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Lolita Latina
An Examination of Gothic and Lolita Style
in the Mexican Environment

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Visual and Material Culture

College of Creative Arts

Massey University

Wellington, New Zealand

Kathryn Adèle Hardy Bernal

2019

Abstract

This thesis, completed for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Visual and Material Culture, Ph.D., examines the development of the fashion-based Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement, and its evolution from its subcultural Japanese roots. It asks, “What are the cultural conditions that encourage this movement to flourish in the Mexican environment?” In turn, “What does Mexican culture contribute to Mexican Gothic and Lolita style?” And, “What does Mexican Gothic and Lolita style say about Mexican culture, society, and beliefs?”

The Gothic and Lolita movement is currently thriving in Mexico as an authentic, independent, creative, handmade fashion industry, yet to be co-opted into mainstream culture. With the do-it-yourself aspect of the movement comes its own, unique, cultural flavour. As such, it transforms and rearranges meanings of the original subcultural style in order to make new statements, which subvert the meanings, and understandings, of the Japanese Lolita identity. Analyses of Mexican Gothic and Lolita styles, in context with the Mexican environment, culture, and belief systems, as well as the operation of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita industry, are major focal points of this study. Also investigated are the ways the movement reflects, fits into, and departs from, the philosophies of the original subculture, especially regarding sociocultural and gender politics. These latter aspects are critiqued in context with “normative” gender positions, roles and hierarchies, within mainstream Japanese and Mexican societies.

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Frontispiece:

Sebastián Salcedo, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, Mexico, painted copper, 1779

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Statement of Original Authorship

This is to certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own ideas and work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no ideas, wording and or analyses, published previously to my own ideas, work and or publications, by another person, except where due acknowledgment and citation is provided.

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Special recognition goes to Regina Morales, for her welcoming friendliness, her continued correspondence, her knowledge, and help, especially her translation of my designer survey questions and the responses, for and from Claudia Baez, on my behalf. Also, to Hiro Takahashi, for her enthusiasm, and motivation in greatly assisting me in the translation of my main thesis questionnaire into Spanish.

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Introduction

Introduction

On July 23, 2017, members of the Gothic and Lolita community of Mexico gathered at an event, *El Baile de Las Rosas* (The Ball of the Roses), held at the Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, Puebla City (see fig. 0.1). Organized by the fashion-based Gothic and Lolita movement's participants from Puebla and Mexico City, it showcased the creations of five designers, of fashion, shoes, jewellery, and accessories, all working within the Mexican Gothic and Lolita industry. That the movement has become so popular in Mexico it has spawned its own production is certainly of note. Originating in Japan, Gothic and Lolita styles have become increasingly visible in Latin-American countries during the past decade, none more so than in Mexico. In my mind, there has been, in recent years, no offshoot of the Japanese subculture as significant as the Mexican development. Furthermore, the Mexican movement brings new meaning to Gothic and Lolita styles. As such, the fashion-based Gothic and Lolita movement, in the Mexican environment, and its industry, is the topic of this thesis.

My research raises the following questions: "What are the cultural conditions that encourage the Gothic and Lolita movement to flourish in Mexico?" "What does Mexican culture contribute to Mexican Gothic and Lolita styles?" "What do Mexican Gothic and Lolita styles say about Mexican culture, society, and beliefs?" And, "How does the Mexican movement fit into, and depart from the philosophies of the original Japanese subculture?" Essentially, why and how does the Gothic and Lolita identity resonate within the Mexican environment? And, how is the Gothic and Lolita identity understood, appropriated, adapted, and presented, in Mexico?

This thesis, *Lolita Latina: An Examination of Gothic and Lolita Style in the Mexican Environment*, completed as a requirement for the fulfilment of my Doctor of Philosophy qualification in Visual and Material Culture, examines the translation and transformation of sociocultural ideas associated with the development of the Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement in the Mexican environment. Mexican Gothic and Lolita styles are, thus, utilized as vehicles for analyzing inherent elements of “Mexicannness,” or the Mexican psyche, especially regarding identity, gender politics, and religion.



Figure 0.1: *Gothic Lolitas in Mexico*

Eleonora Ledesma, Yami Yuki Ai, Norma Ange Aguilar Gomez, Yareni Villarreal,
Elena Jacqueline (Jackz) García Valdez, Rebekah Raven (New Zealand),
Kathryn Hardy Bernal (New Zealand), and Alexa (Alex GL) Fernanda Deras Barraza

El Baile de Las Rosas (The Ball of the Roses)

Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, Ciudad de Puebla, México, July 23, 2017

The Background

In May 2011, I completed my Master of Philosophy, M.Phil., thesis, *The Lolita Complex: A Japanese Fashion Subculture and Its Paradoxes*, which investigated complex socio-political issues implied by and associated with the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement. A year later, I discovered the impetus for this subsequent study, in an article by the *Huffington Post*. Written by Laura Steiner (2012), and titled “Gothic Lolita Fashion Makes its Way from Japan to Mexico,” it suggests that Mexico, at that time, was a burgeoning hotspot for the Gothic and Lolita movement.¹ While the piece is largely photographic and doesn’t say anything substantial about the movement, itself, the notion of this development piqued my interest and reinvigorated my research enthusiasm. I immediately asked myself, “How might this movement translate within a Spanish-speaking, Catholic culture?” My head was filled with theories about how the Gothic and Lolita identity, and particularly the Gothic genre of the Lolita style, might be suited to, and resonate within, the Mexican environment.

An opportunity to visit Mexico, and to carry out a pilot study, arose when Antonio Alcalá González, whom I had first met through the International Gothic Association (IGA), promoted an academic conference, which he annually convenes, to be held at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).² I was extremely fortunate to be able to attend this event, “*Convergencias Góticas: VI Coloquio Gótico Internacional*,”³ in Mexico City, in 2014. While presenting a keynote on the subcultural Japanese Gothic Lolita identity, I handed out a questionnaire for any members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community who happened to be in the audience. During this particular trip, I wasn’t successful in witnessing the Mexican movement *in situ*. However, the feedback I received

¹ Laura Steiner, “Gothic Lolita Fashion Makes its Way from Japan to Mexico,” *The Huffington Post*, May 6, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/06/gothic-lolita-fashion-style-mexico_n_1479029.html?view=screen (accessed January 25, 2014).

² The National Autonomous University of Mexico.

³ “*Gothic Convergences: The VI International Gothic Congress*.”

after delivering my paper convinced me that there was at least a large enough movement for a case study, as part of a wider project. It wasn't until my research progressed further, during my doctoral candidacy, that I realized just how significant the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement is, and that it warrants a study in its own right. As it turns out, the forecast that Mexico would become a major site of interest for the Gothic and Lolita movement, has come true.

This thesis, therefore, includes field studies I undertook during a second research trip to Mexico, in 2017, when and where, this time, I was able to meet members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community, and experience the movement, first-hand. It also incorporates the voices of Mexican participants who shine a light on what it means to be "Lolita" in Mexico.

Methods and Methodologies

At this point, there are no examples of primary or secondary scholarly articles on the Mexican incarnation of the Gothic and Lolita movement; there are just a few journalistic mentions. Therefore, the primary research, contributing to this thesis, is in the form of my ethnographic research, carried out with members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community. In this section, I discuss my methods and processes of collecting the thesis data and collating and analyzing the material.

This study is largely constructed around surveys, interviews, personal correspondence, participation, and observation. Initially, I devised a survey comprised of two questionnaires, one quantitative and one qualitative. Before distributing these, however, I was advised to combine them into one document, which was also eventually made available as a Spanish option (see *Appendices B and C*). While this longer questionnaire is cumbersome and time-consuming to complete, a benefit is that both sets of questions are addressed by each individual. In the past, my experience was that participants would choose to respond to just one type of questionnaire.

Originally, I was investigating the topic in regard to Latin-American cultures. I distributed and received back 120 questionnaires to and from members of Gothic and Lolita communities of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Forty of them, one-third, came from Mexico. It was through this process that I was able to see a clearer picture of Mexico's unique position, which is what led me to my thesis focus. It also highlighted that some of my lines of questioning were not as relevant as others to the themes of this current study and so some of the information has not been evaluated within the body of the thesis (see *Appendix D*).⁴

⁴ For example, the interest in Japanese manga and or anime.

Regarding the tackling of the language, while I was able to translate all the Spanish responses to the questions, which took me several months, I was assisted in the creation of the Spanish-language questionnaire documents. In 2014, in preparation for my pilot study in Mexico City, my host, Antonio Alcalá González, graciously translated my initial quantitative and qualitative questionnaire documents from English into Spanish versions, on my behalf. When it came to this more extensive, combined survey, however, I started by distributing an English-language option, only. As I had been communicating with many of my Latin-American correspondents in English, online, I had thought to dispense with a Spanish alternative. However, early on in the process, one of my survey participants informed me that she knew of members of her community who would be willing to take part in the research if a Spanish-language option became available. This participant, Hiro Takahashi, a Japanese-born Peruvian Lolita, took the initiative to collaborate with me in writing the Spanish version. This was combined with some of Alcalá González's original wording for the final document (see *Appendix C*). After offering the questionnaire in Spanish, I received much more interest from potential participants, who then had the choice of completing either the English or the Spanish versions. Some also replied in Spanish to my English questions. And I still had to interpret some of the English answers, by a few of those who responded in English, due to a difference in syntax.

While my ability to speak Spanish is minimal, as my reading comprehension is much better than my spoken communication, the task of translating the Spanish or, in some cases, "Spanglish," has been achievable due to my familiarity with the subject matter, the movement's jargon, and the context.⁵ Therefore, the transcripts of the qualitative responses, cited throughout the body of this text, are occasionally direct quotes but, more extensively, represent my own translations, from Spanish to English. Mostly, the longer block citations are either my translations of the Spanish, or are paraphrased in

⁵ *Spanglish* = Spanish-English.

order to assist with legibility. These translated or paraphrased citations have been structured and formatted as direct, word-for-word, indented and blocked quotes to make clear distinctions between the respondents' comments and my own. In all cases, however, to the best of my ability, the original meanings, ideas, and emphases have not been altered. There is just one interview that was carried out on my behalf by one of my Mexican correspondents, Regina Morales, who converted my questions for one of the Mexican fashion designers into Spanish, and translated and returned the answers to me in English. On a final note, I draw the reader's attention to the fact that commenters' pseudonyms are sometimes chosen in place of their names, either according to the preferences of those participants, due to their requested desire of anonymity, or, in some cases, if the opinions are controversial, or contain sensitive information.

The Insider/Outsider Approach to Ethnographic Studies

The methods I have used to recruit my survey participants and interviewees, and the ways in which I continue to correspond with them, brings me to my status as an "insider/outsider" researcher. While this examination represents new and previously unexplored territory, for myself and for the wider research field, I have been connected with the original Japanese subculture, as an observer and reader, since 2003; as a global member and participant, since 2006 (the year I bought my first official Japanese Gothic Lolita dress); and as a critical academic researcher, writer and publisher since 2006. Any discussion of my research methods must, therefore, acknowledge my scholarship but also my identity, as a goth for four decades, and as a Gothic Lolita for over a decade, and how my involvement with gothic subcultures contributes to my research practice. I have been passionate about all things Gothic, in relation to art, architecture, history, religion, literature, fashion, music, and design, since the 1970s.

Paul Hodkinson (2002) evaluates the position of the academic researcher from the perspective of a critical insider.⁶ In terms of rigour, he maintains that once an insider becomes the critic, an element of distance must be observed.⁷ Of his own groundbreaking study of the goth subculture in Britain in the 1990s, as a British goth, he emphasizes “that a point of difference was created, as soon as [he]... adopted the role of social researcher.”⁸ Rhoda MacRae (2007) also states that: “Whatever the extent of [one’s]... initial proximity or distance, critical reflexivity is vital for understanding and making explicit the full implications of one’s position.”⁹

However, Hodkinson (2002) argues that it was his insider identity that gave him an edge of authority, claiming that it “would be mistaken... to assume... that all researchers would somehow [be]... equally well-positioned to study goths.”¹⁰ In fact, speaking of his seminal study, his increased immersion in the subculture, as a consequence of his research, not only enriched the project but also his experiences *within* the movement, as his insider status and academic reputation were both heightened. This allowed him much easier accessibility to, and evaluation of, the research data. Hodkinson (2002) explains:

As well as having practical value for gaining access to respondents, participation in the goth scene was key to understanding the experiences and meanings of those involved... and formed the basis of a more distanced, critical form of observation and analysis.... [It was] crucial to gaining a thorough picture, rather than being overly reliant upon accounts of interviewees.¹¹

Regarding this approach, whereby the researcher is both an insider participant and a critical observer, MacRae (2007) also writes:

⁶ See Paul Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style, and Subculture* (Oxford and New York, NY: Berg, 2002).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Rhoda MacRae, “‘Insider’ and ‘Outsider’ Issues in Youth Research,” in *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes*, ed. Paul Hodkinson and Wolfgang Deicke (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2007), 51.

¹⁰ Hodkinson, *Goth*, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Ethnographic studies – including some where the researcher has initial proximity to the respondent group – are an ever more popular method in attempting to understand how... people may construct their identities.... The principle of seeking access to insider knowledge and experience – and attempting to immerse oneself within a given culture in order to achieve this – is... now a widely practiced approach to social research.¹²

Citing Hodkinson (2005), MacRae (2007) agrees that insider relationships often “entail fewer barriers to the research process.”¹³

Hodkinson... has suggested that being an insider researcher can enable... ethnographers to participate fully and competently, to communicate more confidently, freely and informally without being preoccupied with the unfamiliar. A proximate relationship, then, may provide fewer barriers to overcome in terms of access and the ability to get quality in-depth data, something particularly relevant for ethnography, which is centrally concerned with... understanding the contexts of people’s lives.¹⁴

My own experiences as an insider/outsider researcher have been similar in regard to accessibility. Although my initial contacts with members of Latin-American Gothic and Lolita communities were online, many of my survey respondents were recruited via my *Facebook* page, “Gothic and Lolita Subculture,” which gives me some credibility as an insider (see *Appendix A* for my invitation to participate in my thesis survey).¹⁵ My web-based presence on several sites, as a researcher, but also as a member, provides evidence of my alternative, subcultural identity, especially due to profile pictures and photographs, which display my involvement in community activities, locally and internationally. This element has allowed an ease of communication and elicited trust and collegiality. It is my

¹² MacRae, “‘Insider’ and ‘Outsider’ Issues,” 52.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 55 – 56, citing Paul Hodkinson, “Insider Research in the Study of Youth Cultures,” *Journal of Youth Studies* 18, no. 2 (2005), 131 – 149.

¹⁵ See *Gothic and Lolita Subculture*, formerly known as *Lolita Subculture*, <https://www.facebook.com/LolitaSubculture/> (accessed January 27, 2019).

belief that this trust stems from not just an acknowledgment of my participation but acceptance as a member.

It was in 2016 that my surveys were distributed, completed, translated, and collated. Once it was decided, as a result, that my focus would be Mexico, my efforts were concentrated on visiting the country for a second time. Subsequently, in 2017, during this particular field trip, my understanding and knowledge of the Mexican movement, as well as its cultural contexts, was greatly enhanced. I was able to meet some of my survey respondents in real life, and others with whom I had already been in touch. I also had the opportunity to be introduced to even more members who had not been part of the original survey, whose opinions are not, therefore, reflected in the quantitative statistics, but who have become some of my most valued correspondents, especially regarding their contributions to the qualitative content of this thesis.

Inspired by my observations of Gothic and Lolita fashions that I witnessed in Mexico, I followed up my surveys with questions for Mexican designers and makers of the movement's clothing and accessories, upon my return to New Zealand (see *Appendices E and F*). This process put me in touch with even more correspondents. Hence, this thesis represents the opinions of many more members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement than the forty who responded to my original thesis survey.

My treatment of this material, and the way in which I disseminate the information, combines several formal academic methodological approaches, which involve the reading of visual and material culture, popular culture, art, design, and fashion, and their historical and contemporary cultural contexts, in relation to the art-historical method of psychoanalytical art theory.

Methodologies of Art Theory

Academically, I come from a background in art history and theory, having originally completed a four-year Bachelor of Art Theory Honours degree, which concentrated on the history and theory of art, design, architecture, and applied arts, museum studies and curatorial practice. Therefore, my methods of analyzing art, fashion, and visual and material culture pertain to art-historical methodologies. Just as this thesis is multidisciplinary, spanning the fields of visual and material culture, art and design history and theory, history, fashion theory, subculture studies, gothic studies, gender studies, religious history, and culture studies, my approach combines the formal methodological processes of iconology, semiology, and psychoanalytic art theory.

Although there are many resources for these methodologies, Laurie Schneider Adams most succinctly defines them in her *Methodologies of Art* (2010).¹⁶ Beginning with the reading of iconography, Adams (2010) explains that, essentially, it involves the uncovering of the meaning of subject matter:

The term comes from two Greek words – *eikon*, meaning “image,” and *graphe*, meaning “writing.” *Iconography* is thus the way in which an artist “writes” the image, as well as what the image, itself, “writes” – that is, the story it tells.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art: An Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010). Other sources consulted (in alphabetical order): Marcus Banks and David Zeitlyn, *Visual Methods in Social Research* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2015); Peter Clough and Cathy Nutbrown, *A Student's Guide to Methodology: Justifying Enquiry*, 2nd ed. (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007); Peter Fuller, *Art and Psychoanalysis* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988); Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2006); Griselda Pollock, *Psychoanalysis and the Image: Transdisciplinary Perspectives* (Malden, Oxford, and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006); Grant Poole and Diana Newall, *The Basics: Art History* (London, and New York, NY: Routledge, 2008); Esther Rashkin, *Unspeakable Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 3rd ed. (London, Los Angeles, CA, New Delhi, Singapore, and Washington, DC: SAGE, 2012); Tony Schirato and Jen Webb, *Understanding the Visual* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2004); Jack Spector, “The State of Psychoanalytic Research in Art History,” *The Art Bulletin* 70, no. 1 (March, 1988): 49 – 76; Stephen Spencer, *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, and New York, NY: Routledge, 2011); Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁷ Adams, *The Methodologies of Art*, 43.

In other words, there is the *intention* of the artist (the author, the designer, maker, wearer, stylist, architect, photographer, creative director, etc.), and what they “write,” as in what they *create*, and then there is the perspective of the viewer, what they see, or how they *read* the object and, therefore, what they bring to its meaning. The interpretation of the viewer may be vastly different from what the artist intends to project. Nevertheless, reading into, or analyzing, an object’s motifs may serve to enrich its purpose, adding multiple layers to its meaning and significance. Iconology, the science of interpreting symbolic motifs, is closely related to semiology, or the reading of signs, often in order to draw out underlying, or subconscious messages, which, as a concept, also crosses over with the science of psychoanalysis.

In terms of the semiotic approach, Adams (2010) writes:

Semiotics, from the Greek word, *sema* (meaning “sign”), is the application of the science of signs (semiology). It assumes that cultures and cultural expressions, such as language, art, music, [fashion] and film, are composed of signs, and that each sign has a meaning beyond... its literal self.¹⁸

Gillian Rose (2012) adds:

Semiology... can... be a very productive way of thinking about visual meaning.... Moreover, all semiology is centrally concerned with the construction of social difference through signs..., [meaning] that any semiological approach cannot avoid considering the social effects of meaning.¹⁹

These methods are appropriate to this thesis, whereby I analyze objects of art and fashion in order to read, and attempt to reveal, cultural and socio-political meaning.

Adams (2010) illustrates the relationships between iconology, semiology, and psychoanalysis in the interpretation of art objects and imagery:

¹⁸ Ibid., 159.

¹⁹ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 143.

The psychoanalytical approach to art history deals primarily with the unconscious significance of works of art. This complex method involves not only the art but also the artist, the aesthetic response of the viewer, and the cultural context. It is a method that has been partially integrated with iconographic methods, as well as with feminism... and semiotics. Psychobiography, which examines the artist's psycholog[y]... in relation to his or her art, is also a feature of psychoanalytic methodology.... Although art history and psychoanalysis are distinct disciplines, they have much in common. Both fields are concerned with the power of images and their symbolic meaning.... Interpreting imagery is a significant aspect of both psychoanalysis and art history.²⁰

Therefore, what she is saying is that the message of a work of art may be underlying, even to the maker, in that the maker may not consciously intend to project that particular meaning. Uncovering these unconscious messages can highlight the maker's subconscious impulses. Sometimes there is a conscious subtext, however, which is only accessible to interpretation by a particular audience. And, other times, the maker may, again, unconsciously, or quite consciously, bring their social and or cultural influences into the work. In every case, however, a psychoanalytical reading of an object of art or, in the case of this thesis, a fashion garment, entails the drawing out of the unconscious, or the subconscious, and the analysis of symbolic meanings through the reading of its signs and motifs. This process considers not just the object but the maker, the stylist, the audience, and the context.

While the science of psychoanalysis and the analysis of the arts may appear to be incongruous forms of application, it must be remembered that the interpretation of symbols in dreams, as a method of uncovering one's subconscious memories, emotions, anxieties, intentions, desires, and nature, and discovering their hidden meanings, pertains, historically, to psychotherapists and artists, alike, most notably in relation to Surrealism.

²⁰ Adams, *The Methodologies of Art*, 213.

Lastly, the methodologies of iconology, semiology, and psychoanalysis are interconnected with contextual and intertextual frameworks. Contextual art-historical methodologies are those that emphasize the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts of objects, makers, and their motivations. Specifically, throughout this thesis, critical evaluations of visual and material culture are constantly viewed through lenses of post-colonialist and feminist perspectives in association, particularly, with gender politics.

Visual and Material Culture Studies

Although this thesis examines a fashion-based movement, it is not purely a study of fashion design. Mexican Gothic and Lolita styles are analyzed as objects of material culture, through which the culture, itself, is investigated.

Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (2014) ask:

What is material culture...? Historians sometimes simply take it to mean “objects...” Objects have meanings for the people who produce and own, purchase and gift, use and consume them. Material culture, therefore, consists not merely of “things” but also of the meanings they hold for people.... Objects, themselves, are not simply props of history but are tools through which people shape their lives.²¹

And, Judy Attfield (2000) writes:

The rise of Material Culture as a specific field offers a place for the study of the history and theory of design that refuses to privilege it... as a special type of artefact. By amalgamating design with the object world... it becomes just one type of “thing” among other “things” that make up the summation of the material world.... But it is not the “thing,” in itself, which is of prime interest, here.... The material object is... the vehicle through which to explore the object/subject relationship... [and] the acquisition of social meaning within specific cultural/historical contexts.²²

²¹ Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, “Introduction: Writing Material Culture History,” in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London, New Delhi, New York, NY, and Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2014), 2.

²² Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford and New York, NY: Berg, 2000), 11, & 35.

As Attfield (2000) states, it is not the “thing” (or the fashion object) “which is of prime interest,” but what it *says*. Thus, this study is a reading, specifically *my* reading, of Mexican Gothic and Lolita style, and what it says about the culture, itself.

Literature in the Field

While this thesis is focussed on the development of Gothic and Lolita style in Mexico, which represents a departure from the original Japanese subculture, this examination is, in some part, comparative. This is in order to observe the cultural, socio-political, and aesthetic shifts characterized by the movement’s migration into Mexico. As there are, at this point, no specific studies on the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement, a knowledge of the background literature on the foundational Japanese subculture has been crucial as a springboard into this research. In this section, I discuss the literature in this field, before continuing, in the following section, with the main sources I have consulted regarding the supporting material for analyzing the movement in the Mexican environment.

Before reviewing the literature, however, I first list some of the leading publications by date and then alphabetically, according to three categories, in order to get a picture of the scope. These categories are distinguished by research that addresses the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement in Japan; the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement in other Asian sites; and the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement in Anglophone societies. Some publications are mentioned more than once if they fit across these distinctions. I then acknowledge a selection of theses and dissertations in the academic field.²³

²³ Please note that I *mostly* include only the sources that I had become aware of prior to and during the confirmation period of my doctoral candidacy.

The Subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita Movement in Japan²⁴

Literature that addresses the subcultural Japanese movement includes: Donald Richie (2003), Yuniya Kawamura (2006, 2007, 2010, 2012), Tiffany Godoy and Ivan Vartanian (2007, 2009), Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2018), Philomena Keet (2007, 2013), Patrick Macias and Izumi Evers (2007), Masayuki Yoshinaga and Katsuhiko Ishikawa (2007), Bevan K. Y. Chuang and Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (2008), Isaac Gagné (2008, 2013), Masafumi Monden (2008, 2013, 2014, 2015), Ricorico (2008), Valerie Steele and Jennifer Park (2008), Theresa Winge (2008), Vera Mackie (2009, 2010), Michelle Liu Carriger (2009, 2019), Anne McKnight (2010), Laura Miller (2011), Osmud Rahman, Liu Wing-Sun, Elita Lam, and Chan Mong-Tai (2011), Terasa Younker (2011), Anne Peirson-Smith (2012, 2013, 2018), Christine Feldman-Barrett (2013), Perry R. Hinton (2013), Frenchy Lunning (2013), Sophia Staite (2013), Josh Sims (2014), and Zi Young Kang and Tracy Cassidy (2015).²⁵

The Subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita Movement in Asia

Regarding the subculture's migration into other Asian cultures, particularly its prevalence in Hong Kong, the leading researcher is Anne Peirson-Smith (2012, 2013, 2018). Other authors are Osmud Rahman, Liu Wing-Sun, Elita Lam, and Chan Mong-Tai (2011).

The Subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita Movement in Anglophone Cultures

In 2015, Zi Young Kang and Tracy Cassidy published their research on the movement in the United Kingdom. Separate articles by Sophia Staite (2013) and Christine Feldman-Barrett (2013) discuss similar studies in Australia. And, Bevan Chuang and I (2008) have written about our experience working with Auckland Museum and Auckland University of Technology on our exhibition about the movement's presence in New Zealand.

²⁴ For full source details, please refer to the thesis bibliography.

²⁵ All sources are in English. Also see (in Japanese) Misako Aoki, *Lolita Fashion Book* (Tokyo: Mynavi Corporation, 2014).

Theses and Dissertations

When I began this thesis, there had been just over a handful of studies on the Japanese movement, completed for higher research awards. These include doctorates: Masafumi Monden, “Refashioning the Romantics: Contemporary Japanese Culture – Aspects of Dress” (University of Technology, Sydney, 2011), and An Nguyen, “Maiden’s Fashion as Eternal Becomings: Victorian Maidens and Sugar Sweet Cuties Donning Japanese Street Fashion in Japan and North America” (University of Western Ontario, 2012); masters of arts: Sophia Staite, “Lolita: Atemporal Class-Play with Tea and Cakes” (University of Tasmania, 2012), and Chancy J. Gatlin, “The Fashion of Frill: The Art of Impression Management in the Atlanta Lolita and Japanese Street Fashion Community” (Georgia State University, 2014); and an honours dissertation by Kyla Daniéll Robinson, “Empowered Princesses: An Ethnographic Examination of the Practices, Rituals, and Conflicts within Lolita Fashion Communities in the United States” (Georgia State University, 2014).²⁶

In terms of approaches, Monden’s (2011) Ph.D. analyzes the subculture as part of a wider study of alternative Japanese fashion movements; while Nguyen’s (2014) Ph.D. investigates relationships between the movements in Japan and North America:

Building on the existing work that has been done on this topic, I use Lolita fashion as a starting point to examine the themes as noted... [i.e. how Lolitas perceive themselves and how they understand and experience a global web of interactions between places, images, and clothing that tie them with other Lolitas]. I also move beyond the label of “Lolita” to understand what connects people who engage with the fashion differently, such as doll owners, club-goers, and music fans, and how the seemingly visually disparate sub-styles somehow are all considered part of Lolita fashion.²⁷

²⁶ As well as my own study, Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal, “The Lolita Complex: A Japanese Fashion Subculture and its Paradoxes” (M.Phil. thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2011).

²⁷ An Nguyen, “Maiden’s Fashion as Eternal Becomings: Victorian Maidens and Sugar Sweet Cuties Donning Japanese Street Fashion in Japan and North America” (Ph.D. thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 2012), 9.

Gatlin's (2014) and Robinson's (2014) studies also examine the subcultural Gothic and Lolita movement in the United States, both shining a spotlight, specifically, on the Atlanta community; while Sophia Staite (2012) explores the movement in Australia.

Reviewing the Field of Study

As of 2015, when commencing my doctoral candidature at Massey University, the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement, as a research area, had become an emergent academic field. In the early 2000s, however, when I first proposed the subject as my area of postgraduate study, it wasn't determined to be a scholarly endeavour. This was greatly to do with a lack of academic literature, and scarce supporting material. Excepting just a few earlier, seminal studies, this research field is, largely, just over a decade old. In terms of publications, Richie's (2003) book was perhaps the earliest, as far as I have determined, which discusses the fashion-based Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement in any way.²⁸ This was followed by a journal article by Yuniya Kawamura (2006), and then, in 2007, by a surge of journalistic material, which encouraged scholarly momentum.²⁹ Since then, as indicated by the publications and research awards I have listed, the subject has eventually become accepted as a valid topic of interest.

What began my journey into this line of research was the discovery, in the late 1990s, of a journal article by Hannah J. L. Feldman (1996), "The Lolita Complex," published in *World Art* (Australia).³⁰ While it is not explicitly about the fashion-based subculture, the author picks up on a direction in 1980s to 1990s art and popular culture, which coincides with the burgeoning movement in Japan, and reflects its motivations and values. I first connected Feldman's ideas with the Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement after visiting the Sydney Powerhouse Museum's exhibition, *FRUIT*

²⁸ Donald Richie, *The Image Factory: Fads and Fashions in Japan* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003).

²⁹ Yuniya Kawamura, "Japanese Teens as Producers of Street Fashion," *Current Sociology* 54, no. 5 (2006), 784 – 801.

³⁰ Hannah J. L. Feldman, "The Lolita Complex," *World Art* (Australia) 2, Summer (1996), 52 – 57.

Tokyo Street Style: Photographs by Shoichi Aoki (21 December 2002 – 27 July 2003). This show was comprised of photographs taken by Aoki in Harajuku, from 1997 – 2002, and supported by a display of garments and fashion accessories, which documented Japanese street-fashion trends, including examples of Gothic and Lolita styles, of that period.³¹ This was the catalyst for my ongoing interest in the Gothic and Lolita subculture, in Japan, and its increasing globalization.

Feldman's (1996) article has continued to resonate with me, particularly in association with her evaluation of the terminology of "Lolita" as a title, as an *idea*, and as a motif.³² Feldman discusses *the* "Lolita," or the notion of *a* "Lolita," according to the reputation of a "Lolita" as a promiscuous, sexualized little girl, influenced by the projected nature of Vladimir Nabokov's fictional character, Lolita, but now seen in terms of a new type of feminist statement.³³ She declares:

Lolita is back. This particular nymphet, first named in Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel, no longer represents a young girl's vulnerability to an older man's lascivious desires.... Instead, she has re-emerged as a triumphant emblem of a newly configured female desirability. Today, Lolita provides women with a transgressive model for representing female sexuality. To be Lolita means to take control of one's alleged power... and to reverse the pejorative connotations of aggressive sexual behaviour.³⁴

In other words, the reclamation of this image by women is a rebellious act according to its transgressive agency, which gives control, and shifts the power back, to women.³⁵

³¹ The photographic images exhibited at the Powerhouse exhibition were first published in Shoichi Aoki's monthly Japanese fashion magazine, *FRUiTS*, founded in 1997. Subsequent books by Aoki catalogue his work and provide short forewords about the history of Harajuku and its connections with alternative fashion movements and street styles. See Shoichi Aoki, *FRUiTS* (London and New York, NY: Phaidon, 2003); and ———, *FRESH FRUiTS*. (London and New York, NY: Phaidon, 2006).

³² See Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal, "Japanese Lolita: Challenging Sexualized Style and the Little-Girl Look [2008]," in *Fashion Talks: Undressing the Power of Style*, edited by Shira Tarrant and Marjorie Jolles, 117 – 132 (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012).

³³ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, 1st ed. (Paris: Olympia Press, 1955). The effect of Nabokov's novel on the name, Lolita, and its associations with the understanding, or misunderstanding, of the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement, are explained and discussed in much more detail throughout this thesis. See, especially, *Chapter Four*.

³⁴ Feldman, "The Lolita Complex," 52.

³⁵ See Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal, "Japanese Lolita."

The crux of Feldman's (1996) idea is now applied to analyses of the Japanese Gothic and Lolita identity and motivations behind its adoption.³⁶ For example, Theresa Winge (2008) writes:

[The Lolita exhibits] stereotypical feminine characteristics (wearing lacy dresses, hair ribbons, and shoes with bows) in excess. From the standpoint of Japanese women's struggle for equality, this anachronistic portrayal of females as living dolls would seem to undermine the feminist position. For the outsider, Lolita is a representation of a woman as an object to be played with, an ideal girl to be loved or possessed, who manifests the culture's desire for virginal youth. For a Lolita, though, this aesthetic creates a safe space... behind the protection of the childhood patina.³⁷

As Michelle Liu Carriger (2019) states, symbolically, "Gothic Lolitas preserve innocence by strategically escaping to a different time and place (the past, fantasy Europe) to avoid the threat of defilement."³⁸ By dressing in anachronistic childlike fashions, Lolitas *symbolically* (if not actually) refuse to enter the world of adult sexuality.

When it comes to the origins of this movement, some of the most informative publications began to appear in 2007: Mariko Suzuki, "Gothic, Lolita, Visual-Kei: First Kansai Then the World (via Harajuku)," in *Style Deficit Disorder: Harajuku Street Fashion, Tokyo*, edited by Tiffany Godoy and Ivan Vartanian; Philomena Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book: Stylish to Spectacular, Goth to Gyarū, Sidewalk to Catwalk*; and Patrick Macias and Izumi Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno: Tokyo Teen Fashion Subculture Handbook*.³⁹ Then, in 2008, two more books were published, which also address the historical foundations and

³⁶ See *ibid.*

³⁷ Theresa Winge, "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita," in *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human*, ed. Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 59.

³⁸ Michelle Liu Carriger, "Maiden's Armor: Global Gothic Lolita Fashion Communities and Technologies of Girly Counteridentity," *Theatre Survey* 60, no. 1 (January 2019), 132.

³⁹ Mariko Suzuki, "Gothic, Lolita, Visual-Kei: First Kansai Then the World (via Harajuku)," in *Style Deficit Disorder: Harajuku Street Fashion, Tokyo*, ed. Tiffany Godoy and Vartanian, 134 - 137 (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2007); Philomena Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book: Stylish to Spectacular, Goth to Gyarū, Sidewalk to Catwalk* (Tokyo, New York, NY and London: Kodansha International, 2007); and Patrick Macias and Izumi Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno: Tokyo Teen Fashion Subculture Handbook* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2007).

meanings: *Gothic: Dark Glamour* by Valerie Steele and Jennifer Park; and *Gothic Lolita Punk: A Stunning Showcase of the Cutting-edge Work from the Best Gothic Lolita Artists Working Today*, edited by Ricorico (Yuri Okamoto and Rico Komanoya) and translated by Toru Moriya and Corene Cook.⁴⁰ The latter includes an introduction by Komanoya: “The Origin of Gothic Lolita Punk Movement in Japan – An Interview with DJ SiSeN.”⁴¹ DJ SiSeN is a fashion-forward celebrity disc-jockey musician of the Gothic & Lolita + Punk (G&L+P) movement in Japan, whose unique and outrageously flamboyant sartorial style was and is still influential on street-trends and subgenres of subcultural Japanese fashions. In the interview with Komanoya, SiSeN discusses an evolution of the Japanese Goth, Punk, and Gothic and Lolita movements, from the 1980s to the time of publication. These recollections are important in gaining a perspective from someone who was part of the scene in its seminal days.

Another such viewpoint is represented by the renowned Japanese Gothic and Lolita participant and author, Novala Takemoto, in his introduction about the Japanese Gothic Lolita identity, in *Japanese Goth*, another book by Tiffany Godoy and Ivan Vartanian (2009).⁴² Although Takemoto’s section is quite short, this piece, again, is an illuminating discourse delivered “straight from the horse’s mouth.” Since the early 2000s, Novala Takemoto has become highly influential on the rising popularity, international expansion, and longevity of the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement, especially in terms of his authorship of *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (2002).⁴³ This semi-

⁴⁰ Valerie Steele and Jennifer Park, *Gothic: Dark Glamour* (New York, NY: Yale University Press and the Fashion Institute of Technology, 2008); and Ricorico (Yuri Okamoto and Rico Komanoya), ed., *Gothic Lolita Punk: A Stunning Showcase of the Cutting-edge Work from the Best Gothic Lolita Artists Working Today*, trans. Toru Moriya and Corene Cook (New York: Harper Collins, 2008).

⁴¹ Rico Komanoya, “Introduction: The Origin of Gothic Lolita Punk Movement in Japan – An Interview with DJ SiSeN,” in Ricorico (Yuri Okamoto and Rico Komanoya), ed., *Gothic Lolita Punk*, 7 – 13.

⁴² Novala Takemoto, “Introduction: Lolic...,” in *Japanese Goth*, ed. Tiffany Godoy and Ivan Vartanian, 19 – 21 (New York, NY: Universe, 2009).

⁴³ Novala Takemoto, *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (Tokyo: *Shōgakukan*, 2002).

biographical but fictional novel was adapted as a graphic novel and then made into a live-action theatrical film (2004).⁴⁴ The narrative has been instrumental in catapulting the Japanese movement into Anglophone societies, and beyond, since both versions of the novel, and the film, were translated into English, and released in the United States, in 2006, as *Kamikaze Girls*, in all formats.⁴⁵ *Shimotsuma Monogatari*, or *Kamikaze Girls*, is an example of *shōjo* (teenage, or young girls') fiction. The main character, Momoko Ryugasaki, is a Japanese Lolita fashion enthusiast. Although she belongs to no local Gothic and Lolita communities, being the sole participant in her town, she dresses in the style every day, while she does everything she can, often questionable, to acquire her wardrobe. On the surface, this tale serves as light entertainment, yet it represents topical cultural issues, related to and in association with the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement.⁴⁶

One of the more theoretical analyses of the subculture is Theresa Winge's (2008) "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita."⁴⁷ Winge's unique contribution to the discourse is her application of Victor Turner's (1982)

⁴⁴ Takemoto relates himself to his heroine, Momoko Ryugasaki, a Sweet Lolita. See *ibid.*, Novala Takemoto and Yukio Kanesada, *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (Tokyo: *Shōgakukōkan*, 2004); and *Shimotsuma Monogatari*, feature film, dir. Tetsuya Nakashima (Tokyo: Toho Co. Ltd., 2004), theatrical.

⁴⁵ Novala Takemoto, *Kamikaze Girls*, trans. Akemi Wegmüller (San Francisco, CA: VIZ Media, LLC, 2006); *Kamikaze Girls*, feature film, dir. Tetsuya Nakashima (San Francisco, CA: VIZ Media, LLC, 2005), theatrical (subtitled); *Kamikaze Girls*, feature film, dir. Tetsuya Nakashima (San Francisco, CA: VIZ Media, LLC, 2006), DVD (subtitled); and Novala Takemoto and Yukio Kanesada, *Kamikaze Girls*, trans. and adapt. Tomo Kimura (San Francisco, CA: VIZ Media, LLC, 2006).

⁴⁶ See Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal, "Kamikaze Girls and Loli-Goths," conference paper for *Fashion in Fiction: An International Transdisciplinary Conference* (Sydney: University of Technology, 2007), https://www.academia.edu/3990474/Hardy_Bernal_Kathryn_A._Kamikaze_Girls_and_Loli-Goths_Conference_paper_Fashion_in_Fiction_An_International_Transdisciplinary_Conference_Sydney_University_of_Technology_2007 (accessed November 16, 2019); Angelica Le Minh, "Memoirs of a Kamikaze Girl (film review)," *Ricepaper* (2006), <http://www.ricepaperonline.com/index.php?id=116> (accessed September 11, 2006); Vera Mackie, "Reading Lolita in Japan," in *Girl Reading Girl in Japan*, ed. Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley, 187 – 201 (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2010); Masafumi Monden, *Japanese Fashion Subcultures: Dress and Gender in Contemporary Japan* (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2015); Jasper Sharp, "Kamikaze Girls (film review)," *Midnight Eye*, May 17, 2004, <http://www.midnighteye.com/reviews/kamikaze-girls/> (accessed September 13, 2006); Faith Shinri, "Kamikaze Revisited: The Futile Martyrdom of the Lolita," May 15, 2003, http://www.lerman.biz/asagao/gothic_lolita/research4.html (accessed March 13, 2007); and Andrew Sun, "Kamikaze Girls (film review)," *Hollywood Reporter*, April 19, 2005.

⁴⁷ Winge, "Undressing and Dressing Loli." See my reading of Winge's (2008) article in Kathryn Hardy Bernal, "Performing Lolita: The Japanese Gothic and Lolita Subculture and Constructing Identity through Virtual Space," *Journal of Asia Pacific Pop Culture* 1, no. 1 (2016), 79 – 102.

“ritualized identity” theory to the performative aspects of participation in the subcultural movement, whereby she distinguishes three phases in the process becoming a Lolita.⁴⁸ This work is an example of one of two main types of research on the Japanese Gothic and Lolita subculture.

In reviewing the majority of the existing body of literature on the Japanese movement, one overriding aspect becomes apparent, in that, essentially, there are two significantly differing approaches to the subject. While many studies, such as Winge’s (2008), attempt to ascribe meaning to the movement, to critically evaluate the Lolita identity, and to analyze the style in context with cultural, socio-political, and environmental frameworks, others argue that there is no real meaning attached. Yuniya Kawamura (2012), for example, states that:

While Western youth subcultures, such as British punk or U.S. inner-city hip-hop, often convey a strong political or ideological statement, the Lolita girls claim that they have no message and say that their distinctive styles are purely for enjoyment.... They have no intention of rebelling against the formal and traditional ways.⁴⁹

While Theresa Winge (2008) declares that “adherence to the subcultural community and Lolita aesthetic” reflects an unwillingness to conform to the ideals of the “parent culture.”⁵⁰ She says that Sweet Lolitas, in particular, “with their anachronistic dress, childlike mannerisms, and doll-like poses... become objects of visual resistance against acceptable norms of dress and all that these norms stand for.”⁵¹ She elaborates:

Within the Lolita subcultural community, the Sweet Lolita is provided with the safety to present her individual Lolita aesthetic, and by maintaining her resistance and agency, she in turn empowers the subculture, itself....⁵²

⁴⁸ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York, NY: PAJ Publications, 1982).

⁴⁹ Kawamura, *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures*, 68.

⁵⁰ Winge, “Undressing and Dressing Lolita,” 58.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

Winge (2008) analyzes the Sweet Lolita's aesthetic as an endeavour to reconnect with childhood, via *kawaii*, or cute, things:

In this way, Lolas... indicate nostalgia for a past era and a desire to escape adult responsibilities for the carefree days of youth. In essence, Lolas are attempting to prolong childhood with the Lolita aesthetic via the use of *kawaii*.⁵³

This interpretation of the Japanese Gothic and Lolita subculture, as a resistant movement, is the more common perspective among academics, as is the method of critiquing the psychological motivations of its membership. Although it is true that most participants are involved purely for the love of the overtly feminine, cute and pretty fashion styles, and “*claim*,” as Kawamura (2012) rightly observes, that they have no *intention* of *projecting* any message, that is not to say that the image does not *reflect* any message.⁵⁴ Gothic and Lolita styles can be highly, semiotically, loaded, especially when it comes to associations with controversial sociocultural issues.

The element of *kawaisa* (cuteness) and its relationship with the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita identity, especially the Sweet Lolita's childish and or child-like aesthetic and sensibilities, is commonly analyzed by the field's scholars in terms of problematic connections with the afore-mentioned fictional, little-girl character, Lolita, of Vladimir Nabokov's novel (1955).⁵⁵ Insiders and outsider researchers are almost always in agreement that the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita identity is not intended, or *supposed*, to represent this persona. The existence of the sexualized and fetishized cute, little-girl image is, however, still an issue, which is exacerbated by the label, “Lolita,” and, hence, the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita identity is perpetually linked with Nabokov's unfortunate little-girl figure.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See Kawamura, *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures*, 68.

⁵⁵ See Nabokov, *Lolita*. For more, see *Chapter Four* of this thesis.

⁵⁶ See *Chapter Four* of this thesis.

Of the academic writers who have critiqued Gothic and Lolita fashion in context with this Nabokovian framework, the main writer to recognize it as a form of fetish style is Frenchy Lunning (2013).⁵⁷ In the body of this thesis, mostly in *Chapter Four*, I weigh up the opinions of Lunning (2013) against arguments raised by Carolyn (Caro) Dee (2013), expressed in her article, “Why is Lolita Called Lolita? Does Lolita Fashion Have Anything to Do with Nabokov?” and compare them with responses made by my Mexican survey participants.⁵⁸ My re-visitation of this debate re-questions and re-positions conclusions that have now become long-established in the existing research field, suggesting a shift in the conventional perspective. This thesis represents not only newer ways of thinking about these types of lines of enquiry but also ventures into new and unexplored territories.

⁵⁷ Frenchy Lunning, *Fetish Style* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁵⁸ Dee, Carolyn. “Why is Lolita Called ‘Lolita?’ Does Lolita Fashion Have Anything to Do with Nabokov?” *F Yeab Lolita: A Lolita Fashion & Lifestyle Blog*, November 2, 2013. <http://fyeahlolita.blogspot.de/2013/11/why-is-lolita-called-lolita-does-lolita.html> (accessed August 20, 2015).

Gaps in the Research Field and Original Contributions

This thesis identifies and supplements several gaps in the existing research field regarding studies of the Japanese Gothic and Lolita Movement and its migration into new environments. Most conspicuously, one of its major contributions is the examination of Gothic and Lolita style in Mexico, which, at this stage, represents an original and unique project. Although the national Mexican Gothic and Lolita community is one of the largest, and most significant, in the world, no one is asking, “*Why* Mexico?”

Studies of the subcultural Gothic and Lolita movement either concentrate on Japan and or its presence in other Asian, and or in Anglophone nations. Although the subculture developed in Japan, its genesis represents transmigrations of ideas and intertextual and inter-cultural relationships between Japan, the United Kingdom, Northern Europe, and North America, and thus it shares its ideological roots with Anglo-Japanese and Euro-American sources. Therefore, up until this point, research has been focussed on these foundations and interrelationships. However, the movement’s migration into Latin America, and, particularly, Mexico, and the impact it has there, demonstrates a definite departure from these origins, geographically, psychologically, culturally, and aesthetically.

While previous studies have tended to observe the adoption of the original Japanese movement’s ideas within other cultures, this thesis investigates what the adoptive culture, itself, brings *to* the movement. In other words, while other sites of adoption have endeavoured to stay true to the original Japanese subculture’s ideas and aesthetics, the Mexican movement *contributes to* the movement’s ideologies, worldwide, and demonstrates true innovations. This thesis explores these innovations.

Mexican Literary Sources

In order to place the Mexican innovations into cultural context and perspective, I have consulted historical resources on Mexican society, religion, and identity, by Octavio Paz (1961, 1976, 1985),⁵⁹ and Jacques Lafaye (1976),⁶⁰ and supporting contemporary material by Enrique Ajuria Ibarra (2014, 2018), and Antonio Alcalá González (2014, 2018). These scholars agree that the Mexican psyche is built upon anxieties caused by a troubled and violent historical past, founded in bloodshed, conquest, colonization, and displacement.

Ajuria Ibarra (2018) writes of the repression of memories of Mexico's colonial origins, stating that a "postcolonial nation usually deals with the struggle of a silenced and troubled identity... glossed over by a biased, if not inadequate view of the events of the conquest and colonial eras."⁶¹ He cites Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs and their analysis of Australia's postcolonial status as also having been "shaped by the discourse of a 'settler nation,'" forging "an identity of 'reconciliation' that forecloses any recognition of European and Aboriginal encounters."⁶² Similarly, Ajuria Ibarra (2018) states that, in Mexico, "the colonial past is... still manifested in the present."⁶³

Alcalá González (2014) also expresses this sentiment. He cites Rubén Gallo (2004) who describes Mexico City as a "space where the Aztec past coexists... with a postmodern present, where Western culture lives side-by-side with [indigenous] traditions... and... pre-Columbian culture thrives among the chaos of the modern city."⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Octavio Paz Lozano (March 31, 1914 – April 19, 1998) was a renowned Mexican poet, author, and political diplomat.

⁶⁰ Jacques Lafaye (born March 21, 1930), is an esteemed French academic who is recognized for his specializations in Spanish and Latin-American history and religion.

⁶¹ Enrique Ajuria Ibarra, "The Latin American Ghost Story," in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. Scott Brewster and Luke Thornton (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2018), 239.

⁶² *Ibid.*, quoting Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs, "The Postcolonial Ghost Story," in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. Peter Buse and Andrew Scott (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1999), 182.

⁶³ Ajuria Ibarra, "The Latin American Ghost Story," 239.

⁶⁴ Rubén Gallo, "Introduction," in *The Mexico City Reader*, trans. Lorna Scott Fox and Rubén Gallo, ed. Rubén Gallo (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 7; quoted by Antonio Alcalá González, "Fluid Bodies: Gothic Transmutations in Carlos Fuentes' Fiction," in *A Companion to American Gothic*, ed. Charles L. Crow (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014), 536 – 537.

“The past is right there,” Alcalá González (2014) says, “right in front of the city’s inhabitants....”⁶⁵ He continues:

Nevertheless, this past, though right in the face of its inhabitants, is almost forgotten and left to rot behind modern glass and steel. The past is the native heritage that has been relegated to the bottom of the social ladder from the times of New Spain.⁶⁶

Alcalá González (2014) explains that these concerns are symbolized and imbedded in examples of Mexican gothic fiction, underlying, whether consciously or subconsciously, general preoccupations of the Mexican psyche. The message is that:

We live in our time, but... among ghosts from preceding ages, and omens of those to come.... Though being a mixed race of Spanish-speaking people, Mexicans are... of remarkably evident pre-Columbian roots who have postponed or expelled a reencounter with their past....⁶⁷

Mexico, as a nation, is haunted by the spectre of its violent past: the pre-colonial practice of human sacrifice; in turn, the massacre of indigenous peoples by the Spanish conquerors; essentially, the devastation and genocide of peoples and civilizations.⁶⁸ A pervasive unease is tied up with uncertainties and guilt, concerning identity and blood. Anxieties associated with racial ambiguity and hybridity are connected with spiritual and religious assimilation, achieved by the processes of iconoclasm and syncretism. Alcalá González (2014) quotes Lois Marie Jaeck (1999) who maintains that “Mexico cannot forsake the gods, myths and superstitions of its pre-Columbian past, residing just below the surface of the contemporary reality.”⁶⁹ Moreover, as Octavio Paz (1961) clarifies, it is

⁶⁵ Alcalá González, “Fluid Bodies,” 537.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Note: Alcalá González refers to a thematic framework present in the fictional writing of the Mexican novelist, Carlos Fuentes Macías (November 11, 1928 – May 15, 2012).

⁶⁸ In Mexico, the Aztec civilization was also preceded by the Maya, Mixtec, Toltec, Teotihuacán, Zapotec, and Olmec peoples. See Charles Phillips, *The Lost History of Aztec & Maya: The History, Legend, Myth and Culture of the Ancient Native People of Mexico and Central America* (London: Hermes House, Anness Publishing Ltd, 2005).

⁶⁹ Lois Marie Jaeck, “Houses of Horror or Magical Kingdoms? Past Times Revisited with Miguel Ángel Asurias, Carlos Fuentes and Julio Cortázar,” *Ciencia Ergo Sum* 6, no. 3 (1999), 314; quoted in Alcalá González, “Fluid Bodies,” 537.

important to understand that these beliefs have not been completely suppressed but have, over time, been subsumed into a syncretic, hybrid religion and culture.

Paz (1961) highlights that, when the Spanish arrived, they encountered the Aztecs who were but the latest inhabitants, having been the “last to enter the Valley of Mexico.”⁷⁰ They, too, had conquered and colonized preceding civilizations. As such, “differing traditions and cultural heritages” had already been appropriated, assimilated, and “absorbed into the Aztec Empire.”⁷¹ In fact, “individuality of each culture had been replaced, perhaps, within a fairly recent period.”⁷² The Aztecs were but the “heir[s] to the civilizations of the Central Plateau.”⁷³ In 1985, Paz elaborates:

The version of Western civilization that reached Mexico was also syncretist.... Catholic syncretism... assimilated Greco-Latin antiquity and the gods of the “Orientals and barbarians...” [and then there] was Spanish syncretism. Centuries of struggle with Islam had permeated the religious conscience of Spaniards; the notion of the crusade and holy war is Christian but also deeply Moslem.... When Bernal Díaz del Castillo saw the temples of Tenochtitlán, he spoke of “mosques.” For him, as for Cortes, the Indians were “the others” and the others were pre-eminently Moslems.... The Spaniards knocked down the statues of the gods, destroyed the temples, burned the codices and annihilated the priestly caste. It was as though they had removed the eyes, ears, soul and memory of the indigenous people. At the same time, Catholicism... was a refuge because it was a syncretist religion: by christening the Indians it christened their beliefs and gods.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Octavio Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude [1961],” trans. Lysander Kemp, in *The Labyrinth of Solitude, The Other Mexico, Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude, Mexico and the United States, and The Philanthropic Ogre by Octavio Paz* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) 89. See Phillips, *The Lost History of Aztec & Maya*.

⁷¹ Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude,” 91. See Phillips, *The Lost History of Aztec & Maya*.

⁷² Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude,” 90

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 92

⁷⁴ Octavio Paz, “Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude [1985],” trans. Yara Milos, in *The Labyrinth of Solitude, The Other Mexico, Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude, Mexico and the United States, and The Philanthropic Ogre by Octavio Paz* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 345 – 346.

Thus, he argues, Mexican religion is a syncretic faith, formulated by a fusion of Late-Medieval Roman Catholicism and Aztec beliefs, which were fundamentally, themselves, also syncretic in their formations.

Lafaye (1976) is also an important source for religious history and theology in Mexico, particularly the role that religion has played as a tool of propaganda, conquest, and control, and for its place in the foundations of Mexican national identity.⁷⁵ Paz (1976) introduces Lafaye's publication, which is structured around two iconic figures, Quetzalcóatl, the great Aztec god, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of God:

Lafaye's book is an admirable description of the beliefs of New Spain.... [Against this background]... in which two syncretisms blend, Spanish Catholicism and the Aztec religion..., unfold the two myths [of Quetzalcóatl and Our Lady of Guadalupe, which]... have come down to our own day as images arisen from the collective consciousness.⁷⁶

Lafaye (1976) highlights that the "process of syncretism between the great divinities of ancient Mexico and the saints of Christianity worked itself out. The most notable example is... Our Lady of Guadalupe," a female identity.⁷⁷

The construction of Mexicanness, or what it means to be Mexican, is an integral component of the frameworks surrounding the Mexican Gothic Lolita identity, particularly as they are founded in concepts of the Gothic. In Mexico, the Gothic is both an abstract and a tactile sensibility. It is a force of energy, derived from the hauntology of its history and its persistent resonance throughout contemporary society, and is physically evident in the ruins of the structures of past civilizations, and the Gothic and Baroque edifices, which are often built from those remains. As Catherine Spooner (2006) states:

⁷⁵ Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531 – 1813*, trans. Benjamin Keen (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

⁷⁶ Octavio Paz, "Foreword: The Flight of Quetzalcóatl and the Quest for Legitimacy," in *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531 – 1813*, Jacques Lafaye, trans. Benjamin Keen (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), x – xi.

⁷⁷ Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, 214.

It is important to know where Gothic has come from: Gothic... has a history, over which it has... developed and accrued multiple layers of meaning. Gothic as a genre is profoundly concerned with the past, conveyed through both historical settings and narrative interruptions of the past into the present.⁷⁸

The Mexican Gothic Lolita identity is often inspired by the Mexican gothic environment via female icons and their symbolic motifs. The leading female identity, in Mexico, as identified by Paz (1961, 1976, 1985) and Lafaye (1976), is Our Lady of Guadalupe.⁷⁹ Hence, this thesis explores semiotic relationships between Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Mexican Gothic and Lolita identity. It also examines aesthetic references to other notable religious and cultural figures of divine femininity, including Our Lady of Sorrows (another representation of Mary, the Blessed Virgin), La Santa Muerte (Saint Death),⁸⁰ La Calavera Catrina (Skeleton Catrina), La Llorona (Weeping Woman),⁸¹ and Aztec goddesses, Mictlancíhuatl, Cihuacóatl, Cōātlīcue, and Tonantzin,⁸² as well as iconographical and links between each other.

⁷⁸ Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 9.

⁷⁹ See Barbara Calamari and Sandra di Pasqua, *Visions of Mary* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 2014); Francis Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe* (Cuahtémoc, MX: Editorial Verdad y Vida, 1981); Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*; Octavio Paz, “Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude;” ———, “The Flight of Quetzalcóatl and the Quest for Legitimacy;” ———. “The Labyrinth of Solitude;” and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 2005).

⁸⁰ See Pamela Bastante and Brenton Dickieson, “Nuestra Señora de las Sombras: The Enigmatic Identity of Santa Muerte,” *Journal of the Southwest* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2013), 435 – 471; Stefano Bigliardi, “La Santa Muerte and Her Interventions in Human Affairs: A Theological Discussion,” *Sophia* 55, no. 33 (2016), 303 – 323; Manon Hedenborg-White, “Death as a Woman: Santa Muerte and Religious ‘Othering’ in Mexico,” in Anthony Patterson and Marilena Zackheos, ed., *Vile Women: Female Evil in Fact, Fiction and Mythology*, 235 – 255 (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2014); Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, *Fierce Divinities of Eurasia and Latin America: Baba Yaga, Kali, Pombagira, and Santa Muerte* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); ———, “Representations of Death in Mexico: La Santa Muerte,” in Katie Buehner, Kerry Creelman, Catherine Essinger, and Andrea Malone ed. *Proceedings of the Art of Death and Dying Symposium*, 69 – 77 (Houston, TX: University of Houston, 2012); and Marcel Reyes-Cortez, “Material Culture, Magic, and the Santa Muerte in the Cemeteries of a Megalopolis,” *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13, no. 1 (March 2012), 107 – 131.

⁸¹ See Enrique Ajuria Ibarra, “Ghosting the Nation: La Llorona, Popular Culture, and the Spectral Anxiety of Mexican Identity,” in Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville ed., *The Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic*, 131 – 151 (Houndmills and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Ana María Carbonell, “From Llorona to Gritona: Coatlicue in Feminist Tales by Viramontes and Cisneros,” *MELUS* 24, no. 2, *Religion, Myth and Ritual* (Summer 1999), 53 – 74; Amy Fuller, “The Evolving Legend of La Llorona,” *History Today* 65, no. 11 (November 2015), 39 – 44; and Micah Issitt, “La Llorona: Omen of Death,” in *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Literature* (Hackensack, NJ: Salem Press, 2015).

⁸² See Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*; Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*; Octavio Paz, “Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude;” ———, “The Flight of Quetzalcóatl and the Quest for Legitimacy;” ———. “The Labyrinth of Solitude;” and Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*.

The Chapters

The topic of this study, as designated by the title, is an examination of Gothic and Lolita style in the Mexican environment. It is also dedicated to an investigation of the Mexican environment, itself, as a receptacle for the Gothic and Lolita identity. As discussed, it partly explores the fashion-based Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement as a development from the Japanese Gothic and Lolita subculture. As such, it focusses on how the movement evolves, and shifts ideologies, as it migrates from Japan into Mexico.

Chapter One: La Subcultura, Muerte y Vida (Death and Life) explores the socio-political paradigms of the wider Gothic and Lolita subculture, in association with its Japanese history, and analyzes shifts in the way the movement operates within Mexican culture, especially in connection with gender roles and hierarchies. It also discusses the life of the fashion-based movement via its foundations, evolution, and gradual demise in Japan, and its rebirth and reinvigoration in Mexico.

As the gothic element is such a significant aspect of the fashion-based Gothic and Lolita movement in Mexico, two chapters are devoted to the gothic theme. *Chapter Two: México Gótico* begins with the environmental context for the Mexican Gothic Lolita style. It explores the gothic presence within the Mexican landscape, which can be perceived in conceptual, abstract, spiritual, and physical ways. Closely tied to these gothic sensibilities are religion and superstition, expressed through syncretic forms, indigenous and introduced, Aztec and Catholic. This gothic and hybrid Catholic cultural environment is unveiled as a backdrop for Mexican Gothic Lolita inspiration.

The second chapter sets up the frameworks for *Chapter Three: Lolita Gótica*, which examines the influences of the Mexican gothic landscape on the Mexican Gothic Lolita style. In this chapter, prominent figures of feminine divinity, religion, superstition, and Mexican popular culture, Our Lady of Guadalupe, La Santa Muerte, and, particularly, La Catrina, are analyzed along with their iconographic motifs, as points of reference for the creative presentation of the Mexican Gothic Lolita, especially in association with festivities of the Day of the Dead.

The following *Chapter Four: Lolita, La Matriarca* continues with the religiosity of Mexico as inspiration for Classic Gothic and Lolita styles but, this time, in connection with the psychology and meaning of “Lolita.” In determining a departure of the Mexican movement from its Japanese origins, one of the most notable shifts is the incarnation of the Lolita identity as the image of the “Matriarch,” as opposed to that of the “Little Girl.” As such, this chapter revisits and re-interrogates the common debate regarding perceived connections between the typical Japanese little-girl Lolita identity and the fictional sexualized character of Lolita, of Vladimir Nabokov’s novel, *Lolita* (1955).⁸³ In context with that association, it re-questions whether or not the subcultural Lolita style is intended to be sexually provocative. This is in order to compare cultural variations in understandings between Japan and Mexico. Although, in Mexico, there is an awareness of the Nabokovian connotation of the name, “Lolita,” in Spanish it is interpreted differently, particularly, in its root form, Dolores, as a title for the Virgin Mary. In Mexico, the Lolita style has, thus, cognitively, moved away from the Nabokovian evocation, and emphasizes new meaning.

⁸³ See Nabokov, *Lolita*.

Chapter Five, Las Lolitas Mexicanas y La Industria de La Moda, is about the do-it-yourself aspect and industry of Mexican Gothic and Lolita fashions and accessories. Important frameworks for the rise in local industry are economy and accessibility or, rather, consequences of the difficulties of affordability and access, exacerbated by isolation, exchange rates, and shipping fees, which encourage local handcraft activities, and fuel the learning of design, pattern, and construction skills. This is a move away from the emphasis on the acquisition of Japanese designer-label “dream dresses,” a common element of the Japanese movement and its influences. These aspects help to bring about a new cultural flavour to the aesthetics of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita identity. In turn, the Mexican aesthetics of Gothic and Lolita styles are becoming increasingly influential on the movement, worldwide.

Chapter One

La Subcultura, Muerte y Vida

Chapter One: La Subcultura, Muerte y Vida (Death and Life)

The Gothic Lolita.... She should be slender with empty, seductive eyes and five foot four.

*She should like listening to... Gothic music and reading European children's literature,
live in a manor and enjoy going for walks, shopping, visiting galleries and listening to classical concerts.*

*The... Gothic Aristocrat should [have]... eyes in whose sad pupils insanity sleeps...
live in an old castle, listen to symphonic gothic black metal,
read children's gothic horror mysteries, enjoy going for walks at night, and painting.*

– Mana¹

“Subculture is Dead.”² Since at least the 1990s, it has been argued, especially in academic circles, that the life of the true, traditional subculture has been extinguished.³ Dylan Clark (2003) explains that many believe that “with the death of punk, classical subcultures died,” which, signified by the cooption of its style by mainstream society, and its subsequent commodification, can be pinpointed to the late 1970s.⁴ However, scholars also agree that subcultural groups have continued to thrive, just not in the same way.⁵ In 1997, Caroline Evans states that it is the *definition* of “Subculture,” not its existence, that has become obsolete, raising questions about established ideas of its functionality: “Is the idea of Subculture as a form of resistance to the dominant culture still useful?”⁶

¹ Mana, leading Japanese Gothic and Lolita fashion designer and musician, quoted in Philomena Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book: Stylish to Spectacular, Goth to Gyaru, Sidewalk to Catwalk* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2007), 87 – 88.

² Dylan Clark, “The Death and Life of Punk, The Last Subculture,” in *The Post-Subcultures Reader*, ed. David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzil (Oxford: Berg, 2003), <http://individual.utoronto.ca/rogues/PunkLastSubculture.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2016).

³ See *ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*; Caroline Evans, “Dreams That Only Money Can Buy... Or, The Shy Tribe in Flight from Discourse,” in *Fashion Theory* 1, no. 2 (1997), 169 – 188; and Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* [1979] (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁵ See Clark, “The Death and Life of Punk.”

⁶ Evans, “Dreams That Only Money Can Buy,” 169 – 170.

This chapter weighs up this debate via an examination of the history, function, ideologies, and operation of the subcultural Gothic and Lolita movement, its Japanese origins, and its migration into Mexico. I aim to show that not only does the life of subcultures as resistant cultures still flourish but that, also, subcultural movements have evolved and progressed. I contend that the Mexican development of the movement represents both perspectives, death and life: It breathes new life into the ideas of the original movement, while, at the same time, signals a departure from its traditions, particularly in association with gender politics and identity.

I begin with the history of the subculture's Japanese foundations, and the evolution of its styles, continuing with the notion that, for a time, the movement functioned as an authentic, resistant subculture. This leads to my evaluation that the movement in Mexico picks up the baton, and even shakes up the subculture's original ideologies, especially when it comes to disassembling prescribed confines of gender.

The Japanese Origins of the Gothic and Lolita Movement⁷

The Japanese *Gosurori* (*Gosu-loli*, Goth-loli, Gothloli, or Gothic Lolita) is an alternative identity of a fashion-based movement known as the Gothic and Lolita subculture, sometimes written as Gothic & Lolita (with the ampersand), and referred to as G&L, or EGL (Elegant Gothic Lolita).⁸ Generally, the Gothloli look can be described as that of a woman-child/child-woman, as the movement is represented by adolescent and adult members who dress as doll-like young girls. Aesthetically, it is inspired by historical clothing from the Rococo, Romantic, and Victorian periods, combined with a “little-girl” silhouette, which is usually slightly higher waisted but can also be modelled on a baby-doll, empire-line shape (high-waisted, under the bust), with a knee-length, or sometimes longer, bell skirt, and layers of petticoats to give it its typical form.

⁷ Some of the information contained in this section includes my own memories, observations and analyses. Otherwise the main sources I have consulted include: Tiffany Godoy and Ivan Vartanian, ed., *Style, Deficit, Disorder: Harajuku Street Fashion, Tokyo* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2007); Katsuhiko Ishikawa, “Foreword,” in *Gothic & Lolita*, ed. Masayuki Yoshinaga and Katsuhiko Ishikawa, 1 – 2 (London: Phaidon, 2007); Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures* (London and New York, NY: Berg, 2012); ———, “Japanese Fashion Subcultures,” in *Japan Fashion Now*, ed. Valerie Steele, 209 – 228 (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2010); Philomena Keet, “Street Style,” in *Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, ed. Catherine Ince and Rie Nii, 129 – 130 (London: Merrell, 2013); ———, *The Tokyo Look Book*; Rico Komanoya, “Introduction: The Origin of Gothic Lolita Punk Movement in Japan – An Interview with DJ SiSeN,” in *Gothic Lolita Punk: A Stunning Showcase of the Cutting-edge Work from the Best Gothic Lolita Artists Working Today*, ed. Ricorico (Yuri Okamoto and Rico Komanoya), trans. Toru Moriya and Corene Cook, 7 – 13 (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2008); Patrick Macias and Izumi Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno: Tokyo Teen Fashion Subculture Handbook* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2007); Donald Richie, *The Image Factory: Fads and Fashions in Japan* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003); Josh Sims, “Pure Escapism: Idea No. 95, Lolita,” in *100 Ideas That Changed Street Style*, 196 – 197 (London: Lawrence King Publishing, 2014); Valerie Steele and Jennifer Park, *Gothic: Dark Glamour* (New York, NY: Yale University Press and the Fashion Institute of Technology, 2008); Mariko Suzuki, “Gothic, Lolita, Visual-Kei: First Kansai Then the World (via Harajuku),” in *Style Deficit Disorder: Harajuku Street Fashion, Tokyo*, ed. Tiffany Godoy and Ivan Vartanian, 134 – 137 (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2007); Novala Takemoto, “Introduction: Lolic...,” in *Japanese Goth*, ed. Tiffany Godoy and Ivan Vartanian, 19 – 21 (New York, NY: Universe, 2009); and Theresa Winge, “Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita,” in *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human*, ed. Frenchy Lunning, 47 – 63 (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁸ EGL = Elegant Gothic Lolita. Although this title is popularly used for the entire movement, especially outside Japan, this convention is not quite correct. “Elegant Gothic Lolita” was coined in the 1990s by the leading Japanese Lolita fashion designer, Mana, for one of his two ongoing ranges (the other being “Elegant Gothic Aristocrat,” an androgynous unisex style for men and women). As such, EGL and EGA should only be used to refer to Mana’s fashion ranges. Tiffany Godoy (2007) goes further in saying that EGL and EGA are Mana’s avatars. See Tiffany Godoy, in Godoy and Vartanian, ed., *Style, Deficit, Disorder*, 159; and Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book*.

Since its inception, the Gothloli style has developed into numerous substyles, although it is often categorized according to two main genres, the Sweet Lolita and the Gothic Lolita.⁹ While the sweeter variation came first, it is the Gothic Lolita that gave the overriding name, *Gosurori*, to all types of Gothic and Lolita styles.¹⁰ Initially, in reference to what is now labelled “Old-School Lolita,” the same dresses would be made in a variety of plain colours, often a choice of pale-pink or black, but also pale-blue (sax), red, wine, brown, lemon (yellow), mint (green), lavender, off-white, or white.¹¹ While certain colours are considered to be Sweet (or *Ama-loli*, meaning “sweet-loli”), and black is identified as Gothic (or *Kuro-loli*, meaning “black-loli”), *all* looks are historically referred to as Gothloli, or *Gosurori* (Gothic Lolita) *and* *Rorita* (Lolita). In other words, *Gosurori* and *Rorita* are interchangeable terms. The phrasing of the subculture’s title as the Gothic *and* Lolita subculture is not an inference that there are two separate components, as in Gothic *or* Lolita. The conventional naming of the movement was probably encouraged by the popularity of the *Gothic & Lolita Bible*, a periodical Japanese magazine, or “mook” (magazine-book), first published in 2001, which became a “bible” for its followers until it ceased publication in 2017. In fact, according to Mariko Suzuki (2007), it was after the *Gothic & Lolita Bible* gained international interest that the “expression, ‘Gothic & Lolita’ (or Goth-Loli for short),” actually stuck.¹² Furthermore, the Gothic Lolita is still sweet, and the Sweet Lolita can be gothic, and they are *both* genres of the Lolita, or *Rorita*, style.

⁹ See figs 1.1 and 1.2, respectively, for traditional versions of the Sweet and the Gothic Lolita styles.

¹⁰ See Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book*; and Suzuki, “Gothic, Lolita, Visual-Kei.”

¹¹ The older style, which was quite uniform in comparison to the multitude of accepted variations in Gothic and Lolita fashions available since then, lasted until about 2007 (although it returns in cycles). Specifically, old-school dresses are made from plain cotton fabrics and trimmed with cotton lace, or with broderie anglaise insert lace threaded through with ribbon. The lace either matches the colour of the fabric or can be white or off-white as a contrast. Typically, ribbons are also criss-crossed and laced up through eyelet lace sewn into vertical seams of the bodice, and or crossed over the back (over shirring). The headdress is almost always a matching cotton rectangular Victorian-style band, tied on with ribbon. See fig. 1.1.

¹² Suzuki, “Gothic Lolita, Visual-Kei,” 136.

The image we now associate with the “little-girl” Japanese Lolita style developed from “Natural Kei” (Natural Style), a streetstyle, which emerged in the 1970s as adult-sized, “little-girl,” pastoral-style fashions, inspired by young-girls’ clothing of New England.¹³ Also referred to as the “prairie” look, this trend was derived from contemporary preoccupations with past-time, little-girl figures of North American popular culture, such as the female-child characters from the NBC television programme, *Little House on the Prairie*, particularly Laura, Mary, and Carrie.¹⁴ *Little House on the Prairie*, produced between 1974 and 1983, is loosely based on autobiographical stories by Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867 – 1957), about growing up with her family in Wisconsin during the 1870s – 1880s. The garments of the younger female figures are in-keeping with those worn during the real-life author’s childhood. These are generally comprised of full aprons worn over ankle-length, loose-fitting, long-sleeved smocks, slips, pantaloons and stockings. The appearance is typified by the usual headwear, a soft sun-protection bonnet with a wide-brimmed front and a gathered frill that covers the nape of the neck. This bonnet is also the signature of Holly Hobbie, another iconic little-girl motif of the 1970s.

Holly Hobbie is a fictional, although semi-autobiographical, little-girl figure, created by American author and artist, Holly Hobbie, aka Denise Holly Ulinskas.¹⁵ Born in 1944, in rural Connecticut, Ulinskas, like Wilder, also came from a farming background. Her illustrations of the young Holly Hobbie and friends, in their quaint, pastoral-style, patchwork fashions, were first commercialized in the 1960s, resonating with the bohemian, hippie, counterculture of the era. They were printed on greeting cards and then on other merchandise, including fabrics, bedlinen, cushions, and decorative household objects, such as vases, plates, and children’s tea sets. In 1974, Holly Hobbie

¹³ See Godoy and Vartanian, ed., *Style, Deficit, Disorder*; and Patrick Macias and Izumi Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno: Tokyo Teen Fashion Subculture Handbook* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2007).

¹⁴ *Little House on the Prairie*, TV series, directed by Michael Landon, William F. Claxton and others (New York, NY: National Broadcasting Company, 1974 – 1983). See *ibid.*

¹⁵ See Susan Brewer. *Collecting Classic Girls’ Toys* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2010).

and her friends, Heather, Carrie, and Amy, were released as ragdolls, and later as vinyl dolls, by Knickerbocker Toys (New York), increasing the characters' popularity. Their overall appearance is very similar to the style of the girl-child heroines of *Little House on the Prairie*, although the fabrics worn by the Hobbies are more colourful and "folksy," being generally comprised of patches of gingham and floral-patterned swatches. Befitting the nostalgic, handmade, crafts-revivalist zeitgeist, this prairie-girl image, minus the hat, was influential on everyday fashions wherever the counterculture aesthetic reigned. In Japan, the dolly connection became the emphasis, and the look became cuter. There, the rustic simplicity of the pastoral look was combined with style elements of other girl-child *Prairie* characters, such as middle-class Nellie and Nancy – with their sausage-ringlet hair, silk ribbons, brooches, lace and frills – which, altogether, mimicked the appearance of antique dolls. This development from Natural Kei merged with a new streetstyle known as "Dolly Kei."

The doll-like Japanese fashion, Dolly Kei (Dolly Style), represents an eclectic fusion of retrospective inspiration. Sources include porcelain dolls; antique-style ragdolls (such as Holly Hobbie and Raggedy Ann); illustrations of fictional little-girl figures from classic literature and fairy tales (again, the *Prairie* characters, Anne Shirley of *Anne of Green Gables*, *Heidi*, *The Little Match Girl*, and *Red Riding Hood*); traditional Eastern-European, bohemian, and gypsy clothing; colonial, pioneering garments; and lacy Victorian and Edwardian fashions; adorned with vintage jewellery, beads, rosaries, cameos, crosses and crucifixes. The overall image is akin to that of an old doll and thus its emergence forecasted the creepy-cute-gothic-doll aspects of the Gothic Lolita style. Initially, Dolly Kei was marketed by Japanese labels Pink House, Milk, and Emily Temple Cute, brands that are still popular sources of sweet, casual, everyday wear, with which many members of the Gothic and Lolita movement hold a nostalgic attachment.¹⁶

¹⁶ See Godoy and Vartanian, ed., *Style, Deficit, Disorder*, and Macias and Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno*.

The next phase in the evolution of the subcultural Lolita style was the transition through the New Romantic 1980s. It was at this stage that the influences of the Rococo and Romantic periods (1750 – 1850) began to take hold, due to their relationships with twentieth-century New Romanticism.¹⁷ By the mid-1980s, a fusion of the dolly look with elements of frilly, neo-romantic fashions was epitomized in the designs of Akinori Isobe for his iconic brand, Baby, the Stars Shine Bright (BTSSB) (see fig. 1.1).¹⁸ Opening its doors in Shibuya, in 1988, BTSSB was greatly responsible for the typical “little-girl” silhouette that we now associate with the Lolita identity. Mariko Suzuki (2007) clarifies that BTSSB “was definitely Lolita; its fairytale-like clothes were a riot of pinks, light blues, whites, and other pastels rather than Gothic black.”¹⁹ Tiffany Godoy (2007) continues:

¹⁷ The New Romantic style will be discussed further on the following pages in context with the Gothic Lolita. This subculture grew out of the British post-punk era of the late 1970s. It was spawned by the nightclub scene, particularly by regulars of Billy’s in Soho, London. Hosted by Steve Strange and DJ Rusty Egan (of the band, Visage), patrons attended organized evenings known as “Bowie” theme nights (playing mostly David Bowie’s tracks). After moving the event to their own venue, the Blitz club in Covent Garden, Strange and Egan, along with their followers, began to be referred to, alternately, as the “Kids with No Name,” or the “Blitz Kids,” especially by the media. It is said that it was also the press that came up with the title of New Romanticism. Prominent members of the nightclub included other now-famous musicians, such as Boy George (Culture Club), Midge Ure (Visage and Ultravox), Annabella Lwin (Bow Wow Wow), Gary and Martin Kemp and Tony Hadley (Spandau Ballet), Martin Degville (Sigue Sigue Sputnik), and Siobhan Fahey (Bananarama). Regarding their appearances, they were notable for their outlandish, over-the-top, theatrical, flamboyant, androgynous make-up, hair and fashion styles, a fusion of glam, punk and historical costuming, inspired by swashbuckling pirates and princesses, the French Rococo, Directoire and Romantic eras, and the Georgian and Victorian periods. Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren were huge influencers on this subcultural fashion evolution, from the early glam days, through to punk, post-punk, New Romanticism and the early goth subculture. They were also responsible for bolstering the music scene associated with this movement (just as they had been with the Sex Pistols and punk), with McLaren managing influential bands like Adam and the Ants (see fig. 1.4) and Bow Wow Wow, while Westwood, in collaboration with McLaren, designed the musicians’ fashion identities, many of them related to fashion collections, such as “Pirate,” 1981 (see fig. 1.5). See Gavin Baddeley, *Street Culture: 50 Years of Subculture Style* (London: Plexus, 2015); Lynne Zacek Bassett, *Gothic to Goth: Romantic Era Fashion and its Legacy* (Hartford, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2016); David Buckley, *Strange Fascination: David Bowie, The Definitive Story* (London: Virgin Books Ltd., 2005); Godoy and Vartanian, ed., *Style, Deficit, Disorder*; Paul Gorman, *The Look: Adventures in Rock & Pop Fashion* (London: Adelita, 2006); ———, *The Look: Adventures in Rock & Pop Fashion* (London: Sanctuary Publishing, 2001); Andi Harriman and Marloes Bontje, *Some Wear Leather, Some Wear Lace: The Worldwide Compendium of Postpunk and Goth in the 1980s* (Bristol and Chicago, IL: Intellect, 2014); Mablen Jones, *Getting It On: The Clothing of Rock ‘n’ Roll* (New York, NY: Abbeville Press, 1987); Macias and Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno*; Pearce Marchbank, *Bowiepix* (London: Omnibus Press, 1983); Dave Rimmer, *New Romantics: The Look* (London: Omnibus Press, 2003); Sonnet Stanfill, ed. *80s Fashion: From Club to Catwalk* (London: V&A Publishing, 2013); Suzuki, “Gothic, Lolita, Visual-Kei;” Claire Wilcox, *Vivienne Westwood* (London: V&A Publications, 2004); and Caroline Young, *Style Tribes: The Fashion of Subcultures* (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, Quarto Publishing, 2016).

¹⁸ See Godoy and Vartanian, ed., *Style, Deficit, Disorder*; and Macias and Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno*.

¹⁹ Suzuki, “Gothic Lolita, Visual-Kei,” 137.



Figure 1.1:

DVD cover for the Japanese film, *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (*Kamikaze Girls*), Region 1, 2004
Actress, Kyoko Fukada, wears an “old-school” Lolita dress by Baby, the Stars Shine Bright



Figure 1.2: Musician and Gothic Lolita fashion designer, Mana, for *Moi-même-Moitié*

In the early days, Isobe explains, they [BTSSB] struggled to find a brand identity that stood out on the racks. A quick fix was discovered in the addition of lace and ribbons. Lots of them.... Baby had found a silhouette that was a playful and abundant contrast to the form-fitted, sleek body-con aesthetic that was popular internationally.²⁰

It was later, in the early 1990s, that the classic, sweeter Lolita image, represented by brands such as BTSSB (see fig. 1.1), was “gothicized” by the Japanese musician and leading Gothic Lolita fashion designer, known as Mana (see fig. 1.2).²¹

The Gothic Lolita style is a substyle of goth, or gothic, fashion. Although, throughout the centuries, there have been precedents for what may be described as gothic fashions, subcultural *goth* style, as pertaining, specifically, to the recognised, alternative, subcultural music and fashion movement, began to evolve in the 1970s, along with a re-flowering of the Victorian concept of the Neo-gothic, or Gothic Revivalism.²² Victorian Neo-Gothicism reflected a romantic view of the medieval past and a rediscovery, reinvigoration, and reinvention of medieval gothic subject matter and style, from literature to architecture, and art and design, of the historical Gothic period, or the Middle Ages.²³ Twentieth-century New Romanticism developed during the post-punk era of the late 1970s and, in part, harked back to the Victorian passion for the gothic aesthetic but also incorporated other revisions of historical fashions, such as those of the Rococo, Directoire, Empire, Georgian, and Romantic periods.²⁴ New Romanticism was, in a sense, a division of punk, not a complete departure from it, but it also represented a new endeavour to sit outside the mainstream.

²⁰ Godoy, in Godoy and Vartanian, *Style Deficit Disorder*, 142. Note: The Middle Ages is considered to have happened at different times, in different parts of the world. In Britain, it is pinpointed to the period between the Norman Conquest (11th century BCE) and the accession of King Henry VII (in 1485 BCE).

²¹ See Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book*.

²² See Bassett, *Gothic to Goth*.

²³ See *Ibid.*

²⁴ See note 19, in this chapter.

As Lauren M. E. Goodlad and Michael Bibby (2007) highlight:

By the late 1970s, punk was... being exploited for commercial potential. Yet punk... also energized a surge of new styles such as new romantic[ism and]... new wave.... Amid this dizzying subcultural effulgence, a number of bands and personalities would soon become known as goth.²⁵

Goth, which projected a darker side of New Romanticism, eventually became a subcultural movement, in its own right. Paul Hodkinson (2002) explains:

[Goth] had its roots in a... subcultural grouping, which emerged in Britain in the early 1980s. Elements of punk, glam rock, and new romantic[ism], among other things, were gradually fused into a distinctive style of music and fashion. The music associated with what became known as the goth scene was most often described as “dark,” “macabre,” and “sinister,” and its... styles of fashion, most obviously, though not exclusively, consisted of black hair and clothes, and distinctive styles of makeup for both genders.²⁶

However, the more romantic aspects also remained. Goodlad and Bibby (2007) elaborate on the eclectic dark romantic elements in the foundations of goth:

A discordant bricolage of hyperromantic elements, goth drew inspiration from its glam, punk, and new-wave subcultural antecedents. But it also culled freely from gothic literary-historical traditions: from vampire cults, horror flicks... Celtic, Pagan, Egyptian, and Christian [mythologies and iconographies]; from oppositional sexual practices, including queer, drag... fetish... and from an historical canon of the gothic avant-garde, ranging from the Pre-Raphaelites... to Dali.... Goth incorporated elements of *pre*-subcultural, literary, philosophical, and aesthetic traditions.... Goth fashion was and remains a mix-and-match *mélange* of black and retro garments.... The overall style of any gothic ensemble may evoke high chic, antique, retro-kitsch, punk, fetish, second-hand... or some combination....²⁷

²⁵ Lauren M. E. Goodlad and Michael Bibby. “Introduction,” in *Goth: Undead Subculture*, ed. Lauren M. E. Goodlad and Michael Bibby (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.

²⁶ Paul Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style, and Subculture* (Oxford and New York, NY: Berg, 2002), 4.

²⁷ Goodlad and Bibby, “Introduction,” 2 – 3.

The goth identity, therefore, transcends the wearing of black, although black is still a major identifier. As the Gothic Lolita style was a development from gothic New Romanticism, it is also dominated by black clothing and gothic symbolism.

With the introduction of Mana's Gothic Lolita image came motifs from gothic culture and literature, such as bats, crosses, gravestones, ravens, and cats; as well as gothic garb, including Victorian-style mourning dress and jewellery; hence, the proliferation of black fabrics, ribbons, and lace; and the addition of cameo brooches and pendants, crucifixes and rosaries, and smoky eye-makeup. Philomena Keet (2007) writes that:

Mana recalls there was [already] a... Lolita style in Tokyo but he wanted to adapt this to make a new fashion genre. "I added a dark element to the cuteness of Lolita..." a gothic element, resulting in a mix that combines the frills, lace and puffy skirts of Lolita with... gothic black and... gothic motifs, such as crosses, candlestick holders and daggers.²⁸

Mana introduced his Gothic Lolita identity as a guitarist for his band, Marisu Miseru (or Malice Mizer (1992 – 2001), and his alternate persona, the Gothic Aristocrat, for his second project, *Moi-dix-Mois* (from 2002).²⁹ Both groups are of the *Vijuaru Kei*, or "Visual Kei" (Visual Style), music genre. *Vijuaru Kei* is not marked by a similar sound, but by flamboyant, androgynous, romantic stage fashions (see fig. 1.3). Godoy (2007) states:

[I]n the spirit of two avatars, Mana has created [the] Elegant Gothic Aristocrat (E.G.A.) and Elegant Gothic Lolita (E.G.L.), which represent his ideals. Mana's description of E.G.A. is... [that]: "It is either male or female, but it is also neither male nor female. It is both devil and angel. The pursuit of a middle ground." While E.G.L. is modeled on a young girl, she is not much closer to reality. Embellished with ribbons and bows, E.G.L. is meant to be "like an antique doll with a dark spirit."³⁰

²⁸ Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book*, 86.

²⁹ See Godoy, in Godoy and Vartanian, ed., *Style Deficit Disorder*, 159; Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book*; Macias and Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno*; and Suzuki, "Gothic, Lolita, Visual-Kei," 135.

³⁰ Godoy, in Godoy and Vartanian, ed., *Style Deficit Disorder*, 159.



Figure 1.3 (above left): Mana (far left) and Malice Mizer (1992 - 2001)

Figure 1.4 (above right): Adam Ant (Stuart Goddard) Adam and the Ants (1977 – 1982)

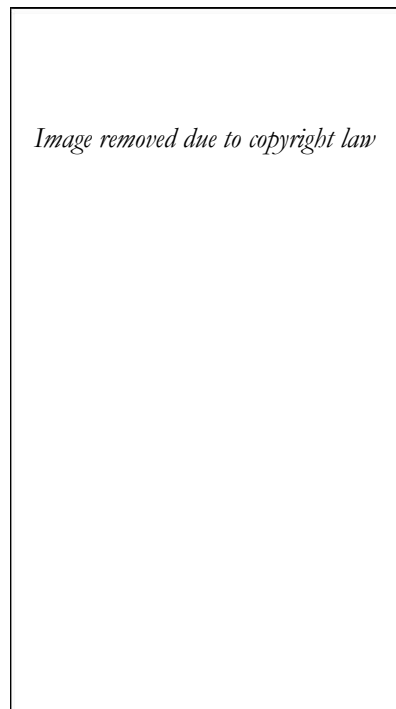


Figure 1.5 (above left): Vivienne Westwood, *Pirate* collection, 1981 – 1982

Figure 1.6 (above right): Yu~ki, bass guitarist for Malice Mizer (1992 – 2001)

In the beginning, Mana's image, which combines historical elements of women's dress and Victorian maidservants' wear, such as the mop cap, appears to have been a frilly intermediate romantic look between the earlier "little-girl" prairie style, albeit "darker" (see fig. 1.3, far left), and his *Gosurori* persona (see fig. 1.2). A comparison of the attire of other Mizer band members with British musicians of the punk, post-punk, and New Romantic movements demonstrates similar sources of aesthetic inspiration, especially the influence of the British designers, Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, who were responsible for the looks of Adam Ant (pictured) and the Sex Pistols (see figs 1.3 – 1.6).³¹

The subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement was first propelled by the copying and adoption of Mana's style by his fans.³² Then, in 1999, when Mana began to market his designs under his label, *Moi-même-Moitié*, it is highly likely that he coined the term, "Gothic Lolita," by putting the two words, "Gothic" and "Lolita," together in the title of his *Elegant Gothic Lolita* identity. As he was also instrumental in the production of the *Gothic & Lolita Bible*, he may very well have been responsible for the naming of the entire Gothic and Lolita subculture, as "that term did not become popular until around the end of 1999 or 2000,"³³ which coincides with the birth of both Mana's fashion brand, as well as the inaugural issue of the *Bible*. Although, as Suzuki (2007) says, it is still "not clear who came up with the moniker."³⁴ In any case, leaving aside further analysis of the meaning of the name, which I return to in detail in *Chapter Four* of this thesis, I examine the way that the subcultural Gothic and Lolita movement has continued to function, after approaching definitions of "Subculture," itself.

³¹ See Wilcox, *Vivienne Westwood*.

³² See Godoy, in Godoy and Vartanian, ed., *Style Deficit Disorder*, 159; Keet, *The Tokyo Look Book*; Macias and Evers, *Japanese Schoolgirl Inferno*; and Suzuki, "Gothic, Lolita, Visual-Kei."

³³ Suzuki, "Gothic, Lolita, Visual-Kei," 136.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

What is a Subculture?

In 1997, Sarah Thornton asks, “What is a subculture?”³⁵ She describes subcultures as societal groups that share distinguishing commonalities, determinedly different to, or separate from, the larger community.³⁶ But, as she says, this explanation could be used to define other types of communities, societies, or even cultures.³⁷ So, what makes a subculture a subculture? Thornton (1997) continues:

“Community” tends to suggest a... population often aligned to a neighbourhood, of which the family is the constituent part.... By contrast..., “subcultures” have tended to be studied apart from their families.... There is something innately oppositional in the word, “subculture....” Subcultures would appear to bring a little disorder to the neighbourhood.... “Subcultures...” have come to designate social groups... perceived to deviate from the normative ideals of [mainstream] adult communities.³⁸

Ken Gelder (2005) adds to this understanding of subcultures as “non-normative and or marginal” groups of society, identified by their activities, their “particular interests and practices..., what they do, and where they do it.”³⁹ And Caroline Evans (1997), citing Thornton (1997), agrees, stating that a subculture is designated according to its “subordinate, subaltern, or subterranean” status, which is in opposition to or distinct from the rest of the community.⁴⁰ In other words, there is an element of resistance. So what counts as subcultural resistance?

More recently, Ross Haenfler (2014) has written:

In thinking about what “counts” as resistance, we might begin with wondering how subcultures disrupt or counter hegemony. This means that meaningful resistance does

³⁵ Sarah Thornton, “General Introduction,” in *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 – 2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Ken Gelder, “Introduction: The Field of Subcultural Studies,” in *The Subcultures Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Ken Gelder (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 1.

⁴⁰ Evans, “Dreams That Only Money Can Buy,” 169; quoting Thornton, “General Introduction,” 4.

not always have to be *revolutionary*, in the sense of radically altering the social order.

Resistance is not always directed towards the state, nor does it always take the form of public protest.... [S]ubcultural resistance is often more subtle than political protest.⁴¹

Subcultural opposition is expressed via alternative dress styles and symbols, recognized as being common to the specific subcultural movement. Dick Hebdige (1979) refers to these motifs as being “pregnant with significance.”⁴² Typically, they “go against nature,” offending the “silent majority.”⁴³ Through alternative sartorial symbols, subcultural identities are projected and claimed, while challenging “principle[s] of unity and cohesion.”⁴⁴ Hebdige (1979) states:

Subcultures represent interference in the orderly sequence... [and] violations of the authorized codes through which the social world is organized.... [They] have... [the] power to provoke and disturb... [to] express forbidden contents... in forbidden forms [via] transgressions of sartorial and behavioural codes.⁴⁵

Clark (2003) explains that these stylizations also signify a determination to *reconstruct* established societal conventions:

What had, by the 1970s, emerged as “subcultures” were understood to be groups... who practiced... social dissent through shared behavioural, musical, and costume orientations. Such groups were remarkably capable vehicles for social change and were involved in dramatically *reshaping* social norms.... These “classical” subcultures obtained their potency partly through an ability to... disobey prescribed confines of class, gender, and ethnicity.⁴⁶

However, paradoxically, *studies* of historical subcultures were, until more recently, defined by those very things: class, gender, and ethnicity.

⁴¹ Ross Haenfler, *Subcultures: The Basics* (London and New York, NY: Routledge), 44.

⁴² Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* [1979] (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 18.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 90, & 91 – 92.

⁴⁶ Clark, “The Death and Life of Punk.”

Lolita, A Girls' Subculture

Up until at least the late 1970s, but also beyond, the trajectory of subcultural research concentrated on masculine identities. The earlier studies of teds (or teddies), mods, rockers, beatniks, skinheads, and punks, were carried out according to theoretical frameworks that positioned subcultural movements as “white, working-class, male” phenomena.⁴⁷ Within the subcultures, group philosophies were also configured in terms of masculinity. What was different about the rise of many Japanese subcultures was that they were no longer white, working-class, or male. While the Gothic and Lolita movement was catapulted by male fashion designers, such as Akinori Isobe for BTSSB, and Mana for *Moi-même-Moitié*, it is one of the most prominent and enduring examples of a subculture that can be defined by opposition to these criteria.

Kawamura (2007) cites Hebdige (1988) in his acknowledgment that, historically:

Girls have been relegated to a position of secondary interest within both sociological accounts of subculture and photographic studies of urban youth, and masculine bias still exists in the subcultures themselves.⁴⁸

“But,” says Kawamura, “it is the *girls* who play a major role in Japanese subcultures.”⁴⁹ It was also in the 1970s that Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1977) began to question the invisibility of girls in academic subcultural studies, claiming that:

Very little seems to have been written about the role of girls.... They are absent from... classical subcultural ethnographic studies.... When girls do appear, it is either in ways which uncritically reinforce the stereotypical image of women... [as] “dumb, passive teenage girls, crudely painted...” or else they are fleetingly and marginally presented... “in footnotes to the main text, as worthy of the odd reference... and peripheral.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See Hebdige, *Subculture*.

⁴⁸ Kawamura, “Japanese Street Fashion,” 344; See Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁴⁹ Kawamura, “Japanese Street Fashion,” 344; my italics/emphasis.

⁵⁰ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, “Girls and Subcultures [1977],” in *The Subcultures Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Ken Gelder (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 105; quoting Tosco R. Fyvel, *The Insecure*

The authors speculate that this absence is due to the gendering of “space,” whereby women and girls are more connected with the private, domestic sphere – to the home and family life – rather than the street, or the public realm, where subcultural activity is spectacular. According to McRobbie and Garber (1977), “if women are marginal to the male culture... it is because they are central and pivotal to a subordinate sphere. They are marginal... because they are central to the family.”⁵¹

The catalyst for this type of enquiry was the ground-breaking essay, “Why Are There No Great Women Artists?” by the art historian and theorist, Linda Nochlin (1971), which investigates the exclusion of women artists from art-historical chronological surveys, in context with the conclusion that the “canon” of the history of art and artists, has been largely based, throughout history, on the notion of the white, male, middle-class Western “genius.”⁵² The essay also addresses the actual challenges for women, traditionally, to achieve recognition as artists, during their lifetimes. Following on from Nochlin’s (1971) lead were a raft of art historians and theorists, in the 1980s, who, through a similar lens as McRobbie and Garber (1977), identify the segregation of the sexes in association with the ideology of separate spheres.⁵³ This concept – that there exists an ideal sphere for women, as “Angels of the Household,” and that men, in turn, are more at home in the public space, or the streets – initially developed in Britain, in the eighteenth century, as one of the results of the Industrial Revolution.⁵⁴

Offenders: Rebellious Youth in the Welfare State (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961); and Sheila Rowbotham, *Women’s Consciousness: Man’s World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973).

⁵¹ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, “Girls and Subcultures [1977],” 106.

⁵² Originally published in the January 1971 issue of the visual arts magazine, *ARTnews*, New York, NY. See Linda Nochlin, “Why Are There No Great Women Artists [1971]?” in *Women, Art and Power, and Other Essays*, 1st ed., 145 – 178 (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1988).

⁵³ See Caroline Arscott, “Employer, Husband, Spectator: Thomas Fairbairn’s Commission of the *Awakening Conscience*,” in *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class*, ed. Janet Wolff and John Seed (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 159 – 190; Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); and Janet Wolff, “The Culture of Separate Spheres: The Role of Culture in Nineteenth-century Public and Private Life,” in *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-century Middle Class*, ed. Janet Wolff and John Seed (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 117 – 134.

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*

Due to an effect of the mechanization of British industry, in the 18th – 19th centuries, workers began to leave rural cottage businesses for employment in urban factories, and following this geographical migration in population, professionals also moved from country practices to city-based office spaces.⁵⁵ Hence, there was a shift in the dynamics of labour, which caused an increasing separation of work and home. While not all women were excluded from working (a great deal of working-class women were employed as factory labourers, especially in regard to the textiles industry), ladies of the middle to upper-middle classes were isolated from industrial enterprises. Thus, a majority of professional male occupations – and men, themselves (including doctors, lawyers, accountants, architects, managers, administrators, retailers, and so on) – became more, and more remote from the family residence. By about the 1830s, this distance became even more notable with the rise of capitalism and the growth of suburban life. As many of the lower classes moved from small towns into major cities for labouring, construction, and factory work, and middle-class families moved out of city centres to new, wealthy, urban suburbs, many workers were required to commute to their inner-city workplaces.⁵⁶ This development also strengthened the cult of domesticity, in that it was generally agreed that the moral task of women was to provide a safe shelter of “sanctity and purity,” for the male to return to after a hard day’s work and, often, travel.⁵⁷

In 1852, Henry Mayhew expressed the idea of the family home as a haven, claiming that it should be “a kind of social sanctuary,” whereby “love alone is to rule and harmony to prevail... and where the gracious trustfulness... of Woman” should make “ample atonement” for the “petty suspicions and heartlessness” of the outside world.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ For this paragraph, see Wolff and Seed, ed., *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-century Middle Class* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

⁵⁶ Wolff, “The Culture of Separate Spheres,” 118.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Henry Mayhew, “Home is Home, be it Never So Homely,” in *Meliora, or Better Times to Come: Being the Contributions of Many Men Touching the Present State and Prospects of Society*, ed. Viscount Ingestre (London: J. W. Parker, 1852), 263; quoted in Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 33.

The ideal of domestic “stability” was considered to be so important, in fact, that it was thought to be required not only for individual happiness but as an insurance of national stability.⁵⁹ A well-managed, morally-regulated home was believed to be the basis for social order and control; it was seen as the backbone that ensured prosperity for the Empire.⁶⁰

A whole century later, and it seems that, in Britain, at least, nothing regarding this notion of gendered spaces had changed. In their discussion of the British teddy (Neo-Edwardian) subculture of the 1950s, McRobbie and Garber (1977) explain:

Teddy-boy culture was an escape from the claustrophobia of the family, into the streets and “caff” [café]. [Teddy-girls]... would be much less likely to spend the same amount of time hanging out on the streets.... Excessive loitering on street corners might be taken as a sexual invitation to the boys.... Cosmetics, of course, were to be worn outside the home, at work, and on the street, as well as in the dance hall. But, the rituals of trying on clothes and experimenting with hairstyles and makeup were home-based activities. It might be suggested that girls’ culture, of the time, operated within the vicinity of the home, or the friends’ home.... Teenage girls did participate in the new public sphere afforded by the growth of the leisure industries, but they could also consume at home... in [the safety of] their bedrooms.⁶¹

It would appear, even by the 1970s, two decades later when McRobbie and Garber were carrying out their studies, that girls were *still* relatively absent from the public subcultural domain, just as they were invisible in the accounts of spectacular subcultures.

However, McRobbie and Garber (1977) *do* claim that girls participate differently within subcultures and, therefore, suggest that girls *should* occupy alternative spaces:

⁵⁹ Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 33.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ McRobbie and Garber, “Girls and Subcultures [1977],” 107 & 108.

Female participation in youth cultures can best be understood by *moving away* from the “classic” subcultural terrain, marked out as oppositional.... Girls negotiate a different leisure space and different personal spaces from those inhabited by boys.⁶²

They argue that, in this way, girls can find their *own* form of resistance:

These [alternative personal spaces]... offer them different possibilities for “resistance....” Some of the cultural forms associated with... [teenage] girls, can be viewed as responses to their perceived status as girls, and to their anxieties about moving into the world of... sexual interaction.... [A] private, inaccessible space... allows... girls to remain seemingly inscrutable to the outside world.... [Girls’] subcultures could be interpreted as ways of buying time... [while remaining in the] safe space of the all-female friendship group.⁶³

It was during the time of McRobbie’s and Garber’s (1970s) studies that girls in Japan were formulating the types of groups that the authors were proposing. Out of this environment, was the development of the Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement, a girls’ resistant subculture. Especially during the earlier stages of the movement, there was an element placed on the private, “female” realm, and the type of bedroom culture that McRobbie and Garber (1977) describe in accordance with the Neo-Edwardian subculture of the 1950s. Girls would get together with other girls, in their own bedrooms, or their friends’ bedrooms, where they experimented with their Lolita styles, dressed up together, and helped each other with styling, hairdos, wigs, accessories, and makeup. These “feminine- gendered” activities, which include getting together for tea parties, are still a strong component of the movement, in Japan, and in Gothic and Lolita communities around the world. Symbolically, they represent the buying of time, referred to by McRobbie and Garber (1977), before having to move into the adult world.⁶⁴

⁶² Ibid., 112; my italics/emphasis.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ See previous quote, in *ibid.*

But, the Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement did not and does not just happen privately, indoors. As a spectacular subculture, it also takes women out onto the streets. Thus, it defies the historical hegemony that puts women “in their place.” Via the “trespassing” of the public space (or the “male” sphere), women also traverse the domain of subcultural agency, both philosophically and geographically. This shift in the way that subcultures have traditionally seen to operate, is even more significant in that it arose in Japan. Not only does it contradict the traditional male-dominated notion of subcultures as “white, working-class, and male,” *and* cross boundaries of gendered space, it is also configured around the female identity.⁶⁵ No longer is the feminine role “relegated to a position of secondary interest.”⁶⁶

Although, in the twenty-first century, socio-cultural structures around gender are changing in Japan, female roles have historically been established in association with how girls and women may best serve their fathers, grandfathers, brothers, and, directly from their childhood homes to their marital homes, their husbands, according to their duties as wives and mothers. Male children have also, generally, received more benefits than their sisters, especially regarding education. Ruth Benedict (1946), writes of the situation at the end of World War II:

Whatever one’s age, one’s position in the hierarchy depends on whether one is male or female. The Japanese woman walks behind her husband and has a lower status.... The Japanese daughter of the family must get along as best she can, while she presents, the attentions, and the money for education go to her brothers.... Serious intellectual training... is not on a par with boys.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Citing Hebdige, *Subculture*.

⁶⁶ Citing Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, in Kawamura, “Japanese Street Fashion,” 344.

⁶⁷ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* [1946] (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 37.

Of course, Benedict was carrying out her research in the first half of the twentieth century. However, fifty years later, Ritsuko Matsumura (1996) was maintaining that “Japanese parents raise sons and daughters differently.”⁶⁸ And, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, Elise K. Tipton (2000) was claiming that Japanese girls were still being “socialized to make marriage and motherhood their primary goals.”⁶⁹

Vera Mackie (2003) cites a statement by Mitsu Tanaka (1970), written as a manifesto for Fighting Women, a women’s group assembled in twentieth-century Japan, for the purpose of fighting for women’s rights.⁷⁰ Tanaka (1970) declares:

According to the masculine consciousness, which shapes our understanding of sexuality, men are unable to see a woman as an integrated whole who has both the emotional quality of gentleness and the sexuality which is the physical expression of this gentleness. As far as men are concerned, a woman is split into two images – either the expression of maternal love: a “mother,” or a vessel for the management of lust: a “toilet.”⁷¹

Mackie (2003) describes Tanaka’s (1970) statement as “an impassioned condemnation of the conventions of sexual behaviour whereby women were condemned to be ‘mothers or ‘whores.’”⁷²

It is here that we get to the crux of *why*, precisely, we can categorize the Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement, especially during its emergence in the twentieth century, as an oppositional, resistant, feminist subculture. The “little-girl” Lolita identity, in re-utilizing Hebdige’s (1979) words, violates “authorized codes through which the social world is organized.” It liberates participants from the images of *Mother* and *Whore*.⁷³

⁶⁸ English Discussion Society, *Japanese Women Now II* (Kyoto: Women’s Bookstore Shoukadoh, 1996), 20.

⁶⁹ Elise K. Tipton, “Being Women in Japan, 1970 – 2000,” in *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity and Globalisation*, ed. Louise Edwards and Mina Roces (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 211.

⁷⁰ Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality* (Cambridge, New York, NY, Melbourne, Madrid and Cape Town: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 144.

⁷¹ Mitsu Tanaka, “*Benjo kara no Kaibō*,” statement for *Tatakau Onna* (Fighting Women), September 1970, quoted in *ibid*.

⁷² Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 144.

⁷³ Citing Hebdige, *Subculture*, 91.

A subcultural movement that encourages women and girls to shirk, or postpone, their duties as wives and mothers, in its historical context, would be perceived as *shocking*. In this sense, the innocent-looking subcultural Japanese “little-girl” Lolita identity, which, via sartorial symbols, is depicted as neither “mature,” nor “sexual,” represents a dismantling of national stability. *This is one* reason why the cutesy, sugary, Sweet-little-girl-Lolita-style image can be considered confronting.⁷⁴ It demonstrates a refusal to conform.

Eventually, the subcultural Japanese Lolita identity was co-opted, marketed, and thus “normalized.” What started out as a do-it-yourself, alternative street trend began to be promoted by official fashion brands, moving into retail outlets. The Lolita style then progressed to the catwalks, with designers, such as Naoto Hirooka, for h.naoto, and Alice Auaa, showing at Tokyo Fashion Weeks. It also went international, with labels, including Baby, the Stars Shine Bright, Moi-même-Moitié, and Angelic Pretty, opening their doors to markets like Paris, San Francisco, and New York. There was once a time when some of these brands would not even ship to overseas customers, even via online shopping sites. Now they provide versions of their websites in other languages, especially English, for the purpose of encouraging international shipping. *However*, it was at the point that the Japanese government decided not only to recognize but to embrace the subcultural fashion-based Gothic and Lolita movement by appointing official spokesmodels, known as Kawaii Ambassadors, that the writing was on the wall.⁷⁵ The *Rorita* style had become accepted, and had lost its ability to shock.

⁷⁴ This is besides the controversial idea that the subcultural Lolita style fuels the Lolita Complex, a mental disorder designated by the obsession of older men with underage girls, a further issue that will be discussed in *Chapter Four* of this thesis.

⁷⁵ The Kawaii Ambassadors will be examined in *Chapter Five* of this thesis.

The Decline of the Japanese Lolita Movement

While the Japanese Gothic and Lolita phenomenon, as a subcultural girls' movement, revolutionized the prevailing male-dominated concept of Subculture and, simultaneously, defied mainstream socio-cultural constructions associated with gendered hierarchies, divisions, and inequities, it is of my opinion that the fashion-based Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement pushes the reformation of gender politics further. This evolution began to emerge at the time that the Japanese movement seemed to be in decline.

From as early as 2007, I can recall ruminations about the death of the Japanese movement, as fewer participants were being witnessed on Tokyo streets. As it turned out, its communities had just moved, geographically, from certain hotspots to others. This shift was partially caused by media attention. The era marks a journalistic frenzy, a point whereby the international press had “discovered” the phenomenon and latched onto it. There were a couple of factors that helped to contribute to this: the notoriety of Gwen Stefani’s “Harajuku Girls,” her four backup dancers who appeared in her music videos and live performances, named Love, Angel, Music, and Baby, after the title of her album, which also included the track, “Harajuku Girls” (2004).⁷⁶ Then came the North American release of the Japanese film, *Shimotsuma Monogatari* (2004), retitled as *Kamikaze Girls* (2005), with English subtitles.⁷⁷ This story, about a girl obsessed with the Japanese label, Baby, the Stars Shine Bright, influenced the increased visibility of participants outside Japan (see fig. 1.1). The result of all of these circumstances was that tourists began to flock to Japan, especially to the main sites of member congregation, particularly the *Jingūbashi* (Shrine Bridge), which crosses over Harajuku station and leads to the *Meiji Jingu* (Meiji Shrine).

⁷⁶ Harajuku, a suburb of Tokyo, is famed for its concentration of alternative fashion boutiques and as a wellspring for subcultural and streetstyle movements. See MiHi Ahn, “Gwenihana: Gwen Stefani Neuters Japanese Street Fashion to Create Spring’s Must-have Accessory.” *Salon* (April 9, 2005), <http://dir.salon.com/story/ent/feature/2005/04/09/geisha/index.html> (accessed September 13, 2006).

⁷⁷ *Shimotsuma Monogatari*, feature film, dir. Tetsuya Nakashima (Tokyo: Toho Co. Ltd., 2004), theatrical; *Kamikaze Girls*, feature film, dir. Tetsuya Nakashima (San Francisco, CA: VIZ Media, LLC, 2005), theatrical (subtitled); and *Kamikaze Girls*, feature film, dir. Tetsuya Nakashima (San Francisco, CA: VIZ Media, LLC, 2006), DVD (subtitled).

As their favourite sites were now being overrun by sightseers with cameras, participants started to relocate to newer meeting places. This has tended to happen periodically. However, more than ten years later, Tokyo correspondents have, indeed, begun to ring Lolita's death knell. This is in association with a common cry: "Harajuku is Dead!"

An online search for the phrase, "Harajuku is Dead," will bring up many such headlines, including "Japan's Wild, Creative Harajuku Street Style is Dead," "Harajuku Street Style is Dead, And Here's What Killed It," "The Death of Fashion in Harajuku," "Is Harajuku Fashion Dying?" and "What the Hell Has Happened to Tokyo's Fashion Subcultures?"⁷⁸ The article, "Japanese Street Fashion 2017: 15 Things You Need to Know," by the correspondent for *Medium* (2017), claims that:

The reality of the "Harajuku is Dead" meme is simply this: Many 1990s Harajuku subcultures are in decline. Several well-known Harajuku subcultures that formed in the mid to late 1990s – especially the highly visible ones referred to by foreign media as Japanese "Kawaii" style – appear to finally be falling out of fashion.... These specific styles are increasingly rare on the street. Fashion brands and Harajuku boutiques that developed around these now-fading subcultures have also, sadly but not surprisingly, been closing.... "Visual Kei" [and] "Gothic Lolita" are in decline.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ See Anonymous, "The Death of Fashion in Harajuku," *Cool Hunting*, February 27, 2017, <https://coolhunting.com/style/death-of-fashion-in-harajuku-japan/> (accessed July 2, 2017); Mark Bain, "Japan's wild, creative Harajuku street style is dead. Long live Uniqlo," *Quartz*, February 23, 2017, <https://qz.com/909573/japans-wild-creative-harajuku-street-style-is-dead-long-live-uniqlo/> (accessed July 2, 2017); Justin Egli, "What the hell has happened to Tokyo's fashion subcultures? Don't Say 'Sayonara' Just Yet. They're Still Here – You Just Have To Look Harder To Spot Them," *Dazed*, December 4, 2015, <https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/28687/1/what-the-hell-has-happened-to-tokyo-s-fashion-subcultures> (accessed July 2, 2017). Fia, "Is Harajuku Fashion Dying?" *Multi Magazine*, April 9, 2017, <https://multimagsite.wordpress.com/2017/04/09/is-harajuku-fashion-dying/> (accessed July 2, 2017); La Carmina, "Decline of Sweet and Elegant Gothic Lolita Fashion in Japan? Streetwear Clothing Blog: Shopping in Laforet Harajuku," *La Carmina*, February 6, 2011, <http://www.lacarmina.com/blog/2011/02/decline-of-sweet-elegant-gothic-lolita-fashion-in-japan-streetwear-clothing-blog-shopping-in-laforet-harajuku/> (accessed March 30, 2017); and Cristina Morales, "Harajuku Style Is Dead, And Here's What Killed It," *Her Style Asia*, n.d., <https://www.herstyleasia.com/harajuku-style-is-dead> (accessed November 16, 2019);

⁷⁹ Anonymous, "Japanese Street Fashion 2017 – 15 Things You Need to Know," in *Medium: Tokyo Fashion*, August 16, 2017, <https://medium.com/@TokyoFashion/japanese-street-fashion-2017-15-things-you-need-to-know-ab06eabfca39> (accessed August 18, 2017).

That this is happening on an international scale is now indicated by the gradual closing of some of the higher-profile international boutiques, such as Baby, the Stars Shine Bright, in Paris and states of North America.

Some say that a sure sign that Harajuku is “dying” is the folding of the famed Japanese *FRUiTS* magazine. This periodical, which ran from 1997 to 2017, was compiled from street photographs by Shoichi Aoki, curator of the acclaimed travelling exhibition of the same name, and author of the accompanying books, *FRUiTS* and *FRESH FRUiTS*.⁸⁰ *FRUiTS* is renowned for Aoki’s documentation of street styles in the suburb of Harajuku, Tokyo, introducing subcultural fashion movements, including Gothic and Lolita, to those outside the area, and the world. In 2017, Aoki declared that *FRUiTS* would be discontinued, as it had become increasingly hard to find suitable subjects to shoot. Mark Bain (2017) cites Aoki regarding the decline of the scene:

What killed Tokyo’s famous Harajuku style was basically what happens when a glut of factories set up shop at the head of a river that feeds vital waterways. “In Tokyo there is a kind of flow of energy when it comes to fashion,” Aoki explains. “Harajuku is the source of this flow. If you picture it as the source of a river, then recently there have been factories erected on its banks, and businesses have appeared, but they have stressed the limits of this little fountainhead.”⁸¹

In my mind, the movement has also stagnated as it has lost its original edge. 2018 marked thirty years since the ground-breaking brand, Baby, the Stars Shine Bright, opened its first store. While it might be difficult to comprehend just how much the frilly fashion style ever had the ability to be confronting, it must be remembered that the general mindset was quite different three decades ago, for reasons already stated. Now that the image is not considered as spectacular, it is losing its subcultural agency, and thus its appeal.

⁸⁰ See Shoichi Aoki, *FRUiTS* (London and New York, NY: Phaidon, 2003); and Shoichi. Aoki, *FRESH FRUiTS* (London and New York, NY: Phaidon, 2006).

⁸¹ Bain, “Japan’s Wild, Creative Harajuku Street Style is Dead.”

The closing of retail outlets is a sign of the times, in general, as more businesses are moving their operations to online shopping. This culture has also affected publications of style magazines and mooks. Returning to the dissolution of *FRUiTS*, *Medium's* (2017) correspondent maintains:

The reality is that print magazines are dying all over the world. *FRUiTS* never had a strong digital presence – and, if they did, asking people to pay money to look at pictures on a website is not a popular business model in 2017. Social media gives everyone free access to an unlimited number of real-time Harajuku street snaps every single day.⁸²

The *Gothic & Lolita Bible*, the most comprehensive guide to the subcultural style, also succumbed to the current environment and ceased production in 2017.

However, *KERA* magazine, another major source for Gothic and Lolita fashions, while also shutting down the production of their hard-copy press, has embraced the move towards digitalization. Again, *Medium* (2017) states:

Harajuku's pre-eminent subculture guide since 1998, *KERA* magazine also announced the end of their print run during the first quarter of 2017. [However] unlike *FRUiTS*, *KERA* plans to continue as an online-only publication.... *KERA* gives detailed instructions on how to achieve the perfect look of specific subcultures, like Sweet Lolita, Gothic Lolita, Gothic, Rock Style [and] Visual Kei.... In general, *KERA* is more focused on established youth subcultures and *FRUiTS* was more focused on individuality.⁸³

Medium (2017) also reports on a “new project, promising to bring many of the Harajuku subcultures, fashion brands, and models, long covered by *KERA*, back into print.”⁸⁴

Titled *Melt*, this Japanese magazine bases its demographic audience on followers of the Gothic and Lolita subculture, and *kawaii* styles in general. Its inaugural issue contained shoots by Baby, the Stars Shine Bright, Angelic Pretty, and work by students at Bunka Fashion College, in Shinjuku, Tokyo, where they now run courses in Lolita style design.

⁸² Anonymous, “Japanese Street Fashion 2017: 15 Things You Need to Know.”

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Medium's (2017) response to all of these changes remains hopeful: “Harajuku is going through growing pains... but there are also many exciting developments [to]... look forward to.”⁸⁵ In the case of the fashion-based Gothic and Lolita movement, one of these exciting developments is represented by a geographical shift, signified in *Melt* magazine’s mission, from its inception, to create a more international focus.⁸⁶ That Mexico is recognized as being one of the major inheritors of this migration is evident in *KERA* magazine’s new outlook, with the employment of Gothic Lolita, Regina Morales, from Mexico City, as the official correspondent, reporter and writer, on the thriving Mexican movement.⁸⁷ It is in Mexico, that the fashion-based Gothic and Lolita phenomenon has been revitalized, and reconfigured.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Regina Morales, “Mysterious Tea Party (from Mexico!),” *KERA* (November 15, 2017), <http://kerastyle.jp/fashion/11930> (accessed February 14, 2018).

The Mexican Reinvigoration of the Gothic and Lolita Movement

The usual evolutionary pattern of an alternative, subcultural movement, from its journey as a spectacular subculture towards its eventual demise, is the co-option of its motifs by mainstream culture.⁸⁸ It is during the early DIY period – before it is commercialized, when the only way to construct one’s identity is to create it – that a movement is defined as an authentic, marginal, underground, oppositional, subcultural, and *subversive*, culture. Once a subculture is co-opted by mainstream society, packaged, commercialized, and made accessible and available to the everyday consumer, can it still be classed as a *subculture*? The title, itself, which designates a *subterranean* culture, or an underground movement, contradicts that prospect. There is a determination that for an alternative identity to be labelled as subcultural it must be considered *authentic*, not merely bought. Evans (1997) stresses that:

Subculture is seen as a heroic resistance to the dominant culture: Subcultural “activists” don’t just buy things they subvert their meanings.... Transformation and the rearrangement of meaning is what differentiates subculture from mere youth culture.⁸⁹

There is also a difference between someone who identifies with a subculture because it is “who they *are*,” and another who merely dresses up to mimic, or to conform to the expectations of the subcultural group, just to fit in.

At this current point in time, the Mexican development of the Gothic and Lolita movement is flourishing, in its own right, as an authentic alternative fashion-based culture, in the creative, handmade, DIY stage, which is yet to be co-opted. With the DIY industry of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement comes its own unique cultural

⁸⁸ For ideas contained in this paragraph, see Clark, “The Death and Life of Punk;” Evans, “Dreams That Only Money Can Buy;” Hannah Ewens, “Emo Was the Last True Subculture,” *I-D Magazine* (July 7, 2015), https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/59bwj5/emo-was-the-last-true-subculture (accessed January 12, 2019); and Hebdige, *Subculture*.

⁸⁹ Evans, “Dreams That Only Money Can Buy,” 173.

flavour. As such, it transforms and rearranges the meanings of the original subcultural style in order to make new statements, which subvert the meanings, and understandings, of the Japanese Lolita identity, at the same time as reflecting a new type of resistance to dominant, mainstream, Mexican society. Analyses of examples of Mexican Gothic and Lolita styles, their symbolism in context with the Mexican environment, culture, and belief systems, and the way that the handmade, DIY Gothic and Lolita fashion industry, itself, functions, in Mexico, are the major focal points of this study, and are examined in the following chapters of this thesis. Here, I investigate how the movement relates to the philosophies of the subculture, especially regarding gender roles and personal identity.

Redefining and Undefined Gender Roles and Identity

In Mexico, within Gothic and Lolita communities, the positioning of gender is not just redefined but undefined, or obscured. One of the most surprising and revealing results of my thesis survey is that 23% (almost a quarter) of my Mexican respondents identify as male, gender-fluid, or transgender. While all of these participants present themselves as female – in that they wear actual dresses, not just dandified unisex clothing (such as Boystyle, or Gothic Aristocrat style) – they feel that they are welcomed into the movement’s communities, and accepted as Lollitas (or, affectionately, Brolitas), no matter what gender they associate with.⁹⁰ In fact, many of the participants claim that one of the aspects they like most about the movement is that it is gender-fluid, and inclusive.

⁹⁰ Boystyle is a cute, unisex version of Lolita style, which incorporates items such as shortie bloomers and knickerbockers in place of skirts. The Gothic Aristocrat style, which stems from Mana’s Elegant Gothic Lolita persona, can also be worn by all genders, and is based on the idea of the Victorian dandy, or the romantic male vampire. The latter look resembles the appearances of certain later twentieth-century onscreen vampire characters, played by Gary Oldman, Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, and Antonio Banderas. See *Dracula*, feature film, dir. Francis Ford Coppola (Los Angeles, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1992), theatrical; and *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*, feature film, dir. Neil Jordan (Burbank, CA: Geffen Pictures, 1994), theatrical. “Brolitas” are cis or transgender male, or gender fluid members of the movement who dress in the typical female Lolita silhouette.

Although it must be remembered that these statistics only refer to the forty members of the national movement that took part in my thesis survey, my further research suggests that this ratio is not an anomaly.⁹¹ The comments made by my Mexican correspondents also tend to back up this analysis. Most participants agree that the Gothic and Lolita identity can be viewed from a position of feminine power, and many regard the movement to have a feminist angle, but almost as many stress that the motivation goes beyond a feminist agenda.

Saku (San Francisco de Campeche) states:

I believe that female empowerment is found in every way that a woman can feel great, self-sufficient and strong, whether or not she sees it, herself. The Japanese started this movement because their society did not give way to many freedoms. I think ours [Mexican society] has some of those features, too. However, likewise, for males who are Brolitas, it is a way for them to also feel beautiful, whether heterosexual, homosexual, and or transsexual. The feminism that I believe in follows that men can also be seen as beautiful princesses if they want to be, and this should not make them feel like lesser men if they do not want to feel that. It [the Lolita, or Brolita identity] allows them to be different from the rest of the boys and, at the same time, more themselves in a society that also judges and schematizes them according to their sex. In that way, Lolita is great!

Nakuru (Toluca) replies:

The concept of feminism can be taken in different ways. If we take into account the origin of the subculture, it may have been a feminist movement because it meant a blow to the repression of women in Japan. However, we must remember, that the style also includes men and, no matter what gender you are, you can still participate in Lolita and be part of the movement.... Gender does not matter, as long as you enjoy dressing in the Lolita style.

⁹¹ Since carrying out my survey, in 2016, I have met many more gender-fluid Mexican participants, in Mexico, and online.

Neki Lizbeth Ushiromiya (Guadalajara, Jalisco) declares:

I believe it is a feminist movement because it breaks with the rules of common society. Likewise, because women can seek new ways of expressing themselves and making themselves feel present in a world where men rule. As well as that, the Lolita style can be worn by any person, man or woman.... Either gender can wear it without feeling less equal than the other.

Muffin (Puebla), a trans member, agrees with this analysis: “Yes, because it is a movement that seeks gender equality.” Minina Moon (Santa Catarina, Nuevo León) says: “It is not exclusive. Both boys and girls can dress well in it and feel good about it.” Naty-chan (Saltillo, Coahuila) explains: “At first, Lolita was born as a feminist movement and the fashion was mainly worn by women, but I can say that, over time, there have been men who have joined us as Boystylers and Brolitas.” Allen Walker (León, Guanajuato), a gender-fluid respondent, claims: “Yes, because it arose within a strongly patriarchal society. Dressing in Lolita means ‘I do not want to be what you, Society, expects me to be.’” And Briz Blossom (Guadalajara, Jalisco) responds:

The Lolita fashion movement began as a rebellion against male domination in Japan, so many girls could see it that way [as a feminist statement] but, since Lolita fashion is all about personal perspective, many people can wear it and feel as they like and how they prefer to be seen.

The notion of the gender-bending Lolita, or the Brolita, is not unique to Mexico. For example, Mana is the original, and consummate representative in Japan. What *is* outstanding is the level of acceptance of non-celebrity, gender-fluid Lolitas within Mexican Gothic and Lolita communities, especially in comparison with some other international Gothic and Lolita groups, including the everyday movement in Japan. Michelle Liu Carriger (2019) highlights:

Although the vast majority of participants in Japan and beyond are cisgender young women, there are enough cisgender men who dress occasionally in Lolita fashions that they have acquired their own affectionate (and controversial) term: “Bro-lita.” There are also a number of trans and non-binary people who participate.... It’s worth noting [though] that although there are trans and male Gothic Lolitas in Japan and abroad, in general there is more hostility and distrust of “Bro-litas” within Japanese communities, perhaps because of..., in particular, straight-male[s] preying on young girls there. In rambling online discussions, Anglophone Lolitas also discuss the difficulties of balancing a welcoming community for everyone....⁹²

Within the Mexican movement, there does not seem to be this kind of hostility, which is surprising, especially considering that, in mainstream Mexican society, femininity is usually treated as subordinate.

In *Appendix G* of this thesis, I transcribe the voices of four gender-fluid members of the Gothic and Lolita movement in Mexico, Tom, Baruch, Kyoko, and Inari, who shed some light on what it is like to be participants of the subculture in a Mexican environment. In reading through these four interviews, it is clear that, for all of them, being involved in the Gothic and Lolita subculture is a vehicle for their sense of freedom and happiness, an experience that allows them to be themselves, or more like they really feel they are. Within the subculture, they are treated with respect and feel that they are understood.

Outside the community, however, it can be quite the opposite, especially closer to home. These four members have differing levels of experience in terms of acceptance by their parents and or other family members. Baruch has the least trouble, if any at all, while Kyoko says, flatly, that her family does not like it and, therefore, she must be discreet. While Inari’s mother is supportive, they are not in contact with their father, who is, thus, unaware of their activity, but Inari believes that their father would be bitterly

⁹² Michelle Liu Carriger, “Maiden’s Armor: Global Gothic Lolita Fashion Communities and Technologies of Girly Counteridentity,” *Theatre Survey* 60, no. 1 (January 2019), 137 – 138.

disappointed, if he knew. Tom, on the other hand, has to completely hide this side from his entire family, also knowing that they would thoroughly disapprove. His family expects him to act like a “man” and wear “men’s” clothing. He does not really care what others, outside his family circle, think, though, stating that “it is very much their problem” if they don’t approve. He enjoys the feeling of rebelliousness in a world that “forces” him to be a “man.” Inari also loves the idea of going against social standards, even stating that one of their motivations is to challenge “normative” mainstream constructions. This element, which is shared by many members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community, whether they identify as female, male, gender fluid, or transgender, demonstrates the Mexican movement’s resistance to the rules of normative society. So, what are the ideologies associated with normative gender roles in Mexican culture?

Gender Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Culture in Mexico

In order to gain a perspective of this framework, I have consulted the chapter, “Gender Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Culture in Mexico,” by Anna-Emilia Hietanen and Susan Pick (2015), as it is contemporary with the timeframe of my ethnographic studies.⁹³ The authors state that, in Mexico, “traditionally, gender inequalities have been very well defined,” even in regard to official laws, which have “led to male dominance and female subordination.”⁹⁴ They explain that, although the legal situation has improved for women in recent years, in reality, new rulings are not commonly followed and are often not “reflected in practice or cultural ideas related to gender.”⁹⁵ They argue that the changes are largely ineffective “as gender inequalities are perceived as normal within the culture.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Anna-Emilia Hietanen and Susan Pick, “Gender Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Culture in Mexico,” in *Psychology of Gender Through the Lens of Culture: Theories and Applications*, ed. Saba Safdar and Natasza Kosakowska-Berezecka, 285 – 305 (Cham, Heidelberg, New York, NY, Dordrecht and London: Springer, 2015).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 286 & 287.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 288.

This cognizance effects women *and* men, as there is immense pressure to conform to unequal conditions considered to be social norms. The notion of paternalism, or the belief that “that is just how things are,” and an underlying sense of fatalism, or the feeling that nothing can be done to change the way that things are, play a part in restricting individuals’ “decisions and actions.”⁹⁷ They highlight that, “in addition, traditional family and gender roles in Mexico are strict. They limit, especially, women’s freedoms, but also define the conducts that are considered socially acceptable for men.”⁹⁸

According to research by Monserrat Sagot and Ana C. Escalante (2009) into the history of women’s social and feminist movements in Central America, it is evident that reforms have traditionally “followed a difficult path.”⁹⁹ The authors discuss the role that academic institutions have played, since the 1970s, in attempts to amend gender-based inequities. They state that the earliest initiatives arose within the academic sector, whereby “feminist perspectives had gained some prestige and acceptance.”¹⁰⁰ For example, they highlight that, the “First Central American-Mexican Seminar on Women’s Research” was held at the Colegio de México, in 1977.¹⁰¹ Norma Vásquez (2001) is cited in association with these seminal enterprises, who writes that a major focus was on aspects of women’s oppression in connection with labour, including female workplace discrimination and exploitation.¹⁰² Sagot and Escalante (2009) lament that not much attention was paid to issues connected with the everyday, domestic lives of women, and or gender relations and hierarchies within family structures.¹⁰³ And, although there have been advances since

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Monserrat Sagot and Ana C. Escalante, “Relations in Dispute: Conflict between Academia and the Feminist Movement in Central America,” in *Global Gender Research: Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Christine E. Bose and Minjeong Kim (New York, NY, and London: Routledge, 2009), 158.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 158.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 159.

¹⁰² Ibid, 161; citing Norma Vásquez, “Recuperar el Feminismo para Entender el Género,” in *Feminismos en América Latina*, ed. Edda Gaviola Artigas and Lissette González Martínez (Guatemala: FLACSO, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 2001), 177.

¹⁰³ Sagot and Escalante, “Relations in Dispute,” 161.

then, Hietanen and Pick (2015) stress that “there are still great economic, social, and cultural barriers that obstruct the full development of women in Mexico.”¹⁰⁴

Hietanen and Pick (2015) maintain that inequities are largely to do with Mexico’s “highly masculine” organization.¹⁰⁵ They explain that, “in societies where masculinity is highly valued, gender roles are clearly distinct. Women are supposed to be tender [and] modest... while men are expected to be tough [and] assertive.”¹⁰⁶ This patriarchal power structure encourages the psychology of “*machismo*,” whereby men, at all times, must be seen to be “macho,” or dominant and “masculine,” which is problematic for women *and men*. In the first instance, the general framing of masculinity, particularly in Hispanic cultures, and what it means to be a *man*, as if all men are born of the same nature, is a major concern.

In context with Hispanic masculinities, Dieter Ingenschay (2014) states that:

Recently, voices can be heard that warn... against blaming men for all evil in the world, as if fascism, colonialism, imperialism, dictatorship, and injustice were simply masculine qualities, hence reducing questions of power and hegemony to a mere problem of testosterone. Masculinity studies have shown that not only [are] women... men’s victims but rather that male power constellations suppress men as well.¹⁰⁷

More specifically, Hietanen and Pick (2015) discuss problems stemming from hegemonic paternalistic gender constructions in Mexico, especially according to the nation’s classification as a “tight” society.¹⁰⁸ They say that cultures are categorized as either “loose” or “tight” depending on how much their citizens are expected to follow prescribed roles and to what extent they adhere to them:

¹⁰⁴ Hietanen and Pick, “Gender Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Culture in Mexico,” 288.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Dieter Ingenschay, “Hispanic/Masculinities/ Transition: An Introduction,” in *Hispanic (LGT) Masculinities in Transition*, ed. Rafael M. Mérida-Jiménez (New York, NY, Washington, D.C., WA, Baltimore, MD, Bern, Frankfurt, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 1 – 2.

¹⁰⁸ See Hietanen and Pick, “Gender Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Culture in Mexico.”

In tight societies, the pressure to conform to socially accepted roles and norms is strong.... Tight societies are characterized by fatalistic ideas that leave individuals with little control over their own lives. In these societies, it is also more likely that social norms become personal norms.... The idea that one has to conform to... socially acceptable role[s] forms an important barrier to freedom of expression and action.¹⁰⁹

The authors emphasize that the tightness of societal restrictions in Mexico varies in terms of region, but, overall, conscience generally forbids resisting one's predetermined circumstances. Catholic beliefs, a strong element in Mexican culture, contribute to this mind-set: "Faith in a higher power and destiny... [the] importance of the family, [a] high level of conformance to sociocultural norms, and subordination of personal goals to goals of the social group,"¹¹⁰ are all elements strongly ingrained within a religious upbringing.

In returning to the responsibilities of men, and their place within these constrictions, it is determined that they must be the breadwinners, the protectors, and the decision makers, while making as much money as possible, and displaying their manhood by being promiscuous with women.¹¹¹ According to Hietanen and Pick (2015), for many Mexican men, these "social expectations can be overwhelming."¹¹² This dominant model of heterosexual, masculine hegemony, built upon the notion of homophobic superiority, creates both pressures and limitations that affect men's lives.¹¹³ Men are constantly urged to prove their manhood and, in turn, to suppress "feminine" qualities.¹¹⁴ "Trespassing certain limits of what is considered feminine," such as expressing fear, not taking risks, showing weakness, and having to be dependent on others, "can cast a doubt on man's virility and masculinity."¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 288.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 288 – 289.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 291.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Contemplation of these cultural issues as frameworks for statements made by my research correspondents, in Mexico, demonstrates the rebelliousness of presenting oneself as gender-fluid, not just as a member of the Gothic and Lolita movement but within Mexican society. It reveals attitudes of defiant resistance, bravery, and *strength*. While it appears that, in mainstream Mexican society, the displaying of so-called “feminine” attributes is considered to emasculate, and thus “weaken,” the character of a male-born citizen, coming up against societal restrictions is a reflection of fortitude. Furthermore, while women are suppressed in Mexican society, the embracement of the feminine ideal is, paradoxically, empowering for men *and* women.

Marianismo, The Power of the Matriarch

Throughout this thesis, I examine the notion of ideal femininity, via the position of the Divine Feminine as a powerful symbol in Mexico, as well as an inspirational motif for the Mexican Gothic Lolita identity. Ubiquitous representations of the Virgin Mary, and figures of superstitious belief – Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe), Nuestra Señora de los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows), La Santa Muerte (Saint Death), La Calavera Catrina, and La Llorona – and everyday Woman as Icon – Frida Kahlo, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz – all contribute to the veneration of the Matriarch, the feminine ideal, as omnipotent in Mexican culture.¹¹⁶ While women are treated as subordinate to men, it is also according to their female attributes that, ironically, they hold power.

Hietanen and Pick (2015) describe hegemonic constructions in relation to Mexican family values and hierarchies:

[In] the Mexican family... strong parental authority is important and requires blind respect, obedience, interdependence, and discipline.... Children, especially girls, are supposed to obey, be submissive, and not question, parental authority. The patriarchal model implies the supremacy of the male and the subordination of the female. A woman

¹¹⁶ Sor (Sister) Juana is not discussed in this thesis but deserves a mention.

is expected to respect her husband's choices and be docile, faithful, and dependent....

As a mother, a woman has to be responsible for the emotional wellbeing and health of the family; [she] preserves the honor and the dignity of the family, devotes herself to the family, and always put[s] others' needs before her own.¹¹⁷

However, in Mexico, the Mother figure is also symbolic of the Divine Matriarch; she is greatly revered, and, deep-down, everyone knows that it is she who must be obeyed.

Paz (1961) writes:

The Mexican Woman has a sort of hieratic calm, a tranquillity.... She is an idol, and like all idols she is mistress of magnetic forces.... She is a symbol... of the stability and continuity of the race. In addition to her cosmic significance, she has an important social role, which is to see to it that law and order, piety and tenderness, are predominant in everyday life.¹¹⁸

Hietanen and Pick (2015) explain that this traditional image of matriarchal "devotion and purity," which is associated with everyday women, whether or not they are mothers, creates a sensibility that they are "morally superior to men," and, thus, they are idolized.¹¹⁹ This concept is referred to as "*marianismo*," a title connected with the Virgin Mary, who is seen as the ultimate female role model. According to Hietanen and Pick (2015), "*marianismo* emphasizes the value of self-sacrifice, abnegation, [and] humility."¹²⁰

Marianismo, essentially the deification of the mother as Mary, Our Mother, serves to oppose *machismo*, the dominating force of men. This is a reason why the Gothic and Lolita identity, which belongs to a feminine movement, resonates within a Mexican environment, especially as a form of resistance. First of all, for male, gender-fluid, and male-to-female transgender and transsexual participants, it thwarts the oppressive aspect of *machismo*. Not only does it allow these members the freedom to embrace their feminine

¹¹⁷ Hietanen and Pick, "Gender Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Culture in Mexico," 290.

¹¹⁸ Octavio Paz, "The Labyrinth of Solitude [1961]," in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 37 – 38.

¹¹⁹ Hietanen and Pick, "Gender Stereotypes, Sexuality, and Culture in Mexico," 290.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

sides, it replaces their masculine sides with an alternate model of empowerment. For women, the motif of the Matriarch is also elevating, reinforcing the feminist agenda of the movement.

Alternately, some anthropologists read the element of *marianismo* in Mexican society “as a form of ambivalent sexism.”¹²¹ However, in context with the psychology of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita identity, the symbol of the Matriarch is akin to the Little-girl motif in Japan, in terms of its function as a resistant agent. The Mother motif (in Mexico) and the Child motif (in Japan) may be, essentially, polar opposites, but they operate in the same way, by reclaiming the power of the oppressed, on one’s own terms.

In Japan, adopting the “little-girl” Lolita look is a metaphor for postponing, or not accepting, the adult responsibilities put upon girls by rigid society. In the same way, the more-mature, matriarchal Mexican identity embraces *marianismo* as a powerful celebration of the Divine Feminine. Both take control of these identities, and, in doing so, reverse their subordinate positions.

Furthermore, in Mexico, this form of “girl power” is not just for girls. It is for everyone who *wants* to be *like* a girl. The feminism of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement is expressed not so much in terms of fighting female oppression as it is in raising gender equality, for both sexes, and eliminating discrimination. It is about reclaiming power through the feminine ideal, no matter one’s gender identity.

Ben Agger (2004) discusses the notion of girl power in relation to the “feminization” of feminism. He maintains that, since the 1980s, the emphasis of the feminist movement has shifted from an “angry political” statement to a “self-oriented feminism that bleeds into femininity, from which it is scarcely distinct.”¹²² He goes as far as to say that, with this development, women now “position themselves, socially, within

¹²¹ Citing *ibid.*

¹²² Ben Agger, *The Virtual Self: A Contemporary Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 135 – 136.

the same old Victorian categories,” as determined by Mayhew’s ideology of separate spheres (previously discussed), with the “only difference between Victorian femininity and this blended feminism/femininity” being that “Victorian women stayed home.”¹²³ Yes, this *is* a difference, and it is a *big* difference, but the point is not whether or not women choose to stay home; it is about not being *made* to stay home, or to be put in one’s “place.” It is about having the freedom to *choose* one’s place. More importantly, it is about the freedom to choose one’s identity. Girl power comes from being allowed to be feminine, or from choosing not to be.

In the case of the focus of this thesis, one of my Mexican survey respondents, Alice Heart (Celaya), states that “Gothic and Lolita styles seek to leave behind *machismo* by displaying feminine beauty and that we belong only to ourselves.” Allen Walker (León, Guanajuato), who identifies as gender fluid, also refers to the resistance of *machismo* in analyzing why this ultra-feminine style may often cause shock value:

I think it is [due to] *machismo*, because it’s not what people expect to see from me. And it is fearful to look different and to be free to dress in whatever you crave. After a while, I get bored and start saying, “It’s just fashion.” And I also say, “I dress this way because I like how I look.” This phrase is the implicit meaning of Lolita.



As the Mexican branch of the fashion-based Gothic and Lolita movement stems from the original Japanese subculture, its participants follow some of the same interests, such as the music, most notably, the Japanese Visual Kei genre, especially the bands of the fashion designer, Mana. It is through the Mexican movement’s “costume orientations,” however, that it brings something unique and outstanding to the table. This thesis, therefore, is a focussed examination of the Gothic and Lolita fashion movement, in the Mexican environment. Before investigating the fashion, I explore the environment, itself.

¹²³ Ibid.

Chapter Two
México Gótico

Chapter Two: México Gótico

One of the most notable traits of the Mexican's character is his willingness to contemplate horror;

he is even familiar and complacent in his dealings with it.

The bloody Christs in our village churches... our wakes,

the custom of eating skull-shaped cakes and candies on the Day of the Dead,

are habits inherited from the Indians and the Spaniards and are now an inseparable part of our being.

Our cult of death is also a cult of life.

– Octavio Paz¹

In examining the migration of the fashion-based Gothic and Lolita movement into the Mexican environment, and, particularly, the prevalence of the Gothic genre of the Lolita identity, one may ask, “*Why Mexico?*” My argument is that, psychologically, it is because there is, in Mexico, a deep-seated connection, conceptually and physically, with the Gothic. In order to explore the adoption, adaption, and presentation of the Gothic Lolita style in Mexico, it is, therefore, essential to first investigate the impact of the Gothic on the Mexican psyche, via the Mexican environment, itself.

As I am dealing with personal style, and visual communication of one's identity, any reading of aesthetic expression must be analyzed in context with the cultural, and spiritual, Self. It should be recognized that one's geographical, sociological, and emotional environment plays a part in the formulation of taste, identity, and style. In particular, image saturation, stemming from one's physical landscape, consciously *and* subliminally, influences individual stylistic choices, and the creation of one's visual identity and sense of self. This chapter is, therefore, dedicated to the gothic landscape of Mexico as a relevant framework for the examination of the Gothic Lolita in a Mexican setting.

¹ Octavio Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude [1961],” in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 23. Note: Octavio Paz Lozano (March 31, 1914 – April 19, 1998), was an award-winning Mexican poet and author and diplomat whose accolades include the Nobel Prize in Literature.

On July 18, 2017, Catherine Spooner delivered the welcome keynote address at the opening ceremony of *Gothic Traditions and Departures: The 13th Biennial Academic Conference of the International Gothic Association* (IGA), which was held at the Universidad de Las Américas, Puebla (UDLAP), Cholula, Mexico. From the outset, she highlighted the importance of the moment, being the first time an IGA conference had been held in Mexico, indeed in any nation of Latin America, representing “a great step forward for the Association’s mission of uniting scholars, writers, readers, and teachers of the Gothic across the world.”² Spooner’s observation of this shift set the tone of her speech, in which she discussed the conference theme of “traditions and departures,” inherent in the concept of the Gothic. She stated:

In English, “departure” is a particularly rich and suggestive word. Its most obvious meaning is leaving or going away.... [I]n the late Middle Ages it became a euphemism for death, one that lingers in our modern phrase, “the dearly departed....” It can mean the action of setting out on a journey, or a deviation from an accepted, prescribed, or usual course of action.... Gothic texts are full of such deviations, as they are preoccupied with the “strange and unusual....” Gothic, itself, has also enacted a series of departures, as it has moved from architecture to literature, to film, to television, to new media and beyond. Moreover, while it emerged from Northern Europe and particularly from Britain and Ireland, it has subsequently journeyed across the globe. The intersectionality of Gothic, its ability to travel across genres, media, historical and national traditions, is what gives it its longevity and power to ask – and address – difficult questions in our contemporary world.”³

² Catherine Spooner, opening ceremony speech delivered at *Gothic Traditions and Departures: The 13th Biennial International Gothic Association Conference*, Universidad de Las Américas, Puebla (UDLAP), July 18, 2017 (unpublished). Supplied courtesy of the author.

³ Ibid.

The Gothic Lolita fashion style, of the Gothic and Lolita movement, also represents a journey, or cultural flow, in its transmigration and exchange of intertextual ideas, across Japan, Northern Europe, the United Kingdom, North America, and, relatively more recently, into Central and South America, and the Mexican environment. The development of the Gothic Lolita identity in Mexico signals further departures and deviations from the movement's "accepted, prescribed, or usual course[s] of action." The Mexican Gothic Lolita demonstrates shifts in the appearance, understandings, meanings, references, and frameworks of her original ancestor, the Japanese Gothloli, especially in association with the "strange and unusual." In context with the topic of this thesis, it is coincidental but, for me, also apt that the International Gothic Association chose Mexico to host its conference, *Gothic Traditions and Departures*, in recognition of the Mexican environment as an important site for the examination of the Gothic.



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Figure 2.1:

La Catedral Metropolitana de la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen María a Los Cielos, 1573 – 1813
Ciudad de México

The Mexican landscape is conspicuously gothic. Mexican gothic scholars Antonio Alcalá González (2018, 2014) and Enrique Ajuria Ibarra (2018, 2014) refer, independently, to the hauntology, or a haunting essence, which pervades contemporary Mexican society, in the spectre of the nation's colonial past.⁴ Mexico's dark and violent history is eternally present, forever casting its shadows. It can be described using the words of Colin Davis (2005), whereby "the priority of being and presence [is replaced] with the figure of the ghost... which is neither dead nor alive."⁵ Ajuria Ibarra (2018) says:

[Mexico's] colonial past can never be got rid of, and its persistent haunting leads to an uncanny uneasiness.... Haunting and spectrality become central phenomena in the experience of the everyday, and they intertwine with cultural constructions of realities and fictions that are consumed both traditionally and artistically.... [G]hosts are here, every day, as nuisances, as terrifying reminders of a past that still lingers on....⁶

According to Alcalá González (2014), Mexican "gothic constantly hints towards what cannot be recovered; it points to the... cultural history that lies in the past without possibilities to regain what remains as a lost Other."⁷

⁴ See Antonio Alcalá González, "Fluid Bodies: Gothic Transmutations in Carlos Fuentes' Fiction," in *A Companion to American Gothic*, ed. Charles L. Crow, 533 – 544 (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014); ———, "Fragmented Gothic Identities in Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*," in *Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature: Latin American Gothic in Literature and Culture*, ed. Sandra Casanova-Vizcaíno and Inés Ordiz, 41 – 53 (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2018); Enrique Ajuria Ibarra, "Ghosting the Nation: La Llorona, Popular Culture, and the Spectral Anxiety of Mexican Identity," in *The Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic*, ed. Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville, 131 – 151 (Houndmills and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); ———, "Media, Shadows, and Spiritual Bindings: Tracing Mexican Gothic in Óscar Urrutia Lazo's *Rito Terminal*," in *Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature: Latin American Gothic in Literature and Culture*, ed. Sandra Casanova-Vizcaíno and Inés Ordiz, 189 – 201 (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2018); and ———, "The Latin American Ghost Story," in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. Scott Brewster and Luke Thornton, 233 – 241 (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2018). .Note: Both scholars, Alcalá González and Ajuria Ibarra, discuss the notions I have cited in this thesis – in relation to the hauntology of Mexico's colonial history, and subsequent anxieties arising from a post-colonial, collective consciousness – in context with themes present in Latin-American gothic fiction, particularly in the work of Carlos Fuentes, which highlight an essence that pervades everyday modern Mexican life. Carlos Fuentes Macías was a Mexican novelist (November 11, 1928 – May 15, 2012).

⁵ Colin Davis, "Hauntology, Spectres, and Phantoms," *French Studies* 59, no. 3 (July 2005), 373.

⁶ Ajuria Ibarra, "The Latin American Ghost Story," 239 & 240.

⁷ Alcalá González, "Fluid Bodies," 535.

This sensibility is symbolized in the image of Mexico's national Cathedral juxtaposed against the decimated remains of El Templo Mayor (founded c. 1325), the grand temple of a major pyramid complex, the former seat of power of the Aztec civilization, at Tenochtitlán (the Náhuatl name for the site of Mexico City), and its surrounding structures (see fig. 2.1).⁸ The Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven was founded in 1573 using the stones of the Aztec edifices, which had been destroyed by the conquistadors.

Alcalá González (2018, 2014) and Ajuria Ibarra (2018, 2014) each discuss the existence of a psychological national identity crisis as a consequence of conquest and colonization. The Mexican psyche is tormented by anxieties arising from the darkness of Mexico's past, creating, in Ajuria Ibarra's (2018) words, a "sense of belonging and non-belonging, of haunting forces that are always beyond the grasp of any possible contemporary reconciliation."⁹ Mexico is a land occupied by descendants of the dispossessed, of conquerors and settlers removed from their homeland, and of indigenous peoples who had their homeland crushed. As such, Ajuria Ibarra (2014) writes of the emergence of a cultural discourse that has evolved through a process of assimilation, "a mutual influence... that appropriates relevant aspects of both cultures."¹⁰ Along with this development, he says, "the hybrid '*mestizo*' was born."¹¹ Ajuria Ibarra (2014) cites Floyd F. Merrell (2003) who argues that "the *mestizos*, from the very beginning, were neither Europeans nor Amerindians," although they are also both.¹²

⁸ Náhuatl is the indigenous language of the Mexican people.

⁹ Ajuria Ibarra, "The Latin American Ghost Story," 239.

¹⁰ Ajuria Ibarra, "Ghosting the Nation," 137.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Floyd F. Merrell, *The Mexicans: A Sense of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003), 86; quoted in *ibid*, 137. Note: The definition of "*mestizo*" is a person of mixed race. In Latin America, it refers, specifically, to someone who is the offspring of both Spanish American and indigenous American parentage or descent. From the Vulgar Latin, *mixticius*, or "mixed," the term arose around 1580 – 90. See <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/mestizo>.

This hybridity is reflected in Mexico's artistic and religious heritage, as well as motifs of popular culture, often demonstrating, through customs as well as iconography, the syncretism of pre-colonial superstitions and beliefs with devout Catholicism. In Mexico, the Catholic faith, itself, was born of this syncretic process. Stylistically, as the colonial establishment of New Spain occurred throughout the late-Medieval to early modern eras and was, therefore, contemporary with the ecclesiastical flavour of the Gothic and Baroque periods in art and design, Mexico's landscape is still very much stamped with a gothic, baroque, and Catholic aesthetic. The physical Mexican environment is as gothic as its haunted atmosphere, dotted everywhere with the architectural legacy of its Spanish Catholic foundations. So, too, are the dilapidated monuments of Mexico's indigenous past, the towering pyramids that still reach for the heavens, as well as the crumbled, and reused, remains that survive as mausoleums of the once powerful Aztec civilization, and the societies that came before it, that refuse to be eradicated from memory.¹³ The Mexican landscape is thus gothic on both abstract and concrete levels. It is from this hybrid gothic habitat that the Mexican incarnation of the Gothic Lolita identity emerges and flourishes.

The Mexican Gothic Lolita identity is a product of Mexico's gothic and Catholic environment. Whether intentionally or by osmosis, members of Mexican Gothic and Lolita communities often reflect their national hybrid notion of the Gothic, and their Catholic faith, in their dress. An example of one of the more conscious participants of the movement is Alexa (Alex GL) Fernanda Deras Barraza, from Torreón. The caption of one of her selfies, taken with a friend, reads "*Poder Católico †* (Catholic Power †)" (see fig. 2.2).

¹³ When the Spanish conquistadors invaded the country we know as Mexico (which they named New Spain), the Aztec civilization was at its peak. However, the Aztecs were the last line of indigenous peoples to have possessed the land. Preceding the Aztecs were the Maya, Mixtec, Toltec, Teotihuacán, Zapotec, and Olmec civilizations. A few of these cultures were still thriving when the colonisers arrived. See Charles Phillips, *The Lost History of Aztec & Maya: The History, Legend, Myth and Culture of the Ancient Native People of Mexico and Central America* (London: Hermes House, Anness Publishing Ltd, 2005).

Alexa's companion is wearing a dress that appropriates the habit of a nun and she holds her hands in prayer.¹⁴ Alexa's outfit evokes traditions of mourning dress, from the floral wreath and lace veil to the black-grounded, silhouette-portrait-cameo pendant and black dress, while touches of cardinal red add a clerical atmosphere. The Catholic sentiment is accentuated by the adornment of both garments with crosses.

While the gothic genre and elements of historical European mourning garb have always been strong features of the subcultural Japanese Lolita style ever since the musician and leading gothic fashion designer, Mana, instigated the original Gothic Lolita look in Japan, in the 1980s,¹⁵ the Mexican Gothic Lolita identity takes on deeper meaning. In Japan, the gothic aspects of the Lolita style are usually (or often) purely aesthetic.¹⁶ In Mexico, gothic symbols, especially those also associated with the Catholic faith, are not always used, merely, as decorative motifs. The Gothic Lolita identity in Mexico is more commonly a projection of Catholic devotion.

In this chapter, *Gothic Mexico*, I examine the gothic and Catholic landscape of Mexico, both physical and psychological, as a receptacle for, and influence on, the Mexican Gothic Lolita identity. The focus is on structural and cultural contexts, architectural and artistic environments, and iconography, pertaining to Mexico's hybrid gothic, and religious, historical foundations and frameworks. This is in order to set up the investigation in *Chapter Three: The Gothic Lolita*, of intertextual aesthetic relationships between the stylistic appearances of Mexican Gothic Lolitas, motifs associated with the prevailing gothic and religious landscape of Mexico, and "death" and mourning culture, popular culture, and related iconic figures of female divinity.

¹⁴ Alexa's friend is not wearing a Mexican Lolita brand dress. The style is "Nameless Poem" by Ista Mori, a Chinese label. What is important, here, is the emphasis in the choice of styling, combined with the composition (the friend's pose), and the caption, *Poder Católico* †, in context with the Catholic framework of the Mexican environment.

¹⁵ See *Chapter One* of this thesis.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*



Figure 2.2: *Poder Católico † (Catholic Power)*:
Alexa (Alex GL) Fernanda Deras Barraza and friend, 2018

Mexico's Hybrid Gothic and Catholic Foundations

In this section, I examine the gothic and Catholic Mexican landscape, the “habits inherited” from the past, and the “bloody Christs,” as referred to by Octavio Paz (1961),¹⁷ as the foundational setting of the Gothic and Lolita fashion movement in Mexico. This hybrid religious environment can also be observed as a continuing psychological influence on the subliminal mind-set of contemporary Mexican society, itself.

While the panoramas of the major cities of Mexico deeply reflect their colonial history and demonstrate an ever-present effect of that period – namely, the Catholicization of the preceding civilization – the expressions of the pre-Hispanic peoples refuse to be completely buried. As such, despite the decisively brutal nature of the Spanish conquest, Mexican society is a richly cultivated multi-culture. As Paz (1976) highlights, the syncretism of Spanish Catholicism and the Aztec religion has “come down to our own day” in the form of a Mexican “collective consciousness.”¹⁸

This multicultural harmony did not happen without the overwhelming annihilation of much of the indigenous population, their culture and art. Jacques Lafaye (1976) provides some statistical estimates. He says that, in 1519, there were approximately 25,000,000 indigenous people, with 1,500,000 in the valley of Mexico.¹⁹ In 1545, the first great epidemic, brought to the shores by the Spanish invaders, killed around 800,000 indigenous people.²⁰ By the end of that century, there were only 70,000 indigenous

¹⁷ Citing Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude [1961],” 23. See the first page of this chapter for the passage.

¹⁸ Octavio Paz, “The Flight of *Quetzalcóatl* and the Quest for Legitimacy,” foreword to *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531 – 1813*, by Jacques Lafaye (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), x – xi.

¹⁹ Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531 – 1813* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), xxx.

²⁰ Ibid. Note: “In 1545, twenty-four years after the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire, an epidemic of a malignant form of a hemorrhagic fever appeared in the highlands of Mexico. The illness was characterized by high fever, headache, and bleeding from the nose, ears, and mouth, accompanied by jaundice, severe abdominal and thoracic pain as well as acute neurological manifestations. The disease was highly lethal and lasted three to four days. It attacked primarily the native population, leaving the Spaniards almost unaffected. The hemorrhagic fevers remained in the area for three centuries and the etiologic agent is still unknown. In... 1576... [it] killed 45% of the entire population of Mexico....” See

survivors in the valley, with the introduction of 10,000 Spaniards, creoles, and other European immigrants.²¹ “In the course of the colonial period [three-hundred years], there were eight [of these] great epidemics.”²² Those, then, who weren’t slaughtered were wiped out by other effects of colonization, such as foreign diseases to which they had developed no immunity. Stanley Brandes (1997) writes:

Whether through warfare, debilitation, or disease, the enormous destruction of life suffered by the Indians of sixteenth-century Mexico is incomprehensible to the human mind or, if comprehended, immediately repressed as a defence against deep, paralysing agony and sorrow.²³

However, just as it is important to acknowledge the atrocities, it is necessary to comprehend the psychology of the time. As art historian, Andrew Graham-Dixon explains in “The Dark Heart,” episode two of his BBC television documentary series, *Art of Spain* (2008):

The conquistadors... saw themselves as missionaries, and their conquest of the New World was just another front in the great religious war that was consuming sixteenth-century Spain. If you want to understand the conquistador mentality you have to realize that it was widely believed, throughout Spain, that God had given, to these Catholic people, the New World, and all its treasures, precisely so that they could combat the enemies of Catholicism.... They genuinely believed that God was on their side.... In the twisted logic of Catholic Spain, the brutality of the conquistadors became the expression of their piety.²⁴

Rodolfo Acuna-Soto, Leticia Calderon Romero, and James H. Maguire, “Large Epidemics of Hemorrhagic Fevers in Mexico 1545 – 1815,” *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 62, no. 6 (June 2000), 1,
<http://www.ajtmh.org/docserver/fulltext/14761645/62/6/11304065.pdf?expires=1506804790&id=id&acname=guest&checksum=C4828A76687F931C04AC9C0D739C4319> (accessed October 1, 2017).

²¹ Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, xxx. Note: “Creoles,” in this context, refers to Mexican-born Spanish citizens.

²² Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, xxx.

²³ Stanley Brandes, “Sugar, Colonialism, and Death: On the Origins of Mexico’s Day of the Dead,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 2 (April 1997), 289.

²⁴ Andrew Graham-Dixon, “The Dark Heart,” ep. 2, in *Art of Spain*, TV documentary series, produced and directed by Mark Bates (London: BBC, February 7, 2008).

One must remember that European society was just progressing from the late Middle Ages, and Spain was still immersed in the depths of the Spanish Inquisition, and so the determination to crush all heresy, was still very much part of the psyche. The violent endeavours of conquest *and* reconquest – that is, the conversion and reconversion to the “true faith,” of all subjects of the Spanish Crown, in the colonies *and* at home – were considered to be acts of God.²⁵ To the invaders of the New World, the religion of the Aztecs was not only pagan and heretical, but satanic.²⁶ The indigenous deities were seen as monstrous; Quetzalcóatl, for example, the feather-serpent-god, was equated with the serpent of Genesis, the Devil.²⁷ And some of the Aztecs’ practices, against their own people, such as methods of human sacrifice, in the name of their own religion, were undeniably gruesome. The Spanish conquerors, therefore, in bringing the Aztec people to the Catholic faith, by whatever means, truly believed that they were saving them.

The Catholicization of the indigenous populations of New Spain was achieved, though, not just by bloodshed but by indoctrinating means, through a process of religious syncretism, or an assimilation of beliefs and motifs, of traces of the old faith with the new. Graham-Dixon (2008) discusses this concept of symbolic fusion in the art of Mexico’s forefathers – in context with the *Reconquista*, or the reconquest of Hispania, the reclamation of Catholic autonomy over Islamic occupation and rule (711 – 1492) – exemplified in the *retablo mayor*, the grand altarpiece, of the Catedral de Santa María de la Sede, in Seville, Southern Spain, completed in 1564 (see fig. 2.3):

²⁵ This statement includes the efforts to annihilate Islam and banish Judaism from Spain.

²⁶ See Francis Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe* (Cuauhtémoc, MX: Editorial Verdad y Vida, 1981), 48.

²⁷ See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 2005).

They demolished the great [Almohad mosque]... and put up in its place... the single largest Christian cathedral in the world. A great crushing symbol of the triumph of militant Christianity.... Built in the North-European [gothic] style..., this might be the last place you'd expect to find traces of Islamic design. But if you look closely enough, it appears that old habits die hard. What's extraordinary about the gothic style as done by the Spanish... is this incredible sense of over-decoration.... It's almost as if every inch of space has to be decorated. And what it makes me think of is the Moorish terror of empty space, that absolute covering of every inch. I wonder whether the experience of Spanish Christians... wasn't so permeated by a sense of Moorish pattern and design that [it]... worked itself into the very soul of Spanish art, so that, although this great altarpiece represents the grand triumph of Christianity over the forces of Islam, at the same time, it completely expresses a kind of Moorish aesthetic. It's deeply Spanish, deeply Moorish, and Christian, all at the same time.²⁸

Even though the Islamic art of the Spanish Moors was, by law, not permitted to depict living beings,²⁹ and examples of Spanish Gothic art, such as the Seville Cathedral altarpiece, display a sea of human faces and figures, what Graham-Dixon means is that the space is treated in such a way that the representational is blurred into a mass of decorative surface-pattern. The *retablo mayor* is so overwrought that it is hard to find focal points. Thus, unless one is standing very close to it, the intricate details are almost obliterated. However, symbolically, in its over-embellishment, it aligns itself with, competes with, *and* outdoes, the old faith.

²⁸ Andrew Graham-Dixon, "The Moorish South," ep. 1, in *Art of Spain*, TV documentary series, produced and directed by Mark Bates (London: BBC, January 31, 2008).

²⁹ Islam forbids graven images of sentient beings (not including all living things, such as plant forms). Therefore, Islamic art compensates by using an abundance of intricate abstract, geometric, and organic surface pattern.

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Figure 2.3: Pierre Dancart (sculptor)

Retablo Mayor, Catedral de Santa María de la Sede, Seville, 1482 – 1564

The Gothic style of the *retablo mayor* was transported to New Spain. It is seen in many examples at the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, in Mexico City. A later style, also imported from Spain, is represented by the *Altar of the Kings* (1718 – 1737), carved in cedar by Jerónimo Balbás, and gilded and finished by Francisco Martínez (see fig. 2.4). It is reportedly the oldest work in Mexico of the Baroque Churrigueresque style. Named after José Benito de Churriguera (1665–1725), a sculptor and architect of Catalan heritage from Madrid, this type of design, again, is marked by an extreme abundance of fine, decorative, detail. It can also be witnessed on the Cathedral’s façade (see fig. 2.5).

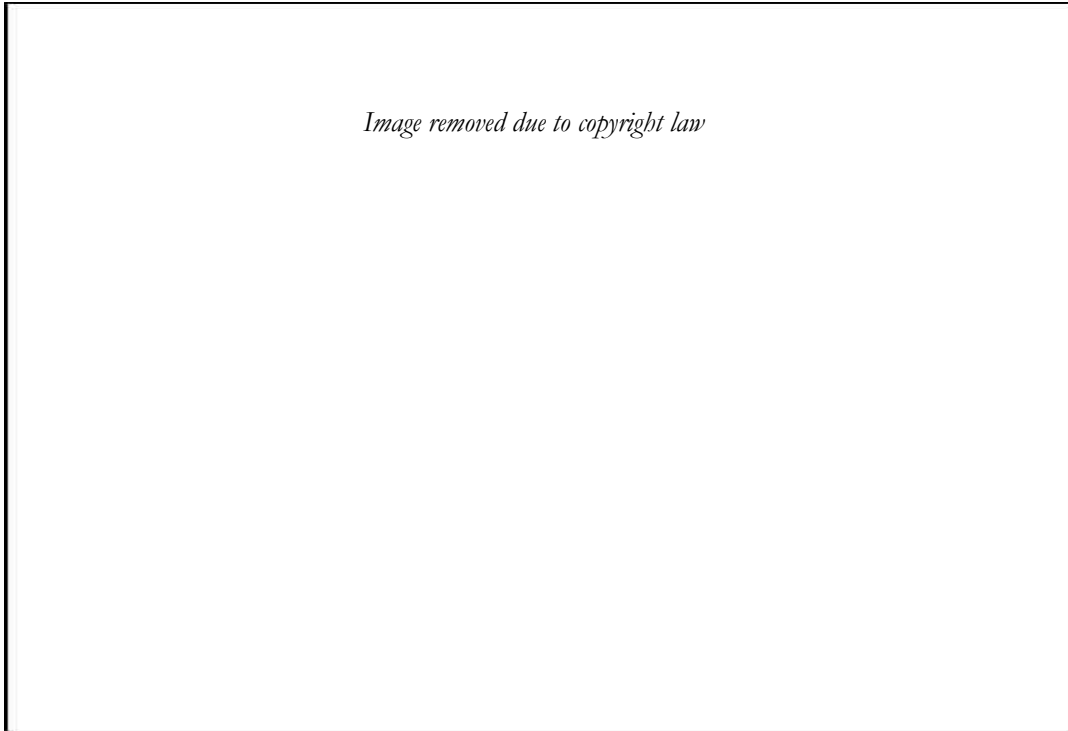


Figure 2.4: Jerónimo Balbás and Francisco Martínez

Altar de Los Reyes, 1718 – 1737

Catedral Metropolitana de La Asunción de La Santísima Virgen María a Los Cielos, 1573 – 1813

Paz (1976) writes:

The art of New Spain, like the very society which created it, did not want to be *new*; it wanted to be *another*. . . . The Baroque aesthetic sought to surprize, dazzle, go beyond. The art of New Spain is not an art of invention but of free use – more precisely: of freer use – of the fundamental elements of imported styles. It is an art that combines and mixes motifs and manners.³⁰

Just as the Spanish Gothic style outdid the art of Spain’s previous Islamic occupants, Mexican Baroque sought to be *more than* baroque.

³⁰ Paz, “The Flight of *Quetzalcóatl*, xiv.



Figure 2.5: Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (photo), *El Tabernáculo*, 2014
Catedral Metropolitana de La Asunción de La Santísima Virgen María a Los Cielos, 1573 – 1813

Graham-Dixon (2008) discusses the Baroque period in the art of Spain, in which a “deep fascination with saints and martyrs... gripped seventeenth-century” society.³¹ He says that “pain had become the mark of piety; God’s sign written into your very flesh that you’d become one of his chosen.”³² In reference to the work of Jusepe de Ribera (1591 – 1652), “the most visceral artist of this pain,” he states:³³

There’s *The Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*... Bartholomew was executed by being skinned alive. There’s a tremendously strong emphasis... on the sheer visceral pain that goes with being a saint. These are religious paintings, but... what they show us is real flesh and blood, human bodies being subjected to appalling torments. You see the sweat, the blood, the straining sinews. There’d been violence of this kind in religious art before but, in Spanish art, everything’s more intense. It’s as if the volume’s been turned up.”³⁴

In Mexico, this grisly horror of historical Spanish religious realism is transferred to three-dimensional Church objects (see figs 2.6 – 2.11). These do as much to instil the fear of God in the onlooker as the majestic edifices mesmerize and enrapture. Where else can one find sacred effigies as gory and fundamentally gothic as a blind baby Jesus, grinning and “staring” at us through empty, hollow, sockets, with blood stains on his cheeks, and tears running off his face and onto his chest, while he holds up his own gouged-out eyes on a gold palette (see fig. 2.6)? Then we discover relics, such as the actual corporeal remains of Beato Sebastián de Aparicio, a sixteenth-century monk, his face covered by a death mask (see fig. 2.7). *This* kind of gothic is more overwrought than overdone decoration.

³¹ Graham-Dixon, “The Dark Heart.”

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*



Figure 2.6 (above): Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (photo), 2017
El Niño Cieguito, Iglesia de Convento de Las Capuchinas de Puebla, Ciudad de Puebla



Figure 2.7 (above): Kathryn Hardy Bernal (photo), 2017
The remains of Beato Sebastián de Aparicio (1502 – 1600) with death mask
Templo de Conventual de San Francisco, Ciudad de Puebla



Figure 2.8 (above): Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (photo), 2014
Old Basilica of Guadalupe, Tepeyac, México



Figure 2.9 (above): Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (photo), 2017
Catedral Basílica de Nuestra Señora de la Inmaculada Concepción de Puebla, Ciudad de Puebla





Figures 2.10 – 2.11 (previous and above): Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (photos), 2017
Parroquia de Nuestro Señor San José de Puebla, Ciudad de Puebla

These examples demonstrate just a grain in the sand when it comes to the abundance of these types of effigies of Jesus and male saints in Mexican church art (see figs 2.6 – 2.11). Exposure to these gritty, visceral representations is part of everyday life for a greater percentage of Mexican people. Statistically, Mexico is the second-largest Catholic population in the world (following Brazil) with 96,450,000 Mexican citizens claiming Catholicism as their religion on their census forms in 2010.³⁵ According to Michael Lipka writing for the *Pew Research Center* (2016), studies carried out in 2014 demonstrated that 90% of Mexican people were raised as Catholic, with 81% retaining their faith, and continuing to practice their religion, into adulthood.³⁶ Therefore, as a major church-going nation, the saturation of this body of intensely pious yet also confronting imagery of figures “subjected to appalling torments,” a legacy of the colonial gothic and baroque art of New Spain, is a familiar element in Mexican society, as well as an important context for the hauntology of the Mexican environment.

Just as populous, however, are depictions of female figures of divinity, particularly of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which, in their often harrowing, sorrowful beauty, counteract but also emphasize the violence of the portrayals of her son Jesus, which are so terrible that they constantly remind us of the cause of her unbearable pain (see fig. 2.11). In Mexico, the most important incarnation of Our Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, is Our Lady of Guadalupe.

³⁵ Anonymous, “The Global Catholic Population,” *Pew Research Center: Religion & Public Life*, February 13, 2013, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/> (accessed September 7, 2018).

³⁶ Michael Lipka, “A Snapshot of Catholics in Mexico, Pope Francis’ Next Stop,” *Pew Research Center*, February 10, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/10/a-snapshot-of-catholics-in-mexico-pope-francis-next-stop/> (accessed September 7, 2018).

Our Lady of Guadalupe³⁷

It is an endeavour of this thesis to explore and analyse motifs of Mexican visual and material culture, especially in association with Mexico's hybrid religious environment, as a backdrop to the presentation of the Mexican Gothic Lolita image. As the Gothic and Lolita identity is designed, universally, around the feminine identity, it is also essential to examine the prominent position of female icons in Mexican culture, as context. Foremost is Our Lady of Guadalupe, although there are other ubiquitous female representations in Mexico, including La Santa Muerte, and La Calavera Catrina. These three figures are all symbols of Mexico's hybrid culture and religious character and are, thus, relevant to an understanding of the psychology behind the Mexican Gothic Lolita's often hybrid gothic and Catholic symbology. In this chapter, beginning with Our Lady of Guadalupe, and continuing into the next chapter with La Muerte and La Catrina, I examine the significance of these female identities, and how their presence contributes to not just Mexican Gothic Lolita styles but to the makeup of a national Mexican consciousness. It is, especially, in association with Mexico's unique relationship with Our Mother – markedly in her incarnation as Our Lady of Guadalupe, but also in connection with all of these figures – that the processes of colonization, Catholicization, syncretism, and assimilation, and the formulation of hybridity in Mexican Catholicism, but also the nature and makeup of the Mexican people, can be explored.

³⁷ The main sources I have consulted on this topic include: Barbara Calamari and Sandra di Pasqua, *Visions of Mary* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 2014); Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*; Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*; Sara Miles, *City of God: Faith in the Streets* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014); Paz, "The Flight of Quetzalcóatl and the Quest for Legitimacy;" Jeanette Favrot Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe, Extremadura, Spain," *Conversations: An Online Journal of the Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of New Religion*, 2014, http://mavcor.yale.edu/sites/default/files/article_pdf/peterson_jeanette_favrot.pdf (accessed October 6, 2017); and Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*.

Just as the Cathedral of Seville symbolizes the defeat of Islam in Spain, the colonial Spanish Cathedral of Mexico City stands for the conquest of the indigenous civilization in New Spain. In both cases, these structures also literally, not just metaphorically, represent the attempted obliteration of the previous cultures, as they are constructed on top of the remains of the demolished societies. Under the foundations of the Catedral Metropolitana and the surrounding historic centre of Mexico City, lie the ruins of the great city of Tenochtitlán, or México-Tenochtitlán (in Náhuatl, Mēxihco-Tenōchtitlan), the capital of the Aztec Empire. Its Templo Mayor, the main structure of the early-fourteenth-century temple complex, was levelled in 1521 by the Spanish invaders in order to begin building the Cathedral in its place (see fig. 2.1). However, as much as this iconoclastic action implies, traces of the indigenous religion live on, disguised in elements of the “new faith.” As Jacques Lafaye (1976) states: “Just as the Christians built their first churches with the rubble... of the ancient pagan temples, so they often borrowed pagan customs for their own cult purposes.”³⁸ The greatest symbol of this cultural borrowing is Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

³⁸ Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, 214.

The Miraculous Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe

It is said that, in 1531, an indigenous Mexican man, of humble means, Juan Diego (1474 – 1548), happened to witness several apparitions of Our Lady Mother at the foot of a hill at Tepeyac, on the edge of Mexico City.³⁹ This man, born in Cuauhtitlan, was originally called Cuauhtlatoatzin, but was renamed after Christianization.⁴⁰ After moving to the town of Tolpetlac, it became Diego's habit to walk to the Franciscan mission at Tlatelolco, via Tepeyac, in order to undertake religious studies. During these journeys, Our Lady appeared to him four times.

The first time, Our Lady entreated Diego to approach the bishop and persuade him to build a shrine for her, in her name, on top of the hill at Tepeyac, so that she may be called upon by worshippers in aid of her succour. Diego took this request to the Spanish-born bishop, Fray Juan Zumárraga, who heeded little attention to the peasant's story. On Diego's return to Tolpetlac, he saw Our Lady again, explaining that his mission had failed. Our Lady implored Diego to keep trying. The next time he visited Zumárraga, the bishop was still not convinced but now urged him to supply some evidence.

³⁹ Although some sources say that Juan Diego was a humble peasant, others provide conflicting information, with some stating that he was an Aztec prince. Cesar Franco writes: "Juan Diego was no ordinary Indian, but the grandson of King Netzahualcoyotl, and the son to King Netzahualpilh and Queen Tlacayehuatzin, who was a descendant of Moctezuma I...." See Cesar Franco, "Our Lady of Guadalupe: She Who Smashes the Serpent," *America Needs Fatima*, <https://www.americaneedsfatima.org/Our-Blessed-Mother/our-lady-of-guadalupe-she-who-smashes-the-serpent.html> (accessed October 12, 2017). Note: Netzahualcoyotl is famous in Mexican history as a warrior, philosopher and poet. See "Saint Juan Diego," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Juan-Diego> (accessed October 12, 2017).

⁴⁰ The Aztec name, Cuauhtlatoatzin, means "the eagle that speaks," or "the talking eagle." Juan Diego, who is also referred to as Juan Diegotzil, is now officially San Juan Diego (Saint Juan) after his canonization in 2002. See Yvonne Wakim Dennis, Arlene Hirschfelder, and Shannon Rothenberger Flynn, *Native American Almanac: More Than 50,000 Years of the Cultures and Histories of Indigenous Peoples* (Detroit, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2016); .Pope John Paul II, "Apostolic Visit to Toronto, to Ciudad de Guatemala and to Ciudad de México: Canonization of Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, Homily of the Holy Father John Paul II, Mexico City, Wednesday July 31, 2002," *Vatican News: Homilies* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vatican, 2002), http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020731_canonization-mexico.html (accessed October 12, 2017); and Vatican, "Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin (1474 - 1548)," *Vatican News: Saints* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vatican), http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20020731_juan-diego_en.html (accessed October 12, 2017).

On the way back from Diego's second consultation with the bishop, he met Our Lady for the third time, whereby he relayed Zumárraga's request for a sign. Our Lady promised Diego that she would comply with the bishop's demand at their next meeting.

The fourth apparition was the one of greatest consequence. During this encounter with Our Lady, the discussion involved the grave illness of Diego's uncle, Juan Bernardino. After learning of this situation, Our Lady assured Diego that, upon returning to Tolpetlac, he would find his uncle to be healed.⁴¹ She then instructed Diego to go to the top of the Tepeyac hill where he would find some blooms to pick for the bishop. Diego was surprised to find these flowers, as they were not native to the land, and he'd never seen their type before. Besides, the hill was rocky, and the soil was not viable for their growth. Some say that the flowers were Castilian roses, of the kind that the Spanish-born Zumárraga had sorely missed. Diego collected a bunch of the blooms and carried them in his *tilma*, a traditional robe woven from hemp, to offer to the bishop. As he stood before Zumárraga, Diego unfolded his *tilma*, whereby the flowers tumbled to the ground and, in their place, imprinted on Diego's garment, appeared a miraculous likeness of Our Lady. This very image is trusted to be the one that hangs, framed, to this day, at the altar of Our Lady's shrine, in Mexico City (see figs 2.12, & 2.20).⁴²

⁴¹ The fifth apparition is identified as Our Lady's visitation to the sick uncle, Juan Bernardino, whereby he rose from his deathbed, cured.

⁴² During the course of its history, this sacred image has been relocated several times, to different sites around the hill at Tepeyac. One of the most important is the old *Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, officially the *Templo Expiatorio a Cristo Rey* (1695 – 1709), which housed the image until 1976. The new purpose-built basilica, erected in 1974 – 76, is situated just metres from the older edifice.

The Significance of Our Ladies of Guadalupe

It is said that the bishop, Fray Juan Zumárraga, believed that the sacred image, imprinted on the *tilma* of Juan Diego, to be a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, embodied in an effigy of his homeland (see fig. 2.13). Also known as Our Lady of Guadalupe, her shrine is located at the Real Monasterio de Santa María, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, near the river, Guadalupe, in the Caceres province of the Extremadura autonomous region of the former Kingdom of Castile, Spain.⁴³

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 2.12: *The venerated image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, The National Shrine
Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Tepeyac, México*

⁴³ The name, “Guadalupe,” is a combination of the Arabic word, “*wadi*,” meaning “river,” and the Latin word, “*lupe*,” meaning “wolf.” It is, therefore, translated as “Wolf River.” See Miles, *City of God*, 153.



Figure 2.13: *Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine*
El Real Monasterio de Santa María, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe
Cáceres Province, Extremadura, Spain

Graham-Dixon (2008) explains that the Extremadura Virgin has an historical connection to the conquistadors, the conquerors of New Spain:

Before the conquistadors set off for the New World, they made a public display of their piety. To pray for safe passage, they visited one of the holiest shrines in Europe, and a well-spring of extreme Catholic fervour, at the Monastery of Guadalupe [in Spain]. Around the year 1290, the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared to a [Spanish] shepherd, and guided him to a statue, buried in the ground.... What the shepherd found became one of the most sacred treasures of the Catholic world, the Virgin of Guadalupe... blackened with age....⁴⁴ For centuries, the Spanish have prayed to the Madonna of Guadalupe. Christopher Columbus, in 1492, came... to pray to her before setting sail for the New World. And the reason was... they believed... this was no ordinary Madonna: This was a portrait of Mary, Mother of God, herself, carved by none other than Saint Luke. And you can still feel that intensity of veneration, in the splendour in which she is housed today.⁴⁵

As Graham-Dixon indicates, the incarnation of the Virgin in Spain has a just-as-colourful history as Our Lady of Tepeyac, and her story portrays some coincidences.⁴⁶ It is said that she was carved by and buried with the evangelist, Saint Luke, in the first century. When the Saint's remains were discovered in the fourth century, they were removed, along with the icon, to Constantinople, the seat of the Holy Roman Empire.⁴⁷ In the sixth century, during the reign of Pope Gregory I, Saint Gregory the Great,⁴⁸ the Virgin was brought to Rome, where she was deemed responsible for the end of a plague.

⁴⁴ There is also a strong argument that she is intentionally black, and that she represents but one example of many ancient black "Virgins" that were originally created to portray the Egyptian goddess, Isis. I have left this aspect aside, for now, as an elaboration on this theory would take the thesis too far off track.

⁴⁵ Graham-Dixon, "The Dark Heart."

⁴⁶ See Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*; and Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*.

⁴⁷ According to Lafaye (1976): "It is almost certain that the image is a Byzantine work, probably of a few centuries AD (the rich ornaments with which it is decked out do not allow a complete examination)." See *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, 221. However, other sources say that it is Medieval, or at least in a style that had become prolific by the time it was "rediscovered" in the fourteenth century. Peterson (2014) claims that: "When the Christ child is seated frontally on his mother's lap, [it is] conforming to a genre referred to as the 'Throne of Wisdom' (*sedes sapientiae*), that disseminated outward from Northern Europe between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries." See Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe."

⁴⁸ Gregorius I (c. 540 – 12 March 604). His papal reign began September 3, 590, ending upon his death.

She then seemingly dispelled another great epidemic in the ancient city of Hispalis (Seville), after being gifted by Gregory to San Leandro,⁴⁹ Archbishop of Seville, for his part in bringing the Visigothic Kings of Hispania, Hermengildo and Reccared, to the Catholic faith. In 714, during the fall of Seville by the Moors, she was evacuated to Extremadura, buried there in a cave, and subsequently lost for six-hundred years. In the fourteenth century, the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to Gil Cordero, a local shepherd, letting him know where the icon could be found. This led to its unearthing by a group of priests, and its subsequent installation in the monastery, where it has been worshipped, ever since. The level of importance of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Extremadura was demonstrated by her canonical coronation by Pope Pius XI on October 12, 1928, attended by King Alfonso XIII, and all the Spanish cardinals.⁵⁰

Leaving aside belief in the legends, Rosemary Radford Ruether (2005) suggests how the miraculous Tepeyac image might have been linked with the Extremadura Virgin:

It is possible that a small shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe of Extremadura was connected with Tepeyac... sometime before 1550.... Cortés's army camped on this hill... in preparation for the siege of the Aztec capital in 1521. Cortés and many of his men came from the Spanish region of Extremadura and brought a devotion to the Virgin... with them to New Spain..... [T]he shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe at Tepeyac began to draw pilgrims... based on a belief in its miraculous healing powers. In 1556, we find the first definite reference to veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe at Tepeyac... [the archbishop of Mexico, Alonso de Montúfar's] sermon of September 6, encouraging devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe."⁵¹

In New Spain, the rapidly growing veneration of Our Lady was accelerated by the vision of the miraculous image of the Virgin of Tepeyac, leading to the transcendence of the supremacy of her Spanish counterpart.

⁴⁹ Saint Leander (c. 534 – 13 March, 600 CE).

⁵⁰ Her crown was designed by Fray Félix Granda y Álvarez Buylla (1868 – 1954).

⁵¹ Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 206 – 207.

On 12 October 1895, Our Lady of Guadalupe of Tepeyac received her own canonical coronation, administered by Pope Leo XIII, thirty-three years *before* her Spanish namesake. In 1737, she had become the Principle Patroness of Mexico City.⁵² In 1810, when the priest, Don Hidalgo,⁵³ called for the state of Mexican independence during his famous speech, *El Grito de Dolores* (The Cry of Dolores), he rallied the insurgents under the banner of Our Lady.⁵⁴ When José María Morelos presented his document, *Sentimientos de la Nación* (Feelings of the Nation), to the National Constituent Congress in 1813, outlaying his vision of an independent Mexico, he ordered that all patriots should wear the Emblem of the Virgin of Guadalupe.⁵⁵ The first president of Mexico (1824 – 1829) changed his name to Guadalupe Victoria.⁵⁶ In 1910, Emiliano Zapata, one of the main leaders of the Mexican Revolution, chose the image of Our Lady as the revolutionaries' flag.⁵⁷ In that same year, Our Lady was proclaimed by Pope Pius X as the Patroness of Latin America. On July 16, 1935, that title was extended by Pope Pius XI as the Heavenly Patroness of the Philippines. In 1945, Pope Pius XII named her Queen of Mexico and, in 1946, Empress of all the Americas. And, in 1999, Pope John Paul II created her title of Protectress of Unborn Children.

As Paz (1976) has stated, “Mexican people... have faith only in the Virgin of Guadalupe and the National Lottery.”⁵⁸

⁵² Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, xxvii.

⁵³ Miguel Gregorio Antonio Ignacio Hidalgo-Costilla y Gallaga Mandarte Villaseñor (8 May 1753 – 30 July 1811).

⁵⁴ Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, xxviii. Note: Hidalgo's rally occurred in the town of Dolores, Guanajuato, Mexico, hence the name of the event. The meaning of “Dolores” is “pains,” or “sorrows,” and is linked with the Virgin through her title as Our Lady of Sorrows. I discuss the relevance of this connection in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

⁵⁵ José María Tecló Morelos Pérez y Pavón (30 September 1765 – 22 December 1815).

⁵⁶ José Miguel Ramón Adauto Fernández y Félix (29 September 1786 – 21 March 1843).

⁵⁷ Emiliano Zapata Salazar (8 August 1879 – 10 April 1919).

⁵⁸ Paz, “The Flight of *Quetzalcóatl*, x.

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Figure 2.14 (above):

*Worshippers camping overnight outside the National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
December 11, 2014, on the eve of Our Lady's Feast Day*

Figure 2.15 (below): "On her feast day, pilgrims gather early in the morning to carry an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in procession outside the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City."

Image removed due to copyright law

On December 12, the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, worshippers flock to the National Shrine (see figs 2.14, & 2.15).⁵⁹ It is estimated that there are at least 20,000,000 visitors every year.⁶⁰ On February 14, 2016, the Argentinian-born Pope Francis held a mass there, attended by 40,000 people.⁶¹ Inés San Martín (2016) states:

Let's face it: Despite the pontiff's love for the poor and the peripheries, it's the Virgin of Guadalupe who truly brought Pope Francis to Aztec soil. "How could I not come?" Francis asked the Mexican bishops.... "Could the Successor of Peter, called from the far south of Latin America, deprive himself of seeing *La Virgen Morenita* (the brown-skinned Virgin)?"⁶²

So, *why* is this image so powerful and widely revered by not just people of Mexican heritage but by many other Latin-Americans, and millions of Catholics around the world? First of all, Our Lady is said to have *chosen* the Aztec peasant, Juan Diego. San Martín (2016) writes, citing the pontiff's homily:

According to the Guadalupe tradition, Our Lady appeared to a young Indian.... The fact that she not only spoke in his native language but appeared to be wearing the dress of an Aztec princess, is credited with producing millions of conversions to the Catholic faith in less than seven years. "Just as she made herself present to little Juan... she continues to reveal herself to all of us..." Francis said.... "This specific choice – we might call it preferential – was not against anyone, but rather in favour of everyone," the Pope said. "The little Indian, Juan, who called himself a 'leather strap, a back frame, a tail, a wing, oppressed by another's burden,' became 'the ambassador, most worthy of trust....' We are all necessary, especially those who [think they] do not count..."⁶³

⁵⁹ Pope Clement IX declared December 12 to be the Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in 1667.

⁶⁰ ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation), "Pilgrimage Statistics: Annual Figures," December 2011, <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/ARC%20pilgrimage%20statistics%20155m%2011-12-19.pdf> (accessed October 2, 2017). Note: These statistics are from 2011. Therefore, the numbers will surely have increased.

⁶¹ Pope Francis was baptized Jorge Mario Bergoglio (b. 17 December 1936, Buenos Aires).

⁶² Inés San Martín, "Pope Francis' Love Affair with Our Lady of Guadalupe," *Cruz*, February 14, 2016, <https://cruznow.com/church/2016/02/14/pope-francis-love-affair-with-our-lady-of-guadalupe/> (accessed October 1, 2017).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, as San Martín claims, Our Lady appeared to Diego as an Aztec princess.

She, thus, resembles her people (see figs 2.12, & 2.20). As Lafaye (1976) writes:

[She is] “Mother of the Indians....” A Virgin with an olive complexion who... appeared to an Indian. Guadalupe made creoles, *mestizos*, and Indians a single people united by the same charismatic faith.⁶⁴

She is, literally, *Our Mother*; “one of us.” Michael Duricy, from the University of Dayton, discusses a phenomenon whereby many examples of the Virgin in Classical and Medieval art are depicted as “Black Madonnas.” He emphasizes that:

There are black Madonnas and “*Black Madonnas*.” The former applies... to any [darker skinned]...representation[s] of Mary.... The term used... to designate these images is inculturated Madonnas, meaning [they are created]... for people of the same or similar cultures.... However... the meaning of [the] “Black Madonna,” used here, refers to a type of Marian statue or painting of mainly Medieval origin (12C – 15C) [of the color black, of which the]... exact origins are not always easy to determine....⁶⁵

Duricy cites an earlier study on the subject, presented by Leonard Moss, on December 28, 1952, to the delegates of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Of his almost one-hundred research objects, Moss identifies three categories:

[1.] Madonnas with [the] physiognomy and skin pigmentation matching... the [relevant] indigenous population; [2.] Various art forms that have turned black as a result of certain physical factors, such as [the] deterioration of lead-based pigments, accumulated smoke from... votive candles, and [the] accumulation of grime over the ages; [and 3.] No ready explanation.⁶⁶

Our Lady of Tepeyac is counted as the first type, an “inculturated” Madonna.

⁶⁴ Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, 288.

⁶⁵ Michael Duricy, “Black Madonnas: Origin, History, Controversy,” *All About Mary, International Marian Research Institute, University of Dayton*, <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/b/black-madonnas-origin-history-controversy.php> (accessed October 6, 2017).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Re: Type 1, an image of a darker-skinned Mary also fits more closely with her Nazarene origins.



Figure 2.16: Kathryn Hardy Bernal (photo), *Altar of Forgiveness*, 2017
Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, Mexico City

But, what if Our Lady of Tepeyac was never meant to be considered a vision of the “darkened” Spanish effigy of Guadalupe? To begin with, in Mexico, many religious figures are dark or, literally, of the colour black. During my visits, I have seen instances of black saints, and even black Jesus (see figure 2.16). Perhaps the wooden examples *have* blackened over time. If not, and if the convention is intentional, I can imagine that, hypothetically, it might be inspired by the traditional, indigenous practice of carving figures from natural black Mexican obsidian.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ I discuss obsidian, the substance, the objects, and the craft, in some detail, in the following chapter.

However, Our Lady of Tepeyac is *not* dark, or black, or blackened; she is of her own people. This aspect aligns with the suggestion that, to most of her indigenous sixteenth-century worshippers (and to many until this day), she is believed to represent the Aztec goddess, Tonantzin, also referred to, historically, as “Our Mother.”⁶⁸ One of the most convincing aspects of the image to support this argument is that her dress is imprinted, all over, with the four-petalled flower motif that, to the Nahua people, symbolized the life-force of the sun. Then, again, this may be coincidental as it could just as easily represent the medieval European gothic quatrefoil of Catholic design.

But, what if her actual name was Coatloxopeuh, as in Tonantzin-Coatloxopeuh (Our Mother Coatloxopeuh), not Guadalupe but something that sounds like it? Referring to the sacred image, Lafaye (1976) claims that, in fact:

The Spanish name of “Guadalupe” was still unknown to the majority of Indian pilgrims to Tepeyac... [well into the]... eighteenth century.... For the Romans [of the Roman Catholic Church] it was but one more image of Mary, the Immaculate; for the Spaniards it was a copy of the Guadalupe of Extremadura; but, in the eyes of the Indians, it was the Mother Goddess of the Aztecs, Tonantzin, who had *always* dwelt at Tepeyac.⁶⁹

In Pre-Colombian days, there had already stood a temple to the Aztec Mother Goddess, on top of Tepeyac hill, which had pre-dated the shrine erected to Our Lady by Cortés’s men. This temple, destroyed by the Spanish invaders, had been dedicated to Cihuacóatl, meaning the “wife of the serpent,” the spouse of the serpent-god, Quetzalcóatl. As Tonantzin is translated as “Our Mother;” she was known as Tonantzin-Cihuacóatl, or “Our Mother Cihuacóatl.”⁷⁰ Lafaye (1976) explains that the name “Tonantzin” designated Cihuacóatl in the same way that ‘Our Lady’ designates the Virgin,

⁶⁸ See Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*; Paz, “The Flight of Quetzalcóatl and the Quest for Legitimacy;” and Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*.

⁶⁹ Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, 277.

⁷⁰ See Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*.

Mary.”⁷¹ It has been argued, however, that it was Tonantzin-Coatloxopeuh, rather than Tonantzin-Cihuacóatl, who appeared to Juan Diego. Johnston (1981) explains that:

In 1895, Professor D. Mariano Jacobo Rojas, head of the department of Náhuatl... [concluded] that the Virgin [was]... Coatloxopeuh.... In those areas of Mexico where Náhuatl is still spoken, the inhabitants still refer to the sacred image as Santa Maria *Te Quatlaxupe* (a slightly easier form to pronounce than Coatloxopeuh).⁷²

This name better suits the established interpretation of the message believed to be imbedded in the sacred image. Johnston (1981) cites Helen Behrens (1964), who he refers to as its “foremost authority:”

The Aztec “*Te coatloxopeuh*” has a similar sound. “*Te*” means “stone,” “*coa*” means “serpent,” [and] “*tlá*” is the noun ending, which can be interpreted as “the,” while “*xopeuh*” means “crush” or “stamp out.” Her precious image will thus be known by the name of the Entirely Perfect Virgin, Holy Mary, and she will crush, stamp out, abolish or eradicate the stone serpent.⁷³

It is through the iconographic meaning of the Virgin of Tepeyac that we can begin to understand how her conflation with Tonantzin was instrumental in converting a whole civilization to the new faith. In a time when the didactic power of imagery was more powerful than the word, especially due to poorer levels of literacy, or language differences, and when the image is not just a picture but believed to be an entity, in itself, we see how the act of the Aztec Mother Goddess, particularly if she *is* Cihuacóatl, who was once the wife and equal of the revered serpent-god, now trampling the serpent under her feet, could be, psychologically, so persuasive. Johnston (1981) states:

⁷¹ Ibid., 212.

⁷² Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 47 – 48. Note: According to Johnston, Jacobo Rojas claimed that the Virgin called herself by this name when she spoke to Juan Diego’s uncle, Juan Bernardino.

⁷³ Ibid, 48; quoting Helen Behrens, *America’s Treasure: The Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, A Short History of the Apparitions of the Virgin Mary to the Indian, Juan Diego and of the Miraculous Appearance of Her Picture on His Tilma (Mantle)* (Mexico: Helen Behrens, 1964).

[The serpent] was the dreaded feathered-serpent-god Quetzalcóatl, the most monstrous of all the original Aztec deities.... The blessed Virgin was *implying* that she would crush all the Aztec gods.... The serpent... is specifically identified as Satan. And her victory over the serpent is precisely what transpired. As a direct result of the apparition, there ensued the greatest mass conversion to Christianity in history.⁷⁴

In the prodigious image enshrined at the national basilica, *however*, there is *no serpent* (see fig. 2.20)! What might be imagined to be a little snake at her feet is just the hem of her dress. In her equation with Mary, the Immaculate, who *is* often portrayed as stepping on a snake, dragon, or “serpent” (see figs 2.18, & 2.19), this relationship is, thus, as Johnston (1981) states, *implied*.⁷⁵

What Our Lady of Guadalupe of Tepeyac, *is* standing on, though, is a crescent moon (see figs 2.12, & 2.20). This can be interpreted in several ways. First of all, it relates the image to the iconography of the Virgin’s Immaculate Conception, in which Mary is represented as the Queen of Heaven (see fig. 2.18). As she stands upon the moon, she can be seen as the ruler of the moon. As the moon is female, while the sun is male, in many European *and* non-European cultures, ancient and modern, including those of Mesoamerica, she is, thus, the Moon Goddess.⁷⁶ The goddess Selene (Greek)/Luna (Roman) is the personification of the moon, while Artemis (Greek)/Diana (Roman) is the Virgin moon-goddess and the Goddess of Virginité. As Our Lady stands upon the moon and in front of the sun, which illuminates her, and her dress is seen to be covered in the four-petalled Nahua motif for the sun’s life-force, she can also be recognized as ruler of both, the moon *and* the sun.

⁷⁴ Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 48.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷⁶ This association tends to stem from an observation of Woman’s biological cycle and its resonance with the “basic rhythms” of the universe, as a menstrual cycle is generally (on average) the length of one calendar month, which is determined by the lunar cycle. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, however, in some pre-historic cultures, the moon was considered to be male. See “Moon Worship,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/moon-worship> (accessed October 10, 2018).

Through her connection as ruler of the moon and the sun, she can also be equated with the bearer and ruler of all Aztec gods and goddesses, the matriarch, Cōātlīcue, who gave birth to the moon-goddess, Coyolxāuhqu, and the sun-god, Huītzilōpōchtli. This demonstrates just one example of sympathies between the old and new faiths that hypothetically contributed to the development of religious syncretism and facilitated a means to conversion. Mary, Mother of God, and her son, Jesus, have supplanted the goddess-mother, Cōātlīcue, and her son, Huītzilōpōchtli. The notion of a “snake” at her hemline is then given some relevance, as Cōātlīcue means “skirt of snakes.” But this analysis also lends the image a sinister message in terms of political and religious propaganda, especially related to the idea of the “crushing of the serpent.” In the Catholic tradition, of course, the serpent stands for Satan. However, Quetzalcoātl, the serpent-god, was also the offspring of Cōātlīcue, and the brother of Huītzilōpōchtli, the sun-god, who was the patron deity of the city of Tenochtitlán, the major stronghold of the rulers of the Aztec empire, buried under the New Spanish City of Mexico. Furthermore, the main structure of the great pyramidal complex at Tenochtitlán, the Templo Mayor, which was felled by the conquistadors for the sake of the Cathedral, was dedicated to the sun-god, Huītzilōpōchtli. Therefore, if we are to believe the *implication*, as Johnston (1981) puts it, that the intention of Our Lady is to “crush *all* the Aztec gods,”⁷⁷ not just the serpent-god (which, as mentioned, is *not* apparent in the prodigious image), but all the offspring of Cōātlīcue, including the Sun (Huītzilōpōchtli) and the Moon (Coyolxāuhqu), we might perceive that the subliminal subtext is the desire to stamp out not just the old faith but the civilization. Thus, Our Lady stamps out the moon, under her feet, and leaves the sun behind her.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, 48.

⁷⁸ The two great pyramids built by the Teotihuacán, sometime between 200 BCE and 200 CE (and still standing), were renamed and dedicated to the Sun and the Moon by their Aztec colonizers. This also emphasizes the importance of Huītzilōpōchtli and Coyolxāuhqu.

This brings us back to Our Lady of Tepeyac's connection with the Extremadura Virgin. As highlighted by Graham-Dixon, the Spanish version of Our Lady of Guadalupe was supremely sacred to the conquistadors, the conquerors and colonizers of Aztec Mexico.⁷⁹ Some say that her appearance in New Spain carried a deeper message in association with not just that conquest but the *Reconquista*, or the re-conquest of Spain, the return of the motherland to autonomous Catholic power, after centuries of Islamic occupation and rule. The Extremadura Virgin played a part in that particular story.

When, in 711 CE, the Moorish troops were driven by the Islamic leader, Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād, to invade Visigothic Spain, they destroyed many Catholic churches and religious houses, transforming them into mosques, and forcing their remaining inhabitants to convert to Islam, by threat of death. Andrew Bieszad (2017) writes:

They embarked on a reign of terror which included... the complete military conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by 718.... Faithful Catholics – priests, religious, and laity alike – attempted to preserve their sacred places and objects as much as possible from Islam's destruction.⁸⁰

Bieszad (2017) explains that the church where the statue of the Virgin was kept was one of the buildings sacked, "along with everything in it."⁸¹ "Everything," he says, "except the statue."⁸²

As previously discussed, the effigy was saved, only to be lost again. When it was rediscovered in the 14th century and rehoused, it ended up in the monastery where, in fact, Juan Zumárraga (the bishop of Mexico who witnessed the materialization of the image of Our Lady upon the *tilma* of Juan Diego) was ordained as a Franciscan friar. Zumárraga would have, thus, been very familiar with the icon's history.

⁷⁹ Graham-Dixon, "The Dark Heart."

⁸⁰ Andrew Bieszad, "The Two Guadalupes: Mary and the Crescent Moon," *One Peter Five: Rebuilding Catholic Culture, Restoring Catholic Tradition*, December 12, 2017, <https://onepeterfive.com/the-two-guadalupes-mary-and-the-crescent-moon/> (accessed October 11, 2018).

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

Historians have noted the significance of the Spanish effigy in relation to the wars in Spain against Islam. When, in 1340, in alliance with Yusuf I, Sultan of Granada, the Moors were planning a renewed invasion, the Portuguese and Castilian Kings, Alfonso IV and Alfonso XI, united forces and travelled together to the new shrine at Extremadura, where they implored Our Lady to protect their nations against the further threat of Islam. It was not until 1492 that the Islamic stronghold of Granada finally fell. Bieszad (2017) states that “the thanks given to Our Lady of Guadalupe for the victory she brought the Catholics was not forgotten.”⁸³ This sheds a new light on the meaning of the crescent moon in the Mexican icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Bieszad (2017) writes:

[I]f one looks at the feet of the image of Our Lady, imprinted on the *tilma*, one sees that she is standing upon the crescent moon, which is the symbol of Islam – a symbol that has been carried historically on the flags of... Muslim armies throughout history. To a man like Zumárraga, this would have carried great significance.... Our lady of Guadalupe is the Patroness of the Americas and the Mexican people. However, her very name and image are inseparable from her roots as the woman who exterminated the Islamic serpent beneath her feet in Spain. [And in] Mexico..., [the] Aztec plumed-serpent-god, Quetzalcoátl, [was also] defeated by the beautiful lady from the heavens.⁸⁴

The theory that the Mexican image of Our Lady stands for the mission to stamp out heresy, might be supported by the inundation of images of the Virgin as the Queen of Heaven, standing upon a crescent moon, that began to emerge in Spain, following the fall of the Spanish Islamic state. A survey of the greatest works of the Virgin, according to this theme, from that point forward, and for the next few-hundred years, appear, in fact, to be almost exclusively by Spanish or Hispanic artists. Some of the most renowned examples are by (in order of the artists' dates of birth) Vicente Juan Masip (1507 – 1579),

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Francisco Pacheco (1564 – 1644), Luis Tristán (1586 – 1624), Jusepe de Ribera (1591 – 1652), Francisco de Zurbarán (1598 – 1664), Diego Velázquez (1599 – 1660), Antonio de Pereda (c. 1611 – 1678), Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1618 – 1682), and Juan de Espinal (1714 – 1783), all of whom were born in Spain. Another version by the Italian artist, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770), was actually commissioned by King Charles III of Spain for the Church of Saint Pascual, in Aranjuez. Outside Europe, we see Mexican versions, such as those by Baltazar de Echave Ibía (c. 1583 – 1644), a painter who was born and died in Mexico City (see figs 2.18, & 4.11). There is, therefore, a case for connecting the inception of this theme with the political, religious environment of inquisition and conquest. *However*, there is also evidence that the convention existed in art elsewhere, such as Germany and the Netherlands, and that there were possibly even precedents for the Spanish examples (see fig. 2.18). That is not to say that the Spanish did not utilize the iconography to convey a new political message.

The iconography of Mary Immaculate does, however, have biblical roots. In context with the development of Mary's symbology, she has been associated, since Medieval times, with the "Woman of the Apocalypse," in the Book of Revelation (see fig. 2.17). Revelation 12 (1539) states:

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.⁸⁵ And she was with child, and cried travailing in birth, and pained ready to be delivered.⁸⁶ And there appeared another wonder in heaven... a great red dragon...⁸⁷ [...] And the dragon stood before the woman... for to devour her child as soon as it were born.⁸⁸ And she brought forth a man child, which should rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her son was taken up

⁸⁵ Revelation 12:1 (spelling adjusted from early modern English), in Myles Coverdale, trans., "The Great Bible: Revelation Chapter 12, 1539," *Textus Receptus Bibles*, <http://textusreceptusbibles.com/Great/66/12> (accessed December 9, 2019).

⁸⁶ Revelation 12:2, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Revelation 12:3, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Revelation 12:4, *ibid.*

into God, and to his seat....⁸⁹ And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon....⁹⁰ And the great dragon, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, was cast out... into the earth....⁹¹ And I heard a loud voice saying... heaven is now made safe and strong and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ....⁹² And the dragon was wrathful with the woman... and made war with the remnant of her seed, who keeps the commandments of God, and... the testimony of Jesus Christ.⁹³

Thus, according to interpretation, the Woman is Mary, her son is Jesus, and she thwarts the “great dragon, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan.”

In the case of the prodigious image of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Tepeyac, whatever its origins, meanings and intentions were and are, and whatever one believes the image to be, what is most significant about it is that it brings the people together as an embodiment of what it is to be Mexican. Our Lady is a symbol of the people, of all the people, be them of Visigothic, or Moorish, Spanish, or indigenous American blood, or new settlers, or any mixture of such. As Lafaye (1976) argues:

The question is not whether the image of Guadalupe... is the result of a miracle.... The problem is to understand how it happened that so many believed and still believe... in the miraculous character of the image of Tepeyac. The cult of Guadalupe is the central theme of the history of [Mexican]... consciousness and... patriotism... in which... the cult of Mary Immaculate and one of the fundamental beliefs of the ancient Mexican religion... converge.⁹⁴

Put simply, in Lafaye’s (1976) words, “it was a question of *Mexicanizing* the Immaculate Conception” (see fig. 2.19).⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Revelation 12:5, *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Revelation 12:7, *ibid.*

⁹¹ Revelation 12:9, *ibid.*

⁹² Revelation 12:10, *ibid.*

⁹³ Revelation 12:17, *ibid.*

⁹⁴ Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe*, 299.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 300.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 2.17: German School, *Jungfrau der Apokalypse (Virgin of the Apocalypse)*, c. 1470

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 2.18:

Baltasar de Echave Ibañeta (México), *Inmaculada Concepción*, c.1600



Figure 2.19:

A popular image portraying Our Lady of Guadalupe as Mary, the Immaculate



Figure 2.20:

The devotional image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The “Catholicization” of the Gothic Lolita

According to the thematic framework of this chapter, when it comes to the examination of the Gothic Lolita identity in Mexico, one will often observe an ecclesiastical essence to the style. While the Japanese Gothic Lolita identity adopts religious motifs that are popularly appropriated by contemporary gothic and medievalist fashion styles, and are often associated with the subcultural goth movement, such as crosses and crucifixes, the Mexican Gothic Lolita adds a sophisticated Catholic sensibility to the cuter Japanese variant. Even garments by official Japanese Gothic and Lolita designer-led brands are restyled, re-accessorized, and recontextualized by members of the Mexican community.

This can be seen in the following image of Briz Blossom (Guadalajara, Jalisco) (see fig. 2.21). This shot demonstrates an example of what can be read as a “Catholicization” of the Classic, Gothic and Lolita identities. Singularly, not all of the sartorial elements evoke a religious flavour, and some are certainly not intended, originally, to do so, perhaps not even by Briz, herself, but when creatively combined, and set against this backdrop, they are lent new meaning.

Within this compositional and aesthetic framework, the colour of Briz’s dress, which is by the Japanese Gothic and Lolita label, Angelic Pretty, becomes reminiscent of the supposed colour of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s gown, which, in the miraculous image, has now faded to a pale red (pink) but is depicted as either a vibrant-red, carmine, crimson, rich-rose-red, or burgundy, in most interpretations. The symbolism of rose-red in connection with Mary means “martyrdom for the faith,” and “divine love.”⁹⁶ The red rose, itself, is a Marian symbol.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Anonymous, “Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church: Symbolism of the Image,” <http://www.olgaustin.org/symbolism.shtml> (accessed October 12, 2018).

⁹⁷ In the most recognized portrait of the Tudor Queen Mary I of England, daughter of King Henry VIII and the Spanish-born Queen Catalina de Aragon, by Antonis Mor, 1554, Mary holds a red rose to symbolize her name, Mary, in association with the Blessed Virgin, Mary, and to emphasize her utter devotion to the Marian Catholic faith.

Red is also, historically, both clerical and royal: It is the traditional colour of the Roman Catholic cardinals; and, as demonstrated in paintings of the period, was a favourite of sixteenth-century Spanish female monarchs. In particular, the colour connotes the garments portrayed in several famous portraits of the “Catholic Queen,” Isabel (Isabella) of Castile, who established and led, in 1478, with her husband Fernando (Ferdinand) II of Aragon, the “Catholic King,” the Spanish Inquisition of the Muslims and Jews of Spain.⁹⁸ It can also be seen to be worn by Isabel’s daughters, especially the young Catalina (Catherine, or Katharine), who later married the English Tudor King Henry VIII; and Juana (known as *Juana la Loca*, or Joanna the Mad), who was the wife of Philip of Habsburg, King Philip I of Castile. These connections are accentuated by the headdress that Briz wears, custom-made by the artists-designers, Yoru and Elisabeth, for their independent Russian clothing and accessories company, *Kaneko* (Moscow). Known as a reticulated French hood, it is a contemporary adaptation of the various styles of this headwear, popularly worn by female members of the royal courts of Europe, particularly France, England, and Spain, from 16th to 17th centuries. Some of the earliest versions of these hoods are shown as being worn, again, by Juana de Aragon, daughter of the “Catholic Kings,” in the 1400s. Adding to the overall flavour, Briz poses in front of an eighteenth-century Catholic church artefact, the *Altar of Christ Crucified*, during her visit to the Museo Pedro de Osma, in Lima, Peru, in September 2018.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ For the purpose of identifying Muslims and Jews, and abolishing Islam and Judaism, in Spain.

⁹⁹ The creators of the altarpiece and silver-embroidered, red-velvet textile (both c. 1700 – 1800), and their origins, are unknown.



Figure 2.21: Moon Bastet (Sue Ellen) (photo), Briz Blossom (Guadalajara, Jalisco)
Museo Pedro de Osma, Lima, Peru, September 2018

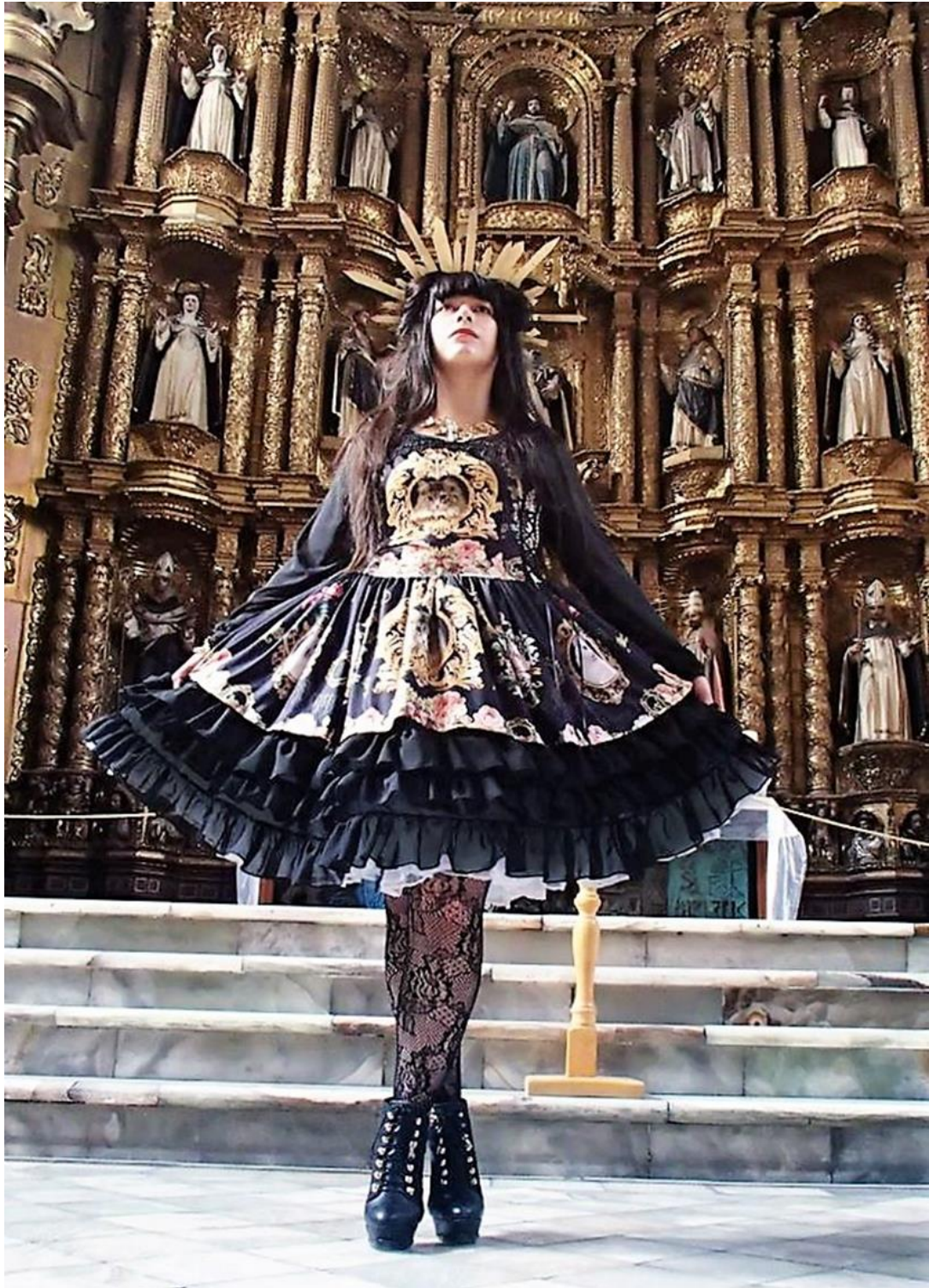


Figure 2.22: Claudia Baez (design) of Puppets (Puebla)
wearing her own creation, “King Kat,” 2016

Catedral Basílica de Nuestra Señora de La Inmaculada Concepción, Ciudad de Puebla

Another garment made ecclesiastical by its styling and setting is “King Kat,” by the Mexican Gothic and Lolita designer and participant, Claudia Baez, aka Rose Baez (Puebla), which she wears in this photograph for her label, Puppets (see fig. 2.22).¹⁰⁰ Claudia relays that she takes her inspiration from Gothic and Baroque art, architecture, and design; historical fashions, Catholic vestments, and the iconography of the Virgin and saints. Here, Claudia’s crown replicates the golden rays of the sunburst that surrounds Our Lady of Guadalupe, or of the halo of Mary Immaculate (see figs 2.17 – 2.20). The main cat motif on the dress, itself, is a tabby, which is also linked to the Virgin Mary. According to folklore, a tabby cat is said to have climbed into the manger of the baby Jesus to help keep him warm and enable him to sleep, whereby the Virgin traced the letter M, for Mary, on the cat’s forehead so that all of the cat’s descendants, for all time, would bear her sign of gratitude.¹⁰¹ The location of this shoot, the Cathedral of Puebla, also emphasizes the religious intention of the artist.

The Catholic sentiment is even more explicit in the actual motifs of another of Claudia’s Gothic Lolita dress designs (see fig. 2.23). The black-and-gold palette and the crosses are both clerical and gothic, while black-and-gold is also a signature of the Baroque. In fact, the style, silhouette, and colourway all resonate with a distinct baroque tone. Jennifer Craik (2005) discusses the formalization of colour symbolism in Catholic vestments concurrent with the Baroque period:

Colours... acquired religious significance after papal regulations were introduced in 1570: white or silver symbolized... purity and innocence; red symbolized martyrdom and sacrifice; purple stood for penitence... gold could be added to any of these colours; and black was associated with death and solemnity.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ The work of Claudia Baez and her Mexican label, Puppets, will be returned to and elaborated on several times throughout this thesis.

¹⁰¹ See Fr. Joseph Jenkins, “Papal Cats and Possible Posers,” *Blogger Priest*, February 21, 2013, <https://bloggerpriest.com/2013/02/21/papal-cats-possible-posers/> (accessed December 11, 2019).

¹⁰² Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford and New York, NY: Berg, 2005), 205.



Figure 2.23: Claudia Baez (design) for her Lolita-fashion label, Puppets, 2018

In this regard, there is a solemn, pious nature and feeling to this garment, although, simultaneously, it would appeal to many members of the contemporary goth subculture, as well as the Gothic Lolita. The crosses are appropriate in each case. For me, it has an edginess in that it is modest and conservative, with its high neck, long sleeves, and longer skirt length, but it is *equally* alternative, thus subversive, and transgressive. Craik (2005) examines the notion of “religious accoutrements for non-religious purposes, [as] a theme picked up by many fashion designers who use religious garb or motifs to shock... the fashion industry.”¹⁰³ The shock factor is psychological and conditioned in us, and comes down to us, from the past:

The more [that] religious authorities attempted to convey purity of the body and spirit through clothes that signified the renunciation of fleshly pleasures, the more the suppressed and forbidden was signalled and made desirable. The concealment of the body only provoked curiosity and sexual interest. Clothes became coda of what was repressed, namely, sexual desire as a denied and forbidden pleasure.¹⁰⁴

Although I am quite certain that this is not the effect or meaning that Claudia, as a devout Catholic, has intended to produce or project, in my opinion, it is the suggestion of “forbidden pleasure,” due to the extent of the concealment of the body that it achieves, combined with its ecclesiastical nature and motifs, that this garment balances on the precipice of transgression.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 206.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.



Figure 2.24: Patrick Landa (Uriel Juarez) (photo); Regina Morales (model)
Claudia Baez (dress design), “Blue Moon Queen” for Puppets
Sunako (Yazmín Pool) (headdress design) for Sunako Creaciones
Diana Valmont (shoe design), “Sigrid” in black velvet for Fredja, 2018

The shot of Regina Morales (Mexico City), incorporates another design by Claudia Baez, “Blue Moon Queen,” which references the Virgin Mary, this time, as the Moon Goddess and, again, as the Queen of Heaven (see fig. 2.24).¹⁰⁵ This image is an advertisement for the shoes that Regina is wearing, designed by Diana Valmont (León, Guanajuato), for her brand, Fredja (see figs 3.38, & 5.33). The headdress is by Yazmín Pool (Mérida, Yucatán) for Sunako Creaciones (see figs 3.33, & 3.34). The intention of this composition is to present the goddess-like character as having slain the giant (behind her). However, she also evokes the spirit of Mary Immaculate, who, in some depictions, stabs and slays the dragon, snake, or serpent, with a cross-headed staff (see fig. 2.19). The crosses, added to the moons and stars of the printed dress fabric, emphasize the garment’s gothic and Catholic sensibilities.



An investigation into the history, context, meanings, and understandings of the prodigious image of Our Lady of Guadalupe helps to illustrate that the founders of New Spain were fanatically Catholic. They were staunch supporters of the war against heresy, on a mission from God to crush the devil, to bring their own people back to the true faith, and to convert and, thus, *save* their new subjects in the New World. That Our Lady, the symbol of this endeavour, is still, today, the national emblem of Mexico, means that this legacy carries on. However, the Catholic religion of Mexico still retains traces of indigenous beliefs. Our Lady of Guadalupe is emblematic of that religious assimilation, as are other figures of divine femininity. Besides Our Lady, two of the most prominent are Santa Muerte and La Catrina, who are examined, independently, and in relation to Our Lady, in the following chapter, as further contexts for the Mexican Gothic Lolita.

¹⁰⁵ Although, in this chapter, I have stressed the abundance of images of the Madonna standing on a crescent moon, there is also a proliferation of representations in art history, of Mary as the Queen of Heaven, standing on a full moon.

Chapter Three
La Lolita Gótica

Chapter Three: La Lolita Gótica

The opposition between life and death was not... absolute to the ancient Mexicans....

Life extended into death, and vice versa.

Death was not the natural end of life but one phase of an infinite cycle.

Life, death and resurrection were stages of a cosmic process that repeated itself continuously.

– Octavio Paz¹

As Inés San Martín (2016) states, “from tortillas and skateboards, to tattoos on drug lords, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is omnipresent in Mexico.”² However, while Our Lady is the most prominent icon of Mexican popular culture, her visual representation competes with prolific examples of other female figures, most notably, the skeletal La Catrina and La Santa Muerte (Saint Death). Therefore, in exploring the significance of Our Lady’s ubiquitous presence as contextual inspiration for the feminine style of the Mexican Gothic Lolita, she should not be examined in isolation. While in the previous chapter I observed Our Lady’s historical frameworks and analyzed her motifs according to colonial constructs, here I investigate her contemporary connections with “Lady Death,” embodied in Saint Death and Catrina, as well as *their* meanings and interrelationships, in association with the festival of the Day of the Dead. Ultimately, this chapter leads to a survey of symbolic, stylistic expressions of Catrina by members of Mexican Gothic and Lolita communities. As the colour black is the staple of these Gothic Lolita styles, created almost exclusively for Day of the Dead events, I provide an overview of the wearing of black in affiliation with mourning rituals, before continuing with the theme of this chapter, the celebration of Death, in the Mexican environment.

¹ Octavio Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude [1961],” in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 54.

² Inés San Martín, “Pope Francis’ Love Affair with Our Lady of Guadalupe,” *Crux*, February 14, 2016, <https://cruxnow.com/church/2016/02/14/pope-francis-love-affair-with-our-lady-of-guadalupe/> (accessed October 1, 2017).

The Mexican Gothic Lolita Identity

The results of my survey, according to the selection of participants who responded, suggest that, although the Sweet Lolita is still present in Mexican communities, the Gothic Lolita genre is the favourite of all Gothic and Lolita fashion styles. There is, here, a 20% lead by the Gothic (82.5%) over the occurrence of the Sweet (62.5%). Some of my respondents also identify with the subcultural goth movement and discuss the relationships between their goth identities and their Gothic Lolita styles.

Lu Di'amante (Mexico City) explains that she was, first of all, a goth and influenced by gothic things. Then, at age 13, she read about the Gothic and Lolita movement in a goth magazine, which led to her discovering more about it online. Eventually, she says, the wearing of Gothic Lolita style became a normal part of the Mexican goth scene, as well as a part of her own lifestyle. Inari Ometéotl (Ecatepec) is also a Gothic Lolita and "still identifying as goth." They state, "It has influenced me in the first instance to choose Gothic Lolita.... I am not encouraged to try another variant of Lolita, or any other style." Lagrima de Luna (Nuevo Laredo) also participates in both the goth and Gothic Lolita movements:

I belong to the Sociedad Gótica de Nuevo Laredo [Gothic Society of Nuevo Laredo]. I sometimes... mix both [goth and Gothic Lolita styles] because they do influence each other... [although] most of the time my goth is goth and my Lolita is Lolita. What crosses between them are small details just to add some edginess or fun to each type of outfit.

Similarly, Tania Pineda Apodaca (Mexico City) says: "My Lolita and goth styles feed each other and, in many cases, share accessories or pieces of clothing." Gothic Lolita Zuria Ivarra (Aguascalientes) relays that she doesn't belong to a goth community, even though, "a few years ago," she began to identify as a goth: "I still like everything that relates to the [goth] movement and my style outside Lolita is also very much influenced by goth." Marlenne Pérez (Mazatlán, Sinaloa) is into:

Nu goth, mainly the aesthetics... and, yes, it influences my Lolita style.... I am a fan of goth music and, on one occasion, a friend showed me a video of Malice Mizer's *Beast of Blood* and introduced me to [who] Mana [is]. I fell in love with his style at first sight.³

A few are also attracted to pastel goth.⁴ Nakuru (Toluca) states: "Lately, I have been very interested in pastel goth, and I am somewhat a spectator of goth.... I keep informed about them [these genres] on blogs, and my [Gothic Lolita] clothes are usually a combination of these styles." According to Naty-chan (Saltillo, Coahuila):

All are cute, but I like the Gothic Lolita style the most because of the elegance and combination with black. I discovered goth a decade ago and, since then, I've liked it very much and have also dressed in what is known as pastel goth, but it [pastel goth] does not influence my Lolita style as much [as goth].

And, Kitty from Puebla, who makes her own Lolita clothes and accessories, often takes her inspiration from gothic horror: "I love horror movies and I love to add many of the motifs to my clothes, which also come from somewhat gothic concepts."

As I have previously stated, the Gothic Lolita identity makes sense in an environment as ostensibly gothic as Mexico. This landscape, and its continuing influence on popular, visual and material culture, and design aesthetics, is an important context for the development of the Mexican Gothic Lolita style. Before I further investigate this framework, I first return to the notion of black in fashion and its traditional associations with the Gothic, this time, in regard to rituals of mourning.

³ Nu goth is a contemporary style trend based extensively on the colour black, which incorporates a lot of new-age, wicca, "witchy," occultist, alchemic, and astrological design elements and motifs. Black lipstick is also a staple element of the overall appearance. Basically, it is the seepage of subcultural gothic aesthetics into current popular culture and fashion. Often, lovers of the look are not affiliated with or interested in other aspects of the subcultural goth scene, such as the music or literature, and choose it purely for personal stylistic reasons. These participants are sometimes referred to, especially online, as "goth adjacent." However, nu goth can be extremely popular with traditional goths, alike. See brands such as Blackcraft Cult, Killstar, Punk Rave, and Restyle.

⁴ Pastel goth is similar to nu goth in that it is also based more on personal styling choices than any sort of subcultural membership. Essentially, it is a gothic look that employs gothic motifs but substitutes an all-black, or darker palette, with pastel colours, like pale-pink, baby-blue, mauve, and lemon-yellow, often in combination with black. Pastel hair colours are also popular in association with this style.

Mourning Black

The Japanese Gothic Lolita genre, from which Mexican Gothic Lolita styles have evolved, is more often than not based on a black or dark palette, and associated, aesthetically, with Victorian revivalism, mediaevalism, romanticism, and mourning dress.⁵ Due to this Victorian connection, one often thinks of Queen Victoria, especially when it comes to historicist black clothing and mourning, and *subsequently* its influence on twentieth-to-twenty-first-century neo-Victorian, and neo-gothic fashions, including the subcultural Gothic Lolita style.⁶ As this section highlights, the Mexican relationship with mourning black is also rooted in its Spanish colonial foundations.

Queen Victoria's impact on the wearing of black must, though, be acknowledged. As Anne Hollander (1993) explains, "although black has obvious appropriateness for mourning, and has been frequently used for it since antiquity, it was not always de rigueur," particularly before Victoria's time.⁷ Victoria, as the supreme role model for customs and etiquette of the Victorian age, helped to define regulations around mourning rituals and rules of dress, especially for women, via her own habits, which trickled down to all walks of society.⁸

⁵ See *Chapter One*.

⁶ It is important to note that the adoption of black for mourning attire has also existed in Japan ever since the enforced opening of the Japanese ports during the mid-Victorian period. In 2007, during a research visit to Tokyo, I noticed a whole floor of a Shinjuku department store dedicated to black mourning attire and accessories.

⁷ Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* [1975] (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 1993), 373.

⁸ In Britain, although there had been customs for the wearing of mourning dress prior to Victoria's influence, the traditions had been varied, and regulations had differed depending on region and class. Wearing black for deepest mourning had been just one option out of several. For example, in some areas of Britain, white had been the popular choice for this stage. As a role model, however, Queen Victoria helped to establish certain rules of etiquette, which became, officially, "the done thing." For the information on Victorian mourning, in this chapter and passim, unless otherwise referenced, see: Lynne Zacek Bassett, *Gothic to Goth: Romantic Era Fashion and its Legacy* (Hartford, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2016); Bob Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700 – 1880* (London: Junction Books, 1982); Susan P. Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1987); James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death: The Architecture and Planning of the 19th-Century Necropolis with Some Observations on the Ephemerality of the Victorian Funeral and a Special Chapter on Cemeteries and Funeral Customs in America* (Detroit, MI: The Partridge Press, 1972); Maureen De Lorme, *Mourning Art & Jewellery* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 2004); Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*; Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Angus Trumble, *Love and Death: Art in the Age of Queen Victoria* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2002); and Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell and the Victorians (or Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology)* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

One of the greatest romantic stories of the Victorian period is represented by Queen Victoria and her relationship with her husband, Prince Albert. When, on December 14, 1861, the Queen's husband died of typhoid fever, she called for a national state of mourning. All of their nine surviving children, staff members, and residences, were plunged into deepest mourning, and the public were encouraged to show their respect by also donning mourning attire. Victoria remained almost always in mourning dress, dominated by black, for the rest of her life, another forty years, until she could join her beloved Albert in the afterlife. When she died, on January 22, 1901, she was laid out and buried in white, as his bride.⁹ Angus Trumble (2002) writes that "No posthumous reunion was more eagerly anticipated than that of Queen Victoria... whose husband, the much-lamented Prince Consort, died... at the age of forty-two."¹⁰

Of course, the Queen's reaction to her bereavement, in the wearing of mourning dress for the remainder of her life, was extreme. For most of society, certain guidelines became general expectations for female grievers (depending on affordability). The first stage was that of deepest mourning, which began from the day of a loved one's death and, in terms of respect, was to last for about a year and another day. Women were to wear only black garments, made of plain, lustreless fabrics, such as crape, with no trimmings or decorations. There was an option of a black or white veil, with the white veil being only for widows, after the Queen's own custom. For the following stage, known as deep or second mourning, which continued for the next three to nine months, women were still to wear all black, or black with a touch of white, although silks and velvets could be introduced, as well as trimmings, such as laces, frills, braids, tassels, fringes, beading, feathers, and ribbons, and jewellery. The final stage was half mourning, whereby women

⁹ It was also the tradition that everyone, of any gender, or class, was buried in a white grave dress. One reason is so they could be seen in the darkness of the afterlife and guided towards the light.

¹⁰ Trumble, *Love and Death*, 18.

could start to wear other colours, also considered customary for bereavement. In progression, these could be charcoal, violet, purple, lavender, mauve, lilac, grey, yellow, cream, bone, ivory, and white.

In Victorian times of mourning, rules regarding colours weren't limited to attire, nor to the British Isles. Also led by Queen Victoria's example, this newspaper article from 1890, entitled "Woman and Home: The Dress and Home of New York's Fashionable Widow," describes the extent that one could go to in terms of demonstrating one's bereavement.¹¹ It claims that "the idea originated in England, and the American mimics have improved upon it:"

The fashionable widow not only attires herself in the habiliments of woe, but loves to adorn every trifle – her lingerie, scent glass, umbrella handle, and penholder – with a bow of black, purple, or mauve. Slippers, purse, blotting pad; prayer, letter and bank book; are all bound in ebony leather.... No flower but the pure white lily is allowed to perfume her room, and she will endure nothing but the odor of violets to scent her sachets.... [T]he upholsterer [is summoned] as soon as the undertaker has been dismissed.... Black and yellow are the colors for chamber and boudoir... [and] the walls are dead black, or hard, white varnish finish. Purple prayer rugs, white or black skins cover the polished floor, a pedestal lamp burns low under a black lace shade.... All the furniture is white enameled wood, the dainty toilet table having a drapery of black silk, and the escritoire a pad of purple velvet....¹²

¹¹ Anonymous, "Woman and Home: The Dress and Home of New York's Fashionable Widow," *Saturday Evening Mail*, March 29, 1890, 6, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/cgi-bin/indiana?a=d&d=SEM18900329.1.6> (accessed January 1, 2018).

¹² *Ibid.*

Queen Victoria was also responsible for jewellery crazes. Again, in association with her state of mourning, elements were commonly black. One of her most favoured gemstones was Whitby jet. This substance, from where the term “jet-black” is derived, is a semi-precious dense-black, natural material from Whitby, in Yorkshire, England. Created by the fossilization of decayed wood from the Jurassic period, it has been formed over the space of about 180 million years. For people who couldn’t afford jet, other black materials became popular, such as imitation jet, known as French jet, or black glass; ebony, a black wood, mostly from India or Ceylon (Sri Lanka), countries that, at the time, were part of the British Empire; bog oak, or fossilized peat; and natural black animal horn (from goats, for example). Vulcanite, a type of early plastic, created by heating India rubber and sulphur (i.e. vulcanization), was the most popular black alternative to Whitby jet, especially when it came to mourning jewellery. Black and black-backgrounded jewellery, such as portrait-silhouette cameo pendants and brooches, thus increased in use and popularity.

However, in Latin American countries and, therefore, Mexico, mourning black and black fashions precede Queen Victoria’s influence. Firstly, Mexico has its own black jewellery, carved from local black obsidian, a natural glass formed from molten volcanic lava. John Pint (2009) states:

We know that obsidian mining and shaping was big business in pre-Columbian Western Mexico because archaeologists have catalogued more than 1,000 mines and quarries in the area and estimate that there may be up to 4,000 more. The ancient rulers of the Teuchitlán nation, which dominated western Mexico for at least 1700 years, found that the very purest obsidian [was to be found in the State of Jalisco... where archaeologists]... calculate that over 2,000 tons of artefacts were produced from the high-grade [deposits]... the third-largest deposits... in the world.¹³

¹³ John Pint, “Obsidian in Mexico: Gift of the Gods,” *Mexconnect*, December 16, 2009, <http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/3565-obsidian-in-mexico-gift-of-the-gods> (accessed September

Obsidian comes in several colours, although its most common and popular presentation is black. Black obsidian decorative objects – including miniature skulls, owls, cats, and crucifixes – and jewellery – rings, beads, pendants, rosaries, and crosses – are still created in abundance in Mexico. Worn for style, and for mourning, the jewellery, of course, befits the taste of goths and Gothic Lolitas, alike. Furthermore, when it comes to black clothing’s association with mourning, Mexico’s customs also predate the Victorian period by a few hundred years.

Blenda Femenías (2005) writes that the Latin-American protocol of wearing black for mourning “seems to be a Spanish colonial legacy.”¹⁴ She says that this custom, which “is still common in many Latin-American and Mediterranean countries,” stems from European Catholicism, dating from the Medieval period.¹⁵ Anne Hollander (1993) argues that it goes back even further, to mourning rituals of “Mediterranean antiquity.”¹⁶ She maintains that, later, with the development of the Medieval Catholic Church, black vestments came to be considered more appropriate for the clergy, until, in the fourteenth century, at the European royal courts, “the mordant beauty of black” began to be recognized for its fashionable grandeur.¹⁷

In the sixteenth century, the Italian Catherine de’ Medici, Queen consort of the French King Henry II, became renowned for her taste in dramatic black clothing.¹⁸ Hollander (1993) claims that “although Catherine’s excuse was mourning..., [her] personal style, as well as her piety, undoubtedly dictated her choice.”¹⁹ She continues:

23, 2018; and John Pint, “Exploring the Mines of El Pedernal: Four Square Kilometers of High-grade Volcanic Glass,” 2009, <http://www.saudicaves.com/mx/more/pedernal/> (accessed September 23, 2018).

¹⁴ Blenda Femenías, “Why Do Gringos Like Black? Mourning, Tourism and Changing Fashions in Peru,” in *The Latin American Fashion Reader*, ed. Regina A. Root (Oxford and New York, NY: Berg, 2005), 97.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁶ Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, 365.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 365 – 366.

¹⁸ Caterina Maria Romula di Lorenzo de’ Medici (born April 13, 1519 in Florence, Italy; died January 5, 1589 in Blois, France) was married to King Henri II of France (reigned March 31, 1547 – July 10, 1559). She was the daughter of Lorenzo di Piero de’ Medici, Duke of Urbino, Lord ruler of Florence.

¹⁹ Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, 367.

“Catherine de’ Medici’s mourning black... takes on [a]... touch of stylish anti-fashion, since, in sixteenth-century Europe, wearing black connoted perverse elegance and the emphasis of individual distinction just as much as ceremonial grief.”²⁰ It was in sixteenth-century Spain, however, that the adoption of “chic black” evolved as an everyday clothing choice.²¹ This shift in fashion history was concurrent with the Spanish invasion of Mexico. Thus, black was also the sartorial signature of the nobility of New Spain. In fact, the dye that enabled the creation of these stylish black fashions, actually came from Mexico. Julia Ortega (2016) writes:

There was a time when fashion was not decided in Paris [or] Milan.... [I]t was Philip II’s Spain... who told the world how to dress.... Spanish high society imposed a style dominated by decorum and formality.... [R]igid black garments became a symbol of power and nobility, and European courts and American viceroyalties began “dressing Spanish.” If black became the symbol of a privileged social class, it was due to the quality of the dye, called “raven’s wing.” It made its way from America, specifically from Mexico, and its high cost made this color a luxury that many desired but few could afford. It was Philip II who decreed this austerity by law for moral and economic reasons – a style that lasted until... [the reign of] Philip IV [r. 1621 – 1665]. Throughout the 17th Century, French fashion was replacing Spanish fashion in European courts.... Black, however, continued dominating in Spain....²²

This aspect is pertinent to a study of the black fashions of the contemporary Mexican Gothic Lolita identity as it demonstrates that Mexico’s affiliation with black clothing goes back six centuries.

²⁰ Ibid., 374.

²¹ Ibid., 367.

²² Julia Ortega, “When ‘Dressing Spanish’ was in Style,” *BBVA: Arts and Culture*, October 19, 2016, <https://www.bbva.com/en/got-a-question-bbva-usa-search-has-the-right-answer/> (accessed September 29, 2019).

When referring to contemporary fashions, overall, the Gothic is manifested as an aesthetic that includes darkly romantic, historicist garments; symbols such as bats, ravens, skulls, skeletons, crosses, crucifixes, rosaries, gravestones, stained-glass windows, churches, and castles; morbid-looking or smoky-eyed makeup; and mourning jewellery. The Gothic Lolita identity also incorporates these elements. However, while many members of gothic groups choose the gothic genre according to their taste for romantic, dark things – sometimes, purely as a matter of preference in terms of personal styling and surface decoration, or even just due to an attraction to cute, or tasteful, “spooky” things – in the case of the Mexican Gothic Lolita, as previously noted, this look is more often accompanied by Catholic devotion.

Mexican Gothic Lolita, Yami Yuki Ai (Atlixco) is a member of her local Gothic and Lolita community, and a designer and dressmaker of Gothic and Lolita fashions, under her label, *Bara No Yami* (0.1, 3.22 – 3.24, 5.29, 5.30, & 6.6).²³ Her Catholic heritage frequently inspires her work, which is also largely of the Gothic style. Yami (2017) refers to an example from her “Martyrs” collection, which is adorned with images of Jesus, Mary, Adam and Eve, and saints. She says, “This is inspired by my Catholic religion and the Gothic. The fabric with the printed paintings is beautiful and so I wanted to make it a feature by juxtaposing it against plain black details (see fig. 3.1).”²⁴ The black lace and black sash also lend this garment an air of mourning.

The theme of mourning is more explicit in the following designs (see figs. 3.2 – 3.4). These garments were created to memorialize the passing of K, or Kengo, the “death vocalist” and guitarist of the Japanese rock group, *Moi Dix Mois*, of which Mana, the musician and Japanese Lolita fashion designer, is the most famous member.²⁵ Yami (2017)

²³ Yami Yuki Ai (her pseudonym) means “dark,” “snow,” and “love,” in Japanese, while *Bara no Yami* translates as “Dark Rose.”

²⁴ Note that this would be worn with a petticoat to give it the Lolita-style silhouette, as in fig. 2.5.

²⁵ K, Kengo Tachibana (born February 6, 1976), vocalist and guitarist for Japanese band *Moi Dix Mois*, passed away on May 19, 2014. The leading Gothic Lolita fashion designer, in Japan, known only as Mana, was and guitarist of *Malice Mizer* (1992 - 2001) and *Moi Dix Mois* (2002 –).

states: “Every year I make a design in his memory.” The first, “Lady Eternal K,” serves as a *memento mori* for K (see fig. 3.2).²⁶ The title, in its essence of eternal love, also connotes the idea of the vampire (in keeping with the musician’s androgynous, gothic identity); or, in this case, as it is a dress, the vampiress, in regard to the notion of eternal life (and the undead), and the evocation of Francis Ford Coppola’s motto, “Love Never Dies,” for his adaptation of *Dracula*.²⁷ This sensibility is accentuated by the aesthetic qualities, such as the dripping blood-red ribbon, set against a romantic, gothic, black, mourning dress.

“Memory of Demon,” another of Yami’s garments for K, harks back to Victorian mourning garb, with its black details on black fabric, highlighted by a Victorian-style cameo (see figs 3.3, & 3.4). The air of death is emphasized in the styling and setting of the second image (see fig. 3.4). Here, the Gothic Lolita model, Soley de Lioncourt (Mexico City), is photographed at the Panteón de Belén, a cemetery at Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. She also wears a black, mourning-type veil, adorned with black feathers, gold and black roses, and a skull. Hollander (1993) writes of black clothing in this type of context: “The symbolism of black... maintains its edge because of its... connotations of the sinister. Black conjures fear of the blind darkness of night and the eternal darkness of death.”²⁸ However, Hollander (1993) also refers to “the blackness of the devil and the blackness of godly renunciation,” the latter symbolized in the black vestments of the clergy.²⁹ Black, therefore, as she says, can be both dark and pious.³⁰

²⁶ *Memento mori* is Latin for “remember that you must die.” It can stand for an object that reminds us of our mortality, or as a remembrance of a loved one’s life. See “*memento mori*,” *Dictionary.com*, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/memento-mori?s=t> (accessed December 12, 2019).

²⁷ *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, feature film, dir. Francis Ford Coppola ((Los Angeles, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1992), theatrical.

²⁸ Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, 365.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 367.

³⁰ *Ibid.*



Figure 3.1: Yami Yuki Ai (design) for Bara No Yami, "Martyrs"



Figure 3.2: Yami Yuki Ai (design) for Bara No Yami, "Lady Eternal K"



Figure 3.3: Yami Yuki Ai (design) for Bara No Yami, "Memory of Demon"



Figure 3.4: Soley de Lioncourt (model)
wearing “Memory of Demon” by Yami Yuki Ai (design) for Bara No Yami
Museo Panteón de Belén, 2017

La Santa Muerte

In Mexico, Death is personified and venerated as Santa Muerte (Saint Death). As the embodiment of Death, but also as *Saint* Death, this female figure is presented as a skeleton, dressed in the typical garb of a sacred icon, often in similar fashions to Our Lady (see figs 3.6, & 3.8 – 3.13). In this sense she can be seen as the flipside of the Holy Mother, Mary, or the anti-Mary. However, for her worshippers, she *is* Our Mother. La Santa Muerte is, thus, revered and reviled.

According to Stefano Bigliani (2016), La Santa Muerte is also known as Holy Death, and sometimes referred to by the diminutive, La Santísima Muerte (The Little Saint Death), as well as many other titles, including:

La Doña (The Lady), La Flaca... La Flaquita (The Skinny/Little Skinny One), La Hermana Blanca (The White Sister)... La Huesuda (The Bony)... La Madre (The Mother), La Matrona (The Matron), La Niña Blanca (The White Girl), La Santita (The Little Saint), La Señora (The Lady), La Señora Blanca (The White Lady), La Señora de Luz (The Lady of Light), La Señora Negra (The Black Lady)...; [and holds] more personal vocatives... such as Mi Amor (My Love), as well as feminine proper nouns, such as María or Martha.³¹

Hence, she shares a few of her addresses with Our Lady. She is also known as La Dama Poderosa (The Powerful Woman),³² and La Amabilísima Madre (The Most Kind Mother), El Angel de Luz (The Angel of Light), El Angel de Dios (The Angel of God), El Angel de La Muerte (The Angel of Death), and La Joven Muerte Encarnada (The Young Incarnation of Death).³³

³¹ Stefano Bigliardi, "La Santa Muerte and Her Interventions in Human Affairs: A Theological Discussion," *Sophia* 55, no. 33 (2016), 305.

³² Alex Washburn, "Enriqueta Romero and the Adoration of Saint Death," *The Daily Dose: True Story, Ozy*, April 18, 2016, <http://www.ozy.com/true-story/enriqueta-romero-and-the-adoration-of-saint-death/65160> (accessed October 12, 2017).

³³ Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, *Fierce Feminine Divinities of Eurasia and Latin America: Baba Yaga, Kali, and Santa Muerte* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 106 – 107, 114.

In the twenty-first century, there has been a steady rise in the worship of Saint Death. Andrew Chesnut (2016) claims that:

[The devotion towards] Santa Muerte has no rival in terms of the rapidity and scope of its expansion.... In 2001... Saint Death was unknown to 99 per cent of Mexicans. In just 15 years Santa Muerte has attracted an estimated 10 to 12 million devotees....³⁴

Her burgeoning notoriety has as much to do with controversy as it has with popularity. To begin with, it is not just her titles but also her images that appropriate those of Our Lady (see figs 3.5 – 3.8). As the embodiment of Death (darkness), her identity is commonly seen by her detractors as the antithesis of Our Lady (light), although, to many, as highlighted above, La Santa Muerte is also the Angel de Luz (Angel of Light).

Malgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba (2015) describes some of the permutations of Santa Muerte's appearance and accoutrements.³⁵ While the figure is always portrayed as a skeleton, and often dressed in a Franciscan monk's cape, carrying a scythe in one hand and a globe or scale in the other, she is sometimes accompanied by owls, seeds, and or coins. The scythe of one of the author's own figurines is adorned with a skull and rose, and includes a picture of Jesus crucified, a dove representing the Holy Ghost, and a four-petal trefoil and horseshoe for good luck. In other examples, the scythe can be in the form of human vertebrae. The author explains that her garments can also be varied and lists alternatives, including the robes and veil of Mary, a bridal gown, a first communion dress, and an Aztec-style tunic. In my opinion, she is hardly distinguishable from the Grim Reaper, especially when wearing a religious habit and holding a scythe, I believe it is greatly for this reason that she instils fear.

³⁴ Andrew Chesnut; quoted in Anonymous, "The Cult of Santa Muerte: Lady of Holy Death Rattles Catholic Church as Number of Devotees Grows," *The Telegraph, National Post*, December 29, 2016, <http://nationalpost.com/news/world/the-cult-of-santa-muerte-lady-of-holy-death-rattles-catholic-church-as-number-of-devotees-grows> (accessed October 8, 2017).

³⁵ See Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, *Fierce Feminine Divinities*, 104 – 105.

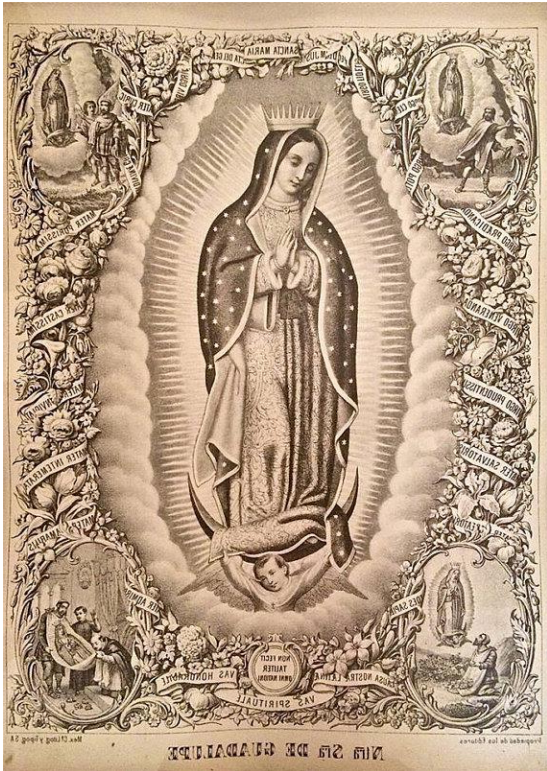


Image removed due to copyright law



Figures 3.5, & 3.7 (top left and bottom left): Our Lady of Guadalupe
Figure 3.6 (top right): Daniel Martin Diaz (artist), *Santa Muerte*, block print
Figure 3.8 (bottom right): *Santa Muerte*



Figure 3.9: Enriqueta Romero's shrine to La Santa Muerte, El Barrio, Tepito, Mexico City

Santa Muerte's repudiation is also often due to her treatment as a holy figure. For one thing, her robes are regularly changed, just as they are, traditionally, for effigies of the Virgin Mary. This type of attention is seen as highly inappropriate.³⁶ Oleszkiewicz-Peralba (2015) states that figures of Santa Muerte are frequently decorated with jewellery and or a crown, thus referencing, in the latter case, the Queen of Heaven and, as many would say, sacrilegiously, the sacred Queen of Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe (see fig. 3.9). Furthermore, she is appealed to, prayed to, and venerated as a goddess and, in return for her favours, plied with gifts:

Offerings to Santa Muerte include *veladoras* (votive candles), statuettes, flowers, incense, fruits, sweets, smoking [lighted] cigars and cigarettes, as well as alcohol, such as tequila, rum, and whiskey. Devotees often blow tobacco smoke on her as a sign of blessing and kiss and touch her glass case at [her altars].³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., 106.

³⁷ Ibid., 107.

In 2013, the representative of the Pontifical council for Culture, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, declared the Vatican's position against the cult of Santa Muerte, stating that it demonstrates the "degeneration of religion. 'It's not religion just because it's dressed up like religion,' he said. 'It's a blasphemy against religion.'"³⁸ The Mexican government has also tried to ban, or at least suppress, her following. In 2009, the army destroyed about forty roadside shrines in Mexican towns along the United States border.³⁹ However, as Oleszkiewicz-Peralba (2015) explains, most fans of Santa Muerte don't see themselves as anti-Catholic. Many, in fact, regard their veneration of her as an extension of their faith; Despite their beliefs, they still identify as Catholic:

They also tend to worship... the Virgin of Guadalupe but consider Santa Muerte to be much stronger.... She is often considered [to be] the Angel of God, the Messenger of God, His Wife, or the Holy Spirit.... [Although] the Catholic hierarchy does not accept... Santa Muerte as part of their faith... Santa Muerte devotion is syncretic and borrows heavily from Catholicism.... This is visible in the liturgy that follows the Catholic model. The rosaries, masses, altars, and prayers for her are modelled on and accompanied by Catholic prayers, such as Hail Mary, Our Father, and Glory Be.⁴⁰

This, of course, is precisely *why* the Catholic Church would be opposed to her worship. As she is perceived by the Vatican as a false idol, her elevation to such a status as the "Holy Spirit," let alone "His Wife," would be viewed not only as highly blasphemous but extremely dangerous.

Enriqueta (Queta) Romero, the creator and owner of one of the most famous public shrines to the idol, says, though, that Santa Muerte "shouldn't be feared. She is not vengeful, [and] she will not hasten your death. She is part of life and she protects those no one else will (see figs 3.9 – 3.13)."⁴¹ This perspective influences her attraction for

³⁸ Anonymous, "The Cult of Santa Muerte."

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, *Fierce Feminine Divinities*, 112 – 113.

⁴¹ Anonymous, "The Cult of Santa Muerte."

masses of her supporters. Death comes to everyone, whatever our walk of life; She does not discriminate. As Lady Death is not selective, and, therefore, does not judge, she is also the protectress of us all, no matter our sins. However, as her protection is inclusive and unconditional, there is the idea that she gives power to those who commit the most heinous crimes.

As Manon Hedenborg-White (2014) maintains, “there are... [in fact], indications that the Santa Muerte cult can provide a spiritual framework that legitimizes acts of extreme brutality.”⁴² But, the author also counter argues that “the Catholic establishment’s demonization of Santa Muerte is... [just] part of a religious power struggle, as most members of her cult invoke her aid for benevolent ends,” rather than vengeful acts.⁴³ Besides, to many of her worshippers, she is not only an extension of their Catholic faith but a part of it, endorsed by, they believe, her appearance in the Bible.

Kevin Ferguson and Collin Campbell (2015) explain that Santa Muerte is equated with the Old Testament Angel of Death, an Angel of the Lord.⁴⁴ They write that “Aztec worship post-Conquistador era continued, going underground to avoid persecution.”⁴⁵ This resulted in a “collision” between Catholicism and the old faith, whereby the symbol of this “hybridization” became Santa Muerte.⁴⁶ Hence, they argue, “[f]ollowers of Santa Muerte believe her to be a saint created by God himself.”⁴⁷ Santa Muerte is, therefore, the ancient indigenous goddess, Mictlancíhuatl, Queen of Mictlan (the Underworld), appropriated by an Hispanic culture, descended from a late-Medieval society, also pre-occupied with images of death.

⁴² Hedenborg-White, “Death as a Woman,” 235.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The Angel of Death appears in the Old Testament books of Kings and Isaiah.

⁴⁵ Kevin Ferguson and Collin Campbell, “What is *Santa Muerte*? A Guide for *True Detective* Fans,” *Welcome to Vinci*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.scpr.org/programs/welcome-to-vinci/2015/07/27/43828/what-is-santa-muerte-a-guide-for-true-detective-fa/> (accessed October 13, 2017).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figures 3.10 – 3.11 (above and below):

Enriqueta Romero's public shrine to Santa Muerte, El Barrio, Tepito, Mexico City.

Romero regularly changes the icon's outfit (see previous image for another style).

Image removed due to copyright law

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 3.12 (above): Romero's husband, Raymundo, in the little shop in the front of their house where they sell candles, amulets, jewellery and other items for the celebration of Santa Muerte.

Figure 3.13 (below): Enriqueta Romero customizing a Calivera Catrina statuette into a Santa Muerte figurine for her public altar.

Image removed due to copyright law

La Calavera Catrina

Another personification of Death, also related to Mictlancíhuatl, is La Calavera Catrina. La Catrina has become the foremost symbol of Día de Los Muertos, the Day of the Dead. This character was first created between 1910 and 1913 by the Mexican artist and lithographer, José Guadalupe Posada (see figs 3.14, & 3.15).⁴⁸ The original image displays a grinning skull wearing an extravagant feathered chapeau (see fig. 3.14). According to Christine Delsol (2011), the caricaturized representation of “a high-society lady as a skeleton wearing only a fancy French-style hat [signals] a sort of satirical obituary for the privileged class.”⁴⁹ Catherine Martinez (2017) clarifies that “La Catrina [was]... originally... named ‘La Calavera Garbancera,’ to reference people who were ashamed of their indigenous roots and preferred to adopt French customs.”⁵⁰ In 1948, this skeletal figure was then depicted by the renowned Mexican artist, Diego Rivera,⁵¹ in his panoramic mural, *Sueño de una Tarde Dominical en La Alameda Central* (*Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda Central*), to which he gave her the title, “Catrina,” a name he associated with the wealthier classes (see figs 3.16, & 3.17).⁵²

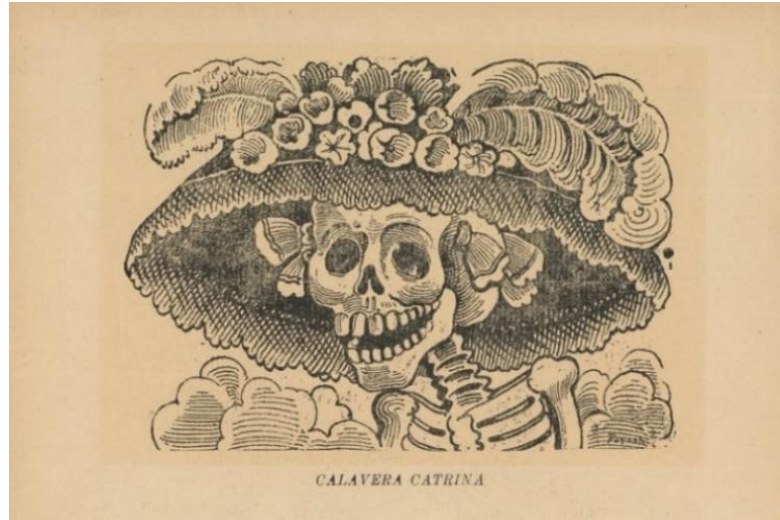
⁴⁸ José Guadalupe Posada (February 2, 1852 – January 20, 1913), born in Aguascalientes, was an engraver and printmaker who commonly used skeletal figures in his satirical cartoons to make political statements.

⁴⁹ Christine Delsol, “La Catrina: Mexico's Grande Dame of Death,” *SFGate*, October 25, 2011. <http://www.sfgate.com/mexico/mexicomix/article/La-Catrina-Mexico-s-grande-dame-of-death-2318009.php> (accessed October 24, 2017).

⁵⁰ Catherine Martinez, “Las 20 Tradiciones y Costumbres de México Más Importantes,” *Lifeder.com*, 2017, <https://www.lifeder.com/tradiciones-costumbres-mexico/> (accessed September 20, 2017). Note: *Una garbancera* is a rude, or vulgar female person (“*un garbancero*” is the masculine form). Delsol (2011) also describes *garbanceros* as “native Mexicans who scorned their culture and tried to pass as European.” See Delsol, “La Catrina.”

⁵¹ Rivera Diego María, born in Guanajuato, and baptized Diego María de la Concepción Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodríguez (December 8, 1886 – November 24, 1957).

⁵² Martinez, “Las 20 Tradiciones y Costumbres de México Más Importantes.” Note: No doubt, the painting’s title references and parodies *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, by the French artist, Georges Seurat, 1884.



José Guadalupe Posada (artist)

Figure 3.14 (above): *La Calavera Catrina*, c. 1910

Figure 3.15 (below): *La Calavera Garbancera*, *Periódico de la Época Revolucionaria*, 1913

**REMATE DE CALAVERAS ALEGRES
Y SANDUNGUERAS**

**Las que hoy son empolvadas GARBANCERAS,
pararán en deformes calaveras.**

Hay hermosas garbanceras,
De coral y alto tacón;
Pero han de ser calaveras,
Calaveras del montón.

Gala que te puestas chapas
Con ladrillo o bermejillo;
La muerte dirá: «No escapas,
«Eres craneo del montón.»

Un examen voy a hacer,
Con gran justificación,
Y en él han de aparecer
Muchos craneos del montón.

Hay unas gatas ingratas,
Hay llamas de presunción
Y matras como ralas,
Que compran joyas baratas
En las ventas de ocasión.

A veces se llaman «Rita»,
Otras se llaman «Consuelo»,
Y a otras les dicen «Pepita»;
A esas la muerte les grita:
«No se duerman, que yo velo;
«Y en llegando la ocasión,
«Que no mucho las de tardar,
«Herdas por un torcón,
«Calaveras del montón,
«Al hoyo iréis a parar.»

Hay unas «Rosas» fragantes,
Porque compran «Pacharán»
Unas «Trinco» ligareros,
Y unas «Chules» polvosantes,
Dulces como un piruli;
Pero también la peña
Les dice sin emoción:
«No olviden a mi persona,
«Que les guarda una corona
«De muelas en el pantón.»

Vienen luego las mandadas
Que «Ganchos» se hacen llamar,
Y que aunque sean pretenciosas,
No tienen perlas por cosas,
Sino magre hasta más dar.
A ellas y a las Filomenas,
Que usan vestido zafiro,
Y gustan de algún te ríveris,
Les he de acabar sus penas
La Flaca con su azúcar.

«Sigan las Petras airovas,
Las Clotilde y Manolitos,
Que pueras y manducotas,
Son flojas y pingajonas»
Y rompen muchas casetas.
La solitaria misteriosa,
Que impera allá en el Pantón,
Y es algo cavilosa,
Con su galante fisona
Las echará al socavón.

Las Adoradas teledoras,
Que apretan emoción,
Si oyen frases seductoras,
Y que son sed-ictoras
Y muy hijas de pólvora,
Se han de ver próximamente,
Sin poderlo remediar,
Sumidas exitosamente
En el hoyo pestilente
De donde no han de escapar.

Las Enriguetas volutas,
Ucidas a las Juliannas,
Y a las Virginitas trasponas,
Que compran baratas cosas,
Aunque resulten mal sanas;
Pagarán su picardía
Y sus manías de agiotista,
Sumándose en la estrechez
Y en la inmundicia tobernez
Porque la muerte es muy lista.

Las pulidas Carolinas,
Que se van a platicar,
En la tirada y las espiadas,
Y se la echas de catrines
Porque se saben pisar.

Hay un grupo de señoras,
Que se llaman «Carmela»,
Por producir emoción,
Y tienen el bodegón
Tan sucio que descomparan;
Han de pagar su percaza
Que da mortificación,
Sumándose de calacas
En el fondo de la necesa,
A ser craneos del montón.

En fin, las Lopez y Pitas,
Las Edwigis y Litas,
Las perfunarias Anita,
Las Julias y las Chuchitas,
Tan amantes de las galas;
Han de sentir por final,
Diciendo «Miren qué, uau»,
El guardisco fatal,
Y irán como tascal,
Verán que llegó su ocasión.

Pero no quieren olvidar
A las lindas Margaritas,
Tan amantes de bailar,
Y a quienes gusta coquetar,
Porque se creen muy bonitas,
La muerte las ha de herir,
Sin mirar su presunción,
Y aunque se van a adigar
Yo las tengo que decir
«Calaveras del montón.»

Las Gumbesidas e Irenas,
Las Gilbertas y Ramonas,
Que quieren siempre ir en trenes,
Y que aizan muchos los senes
Porque se juegan personas;
Las Melquides y Rebecas,
Las Anulias y Janetas,
Que unas son sucias y mecas
Y otras se juzgan muñecas
Y presumes de lunitas;

Las Romanas y Esperanzas,
Las Anasta-las Esmonas,
Que son garbitas y muy lanzas
Y parecen gatas muscas,
Porque son muy labiosas;
Todas, todas en montón,
Sin poderlo remediar,
En llegando la ocasión,
Calaveras del montón,
En la tumba han de parar.

Imp. de A. Vázquez Arroyo,
2º de Sta. Teresa núm. 43.
México — 1913.



Figures 3.16 – 3.17 (detail above):

Diego Rivera (artist), *Sueño de una Tarde Dominical en La Alameda Central*
(*Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Central*), 1947 – 1948



The setting for Rivera's 50-foot mural is Alameda Central Park, which was built over the ruins of an Aztec marketplace (see fig. 3.17). It represents the Spanish invasion, the nineteenth-century French intervention, and the affects of these major episodes in Mexican history, namely the conquest, the fight for independence, and the revolution. In the central area is Rivera's wife, the painter Frida Kahlo.⁵³ She is holding the Eastern *yin-yang* symbol, which, according to Doris Maria-Reina Bravo (2010), operates as a metaphor for the dual principle of pre-Columbian religious philosophy (see fig. 3.16).⁵⁴ It can also be seen as symbolic of the hybrid nationality of the Mexican people. She is standing behind the artist, himself, who he has depicted as a ten-year-old boy. Kahlo has a protective hand on his shoulder as a sign of her affection. According to some sources, the reason Rivera presents himself as a child in this painting is that the scene includes memories from his youth.⁵⁵ However, Bravo (2010) explains that:

In Chinese philosophy, yin and yang refer to opposite yet interdependent forces, like day and night.... This concept is perhaps the most fundamental duality... female ("*yin*") and male ("*yang*"). Thus, this Chinese symbol becomes a metaphor for Rivera and Kahlo's complex relationship: Rivera began as Kahlo's mentor; they then married, separated, and got back together; they were political comrades; and they painted each other frequently. Their double-portraits often reflect the state of the couple's relationship at that moment.... Kahlo was ill as Rivera worked on this mural and his diminished size may reflect his feelings of helplessness.⁵⁶

⁵³ Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo y Calderón (July 6, 1907 – July 13, 1954), was born in Coyoacán, Mexico City, to a German father and *mestizo* Mexican mother.

⁵⁴ Doris Maria-Reina Bravo, "Rivera, Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Central Park," *Khan Academy*, 2010, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/late-europe-and-americas/modernity-ap/a/rivera-dream-of-a-sunday-afternoon-in-alameda-central-park> (accessed October 24, 2017). Note: Aztec religious philosophy adheres to a dual principle, constructed according to binary oppositions that function as two parts of one united whole: lightness/darkness, day/night, sun/moon, female/male, etc., and gods and goddesses are paired as bi-gendered single entities. For example, the prime deity, Ometecuhtli, has a male side, Ometeotl, and a female side, Omecihuatl, who are the equivalents of the "yang" and the "yin" sides of one being.

⁵⁵ See "Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Park," *Diego Rivera.org*, 2010. <https://www.diegorivera.org/dream-of-a-sunday-afternoon-in-alameda-park.jsp> (accessed October 25, 2017).

⁵⁶ Bravo, "Rivera, Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Central Park."

The young Rivera is also holding the hand of the skeletal figure of La Catrina, the focal point of the picture, as if she is his mother (see fig. 3.16). In my opinion, this seemingly maternal relationship between Catrina and the boy is accentuated by her clothing style, which is not of the 1940s, when the mural was painted, but of the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century, contemporary with the artist's childhood.

Rivera thought very highly of Posada and his work and, in the *Alameda* mural, he honoured the artist with a prominent position; he is the well-dressed gentleman offering his arm to Rivera's Catrina. This is an interesting gesture as, although, as discussed, La Calavera symbolizes, for Posada, a disrespectful type of character, she is actually treated here with respect. The way I analyse this is that, while she is dressed as an apparently crass, ostentatious, pompous member of the urban European bourgeoisie, she is reduced to a skeleton, demonstrating that, underneath, "we are all the same," and "we are all of the people." She is, therefore, not only a genuine, "real" person but an emblem of tragedy, a consequence of the colonization, occupation, struggle and death of her people, indigenous Mexicans, albeit now dressed up as a foreign member of aristocracy. As a mother figure, she is also lent a sympathetic tone not just as *a* mother but *the* Mother, revered so highly in Mexican society. This, again, links back to the symbol of Our Mother, a title given to Our Lady of Guadalupe and, also, Our Lady of Death. This reading is supported by her iconography. First of all, her skeletal form links her to Mictlancíhuatl, Queen of the Underworld, primordial Lady of Death, but she is also "an allusion to the Aztec Earth Mother, Cōātlīcue, who is frequently represented as a skull," and adorned with snakes.⁵⁷ Around her neck, she wears a rattlesnake as a feather boa, which reminds us of the plumed-serpent-god, Quetzalcóatl, who is the son of Cōātlīcue.

⁵⁷ Anonymous, "Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Park."

The goddess, Cōātlīcue, or Cōātl īcue, is alternatively known as Tēteoh īnnān, Mother of the Gods.⁵⁸ However, the multifaceted Cōātlīcue also appears as Cihuacóatl, who is, according to Lafaye (1976), Our Mother, Tonantzin, Our Lady.⁵⁹ Through these associations, therefore, La Catrina, La Santa Muerte, and Our Lady of Guadalupe are interlinked. Delsol cites David de la Torre (2011):

“La Catrina has been [re]iterated over time.... It’s not just Posada and his work in 1910. There are layers of history. The image and the woman in death goes back to the ancient Aztec period. Posada took his inspiration from Mictlancíhuatl, goddess of death and Lady of Mictlan, the underworld.” Also known as Lady of the Dead, Mictlancíhuatl was keeper of the bones in the Underworld, and she presided over the ancient month-long Aztec festivals honoring the dead. With Christian beliefs superimposed on the ancient rituals, those celebrations have evolved into today’s Day of the Dead.⁶⁰

All over Mexico, images and figurines of La Catrina abound, from cheap souvenirs to exquisite examples such as a talavera ceramic sculpture I photographed in Puebla City (see fig. 3.18). She has, thus, become another important national symbol, especially regarding her relationship with La Día de Los Muertos, the Day of the Dead.

⁵⁸ *Tēteoh*, plural of *teōtl* = “god;” and *īnnān* = “their mother.” See “Coatlicue,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Coatlicue> (accessed November 6, 2017).

⁵⁹ Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531 – 1813* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 212.

⁶⁰ Delsol, “La Catrina: Mexico’s Grande Dame of Death.”



Figure 3.18: Kathryn Hardy Bernal (photo)
La Catrina talavera ceramic figure in a shop window
Avenida 2 Oriente 206, Ciudad de Puebla, México, 2017

La Día de Los Muertos

In the words of Octavio Paz (1961):

The Mexican... is familiar with death, jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps with it, celebrates it.... True, there is perhaps as much fear in his attitude... but at least death is not hidden away.... Death is present in our fiestas, our games, our loves and our thoughts.... Sugar-candy skulls, and tissue-paper skulls and skeletons strung with fireworks.... We decorate our houses with death's heads, [and] we eat bread in the shape of bones on the Day of the Dead.... [The Mexican] praises [death]... cultivates it, embraces it.... [His] relations[hips] with death are intimate.⁶¹

La Día de Los Muertos, the Day of the Dead, is a time of remembrance and celebration of those who have passed, as well as a chance for the souls of the deceased to revisit and dwell in the presence of their loved ones. Stanley Brandes (1997) has posited that this inherent sensibility and, with it, such a “ritualistic elaborate” celebration of death, is a consequence “of the enormous loss of life during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” suffered in the process of the colonization of Mexico.⁶² The modern Day of the Dead demonstrates, though, that many of the pre-colonial customs and ceremonies were not easily wiped out. Mexican scholars, including Lafaye (1976), Paz (1961), and Reyes-Cortez (2012), argue that the Day of the Dead, while it is associated with the Roman Catholic All Saints’ and All Souls’ Days, is rooted in pre-Hispanic customs.⁶³

Robert V. Childs and Patricia B. Altman (1982) state:

The beliefs and practices associated with contemporary observances of Día de los Muertos, although not a direct and simple survival of pre-Hispanic ritual, have their roots in the ancient religions of Mesoamerica.... However successful the Spanish Church may have been in the destruction of state cults, it is apparent, on close scrutiny, that much

⁶¹ Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude,” 57 – 59.

⁶² Stanley Brandes, “Sugar, Colonialism, and Death: On the Origins of Mexico’s Day of the Dead,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 2 (April 1997), 289.

⁶³ The Day of the Dead festival (which is actually celebrated over the course of several days) falls at the same time as Halloween (October 31), All Saints’ Day (November 1), and All Souls’ Day (November 2).

“Catholicism” of contemporary Indian communities is pre-Hispanic in origin, especially the beliefs and customs related to death and the dead.⁶⁴

Brandes (1997) claims that:

The Day of the Dead, perhaps more than any other single Mexican ritual, is... believed to be either a basically pre-conquest Indian survival with a European Catholic veneer or a near-seamless fusion of pre-conquest and Roman Catholic practices.⁶⁵

And Mexican anthropologist, Marcel Reyes-Cortez (2012), explains that:

Mexico’s religious and funerary practices, introduced from Spain during the Spanish conquest, both clashed and fused with existing customs, creating complex and elaborate social rituals and systems..., practices, and the establishment of the contemporary landscapes and spaces dedicated to the dead.⁶⁶

As Sabrina Sonntag (1995) writes, while the Day of the Dead incorporates Catholic feast days, “the missionaries’ ideas came to coexist with, rather than supplant, existing indigenous beliefs.”⁶⁷

The coexistence of both pre-Hispanic and Catholic ideas is symbolized in the floral emblem of La Día de Los Muertos, the Mexican marigold, also known as *the xempoalxóchitl*, *campasúchitl*, or *campasúchil*, or the *flor de muerto* (flower of death), the foremost motif of the Day of the Dead (see figs 3.19, & 3.20).⁶⁸ This golden-orange flower is associated, equally, with the iconography of Santa Muerte, La Catrina, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is linked with Saint Death and Catrina as the *flor de muerto* but also to Our Lady by name: “Marigold” (Mary gold), comes from the tradition of offering the flowers to the Virgin as a substitute for gold coins.

⁶⁴ Robert V. Childs and Patricia B. Altman, *Vive Tu Recuerdo: Living Traditions in the Mexican Days of the Dead* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 6 – 7.

⁶⁵ Brandes, “Sugar, Colonialism, and Death,” 274.

⁶⁶ Marcel Reyes-Cortez, “Extending Current Boundaries Between the Private, Domestic and Public Display of Mourning, Love and Visual Culture in Mexico City,” *Social History* 37, no. 2 (May 2012), 121.

⁶⁷ Sabrina Sonntag, “The Return of the Dead: Purhepecha Celebration of Life,” *Native Peoples Magazine* 9, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 1995), 50.

⁶⁸ Alternative spellings are *sempasúchitl*, *xempoalxóchitl*, and *xempasúchitl*. In Spanish, it is the *caléndula*, and its scientific name is *calendula officinalis*.



Figure 3.19 (above): Mexican cemetery during La Día de Los Muertos

Figure 3.20 (below): Leon Camerot (photo), *Cemetery, Day of the Dead, Oaxaca, Mexico*, 2018

Image removed due to copyright law

Before the worship of Our Lady of Guadalupe, however, the cempasúchil, which is native to Mexico, had been cultivated since ancient times, and had already held great meaning for the Aztec people before colonization. According to Suzanne Barbezat (2017), its “vibrant colour is said to represent the sun, which in Aztec mythology guides the spirits on their way to the Underworld.”⁶⁹ As such, it has gained its place of importance during the Day of the Dead, an occasion when deceased loved ones are not only remembered but when their spirits are said to return. The cempasúchil’s radiant colour and strong aroma are believed to attract the souls of the departed, who follow the scattered petals, or full blooms, as a pathway to altars erected in their honour. Says Sonntag (1995), the cempasúchil has been connected with this ceremony “since pre-Hispanic times... to honor the gods and to revere the dead.”⁷⁰

The cempasúchil also unites Catrina and Santa Muerte with Our Lady in their associations with the snake-goddess, Cihuacóatl (Tonantzin), of whom the flower signifies. It is said that:

To the Southeast of ancient Tenochtitlán there was a temple called Tlillancalco, “house of darkness or blackness,” dedicated to Cihuacóatl, snake-goddess mother, patron deity of cihuatetas, women who have died in childbirth, which, according to Aztec mythology, retained the sun from midday until sunset. This temple was adorned with cempoalxóchil flowers... of reddish yellow colour and an intense and pleasant balsamic smell.⁷¹

The flower is attached to the three figures, though, in differing ways. As discussed, the “Mary gold” has long been related to Mary, the Virgin, but there is also another link with Our Lady in that she is framed by the sun, which the flower also symbolizes (see figs 2.12,

⁶⁹ Suzanne Barbezat, “Cempasúchil Flowers for Day of the Dead,” *Trip Savvy*, August 3, 2017, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/cempasuchil-flowers-for-day-of-dead-1588749> (accessed November 11, 2017).

⁷⁰ Sonntag, “The Return of the Dead,” 54.

⁷¹ “*Cempasúchil*,” *Inicio Enciclopedia*, <http://www.encyclopediagro.org/index.php/indices/indice-flora-y-fauna/514-cempasuchil> (accessed November 6, 2017). This is unlikely to be the same temple that was torn down by the Spanish colonizers, which Our Lady of Guadalupe, is said to have asked to be rebuilt in her name, as the hill at Tepeyac lies North of Tenochtitlán.

2.15, 2.19, 2.20, 3.5, & 3.7). Santa Muerte, whose image borrows from the Virgin, often displays this sunburst as well and, just as the sun is said to guide spirits safely to the afterlife, she does the same (see figs 3.4, & 3.8). As such, Our Lady of Death is often portrayed surrounded by the cempasúchil (see fig. 3.8). This aligns her, again, with Mictlancíhuatl, the ruler of the Underworld, of whom the flower was first sacred to. Both of these latter figures, in turn, are related to Catrina, the mascot for the Day of the Dead.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 3.21: *Calaveras de dulce* (Mexican sugar skulls)

La Lolita Catrina

The Mexican Gothic Lolita genre resonates from Mexico's cultural landscape, reflecting its history and society, via an aesthetic fusion that draws from local indigenous, colonial, medieval, and contemporary gothic motifs. As Paz (1961) has stated, this environment is framed by its cult of death, celebrated in association with the Día de Los Muertos, or the Day of the Dead, a phenomenon connected with Mexico's hybrid form of religiosity, a syncretism of pre-Colonial and Catholic beliefs, of "habits inherited" from the Aztecs *and* the Spanish, which are "inseparable" from the Mexican being.¹ The figure of Catrina, especially, is most notably inspirational, in this sense, during the Day of the Dead festivities. It is also for these events that the well-known painted and decorated skulls are created, either in edible form (sugar skulls), wood, stone, plastic, or ceramics.² This "sugar skull" image is often interpreted as a gothic makeup look for this special occasion.

In the two following images, the designer, Yami Yuki Ai (Atlixco), demonstrates a look she has styled especially for the Day of the Dead (see figs 3.22, & 3.23). She incorporates skull-like makeup with the silhouette of the Gothic Lolita, adding a silver cross pendant, a black mourning veil, and a white widow's veil. Her dress, titled "Holy Angel Print" (2013), is by the Japanese Gothic Lolita designer, Mana, for his label, *Moi-même-Moitié*. The wording on the garment is taken from the lyrics of *Gloire dans le Silence* (Glory in the Silence), a song by Mana's band, *Moi Dix Mois* (2003):

¹ Paz, "The Labyrinth of Solitude," 23.

² Although the ornamental (rather than edible) ones are made and sold all year round.



Figures (above and below) 3.22 – 3.23: Yami Yuki Ai (Atlixco)

I cut myself in the silence, and it still hurts / I have sorrowed the wrong god in the silence
/ In the world of hurt, nothing ever changes / Bleeding with scares, pride world is dying
[sic] / The sad black knight crosses his heart / I cut myself in the silence, and it still hurts
/ I have sorrowed the wrong god in the silence / In the world of hurt, nothing ever
changes / Bleeding with scares pride world is dying [sic]....³

Yami transfers the essence of this theme of bereavement to her outfit, in celebration of the Mexican Day of the Dead.

³ Excerpt from the song, *Gloire dans le Silence*, from the *Moi Dix Mois* album, *Dix Infernal*, 2003.



The next example is Yami, again, in 2018 (see fig. 3.24). This photograph is accompanied by the caption, “*La Muerte*” (The Death). Dressed from-head-to-toe in mourning black, Yami wears her own Gothic Lolita design, which includes a mourning veil, a cross pendant, and skeleton-print tights. She adds skull-like makeup and carries a cempasúchil as if to lure the spirits. Yami’s pose and the composition of this image also present her as a gothic bride, or the bride of Death.



Figure 3.24: Yami Yuki Ai (Atlixco), “La Muerte,” 2018



Figure 3.25 (above): Briz Blossom (Guadalajara, Jalisco), 2016

The cempasúchil features in the next example (above), as well (see fig. 3.25). Here, Briz Blossom (Guadalajara, Jalisco) explains:

In November we celebrate, in Mexico, the Day of the Dead. We honour our beloved people that passed away and we dress as the Death, called “Catrina.” I’m also wearing traditional Mexican orange flowers called cempasúchils.

Her pretty, bright makeup also emulates the appearance of the sugar skull.

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Image removed due to copyright law

Figures 3.26 – 3.27 (above and previous):

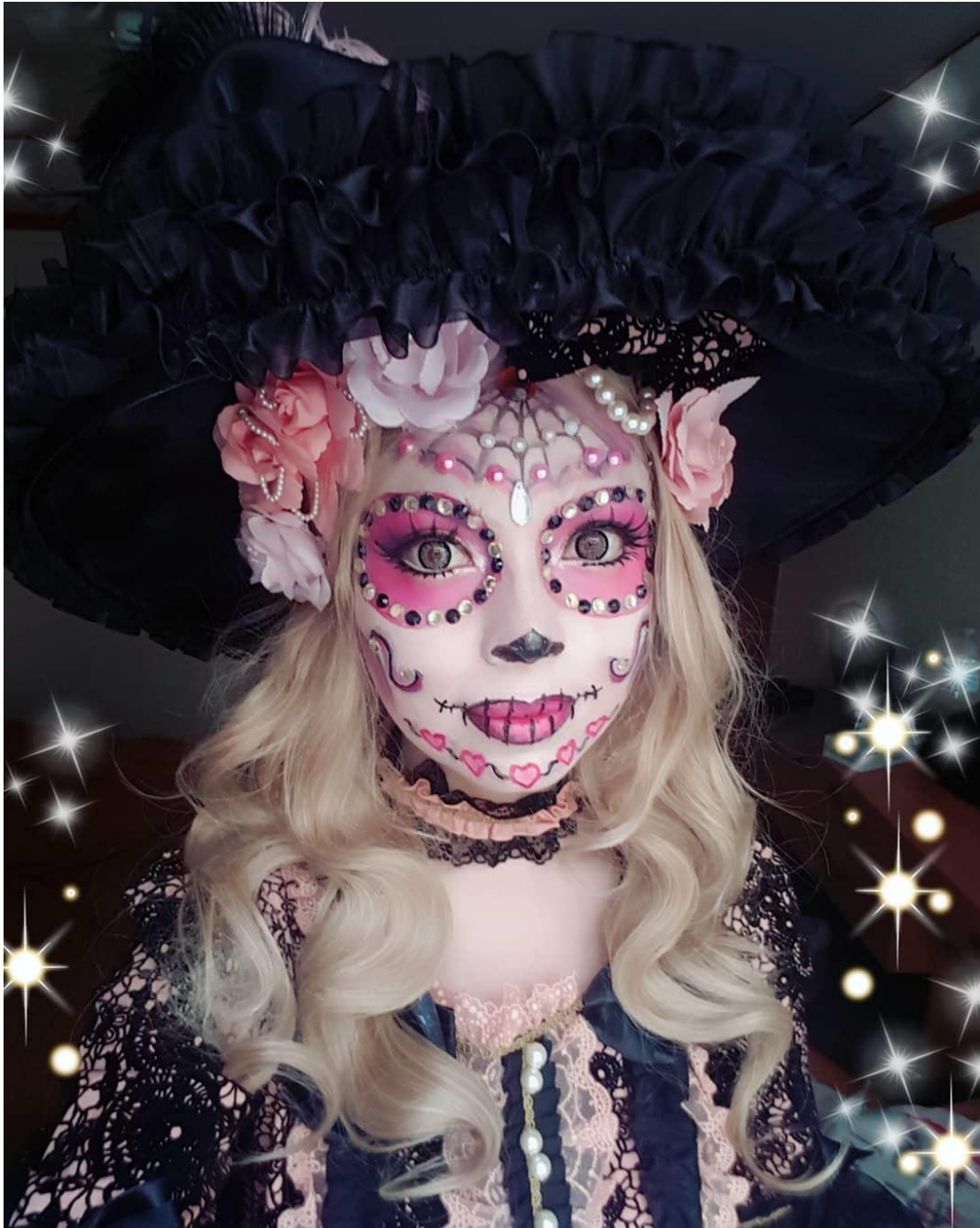
Alberto Prieto Ortega (photo), *Briz Blossom*, “*La Catrina*,” 2014

In these two images (above), Briz’s outfit takes on the traditional motifs of La Catrina, further (see figs 3.16, & 3.17). Her large chapeau, white dress, and feather boa are especially reminiscent of Rivera’s version (see figs 3.26, & 3.27). As in previous images of Briz, Claudia Baez, and Soley de Lioncourt, the setting adds to the framing of the genre (see figs 2.21, 2.22, 3.4, 3.26, & 3.27). The shoot takes place in a cemetery, emphasizing the presence of Our Lady, Death.

For Halloween 2018, Briz’s costume fuses the Lolita style with elements of Catrina’s iconography, such as the big white hat but, this time, the personification of Death is lent to the gothic representation of a post-decapitated ghost of Marie Antoinette: Her caption reads: “The Ghost of Mary Antoinette.... I did the styling and makeup myself” (see fig. 3.28).



Figure 3.28: Briz Blossom (Guadalajara, Jalisco), 2018



Figures 3.29 – 3.30 (above and below):

Briz Blossom at *Catrinás Lolitas; Día de Muertos Lolita y Boystyle CDMX*

Hotel Geneve, Mexico City, October 27, 2018





Figure 3.31: Baruco Ortiz (photo)

Briz Blossom, Michael Valle, and Jane Baphy

Catrinas Lolitas; Día de Muertos Lolita y Boystyle CDMX

Hotel Geneve, Mexico City, October 27, 2018

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 3.32: Jane Baphy (Villa de Alvarez, Colima) at
Catrinas Lolitas; Día de Muertos Lolita y Boystyle CDMX
Hotel Geneve, Mexico City, October 27, 2018

Briz's interpretation of "Lolita Catrina" is truly exemplified, however, in her outfit for the event, *Catrinas Lolitas; Día de Muertos Lolita y Boystyle CDMX*, held at the Hotel Geneve in Mexico City on October 27, 2018 (see figs 3.29 – 3.31). Here, she has combined immaculate sugar-skull-like makeup and a huge feathered chapeau with an exquisite dress by the Japanese Gothic and Lolita brand, Angelic Pretty, to create the consummate Mexican Gothic-Lolita-style Catrina identity.

In the third image, she is pictured with two other attendees, Michael Valle (Manzanillo, Colima) and Jane Baphy (Villa de Alvarez, Colima), who also complement the event's theme (see fig. 3.31). Michael, with his skull-like make-up, skeleton gloves, and large top hat decorated with a plumed sugar skull, evokes the skeletal male groom of Catrina, who is often depicted, alongside her, in objects of contemporary popular culture. Jane's outfit embodies, again, the Catrina Lolita, bringing together the classic Lolita silhouette with Catrina motifs. The black-and-gold colourway allows yet another layer of reference to Jane's ensemble, as it appropriates the typical palette of Spanish and Mexican Baroque design and fashion. Her mantilla headdress is even more strongly aligned with this historic Spanish-Mexican sensibility; and the radiating, star-shaped coronet adds a regal and religious touch, connoting Our Lady as Queen of the Sun and Heavens. Her sugar-skull makeup, skeleton tights, and a tiny jewelled-skull detail at the base of her headdress unites the figure of Our Lady, Queen of the Heavens, with Our Lady, Queen of the Underworld (see figs 3.31, & 3.32).



Figure 3.33: Soley de Lioncourt (Mexico City) and her niece, 2018

Also, for 2018, Soley de Lioncourt (Mexico City) has dressed herself and her young niece in matching Gothic Lolita outfits (see fig. 3.33). Regarding the little girl, Soley says, “She’s ready” to be a Gothic Lolita. She holds a carry case that symbolically merges two cultures, in that it is in the shape of a guitar, connoting Spanish heritage, and topped with a stylized Aztec-type skull. Both Soley and her niece wear garments of the typical Lolita silhouette in gothic mourning black, with Catrina-style makeup and head wreaths of red roses. The red rose, as discussed in the previous chapter, is one of the motifs of the Virgin Mary, while floral head wreaths hold an extra layer of meaning. According to Kirstin Kennedy (2018): In Mexico, “floral headdresses... [recall] the elaborate crowns studded with artificial flowers worn by Mexican nuns at the moment of their profession, and on their death beds....”⁷⁵ Appropriately, Soley has captioned this photo: “We are born alone, live alone, die alone. Everything in between is a gift.”⁷⁶

The next three images are of Alexa Fernanda Deras Barraza (Torreón), aka Aleex GL (the GL stands for Gothic Lolita), who has provided me with examples of her Catrina Lolita looks from several Days of the Dead from the past few years (see figs 3.34 – 3.36). In the first two images, she incorporates Catrina’s signature chapeau. In the third, she is dressed in more of a goth style of mourning attire, including a classic black dress, fascinator, and cameo brooch, accentuated by sugar-skull-like makeup, and skeleton gloves. Her tribute to the dearly departed is emphasized by the setting, as she stands in front of an altar to her loved ones who have passed (see fig. 3.36).

⁷⁵ Kirstin Kennedy, “The *Resplendor*: Cultural and Spiritual Significance in Two Self-Portraits,” in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, ed. Claire Wilcox and Circe Henestrosa (London: V&A Publishing, 2018), 166.

⁷⁶ Quoting the actor, Yul Brinner.





Figures 3.34 – 3.36 (above and previous): Alex GL (Torreón)

The eclectic style of Yazmín Pool (Mérida, Yucatán), who calls herself Sunako, is inspired by the hybrid notion of the Catrina Lolita (see figs 3.37, & 3.38). In the first image, she dons a Catrina-like chapeau, enhanced by a long, black, gothic, mourning veil, while, in the second, she substitutes the hat for a veiled headdress that harks back to the regal hoods, or reticulated headdresses, of early colonial times. In the second image, she adds the innovation of white lace as a face covering, which cleverly imitates the appearance of a decorated sugar skull. She declares, “Happy Halloween!! Today there is a festival at school, and what is better than a Catrina outfit like every year?” Again, adorning her hood, we have the Marian motif of red roses. This symbolism is emphasized by the spikes that radiate from the headdress, like the starred rays of the halo of Mary Immaculate (this feature is not so obvious in this particular shot, which has been chosen to highlight the facial details). These spikes have clear tips that look like water droplets, or teardrops. This relates to Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows (a particular type of depiction of the Virgin, which is discussed in great detail in the following chapter).

In 2018, Gloria D’l Pilar Cantú (Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas), shot a whole series of photographs in a cemetery to showcase her Day of the Dead Catrina Lolita ensemble (see fig. 3.39). As does the friend of Alex GL in an image in the previous chapter (see fig. 2.2), Gloria wears the nun-like dress, consistently popular in Mexico (at the time of writing), “Nameless Poem,” by *Ista Mori* (see fig. 3.39). The Catholic essence of this garment is reiterated in Gloria’s cross pendant and the crosses included in her sugar-skull-like makeup. She wears a red-rose head wreath, like Soley and Sunako, but chooses a Victorian-style Lolita bonnet (see figs 3.33, 3.38, & 3.39).

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 3.37: Edwin Gongora (photo), *Yazmín Pool* (Mérida, Yucatán), *Seiki*, 2016



Figure 3.38: Yazmín Pool (Mérida, Yucatán), 2018

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 3.39: Gloria D'l Pilar Cantú (Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas), 2018

Ham Balo (León, Guanajuato) displays, in the following photographs, a typical style of Gothic Lolita dress but matches it with spectacular, gothic, broken-skull-like makeup (see figs 3.40, & 3.41). Shoe designer, Diana Valmont (León, Guanajuato), and Yareni Villareal (Monterrey), who both feature further on in this thesis, also display their own Catrina makeup versions (see figs 3.42, & 3.43).

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Image removed due to copyright law

Figures 3.40 – 3.41: Ham Balo (León, Guanajuato), 2017



Figure 3.42: Diana Valmont (León, Guanajuato)



Figure 3.43: Yareni Villareal (Monterrey)

All of these members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community, in constructing their Halloween and Day of the Dead outfits, have generated ensembles compatible with their individual Gothic and Lolita identities, by injecting their own personalities into their alternative appearances, applying motifs from their local cultures and merging them with aesthetic elements of Gothic Lolita design. While some ensembles are especially handmade for the occasion, others are created by combining bought Lolita clothing with sugar-skull-like makeup for the effect. As I discuss in *Chapter Five*, many Mexican Lolita participants do make their own garments, even if they are just accessories. For example, Priscila Montserrat Villalobos Montes (Tapachula, Chiapas) writes:

Some years ago, I made a few headdresses like cofias and mini hats and, this year, I've made many wrist cuffs, head bows and some cute jewelry with polymer clay. Actually, I'm making a pair of short pants in *kodona* style [Boystyle], an aristocrat goth skirt and a bonnet. I want to wear the skirt and bonnet for the Day of the Dead. I will go out with some friends and family because it is the birthday of my baby.

In addition, some of the members also express their creativity through art. In 2017, one of my survey respondents, Naty-chan (Saltillo, Coahuila) acknowledged the Day of the Dead with her drawing of a Gothic Lolita Catrina, which she has posted on her artist's page on *Facebook* (see fig. 3.44). The caption reads (translated):

Good day, followers.... I have neglected my page a bit, but now I continue to draw as never before. Today, I wish to dedicate it especially to those who are no longer with us on this plane and, as it is our beautiful day of the dead tradition, to commemorate it with this illustration.⁷⁷

In the same year, other members posted photos of their domestic shrines on *Instagram*. One was from the home of Yareni Villareal (see figs 3.43, & 3.45) and another was by Soley de Lioncourt (see figs 3.4, & 3.46). These shrines combine many of the elements and motifs of Mexican culture discussed throughout this chapter and the last. In the first image, especially, we can see both Our Lady of Guadalupe and Santa Muerte, along with crosses and cempasúchils. Both examples include pictures of deceased loved ones.

⁷⁷ Naty-Chan (artist), *Naty Rivaille Ilustraciones*, *Facebook*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/ilustracionesrivaillenaty/photos/a.1830587417266535.1073741828.1830584190600191/1962013990790543/?type=3&theater> (accessed November 4, 2017).



Figure 3.44: Naty-Chan (artist), *Naty Rivaille Ilustraciones*, 2017



soytotalmentesoley
Distrito Federal, Mexico



Figures 3.45 – 3.46: Domestic shrines



Figures 3.47 – 3.48: Bryan Gordon Moliere Tabuteau (photos)
Grand Park, Los Angeles, November 8, 2017



Figure 3.49: Briz Blossom (photo), 2018

Day of the Dead rituals extend into regions of the United States, especially those that have strong Mexicano-Americano communities. According to the 2016 census, there were approximately 36,255,589 people of Mexican origin living in the U.S. (+/- 90,344).⁷⁸ In 2017, the city of Los Angeles celebrated this heritage with an event, *Grand Park, Día de Los Muertos Altars + Art Exhibition* (October 28 – November 5, 2017). A photograph taken by Bryan Gordon Moliere Tabuteau on the lawn between North Broadway and Spring Street, depicts a “Sugar Skull Community Altar,” a space for people to write and leave dedicated tributes to their departed loved ones, as well as *ofrenda* (offerings) (see fig. 3.47).⁷⁹ The next image demonstrates, again, the importance of Our Lady of Guadalupe in relation to and in association with these cultural elements (see fig. 3.48). The final image, here, taken back in Mexico by Briz Blossom, in 2018, further emphasizes the hybrid heritage of the famous Day of the Dead (see fig. 3.49). Her caption, which accompanies her picture of a local altar, declares: “*Altar de Muertos con La Virgencita* [Altar of the Dead with the Little Virgin]. When Catholicism and ‘Paganism’ join together, this is Mexican culture.”

⁷⁸ United States Census Bureau, “Hispanic or Latino by Specific Origin,” *American Fact Finder*, https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_1YR_B03001&prodType=table (accessed November 19, 2017).

⁷⁹ Grand Park LA, “Calendar: Downtown Día de Los Muertos: Altars + Art @ Grand Park,” http://grandparkla.org/calendar/action~agenda/page_offset~-2/cat_ids~47,48/request_format~html/ (accessed November 8, 2017).



While Our Lady of Guadalupe, Santa Muerte, and La Catrina are separate entities, they are connected on multiple levels, with each other, and to the Day of the Dead, a phenomenon that highlights that, in Mexico, “ghosts are here, every day, as... reminders of a past that still lingers on.”⁸⁰

What is also notable about these figures is that they are all female. If we are to rely on the t-shirt industry, many of the most famous and popular icons of Mexican culture (in terms of common identification) are feminine: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz (a seventeenth-century nun who does not appear in this thesis), Santa Muerte, La Catrina, and the surrealist artist, Frida Kahlo.⁸¹ As such, the Gothic Lolita identity, one that is based on the feminine ideal, merges quite comfortably with a culture that worships the Goddess/Matriarch. In the following chapter, I expand on the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement’s relationship between the Mother, the “*Virgencita*,” and the notion of the “Lolita.”

⁸⁰ Citing Enrique Ajuria Ibarra, “The Latin American Ghost Story,” in *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story*, ed. Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2018), 240.

⁸¹ The male god, Quetzalcóatl, might be the only exception but he is not venerated in contemporary society in the same way. The same goes for historical male figures, including Diego Rivera. However, I’m talking more about the notion of the icon, as in the symbol. These female figures have been transformed into popular, recognizable, decorative and ubiquitous *motifs*.

Chapter Four
Lolita, La Matriarca

Chapter Four: Lolita, La Matriarca

Lo. Lee. Ta. She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock.

She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line.

But, in my arms, she was always Lolita.

Did she have a precursor? She did, indeed she did.

In point of fact, there might have been no Lolita at all

had I not loved, one summer, an initial girl-child.

– Vladimir Nabokov, 1955¹

This chapter re-examines the symbol of Our Mother, Mary, as aesthetic inspiration for Mexican Gothic and Classic Lolita styles, while emphasizing, this time, the “Lolita” part of the Gothic Lolita label. In *Chapter Two*, I explored aspects of the historical gothic environment of Mexico as background context for analyzing the Gothic Lolita identity, according to Mexico’s hybrid gothic and religious landscape, particularly in relation to the syncretic foundations of the Catholic faith, the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and her importance as a Mexican icon. *Chapter Three* then investigated the interrelationships between Our Lady of Guadalupe and figures of more contemporary Mexican culture, La Santa Muerte and La Catrina, especially in connection with celebrations of Death. Regarding that particular theme, Eva Aridjis (2017) declares:

The Day of the Dead festival, the engravings of... Posada, the... [art] of Rivera and Kahlo, and the cult of La Santa Muerte, [which] all have their roots in pre-Hispanic representations of death..., [are] part of everyday life... ¡Viva la muerte! (Long live death!), as many Mexicans would say.²

¹ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, 1st ed. (Paris: Olympia Press, 1955), opening lines.

² Eva Aridjis, “Symbolizing Death: Death in Ancient and Present-day Mexico,” in *Death: A Graveside Companion*, ed. Joanna Ebenstein (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2017), 216.

Thus, the theme of Death, and motifs of Mexican “death” culture, from pre-colonial to modern times, have been analysed as sources of aesthetic influence on the Gothic Lolita style in Mexico. In this chapter, I extend my examination of the Mexican gothic, religious, and superstitious environment, as a framework for Mexican Gothic and Classic Lolita styles, specifically, in regard to the symbolism of Our Lady as Our Mother, the Matriarch, in association with the notion of the “Lolita,” including cultural differences in the meaning and understanding of the name, between Japan (the original site of the Lolita movement) and Mexico. According to Enrique Ajuria Ibarra (2014), “Octavio Paz argues that the Mother is one of the most defining elements of the [Mexican] nation.”³ And, while Paz (1961) highlights that “it is no secret to anyone that Mexican Catholicism is centred about the cult of Guadalupe,”⁴ it is with another representation of the Catholic Matriarch, Mary, of hardly less significance, Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores, Our Lady of Sorrows, that the essence of the Mother is exemplified.⁵ The Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Dolour, Dolores, or “Lolita” for short, is the subject of this chapter.⁶

Here, I discuss the Mexican Lolita image according to the motif of Our Lady of Sorrows as the Weeping Woman, and the Long-suffering Mother. In connection with this harrowed identity, I introduce yet another figure, descending from Mexican folkloric tradition, referred to as La Llorona, a title that translates as The Weeping (or Wailing) Woman. As Amy Fuller highlights, the legend of the Weeping Woman “is deeply ingrained in Mexican culture.”⁷ Again, she is linked with the Aztec goddesses, Cihuacōatl and Cōātlīcue. And, like Our Lady of Guadalupe, Santa Muerte and La Catrina, she also represents anxieties associated with Mexico’s hybrid national identity and postcolonial

³ Enrique Ajuria Ibarra, “Ghosting the Nation: La Llorona, Popular Culture, and the Spectral Anxiety of Mexican Identity,” in *The Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic*, ed. Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville (Houndmills and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 143.

⁴ Octavio Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude [1961],” in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 84.

⁵ Or *Mater Dolorosa*, in Latin.

⁶ As it will be discussed, the name, “Lolita,” is short for the name, “Dolores.”

⁷ Amy Fuller, “The Evolving Legend of *La Llorona*,” *History Today* 65, no. 11 (November 2015), 39.

trauma. Symbolically, though, La Llorona's iconography merges more with Our Lady of Sorrows. In relation to Our Lady of Sorrows, or Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores, I interrogate the name, "Lolita," meaning "little Dolores," as a label for the Lolita fashion style, especially within a Mexican framework, and in consideration of these local references. How does the meaning of the title differ, culturally, in terms of definitions and nuances? And how does this understanding represent shifts in more generalized readings of the Gothic and Classic Lolita identities?

Cultural Differences in the Meaning of "Lolita"

Vladimir Nabokov's mid-twentieth-century novel, *Lolita*, irrevocably changed the connotation of the title, Lolita. Prior to this narrative, "Lolita" was merely a popular girls' given name. However, since the release of Nabokov's book, in 1955, "Lolita" has become a description for a young, sexualized girl. This is due to the naming of the tale's young female character, Dolores (Lolita) Haze, who is known, infamously, for her involvement in a physical relationship, from the mere age of twelve, with her thirty-seven-year-old stepfather, Humbert Humbert. "Lolita" is so tainted by this association that the word has been transformed from an innocuous proper noun to a derogatory label. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines "Lolita" as a "young girl who has a very sexual appearance or behaves in a very sexual way."⁸ The *Oxford Dictionary* similarly interprets the meaning as a "sexually precocious young girl," originating "from the name of a character in the novel, *Lolita* (1958) by Vladimir Nabokov."⁹ And *Dictionary.com* simply describes "Lolita" as a "nymphet after the novel's character."¹⁰ The consultation of dictionary definitions of

⁸ *Cambridge Dictionary*, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lolita> (accessed August 28, 2017).

⁹ *Oxford Dictionaries*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lolita> (accessed August 28, 2017).

¹⁰ *Dictionary.com*, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/lolita?s=t> (accessed August 28, 2017). Note that, in the novel, the character, Lolita, is referred to as a "nymphet." *Dictionary.com* defines a nymphet as "1. a young nymph; 2. a sexually attractive young girl; [and] 3. a sexually precocious girl or young woman." See <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/nymphet?s=t> (accessed September 2, 2017). In the case of Nabokov's *Lolita*, the intended meaning is related to the second and third definitions, stemming from the notion of a young "nymphetomaniac: 1. a woman who has abnormally excessive and uncontrollable sexual

“Lolita” is valid, in this context, in highlighting the existence of a pre-conceived understanding that has become so commonplace it is difficult to separate the name from the suggestion. As such, this complicates readings of the motivations behind the subcultural Gothic and Lolita movement, due to its apparent link, whether unintentional, with the fictional Lolita, Nabokov’s unfortunate female protagonist.

In Mexico, however, while there is still an absolute awareness of this meaning, the title of the movement is not as problematic. This is due to the comprehension of “Lolita” as a traditional Spanish, Catholic, girls’ name. When observing babies’ name dictionaries, rather than conventional dictionaries, the customary Spanish definition is affirmed. For example:

Lolita is a diminutive of Lola, derived from Dolores. Dolores originates in [the] Spanish language and means “full of sorrows.” It is a very popular feminine given name in Spanish-speaking families, since it refers to [the] Virgin, Mary of Sorrows, in Spanish, La Virgen Maria de Los Dolores.¹¹

Dolly, Lo, Lola, and Lolita, are all diminutives of Dolores. The name, Dolores, references Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows), La Virgen de Los Dolores (The Virgin of Sorrows), and María de Los Dolores (Mary of Sorrows). Los Siete Dolores de María Santísima are the Seven Sorrows of Saint Mary, and María, La Madre Dolorosa, is Mary, the Mother of Pain. All seven of the events, which are the cause of Mary’s pain and sorrows, are connected with her son, Jesus Christ, and her maternal suffering. One of these occasions is the sad encounter of Mary with Jesus on the Via Dolorosa (Latin for the Way of Sorrow, or Road of Sorrow), the path that Jesus took, bearing his own cross,

desire,” rather than a young “nymph: 1. one of a numerous class of lesser deities of mythology, conceived of as beautiful maidens inhabiting the sea, rivers, woods, trees, mountains, meadows, etc., and frequently mentioned as attending a superior deity; 2. a beautiful or graceful young woman. 3. a maiden; [and] 4. the young of an insect that undergoes incomplete metamorphosis.” See <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/nymphomaniac?s=t> (accessed September 3, 2017); and <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/nymph?s=t> (accessed September 3, 2017).

¹¹ “Lolita,” *Babynames.net*, <http://www.babynames.net/names/lolita> (accessed September 1, 2017).

on the way to his crucifixion. The name Mary, or María, itself, is from the Hebrew *Miryām* (Miriam, Mariam, Maryam, or Marion), which means bitter, bitterness, sea of bitterness, or sea of sorrow. Hence, she is alternatively referred to as Our Lady of the Sea, or Our Lady of the Sea of Sorrows.¹² In Spanish, she is also *Nuestra Señora, Estrella del Mar* (Our Lady, Star of the Sea), *María, Estrella de la Mar* (Mary, Star of the Sea) and, in Latin, *Stella Maris*. The names Dolores (Lolita) and Maria (Mary) are, therefore, united as one figure, the Virgin Mother.

This reading of the name, Lolita (that is, Lolita = Dolores = Mary, the Virgin), is in polar opposition to what is defined in standard dictionaries. As a Spanish interpretation, it is also a significant context for researching the Gothic and Lolita movement in a Mexican environment. Most importantly, it signals a departure from the notion of the subcultural Lolita image as the Sexualized Child towards a re-presentation of the Classic Gothic Lolita identity as the Virginal Matriarch.

The Lolita Complex and the Fetishization of the Little-Girl Identity

Due to the Nabokovian association, the labelling of the subcultural identity as Lolita has been controversial. It has not been made easier by the fact that, historically, the Japanese subculture has been represented by women who have dressed in “little-girl” fashions.¹³ In its perceived evocation of the character, Lolita, or *the* sexualized child, it is thus seen to be fuelling a fetishization of the Little Girl. In her book, *Fetish Style*, Frenchy Lunning (2013) discusses the “Victorian-little-girl” Japanese Gothic and Lolita style within a framework of the fetish:

¹² See, for example, *Babynamewizard*, <http://www.babynamewizard.com/baby-name/girl/mary> (accessed September 1, 2017).

¹³ See *Chapter One*.

The Lolita extends from [Japanese] *shōjo* [young-girl] culture,¹⁴ but centers specifically on one of the last bastions of mythic femininities.... Performed initially almost entirely by women... the Lolita is... fetishized... based on the appearance of the somewhat fictionalized Victorian notion of the Little Girl.¹⁵

Lunning (2013) further analyzes the subject in terms of the “dressing up” aspect:

The process of “dressing up” is a variation on the popular pastime of little girls and explains something of the allure of... *shōjo* culture.... [T]he body is supplanted by an imaginary identity and body... a process which also serves to elide the founding condition of the abject body. In [regard to the Lolita style]... these obsessions also proliferate around the form and fabric details of Victorian fashions... which, in contemporary culture, are understood as decidedly fetishistic.¹⁶

According to Lunning (2013), it is the romantic fantasy of the life of the nineteenth-century Little Girl that is fetishized.¹⁷ It is not about any specific figure of the girl but the “mythic notion” of Victorian girlhood.¹⁸ I argue that, in supplanting the adult body with this imaginary little-girl identity, one also romantically mythologizes their own state of girlhood, meaning that the image is not always connected to the notion of fetish. In any case, the frilly, sexualized child-woman image feeds the Little Girl fetish, which is apparent in Japan, where the fashion-based Lolita subculture was born. It is here that the term, “Lolita Complex” (*rorita konpurekekusu*), is said to have emerged, referring to the psychological condition belonging to men who are inherently sexually attracted to, or obsessed with, much younger women or underage girls, and or their imagery.¹⁹ This label

¹⁴ For more on *shōjo* culture in Japan and its relationship with the subcultural Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement, see Masafumi Monden, “Being Alice in Japan: Performing a cute, ‘girlish’ revolt,” *Japan Forum* 26, no. 2 (2014), 265–85.

¹⁵ Frenchy Lunning, *Fetish Style* (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), 127.

¹⁶ Frenchy Lunning, “Under the Ruffles: *Shōjo* and the Morphology of Power,” in *Mechademia 6: User Enhanced*, ed. Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 10.

¹⁷ Lunning, *Fetish Style*, 52.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ If we are speaking of these tendencies, the inclination isn’t gender-specific. However, when using this label, the diagnosis is applied exclusively to men obsessed with younger girls, because of the association of their mental state with that of the male Humbert Humbert, of the Nabokovian narrative.

is derived from an association with the behaviour of Humbert Humbert, the male protagonist of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*.

Also connected with this terminology is the phenomenon known as the lolicon (*rurikon*, or *ruricon*), a contraction of “Lolita” and “Complex.” This material, comprised of two-dimensional illustrations, is accessed in magazines and online, in both manga and anime versions of little girls and young women, posed provocatively or depicted in sexually explicit, sometimes violent, situations, often in pornographic acts with older males. According to Hiroyoshi Aoyagi (2005), there are also lolicon graphic novels (comics) that objectify “young female characters – most typically as the victims of rape.”²⁰ This narrative of non-consent, frequently the raping of virgins, is also apparent in a certain genre of hentai, or x-rated animated cartoons.

These terminological relationships cause much confusion and misinformation about the Gothic and Lolita subculture. This leads to misunderstandings about the purpose of the movement and the motivations of its members. This issue is compounded by the subsumption of the subcultural Lolita image into the lolicon industry and pornography. In fact, one of my Mexican correspondents says that they have “actually seen porn starring a girl dressed in the Lolita style.” This is not the general intention. As Isaac Gagné (2008) highlights, a consequence of this sexualization and fetishization means that participants of the subculture often have to deal with the battle between their “own desired expression as ‘figures of identity’ (for self), versus the sexualized fetish ‘figure of desire’ (for others).”²¹ In other words, if participants desire to style themselves in these fashions, it should not be presumed that they do so to *attract* desire.

²⁰ Hiroyoshi Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles: Idol Performance and Symbolic Production in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 211. Note: Manga refers to two-dimensional drawings, while anime to animated illustration (cartoons).

²¹ Isaac Gagné, “Urban Princesses: Performance and ‘Women’s Language’ in Japan’s Gothic/Lolita Subculture,” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (2008): 142.

The Mexican Perspective

When, in April 2014, I was visiting Mexico in order to present a keynote on the Japanese Gothic Lolita identity, I had compiled a questionnaire for any members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community who might have been in the audience.²² In response to the question, “Do you think that the Lolita fashion movement has anything to do with Vladimir Nabokov’s novel, or with the character, Lolita? Why or why not?” one participant from Mexico City replied, “No. I mean, there are a few things you can relate to it, but no.... My parents do, though. They relate Sweet Lolita to age-play and strip clubs.”²³ During a conversation with this same respondent, she told me that, as a consequence, if she ever wanted to wear Lolita-style clothing, she had to pack her outfits in a bag, leave the house in her everyday clothes, and get redressed into her Lolita outfits in shopping-centre restrooms.²⁴ She said that this was common practice, at the time, for most of her Mexican Gothic and Lolita friends.²⁵ This notion suggests that disapproval, especially of the sweeter, “little-girl” style, is often to do with the infantile appearance rather than an association with the name, or with the nature of the character.

So, in order to cause these kinds of reactions, what does this sweeter Lolita genre look like in contemporary times? Although it is now five years down the track since I had that initial discussion about the movement in Mexico, the Sweet Lolita style is still very much in vogue, in Japan, as well as sites around the world. In the following photo, are North American participants, Katie Babydoll and Nina Bear, who both exemplify the current sweet “little-girl” Lolita image (see fig. 4.1).

²² The presentation was for “*Convergencias Góticas: VI Coloquio Gótico Internacional (“Gothic Convergences:” The VI International Gothic Congress)*” at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

²³ Personal correspondence with the author, in the form of a questionnaire, April 1, 2014.

²⁴ Personal correspondence with the author, in person, April 1, 2014.

²⁵ Ibid.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 4.1: Katie Babydoll and Nina Bear, Palace Hotel, San Francisco, 2018

An unmistakable indicator of the Sweet Lolita style is the colour pink, especially candy-floss shades (see fig. 4.1). In this example, the “little-girl” silhouette is accentuated by very full, bell-shaped skirts, and supported by layers of cup-cake-shaped petticoats, taking the typical image to its very limits. Here, the sweetness of the pinkness is paired with the sweetness of the patterned fabrics, which include confectionery and cake motifs. Added to that is an over-the-top abundance of childlike accessories, such as hair bows and hair clips, long pastel over-the-knee socks and frill-topped bobby socks, and even a plush unicorn-shaped carry purse. The pseudonyms of these members, “Babydoll” and “Bear,” signal their affinities with the extremely cute and pretty Sweet Lolita identity.

From the outside, this “infantile,” “little-girl” look creates confusion for the onlooker in terms of understanding the meaning of and motivations behind it, especially when linked to the name, “Lolita.” From the inside, however, it is strongly believed that the title is coincidental. For the purpose of this thesis, I asked members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community this question: “If you have either read the novel or seen a film version of *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, do you think that the naming of the Lolita clothing style is, in any way, connected with the story or with the main character, Lolita? Why or why not?” Out of the forty responses, 75% say that they do not believe that there is any correlation between the Lolita fashion style and Nabokov’s fictional Lolita. They agree with the reasoning, commonly expounded by insider participants around the world, that the perceived relationship is a misunderstanding.

Kitty (Puebla) replies:

No, they have nothing to do with each other. Lolita is a girl who initiates her sexuality with an older man behind a veil of confusion as to who the victim is and who is the victimizer. There is harassment, adultery, rape and a series of abuses on the part of both protagonists [in the novel]. Lolita fashion, my dress style, does not reflect or inspire anything of the above.

Carolina Melon (Guadalajara, Jalisco) declares:

Definitely not! They are totally isolated things. Lolita fashion is associated with perfection, goodness, sweetness, elegance, and delicacy. On the other hand, Nabokov's *Lolita* demonstrates someone who is precocious and sexual.

Lagrima de Luna (Nuevo Laredo) says:

Not at all, I think it has more to do with the popularity of the idea of a little girl and the same name. To be honest I don't see how the story of an abused and sexualized little girl can be turned into something so beautiful and empowering, also so modest.

And Nakuru (Toluca) states:

I do not think that they really relate. *Lolita* is an interesting story, but I do not think it has a direct connection to the Lolita style. That is, the girl that Nabokov presents to us in his story is very different to what we find in the image of Lolita [the fashion-based identity]. Although they are often associated with each other, I think it is mainly because both are so well-known that when the name "Lolita" is mentioned you immediately think of either one of the two, which leads to confusion. The solution would be to clarify which Lolita we mean.

Other comments include: "Gosh!!! No, I think it's a sad coincidence. It's named the same, but the subjects are different;" "It has nothing to do with it, especially seeing what the girl does with her stepfather. Lolita is a fashion;" "No, the book has sexual connotations, which has nothing to do with what the dress style aims for;" "No, because the story simply has nothing to do with us. This is a girl who seduces a mature adult. She is not related in any way with us. We are only a fashion style;" "Lolita fashion has no connection with the book of Nabokov because this fashion is innocent, elegant, and it has no sexual meaning;" "I do not think so because Nabokov describes a girl who wants to experiment with sex and sexuality. Lolita fashion is inspired by the elegance of the Victorian and Rococo eras, updated for our times;" and "No, they are opposite worlds, as far apart as Boston and Baghdad, and yet they share a common title."

However, surprisingly, although most of the responses are in line with the overriding opinion, the results are not unanimous. Two participants are not sure, and four of them actually say, “Yes.” In other words, 15% of the respondents think that there is some sort of relationship between the two. Of the ones who elaborate, this comment by a participant from Chiapas stands out the most: “Yes, because Nabokov introduced the term ‘Lolita’ to the world. It’s the way to describe a ‘little-girl-woman,’ and being Lolita is a similar concept in that we are women in little-girl appearances, almost always.” She talks about it further within the context of a sexual fetish:

I don’t think of it as a fetish but sometimes couples have fantasies about petticoats and they like the idea of having sex with, let’s say, a Victorian girl or with a classical princess. Or maybe some think of it as beautiful in the same way that they see a model wearing a bikini in a magazine, and they have sexual thoughts about it.

A young woman from Mérida suggests something similar: “For many it can be a fetish because something interesting could be hidden under so many things.” And a couple of participants even admit that they like to bring their style to the bedroom, for their partners. One from Sinaloa says:

I recognize that it draws attention from daddy doms and I have worn some of my dresses partially as a fetish, but only in my relationship. It’s not like I go through life teasing older men, or something like that.

And one in Santa Catarina thinks that because the style is that of a younger girl, it makes it “*risqué* enough to be sexy.” She states, “Well, my husband likes it and it can be fun.”

So, while the majority of members of the Mexican community don’t like the idea that their style might be fetishized, many acknowledge that, unfortunately, they know that the element exists. For example, one from Puebla explains: “I think for the ‘inexperienced’ eye it is easily confused with the taboo factor of child hypersexualization, which could move someone to have that impression of a woman who looks like a little

Lolita girl.” A few respondents say that they “hate” that they could be perceived in that way, while others say that they try not to let it affect them. One from Tijuana claims:

Yes, I think [it can be seen as a form of fetish]... mostly the Sweet Lolita style that tends to be more childish or incorporate more fantasy/girly themes. I don't really know how popular it is in terms of a fetish, but people wear clothes the way they want, and people have fetishes about almost everything. I don't get mad about the subject. I wear my fashion and don't worry about these things. There are sick people in the world. I can't solve that, and I just don't let it bug me.

Two other women who were born in Mexico but are now living in Japan also give their opinions. The first, in Tokyo, agrees: “Yes. And I don't like it. But I won't stop wearing my clothes just because of that. There are many fetishes in this world.” And the second, in Chiba, also states: “There are many types of fetish. I do believe that some people see it that way. I don't care what other people do. Just don't include me.”

Some in Mexico believe that, as much as they don't like it, it's the right of the individual to explore their own sexuality, likes and dislikes, while not pushing it onto others. One declares that it is “annoying” to her “that some people see it as a fetish,” but, although it's not something she's “in favour of,” she believes that “each person is free to live out their own sexuality.” And one from Mexico City says:

As they say about the internet, “If the pornography exists, it is there.” There will always be fetishes of everything, including the fetishists of this fashion, which doesn't bother me. However, it must be remembered that this style of dress is not [intended to be] fetish[ized.]

Another respondent from Mexico City, Baruch Ortiz, believes that:

Everybody has the right to think whatever they want but, if people want to learn a little bit more, they're going to be very disappointed, and I am happy to help them understand that this clothing style is *not* related to any sort of fetish.

Similarly a member from Aguascalientes writes:

Many times, people think... it has something to do with a sexual fetish. There are so many fetishes that can be clearly seen in this way. I would relate it to paedophiles, who feel that seeing us dressed childishly, but being adults, would partially satisfy their desires. It is inevitable that people relate things to fetishes. It is unpleasant, of course, but we are not the only ones exposed to such people. Whenever they misunderstand it, I do try to explain that it's just an alternative fashion.

And Mia Novoselic, also from Mexico City, states: "Because people see or hear of the title, Lolita, they think it is some sort of kink, as the term is sexualized. However, if you show them that the fashion is modest and cute, they change their minds."

Andrea Rodriguez from Mexicali, Baja California, maintains, however, that convincing people that the Lolita style is not meant to be sexually provocative is not that easy to accomplish:

It's an erroneous way to see something so different and even more because almost everyone thinks it looks like little-girls' clothes. So, are they sexualizing a little girl? Some people just can't conceive that something so different doesn't have anything to do with role play or something sexual. With some people it is really hard to make them understand that it isn't anything like that, and sometimes they don't believe you.

And a participant from Puebla is disturbed by this aspect:

I think that each person is free to fetishize what they like, but it seems a bit deviant, since we do not wear Lolita clothes to sexually attract someone, but to be ourselves. The non-objectification of women is one of our goals.... It's disgusting and frightening to be harassed by men just because they assume we dress like this to provoke them. I do not like being afraid of being who I am, and expressing it by what I wear, or having to expect some sort of behaviour that violates my freedom just because someone believes that the way I dress is sexy and that it is fun to treat it as a fetish.

One young woman from Mexico City, who is one of the few who *does* see a connection with Nabokov's *Lolita*, accepts that the image is fetishized, while she also sees the paradox in that relationship. She claims:

I know it has often been said that, during the birth of the subculture in Japan, the name was chosen just because of the sound of the word but, for me, if it has any relation to [Nabokov's] *Lolita*, it is the childish essence of the aesthetic. As to the erotic element, the novel also has a certain association with the fashion, since originally, in Japanese culture, *Lolita* clothing came across as shocking. Maybe today it doesn't look daring but, in summary, women were revolutionizing femininity through the appearance of the Girl, a metaphor for the life stage of [the character] *Lolita*. There are many psychological manifestations that explain a fixation on childlike aesthetics. On the one hand, a sexual disorder taken from Nabokov's book. In contrast, as well, sexual evasion.

In other words, dressing like a child may elicit sexual attention from those who fetishize the "little-girl" look but, to the wearer, dressing in an innocent, childlike manner is often, ironically, chosen to *ward off* mature advances. This same member talks about these two sides of the coin in response to the question: "Do you think that the *Lolita* clothing-style could be seen by some people as a form of fetish wear?"

It seems to be [a fetish] for people my father's age but I know it is somewhat outdated to perceive the aesthetics of the *Lolita* style as erotic. With the little-girl or schoolgirl fetish, it is more about short skirts and a flirtatious attitude (more like Nabokov's *Lolita*), while in the *Lolita* subculture the rules are different. With the *Lolita* identity, necklines are higher, skirts are not very short, and attitudes are more feminine and correct, more like they were in the Victorian and Rococo eras when people were more sexually reserved and upheld certain manners. Many people confuse this. I think that both perceptions are okay, and combining them as well (I do) but it is important to know the similarities between them, as well as the differences.

So, when she says that "it is somewhat outdated to perceive the aesthetics of the *Lolita* style as erotic," I think she refers to the fact that outsiders are becoming more aware that the look is not *meant* to be sexually provocative. It could be argued, though, that insiders are also beginning to understand that if their image *is* eroticized by others, whether one approves of it, or not, it can be classed as a fetish style.

A member of the Gothic and Lolita community of Puebla, who also sees a link between the two Lolitas, says, in reference to the original Japanese Lolita identity: “Perhaps she is an Eastern adaptation of the Western girl, Lolita, seen through a mirror but, conversely, as a woman who wants to be a girl.” Thus, each of the two Lolitas is the reverse of the other, with the other being a reflection, another side, of the Self. While Yazmín Pool from Mérida, Yucatán (see figs 3.37, & 3.38), disagrees with the Nabokovian link, she also agrees with the latter part of this analysis, in that: “Nabokov’s Lolita is a girl anxious to grow up. [But] Lolita fashion is represented by adults going through a phase to be girls again.” Ironically, the Lolita identity *does* reflect both of these things.

The main message from all of this is that members are not ignorant of the fact that their style is misappropriated and misunderstood but that their *intentions* are typically in opposition to the *assumptions* of outsiders. In this respect, the attitudes, motivations, and opinions of most Gothic and Lolita participants in Mexico are in line with those of the greater majority from communities worldwide. What *is* different in Mexico, however, is *how* the style is generally presented.

Over my years of observing the Lolita style in Mexico, there has been an accelerating shift away from an emphasis on the sugary-sweet, little-girl identity, to one of more maturity. This lessens the perceived association between *the* Little Girl, Lolita, and the Lolita fashion style. Added to this, is the differing cultural understanding of the title, “Lolita.” As a diminutive of “Dolores,” it is another name for Mary, the Virgin.

An examination of Mexican Lolita identities allows us to renegotiate the semiotic meanings of the Lolita style. In Mexico, in some cases, the endeavour come closer, in fact, to the original movement’s intended ideas, meanings, and motivations, particularly regarding the projection of modesty, and purity. Exemplified, here, is the spirit of the Virgin, Mary, manifested in Mexican Gothic and Classic Lolita styles.

María de Los Dolores, the Weeping Mother

So far, I have emphasized the major importance of the figure of the Virgin, Mary, in her incarnation as Our Lady of Guadalupe, to the hearts of the Mexican people.²⁶ Also notable in Mexico is another representation of Our Mother, as Our Lady of Sorrows. In context with the subject of this thesis, the image of Our Lady as the Long-suffering, Weeping Mother is especially relevant in investigating a cultural shift in the meaning, interpretation and expression of Lolita fashion styles.

It is important to recognize the saturation of imagery in the Mexican environment regarding Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows) as an affective element in the creation of a particular style of Lolita fashion, and establishment of the Gothic and Lolita movement, in Mexico. Towards the beginning of this chapter, I revealed the connection of the word, “Lolita,” to the proper girls’ name, Dolores. In English, *dolores* translates to “dolors,” of which, in Spanish, the singular is *dolor*. *Dolor* can be used, equally, to express sorrow, grief, pain, aches, aching, soreness, suffering, distress, and agony. In many Catholic establishments in Mexico, in chapels, churches, cathedrals, convents, hospitals, if not all types of religious institutions, Nuestra Madre Maria de Los Dolores (Our Mother, Mary of Sorrows) is present, inconsolably wringing her hands, and crying floods of tears that wash down her exquisitely beautiful, devastated face. She reminds us not only of the pains of the Mother of Christ but of our own, long-suffering mothers. She, therefore, appeals to our sympathies, no matter our faith. She is *the* Matriarch, Our Loving Mother, both a sacred and secular entity, who cuts through all beliefs and resonates with all humankind.

Paz (1961) describes the Mexican Woman in context with this sacred, maternal motif:

²⁶ See *Chapters Two and Three*.

Her natural frailty is made a virtue, and the myth of the “long-suffering Mexican Woman” is created. The idol – always vulnerable – becomes a victim, but a victim hardened and insensible to suffering, bearing her tribulations in silence.... Through suffering, our women become like our men: Invulnerable, impassive, and stoic.²⁷

The “long-suffering Mexican Woman” is also a symbol of Mexico’s painful past, as well as an important “configuration... in the structure of Mexicanness.”²⁸

Enrique Ajuria Ibarra (2014) discusses this notion in relation to another weeping figure, *La Llorona* (The Weeping Woman), and her place in the formation of Mexican consciousness:

La Llorona is a national myth that realizes a troubled historical origin.... It is by exploring its origin as a folk legend and its recurrence in popular culture, particularly visual media, that this local haunting is able to evidence a phantasmatic obsession with national identity.²⁹

I explore this idea and highlight Ajuria Ibarra’s statements further, in the following section, before examining the theme of the Matriarch as aesthetic inspiration for the Mexican Lolita identity.

La Llorona and Her Relationship with Our Lady of Sorrows

At the time of writing this section, the box-office release of the Warner Bros. horror feature film, *The Curse of La Llorona*, has just been announced for April 19, 2019.³⁰ The teaser trailer, alone, has been described as “traumatic,” and “utterly terrifying.”³¹ An excerpt from the official blurb reads:

²⁷ Paz, “The Labyrinth of Solitude,” 38 – 39.

²⁸ Citing Ajuria Ibarra, “Ghosting the Nation,” 136.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *The Curse of La Llorona*, Theatrical film, directed by Michael Chaves, produced by James Wan (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2019). Note: At the time of writing, it is October 2018, therefore, preceding the film’s release.

³¹ Elizabeth Aubrey, “Check out the terrifying teaser trailer for upcoming horror movie ‘The Curse of La Llorona,’” *NME*, October 22, 2018, <https://www.nme.com/news/film/curse-of-la-llorona-trailer-horror-2392409> (accessed December 4, 2018).

La Llorona. The Weeping Woman. A horrifying apparition, caught between Heaven and Hell.... In life, she drowned her children in a jealous rage, throwing herself in the churning river after them as she wept in pain. Now her tears are eternal.³²

This interpretation of La Llorona intensifies the aspect of sheer terror associated with this figure and her story. There are, however, varying versions of her legend. In most, she has murdered her own children. In others, her children have accidentally drowned. In all, she is pining, wailing and wandering at night, searching for the children she has lost. Says Ajuria Ibarra (2014), the conventional understanding is that:

She is the ghost of a woman who constantly wails for the children she has killed. She wanders along the river looking for them. If you come out late at night, she might mistake you for one of her own [children] and take you away.³³

And, in line with her most malevolent reputation, Ana María Carbonell (1999) writes:

In examining ethnographic accounts dating back to the colonial period, La Llorona... repeatedly emerge[s] as dangerous and destructive.... These tales... describe La Llorona as a treacherous, selfish woman who murders her own children, usually through drowning. The motivations include insanity, parental neglect or abuse, and or revenge for being abandoned by a lover. In addition, La Llorona often seeks to murder other children or women out of envy for her loss and to seduce or kill men out of spite....³⁴

This latter, extreme, image of La Llorona, as a demented, vindictive, supernatural serial killer, is the one drawn from for the 2019 screen adaptation.

³² James Hadden, “‘The Curse of La Llorona’ Trailer Unleashes the Weeping Woman,” *Screen Geek*, October 19, 2018, <https://www.screengeek.net/2018/10/19/the-curse-of-la-llorona-trailer/> (accessed December 4, 2018).

³³ Ajuria Ibarra, “Ghosting the Nation,” 131.

³⁴ Ana María Carbonell, “From Llorona to Gritona: Coatlicue in Feminist Tales by Viramontes and Cisneros,” *MELUS* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 54.

Given the interconnectedness of other iconic female figures of Mexican culture, as discussed in the previous chapter, it should not be much of a surprise that La Llorona shares intertextual relationships with them, as well. She is equated, particularly, with the goddesses, Cihuacóatl (the spouse of the serpent-god, Quetzalcóatl) and Cōātlīcue (the mother of the sun-god, Huītzilōpōchtli, who is the brother of Quetzalcoātl). According to Amy Fuller (2015), it is not possible to pinpoint the exact origins of La Llorona's legend but many do believe the story has pre-Hispanic roots.³⁵

In the *Florentine Codex*, an encyclopedic work on the Nahuatl peoples of Mexico, completed during the 16th century by the Franciscan friar, Bernardino de Sahagún, we find... Cihuacóatl (snake-woman), described as “a savage beast and an evil omen,” who “appeared in white” and... would walk at night, “weeping and wailing.” She... could also be linked to... the voice of a woman heard wailing at night, crying about the fate of her children. A later codex by a Dominican friar, Diego Durán... discusses Cōātlīcue... mother of Huītzilōpōchtli, the Aztec god of war.... She waits for her son to return to her from war and weeps and mourns for him while he is gone.³⁶

Through her connections with these goddesses, La Llorona is also related, then, to Mictlancīhuatl, Queen of Mictlan (the Underworld); Santa Muerte (Saint Death); La Catrina; Our Lady of Guadalupe; *and* Our Lady of Sorrows. In association with the last two, in fact, La Llorona's actual name is María.³⁷

Whether she kills her own children, and then regrets it, or whether they accidentally drown, the ending of her story is usually similar. Micah Issitt (2015) relays that she runs after her children with her arms outstretched and screaming in pain as they are carried away downstream. However, it is impossible for her to reach them and the children cannot be saved:

³⁵ Amy Fuller, “The Evolving Legend of *La Llorona*,” *History Today* 65, no. 11 (November 2015), 39.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 39 – 40.

³⁷ Micah Issitt, “La Llorona: Omen of Death,” in *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Literature* (Hackensack, NJ: Salem Press, 2015).

The next morning, the villagers find María dead by the river. They dress her in white funerary garments and bury her body near the spot where she was found. That night, the villagers hear moaning coming from the banks of the river calling for her children. Night after night, the villagers hear and see the ghost of María, wandering near the river dressed in her white funerary garments and calling out, “Where are my children?” After some time, the villagers no longer call her María and begin calling her La Llorona. . . . From that time on, the people of the village warn their children against going out unattended at night, lest La Llorona steal[s] them, thinking that they are her children.³⁸

This child-murdering/child-stealing figure of the Mother is, in nature, the antithesis of Our Mother, Mary. However, it is claimed that María’s tale has been distorted over time to suit colonial motives and fit with religious conquest and propaganda.

Issitt (2015) explains that, from the colonial period, the goddesses Cōātlīcue and Cihuacōatl, as well as La Llorona, began to be depicted as “dangerous and destructive,” which “deviates from the traditional Aztec portrayals” of these figures, especially in the case of “Cihuacōatl, as the patroness of midwives” and childbirth, and hence *protectress* of women and children.³⁹

Historians believe that the patriarchal Spanish culture absorbed and adjusted the female figures of Aztec mythology to produce characters that fit[ted] the male-dominated mold of Spanish Catholic culture. In this way, stories in which Coatlicue appears to the Aztecs crying for the loss of her child[ren] became a story of a vain woman who destroys her own children and then threatens others because of her grief.⁴⁰

Carbonell (1999) indicates that it was even more complicated than that. She claims that militaristic members of the Azteca-Mexica culture were the first to alter the ancient goddesses’ holistic attributes:

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

According to Fray Diego Durán, writing in 1570, Aztecan high priests would manipulate the image of [Cihuacoatl]... as a “cunning device” to obtain more sacrificial victims.... These priests would solicit an ordinary woman to impersonate Cihuacoatl and carry a cradle that contained not a child but a sacrificial knife. She would then disappear into a body of water, strategically leaving the cradle with the knife behind, so others would interpret it as a sign that the gods desired more sacrificial victims.⁴¹

Carbonell maintains that it was for this purpose that the characteristics of La Llorona’s pre-Columbian predecessors were “debased,” by dividing the once-multifaceted personality of Cōātlīcue into separate entities, severing her sides or faces from each other.⁴² Moreover, one of Cōātlīcue’s identities, Tonantzin, was promoted as the “Good Mother,” while another, Cihuacóatl, was transformed into the “Bad Mother.”⁴³ In the process, Cihuacóatl’s child, one of her symbols as the patroness of midwives and childbirth, was replaced with the motif of the sacrificial knife. She was, thus, reconstructed from an ancient earth-goddess of fertility and protection into an “agent of destruction.”⁴⁴

Says Carbonell (1999):

The Spanish [then] polarized Coatlicue’s attributes even further. They desexualized and continued to extol Tonantzin..., associating her with Our Lady of Guadalupe, or the Virgin Mary, and oversexualized Cihuacoatl, associating her with... La Llorona.... This pervasive denigration of female agency in Mexican culture has created the well-known virgin-versus-whore paradigm, a dualistic structure that attempts to police female behaviour by extolling the virgin’s passivity and selflessness while denigrating figures who take action, such as... La Llorona, as selfish, treacherous and destructive. Within such a worldview, Our Lady of Guadalupe is divested of her rebellious, proactive potential and seen as all-giving and completely selfless..., and La Llorona... is depicted as a seductress

⁴¹ Carbonell, “From Llorona to Gritona,” 54 – 55.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Citing *ibid.*

and murderess who continues either to commit treacherous behaviour or eternally and impotently weep for her sins.⁴⁵

Through a process of assimilation and syncretism, Our Lady of Guadalupe, therefore, arose as an amalgamation of the indigenous goddess Tonantzin (the “Good Mother”) and Mary, the Virgin (Our Mother). In the beginning, due to Tonantzin’s conflation with Cihuacóatl, and, therefore, her relationship with the Serpent, namely the feathered-serpent god, Quetzalcóatl, the Spanish conquerors had equated her with the biblical Eve, or the “Bad Mother,” the opposite of Mary, “the Good Mother,” just as Quetzalcóatl was seen as Satan. Tonantzin was also connected by the colonizers with Eve through the translation of her Náhuatl title as Our Mother, being that Eve was the first mother and, therefore, the mother of all mankind. To the Aztecs, however, she was not only the mother of the human race but of all the gods. This also conflated her with the Mother of God, Mary, the “Good Mother.” The ultimate mother goddess, Mary/Tonantzin, thus became an icon for all Mexicans of the modern world. In her manifestation of both of these figures, she, again, represents two faces of the one coin.

La Llorona also represents this duality: She is both the “Bad Mother” and the “Good Mother.” As Ajuria Ibarra (2014) states:

[T]he wailing woman, is a spectral mother who mourns for the children she killed herself; moreover, she is also invoked to warn children off from behaving badly. Thus... she is a bad mother and a protective mother, a caregiver and a punisher. Her negative connotation is paired off with remorse and guilt. She is not just a wrongdoer; She is also a ghost that represents sorrow and grief.⁴⁶

The absolute image of maternal sorrow and grief is represented, however, by Our Mother, Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores, Our Lady of Sorrows.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 55 – 56.

⁴⁶ Ajuria Ibarra, “Ghosting the Nation,” 131.

While it might seem a stretch to compare the two Marías – La Llorona and Mary, the Virgin – and some might think it sacrilegious, their depictions, in terms of visual culture, especially, are interlaced. La Llorona is imagined in white, symbolizing purity, also, therefore, associated with Mary, the Immaculate. The two figures, of course, also weep, eternally, for the heart-breaking loss of their children. Admittedly, it is not by Mary's own hands that her son, Jesus, is murdered. In this sense, the two Marías are antitheses of each other. Nonetheless, both situations represent sacrifice and bereavement.

In the case of La Llorona, this theme may be an analogy for the historical incidence of human sacrifice, and infanticide, in Aztec society. Aridjis (2017) explains the reasoning behind these motivations:

The concept of life-death duality was central to pre-Hispanic cultures.... Just like the seasons and the agricultural cycles..., death was a natural stage of existence that came after life, but also before it. Life and death were two parts of an endless cycle and, in order for there to be life, there had to be death, as well as... sacrifice. For Mesoamericans, human sacrifice was a means to maintain balance and harmony.⁴⁷

She continues, regarding the extent of this practice, claiming that the estimation for “the number of people sacrificed in central Mexico in the 15th century was as high as 250,000 a year,” and that many of these deaths included those of children.⁴⁸ Kristin Romey (2018) writes of a “mass child sacrifice event, for which we have physical evidence,” of forty-two children at the Aztec Templo Mayor at Tenochtitlán, Mexico City.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Aridjis, “Symbolizing Death,” 212 – 213.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁴⁹ Kristin Romey, “Exclusive: Ancient Mass Child Sacrifice May Be World's Largest,” *National Geographic*, April 26, 2018, https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/04/mass-child-human-animal-sacrifice-peru-chimu-science/?cmpid=org&sf208960269=1&fbclid=IwAR1dxqrQRFz5rfg7IHP0pYJVodCb5Z7CaTTaseEs10B-nrPdL_FPufbrgRI (accessed March 8, 2019).

Furthermore, Aridjis (2017) says that “most of the child sacrifices were of local and noble lineage, offered to the gods by their own parents.”⁵⁰ The difficult comprehension of how a mother could endlessly grieve for the children she has murdered, herself, may be tied up with this occurrence.

Carbonell (1999) tells of another real-life tragedy, this time in connection with the conquistadors, which might also have contributed to the origins of the story of La Llorona, and may, at least, “provide a social reason for her behavior.”⁵¹ She cites Bess Lomax Hawes (1968) who discusses a “variant” of the tale, which “locates La Llorona within colonial Mexico and shows the extreme disenfranchisement of Indian mothers” during that historical period.⁵² Hawes (1968) claims that the Spanish colonizers greatly admired the beauty of the indigenous Mexican children and that they “took the children (the most beautiful) and gave them to their wives.”⁵³

Some of the Indian women killed their children in order to keep the Spaniards from taking them. La Llorona is one such woman. She is now searching constantly for her children, whose faces she sees in all children. She kills the children to be united with her own.⁵⁴

Carbonell (1999) argues that, in this context, the actions of La Llorona are “not vengeful,” but are carried out in order to “protect” her children from a life of “virtual enslavement within the Spanish world.”⁵⁵

This stolen-children episode increases national anxieties associated with blood, assimilation and identity, violence and loss, symbolized in the ever-haunting presence of La Llorona. As Ajuria Ibarra (2014) writes:

⁵⁰ Aridjis, “Symbolizing Death,” 213.

⁵¹ Citing Carbonell, “From Llorona to Gritona,” 56.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Bess Lomax Hawes, “La Llorona in Juvenile Hall,” *Western Folklore* 27, no. 3 (July 1968), 159; quoted in Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 56 – 57.

⁵⁵ Carbonell, “From Llorona to Gritona,” 57.

La Llorona [parallels]... a series of events that involve historical associations with violent death.... At the heart of these events lies a transgenerational anxiety over purity and identity embodied in blood.... [T]he wailing woman is structured as a constant haunting that has its roots in postcolonial anxiety: An inevitable encounter of cultures that results in a troubled origin... now experienced as traumatic.... Ultimately, hybridity reveals that Mexicanness is already haunted by its violent [past].⁵⁶

Hence La Llorona stands for the loss of not just her children but the loss of her people's children. More specifically, her pain can be read as a metaphor for Mexico's pain. Moreover, she eternally weeps for her loss *and* her own sins and, symbolically, for the sins of history. This is another connection with Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, who eternally weeps for the loss of her son but also the sins of all mankind, for which her son was sacrificed.

Returning to the crux of this chapter, we can observe the saturation of images of Mary, the Mother, in the Mexican environment as affective on the national psyche in the same way as we view the two Lolitas, or the Child/Woman identity, in Japan. With the development of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement, we are, thus, introduced to the influence of the ubiquitous image of the Matriarch, versus the Little Girl.

⁵⁶ Ajouria Ibarra, "Ghosting the Nation," 138, 139, 140, & 141.

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Figure 4.2: Francisco Romero Zafra (artist), *María Santísima de la Victoria*, 2008

Lolita, La Virgencita⁵⁷

References to the Matriarch, the Virgin Mother, are recognizably present in the Gothic and Classic Lolita fashion styles of members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community. An example can be seen in photographs of Karla Ochoa (Matamoros, Tamaulipas) (see figs 4.3, & 4.4). Karla complements her Gothic Lolita ensemble with a self-made coronet, which mimics the radiating halo of Mary of the Immaculate Conception and the sunburst motif of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Tepeyac (see figs 2.12, 2.15, 2.18 – 2.20, 3.5, & 3.7). Attached to her headdress is a chained pendant containing a crescent moon, another symbol of Mary Immaculate and Our Lady. Around her neck, she wears a radiant heart, a heart-shaped jewel surrounded by gold rays, connoting Mary's sacred heart.⁵⁸

Karla holds this pendant up in her later image, which she has titled, "Sad but Cute" (see fig. 4.4). This emphasizes her efforts to signify the sorrowful *Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores* as the Lolita. This idea is clearly apparent in her endeavour to replicate the reddened eyes and dripping tears of Our Lady of Sorrows (see figs 4.2, & 4.3). An overall feeling of bereavement is accentuated by the black schema and the curtain veil that hangs from her coronet. Her aim to honour the Virgin Mother is made even more explicit in comparison with an artistic depiction of *Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores*, as the Holy Mary of Victory in mourning attire, by the celebrated Spanish sculptor, Francisco Romero Zafra (see fig. 4.1).⁵⁹ Interestingly, I first found this image on a web page dedicated to *La Llorona*. Lastly, Karla leaves no doubt as to her intentions as she holds her hands in prayer (see fig. 4.3).

⁵⁷ "Lolita, The Little Virgin."

⁵⁸ This pendant is not fully depicted in these images, which I have chosen for other reasons (such as the clarity of her headdress and makeup), but it is visible in others I have not displayed.

⁵⁹ While this model is Spanish, rather than Mexican, it is the best I could find as a visual aid. Note: Sculptures of Our Lady of Sorrows in Mexico possess the same kind of devastated faces, with the huge, running tears. I photographed one such example at the Basilica of Guadalupe, although my image is out of focus and so it doesn't show the actual tears (see fig. 4.14). I feel that my example was possibly even created by the same artist, as it is of the same quality and style.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 4.3: Luis Carlos Sierra, *LC Photography* (photo)
Karla Ochoa and Lizeth Garcia (Miss Alpaca) (Matamoros, Tamaulipas)
Otaku Fest, Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico, February 24, 2018



Figure 4.4: Karla Ochoa: “Sad but Cute,” April 23, 2018

Juana Neri (Mexico City) has also made her own, similar, veiled coronet (see figs 4.5, & 4.6). She states: “I made the headdress with Catholic iconography in mind, and also... heavily decorated skeletons of saints.... I also added another headpiece with roses, inspired by Día de Muertos decorations.” The red roses and pearls are also symbolic of the Virgin Mary. And, while Juana says that she emulates adorned skeletons she saw on a trip to Europe, her skull-like makeup and skeletal tights reference La Catrina, as well. Her whole ensemble befits the Day of the Dead occasion.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Juana had recently been on a trip to Italy, Spain, France, and Germany.



Figures 4.5 – 4.6 (above and below): Juana Neri (Mexico City), 2018



The motifs of Our Mother are also of great influence on the work of Claudia Baez, Gothic and Classic Lolita fashion designer, maker, and participant, from Puebla, for her registered label, Puppets. She says that she includes “jacquard fabrics, veils, crowns, and lights,” to evoke images of the Virgin and Saints in Mexican Gothic and Baroque art. This is apparent in the following image, due to the colour palette of blue and gold: Mary is traditionally portrayed in blue, in art, which is symbolic of heavenly love or heavenly grace, while the gold adds a regal touch, designating her as the Queen of Heaven (see fig. 4.7). These motifs are supported by her radiant starred coronet and her crown.



Figure 4.7: Claudia Baez (design) for Puppets, 2017

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 4.8: Claudia Baez (designer) wearing her own design for Puppets, 2017

In the next image (see fig. 4.8), Claudia (Puebla), herself, models another of her designs for Puppets, wearing the crown shown in the previous image (see fig. 4.7). Dressed all in white, symbolizing purity, innocence, and virtue, combined with accents of regal gold, she is, here, the Blessed Virgin Queen, emulating the essence of effigies of Mary, such as the following (see fig. 4.9). The dress, itself, is of the classic Lolita silhouette with Baroque-style sleeves.

This outfit was also modelled by Lolita participant, Regina Morales (Mexico City), during a Lolita fashion show, *El Baile de Las Rosas* (The Ball of the Roses), held at the Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, Puebla City, on July 23, 2017, which I was extremely fortunate to attend (see figs 0.1, 4.10, 5.11, & 5.36). In the image of Regina, we can see that, on this occasion, the underskirt is lit up, which is an example of what Claudia refers to when she says that she uses lights in her work (see fig. 4.10). These LED lights create a beautiful, ethereal effect, accentuating the garment's heavenly-like aspect. Regina holds rosary beads in the same manner that the figure of Mary does in statuettes (see figs 4.9, & 4.10). Finally, the white veil adds a bridal sensibility, lending the look an extra feeling of purity and virginity.

Also at *El Baile de Las Rosas*, Diana Lopez Machorro (Cuautitlán, Mexico State) modelled another Puppets ensemble, again embodying the Virgin Mary (see fig. 4.11, 5.11, & 5.37). This time, the appearance evokes representations of both Mary Immaculate and Our Lady of Sorrows. This is immediately noted in the colourway of navy-blue, gold, and white, as seen in art and church objects (see figs 2.11, 2.18, & 4.12 – 4.15). Her headdress emphasizes these sources: While it imitates Mary's radiating halo, its spokes are finished with stars, also triggering cognitive links to Stella Maris. This is the same headpiece depicted previously (see fig. 4.7). No doubt, Claudia has her own points of reference, although I have selected these (see figs 2.18, & 4.12 – 4.14). The veil draped over the coronet also achieves a Spanish mantilla over a *peineta* effect.



Figures 4.9 – 4.10: Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (photos)

(Above) *La Virgen María, Parroquia de Nuestro Señor San José de Puebla*, July 22

(Below) Regina Morales (model)

Dress and headdress by Claudia Baez for Puppets

Necklace by Gabriela Canton for Stella Maris

Shoes by Fernando Díaz for Enid Hallow

El Baille de Las Rosas, Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, July 23

Ciudad de Puebla, México, 2017





Figure 4.11: Diana Lopez Machorro (model)

Dress and headdress by Claudia Baez for Puppets

Necklace by Gabriela Canton for Stella Maris

El Baille de Las Rosas, Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, Ciudad de Puebla, México, July 23, 2017

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Image removed due to copyright law



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Figure 4.12 (previous top left): José Villegas Cora (photo)

Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, Iglesia Conventual de Nuestra Señora del Carmen, Puebla, Mexico

Figure 4.13 (previous top right): Baltasar de Echave Ivía (Mexico), *Tota Pulchra*, c. 1620

Figure 4.14: (previous bottom left): Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal (photo)

Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores, Old Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico City, 2017

Figure 4.15: (previous bottom right): *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad de Puebla*

Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de la Soledad de Oaxaca, Puebla, Mexico

Figure 4.16 (above): *Cixi or Tzu Hsi, the Last Empress of China* (1835 – 1908)

Interestingly, it is, perhaps, not the actual intention to project the Virgin's image with this garment (see fig. 4.11). Apparently, the style is meant to be Chinese. As we can see, Diana wears gold adornments on two fingers, which she holds up (see fig. 4.11, 5.11, & 5.37). When I asked her about the meaning of them, she explained they were fingernail guards, inspired by a type worn by the last Empress of China, which Diana brought with her on the day, to contribute to the look, as she had been told her outfit would be of Chinese influence (see fig. 4.16). She was then asked to hold them up in the manner of a religious figure, as if giving a blessing. Diana explains:

I was told that the dress I was going to wear in the fashion show was going to be a Chinese style, so I took the finger accessories with me. They [these type] were worn in the Qing dynasty as a symbol of status and power by ladies related to the royal family. At that time they were made of gold and precious stones. So that's what I wanted to show, something like nobility. In the end, the whole outfit seemed more like a religious figure than of Chinese style, and the girl that was helping with the fashion show told me to act as if I were blessing someone.

So, even Diana admits that she felt more like a Catholic religious figure than Chinese, although the colourway, and the touches she has added, do create a resemblance to the Empress, as well as a reference to Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, and of the Immaculate Conception, especially with the navy and gold. She has also fashioned her hair in the same way and decorated it with similar dangling tassled ornaments (see figs 4.11, 4.16, 5.11, & 5.37). As such, I asked her if she has any Chinese heritage, to which she replied:

I don't but I'm interested in Chinese and Japanese culture so a year ago I decided that I wanted to try Chinese Lolita style. At the same time, I started buying from Taobao and saw many [previously] unknown things that I thought were lovely and could be used with my Lolita style. That's how I found my finger accessories.⁶¹

⁶¹ Taobao is an online Chinese shopping company, which includes the retail of Chinese Lolita labels.

It is, therefore, even more noteworthy that the spirit of Claudia Baez's Catholic heritage, and her culture, still underlies the aesthetic qualities of this work, whether consciously or subconsciously.

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Figure 4.17: Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait*, 1948

Incidentally, and coincidentally, the famed Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo, is also said to have felt a resonance with Chinese culture, which she partially demonstrated in her eclectic style of dress. Gannit Ankori (2018) states:

Kahlo and Rivera travelled to San Francisco [in 1930].... It was there that Kahlo proceeded to assemble her repertoire of accessories, dresses, and tresses.... Kahlo wrote at length about Chinatown... which she happily explored.... Kahlo cultivated her budding predilection for exuberant fabrics, handmade embroideries and ethnic crafts [in bustling Chinatown].... By the time she... return[ed] to Mexico... she had acquired multiple Chinese items, which she would later integrate into her wardrobe.⁶²

However, as Claire Wilcox and Circe Henestrosa (2018) point out, “despite her atheism and commitment to Communism, Kahlo’s work [her paintings, were often, also]... imbued with Catholic imagery.”⁶³

In context with the theme of this chapter, Kahlo painted herself as the Weeping Woman. In a self-portrait of 1948, her sorrowful face is wreathed by a *resplendor*, a traditional garment meaning “radiance” (see fig. 4.17).⁶⁴ Kirstin Kennedy (2018) writes:

Kahlo had rejected her mother’s devout Catholicism, but the image of her head encircled in ray-like lace pleats... recalls depictions of the Virgin Mary, particularly the Virgin of Guadalupe... surrounded by rays of light.... The sun-like quality of the pleats also... echoes Aztec mythology, in which the sun was... a symbol of eternal rebirth.⁶⁵

However, her tears even more profoundly align her with Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows. And, says Kennedy (2018), they “equally suggest her identification with... La Llorona.”⁶⁶

⁶² Gannit Ankori, “Frida Kahlo: Posing, Composing, Exposing,” in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, ed. Claire Wilcox and Circe Henestrosa (London: V&A Publishing, 2018), 145 – 146.

⁶³ Claire Wilcox and Circe Henestrosa, “Introduction: Fashioning Frida,” in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, 17.

⁶⁴ Kirstin Kennedy, “The *Resplendor*: Cultural and Spiritual Significance in Two Self-Portraits,” in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, 163.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 165 – 166.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 166.



In regard to differing interpretations of the term, “Lolita,” and their relationships with the Gothic and Lolita movement, we can see a psychological shift in Mexico, from the essence of the Japanese “little-girl” Lolita image, towards a connection with the Spanish given name, Lolita, a form of Dolores, a title of Our Mother, the Matriarch. While the two names, Dolores and Lolita, are shared by Vladimir Nabokov’s little girl, several of my Mexican correspondents emphasize that, in their culture, Lolita is simply a “*diminutivo*” of Dolores, without connotation. As Nataly (Mexico City) says, “I just consider that the girl of whom he [Nabokov] speaks of in the book was named Dolores and affectionately called Lolita.” It is the framework that affects the meaning.

While we may be determined to uncover the true meaning behind the original naming of the subcultural Lolita identity, style and movement, any result must remain purely theoretical, without the absolute facts. It is in the way that we read the semiotics, the symbolism, connotations, and intertextual associations, that we are able to gain understanding, as long as our analysis is from a critical viewpoint, supported by a knowledge of the socio-political and cultural landscapes, from which the definitions arise.

As a visual practice, fashion is especially affected by image saturation. Although not all of the creative output of Mexican Lolita designers and makers displays as literal a translation of their culture’s visual cues as does Claudia Baez’s work, there is a distinct flavour that distinguishes Mexico’s movement from the rest. This is due to the fact that, in its Woman/Child duality, it leans more towards the Matriarch than the Little Girl. As Lolita participant Mia Novoselic (Mexico City) declares: “In the beginning..., the style was so childish, but it has evolved, and now you can find different styles, which are more mature.” This factor is apparent in regard to an observation of the Mexican Lolita-style clothing industry, which is the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter Five
Las Lolitas Mexicanas y
La Industria de La Moda

Chapter Five:

Las Lolitas Mexicanas y La Industria de La Moda

This chapter looks at the growth industry of the Gothic and Classic Lolita fashion movement in Mexico, focussing on the design, manufacture, and consumption of the clothing. An important element is the increasing return to the handmade, to do-it-yourself, and independent local cottage industries, and what this means as a departure from how the Japanese Gothic and Lolita subculture has come to be, in terms of economy, function, and status. It also delves deeper into what it means to be a Lolita in the Mexican environment, from the viewpoints of insider members. It reveals attitudes towards the local homemade versus the Japanese designer label, in Mexico, whether there are expectations, in this regard, according to what one chooses to wear, and investigates if there is pressure to conform to certain ideals of style, in order to fit in. Furthermore, it demonstrates how these attitudes and circumstances foster support for the growth of a Mexican Gothic and Lolita design industry. Consequently, this rise in production, has encouraged the development of local, cultural Gothic and Lolita styles.

First of all, as an introduction, and to provide a perspective of the extent and operation of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community, I refer to interviews between myself and two Mexican spokespeople for the movement, who discuss what it is like to be members in Japan, and in Mexico. I begin with Gloria Capetillo, a Mexican Lolita artist, now living in Japan. I then follow with Briz Blossom, an authority on the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community, as the Kawaii Ambassador of Mexico, an officially appointed national leader. Both of these representatives give some insight into the economy, function, industry, and status of Gothic and Lolita fashion in Mexico.

Gloria Capetillo, Mexican Lolita Artist in Japan

Gloria Capetillo is a Mexican artist of the Japanese manga style who incorporates illustrations of Lolita figures in her work (see fig. 5.1). She is a member of Mexican and Japanese Lolita communities, having been born and raised in Mexico and, more recently, become a resident of Japan. As such, she is in a rare position in regard to making comparisons between the operations of each community. She, therefore, discusses each of the Japanese and Mexican movements as both an insider and an informed outsider. She is one of my correspondents who responded separately to my thesis survey (although her answers are not included in the results of my quantitative statistics) and she was also featured by Edgar Santiago Pelaez Mazariegos for *BMJ: Beautiful and Mysterious Japan*, an online travel guide, in early 2015.¹ The following commentary combines information from these two sources.

Gloria states that she began to wear Lolita clothing in 2009. She was first introduced to Japanese popular culture via television when a Mexico City channel began to broadcast Japanese anime programmes. After discovering Lolita fashion while “looking for antique styles on the internet,” and realizing that its origins were also Japanese, she “became obsessed” with the idea of moving to Japan, believing there would be a larger audience for her kind of art, in that country. Although she was seventeen when she became interested in the Lolita style, it wasn’t until she was twenty-two that she became involved with her local Lolita community. In her interview for *BMJ* (2015), she elaborates:

I began to enter the Lolita world and a small community began to take form in my town [in Mexico]. It was at that moment that I found the perfect balance between my art and my love of Japan, because, even before I knew about Lolita, I dedicated myself to drawing

¹ Edgar Santiago Pelaez Mazariegos, “Lolita Culture in Mexico: Interview with Gloria Capetillo, Lolita artist and illustrator living in Japan,” *BMJ: Beautiful and Mysterious Japan*, April 12, 2015, <http://japantravel-bmj.com/lolita-culture-in-mexico/> (accessed February 3, 2017).

women in old-fashioned dresses with big skirts in a very Rococo style. From then on, I realized that Lolita illustration was my thing.²

Pelaez Mazariegos (2015) asks whether Gloria has always been interested in antique styles, to which she confirms that they have long-been a preoccupation, and that she's especially attracted to nineteenth-century architecture and fashion. She likes to imagine, through her artist's eyes, how people might have experienced the Victorian period:

I always wanted to dress like the girls in my drawings.... When I saw... [images of] Lolita... I discovered it was possible.... I went to the fabric store, even though I didn't know a thing about making clothes, [and] I tried to do my first dress, which, honestly, was a complete disaster, but I didn't care. The first time you wear a [Lolita] dress... nothing else seems to matter. You feel like a princess, like a queen, and it doesn't matter what people think, or if they think it is too extravagant. That's something you should not care about.³

Since making her first Lolita dress, Gloria has continued to design and make all of her own Lolita clothes and accessories. She has told me that she doesn't buy or own any official Lolita-brand garments. She sews her own dresses, and makes her own accessories, such as "brooches, necklaces, hair accessories" and "painted stockings."⁴ This is despite living in Japan where she has easier access to all the local stores. Although she maintains that she just loves making things with her "own hands," this is also due to the expense of Japanese Lolita designer clothing and fabrics. She explains:

I don't have a lot of money, so I cannot buy very expensive things. Therefore, I try to save wherever I can. Sometimes I buy used clothes... and make new clothes out of them.... If I'm bored or stuck in the house, I just grab anything I have lying around and start to make new things... dresses, frames, drawings.... I'm always doing something.⁵

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.1: Gloria Capetillo wearing one of her own handmade designs

The making of one's own wardrobe, particularly as a response to the matter of economy, is a significant aspect in terms of how the Gothic and Lolita movement functions in Mexico. This is a shift in how the Japanese Lolita industry is currently constructed around expensive designer-label brands. In this image (above), Gloria wears one of her own, handmade, Classic Lolita ensembles (see fig. 5.1). It is clear that she has gained expertise in design and dressmaking over the years. This garment demonstrates Gloria's love for the classic, aristocratic, Rococo Lolita style, apparent in the duck-egg-blue-green, salmon-pink, and ivory colour palette, and the frills and placement of the bows.

As Gloria highlights, while she now belongs to a Japanese Lolita community, she began her membership in Mexico. In describing the size and significance of the Mexican movement, she states that “it is enormous:”

There are hundreds and hundreds of Lolitas in Mexico; almost all of the states have a big Lolita community. The biggest that I know of is in Tijuana. In that town, there are many Lolitas and they have formed a very organized community. They have held events so big that they have been able to bring brands and models from Japan.... Probably, in Mexico City, the number of Lolitas is [even] larger.... All of Mexico is full of Lolitas, and every day there are more and more.⁶

Gloria claims that what she likes so much about the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community is that the larger it gets the stronger it grows, particularly its sense of unity. She talks about a group, in Mexico, called the Lolita Sisterhood, whereby members who have been involved for a longer amount of time welcome newer participants and assist them in adopting the lifestyle:

They teach them [new members] how to dress, or how to make their own clothes, they invite them to tea parties.... I like it because, since I left Mexico, I've seen that they are closer to each other and... the girls support each other, more and more.⁷

Gloria compares her personal experience as a member of the Mexican movement with how she feels as part of the Japanese subculture. She believes that, in Mexico and other Latin-American countries, members are friendlier than they are with each other in Japan. She states that Mexican participants usually become friends as soon as they meet, whereas, within Japanese communities, members seem more distanced. Communication with Japanese Lolitas, she says, can be like speaking “indirectly to a stranger,” although with much politeness and respect. “In fact,” she declares, “there’s not much contact” at all:

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

I would dare to say that [in Japan] there are no communities; there are no Lolita groups.... There are many Lolita girls, but they don't find it necessary to come together.... In Mexico..., we come together and organize parties.... We even have the idea that you must have a best Lolita friend! But, in Japan, that doesn't exist; the parties are held by the brands and people go on their own.... It's not [such] a friendly environment. People have to know you for a long time in order for that chemistry to develop between you.⁸

Pelaez Mazariegos (2015) wonders how Gloria thinks the Gothic and Lolita movement will evolve in Mexico and asks her if she believes it has a future. She replies that, in her mind, she sees a "great future."⁹ She says that, when she left Mexico, she never imagined that the movement would develop so much. She is surprised that, in just a few years, Mexican Gothic and Lolita communities have expanded to such numbers. She also "didn't think it was possible, in such a short time," that they could advance to a point whereby they are now able to host notable Japanese Lolita visitors, spokesmodels, and designers, at large local events.

It is of Gloria's opinion that the growth of the Gothic and Lolita movement in Mexico is partly due to the emergence of leaders who support the new members:

[They] encourage girls to trust themselves, to get on well with each other, and to work together to hold events. They [have] created a very positive energy.... [These]... events... help the general public learn about Lolita, which has helped to increase its acceptance [and enabled]... more activities.... In Latin America there is a big Lolita community, but Mexico is the biggest one....¹⁰

Indeed, one of the most important of these Lolita leaders, who has done much to encourage and promote the Gothic and Lolita movement in Mexico, is Briz Blossom, who was officially appointed as the national Lolita ambassador in 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Briz Blossom, La Embajadora Lolita de México

Beatriz, a lawyer from Guadalajara, Jalisco, who goes by the pseudonym, Briz Blossom, is the officially appointed Kawaii Ambassador of Mexico, or La Embajadora Lolita de México (The Lolita Ambassador of Mexico) (see figs 2.21, 3.35 – 3.31, 5.2, & 5.15). I discuss what this role means, in more detail, following this section. First, this information comes from conversations between Briz and myself, accomplished in stages, over the course of 2015 – 2018. It represents a reconstruction of the order of our dialogue, so as to create a narrative.

Like Gloria Capetillo, Briz Blossom began wearing Lolita fashions in 2009. Briz's method of discovery was through the Japanese *Kera* magazine, a publication that has long supported the Gothic and Lolita movement in Japan, and has more recently begun to feature articles on the subculture around the world, including Mexico.¹¹ It was via an online issue of this periodical that Briz first saw a “beautiful old-school Lolita design,” which she “fell in love with.” Her attraction to Lolita fashion is connected with her preference for “elegant” clothing, of which she believes the Lolita style to be “one of the most beautiful.” She claims it makes her “feel feminine, cute and happy,” and “fulfils” her desires “to live life to the maximum.” She alternates between all of the Lolita genres, “Classic, Sweet, Hime (Princess), Gothic, Sailor, Country, Pirate, and Kodona/Ouji,” etc., although her very favourites are the Hime and the Classic Rococo styles because of their “fanciness” and sophistication (see fig. 5.2). Briz considers herself to be a “lifestyle” Lolita, as she wears the clothing as often as she possibly can: “I can't wear Lolita every day because my job doesn't allow me to do so (I'm a lawyer). But I try to include elements of Lolita fashion in my everyday wear.”

¹¹ Regina Morales (Mexico City) is currently a correspondent and reporter on the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community for the Japanese magazine, *Kera*.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.2: Fer Jara (photo)

Briz Blossom and Misako Aoki, Kawaii Ambassadors of Mexico and Japan (respectively)
Oz Fest, Colombia, 2016

As Briz holds a good career position, she is able to acquire garments and accessories by Japanese designer-led Lolita labels, such as *Angelic Pretty*, *Moi-même-Moitié*, *Metamorphose*, *Victorian Maiden*, and *Mary Magdalene*. She doesn't believe, however, that one must own higher-end brands in order to look authentic and be accepted, "because buying expensive dresses doesn't make you a better or worse Lolita. It's simply the effort that counts," she says, "and always trying to be better every day without treading on other Lolitas' toes." In other words, it's how you style yourself, how

you put what is available together, but, also, how you treat, respect, help and support other members, which is most important.

Briz's perspective of being a member of the Mexican Lolita community is similar to Gloria Capetillo's, in that she also describes an atmosphere of kindness and friendliness, and a sense of unity. Regarding the matter of whether she feels that members in Mexico are, however, coerced into buying leading Japanese brands, she claims:

In our Lolita community I don't think we are pressured to buy Lolita brand to fit in. We [all] started... with handmade, indie, and off-brand clothes, and I still wear these. I don't think a Lolita is worth what she can afford to pay for dressing. A Lolita is worth the amount of love and perseverance she puts into achieving her goals for this fashion.

This is a refreshing departure from the way in which many national Gothic and Lolita communities operate or are said to function. Participants of many global communities are frequently belittled and or ostracized for not getting the style "right," for not owning items by official Japanese brands, or for wearing handmade clothing.

The subcultural Japanese Lolita style evolved from historical fashion fads and street looks and as such, in fact, also began its journey as a DIY, eclectic fusion of many trends. The handmade aspect became a particular element when fans of the musician, Mana, began to emulate his Gothic Lolita image, as ready-made garments weren't as easily available, at that time. However, once the founding Japanese designer labels began to be successful, crystallizing what we now think of as the typical Lolita silhouette, it became "essential" to many Lolita communities for members to own official brands. This was originally expected in order to prove one's knowledge and authenticity, especially if outside Japan. Unfortunately, though, it became, in many places, an elitist aspect of the Gothic and Lolita subculture. Members of global communities are called out for their "bad" taste, for not wearing renowned brands, or for styling themselves "incorrectly." The victims of this kind of behaviour are often labelled "Ita," in other words, "not quite

Lolita,” a derogatory assessment. The term is also often handed to Lolita participants who make their own clothes. Briz reflects on this aspect of the movement, again emphasizing its relative absence within her own community: “I’ve fortunately never been bullied. I know that other Lolitas do get hurt in that way, but we always try to respect each other and to promote an environment of harmony.”

What is strikingly significant about this welcoming environment is that, without an overwhelming bullying factor, members are free to create and develop their own styles. If they, perhaps, don’t get it “right,” they are usually given genuine help and advice. Moreover, because there is not the same level of persuasion to own expensive Japanese brands, and the local, handmade item is also strongly supported, there is leeway for the evolution of a local, Mexican Lolita flavour.

Although Gloria Capetillo and Briz Blossom are both associated with the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community, and share similar experiences, socially, they respond to it quite differently, not just because Gloria is now based in Japan. Briz is able to attain top-end Japanese Lolita fashion garments, while Gloria, despite the fact that she actually lives in Japan and, therefore, has more immediate access to shopping, avoiding huge shipping costs, still finds it difficult to afford Japanese designer brands. Gloria’s choice to design and construct all of her own Lolita clothes and accessories, however, is largely swayed by her passion for making. This is a robust motivation for many of Mexico’s Gothic and Lolita participants. The few who don’t sew their own clothes will at least restyle garments and or make accessories. Briz, for example, says that she “always tries” to create items such as headdresses and rosettes.

In Mexico, the handmade option is also not as expensive as it can be in other countries. Gloria explains that, although it is cheaper in Japan to make your own Lolita wardrobe than it is to buy it, Japanese materials are still not as affordable as they are in Mexico. What is largely evident, as well, is that besides the removal of the stigma attached

to the do-it-yourself Lolita ensemble, in fact, the local handmade dress is highly prized. For these reasons, as well as a widespread love and aptitude among members for designing and making clothes and accessories, there exists a blossoming subcultural DIY Mexican Gothic and Lolita fashion industry.

That, in Mexico, the Gothic and Lolita community has grown so large it has spawned its own industry, and warranted its own official leader is of great note. The Mexican movement, and industry, is the focus of this chapter. But, before an examination of its fashion production, I elaborate, here, on what Briz Blossom's role as a Kawaii Ambassador means, and how her position operates within, and strengthens, the Mexican movement, while I continue with her responses, in this context.

The Kawaii Ambassadors (Ambassadors of Cuteness)

At the end of one of my interviews with Briz, I asked her, "What does it mean to you to be called a Lolita?" The question is one that I have always asked my research correspondents. Her reply was:

To be a very sweet, humble, perseverant, elegant, feminine and cute person that doesn't need a man to succeed, herself. As Lolita fashion started as a revolution against male chauvinism, independence is one of our virtues.

Briz's message is important as it emphasizes the mission of wearers of the style, around the world, to be seen as independent, strong women, who choose to dress in these feminine fashions to please themselves, not to provoke unwanted attentions. As the motivations of members of Lolita communities are often misunderstood by outsiders, the need for spokespeople to provide official clarification on behalf of participants about the intentions of the movement is vital.



Figure 5.3: Misako Aoki and Kathryn Hardy Bernal

Book-signing of Misako Aoki's *Lolita Fashion Book* (Tokyo: Mynavi Corporation, 2014)

Kawaii Kon, Hawaii Convention Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 4, 2014



Figure 5.4: The Hawaii Lolitas and international Lolita friends with Misako Aoki

Front: (centre) Misako Aoki; Back: (2nd in from right end) Kathryn Hardy Bernal

Angelo Pietro, Italian Restaurant, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 6, 2014

In February 2009 – in a concerted effort to nail down meanings, essentially, to help understandings and thwart misunderstandings, and to protect the Lolita movement’s image and, furthermore, that of the nation that created it – the Japanese government created the role of an official leader to both represent the subculture’s interests, and to promote *and* safeguard the country’s international reputation. As one of three commissions devised for this purpose, with the others speaking for further style trends, the move was touted as a means to bolster the Japanese tourist industry, “with the idea of using pop culture to stimulate interest in Japan overseas, especially among young people.”¹² In August 2009, it was reported that:

Japanese manga, anime, fashion, and other pop culture has taken the world by storm. In an attempt to harness this boom [and] to deepen understanding[s] of Japan among young people around the globe, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan [has] appointed three young leaders as *Kawaii Taisbi* (“Ambassadors of Cuteness”).... The role of the three ambassadors, each a leading figure in a particular genre of fashion, is to represent Japan’s vibrant popular culture overseas. They have already been making a splash at Japan-themed events around the world.¹³

One of the envoys was chosen to represent the Japanese schoolgirl look:

Fujioka Shizuka, a star in the world of school-uniform-style designer clothing, [is] increasingly popular with young women in various countries. Her eye for the perfect combination of socks, skirts, and schoolgirl blouses has earned her a reputation as the “magician of school uniform coordination...”¹⁴

Another was Kimura Yu, elected to showcase the “Harajuku Girl” style, the cute, eclectic, mish-mash fashion sense of young Japanese girls, seen on the Tokyo streets of Harajuku.

¹² Anonymous, “The Kawaii Ambassadors (Ambassadors of Cuteness): Meet Japan’s Pop Culture Envoys,” *Trends in Japan*, August 2009, http://web-japan.org/trends/09_culture/pop090827.html (accessed November 24, 2017).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The main personality, however, and the most prominent of the three, was and is Misako Aoki, the official Japanese *Kawaii* Ambassador of Lolita, the world's leading spokesperson for the subcultural Gothic and Lolita movement in Japan, and on behalf of Gothic and Lolita communities, worldwide (see figs 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, & 5.9).¹⁵ Misako began as a model for leading Japanese Lolita fashion brands. By the time she was chosen to front the phenomenon, her image, if not then her name, was already familiar to followers of the movement, via Japanese style magazines, such as *Kera* and the *Gothic & Lolita Bible*.

Misako travels to countries that inhabit substantial Gothic and Lolita communities. There, she attends occasions organized in her honour, such as tea parties, special convention events, and Lolita fashion shows, where she meets with her fans, and holds Q & A panels. I have been very fortunate to meet with her, myself, in 2014, when she was a distinguished guest at *Kawaii Kon*, a Japanese popular culture expo, held annually at the Hawaii Convention Center, Honolulu, Hawaii (figs 5.3, 5.4). I first met her at a meet-and-greet and book-signing session (see fig. 5.3);¹⁶ again, at a ticketed, formal tea party; at a Q&A media conference; and during a private dinner, at a local restaurant, for members of the Hawaii Lolitas and invited visitors from other Lolita communities (see fig. 5.4). It is her duty, during her official attendances, to instruct her audiences about the intentions and meanings of the subcultural Lolita movement, and give advice about the correct way to wear Gothic and Lolita styles. At this convention, Misako also took the opportunity to launch her *Lolita Fashion Book*, a guide to Lolita styles and customs, and to

¹⁵ Although this move is framed in terms of the concept of selling Japan through “soft power,” I would suggest that the emphasis of the agenda, in creating these ambassadors, was and is to defend the nation's reputation. It will be apparent that all three of these trends in Japan, especially the “schoolgirl” craze, were and are commonly sexualized in terms of the fetishization of the “little-girl,” a phenomenon discussed in *Chapter Four*. The underlying necessity, therefore, I believe, was and is to promote images of innocence to counteract the problematic issues associated with, and connotations that arose and have arisen from these meteoric fads that have become overtly visible, internationally, through media saturation, since at least the mid-2000s. This analysis seems to be backed up by this statement: “The objective is to promote an understanding of Japan, a better image, or the correct image,” says Takeshi Akahori, director of the public diplomacy department at Tokyo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.” See Mark Ellwood, “Japan's ‘Ambassadors of Cute,’” *Financial Times*, March 27, 2010, <https://www.ft.com/content/06978f58-384d-11df-8420-00144feabdc0> (accessed January 16, 2018).

¹⁶ Misako Aoki, *Lolita Fashion Book* (Tokyo: Mynavi Corporation, 2014).

answer questions about her publication, via a Japanese-English-speaking translator, during her public conference.¹⁷

As the Japanese Gothic and Lolita subculture has grown and increasingly globalized, international envoys have been added to the fold to represent their own countries' interest. Each leader is formally appointed, upon competitive application, by the Japan Lolita Association, of which Misako Aoki is the face.¹⁸ Just a few of the many national Gothic and Lolita communities, administrated by official Kawaii Ambassadors, are Canada, France, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Mexico.

One of the most outstanding, and popular, of the official international Kawaii Ambassadors, with a large internet following, is Mexico's Briz Blossom. Both a role model and spokesmodel for the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement, she is also followed and supported by Gothic and Lolita fans around the world. Her responsibilities are to organize and officiate at Gothic and Lolita functions, locally and abroad, at which she is also specially invited, to promote, and to provide information about, the Lolita style, and the globalized Lolita subculture. It was 2016 when Briz was announced as the Kawaii Ambassador of Mexico. Lolita Ambassadors earn their roles due to their impeccable image and communication skills but also for their support of, and efforts to expand, the movement. Prior to learning of her achievement, Briz said to me in conversation:

I've recently been hosting Lolita events in my city [Guadalajara] so that all the Lolitas that live here [in Mexico], as well as foreign Lolitas who visit us, can spend great times together. I also help to organize bigger Lolita events in Mexico and Latin America. One of these events, "*Winter Garden*," held in San Luis Potosí [in 2016], appeared in [the Japanese style magazine] *The Gothic & Lolita Bible*.

For this event, Briz was responsible for bringing the Korean Lolita label, Haenuli (by the designer, Haenuli), to Mexico. Since then, she has helped to bring other big names to

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See their website, *The Japan Lolita Association*, <http://jlolita.org/>

Mexican Gothic and Lolita events, including the Japanese Kawaii Ambassador, Misako Aoki (see fig. 5.2); and is set to host the famous Japanese Lolita model, Midori Fukasawa, and the renowned Japanese Lolita brand, Enchantlic Enchantilly (by Fumiko Kawamura), in Monterrey, in July 2019.

In a 2017 communication with me, Briz looked back on previous events:

I was invited to Colombia as an international Lolita guest, and I helped to bring Misako Aoki to that event (see fig. 5.2). I felt very pleased and happy there. I was later appointed as Kawaii Ambassador for Mexico. I feel very honoured. I was also invited as an international Lolita guest to the *Grand Lolita Tea Party Latin America*, held in Peru, attended by other Lolita and Boystyler guests. It was a marvellous and amazing event.

In the same year, she also discussed another of her roles with me, as an official spokesmodel for the company, Gothic Lolita Wigs, in the U.S.A:

I found out about this company in 2011 and since then I've loved their wigs because I am amazed that they specialize in wigs for Lolas. After that, they asked me to be a spokesmodel for their brand. I consequently met the owners and I was surprised to discover that one of them is part Mexican. They love and support my country and people.

Here, Briz talks about the community she leads in her country, the way the Lolita identity and styles are understood and responded to, locally, particularly in wider society, and the kind of knowledge she tries to impart, in order to create awareness:

People in Mexico are very curious, so most of the times they approach to ask us about the fashion in a positive way. I always try to explain to them about the fashion because if people ask for information in a friendly way, it means they like how we look. I haven't had any bad encounters in Lolita, fortunately.

I have asked Briz if she knows of, or has heard of, any situations, in Mexico, whereby participants' family members have disapproved of their Lolita style choices and, if so, why she thinks that might be the case:

I think we all have known someone who has experienced this situation. I think parents or families might not support this fashion because of ignorance. Our fashion is a healthy hobby, and some people can misunderstand it as a fetishist or sexual fashion, wrongly. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, some participants, because of this reason, have to, or have had to, hide their Lolita-style clothing from their parents and or other family members. I have asked Briz whether she is aware of this happening. She continues:

If girls have to hide the fashion it is because their families know almost nothing about it. Lolita is a very beautiful and elegant fashion, and all we need to do is to explain to our families and friends that it has nothing to do with sex or fetishism. As long as our loved ones get to know more about this fashion, they accept it.

She says she can't even comprehend how the style can be fetishized, stating: "I don't find a relationship between this elegant and modest fashion and fetish wear. Simply, there is no way I can see it." Briz raises the importance of modesty, as a means to combat the style's fetishization and sexualization:

Lolita has a basic shape so that people can distinguish it from other fashions, nowadays, [although] rules for Lolita aren't as strict as previous years. If you maintain a modest style, with no sexual intention or provocation, it's fine. In Lolita, you shouldn't show a lot. Even with the Ero Lolita style,¹⁹ it is fine to show more than is usually allowed but you should still try not to look vulgar, and to keep maintaining an elegant and decent look.

It is for the rest of this chapter that I examine the look of Mexican Lolita design and style, in context with the growing Mexican Gothic and Lolita fashion industry.

¹⁹ Ero Lolita means Erotic Lolita, although it just means that necklines can be lower and skirts shorter and a corset, for example, can be added. As Briz states, the style should still be "decent."

The Mexican Gothic and Lolita Fashion Industry

Along with the expanding popularity and membership of the Gothic and Lolita movement in Mexico, is the growth in independent Mexican production of Gothic and Classic Lolita fashion. Here, there is a concentration on the handmade, ranging from DIY to cottage industries, and the burgeoning establishment of small companies and registered labels. While there are members of communities around the world known for making their own Lolita garments, this aspect is emphasized in Mexico. This is currently a shift in how the movement generally operates around Japanese designer brands.

As mentioned, within many other of the larger Gothic and Lolita communities, including Japan, there is a preference for owning authentic, designer-led, Japanese brands, as well as a sense that, if you don't attempt to acquire examples of them, you aren't a fully-fledged Lolita, and you can't be accepted. However, while just about all members of any Lolita community speak of "dream dresses," or "wish lists," realistically, not all participants can achieve those aspirations, no matter where they are. There are two main reasons, particularly if you live outside Japan: one's financial status (exacerbated by foreign exchange rates); and isolation (adding to the economic issues, as shipping costs can be heavy). As Gloria Capetillo has stated, for her, these issues led to her interest in the design and creation of her own wardrobe. These explanations also seem to be common for many members of Mexican Lolita communities. As Briz Blossom has pointed out, there is an understanding of these factors in Mexico and, therefore, most members try not to exclude others by being judgmental about what they wear. Instead, many Mexican Lolitas try to support and assist each other, in order to look their best, and to fit in, according to their available resources. Garments are, thus, quite often handmade, if not of independent Mexican labels, or cheaper "off-brands." Off-brands are those not considered to be Lolita-style labels but are brands who produce some clothing items that can be adapted as part of a Lolita ensemble, such as cardigans or full skirts.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.5: Pam Cervantes (Mexicali, Baja California) wearing her own, handmade outfit

In regard to my survey question, “Do you make (or have you ever made) any of your own Lolita-style clothes or accessories?” an overwhelming 90% of my Mexican correspondents replied that they have and that they do. Many also agree with Briz’s opinion that cheaper Japanese brands and off-brands are a good alternative for those who can’t afford top-end designer labels. For example, Pam (Choco Chip) Cervantes (Mexicali, Baja California) says: “I’ve made dresses, blouses, socks, and hats. I think that they [the cheaper brands] are also a good option to start with. My clothing is usually handmade, and I’ve never felt any discrimination about it (see fig. 5.5).” Briz suggests that gradually saving to buy less-expensive Japanese and or local independent Mexican products can also be a solution. Another approach is to modify clothing to suit the Lolita style.

According to my thesis statistics, while the do-it-yourself, handmade factor already appears to be a strong element of the movement in Mexico, this aspect is also developing into a local industry. Here, I observe the production of some of the more visible Mexican Lolita-style designers and makers, and provide information about their operations and inspirations, while analyzing some of their work.

Rebel Butterfly by Zeleste Moon

One of the most successful designer-led Gothic, Punk, and Classic Lolita-style Mexican brands is Rebel Butterfly, owned and produced by the Lolita participant who goes by the pseudonym, Zeleste Moon (see figs 5.6, & 5.7). Zeleste hails from Toluca, in the State of Mexico, and belongs to the Gothic and Lolita community of Mexico City. She started Rebel Butterfly in April 2016.

Like many who have responded to my thesis surveys, including Briz Blossom, Zeleste discovered the Lolita style in a “Japanese fashion magazine.” This was in 2011, when she was eighteen years old, in the same year that she, subsequently, started to wear Lolita fashions, herself. Personally, she prefers the Punk Lolita and Classic Lolita styles (see figs 5.6, & 5.7, respectively). Taught by her mother, she began to sew garments when she was seventeen. She then formally studied fashion and fine art. She produces most of what she markets on her own, and occasionally contracts helpers when it is order season. Regarding her influences, she says: “My main inspiration is art, but also rebellion. For example, in my punk designs, I aim for a fusion between the aesthetics of punk and art. I consider Lolita fashion to be an art.” Besides her own clothing, she owns and wears garments by the Japanese brands Baby, the Stars Shine Bright, Alice and the Pirates, Putumayo, Metamorphose, as well as some local and international indie labels. Her favourites are Alice and the Pirates, “because of their dark and mysterious themed prints,” and Putumayo, “for their punk style.” These labels are influential on her own designs.

There is a definite rebelliousness in Zeleste’s work, in that subversive elements are playfully balanced against traditional, cultural aesthetics. The latter aspects are clearly apparent in her “Royal Gold Princess,” which, as she says, is inspired by the Baroque, demonstrated by the regal old-gold, bronze, ivory, and white colour palette, and the historical essence of the dress, particularly the Rococo-style sleeves (see fig. 5.8).

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.6: Edward Castro Avalos (photo), Zeleste Moon in Punk Lolita style
The artist wearing her own design, “Anarchy Doll Collection,” for Rebel Butterfly, 2016

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.7: Edward Castro Avalos (photo), Zeleste Moon in Classic Lolita style
The artist wearing her own design, “Rose Essence Collection,” for Rebel Butterfly, 2016

Image removed due to copyright law

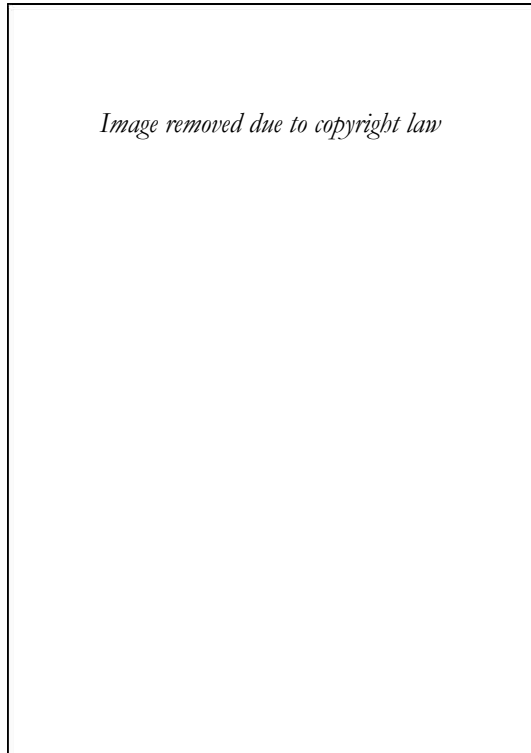
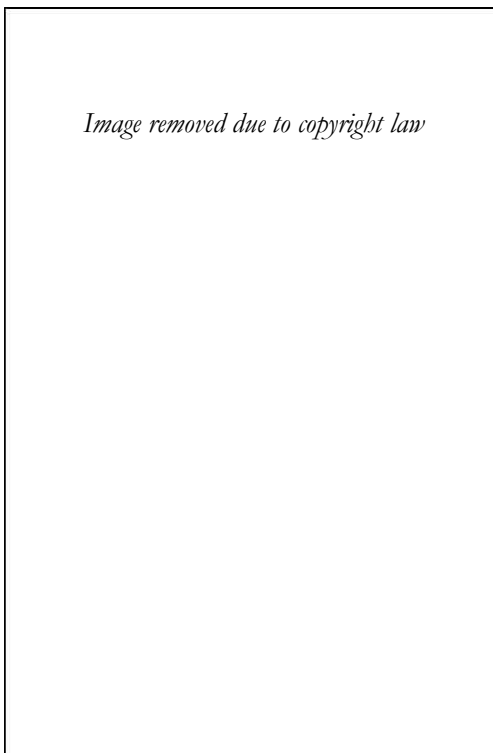
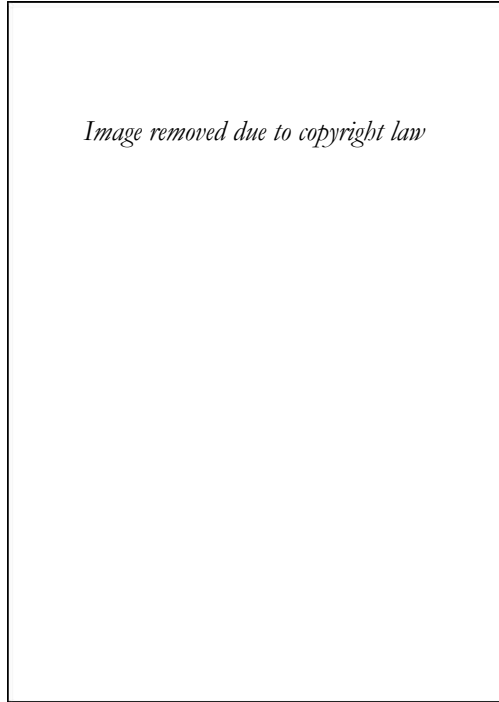
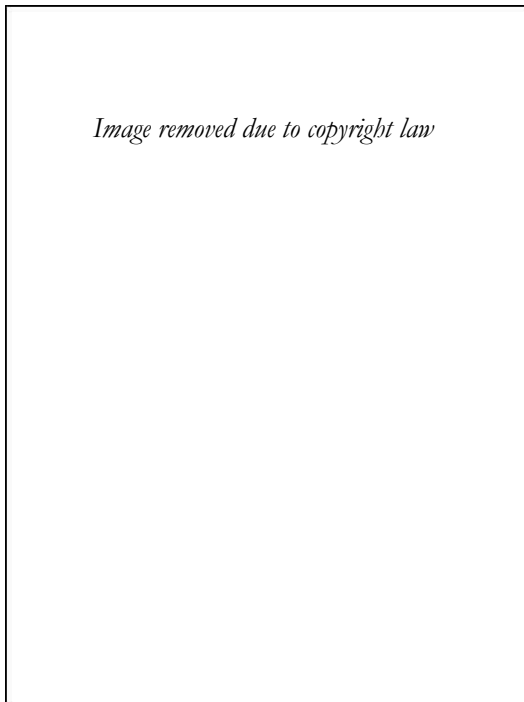
Figure 5.8: Edward Castro Avalos (photo)
Zelesse Moon (design), "Royal Gold Princess," Rebel Butterfly, 2017

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Figure 5.9: Edward Castro Avalos (photo)

Misako Aoki modelling for Rebel Butterfly wearing “Mysterious Princess” by Zeleste Moon

J’Fest: Festival de Música y Moda de Asia en CDMX, Mexico City, April 1 – 2, 2017



Figures 5.10 – 5.13:
“Bleeding Rose” by Zeleste Moon for Rebel Butterfly, 2017

“Mysterious Princess,” worn by Misako Aoki, also harks back to the spirit of the Gothic and the Baroque, especially the headdress, which mimics a sixteenth-century French hood, complete with a curtain veil, first worn at the royal courts of Europe and then transferred to New Spain during the early colonial period (see fig. 5.9). The roses, cross (or crucifix) pendant strung with beads, and purple-and-black colourway, add a Catholic touch to this regal sensibility – purple symbolizes both royalty and penitence, and black is traditional for the vestments of the clergy – while both purple and black also represent mourning, as does the black veil, lending the ensemble a gothic tone, as well.

“Bleeding Rose,” however, is more edgy (see figs 5.10 – 5.13). It shakes up the sweeter semiotics of the subcultural Lolita identity and the traditional relationship with Alice, from *Alice in Wonderland*. In the Gothic and Lolita world, keys and playing-cards are often used as signifiers of Lewis Carroll’s little-girl character, Alice.²⁰ Here, though, Zeleste has also adorned her dress with *croix pattées* (“patty crosses”). This serves to make the image less cute and sweet, more punk and slightly anarchic, as this motif is popular in the punk, biker, and hard-rock and heavy-metal music scenes. It also adds a transgressive note regarding the symbol’s more controversial connotations in its association with the iron cross. Historically, this motif is a Catholic, Christian symbol, connected with the Crusades, and also appearing on the crowns of European royalty since early Medieval times. Moreover, the “bleeding” red roses are emblematic of the Virgin Mary, and connected with Carroll’s *Alice* stories, again, in association with the Queen of Hearts. This garment, thus, cleverly clashes together many layers of cultural and artistic meaning.

²⁰ See Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal, “Lolita through the Looking-Glass: Alice, the Japanese Lolita Subculture, and the Lolita Complex,” in *Transglobal Fashion Narratives: Clothing Communication, Style Statements and Brand Storytelling*, ed. Anne Peirson-Smith and Joseph Hancock II, 91 – 114 (Bristol and Chicago, IL: Intellect, 2018).

Puppets by Claudia Baez

Puppets is a Mexican Gothic and Classic Lolita brand by the designer and participant, Claudia Baez (Puebla), who also goes by the name of Rose Baez (see figs 2.22, 4.8, 5.14, 5.22, & 5.25). As noted in *Chapter Four*, some of Claudia's work was shown at an event I attended in Puebla City, Mexico, *El Baile de Las Rosas* ("The Ball of the Roses"), on July 23, 2017 (see figs 4.10, 4.11, 5.14, 5.39, & 5.40). So far, I have discussed her garments in context with their aesthetic connections with the Gothic, the Goddess, and the Virgin Mary (see figs 2.22 – 2.24, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10, & 4.11). I now uncover more about the designer, herself, and observe other inspiration for her designs.²¹



Figure 5.14: Claudia Baez (designer) with her four models for Puppets
Claudia (Rose) Baez, Anna Juárez, Diana Lopez Machorro, Regina Morales, and Muffin
Jewellery: Gabriela Canton for Stella Maris; Shoes: Fernando Díaz for Enid Hallow
El Baile de Las Rosas, Hotel San Palacio Leonardo, Ciudad de Puebla, July 23, 2017

²¹ I thank my Lolita correspondent, Regina Morales (Puebla City, Mexico), for her role in contacting Claudia Baez, on my behalf. Regina translated my questions into Spanish for the designer, and then returned the answers to me, translated into English.

Claudia began Puppets in 2014, but registered the brand, officially, in 2016. She says that she started her life in fashion when she was ten years old, employed in a workroom removing threads during the manufacturing process. Although she “didn’t learn much,” at the time, about the fashion industry, she feels that it was when she began to understand basic information about pattern and construction. She eventually taught herself how to sew before enrolling in fashion design at college. Regarding her production, she always designs and makes each prototype, herself, and then employs a team to help with the construction of customer orders, and assist with fine work, such as embroidery.

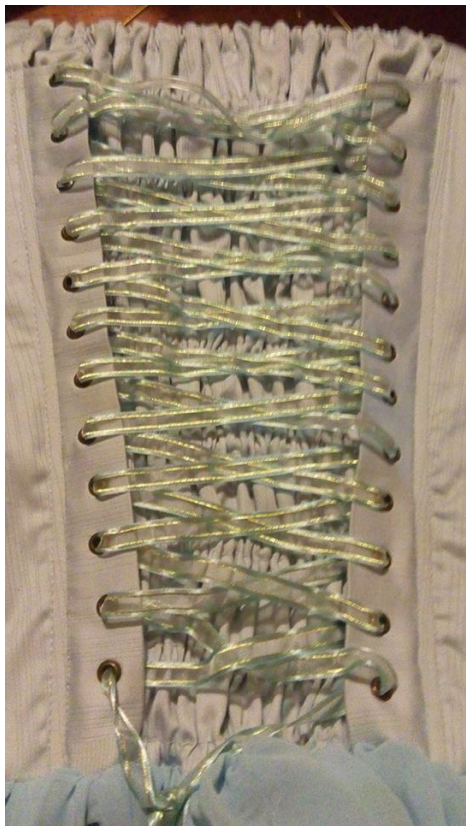
As highlighted in the previous chapters, Claudia’s main inspiration comes from her Catholic faith (see figs 2.22, 2.23, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10, & 4.11). An examination of her work also reveals a design relationship with fashions of the French Rococo period, in the frills and placement of bows, the shapes of sleeves, the types of fabric pickups, bunches and gathers, and the lacing, as well as the use of gold accents against typical colour palettes of the era, which include duck-egg and powder blues, salmons and pinks, creams and yellows, ivory and white (see fig. 5.14, second from left and far right; and figs 5.15 – 5.22). Catering to the tastes of the Gothic Lolita, as well, her ranges also encompass all-black and black-grounded designs (see figs 2.22 – 2.24, & 5.23).



Figure 5.15: Briz Blossom (model) wearing “Trío de Rosas: Shy Rose”
by Claudia Baez for Puppets, 2016



Figure 5.16: “Trío de Rosas: Shy Rose” (back view) by Claudia Baez for Puppets, 2016



Figures 5.17 – 5.20: Claudia Baez (design details) for Puppets, 2016



Figure 5.21: Elizabeth Armstrong D Blois (model)
wearing a design by Claudia Baez for Puppets, 2017



Figure 5.22: Claudia Baez (designer)
wearing her own design for Puppets, 2017



Figure 5.23: Claudia Baez (design) for Puppets, 2017

Keeping with the European historicism evident in all of Claudia's designs, but, in this case, sitting outside the box, is the following ensemble, which includes an incredible, veiled ship-shaped chapeau, worn by one of my survey participants and main correspondents, Alicia Boucanier (Puebla City), at *El Baile de Las Rosas* (see figs 5.24, & 5.25). The ship decoration of the hat is reminiscent of the Rococo taste for such fashions but also takes us back to a vision of the Spanish colonial fleet, sailing to the shores of the Americas on their mission to conquer the New World. This notion is complemented by the dress, which, with its tiered flounces, emulates an Hispanic, flamenco-type style.

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.24:

Alicia Boucanier (model) outside the Hotel San Palacio Leonardo, Puebla City, July 23, 2017

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.25: Alicia Boucanier (model) and Claudia Baez (designer)

Alicia wears a design by Claudia Baez for Puppets

El Baile de Las Rosas

Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, Puebla City, July 23, 2017

Bara No Yami by Yami Yuki Ai

Yami Yuki Ai is the pseudonym of the Lolita participant and Gothic and Classic Lolita designer for Bara No Yami (see figs 0.1, 3.22 – 3.24, 5.29, 5.30, & 6.6). She lives in Atlixco, Puebla, Mexico. I also had the pleasure of meeting Yami at *El Baile de Las Rosas*, at the Hotel Palacio, San Leonardo, on July 23, 2017, where Bara No Yami was one of three Lolita fashion labels demonstrated in the show. As with Claudia's designs for Puppets, Yami's Catholic heritage is imbedded in her work. Yami's own signature look, and design style, is of the Gothic Lolita genre, after her muse, the Japanese musician and leading Gothic Lolita fashion designer, Mana. I have also discussed examples of her designs in *Chapter Three*, and in the *Conclusion* of this thesis (see figs 3.1 – 3.4, 3.24, & 6.6).

Yami officially started Bara No Yami on June 11, 2011. She began by creating simple accessories at about eighteen and then progressed to making her first skirts using her grandmother's sewing machine. She has never been enrolled in fashion, in higher education, but has taken sewing classes. She designs and produces all of her own work without assistance. Regarding her inspiration, she says:

My main influence is Mana Sama, his designs, his music, everything he does; he is the main motivation for me. I'm inspired by a lot of things, music, art, religion, paintings, fabrics, photos, souvenirs, places, deaths, moods, and dreams. These last three aspects make some things more complicated, since both the titles and the works have personal meanings for me, so many of my designs have not been for sale to the public.

Of the following examples, Yami states: “[This was] for my birthday, and for my loved one, so it is important to me (see figs 0.1, 5.26, & 5.29 – 5.31).... This, ‘Dream of Angel,’ is about a dream that I had.... I did not manage to recreate it as I saw it, but I love the result. I wanted it to be so that when you look at it, and wear it, you really feel like this..., like an angel in a dream (see fig. 5.27).... [And] of this, I love the fabric print and opted for something classic (see fig. 5.28).”



Figure 5.26: Yami Yuki Ai (design) for Bara No Yami, "Queen Carmesi"



Figure 5.27: Alexa Fernanda Deras Barraza (Aleex GL) (model)
wearing “Dream of Angel” by Yami Yuki Ai (design) for Bara No Yami
shoes by Fernando Díaz (design) for Enid Hallow
El Baille de Las Rosas, Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, Ciudad de Puebla, México
July 23, 2017



Figure 5.28: Yami Yuki Ai (design) for Bara No Yami, “Sanctuary of Roses”

In the photos of Yami, she is wearing a *Moi-même-Moitié* dress designed by Mana, while her veiled headdress is of her own make and styling (see figs 0.1, 5.29, & 5.30). She is accompanied by Eleonora Ledesma in Yami’s “Queen Carmesi.” In the last image are her models showing her designs for the catwalk at the *Baile de las Rosas* event. From the left is Gabriela Canton, the designer for Stella Maris, in “Memory of Demon;” Alex GL in “Dream of Angel;” and Ham Balo in “Sanctuary of Roses” (see fig. 5.31).



Figures 5.29 – 5.30 (above and below): Kathryn Hardy Bernal (photos)
Yami Yuki Ai (wearing *Moi-même-Moitié*) and Eleonora Ledesma (wearing *Bara No Yami*)
El Baile de Las Rosas, Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, Ciudad de Puebla
July 23, 2017



Figure 5.31: Models for Bara No Yami

Gabriela Canton, Alex GL, Ham Balo, and Eleonora Ledesma
El Baile de Las Rosas, Hotel Palacio San Leonardo, July 23, 2017

Pinkutomidori by Fernanda Suárez

Fernanda Suárez is another Mexican Lolita fashion designer who showed some of her work at *El Baile de Las Rosas*, in 2017. Below is Soley de Lioncourt, a Gothic Lolita from Mexico City, who manages the Lolita and Boystyler Community of CDMX, wearing a Classic Lolita dress by Fernanda for Pinkutomidori, and a headdress by Claudia Baez for Puppets, on her wedding day in 2017 (see fig 5.32).

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.32: Soley de Lioncourt wearing Pinkutomidori and Puppets on her wedding day, 2017

Atelier Dulcinea by Yessica Lavin

Yessica Lavin (Mexico City) is a Gothic and Classic Lolita designer, maker and wearer, whom I also met at *El Baile de Las Rosas*, in Puebla, in 2017 (see figs 5.33, 6.2, & 6.3). At the time, she had just created her first range, which I discuss here (see fig. 5.33).

Yessica realized that she wanted to study fashion when she was ten-years-old. From that point, she began drawing her own designs and, at nineteen, learning how to sew. She explains that her parents didn't want her buying a sewing machine because they didn't believe in her ambition and thought she'd end up choosing a different path. She persevered, however, and after completing a counselling diploma, she went on to study graphic design, and then fashion design at IES Moda Casa de Francia (Mexico City). Things progressed after a journey she took in 2016:

I travelled to Japan, where I was able to witness the Lolita industry in a greater way, which fascinated me. When I came back to Mexico, I became interested in dressing in Lolita fashion, and wearing my own designs, so I decided to start my own brand in 2017.

Yessica does all of the designing, patternmaking, and fabric selection, herself, making up samples for a machinist who takes care of the customer orders. Regarding her influences, she writes:

The main inspirations for my designs are feminine archetypes we find in fairy tales and mythologies from different cultures, such as fairies, goddesses, sorceresses, nymphs, and sirens. My goal is to create an essence of these characters with my dresses, so that when someone wears them or sees them they can feel the energy of the characters and identify with them. Dulcinea's first collection is comprised of one main design in which it is sought to reflect, in its construction and details, the magic and mystery of an enchanted forest where there might live several fantastic characters. From this design, five different colour and print combinations are derived, in order to give life and personalities to the various characters. "Creatures of the Enchanted Forest: The Princess" – It is said that a mischievous fairy called Malekin lives in an enchanted castle.

Although she claims that she is just a girl trapped in the realm of fairies, it does not prevent her from enjoying all her days as a princess. “Creatures of the Enchanted Forest: The Fairy” – Xanas are small enchanted beings tied by a spell to fountains by a golden thread. If you can free her from the thread, you will be granted a wish.



Figure 5.33: Eduardo Caballero (photo)
Yessica Lavin (designer) wearing “Creatures of the Enchanted Forest: The Witch”
by Yessica Lavin for Dulcinea
Make-up and styling: Yessica Lavin, 2017

Enid Hallow (Shoes) by Fernando Díaz

Issues regarding economy and accessibility also affect the Lolita-style footwear industry. As such, a few Mexican designers have launched handmade shoe brands that cater, specifically, to the tastes of members of local Gothic and Lolita communities. One of these is Fernando Díaz, owner of the company, Enid Hallow (León, Guanajuato) (see fig. 5.35). Many of the attendees of *El Baille de Las Rosas*, in Puebla City, including the models, were wearing Enid Hallow shoes. This event, in July 2017, is where I met Fernando, the designer. His company's shoes are all custom-made according to client specifications (precise measurements, colour, materials, heel, etc.).

Fernando launched Enid Hallow in October 2016, "on Halloween, to be exact." His interest in fashion began at the age of sixteen when he started to draw dress designs, which he "never actually" made. There is, though, no family connection with fashion or family influence on his passion: "My family is not involved with the fashion or footwear industries. My mother, father and brother are lawyers, and I studied marketing." His design research has, therefore, been independent. He states: "I study fashion from books that my girlfriend has given me." When his ideas turned to shoes, he set out to find someone to teach him "everything about footwear." This led to him learning all that he knows from a Mr. Zapatero: "In less than three months..., [he] very kindly showed me how to hand-make shoes on my own." Regarding his production, he explains:

In the beginning, we started off with four people, and we practically made everything alone. After that, two of those people left the project, and one of them took the knowledge and tried to make his own brand. So, there are just two of us now who make at least 80% of the shoes. The remaining 20% is divided between an extra person, who supports us with sewing the materials, and another who helps us put the parts of the shoes together, when we have a bigger workload.



Figure 5.34: Lolita Tea-party shoes by Fernando Díaz for Enid Hallow

In relation to the Gothic and Lolita industry, and his inspiration, overall, he says:

I am inspired by the old-school Lolita style, which is the one I was first introduced to, and Harajuku fashion, in general (see fig. 5.34). Also, shabby-chic aesthetics and global fashion footwear, from the historical times of Marie Antoinette to the innovative and ground-breaking work of Salvatore Ferragamo. I also greatly admire Vivienne Westwood and Jimmy Choo.

An observation of Fernando's own personal style reveals his attraction to these sources (see fig. 5.35). His tricorne hat and complete ensemble references the male swashbuckling fashions of the late Rococo era of Marie Antoinette's reign as Queen consort to Louis XVI, moving into the first French Revolution, the Directoire and Empire Periods of the 1700s – 1800s, and those influences on Vivienne Westwood, New Romanticism, and Visual Kei, of which Japanese Gothic and Lolita style is also linked.



Figure 5.35: Kathryn Hardy Bernal (photo), Fernando Díaz, designer for Enid Hallow
El Baille de Las Rosas, Hotel San Palacio, Puebla, México, July 23, 2017

Fredja Alternative Fashion (Shoes) by Diana Valmont

Diana Valmont, another shoe designer from Guanajuato, is also a member of her local Gothic and Lolita community (see fig. 3.52, & 5.37). When I interviewed her, in October 2017, she was just starting out in the field and so had no ready examples to show and or discuss. Since then, however, she has launched her brand, and a few styles, which are proving to be extremely popular within the movement, locally and internationally through online orders. Her first model, “Sigrid,” which is available in various colours and materials, is pictured in *Chapter Two*, worn by Regina Morales in an advertisement for Diana’s label, Fredja (see fig. 2.24). Pairs of the style are also displayed here, arranged in front of Diana’s shoeboxes, stamped with her logo, which portrays the Viking goddess, Fredja, an image of female power (see fig. 5.36). The following photo is of Diana, herself, standing in front of her shoe stall, at a Lolita event, *La Corte de La Reina*, held in Puebla, December 15 – 16, 2018 (see fig. 5.37). She is also wearing “Sigrid,” along with a costume headpiece representing the goddess’s winged helmet. She explains her aims:

The brand is symbolized by “Fredja,” the Viking Goddess. My prayer is that I can reflect an image of empowerment, perseverance, strength, and beauty, and the power to not surrender to any adversity; this I want to pass on to the public.... My designs will be released soon, in a week in Mexico City,²² so I can’t present photos at this stage, but I can tell you that they will be elegant, comfortable, and of good quality!

In terms of her production, Diana says that she works with artisans who help her to materialize her original designs and make any necessary corrections or alterations. In 2017, Diana was also planning to commence university study of fashion and footwear, in the following year.

²² October 2017.



Figure 5.36: Diana Valmont (design), “Sigrid” shoes for Fredja, 2018

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.37: Diana Valmont at *La Corte de La Reina*, December 16, 2018.

Stella Maris (Jewellery and Accessories) by Gabriela Canton

Gabriela Canton, from Mérida, Yucatán, is a Gothic and Lolita participant, and jewellery and accessory designer and maker. She was also in attendance at *El Baille de Las Rosas*, the event that I attended, where she modelled for Bara No Yami (see figs 5.31, & 5.38) and showcased some of her jewellery, which was worn by other models (see figs 4.10, 4.11, 5.14, 5.39, & 5.40). With a title like Stella Maris, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, is one of the titles of the Blessed Virgin, Mary, it is clear, as it is for a number of other members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community I have spoken with, that Gabriela's Catholic faith inspires her work, an observation she confirms.

Gabriela states: "Without hesitation, I would say that my religion is very much present in my designs.... I like using a lot of pearls. (see figs 5.39 and 5.40)." Pearls are symbols of purity, perfection, innocence, modesty, and chastity, and are, thus, traditionally associated with Mary, the Virgin. Her pearl necklace worn, here, by Regina Morales, is a perfect accompaniment for Claudia Baez's outfit for Puppets, which is also inspired by the Virgin Mother (see 5.36). The piece chosen for Diana Lopez Machorro to complement another of Claudia's designs, is equally appropriate (see fig. 5.40). As discussed in *Chapter Four*, all shades of blue symbolize Mary, in their meaning of heavenly love or heavenly grace. And sapphire blue is sacred, in itself:

The magnificent and holy sapphire... is a stone of wisdom and royalty, of prophecy and divine favor. It is forever associated with sacred things.... To the ancient and medieval world, sapphire[s] of heavenly blue signified the height of celestial hope and faith, and was believed to bring protection, good fortune and spiritual insight.... As a talisman, [the] sapphire was thought to preserve chastity....²³

²³ Anonymous, "Sapphire," *Symbolism Wiki*, <http://symbolism.wikia.com/wiki/Sapphire> (accessed January 4, 2018).

In this design, the sapphire-blue colour combined with the pearls, forming a cross-shaped pattern, accentuates the connection with chastity and, thus, the Virgin, especially against the blue-gold-and-white colour palette, a signature of Our Lady Mary, Mother of Sorrows, or Stella Maris, the jewellery brand's namesake (see figs 2.11, 2.18, & 4.12 – 4.15).

Taught by her Aunt Amalia to cross stitch, and her mother and sister to make jewellery, Gabriela says:

I have always liked crafts. I've been interested in drawing and art since I was a child. Cross stitch is one of my newest hobbies. I have learned how to hand-make jewellery in the last year. I know I am really new. I started out making necklaces for myself, for Mass, and for my friends. They have supported me and encouraged me to start my own brand. I am grateful to be able to fulfil this dream.





Figure 5.38 (previous): Kathryn Hardy Bernal (photo)
Gabriela Canton, designer for Stella Maris

Figure 5.39 (above): Kathryn Hardy Bernal (photo)
Regina Morales (model)

Necklace by Gabriela Canton for Stella Maris

Dress and headdress by Claudia Baez for Puppets

El Baille de Las Rosas, Hotel San Palacio, Puebla, México, July 23, 2017



Figure 5.40: Kathryn Hardy Bernal (photo)

Left: Diana Lopez Machorro

Necklace by Gabriela Canton for Stella Maris

Right: Anna Juárez

Dresses and headdresses by Claudia Baez for Puppets

El Baille de Las Rosas, Hotel San Palacio, Puebla, México, July 23, 2017

Tea Time Couture by Elizabeth Gray

Tania Elizabeth Martínez Valenzuela (Torreón, Coahuila) is a Lolita participant and fashion designer who goes by the name of Elizabeth Gray. Tania started her production in 2009, but under another company name, as another project. Tea Time Couture, which is now more focussed on Gothic and Lolita fashions, was launched in 2013.

From about nine-years-old, Tania began making dolls' clothes, and painting on and modifying her own garments. Her endeavours were driven by these interests, which led to her formal qualification in Fashion Design and Industry. She works alone on her label. Her strongest inspiration is the Gothic, while her greatest influences come from "any kind" of literature. For her "Nevermore Collection," she drew from Edgar Allan Poe's poem, *The Raven*:

The fabric, which is called "Nevermore," an allusion to the poem, is by Michael Miller, and imported from New York. The blouse, underskirt, headdress, and all other elements made to coordinate with the dress, were designed to enhance the fabric print (see figs 5.41, & 5.42).

These images are from a fashion show held during the 4th *National Lolita and Boystyle Meeting* in the city of Aguascalientes on December 17, 2016. Tania's captions state: "Many thanks to Zuria Ivarra [the organizer] for all your attention, as well as the beautiful models, Raven Rose Noir (see fig. 5.41) and Lluvia Chávez Lombriz (see fig. 5.42)."



Figure 5.41: Raven Rose Noir (model)
wearing “Nevermore Collection” by Elizabeth Gray (design) for Tea Time Couture

Image removed due to copyright law

Figure 5.42: Lluvia Chávez Lombriz (model)
wearing “Nevermore Collection” by Elizabeth Gray (design) for Tea Time Couture



Although the designers, makers, and labels I have chosen to represent in this thesis by no means demonstrate a complete catalogue of Mexican Gothic and Lolita fashions, some of them are the most prominent, especially in terms of internet presence. Regarding their outputs, so far, I have also been selective. What is here, however, gives an overview of the typical production of each designer.

In collating this material, what is suggested is that, even though the cute, sweet, “little-girl,” Lolita style does make an appearance within Mexican Gothic and Lolita communities and industries, the preference for the Gothic and or the Classic styles seems to prevail. Gothic, in this context, is determined by historical definitions, which are not restricted to “like goth,” as in just a branch of contemporary goth subculture, but to wider concepts of the Gothic, in art, architecture, literature, and popular culture, sometimes from further afield but, more often than not, stemming from rich traditions, ensconced in the Mexican landscape. As they say, fashion does not happen in a vacuum. Environment – physical, geographical, emotional, spiritual, and economical – plays a part in the formation of visual and material objects, especially those of the creative industries. Not the least important is the influence of image saturation, imprinted on our minds, even subconsciously, via these frameworks. As Ken Gelder (2007) highlights, subcultures, and thus fashion styles associated with those subcultures, create their own geographies, “a set of places or sites,” whereby they acquire a particular “cohesion and identity.”²⁴ According to my observations of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement, Hispanic elements, such as mantillas, veils, large floral headdresses, and tiered, flounced skirts, are becoming conspicuous aspects of the local Lolita image. These developments are filtering into other Gothic and Lolita communities, outside Mexico, particularly within Europe. It is difficult to tell whether Mexican participants have just been naturally drawn to these aesthetic choices, or whether they initiated them and are making an impact on the wider, global, subculture. However, it is clear that there is a shift. Mexican Gothic and Classic Lolita styles reflect the essence of Mexico’s environment, represented by a syncretic fusion of indigenous, colonial, and contemporary motifs, superstitions, beliefs, practices, and rituals. The result is that Mexico’s Gothic and Lolita styles bear their own flavour.

²⁴ Ken Gelder, *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 2.

Conclusion

Conclusion

On the eve of commencing the conclusion to this thesis, images have appeared on *Instagram* and *Facebook* marking a two-day event, *La Corte de la Reina* (The Queen's Court), which was held by the Mexican Gothic and Lolita community at various venues, including the historic Chautla Hacienda, in the state of Puebla, on December 15 – 16, 2018. Ensembles created by members of the group, specifically for the occasion, represent a crescendo in the Mexicanization of the Gothic and Lolita identity, exemplifying a fusion of traditional Mexican motifs with the Lolita silhouette. In these examples, in my opinion, the transformation of the original Japanese Lolita identity has been realised. All that remains of the typical, traditional, sweet, cute, Japanese “little-girl” style is the basic shape and certain rules of length and modesty. Even the title of the event signals a shift from the idea of Lolita as the Little Princess to a concept of the regal, mature, Divine Queen. Paradoxically, the figure is still recognisable as the Lolita, although “grown up.”

In general, my analyses of the fashions presented throughout this thesis have been my readings, or critical, theoretical evaluations, influenced by context, except when designers or wearers have confirmed their intentional meanings. Here, now, however, what has before been implied has become explicit. These images provide testimony to the hypothesis that members of the Gothic and Lolita movement in Mexico are consciously motivated by their own national culture and beliefs in constructing their Gothic and Lolita identities (see figs 6.1 – 6.9).



Figure 6.1: Yareni Villareal (Monterrey), December 2018

The most unequivocal materialization of the Classic Mexican Lolita is by Yareni Villareal who embodies the renowned artist Frida Kahlo, from her dark plaited hair and floral headband to a sense of her fashion style, which appropriates “Tehuana dress, with [a] brightly embroidered blouse and full skirt (see fig. 6.1).”¹ This look is also in keeping with the image of the Matriarch, as discussed throughout this thesis. Most conspicuously, Yareni wears a wreath of red roses, a Marian motif. In representing Kahlo, she also takes on the identity of Woman as Icon. But, even more profoundly, in referencing the style of the Tehuanas, signified via the emulation of the artist, Yareni connotes the power of womanhood. Circe Henestrosa (2018) writes:

[T]he Isthmus of Tehuantepec, a region in the state of Oaxaca in the South-east of Mexico, [is] composed predominantly of indigenous Zapotec peoples. It is a matriarchal society in which women dominate, and dress in Tehuana attire, comprising floor-length skirts, richly embroidered blouses, and long woven shawls, their hair dressed elaborately with ribbons and flowers.... The matriarchal society of the Tehuanas held a particular appeal for Kahlo.... Themes of female empowerment... [are] directly incorporated into her artwork through her self-portrayal in the style of the Isthmus women.²

While Yareni’s garments fit more with the Lolita silhouette, rather than the cut of historical Mexican clothing, they are of the essence.³ Yareni combines the traditional Mexican embroidery of her blouse with a full bell-shaped Gothic Lolita skirt, which is titled “Lilith,” and designed and made by the Lolita participant, Yessica Lavin, for her label, Atelier Dulcinea.⁴ According to Oriana Baddeley (2018):

¹ Citing Claire Wilcox and Circe Henestrosa, “Introduction: Fashioning Frida,” in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, ed. Claire Wilcox and Circe Henestrosa (London: V&A Publishing, 2018), 13.

² Circe Henestrosa, “Appearances Can be Deceiving – Frida Kahlo’s Construction of Identity: Disability, Ethnicity and Dress,” in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, ed. Wilcox and Henestrosa, 67, & 70.

³ Chloë Sayer (2018) explains that: “Traditional [Mexican] garments are not tailored in the European manner: instead they are assembled from squares or rectangles of cloth.” See Chloë Sayer, “Frida Kahlo’s wardrobe,” in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, ed. Wilcox and Henestrosa, 99. Note: Yareni’s skirt, by Yessica, is also shorter than the Tehuana style.

⁴ Lilith is yet another powerful female icon. Many believe her to have been the first wife of Adam, referred to in Genesis 1:26 – 27: “And so God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them,” which is thought to mean that they were created simultaneously, as equals. See Genesis 1:26 (spelling adjusted from early modern English, in Myles

In donning the costume of Frida... admirers... are aspiring to the very particular values that her image now represents..., manifesting their own identifications with such values... [related] to very contemporary debates around identity and the body; to gender; to race; and... an assertive positioning in relation to these issues. The elements of this visual characterization are parts of the iconography of Frida's identity – components of a symbolic embodiment of alterity... and empowerment.⁵

The designer, Yessica, herself, wears a one-piece dress that, again, fuses the Classic Lolita image with an essence of Mexican design (see figs 6.2, & 6.3). The Lolita silhouette is recognizable in the slightly higher waist, below-the-knee-length full bell skirt supported by petticoats, the short-puffed sleeves, and a high neckline, to which an intricately beaded, embroidered yoke is added. In this case, the garment has been transformed from an Indian dress, which Yessica has modified especially for the tea party, and, while traditional Mexican dress is based on squares, and this yoke is rounded, it now, whether intentionally or not, manifests the spirit of the indigenous Mexican Lolita as it hints at the decorative style of historical fashion.

Coverdale, trans., "The Great Bible: Genesis Chapter 1, 1539," *Textus Receptus Bibles*, <http://textusreceptusbibles.com/Great/1/1> (accessed December 12, 2019). In Genesis 2, God then creates another wife, Eve, fashioned out of Adam's rib while he sleeps (this, perhaps, just reiterates the first mention). See Genesis 2:21 – 23, in Myles Coverdale, trans., "The Great Bible: Genesis Chapter 2, 1539," *Textus Receptus Bibles*, <http://textusreceptusbibles.com/Great/1/2> (accessed December 16, 2019). In apocryphal texts, it is said that Adam was displeased with Lilith, mainly due to her strength and dominance, and thus they fought, causing Lilith to abandon him. According to Pelaia (2018), "many believe [Lilith]... was inspired by Sumerian myths about female vampires called 'Lillu' or Mesopotamian myths about succubae (female night demons) called 'lilin.' Lilith is mentioned... in the Babylonian *Talmud*, but it is not until the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* (c. 800s to 900s) that [she] is associated with the first version of Creation... [Here, it says that Adam and Lilith] didn't see eye-to-eye on matters of sex because Adam always wanted to be on top while Lilith also wanted... the dominant sexual position. When they could not agree..., she uttered God's name and flew into the air, leaving Adam alone in the Garden of Eden... What results is a story about... an assertive wife who rebelled against God and husband, was replaced by another woman, and was demonized in Jewish folklore." See Ariela Pelaia, "The Legend of Lilith: Adam's First Wife," *ThoughtCo.*, December 28, 2018, <https://www.thoughtco.com/legend-of-lilith-origins-2076660> (accessed January 27, 2019).
5 Oriana Baddeley, "Frida Redressed," in *Frida Kahlo: Making Her Self Up*, ed. Wilcox and Henestrosa, 175 – 176.

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Figure 6.2: Yessica Lavin (Mexico City), December 2018

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Figure 6.3: Yessica Lavin (Mexico City), December 2018

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Figure 6.4: Yareni Villareal (Monterrey), December 2018



Figure 6.5: Yareni Villareal (Monterrey), December 2018

The Mexicanization of the Lolita identity is, again, intentional when it comes to another of Yareni's outfits created for the same event (see figs 6.4, & 6.5). Her spectacular ensemble is influenced by her interest in the history of the Nahua woman, La Malinche, an important figure from the time of the Spanish colonization of Mexico.⁶ This image is, again, a nod to the matriarchal civilization of the Tehuanas. Baddeley (2018) writes:

In the anti-colonialist iconography of Mexico, the [Tehuantepec] region... [represents] a purer, more empowered, Indian culture. The legitimate Mother... [is] often used in opposition to the figure of the subjugated land of Mexico, as represented by the maligned figure of Malinche, the metaphorical mother of *mestizo* Mexico.... During the revolutionary period... colonization was often characterized as the rape and dishonouring of the indigenous race through the allegory of Hernán Cortés taking the Indian woman Malinche as his mistress and then abandoning her. The Tehuana iconography, on the other hand..., [represents] the indigenous Woman resisting conquest and colonization.⁷

Yareni says that this outfit, “inspired by Malinche,” combines two things she loves, national fashions and Lolita style. Her headdress, which she has designed and made, incorporates both Catholic and pre-colonial symbols, including a skull and the red roses and radiant halo of Our Lady. Her white dress, of the Mexican Lolita brand, Puppets, by Claudia Baez, also evokes La Llorona, the Woman in White, with whom Malinche is often conflated. Traditional touches are added with the floral-embroidered black velvet apron and belt, which demonstrate a distinctive characteristic of Mexican handcraft. Lastly, Yareni wears shoes by the Mexican designer, Diana Valmont, for her label, Fredja.

⁶ La Malinche (b. c. 1496 – 1501; d. c. 1529), who is also referred to as Malinalli, Malintzin, and Doña Marina, was one of a group of slaves handed over to the Spanish conquistadors in 1519. She played a major role in the conquest of the Aztec Empire and the foundation of New Spain as translator and advisor to Hernán Cortés, with whom she bore a child, before he forsook her. Their son, Martín, is considered to have been one of the very first *mestizos* (a person of both European Spanish and indigenous American blood). Marina, or La Malinche, is often associated with the legendary María, La Llorona (see *Chapter Two* of this thesis). Baddeley (2018) writes: “The Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortés discarded Indian mistress Malinche has traditionally been used allegorically to represent the injured and colonized body of Mexico.” See Baddeley, “Frida Redressed,” in *Frida Kablo: Making Her Self Up*, n. 8, 199.

⁷ Baddeley, *ibid.*, 179.



Figure 6.6: Yami Yuki Ai for Bara No Yami (Atlixco), December 2018

Especially read within the framework of other garments for this occasion, Yami Yuki Ai's look emphasizes its own hybrid Mexicanness (see fig. 6.6). Accessorized with a Gothic Lolita gown in mourning black, which she has designed and made for her label, Bara No Yami, she, too has constructed a headdress that combines a skull with the rays of Mary's radiating halo as Queen of Heaven, while substituting black and royal-blue roses, signature motifs of Yami's muse, the Japanese Gothic Lolita fashion designer and musician, Mana. In the caption, she writes: "Lolita forever."

Mexican production is again represented by Claudia Baez for Puppets in the regal Catholic look worn by Alicia Boucanier as the Virgin Queen; and by Mina del Angel who wears her own creations (see figs 6.7, & 6.8). Alicia's crown is reminiscent of a type that adorns, particularly, Our Lady, the Virgin of Guadalupe, of Extremadura, Spain; while Mina's entire ensemble, including the headpiece, which is inspired by the extravagant headwear of the historic Russian Romanov royal dynasty, also displays the ivory and gold colourway of the Matriarch (see figs 2.13, 4.9, 6.7, & 6.8).

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Figure 6.7: Alicia Boucanier (Puebla City), December 2018

Vestments: Claudia Baez for *Puppets* (Puebla); Shoes: Diana Valmont for *Fredja* (Guanajuato)

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Figure 6.8: Mina del Angel (Mexico City), December 2018



Figure 6.9: J. H. Vega (photo), Mina del Angel (Mexico City)
“Catrina Coronada,” November 2018

Essentially, the aim of this thesis has been to demonstrate the Mexicanization of the original Japanese Gothic and Lolita movement in its migration from Japan into Mexico and, thus, to examine Mexico's contribution to the style, as well as analyze the Mexicanness of the interpretation. The crux of the message is how one's cultural and societal environment significantly impacts on one's alternative identity and sartorial expression, and how local influences produce shifts in original concepts, visual presentation, and operation. There are a number of international Gothic and Lolita communities I could have chosen from to explore this notion, whereby this kind of development is somewhat evident, to varying degrees. From the start of this project, Mexico was always at the forefront of my research, but I considered other examples, such as Hong Kong, Hawaii, and further Latin-American nations.⁸ Since then, even more sites of interest have arisen regarding this angle, including Spain, and Russia. However, at the point of tying up this thesis, I still maintain that the Mexican evolution of the Gothic and Lolita identity is the most significant.

The Gothic and Lolita style, in Mexico, is quite often, undeniably Mexican. Most emphatically, this evolution can be seen to have culminated in the example, "Catrina Coronada," a product of Mina del Angel's 2018 design and contribution to styling (see fig 6.9). This ensemble represents all of the major motifs identified in this thesis: It harks back to the historic Catholic Gothic and Baroque periods, with the black-and-gold colourway, the ecclesiastical symbols of the rich brocade fabric, and the actual style of her dress, which she has, herself, constructed; in her makeup, by artist, Mónica B. Garcia, we see the skull-face and skeletal body of both La Catrina and Santa Muerte (Saint Death), as well as the goddess, Mictlancíhuatl (Queen of the Underworld), while the other skull

⁸ In the case of Hong Kong, I would have heavily relied on the studies by Anne Peirson-Smith, who is at the forefront of academic research on the subcultural Gothic and Lolita movement in Hong Kong, as well as communities of South-East-Asia, and, therefore, I determined early on that my contribution to the field would not have been as original had I taken that road.

she holds also reminds us of these figures; she wears a cross, or crucifix, around her neck; her coronet, created in collaboration with Abel Morales, exemplifies the radiant halo of Our Lady, the Virgin Mary; and her mask, which she has also made, herself, in the shape of a crescent moon, a motif of Mary of the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin of Guadalupe, adds a dual personality to this hybrid Gothic Lolita identity.

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed motifs of visual, material, and popular culture in Mexico, Hispanic and indigenous, Catholic and Aztec, historical and contemporary, as well as those of real and legendary female Mexican figures, including Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Sorrows, Santa Muerte, La Catrina, La Llorona, Frida Kahlo, and symbols of the Day of the Dead, as either direct or indirect influences on the formulation of new Gothic and Lolita styles and a unique, hybrid, alternative identity. Towards the completion of my candidacy, however, it has become apparent that this development is no longer exclusive to Mexico and that certain elements of this style have seeped into the creative expression of members of the movement in pockets of Gothic and Lolita communities around the world. The once-cutesy little-girl aspect of the Lolita style is also gradually diminishing, the look is maturing, globally. Overall, the Gothic is gaining an edge over the Sweet, and the Catholic essence is currently pervasive.

The Lolita style, after all, is considered to be, by insiders at least, alternative fashion (rather than a costume) and, like all fashions, it, thus, pertains to trends. This latest, regal Catholic look demonstrates such a shift, however, that if one were to line up, side-by-side, an example of “old-school” Japanese Lolita style (c. 1990s – 2000s) against any of the Mexican examples shown in this thesis, especially in this concluding chapter, one might even assume the latter to represent a completely separate movement.

Also, there is no denying that Catholic is in fashion. In 2018, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, held *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination* (May 10 – October 8), as its Spring exhibition. Curated by Andrew Bolton, it showcased the overwhelming influence of Catholic aesthetics on fashion designers. Madonna attended the opening gala adorned in an incredible outfit by Jean Paul Gaultier, which paid homage to her role in promoting Catholic iconography in fashion and popular culture (see fig. 6.10). In this image, she is a gothic Catholic Queen, the Matriarch, *the* Madonna, posed in front of a wall of Marian red roses. And, in 2019, the Australian contestant of the Eurovision Song Contest, Kate Miller-Heidke, took to the stage in a headdress by Chantelle Ford of Ford Millinery, who states that “when creating any spiky headpiece, it is easy to look [to the] Statue of Liberty.” However, she claims that the “layout of the spikes on Kate’s headpiece was very deliberate, tapering on the sides,” in order to create more of the feel of a religious icon, “accentuated with the inner halo (see fig. 6.11).”⁹

Regarding the “Catholicization” and “Mexicanization” of the Gothic and Lolita style, it is not easy to determine what came first, whether Mexican members latched on to elements already pertaining to the style – such as veils, mantillas, medieval headdresses, floral wreaths, rose crowns, coronas, and crucifixes – and, by giving them larger exposure, accelerated this shift, or whether they actually introduced many of these motifs and, consequently, have had an influential hand in the evolution. I would say that both perspectives are evident but that the innovation of much of this development lies within indigenous and Hispanic Mexican culture. Besides, much of the new image stems from the appropriation of symbols that are *unquestionably* Mexican, such as sugar skulls, the sunburst rays of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the iconography of Catrina.

⁹ Chantelle Ford, “Kate Miller-Heidke’s Eurovision Crown designed by Ford Millinery,” Ford Millinery, <https://fordmillinery.com.au/who-made-australias-kate-miller-heidkes-eurovision-crown/> (accessed May 30, 2019).

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Figure 6.10: Madonna wearing Jean Paul Gaultier at the Met, 2018

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Figure 6.11: Designers Chantelle Ford (headdress) and Steven Khalil (gown)
with Australian Eurovision contestant, Kate Miller-Heidke, 2019

What can be argued is that the notion of a feminist, feminine, female movement has, in Mexico, met its aims through the power of the Matriarch. Here, girl power is woman power, symbolized by the motif of the Mother Goddess versus the Little Girl. In Mexico's religious history, Cōātlīcue was the mother of all the gods and goddesses, the moon, the stars, and the sun. In other words, the Matriarch was omnipotent. She was superseded by the Catholic icon of the Mother – chosen by God as the bearer of Jesus, the Son of God – Mary, the Queen of Heaven, also ruler of the moon, the stars, and the sun, without whom, it is believed by many, humankind would have no saviour. As God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, She is the bearer, the Mother of God, as well. Like Cōātlīcue, She is, in this sense, omnipotent. The Matriarch, the Mother has, therefore, survived as the ultimate role model for Woman.

In determining the shift from Japan to Mexico, this is the real difference. In Japan, the adoption of the “little-girl” Lolita identity has been psychoanalyzed as a desire to prolong the idyllic state of childhood and, thus, representative of a refusal to grow up. In Mexico, the matriarchal Lolita identity symbolizes the opposite, a yearning to embrace womanhood. As the Matriarch, Woman is revered, worshipped, and respected; as the Mother, she finds her independence and power.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Invitation to participate in research on the Lolita subculture

Researcher Introduction

My name is Kathryn Hardy Bernal and I am a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) candidate at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand. I am a fashion, art and design theorist and historian. My main research specialization is the fashion-based Lolita subcultural movement, on which I write articles, and speak internationally at conferences and events. In 2007, I curated an exhibition, *Loli-Pop*, on the Japanese Lolita in popular culture, at Auckland Museum, New Zealand. I also delivered a keynote address on the Gothic Lolita, at the International Gothic Congress, at UNAM, Mexico, in 2014. Here is a link to my research profile, which includes access to some of my publications on the Lolita subculture: <https://massey.academia.edu/khardybernal>. You may also be familiar with my *Facebook* page: <https://www.facebook.com/LolitaSubculture>.

Invitation

This letter invites you to take part in my current research project towards my Ph.D. thesis on the Lolita subcultural movement. I am mostly interested in what wearers of the Lolita clothing style, and their associates, think about wearing Lolita-style clothing, including their opinions on what the Lolita subculture is about. If you agree to participate, you will be involved in answering questions in the form of a written survey. Your completion of this survey will indicate your consent to the incorporation of your responses in my doctoral thesis, as well as the possibility of the citation of your responses in any presentations or publications that may result from this current research project. *As such, you will have the option to undertake this task anonymously, or using a nickname, if you wish.* You may also be invited to elaborate on or answer further questions. With your consent, this may involve an interview.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

1. Stage one: I have approached you to invite you to participate in my survey for one of these reasons:
 - a. You are personally known, to me, as a wearer of Lolita fashions;
 - b. You are associated with the Lolita fashion industry;
 - c. Your *Facebook* profile indicates that you are either a wearer of Lolita fashions or involved in the Lolita fashion industry;
 - d. You are a follower of my Lolita Subculture *Facebook* page.
2. Stage two: I may approach you to invite you to elaborate on or answer more questions, which may be in the form of an interview, if you have indicated your consent to further participation, at the final question, on the initial survey. This second invitation will be subject to my personal determination of whether your initial responses warrant further expansion according to their relevance to my final thesis.
3. Your responses to the survey will be collated with the responses of other participants in order to ascertain collective perspectives on issues related to the topics in question. In certain cases, your individual opinions may be analyzed more closely, and used specifically, in order to support or argue against critical theories related to the topic.
4. Your responses will, therefore, be used in either of these two ways, or both:
 - a. As collective, anonymous, contributions towards common viewpoints;
 - b. As citations, that is, direct quotations to support a particular viewpoint. If you have not opted to supply your real name, or nickname, citations may still be used anonymously. Otherwise, if you have supplied your real name, or nickname, citations will be fully referenced, and your opinions will be acknowledged, that is, attributed to you.

5. If you have chosen to respond anonymously, please be assured that your personal information and opinions will remain confidential. If you have chosen to submit your name, or nickname, your opinions may be quoted and published, with attributions to you. In the case of publication, confidentiality risks are the same as they would be in regard to any social-media platform.
6. Your responses will be securely stored by me, the researcher, Kathryn Hardy Bernal.
7. During the study, the only person who will have access to the storage of the information contained in your responses will be me, the researcher, Kathryn Hardy Bernal.
8. After completion of the study, your responses will remain securely stored by me, the researcher, Kathryn Hardy Bernal. However, your responses may be published in my doctoral thesis, or published in any written work stemming from my doctoral thesis, during or after completion of my doctoral thesis, in the manner described in points 4. And 5. of this section.

Research Project Procedures

1. If you agree to participate in stage one of the study, you will complete a questionnaire and return it to me, the researcher, Kathryn Hardy Bernal.
2. The questionnaire will take an average time of about 80 minutes for you to complete.
3. If you agree to stage two, as indicated in your response to the final question of the initial survey, which will involve you answering further questions outside the initial survey, and may take on the form of an interview, an additional invitation will be sent to you, whereby you will have the opportunity to review extended instructions before accepting the proposal.

Your Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this stage of the invitation to complete the questionnaire. However, if you do decide to accept it, you will still have the rights to:

1. Change your mind about completing the survey, after receiving it and reading it, that is, decline to participate, before you send your responses back to me, the researcher, Kathryn Hardy Bernal;
2. Decline to complete some of the survey, that is, to refuse to answer any particular questions you are not comfortable with answering;
3. Respond to the survey anonymously and, therefore, decline to have your opinions attributed to you in any written form of publication;
4. Ask to have any of the questions explained during your completion of the survey;
5. Be given access, on request, to the written publication of any summaries of the outcomes of the study, once completed and available.

I would prefer to receive your responses to the survey in English (even if English is not your first language). However, I will accept your answers in Spanish, or another language, if you have major difficulties expressing yourself in English.

Project Contacts

Researcher: Kathryn Hardy Bernal, email: kathryn.hardy.bernal.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

Primary Supervisor: Prof. Vicki Karaminas, email: V.Karaminas@massey.ac.nz

Academic Integrity Officer: Dr. Patricia Thomas, email: p.a.thomas@massey.ac.nz

You are invited to contact either the researcher, supervisor or academic integrity officer if you have any further questions about the project.

Appendix B: Questionnaire (English)

Lolita Questions

1. What is your name or nickname (optional)?
2. What is your current city of residence?
3. What is your current country of residence?
4. What was your country of birth?
5. What is your age range?
 - 16 – 18
 - 19 – 24
 - 25 – 29
 - 30 – 34
 - 35 – 39
 - Over 40
6. Which gender do you mostly identify as (choose ONE only)?
 - Female
 - Male
 - Gender fluid
 - Transgender/Transsexual
7. Do you (often *or* occasionally) WEAR (choose ALL that apply)?
 - Classic Lolita
 - Sweet Lolita
 - Hime Lolita (princess)
 - Gothic Lolita
 - Kuro Lolita (all black)
 - Shiro Lolita (all white/all ivory)
 - Guro Lolita (gory)
 - Punk Lolita

- Others (please list)...
- Not applicable – I do not wear Lolita clothing
8. If you had to choose just one Lolita style, which would be your very favourite?
9. Do you, or did you ever, belong to any other subculture, such as Goth or Punk?
If yes, does the other subculture inspire your own Lolita style? If yes, in what ways?
10. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, in what year did you start wearing it?
11. How or where did you first see, or find out about, Lolita-style clothing?
12. Do you consider yourself to be (choose ONE only)?
- A full-time lifestyle Lolita (everyday dress/as often as possible)
- A part-time Lolita (just for meetups, parties, special occasions, events, conventions, or picnics)
- A very occasional Lolita (rarely wear)
- A fan/follower but not yet a participant (wanting to wear)
- An “outsider” observer (would never wear)
13. Are you a member of (choose ALL that apply)?
- A real-life community of Lolita friends
- An online community/group of Lolita friends
- Not applicable – I do not belong to any Lolita communities/groups
14. If you belong to a local, real-life Lolita community, where members know each other in person, in which town/city is the group located?
15. If you participate in any events organised by a local group of Lolita friends, at what types of places do you meet? What kinds of activities do you do together?
16. Have you ever travelled to another city or country to attend a Lolita event or convention? If so, please provide details of where you went, with whom you met, and the activities you participated in while you were there.
17. Do you buy your Lolita-style clothing (choose ALL that apply)?

- New, directly (in person) from Lolita-brand stores/boutiques
- New, directly (in person) from Lolita-brand stalls at events/conventions
- New, online via Lolita-brand websites (from the official source)
- New (unworn) via online communities/groups, e.g. *Lace Market*, *EGL Sales Community*, or *Lolita Sales* through *Facebook*
- Used (previously worn) via online communities/groups, e.g. *Lace Market*, *EGL Sales Community*, or *Lolita Sales* through *Facebook*
- New (unworn) from friends
- Used (previously worn) from friends
- Swap or trade with friends or online (new and used)
- Not applicable – I do not buy Lolita clothing

18. Do you make (or have ever made) any of your own Lolita-style clothes or accessories? If yes, what kinds of things have you made?

19. If you own any dresses by official Lolita-style clothing brands, which brands do you own? Why have you chosen to buy these particular brands? What do you like about them?

20. Whether you own them or not (even if they are just on your wish list), what are your favourite Lolita-style clothing brands? What do you like most about them?

21. A true member of the Lolita subculture should own at least one official brand-name Lolita dress (choose ONE):

strongly disagree	slightly disagree	no opinion	slightly agree	strongly agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain why you think this.

22. How do you feel about cheaper, more mass-produced brands, such as Bodyline or GLP?

23. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, have you ever felt pressured to buy very expensive Lolita-brand clothes just to fit in with your Lolita community? Or have you ever been made to feel ashamed about what Lolita-style clothes you can or can't afford to own? If yes, can you explain?
24. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, have you ever been bullied or called mean names by other Lolita wearers (online or in real life) for what you wear, or how you coordinate your style? For example, have you ever been called an "Ita?" If yes, can you give examples of what has happened?
25. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, have you ever been stared at in public, by strangers, in a negative way, or been made to feel embarrassed? If yes, can you explain what has happened?
26. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, do your parents and or other family members know that you wear it? If yes, what do they think about it? Do they approve or disapprove of it? Please explain.
27. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, have you ever had to hide it from your parents, other family members, or friends? If yes, please explain the circumstances.
28. If you have had any disapproving feedback about wearing Lolita-style clothing, from either family members, friends, or other onlookers, for what reasons do you think that might be? Can you explain?
29. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, do you find that people sometimes don't understand the meaning of it? And, if so, have you ever had to try to explain what it's about, or why you choose to wear it? If yes, can you explain?
30. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, does it make you feel rebellious? How does it, or why doesn't it?
31. If you wear Lolita-style clothing, why do *you* wear it? How does it make you feel about yourself when you wear it?
32. Name up to six keywords (adjectives) to describe Lolita-style clothing, e.g. pretty.

33. How important do you think it is for Lolita-style clothing to be modest?

not important	not very important	no opinion	important	extremely important
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain why you think this.

34. If you think that it's important for Lolita participants to stick to rules of modesty when it comes to their dress, can you explain why you think this?

35. If you think that it's important for Lolita participants to stick to rules of modesty when it comes to their dress, how should they accomplish this? What are the rules that they should follow?

36. If you think that it's NOT important for Lolita participants to stick to rules of modesty when it comes to their dress, why do you think this?

37. Do you think that the Lolita subculture is a type of feminist movement? Why or why not?

38. Do you own any Lolita-style dolls of these types (choose ALL that apply)?

Pullip

Blythe

Dollfie

Others (please list)...

Not applicable – I do not own any Lolita-style dolls

39. Do you own any dolls or figurines based on Japanese anime (cartoons) or manga graphic novel (comics) characters?

Yes

No

40. Do you enjoy watching Japanese anime (cartoons)?

Yes

No

If yes, which ones are your favourites?

41. Do you enjoy reading Japanese manga graphic novels (comics)?
- Yes
- No
- If yes, which ones are your favourites?
42. Have you read the graphic novel (comic), *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma Monogatari)*?
- Yes
- No
43. Have you read the original novel (book), *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma Monogatari)*?
- Yes
- No
44. Have you seen the film, *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma Monogatari)*?
- Yes
- No
45. If you have seen the film, *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma Monogatari)*, or read either of the novels, did you relate to the storyline or to any of the individual characters in any way? If so, please explain.
46. Do you know what the story of *Lolita*, by Vladimir Nabokov, is about?
- Yes
- No
- Maybe
47. Have you read the novel, *Lolita*, by Vladimir Nabokov?
- Yes
- No
48. Have you watched at least one of the film versions of *Lolita*, based on the novel by Vladimir Nabokov?
- Yes
- No

49. If you have either read the novel or seen a film version of *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, do you think that the naming of the Lolita clothing style is, in any way, connected with the story or with the main character, Lolita? Why or why not?
50. What does it mean, to you, to be called a Lolita?
51. Do you think that the Lolita clothing-style could be seen by some people as a form of fetish wear? What do you think about that?
52. Do you participate in cosplay? If so, what type of characters do you like to dress as?
53. Do you think that dressing in Lolita-style clothing is a form of cosplay? If yes, how is it? If not, why not?
54. Do you enjoy listening to music by Japanese Goth/Rock/Visual-kei artists?
- Yes
- No
55. Have you attended at least one Japanese Goth/Rock/Visual-kei concert?
- Yes
- No
56. Which musicians/bands would you say are associated with followers of the Lolita subculture?
57. Do you have favourite celebrities associated with the Lolita subculture, such as performers (musicians, actresses, etc.), Lolita models, or Kawaii ambassadors? If so, what is their appeal to you?
58. If applicable, what is your religion?
59. Do you practice your religion? If yes, in what ways (optional question)?
60. Finally, would you be interested in being interviewed further about your opinions or involvement in the Lolita subculture? If yes, please provide an email address.

Appendix C: Questionnaire (Spanish)

Preguntas sobre Lolita¹

1. ¿Cuál es tu nombre o alias?
2. ¿Cuál es tu ciudad de residencia actual?
3. ¿Cuál es tu país de residencia actual?
4. ¿Cuál fue tu país de nacimiento?
5. ¿En qué rango de edad te encuentras?
 16 – 18
 19 – 24
 25 – 29
 30 – 34
 35 – 39
 40+
6. ¿Con qué género te identificas (marca solo uno)?
 Femenino
 Masculino
 Género fluido
 Transgénero
7. ¿Qué estilos de Lolita usas (marca todos aquellos que sean aplicables)?
 Classic Lolita
 Sweet Lolita
 Hime Lolita
 Gothic Lolita
 Kuro Lolita

¹ Translation assisted by Hiro Takahashi: Original English questionnaire translated with the assistance of Hiro Takahashi, Japanese-born Lolita participant and correspondent from Peru, via private messages on my facebook page, *Gothic and Lolita Subculture*, October 19, 2016.

- Shiro Lolita
 - Guro Lolita
 - Punk Lolita
 - Otros (específica)...
 - No uso ropa Lolita
8. ¿Qué estilo es tu favorito (sólo uno)?
 9. ¿Pertenece a otra subcultura, por ejemplo, el punk o gótico? ¿Influye en tu forma de llevar ropa Lolita?
 10. ¿Si usas ropa Lolita, en qué año empezaste a usarla?
 11. ¿Cómo te enteraste de la moda Lolita?
 12. Te consideras:
 - Lifestyle Lolita (usa ropa Lolita tanto como le sea posible)
 - Part-time Lolita (sólo para eventos especiales)
 - Lolita ocasional (muy rara vez usa Lolita)
 - Fan o seguidor de la moda Lolita (con ganas de empezar a usar)
 - Un observador/persona ajena al círculo (alguien que nunca usaría Lolita)
 13. ¿Eres miembro de... (elija todas las aplicables)?
 - Una comunidad Lolita en la vida real
 - Una comunidad Lolita en internet
 - No pertenezco a ninguna comunidad Lolita
 14. ¿En qué ciudad se reúne tu comunidad?
 15. ¿Qué tipo de actividades realiza tu comunidad? ¿En qué lugares se encuentran?
 16. ¿Has viajado a otra ciudad o país para participar en un evento Lolita? ¿De ser así dónde? ¿Qué hiciste allí?
 17. ¿Cómo consigues tu ropa Lolita (elige todas las aplicables)?
 - Ropa nueva en persona en tiendas de marcas Lolita
 - Ropa nueva en eventos Lolita

- Ropa nueva en páginas web de marcas Lolita
 - Ropa nueva en *Lace Market* o grupos de *Facebook*
 - Ropa usada en *Lace Market* o grupos de *Facebook*
 - Ropa nueva por intercambio con amigos
 - Ropa usada por intercambio con amigos
 - Intercambiado en línea
 - Yo no compro ropa Lolita
18. ¿Has hecho ropa o accesorios Lolita? ¿De ser así qué ropa o accesorios hiciste?
19. ¿Posees alguna prenda de marca (Brand)? ¿De qué marca? ¿Qué es lo que te gusta de ellas?
20. ¿Cuáles son tus marcas Lolita favoritas? Incluye aquellas que están en tu lista de deseos.
21. Alguien que participe en el Lolita debe poseer al menos un vestido de alguna marca (Brand) Lolita.
- Muy en desacuerdo
 - Ligeramente en desacuerdo
 - No opina
 - Ligeramente de acuerdo
 - Muy de acuerdo
- Explique por qué.
22. ¿Qué opinas de las marcas Lolita más baratas (ejemplo: Bodyline)?
23. ¿Si usas ropa Lolita alguna vez te has sentido presionada/presionado a adquirir ropa Lolita cara para encajar en tu comunidad? ¿O alguna vez te hicieron sentir mal por ropa Lolita que no puedes adquirir? Si ha sucedido, por favor explica cómo.
24. ¿Has sido acosado o llamado de forma grosera por otros miembros de tu comunidad? ¿Se te ha llamado “ita” en la vida real o en internet?

25. ¿Si usas ropa Lolita en público alguna vez has sido observada por gente desconocida, o hecho sentir avergonzada?
26. ¿Qué piensan tus padres y familia sobre tu ropa Lolita?
27. ¿Tienes o has tenido que esconder tu ropa Lolita de tus padres o familia?
28. ¿Si alguno de tus padres, familiares, amigos o incluso gente extraña no aprueban tu ropa Lolita cuál crees que es el motivo?
29. ¿Tienes que explicar a menudo el significado de la moda Lolita a otras personas?
30. ¿Usar ropa Lolita te hace sentir rebelde?
31. ¿Cómo te hace sentir usar ropa Lolita?
32. Nombra 6 palabras con las que describirías la ropa Lolita, por ejemplo, hermosa.
33. ¿Consideras que la ropa Lolita debe ser modesta/conservadora?
- Muy en desacuerdo
- Ligeramente en desacuerdo
- No opino
- Ligeramente de acuerdo
- Muy de acuerdo
34. ¿Si estás de acuerdo con la pregunta anterior, por qué piensas eso?
35. ¿Qué reglas son importantes dentro de la moda Lolita?
36. ¿Si no crees que las reglas son importantes para el Lolita, por qué no?
37. ¿Crees que el Lolita es un movimiento feminista? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
38. ¿Tienes alguna de estas muñecas (marca todas las que apliquen)?
- Pullip
- Blythe
- Dollfie
- Otros (especifica)...
- No poseo ninguna muñeca

39. ¿Tienes figuras de acción basadas en manga o anime?

Sí

No

40. ¿Te gusta el anime Japonés?

Sí

No

¿Cuáles?...

41. ¿Te gusta el manga Japonés?

Sí

No

¿Cuáles?...

42. ¿Has leído la versión manga de *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma Monogatari)*?

Sí

No

43. ¿Has leído la novela de *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma Monogatari)*?

Sí

No

44. ¿Has visto la película de *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma Monogatari)*?

Sí

No

45. ¿Si has leído o visto *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma Monogatari)*, te relacionas con alguno de los personajes o la historia?

46. ¿Sabe usted cuál es la historia de Lolita, de Vladimir Nabokov, se trata?

Sí

No

Quizás

47. ¿Has leído la novela Lolita, de Vladimir Nabokov?
- Sí
- No
48. ¿Has visto alguna versión cinematográfica de Lolita, de Vladimir Nabokov?
- Sí
- No
49. ¿Crees que el Lolita de Nabokov tiene algo que ver con el nombre Lolita de la moda? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
50. ¿Qué significa ser Lolita para ti?
51. 51. ¿Qué opinas sobre la ropa Lolita como un tipo de fetichismo?
52. 52. ¿Haces cosplay? ¿Qué personajes te gusta representar?
53. 53. ¿Crees que el uso de ropa Lolita es una forma de cosplay? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
54. 54. ¿Escuchas música de grupos visual-kei?
- Sí
- No
55. ¿Has asistido a un concierto visual-kei?
- Sí
- No
56. ¿Qué grupos visual-kei consideras más populares entre las lolitas?
57. ¿Tienes alguna celebridad favorite asociada con el Lolita (como artistas, embajadoras kawaii, modelos, etc.)? ¿Por qué te atraen?
58. ¿Cuál es tu religión?
59. ¿Cómo participas de tu religión?
60. ¿Te interesaría ser entrevistada/entrevistado? De ser así, escribe tu dirección de correo electrónico...

Appendix D: Quantitative Results and Statistics

Question 2: What is your city of residence (statistical order)?

Place	Number	Percentage
Mexico City (National Capital), Mexico	8	20.0
Guadalajara, Jalisco	4	10.0
Puebla, Puebla	4	10.0
Toluca (State Capital), Mexico	3	7.5
Mexicali, Baja California	2	5.0
Tijuana, Baja California	2	5.0
Saltillo, Coahuila	2	5.0
Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes	1	2.5
San Francisco de Campeche, Campeche	1	2.5
Tapachula, Chiapas	1	2.5
Celaya, Guanajuato	1	2.5
León, Guanajuato	1	2.5
Ecatepec, Mexico	1	2.5
Santa Catarina, Nuevo Leon	1	2.5
Los Mochis, Sinaloa	1	2.5
Mazatlán, Sinaloa	1	2.5
Hermosillo, Sonora	1	2.5
Obregón, Sonora	1	2.5
Matamoros, Tamaulipas	1	2.5
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas	1	2.5
Tampico, Tamaulipas	1	2.5
Mérida, Yucatán	1	2.5

Question 2: What is your city of residence (alphabetical order)?

Place	Number	Percentage
Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes	1	2.5
Mexicali, Baja California	2	5.0
Tijuana, Baja California	2	5.0
San Francisco de Campeche, Campeche	1	2.5
Tapachula, Chiapas	1	2.5
Saltillo, Coahuila	2	5.0
Celaya, Guanajuato	1	2.5
León, Guanajuato	1	2.5
Guadalajara, Jalisco	4	10.0
Ecatepec, Mexico	1	2.5
Mexico City (National Capital), Mexico	8	20.0
Toluca (State Capital), Mexico	3	7.5
Santa Catarina, Nuevo Leon	1	2.5
Puebla, Puebla	4	10.0
Los Mochis, Sinaloa	1	2.5
Mazatlán, Sinaloa	1	2.5
Hermosillo, Sonora	1	2.5
Obregón, Sonora	1	2.5
Matamoros, Tamaulipas	1	2.5
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas	1	2.5
Tampico, Tamaulipas	1	2.5
Mérida, Yucatán	1	2.5

Question 4: What was your country of birth?

Place	Number	Percentage
Mexico	40	100.00

Question 5: What is your age range (statistical order)?

	25 – 29	19 – 24	30 – 34	16 – 18	35 – 39	40+
Number	19	16	2	1	1	1
Percentage	47.5	40.0	5.0	2.5	2.5	2.5

Question 5: What is your age range (question order)?

	16 – 18	19 – 24	25 – 29	30 – 34	35 – 39	40+
Number	1	16	19	2	1	1
Percentage	2.5	40.0	47.5	5.0	2.5	2.5

Question 6: Which gender do you identify as (statistical order)?

	Female	Gender Fluid	Male	Transgender
Number	31	5	3	1
Percentage	77.5	12.5	7.5	2.5

Question 6: Which gender do you identify as (question order)?

	Female	Male	Gender Fluid	Transgender
Number	31	3	5	1
Percentage	77.5	7.5	12.5	2.5

Question 7: Do you wear (statistical order)?

Lolita Style	Number of respondents who wear it	Percentage of respondents who wear it
Classic	35	87.5
Gothic	33	82.5
Sweet	25	62.5
Kuro (all black)	11	27.5
Punk	10	25.0
Guro (gory)	7	17.5
Shiro (all white/ivory)	7	17.5
Hime/Rococo (Princess)	5	12.5
Casual	3	7.5
Kodona/Ouji (boystyle)	3	7.5
Pirate	3	7.5
Country	2	5.0
Bittersweet	1	2.5
Creepy cute	1	2.5
Ero (erotic)	1	2.5
Gothic Aristocrat	1	2.5
Military	1	2.5
Mori	1	2.5
OTT (over-the-top) Sweet	1	2.5
Sailor	1	2.5
Steampunk	1	2.5
Wa Lolita (trad. Japanese fusion)	1	2.5

Question 7: Do you wear (alphabetical order)?

Lolita Style	Number of respondents who wear it	Percentage of respondents who wear it
Bittersweet	1	2.5
Casual	3	7.5
Classic	35	87.5
Country	2	5.0
Creepy cute	1	2.5
Ero (erotic)	1	2.5
Gothic	33	82.5
Gothic Aristocrat	1	2.5
Guro (gory)	7	17.5
Hime/Rococo (Princess)	5	12.5
Kodona/Ouji (boystyle)	3	7.5
Kuro (all black)	11	27.5
Military	1	2.5
Mori	1	2.5
O'TT (over-the-top) Sweet	1	2.5
Pirate	3	7.5
Punk	10	25.0
Sailor	1	2.5
Shiro (all white/ivory)	7	17.5
Steampunk	1	2.5
Sweet	25	62.5
Wa Lolita (trad. Japanese fusion)	1	2.5

Question 8: Favourite Lolita style (statistical order)?

Favourite Lolita Style	Number	Percentage
Gothic	13	32.5
Classic	11	27.5
Sweet	8	20.0
Punk	3	7.5
Hime/Rococo (Princess)	2	5.0
Casual	1	2.5
Pirate	1	2.5
Not applicable or no response	1	2.5

Question 8: Favourite Lolita style (alphabetical order)?

Favourite Lolita Style	Number	Percentage
Casual	1	2.5
Classic	11	27.5
Gothic	13	32.5
Hime/Rococo (Princess)	2	5.0
Pirate	1	2.5
Punk	3	7.5
Sweet	8	20.0
Not applicable or no response	1	2.5

Question 12: Do you consider yourself to be (statistical order)?

Lolita Type	Number	Percentage
Part-time (just for events)	22	55.0
Full-time, lifestyle (everyday)	16	40.0
Very occasional (rarely wear)	2	5.0

Question 12: Do you consider yourself to be (question order)?

Lolita Type	Number	Percentage
Full-time, lifestyle (everyday)	16	40.0
Part-time (just for events)	22	55.0
Very occasional (rarely wear)	2	5.0

Question 13: Are you a member of (choose ALL that apply)?

Lolita Community Type	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
A real-life community	27	67.5
An online community	21	52.5
Not applicable or no response	9	22.5

Question 14: In which town is your real-life local community located (statistical order)?

Place	Number	Percentage
Not applicable (don't belong to a local community)	11	27.5
Mexico City (National Capital), Mexico	9	22.5
Guadalajara, Jalisco	3	7.5
Mexicali, Baja California	2	5.0
Tijuana, Baja California	2	5.0
Puebla, Puebla	2	5.0
Campeche, Campeche	1	2.5
Saltillo, Coahuila	1	2.5
Celaya, Guanajuato	1	2.5
León, Guanajuato	1	2.5
Mexico City, Mexico and Monterrey, Nuevo León	1	2.5
Culiacán, Sinaloa	1	2.5
Los Mochis, Sinaloa	1	2.5
Hermosillo, Sonora	1	2.5
Obregón, Sonora	1	2.5
Laredo, Texas, USA and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico (binational)	1	2.5
Mérida, Yucatán	1	2.5

Question 14: In which town is your real-life local community located (alphabetical order)?

Place	Number	Percentage
Mexicali, Baja California	2	5.0
Tijuana, Baja California	2	5.0
Campeche, Campeche	1	2.5
Saltillo, Coahuila	1	2.5
Celaya, Guanajuato	1	2.5
León, Guanajuato	1	2.5
Guadalajara, Jalisco	3	7.5
Mexico City (National Capital), Mexico	9	22.5
Mexico City, Mexico and Monterrey, Nuevo León	1	2.5
Puebla, Puebla	2	5.0
Culiacán, Sinaloa	1	2.5
Los Mochis, Sinaloa	1	2.5
Hermosillo, Sonora	1	2.5
Obregón, Sonora	1	2.5
Laredo, Texas, USA and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico (binational)	1	2.5
Mérida, Yucatán	1	2.5
Not applicable (don't belong to a local community)	11	27.5

Question 17: Do you buy your Lolita style clothing (statistical order)?

Source	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
New, online via Lolita-brand websites (from the official source)	30	75.0
Used (previously worn) via online communities, e.g. Lace Market, EGL, or sales groups on facebook	28	70.0
New (unworn) via online communities, e.g. Lace Market, EGL, or sales groups on facebook	22	55.0
Buy from or swap with friends (new and used)	21	52.5
New, directly (in person) from Lolita-brand boutiques	8	20.0
New, directly (in person) from Lolita-brand stalls at conventions	6	15.0
Trade (swap) online (new and used)	6	15.0
Custom-made by seamstress	1	2.5
Not applicable	1	2.5

Question 17: Do you buy your Lolita style clothing (question order)?

Source	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
New, directly (in person) from Lolita-brand boutiques	8	20.0
New, directly (in person) from Lolita-brand stalls at conventions	6	15.0
New, online via Lolita-brand websites (from the official source)	30	75.0
New (unworn) via online communities, e.g. Lace Market, EGL, or sales groups on facebook	22	55.0
Used (previously worn) via online communities, e.g. Lace Market, EGL, or sales groups on facebook	28	70.0
Buy from or swap with friends (new and used)	21	52.5
Trade (swap) online (new and used)	6	15.0
Custom-made by seamstress	1	2.5
Not applicable	1	2.5

Question 18: Do you make (or have ever made) any of your own Lolita-style clothes or accessories?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	36	90.0
No	4	10.0

Question 19: Which brands do you own (statistical order)?

Brand	Number of respondents who own these brands	Percentage of respondents who own these brands
Angelic Pretty	18	45.0
Baby the Stars Shine Bright (BTSSB)	11	27.5
Alice and the Pirates (AatP)	8	20.0
Bodyline	5	12.5
Innocent World	5	12.5
Metamorphose	5	12.5
No brands	4	10.0
Infanta	3	7.5
Moi-même-Moitié	3	7.5
Pumpkin Cat	3	7.5
Baroque	2	5.0
Haenuli	2	5.0
LIEF	2	5.0
Maxicimam	2	5.0
Souffle Song	2	5.0
Victorian Maiden	2	5.0
Indrolita	1	2.5
Mary Magdalene	1	2.5
Pinkutomidori (Mexican)	1	2.5
Putumayo	1	2.5
Shirley Temple	1	2.5
Sunako Creaciones (Mexican)	1	2.5
Magic Tea Party	1	2.5

Question 19: Which brands do you own (alphabetical order)?

Brand	Number of respondents who own these brands	Percentage of respondents who own these brands
Alice and the Pirates (AatP)	8	20.0
Angelic Pretty	18	45.0
Baby the Stars Shine Bright (BTSSB)	11	27.5
Baroque	2	5.0
Bodyline	5	12.5
Haenuli	2	5.0
Indrolita	1	2.5
Infanta	3	7.5
Innocent World	5	12.5
LIEF	2	5.0
Mary Magdalene	1	2.5
Maxicimam	2	5.0
Metamorphose	5	12.5
Moi-même-Moitié	3	7.5
Pinkutomidori (Mexican)	1	2.5
Pumpkin Cat	3	7.5
Putumayo	1	2.5
Shirley Temple	1	2.5
Souffle Song	2	5.0
Sunako Creaciones (Mexican)	1	2.5
Magic Tea Party	1	2.5
Victorian Maiden	2	5.0
No brands	4	10.0

Question 20: What are your favourite brands (statistical order)?

Brand	Number of respondents who are fans of these brands	Percentage of respondents who are fans of these brands
Angelic Pretty	27	67.5
Baby the Stars Shine Bright (BTSSB)	18	45.0
Alice and the Pirates (AatP)	15	37.5
Innocent World	9	22.5
Mary Magdalene	7	17.5
Metamorphose	7	17.5
Moi-même-Moitié	7	17.5
Victorian Maiden	7	17.5
Atelier Boz/Atelier Pierrot	6	15.0
LIEF	6	15.0
Haenuli	5	12.5
Infanta	5	12.5
Bodyline	4	10.0
Putumayo	3	7.5
H.Naoto	2	5.0
Juliette et Justine	2	5.0
Maxicimam	2	5.0
Chess Story	1	2.5
Dear Celine	1	2.5
Diamond Honey	1	2.5
Emily Temple Cute	1	2.5
Ecailles de Lune	1	2.5
Enchantlic Enchantilly	1	2.5
Fan Plus Friend	1	2.5

Honey Honey	1	2.5
Inori	1	2.5
Jane Marple	1	2.5
Lady Sloth	1	2.5
Millefleurs	1	2.5
Puppets (Mexican)	1	2.5
Rose Trianon	1	2.5
Souffle Song	1	2.5
Sunako Creaciones (Mexican)	1	2.5
Sweet Addiction (Mexican)	1	2.5
Yolanda	1	2.5

Question 20: What are your favourite brands (alphabetical order)?

Brand	Number of respondents who are fans of these brands	Percentage of respondents who are fans of these brands
Alice and the Pirates (AatP)	15	37.5
Angelic Pretty	27	67.5
Atelier Boz/ Atelier Pierrot	6	15.0
Baby the Stars Shine Bright (BTSSB)	18	45.0
Bodyline	4	10.0
Chess Story	1	2.5
Dear Celine	1	2.5
Diamond Honey	1	2.5
Emily Temple Cute	1	2.5
Ecailles de Lune	1	2.5
Enchantic Enchantilly	1	2.5
Fan Plus Friend	1	2.5
Haenuli	5	12.5
H.Naoto	2	5.0
Honey Honey	1	2.5
Infanta	5	12.5
Innocent World	9	22.5
Inori	1	2.5
Jane Marple	1	2.5
Juliette et Justine	2	5.0
Lady Sloth	1	2.5
LIEF	6	15.0
Mary Magdalene	7	17.5
Maxicimam	2	5.0

Metamorphose	7	17.5
Millefleurs	1	2.5
Moi-même-Moitié	7	17.5
Puppets (Mexican)	1	2.5
Putumayo	3	7.5
Rose Trianon	1	2.5
Souffle Song	1	2.5
Sunako Creaciones (Mexican)	1	2.5
Sweet Addiction (Mexican)	1	2.5
Victorian Maiden	7	17.5
Yolanda	1	2.5

Question 21: A true member of the Lolita subculture should own at least one official brand-name Lolita dress (statistical order).

	strongly disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	strongly agree	no opinion
Number	16	13	6	4	1
Percentage	40.0	32.5	15.0	10.0	2.5

Question 21: A true member of the Lolita subculture should own at least one official brand-name Lolita dress (question order).

	strongly disagree	slightly disagree	no opinion	slightly agree	strongly agree
Number	16	13	1	6	4
Percentage	40.0	32.5	2.5	15.0	10.0

Question 23: If you wear Lolita-style clothing, have you ever felt pressured to buy very expensive Lolita-brand clothes just to fit in with your Lolita community? Or have you ever been made to feel ashamed about what Lolita-style clothes you can or can't afford to own?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	17.5
No	33	82.5

Question 24: If you wear Lolita-style clothing, have you ever been bullied or called mean names by other Lolita wearers (online or in real life) for what you wear, or how you coordinate your style? For example, have you ever been called an “Ita?”

	Number	Percentage
Yes	14	35.0
No	26	65.0

Question 25: If you wear Lolita-style clothing, have you ever been stared at in public, by strangers, in a negative way, or been made to feel embarrassed?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	34	85.0
No	6	15.0

Question 26: If you wear Lolita-style clothing, do your parents, or other family members, disapprove of it, or have they ever?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	55.0
No	17	42.5
Not applicable	1	2.5

Question 27: If you wear Lolita-style clothing, have you ever had to hide it from your parents, other family members, or friends?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	11	25.5
No	28	70.0
Not applicable	1	2.5

Question 30: If you wear Lolita-style clothing, does it make you feel rebellious?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	20	50.0
No	20	50.0

Question 32: Keywords to describe Lolita-style (TOP 10 results).

Keyword	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Beautiful	20	50.0
Elegant	20	50.0
Feminine	11	27.5
Cute	9	22.5
Delicate	7	17.5
Detailed	7	17.5
Original	7	17.5
Pretty	7	17.5
Unique	7	17.5
Liberated, Liberating	5	12.5

Question 32: Keywords to describe Lolita-style (alphabetical order).

Keyword	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Acceptance	1	2.5
Aesthetic	1	2.5
Amazing	2	5.0
Angelic	1	2.5
Antique	1	2.5
Armour	1	2.5
Artistic	1	2.5
Attractive	1	2.5
Authentic	1	2.5
Beautiful	20	50.0
Bold	1	2.5

Brave	3	7.5
Chic	1	2.5
Cheerful	1	2.5
Classy	1	2.5
Comfortable	3	7.5
Confidant	1	2.5
Cool	2	5.0
Creative	1	2.5
Cute	9	22.5
Delicate	7	17.5
Design	1	2.5
Detailed	7	17.5
Different	4	10
Dreams	1	2.5
Elaborate	2	5.0
Elegant	20	50.0
Emotive	1	2.5
Empowering	1	2.5
Exalted	1	2.5
Exceptional	1	2.5
Expensive	3	7.5
Expressive	2	5.0
Extravagant	1	2.5
Exquisite	1	2.5
Fabrics	1	2.5
Fancy	3	7.5
Fantastic	1	2.5
Female	1	2.5
Feminine	11	27.5

Feminist	1	2.5
Fluffy	2	5.0
Friendly, Friendship	3	7.5
Frilled	1	2.5
Fun	4	10.0
Glamorous	1	2.5
Graceful	1	2.5
Ground-breaking	1	2.5
Handsome	1	2.5
Happiness, Happy	2	5.0
Identity	1	2.5
Imagination	1	2.5
Inclusive	1	2.5
Incredible	1	2.5
Inspirational, Inspiring	3	7.5
Interesting	1	2.5
Joy	1	2.5
Kawaii	1	2.5
Liberated, Liberating	5	12.5
Lovely	4	10.0
Magic, Magical	2	5.0
Marvellous	2	5.0
Modest	2	5.0
Mysterious	4	10.0
Noble	1	2.5
Original	7	17.5
OTT (over-the-top)	1	2.5
Pleasing, Pleasurable	2	5.0
Pompous	2	5.0

Power	1	2.5
Pretty	7	17.5
Poufy, Puffy	2	5.0
Quality	2	5.0
Radiant	1	2.5
Rebellious	3	7.5
Regal	1	2.5
Revolutionary	1	2.5
Rococo	1	2.5
Romantic	1	2.5
Self-esteem	1	2.5
Sensitive	1	2.5
Sentimental	1	2.5
Sewing machines	1	2.5
Sophisticated	2	5.0
Special	3	7.5
Striking	2	5.0
Strong	2	5.0
Stylish	1	2.5
Sublime	2	5.0
Sweet	2	5.0
Tender	1	2.5
Tranquillity	1	2.5
Unique	7	17.5
Vampiric	1	2.5
Versatile	1	2.5
Voluminous	1	2.5
Warrior	1	2.5
Wonderful	2	5.0

Question 33: How important do you think it is for Lolita-style clothing to be modest (statistical order)?

	important	not very important	no opinion	not important	extremely important
Number	13	11	10	5	1
Percentage	32.5	27.5	25.0	12.5	2.5

Question 33: How important do you think it is for Lolita-style clothing to be modest (question order)?

	not important	not very important	no opinion	important	extremely important
Number	5	11	10	13	1
Percentage	12.5	27.5	25.0	32.5	2.5

Question 37: Do you think that the Lolita subculture is a type of feminist movement?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	28	70.0
No	6	15.0
Maybe	4	10.0
No response	2	5.0

Question 38 (a): Do you own Lolita-style dolls?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	17.5
No	33	82.5

Question 38 (b): Do you own other types of dolls?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	6	15.0
No	34	85.0

Question 40: Do you enjoy watching Japanese anime?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	33	82.5
No	7	17.5

Question 41: Do you enjoy reading Japanese manga?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	26	65.0
No	14	35.0

Question 42: Have you read the manga version of *Kamikaze Girls*?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	10	25.0
No	30	75.0

Question 43: Have you read the novel version of *Kamikaze Girls*?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	6	15.0
No	34	85.0

Question 44: Have you seen the film version of *Kamikaze Girls*?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	33	82.5
No	7	17.5

Question 46: Do you know what Nabokov's novel, *Lolita*, is about?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	35	87.5
No	1	2.5
Maybe	4	10.0

Question 47: Have you read Nabokov's novel, *Lolita*?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	47.5
No	20	50.0
No response	1	2.5

Question 48: Have you watched a film version of Nabokov's *Lolita*?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	25	62.5
No	15	37.5

Question 49: If you have either read the novel or seen a film version of *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, do you think that the naming of the Lolita clothing style is, in any way, connected with the story or with the main character, Lolita?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	10.0
No	30	75.00
Maybe	2	5.0
Don't know	2	5.0
No response	2	5.0

Question 52: Do you participate in cosplay?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	55.00
No	18	45.00

Question 53: Do you think that wearing Lolita-style clothing is a form of cosplay?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	0	0.00
No	36	90.00
Only if playing a character from fiction who wears Lolita style	4	10.00

Question 57: Do you have any favourite celebrities associated with the Lolita subculture, such as performers (musicians, actresses, etc.), Lolita models, or Kawaii ambassadors (in order of preference)?

Personality	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Misako Aoki	17	42.5
Rin Rin Doll	10	25.00
Midori Fukasawa	7	17.5
Akira	6	15.0
Briz Blossom	5	12.5
Daniela Michel	5	12.5
Nana Kitade	3	7.5
Kaya	2	5.0
Mana	2	5.0
Ali Project	1	2.5
Candy (Lolita in Wonderland)	1	2.5
Elliot Ryan	1	2.5
Emilie Autumn	1	2.5
Kanon Wakeshima	1	2.5
Kimura U	1	2.5
Lopotyn	1	2.5
Luis Moon	1	2.5
Marie Cherie	1	2.5
Minori	1	2.5
Moon Kana	1	2.5
Novala Takemoto	1	2.5
Rame (ex-Vidoll)	1	2.5
Sakizou	1	2.5

Sashiko	1	2.5
Sora Jung (LIEF)	1	2.5
Tama	1	2.5
Töny Mäta	1	2.5
Yohio	1	2.5
None	7	17.5
No response	4	10.0

Question 58: What is your religion (statistical order)?

Religion	Number	Percentage
Catholic	16	40.0
None	10	25.0
No response	4	10.0
Atheist	2	5.0
None, but I am not an atheist	2	5.0
Agnostic	1	2.5
Apostolic	1	2.5
Buddhist and Pastafarian	1	2.5
Catholic, Buddhist, Shintoist, Cyclist	1	2.5
Deist	1	2.5
Wiccan	1	2.5

Question 58: What is your religion (alphabetical order)?

Religion	Number	Percentage
Agnostic	1	2.5
Apostolic	1	2.5
Atheist	2	5.0
Buddhist and Pastafarian	1	2.5
Catholic	16	40.0
Catholic, Buddhist, Shintoist, Cyclist	1	2.5
Deist	1	2.5
Wiccan	1	2.5
None, but I am not an atheist	2	5.0
None	10	25.0
No response	4	10.0

Question 59: Do you practice your religion in any way, at all?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	9	22.5
No	9	22.5
No, but I believe in Jesus, God	2	5.0
No, but I am not an atheist	1	2.5
Not applicable or no response	19	47.5

Appendix E: Invitation for Designers

Invitation to participate in research on the Lolita subculture

Researcher Introduction

My name is Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal and I am a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) candidate at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand. I am a fashion, art and design theorist and historian. My main research specialization is the fashion-based Lolita subcultural movement, on which I write articles, and speak internationally at conferences and events. In 2007, I curated an exhibition, *Loli-Pop*, on the Japanese Lolita in popular culture, at Auckland Museum, New Zealand. I also delivered a keynote address on the Gothic Lolita, at the International Gothic Congress, at UNAM, Mexico, in 2014. Here is a link to my research profile, which includes links to some of my publications on the Lolita subculture: <https://massey.academia.edu/khardybernal> You may also be familiar with my facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/LolitaSubculture>

Invitation

This letter invites you to take part in my current research project towards my Ph.D. thesis on the Lolita subcultural movement. If you agree to participate, you will be involved in answering a few questions. Your completion of this survey will indicate your consent to the incorporation of your responses in my doctoral thesis, as well as the possibility of the citation of your responses in any presentations or publications that may result from this current research project. *As such, you will have the option to undertake this task anonymously, or using a nickname, if you wish. You may answer the questions in Spanish. Please let me know if you would also prefer the questions to be translated into Spanish.*

Participant Identification and Recruitment

1. I have approached you to invite you to participate in my survey for at least ONE of these reasons:
 - a. You are personally known, to me, as a wearer of Lolita fashions
 - b. You are associated with the Lolita fashion industry
 - c. Your facebook profile indicates that you are either a wearer of Lolita fashions or involved in the Lolita fashion industry
 - d. You are a follower of my Lolita Subculture facebook page
 - b. I met you in Puebla at El Baile de las Rosas
2. Your responses will be used in either of these two ways, or both:
 - a. As paraphrased information of your wording
 - b. As direct quotations of your wording
3. In the case of publication, confidentiality risks are the same as they would be in regard to any social-media platform
4. Your responses will be securely stored by me, the researcher, Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal
5. During the study, the only person who will have access to the storage of the information contained in your responses will be me, the researcher, Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal
6. After completion of the study, your responses will remain securely stored by me, the researcher, Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal. However, your responses may be published in my doctoral thesis, or published in any written work stemming from my doctoral thesis, during or after completion of my doctoral thesis, in the manner described in points 2 of this section

Research Project Procedures

1. If you agree to participate in stage one of the study, you will complete a written survey and return it to me, the researcher, Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal
2. The survey will take an average time of about 15 minutes for you to complete

Your Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation to complete the written survey.

However, if you do decide to accept it, you will still have the right to:

1. Change your mind about completing the survey, after receiving it and reading it, that is, decline to participate, before you send your responses back to me, the researcher, Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal;
2. Decline to complete some of the survey, that is, to refuse to answer any particular questions you are not comfortable with answering;
3. Respond to the survey using a nickname;
4. Ask to have any of the questions explained during your completion of the survey;
5. Be given access, on request, to the written publication of any summaries of the outcomes of the study, once completed and available.

Project Contacts

Researcher: Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal, email kathryn.hardy.bernal.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

Primary Supervisor: Prof. Vicki Karaminas, email V.Karaminas@massey.ac.nz

Academic Integrity Officer: Dr. Patricia Thomas, email: p.a.thomas@massey.ac.nz

You are invited to contact either the Researcher, Supervisor or Academic Integrity Officer if you have any further questions about the project.

Appendix F: Interview Questions for Designers

Questions for Mexican Lolita Designers

1. What is your name (or nickname)?
2. What is the name of your brand?
3. In what year did you start your brand?
4. Where do you live (town/city)?
5. Can you remember how old you were when you started to sew, embroider, make things?
6. Did someone in the family teach you to sew, embroider, make things? E.g. Your mother or grandmother?
7. Have you studied fashion, design, or art at school, college, or university?
8. Does anyone else work with you to make your products or is it just yourself?
9. What is your inspiration? What influences you? Art, religion, history, etc.?
10. Can you provide a photo or a link to at least one of your designs and explain the meaning, inspiration?

YOU MAY ANSWER IN SPANISH.

Gracias,

Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal

Appendix G:

Interviews with Tom, Baruch, Kyoko, and Inari

The following dialogues are between four gender-fluid members of the Mexican Gothic and Lolita movement and myself. They illustrate what it means to identify as non-binary or gender-fluid within the community, but also within the context of Mexican society.

Note: They were carried out in 2016. Therefore, circumstances may have changed.

Tom

For privacy reasons, as he hasn't "come out" to his family, I refer to the following respondent as "Tom." Tom lives in Mexico City. He is over forty, refers to himself as male, and is a lifestyle Lolita, meaning that he wears Lolita-style dresses every day, or as often as possible. On the occasions that he is in his family's company, his appearance conforms to what they would consider to be appropriate for his birth gender. Every other day, he reverts to his Lolita image. He belongs to the Lolita and Boystyler Community of CDMX, and to online community groups.

KHB: How did you first discover the Lolita style?

Tom: By means of the internet, magazines, and anime and manga conventions.

KHB: When did you begin to wear Lolita-style dresses?

Tom: About eight years ago, according to my memory.

KHB: What Lolita styles do you wear?

Tom: Classic, Sweet, Gothic, Kuro (all black), Shiro (all white), Guro (gory/horror)... I know that with the passage of time I will abandon some of the styles that I like now. However, fortunately, there are styles for all ages and so my interests will eventually range from the more Classic, and the Gothic, through to the Elegant and Aristocrat Lolita.

KHB: What Lolita style is your very favourite?

Tom: Sweet.

KHB: Do you belong, or have you ever belonged to another subculture, such as punk or goth? If so, does it influence your Lolita style? In what ways?

Tom: More like another community, a cycling community, rather than a subculture, whereby, apparently, I am the only person, maybe in the world, who rides dressed in Lolita style. I belong to a cyclists' group that goes out, every weekend, to travel across several tens of kilometres. I dress in my beautiful Lolita clothes as we ride through towns and cities and, of course, everyone looks at me, so I feel really special that I'm wearing this beautiful style. It fills me with happiness that I am treated preferentially in the places where we have spent time touring, and that the people often come back just to see me, and they like to call me "Doll" or "Princess."

KHB: What sort of activities do you participate in when you meet up with your local Lolita community in Mexico City? What kinds of places do you visit?

Tom: Picnics, tea parties, concerts, visits to cafés and restaurants, aquariums, cultural centres, such as museums, etc. Where we meet depends on the place that we will attend; either at a transport terminal (a train, tram, bus station, etc.) or on the streets outside cafés and restaurants.

KHB: Have you ever travelled to another city, state, or country to attend a Lolita event?

Tom: This year (2016) will be my first trip to a national Lolita event in my country, to the state of Aguascalientes, Mexico. I know that there will be many wonderful activities there. I have also traversed a few thousand kilometres with my cycling community. It is possible that I am the only Lolita that travels across several states or regions of his country wearing this beautiful style.

KHB: Do you make, or have you made, any Lolita-style garments or accessories?

Tom: Yes, I have about ten dresses that I have made along with their matching head bows and different accessories. I'm currently trying to make my first bonnet.... I own dolls by a Mexican brand called Geli. And I've bought some Gracioli Giochi from Italy; these are a little more articulated and are a metre high, which I have also made clothes for, like mine, with the fabric that I have leftover.

KHB: Do you own any garments or accessories made by official designer brands? If so, why did you choose them? What do you like about them?

Tom: Yes, a beautiful Tea Party JSK. I love its empire cut and elegant print, although a good part of my dresses is from Bodyline.

KHB: What are your favourite brands, even if they are just on your wish list?

Tom: Alice and the Pirates (AatP), Baby, the Stars Shine Bright (BTSSB), Angelic Pretty, Sweet Addiction (Mexico), Bodyline.

KHB: What do you think about the cheaper brands, such as Bodyline?

Tom: It seems to me that their existence is very good, since they allow the greater majority of Lolitas to begin this beautiful style of living and dressing.

KHB: Do you think that to be a true Lolita one must own at least one brand dress?

Tom: No, not all Lolitas can have access to them so I disagree. As much as we wish it were not the case, it is sad but true.

KHB: Have you ever felt pressured to buy expensive brands just to fit in with your community?

Tom: Hmmmm, so far, I have not felt pressured and few have made me feel bad in my community. Several times, I have attended events wearing dresses I made myself and I have not received ill-treatment.

KHB: Have you ever been bullied about your Lolita style or called an "Ita?"

Tom: As far as I know, or have been of told directly, no.

KHB: Have you ever been stared at (in a negative way) or been made to feel ashamed of your Lolita style in public?

Tom: Everyone that I hang out with is undoubtedly and unavoidably noticed and observed. Ashamed? Never. Observed, yes.

KHB: How do your parents and or other family members feel about you wearing Lolita style?

Tom: This is a thorny and difficult issue as, because I am male, it is expected that I dress in a way that is in accordance with my masculine gender when I am with them. I, therefore, am subjected to having to be discreet, and only dress in a very personal way when I'm away from my family. I can then wear my Lolita clothes in full light. Technically, I hide amongst the crowds and no one recognizes me, despite me displaying what I'm wearing openly before hundreds of people.

KHB: If you have ever had any disapproving feedback about wearing Lolita-style clothing, either from family members, friends, or onlookers, for what reasons do you think that might be? Can you explain?

Tom: If they do not approve, it is very much their problem. I used to like to wear it to make a point so, in my case, because I'm supposed to wear men's clothes, that would be the reason for their disapproval.

KHB: Do you find that people sometimes don't understand the meaning of the Lolita style? And, if so, have you ever had to try to explain what it's about, or why you choose to wear it? If yes, can you explain?

Tom: Yes, in fact it is an obligation that I will always have to answer to somebody for my way of dressing and so for that reason I am usually armed with a cute smile and some handouts containing information.

KHB: Does Lolita-style clothing make you feel rebellious? How does it, or why doesn't it?

Tom: In a way, yes, since by dressing in female clothes, I am revealing myself to the mainstream, a world where I am supposed to be forced to wear clothes of my gender.

KHB: Why do you personally wear Lolita-style clothing? What other ways does it make you feel?

Tom: Pretty, cute, beautiful, completely free and very, very happy (yes, all in terms of the feminine gender).

KHB: Name up to six keywords (adjectives) to describe Lolita-style clothing.

Tom: Beautiful, stylish, elegant, liberating, revolutionary, marvellous.

KHB: How important do you think it is for Lolita-style clothing to be modest?

Tom: Not very. When born of a revolutionary movement, which is against stereotypes, in my opinion, I think that gives you permission to step outside established parameters and it allows you some flexibility.

KHB: Do you think of the Lolita subculture as a feminist movement?

Tom: Yes, it is a feminist movement but, unlike other feminist movements, it is distinguished by being inclusive and tolerant in every respect.

KHB: What does it mean to you to be called a Lolita?

Tom: Freedom to live, to dress how I want, to feel beautiful, to embrace my feminine side, and to be treated with respect.

KHB: Do you think that the Lolita clothing-style could be seen by some people as a form of fetish wear?

What do you think about that?

Tom: Well, I cannot do anything about it, except to feel a tremendous sadness when I see the idea of wearing these beautiful garments “mutilated” to be used for sexual purposes.

KHB: And finally, what is your religion?

Tom: Catholic, Shinto, Buddhist, and cyclist....

Tom ends his interview with this note: “A thousand thanks for the opportunity to express my feelings.... Good night.”

Baruch

Baruch Ortiz is another male participant from Mexico City, who is in his thirties, and considers himself to be a full-time participant in the Gothic and Lolita subculture. Like Tom, he is also a member of the Lolita and Boystyler Community of CDMX, as well as online groups. Baruch’s style, overall, is gender fluid. His wardrobe includes the dandy boystyle as well as Lolita-style dresses.

KHB: What Lolita styles do you wear?

BO: Dandy style and Classic Lolita.

KHB: Do you belong, or have you ever belonged, to any other subculture, such as punk or goth? If yes, how does it influence your style?

BO: Yes, I belong to the scotch-kilt-wearers, steampunk, and geek subcultures but, no, those subcultures do not influence my Boystyle or Brolita style.

KHB: How or where did you first see, or find out about, Lolita-style clothing?

BO: I was doing some research for an old job when I discovered the Lolita subculture. I immediately fell in love with the Classic and Sweet Lolita styles but, after about three years or so, I began by wearing Boystyle when I found out that there existed Lolita communities in my country, and gradually found one in my own town.

KHB: If you participate in any events organised by a local group of Lolita friends, at what types of places do you meet? What kinds of activities do you do together?

BO: Well, that's an amazing question. We usually meet each new member of our community at our monthly informal tea parties. We also organize and participate in picnics and thematic tea party events, which are open to everyone interested in the Lolita subculture and Lolita fashion, with the main rule being RESPECT.

Where: Every single Gothic, Victorian, and Neogothic place, and some other well-known beautiful sites; we tend to go to new places, just to break the routine.

Activities: Hmm, this might sound weird to some communities, but we play like children, with prizes for the winners; we hold guessing games, runway shows, competitions for Best Lolita Coordinate and Best Well-Dressed (not always won by the same person), etcetera.

KHB: Have you ever travelled to another city or country to attend a Lolita event or convention? If so, please provide details of where you went, with whom you met, and the activities you participated in while you were there.

BO: Yes, I have travelled, and I am going to go again to another city to attend a Lolita event (tea party). Last year it was to San Luis Potosí, México. It was there that I met a lot of my current Lolita friends, some from my own town, and others from other regions of this amazing country!!!

KHB: Do you make (or have ever made) any of your own Lolita-style clothes or accessories? If yes, what kinds of things?

BO: Yes!!! Waistcoats, lots of waistcoats, and a petticoat. Did I mention that I wear Lolita-style dresses too?

KHB: If you own any dresses by official Lolita-style clothing brands, which brands do you own? Why have you chosen to buy these particular brands? What do you like about them?

BO: Yes, I own three dresses, by Haenuli, Infanta and a Pinkutomidori (a Mexican indie brand). Why? The Haenuli because I fell in love with that dress at the San Luis Potosí event (*Winter Garden Tea Party*); the Infanta because I traded a dress with another friend; and the Pinkutomidori because of the opportunity to buy such a beautiful dress, offered to me by the designer.

KHB: Whether you own them or not (even if they are just on your wish list), what are your favourite Lolita-style clothing brands? What do you like most about them?

BO: Angelic Pretty, Fan Plus Friend, Alice and the Pirates (AatP), Infanta, and Lief. What do I like most about them? Hmmm, besides that they make beautiful pieces of art, they also make sizes I fit!!!!

KHB: Do you believe that a true member of the Lolita subculture should own at least one official brand-name Lolita dress?

BO: I slightly agree because some of them can be bought second hand. But, there are members who are Boystylers, and not all the brands offer coords for Boystylers. Of course, if they want to own something by a brand, or not, nobody should be forcing them.

KHB: How do you feel about cheaper, more mass-produced brands, such as Bodyline or GLP?

BO: Well I feel comfortable about them, they are a nice place to begin. Maybe they do not have the most beautiful or elegant styles, but with some talent, imagination and guidance, you can make something great from them.

KHB: Have you ever felt pressured to buy very expensive Lolita-brand clothes just to fit in with your Lolita community? Or have you ever been made to feel ashamed about what Lolita-styles clothes you can or can't afford to own? If yes, can you explain?

BO: Never, and I am against that kind of activity, Lolita is more than a brand of fashion: Lolita is about equality, solidarity, fraternity, respect, freedom of thought, acceptance (of self and others), support, understanding, perseverance, passion and encouragement of entrepreneurship.

KHB: Have you ever been bullied or called mean names by other Lolita wearers (online or in real life) for what you wear, or how you coordinate your style? For example, have you ever been called an "Ita?" If yes, can you give examples of what has happened?

BO: Hmmm, no, I've so far run with luck and have never received any kind of mean nickname.

KHB: Have you ever been stared at in public, by strangers, in a negative way, or been made to feel embarrassed? If yes, can you explain what has happened?

BO: Never, not even when I've worn a proper Lolita dress.

KHB: Do your parents and or other family members know that you wear Lolita dresses? If yes, what do they think about it?

BO: Yes, my family and some of my friends know that I wear Boystyle. They say, "It's so you, it's so elegant and sophisticated." A few know that I also wear Lolita dresses. They simply say things like, "Okay, it's beautiful," "How did you get into this kind of dressing?" or "How did you buy that beautiful dress?" or "How do you find such amazing stuff?" etcetera.

KHB: Have you ever had to hide the way that you dress from your parents, other family members, or friends? If yes, please explain the circumstances.

BO: Hmmm not in my case.

KHB: If you have had any disapproving feedback about wearing Lolita-style clothing, either from family members, friends, or other onlookers, for what reasons do you think that might be? Can you explain?

BO: Well I have a friend that thinks that the Lolita movement is disgusting and retrograde, but I know his reasons, such as his anti-monarchy fears related to the dandy style of the clothing but, if any other person gives me some disapproving feedback, I try to discover the root of their opinions and receive it as an opportunity to give friendly information.

KHB: So, if you have ever had to try to explain why you choose to wear Lolita style, can you elaborate?

BO: Well, it's pretty close to wearing a kilt. You cannot wear it without compliments about your dress and people asking about your choice in clothes. That's why in our Lolita community we print and give out a small pamphlet, designed by Dandy Armi, a member from Colombia. The pamphlet provides a small bit of info about the Lolita style, and why we wear it. It's the easiest and kindest way to explain without making anybody uncomfortable (them for asking and me for having to explain why).

KHB: Does wearing the Lolita style make you feel rebellious?

BO: Hahahaha, kind of rebellious. To be honest, in my personal case, I don't feel like it's rebellious. I feel more like me, more comfortable with myself, more joyful.

KHB: Why do you, personally, wear Lolita style?

BO: Since I was a child I have always dressed too well, or formally, without any influence that I can recall. When I found the Lolita-style, I said, "That's what I was looking for!" I feel I can lose my civilian "costume" and dress the way I've always felt like I've wanted to dress.

KHB: Name up to six keywords (adjectives) to describe Lolita-style clothing.

BO: Amazing, Friendship, Joy, Beautiful, Acceptance, Happiness.

KHB: How important do you think it is for Lolita-style clothing to be modest?

BO: Not at all. I think that modesty must exist in the way you act and how you treat other people, in and out of this subculture, not in the way you style your own clothing. I think that everybody can wear what they want to wear; you should be free to wear what you want. If you are really talented enough to be able to dress like an aristocrat, then dress like that; if you are not really talented enough to do it well, you're free to ask for some help to improve.

KHB: Do you think that the Lolita subculture is a type of feminist movement? Why or why not?

BO: Of course, it is in its roots. Essentially, this subculture is inclusive to all human kinds, whatever gender. Within the Lolita subculture, there is a place for everyone, in the most amazing, kindly, and fraternal way.

KHB: What does it mean, to you, to be called a Lolita?

BO: It's an honour, because it means that the person really knows what it means to be a Lolita (or Boystyler).

KHB: And, finally, what is your religion?

BO: Buddhism

Kyoko

Kyoko, who is a lifestyle (full-time) Lolita in her thirties, identifies as transgender. She also lives in Mexico City and belongs to the Lolita and Boystyler Community of CDMX.

KHB: When did you start to wear the Lolita style?

KY: May 2016.

KHB: How did you find out about the Lolita style?

KY: Lolita magazines, *Keru* and *Gothic & Lolita Bible*.

KHB: What Lolita styles do you wear?

KY: Classic and Sweet.

KHB: Which Lolita style is your very favourite?

KY: Sweet Lolita.

KHB: What kinds of activities do you share with your community and what kinds of places do you visit?

KY: We have picnics in parks, go out to theatres and cinemas, cafés and restaurants, and theme parks.

KHB: Have you ever travelled to another city, state, region, or country for a Lolita event?

KY: Yes, to Tampico, Tamaulipas, another region in Mexico, for a Lolita meeting to get to know each other.

KHB: Do you, or have you ever made your own Lolita clothes or accessories? If yes, what have you made?

KY: Bow headdresses, petticoats, and bloomers.

KHB: Do you own any official brand dresses? If yes, what do you like about them?

KY: Angelic Pretty, because I like their prints.

KHB: What are your favourite brands, even if they are just on your wish list?

KY: Angelic Pretty, Baby the Stars Shine Bright, and Victorian Maiden.

KHB: Do you think that to be a true Lolita you should own at least one official brand dress?

KY: No, I very much disagree because it's not necessary to wear expensive brands to be a Lolita.

KHB: What do you think about cheaper brands such as Bodyline?

KY: They are good. You just need to know how to coordinate them well.

KHB: Have you ever felt pressured into buying expensive brands just to fit in?

KY: No one pressures me.

KHB: Have you ever been bullied for your Lolita style or called an Ita?

KY: Yes, I have been called an Ita for not knowing how to coordinate wrist cuffs and called a brand whore for buying brand.

KHB: Have you ever been stared at in public, in a negative way, or been made to feel embarrassed? If yes, can you explain what has happened?

KY: Always for being a Brolita and for not proudly holding out my dress.

KHB: What do your parent and or other family members think about you wearing the Lolita style?

KY: They do not like it.

KHB: Have you ever had to hide wearing the Lolita style from your parents, other family members, or friends? If yes, please explain the circumstances.

KY: Always, because I am a man.

KHB: If you have had any disapproving feedback about wearing Lolita-style clothing, from either family members, friends, or other onlookers, for what reasons do you think that might be?

KY: Because I am a man and should not want to wear women's clothes.

KHB: Have you ever had to try to explain what it's about, or why you choose to wear it?

KY: Always.

KHB: Does wearing the Lolita style make you feel rebellious?

KY: No, it makes me feel feminine.

KHB: Why do you personally choose to wear the Lolita style? How does it make you feel about yourself when you wear it?

KY: Happy. To be able to put on a dress and show my feminine side.

KHB: Please choose up to six keywords to describe the Lolita style.

KY: Pretty, cute, beautiful, radiant.

KHB: How important do you think it is for Lolita-style clothing to be modest?

KY: It's not important. What is important is to coordinate your outfits well, respect your companions, and behave like a lady.

KHB: Do you collect dolls?

KY: Yes, *Pullip* dolls.

KHB: What does it mean to you to be called a Lolita?

KY: It's a means to satisfy my feminine side and to be able to share the enjoyment with my friends who also like it.

KHB: And, finally, what is your religion?

KY: Catholic.

Inari

Inari Ometéotl who is in their twenties, is from Ecatepec in the State of Mexico. They identify as gender fluid. They are a part-time wearer of the Lolita style, mainly reserving the look for meetups and events. Inari belongs to a local Lolita community as well as online groups.

KHB: In what year did you start wearing the Lolita style?

IO: 2013.

KHB: How or where did you first see, or find out about, Lolita-style clothing?

IO: When I first saw it, I didn't know much about it, but thought it was quite charming and romantic. Later, a friend who had been a Lolita for a long time, taught me more, and my understanding of what it really means changed. It raised the charm to another level, knowing that the style can be beautiful without having to be sexually provocative.

KHB: What Lolita styles do you wear?

IO: Classic Lolita, Gothic Lolita, Kuro Lolita (all black), Shiro Lolita (all white), Guro Lolita (gory/horror), Punk Lolita, Holy Days (holiday-themed Lolita), Wa Lolita (traditional Japanese fusion), and I'm thinking of introducing a new branch of Lolita, Greek Lolita, with styles that I want to develop: Ellini Lolita, Athini Lolita and Sparti Lolita.

KHB: If you had to choose just one Lolita style, which would be your very favourite?

IO: Gothic Lolita

KHB: In which town/city is your Lolita community located?

IO: It's from the central-Mexican metropolis and growing. I don't know everybody, just a few who I've hung out with for a while, but when I go out I encounter lots of people who wear Lolita style, and most are cool.

KHB: If you participate in any events organised by your local group of Lolita friends, at what types of places do you meet? What kinds of activities do you do together?

IO: Parks, museums, restaurants, cafés, and occasionally (but rarely) bars, etc.

KHB: Have you ever travelled to another city or country to attend a Lolita event or convention? If so, please provide details of where you went, with whom you met, and the activities you participated in while you were there.

IO: National Lolita Meetings: Mexico City, December 2013; Guanajuato, December 2014; and *Winter Garden Lolita Tea Party*, San Luis Potosí, December 2015; *Mexijuku* (a fashion walk around the city), Mexico City, March 2014; and *Nihongo Matsuri* (FES Aragón, UNAM) May 2015).

KHB: If you own any dresses by official Lolita-style clothing brands, which brands do you own? Why have you chosen to buy these particular brands? What do you like about them?

IO: I only have a Fall/Winter Baby, the Stars Shine Bright Cherry Rose set, which was the one I disliked the least out of the ones I could get by pre-order, because a Pirate set I liked by Alice and the Pirates was sold out. It's still pretty but I hardly ever wear it.

KHB: Whether you own them or not (even if they are just on your wish list), what are your favourite Lolita-style clothing brands? What do you like most about them?

IO: I love Moi-Même-Moitié, and Alice and the Pirates, which are the ones that come closest to mind, though I like some others.

KHB: Do you think that to be a true member of the Lolita subculture you should own at least one official brand-name Lolita dress?

IO: For me, Lolita shouldn't be a symbol of consumerism, but style. It should be about ingenuity, to make one believe that the Lolita style can be achieved by anyone and to allow everyone to think that, although it may look fancy, it is not inaccessible.

KHB: How do you feel about cheaper, more mass-produced brands, such as Bodyline or GLP?

IO: Bodyline is not an haute couture brand, but they have some very cute designs that are fairly affordable. I know there are a lot more things to like about high brands, but I've seen some good creations by Bodyline. I wouldn't regret buying from them (but it depends, not all is good).

KHB: Have you ever felt pressured to buy very expensive Lolita-brand clothes just to fit in with your Lolita community? Or have you ever been made to feel ashamed about what Lolita-style clothes you can or can't afford to own? If yes, can you explain?

IO: Fortunately, not. At least, it has not happened to me. But I've known about other people being harassed for getting things "wrong."

KHB: Have you ever been bullied or called mean names by other Lolita wearers (online or in real life) for what you wear, or how you coordinate your style? For example, have you ever been called an “Ita?” If yes, can you give examples of what has happened?

IO: Not really, but once I was in a photo with a girl that was indeed bullied, and my face was in focus. The photo was uploaded to *4Chan*.¹

KHB: Have you ever been stared at in public, by strangers, in a negative way, or been made to feel embarrassed? If yes, can you explain what has happened?

IO: Yes, but no one has dared to insult me directly. I just get asked why I wear stuff like this, and I try to explain the history behind it, about its origins and what the style means. In May 2015, I conducted a conference, along with some of my friends, at FES (Facultad de Estudios Superiores Aragón), of the Universidad en Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, México, UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), which is also where I work, and I talked about some of the facts about Lolita style.

KHB: Do your parents and or other family members know that you wear Lolita clothing? If yes, what do they think about you wearing it? Do they approve of, oppose, or have no obvious opinions about it? Please explain.

IO: My mom is tolerant and doesn't complain. One of my uncles knows and he's positive about it, but my dad, who does not live with me and my mother, doesn't really know and I doubt he would be deeply proud of it.

KHB: Have you ever had to hide it from your parents, other family members, or friends?

IO: No, thank goodness.

KHB: If you have had any disapproving feedback about wearing Lolita-style clothing, from either family members, friends, or other onlookers, for what reasons do you think that might be?

¹ *4Chan* is a site whereby members can post people's images and comment on them anonymously. From experience, the commentary can be vicious. It seems to be a form of entertainment at the victims' expense.

IO: They often think it's against social standards. I'm quite happy with that reaction since I don't agree with those standards.

KHB: Does wearing Lolita-style clothing, make you feel rebellious?

IO: Yes and no. My intentions are to encourage change, or at least to try and challenge perceptions of taste, and style, no matter whether people like it, or not. But, sometimes it is just for my own pleasure, to enjoy doing it, and to look cute and fancy.

KHB: Name up to six keywords (adjectives) to describe Lolita-style clothing

IO: Pretty, cute, handsome, fancy, mysterious, freeing.

KHB: Do you think that the Lolita subculture is a type of feminist movement? Why or why not?

IO: Yeah, and even beyond what everyone calls feminist. It's about new ways to represent feminine beauty, or masculine beauty. An aesthetic movement that should be for whomever wants to try it and give it its own personal signs.

KHB: Do you own any Lolita-style dolls?

IO: Yes, it's a really a beautiful one, proudly made here in Mexico by Geli. I should say that I don't like all of the dolls in their catalogue but, fairly, some of them are really cute. The one that I have, as far as I am concerned, is the most beautiful one they have created.

KHB: What does it mean, to you, to be called a Lolita?

IO: Firstly, someone who wears the lovely fashion that I like. Secondly, a short name for Dolores. And thirdly, and less considered, an adjective to define girls who are sexually attracted to adult men.

KHB: This final comment by Inari is particularly illuminating as it shows their understanding of the psychology of Lolita from all perspectives.