Performing Lolita: The Japanese Gothic and Lolita Subculture and Constructing Identity through Virtual Space

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ABSTRACT | *This article investigates the concept of constructing a "Lolita" identity in virtual space. It explores how members of the Japanese fashion-based Lolita subculture use the Internet to formulate images of their desired selves in order to gain acceptance, and establish an "authentic" presence, within worldwide Lolita communities. While members may be geographically separated, they are united in the virtual world. The affinity gained through online forms of interchange, especially social networking sites, is pertinent for Gothloli who live outside Japan, the movement's place of origin, especially if real-life interactions are made less possible by lack of local congregation. However, a downside of Internet visibility, and a consequence of the ability to hide behind an "anonymous" profile, is the prevalence of cyberbullying, due to pressures to "fit in," and thus competition and jealousy. This article focuses on these paradoxes and the positive and negative influences on the Lolita subculture in virtual space.*

KEYWORDS | *Lolita, Fashion, Japanese Subculture, Internet, Cyberbullying*

Identity is a performance of fantasy and desire—a pursuit of being and becoming the image of this desire. —Judith Butler[1]

The fashion identity of the Japanese Lolita, or Gothloli (*Gosurori/Gosu-loli*, Gothic Lolita),[2]—the most prominent member of the globalized Gothic and Lolita subculture (G&L)—is an amalgam of transcultural sources, European and Japanese, historical and contemporary. Represented by women who dress as doll-like children, the style is both macabre and sweet. They follow the manner of Wednesday Addams,[3] Anne Rice's Claudia or Lewis Carroll's Alice.[4] Emerging in Japan during the 1990s, this movement is now beginning to thrive around the world. While the adoption of the Lolita style is

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recognized as making both a fashion statement and a lifestyle choice, and differentiated from the practice of *kosupure* ("cosplay," or costume play),[5] the motivation for participation in this subcultural movement is entwined with an aspect of spectacle, or "performance."

In the realm of the Internet, this performative element may be elevated as one's identity becomes removed from the physical body through imagery, text, and intertextual relationships. This allows for the invention of a virtual self, an image of fantasy built upon desire. It is through such online relationships that Gothloli formulate and perform constructed identities based on desired selves, while simultaneously creating, influencing, and establishing rules and regulations about Lolita behavior and appearance. It is in such virtual spaces that misinterpretations of the Lolita subculture are also debated. Problematic (mis)associations, which often necessitate Lolita community resistance, are connected with the terminology of "Lolita," specifically in reference to Nabokov's novel, *Lolita* (1955),[6] and what is known as the "Lolita Complex."[7] Other confusions arise from the perceived similarities between Lolita-style fashions and costumes, particularly the uniforms of "Maids," or of women who work in "maid cafés." It is via Internet-based Lolita communities that common misunderstandings, which can lead to the sexual objectification of the Gothloli image, are collectively and publicly thwarted.

The existence of digital technologies, particularly social networking sites and blogs, has created a globalizing effect for many subcultural movements that otherwise would have remained insular and underground.[8] It has also encouraged a sense of belonging, for although members may be geographically separated, they may be united in virtual space. The affinity gained through online forms of interchange is notably pertinent for Gothloli who live outside Japan, the movement's place of origin, especially if real-life interactions are less possible. However, a disadvantage and consequence of Internet visibility, which can also be an advantage, is the ability for others to hide behind anonymity. An effect of this is cyberbullying, which is due to immense pressures to "fit in," or to be a so-called authentic participant in the Lolita subculture, and thereby caused by both competition and jealousy.

This article investigates these paradoxes and examines some of the positive and negative influences of cyberspace on the Lolita subculture. The topic is approached from the perspective of critical observation, from both objective "outsider" and "insider" viewpoints,[9] with the latter

stemming from my own participation in the Lolita subculture and involvement with virtual and real-life Lolita communities, and communications via social networking sites, blogs, and face-to-face conversations with Gothloli, worldwide.

Subcultural Style versus Costume Play

The subcultural Lolita fashion style is based on design features of both the French Rococo and Victorian periods, especially on the dress of the girl child. There are many genres of Lolita style, although most fit into the two main categories of either "sweet" or "Gothic." Both of these looks have also developed from "little-girl" Japanese street fashions, first influenced in the 1970s by Holly Hobbie dolls[10] and the costumes of the young female characters of the American television program, *Little House on the Prairie*.[11] This trend is now referred to as Dolly *Kei* (meaning "Dolly style").[12] The next phase occurred in the New Romantic 1980s,[13] picking up frills, lace, and ribbons. With the Gothic Lolita came aspects of gothic subculture, including elements of Victorian mourning dress and accessories such as crosses, crucifixes, and rosaries. The one overriding feature of all Lolita styles as they are recognized today is the basic silhouette, which is reminiscent of the full-skirted, pinafore-style dress, worn by Sir John Tenniel's young Alice character in his illustrations for Lewis Carroll's *Alice* stories (1865 and 1871).[14]

There is a prevailing confusion between the subcultural Lolita fashion style and the notion of cosplay, which is a result of mainstream perceptions regarding the "dress-up" aspect of the Gothloli. As Isaac Gagné (2008) stresses, interpreting Lolita style as a form of costume is misinformed. He cites an entry in a Lolita blog by a member called "Night Moon," who quotes her mother asking, "What are you [dressed as], an alien?" She claims that "[h]aving an ignorant mother who doesn't want to acknowledge Lolita and calls it 'cosplay' is really tiring."[15] Gagné notes that this common reaction is frustrating for most Gothloli. He points out that cosplay is about mimicking someone, a specific someone, and dressing as a recognizable figure from graphic novels, films, or television shows, whereas adopting Lolita style is about expressing the wearer's personal identity, an extension of one's self. Lolita style should not be, therefore, considered a costume; rather, it should be recognized in terms of a fashion sense. Gothloli may, at alternative times, also enjoy and participate in cosplay, just as likely or unlikely as

anyone else, but it is a common understanding within Lolita communities that one does not, and is not able to, cosplay Lolita. Being Lolita is about dressing up, but not as an impersonation of an identifiable character. As Gagné maintains:

> It could be argued that . . . Lolitas [*sic*][16] are also involved in mimicry like *kosupure* fans, although their object of mimicry is an archetypal figure—a princess, an innocent "Sweet Lolita," an elegant "Gothic Lolita"—rather than a cited figure . . . like Sailor Moon. . . . Lolita motifs are often drawn from inanimate figures like dolls. . . . This contrasts with the animate (or at least animated) figures of *kosupure*, which are always . . . a pre-existing identity within a narrativized context, like a video game or comic book. . . . Lolita archetypes that are drawn from dolls or other inanimate sources may lack any pre-existing story-based context.[17]

The Gothloli displays a multifaceted relationship with dolls (*ningyō*, or "human shapes"). She resembles a doll, may collect and play with dolls, and even design and make dolls' clothing. A favorite pastime is to attend tea parties with other dolly friends. Traditionally, Gothloli have been sighted around the streets of Harajuku and Shinjuku, original hotspots for the subculture in Japan, parading for photos with their dolls, often dressed in similar fashions. It is this element of performance, the aspect of display, that creates ambiguity with regard to the division between Lolita style and costume play, especially as Lolita participants and cosplayers often occupy the same public spaces. Gagné, however, makes the distinction clear. He states that the Gothloli's personification of the doll is an animation of an inanimate model, rather than a cloning of an animated character: "[She] strives to become an animate representation of that figure—a process that contrasts explicitly with *kosupure* fans who are always involved in the *reanimation* of already animate figures."[18] She may "perform" her identity, but she does not play a specific, known role.

Lolita as a Ritualized Identity

In her important chapter, "Undressing and Dressing Loli: A Search for the Identity of the Japanese Lolita," Theresa Winge (2008) analyzes the

performative nature of the Lolita persona and classifies her as a "ritualized identity." She explores the practice of "parading" as an integral part of the process of becoming "Lolita" and how this behavior becomes a means to finding one's place within the subculture, and society. She applies Victor Turner's (1982) theories on the three phases of ritual to the formulation of a Gothloli image. Winge explains that during the first stage, the "preliminal phase (separation)," one will initially break away from mainstream society. Participants do this, she says, by discarding their usual clothing and experimenting with Lolita-type garments, often basing their aesthetic on imagery found in magazines and online. The following "liminal phase (transition)" is marked by a shift to a further level of interest whereby one neither belongs to the dominant society, nor is an accepted, fully fledged member of the subcultural group. The Gothloli begins to develop her own aesthetic and changes her behavior, "practicing poses and mannerisms . . . and seeking the approval of other, more experienced Lolitas [*sic*]."[19] The third phase of "postliminal phase (reincorporation)" is when the Gothloli establishes her position in a community. She will openly introduce her Lolita persona to society in public places, to the subcultural group, family, friends, and general passers-by. The sites she occupies, which may be either physical or virtual, operate as "performance spaces, where she displays and visually communicates her aesthetic and identity, such as urban streets . . . websites . . . and magazines,"[20] as well as shopping centers, cafés, parks, museums, convention centers, and social networking pages and groups. It is within these contexts that an individual finds her location within the collective subculture: "She ceases to be herself; she is a Lolita . . . free from the constraints of the dominant culture and free to display the Lolita aesthetic."[21] It is, therefore, also at this stage that there is less of a concentration on "playing at" being Lolita, as she begins to behave more "naturally," becoming increasingly more comfortable with her subcultural identity.

Lolita as a Hyper-Realized Identity

Osmud Rahman, Liu Wing-Sun, Elita Lam, and Chan Mong-Tai (2011) emphasize, however, that Gothloli "lives are filled with performance, imagination [and] illusions."[22] They discuss the Gothloli's position in context with a postmodern hyper-real world, whereby one can transcend the limitations of reality to become realer-than-real: "In a state of postmodernity, where

hyper-reality has superseded the importance and significance of reality, people do not merely fantasize about their imaginary world but also create their desired identity, and this process, or lived experience, becomes reality itself."[23] In other words, the virtual identity becomes the real self, but that self is also an image of fantasy. For Gothloli, this idyllic persona is constructed through the "symbolic consumption" of Lolita clothing in combination with prescribed behavior, or performance, in real and virtual spaces. This means that the self is also virtual *and* real, imagined and physical, abstract and tangible, making it something more than real: "Through Lolita, young people may enter into their dream/ideal world and create their own imaginary self . . . a descendant of a noble family, a sweet girl . . . a princess. . . . Indeed, they are living in a state of hyper-reality."[24] The act of parading and performing in public places allows Gothloli to manifest their imaginative selves. As Winge highlights, it is here that they are "free to pose for photographs, which provides them with agency by making them objects of desire,"[25] as well as desired subjects. It is online, in virtual space, that this notion becomes amplified. The ability to "perform" one's identity is heightened via the Internet, especially through sites such as DeviantArt, Instagram, and Facebook, whereby the posting and selective tagging of imagery of oneself can project both a desired and desirable profile. However, this online activity, which allows for increased access by outsiders to one's personal image, also enables one's identity to be objectified and exploited.

The Fetishization and Sexualization of the Lolita Identity

A complication of belonging to and participating in the fashion-based Lolita subculture is the fetishization and sexualization of the Gothloli image. Gagné discusses this consequence, as well as the general fear, amongst Lolita communities, about the potential for misappropriation of their style. He also illustrates the chasm between how members intend to be perceived and how they are actually viewed: "Specifically . . . , Lolitas' [*sic*] own desired expression as 'figures of identity' (for self), versus the sexualized, fetish 'figure of desire' (for others) . . . , represent[s] how tenuous the process of self-representation is for [them]."[26] In parading their Lolita identities in public, allowing themselves to be photographed by others, and uploading their own images online, Gothloli venture into precarious territory. This is especially due to links that are made between the Lolita identity and pedophilic

imagery known as *lolicon* (*rorikon*, or *roricon*), a Japanese term arising from the contraction of "Lolita" and "complex," in reference to the Lolita Complex (*rorita konpurekkusu*), a psychological condition belonging to an older man's obsession with young girls. This material is obtained from 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."[27] This narrative of non-consent, frequently the raping of virgins, is also present in many X-rated animations, referred to as *hentai*. The subject and subtext of this paraphernalia references the plot of Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita*, of which the protagonists, a young pubescent girl and her stepfather (who is almost old enough to be her grandfather), are involved in a sexual "relationship," which can be interpreted as a situation of statutory rape. It is this story that lends its title to the Lolita Complex. Through these intertextual connections, therefore, the Gothloli identity becomes problematic, not the least due to the branding of the subculture as "Lolita," but especially as the look is based on little-girls' fashions, and represents the "child-woman" motif. As Gagné states, "[t]aken together, the[se] various combinatory permutations" mean that members of the Lolita subculture must "continually struggle to define themselves against the buffeting winds of . . . lecherous gazes."[28] For while the *lolicon* rarely fetishizes the Lolita style itself, the Gothloli is nonetheless attached by association to her name, "Lolita," and to her choice to dress in younger girls' fashions. Some may see this as a fine line, especially as her clothing is often conflated with the costume of the "Maid," an appearance more closely related to the notion of fetish.

Lolita versus Maids

As Yuniya Kawamura (2012) claims, "[w]hichever Lolita look one dresses in, it is difficult to tell whether one is a real Lolita or a cosplayer."[29] She admits that: "When I started my research on [the] Lolita subculture in 2004, I thought Lolita was part of cosplay, and I could not tell the difference between a maid costume worn by a waitress at [a] Maid Café in Akihabara and Lolita fashion. Even industry professionals are confused about the differences."[30] Added to the complexities between cosplay and Lolita style

is this common misidentification of the Lolita subculture with the Maid movement, which originated in the Akihabara district of Tokyo. The Maid industry involves the costuming of young women (usually school or college students) as "French-style" maids, who work in so-called maid cafés, serving food and beverages, playing board games, chatting, and posing for pictures, all the while taking on a subservient role for their clients, whom they refer to as their "masters/mistresses." As Chris Kincaid (2015) comments, "You don't go to cafes to eat. You go to talk with the maids. Maids provide various services that center on the master-servant relationship maid cafes build [upon]."[31]

According to Patrick Galbraith (2011), who carried out "ethnographic studies in five maid cafés in Akihabara between 2004 and 2009,"[32] the maids' services are never sexual and the rules of conduct, which "explicitly prohibit personal questions and sexual harassment, be it physical or verbal,"[33] enforce that condition. Kincaid highlights some of the stipulations: "1. You cannot ask for a maid's real name or personal information; 2. No physical contact is permitted; 3. No personal cameras; 4. No sexual advances; [and] 5. You must order [at least] one drink."[34] There are suggestions, however, that some establishments outside Akihabara may actually provide "extra services." Apparently, in the Nipponbashi area of Osaka, maid cafés may be in violation of the "Businesses Affecting Public Morals Regulation Law," which regulates the limitations of the sex industry in Japan.[35] As Kenji Nakano (2012) elaborates:

> There was a time when Osaka's Nipponbashi area . . . provided a "healing experience" for fanatics of electronics, anime, manga, and maid cafes. But nowadays, reports *Shukan Jitsuwa* . . . , the district is being overrun with clubs offering sex on the side.[36] This is most evident in the various "costume" clubs. . . . The availability of erotic services . . . where female staff members dress in a variety of uniforms, continues to increase unabated. *Shukan Jitsuwa* says that the trend can be traced back to Akihabara, where . . . massage parlors featuring female high-school student masseuses started to appear. Osaka's maid establishments have copied that business model. . . . "Even though not promoted, it's normal . . . to offer customers . . . a deep kiss, a hug, an opportunity to sleep next to the girl, or have her rest on his arm," says a local writer . . . , which is commercial sex. But the[y] . . .

> have now escalated their offerings to include taking a "stroll" with a staff member. . . . "In other words, she'll take the customer to a 'love hotel' where various other 'underground' options will be available," continues the source. "It's a way for her to earn pocket money."[37]

Whether or not the rumors are true, there is an underlying sexual connotation in association with Maids. Even Galbraith (2011) states that "[i]n the maid café . . . , sexuality is most apparent in its absence, appearing explicitly nowhere and implicitly everywhere, for example, [in] the glimpse of white bloomers beneath a frilly skirt."[38] Although Galbraith also stresses that these "accidental" titillations are to be "defused in interpretation as merely unguarded innocence,"[39] he does acknowledge that "those [customers] who cannot strategise relationships may instead consume and fantasise [about] intimacy to meet individual needs."[40] In fact, this environment *is* sexually charged, particularly for one who fantasizes about, or especially takes part in, D/S play.[41] The role-playing elements of the customer/maid as master/servant mimic *and* represent a D/S relationship, which situate the maid café experience within the realm of BDSM (i.e., fetish and sexual fantasy).[42]

Jordan Mounteer (2014), in relating the details of his visit to an Akihabara establishment, notes that his waitress kneeled down when serving drinks. This servile act, he says, "is a quintessential aspect of the maid's . . . embodiment of innocence," although it is also a signifier of sexual submission.[43] He continues: "The sexuality in maid cafés is deliberately subdued. And yet both maid and master seem to follow a kind of script that acknowledges the maid as a symbolic and subversive infantilization of that sexuality."[44] This observation, as well as the author's discomfort with his maid's age, appearing to him to be much lower than he thought acceptable, highlights just how this industry fetishizes and sexualizes not only the Maid but also the "little-girl" identity, feeding and fueling the Lolita Complex. This argument can be validated by undertaking an Internet search for images, using the keywords "maid *lolicon*" and, unequivocally, "maid *hentai*." As Kincaid claims, although "most maid cafés have strict rules that seek to avoid sexual advances, lewd behavior, and other problems . . . this suggests [that] such behavior was a problem in the past."[45] He notes that the maids' outfits do "seem to be tailored for men's fantasies."[46] He then goes on to make a statement that supports Kawamura's opinion, namely that their costumes

"are closely related to Lolita fashion."[47] This perceived similarity thus further problematizes the "little-girl" Lolita style.

The maid phenomenon is indeed recognized by Isaac Gagné as an "additional catalyst to the sexual objectification" of the Gothloli due to the common assumption that the fetishized maid image is somehow related to the Lolita identity.[48] This misinterpretation is largely caused by what are determined as indistinct differences between the archetypal, historical black-and-white maids' uniform versus the black-and-white option of the Gothic Lolita, as well as the mere silhouette, the frills and lace, albeit in any colorway. However, he explains that the

> Lolitas [*sic*] I spoke with virulently denied any connection to maids . . . claiming that the crucial difference (beyond that of the maid's vastly inferior clothing style and quality) was that maids "served" people, whereas . . . Lolitas "were served" (because they are princesses). Indeed, one of my informants even mentioned that she enjoyed going to maid cafés with her . . . Lolita friends, because they were served like princesses.[49]

Therefore, differentiation is essentially made in regard to a notion of "class," in terms of both appearance and behavior: Gothloli take pleasure in attending tea parties, drinking tea, and eating cakes; Maids are there to provide that pleasure, a service.

Parading Lolita, Public Visibility, and the Voyeuristic Gaze

For Gothloli, efforts to separate and disassociate themselves from the multiple associations with sexualized images have increasingly become just as much a necessity as a desire. Once a relatively underground Japanese movement of the twentieth century, the Lolita subculture began to gain worldwide notoriety by the 2000s after it moved in greater numbers onto the streets, and tourists' photographs were able to be disseminated more easily through the Internet. This was followed by a spate of international journalistic reports on the subcultural Lolita phenomenon, which peaked around 2006/2007. The media buzz meant that Gothloli became more exposed to an uncompromising, voyeuristic gaze, and their intentions were made open for scrutiny and misjudgment.

In 2007, during a research trip to Japan with my colleague Bevan Chuang, we observed the dangers of parading as Lolita in public.[50] This was on location at what was once the most popular site of congregation—the *Jingu Bashi* (Shrine Bridge), which crosses over Harajuku station and leads to the *Meiji Jingu* (Meiji Shrine)—where Gothloli would traditionally hang out and have their pictures taken. While the women were generally contented with posing for photos (it was an expected occurrence, due to the publicity of this spot and the inundation of curious tourists to this area), they mostly preferred to be asked before people started snapping away, and would usually give permission only if photographers were considered polite (or felt to be "safe"). Yet just as often they would deny the request. For although they consciously placed themselves in this position, they did sense their vulnerability. Chuang and I witnessed evidence of this when several women became distressed after constant harassment, even stating their upset. At one point, a certain photographer was even behaving aggressively toward other photographers, ordering them to stop shooting, while shouting at the women he was pursuing, "I own you! You are mine."

When Isaac Gagné was carrying out his own study in Harajuku about four years earlier, he found that "[t]he girls' biggest fear was . . . [that] they didn't know where those pictures would end up. Several added that they might end up on Internet sites, cropped so that the heads were cut off and only the Lolita body was visible, or in other sexualized ways."[51] Gagné also noticed that women would sometimes refuse to be photographed by people who made them feel uncomfortable. Whether this is the reason or not, Kawamura claims that the *Jingu Bashi* is no longer a popular gathering spot for the Lolita subculture. She cites a Japanese Gothloli: "I've been there only a few times. The Lolita girls you see on that bridge are simply cosplaying and are not real Lolita. We, the real ones, never go there. Those who used to hang out there . . . are not real Lolita. The real ones are well and alive, and we are here to stay."[52] Kawamura maintains, however, that the suburb of Harajuku is still an "exclusive and sacred" place for local Gothloli as well as those visiting from around the world. Along with the Marui Young department store in Shinjuku, it is still a major shopping site for authentic, leading Lolita designer-label fashions.[53] Maybe the decline in population at the Bridge has been caused by the predatory atmosphere, or perhaps it just demonstrates that Lolita style is finally being understood as a fashion movement and less as a form of cosplay.

Resisting the Sexualization of Lolita Style via Community Education

A generalized outsiders' perspective of motivations behind the wearing of Lolita style, as well as the intentions of one's participation in the Lolita subculture is, therefore, fraught with both misperception and peril. Due to the licentious environments that the Lolita image becomes misidentified with, and the sensitive issues associated with these contexts, members are also frequently confronted by outsiders' heated reactions and emotional responses. Many of those involved with the subculture, particularly Gothloli themselves, are equally riled by these frameworks and, therefore, find it necessary to rebel against a presupposed position of vulnerability and culpability by endeavoring to mold and control their own images and reputations. As an extra measure, they find it necessary to inform their peers about the movement's rules, regulations and intentions, and acceptable standards of dress and behavior, in order to combat any insider misjudgement as well. As Gagné claims, "There is more at stake in educating each other through magazines and web forums than merely constructing a shared notion of community. Haunting . . . Lolita at every turn is what they perceive as a pervasive misunderstanding of their subculture by society at large, and results in attempts, both passive and active, to distance themselves from unwanted stereotypes."[54]

In an attempt to fight against the numerous misinterpretations of the Lolita subculture, there are, first of all, rules and regulations pertaining to "authentic" Lolita dress, supported by periodical manuals, particularly the *Gothic & Lolita Bible*, as well as online forums. Through studying these kinds of sources, it is evident that the larger percentage of Gothloli are keen to preserve the classic Lolita look, in line with what they consider to be the original intentions of the fashion, to represent modesty and innocence, and to oppose the displaying of too much flesh. It is the consensus that a Lolita garment should not be too low-cut at the neck and the hem never too short; at the most, skirts will usually finish only slightly above the knee, if not below. Her manner of dress, overall, is to avoid sexual provocation.

In the past, before the site became obsolete for the purposes, I gathered hundreds of Gothloli "friends" on MySpace from around the world, with whom I held discussions through private messaging and personal blogs. It was here that I realized that many Gothloli upheld similar principles.[55] On

16 January 2010, "E.G.Lolita of S. Florida," who was residing in the Netherlands at the time, told me that she believed Lolita style was actually "created to fight the exposure of the body and skin."[56] In accordance with this line of thinking, German Gothloli, "Duplica," also claimed, "I rebel against the modern fashion and the sexism in fashion because I wear Lolita. It's a fashion which hides nearly all parts of the body. . . . It's important to be proud of the fact being a woman [*sic*]. . . . Instead of trying to look like a guy we overdo the look of a girl. It's more feminine and classy than showing tits."[57] A Hong Kong–born Aucklander, "Loli-Bee," has said that "[b]ecause a Lolita girl covers more than 70% of the body, in no way it is [*sic*] meant to be sexual. It's meant to be cute and elegant."[58] And a German correspondent, "Harcole," agreed with "Loli-Bee," declaring, "Me [*sic*] wear bloomers. . . . What about that is erotic?'[59] Indeed, "Kasutei" from Kirkcaldy, Scotland, apparently chose the Lolita style precisely because she saw it as *asexual*, modest, "romantic and elegant," stating, "I like art and history. Lolita fashion is inspired by history yet . . . cute and pretty. Also . . . it covers up everything . . . as a non-sexual fashion . . . it appeals to my asexuality. I sometimes feel self-conscious in anything mildly revealing that might hint at sexuality because it's just not me. . . . It's not my fault if somehow [*sic*] wants to twist and make it a sexual thing."[60] While another Aucklander, "Mental Tart," reiterated this commonly held position:

> I love the fashion and the attitude of Lolita. . . . I also love the focus on trying to look as pretty [and] sweet . . . as possible. It is a welcome shift of focus from that of the Western world, which is shoved down our throats through every form of media possible. The usual focus when one is dressing up to go out is to look as sexy as possible for the opposite sex. Showing off as many curves as possible . . . and as much flesh. . . . It is actually a relief to know that as I look at my reflection I do not think men will desire me in this [Lolita] outfit. I know this isn't what they want to see, this isn't what they find sexy. I smile knowing this. I breath [*sic*] a sigh of relief to know that if a man looks at me now he will be thinking, "What the hell is she wearing?!" and not much else.[61]

And "BeliaMadHatter" from Stuttgart mentioned something similar: "I don't think that many men think a Lolita is sex [*sic*]. . . . My boyfriend

for example and the most other friends of me [*sic*] don't like it [for that reason]."[62]

Whatever their motives, many women who enter into the Lolita subculture soon find out that they have to justify their involvement by defending their positions in this way. For, while they may start out with nothing political to say, and their devotion is often quite simplistic in that their initial attraction to the Lolita style is usually based on surface values, they do not generally remain ignorant about lascivious frameworks for long, especially if they begin to take their participation more seriously than a superficial love of the aesthetics. Members are eventually enlightened about the subculture's problematic associations through community education, more often than not, via online sources, such as web-based forums, blogs, and social networking sites. As they become aware of the potentially hazardous domain they inhabit, they find a "voice."

The "Ita," "Lolitism," and Cyberbullying

There is a need for members of the Lolita subculture to educate the public, that is, the non-initiated, about the meaning and intentions of the movement. At the same time there is also the need to demonstrate, sometimes quite vehemently, their antagonism to those who might undermine their collective reputation, an antagonism that is often aimed at members themselves. The tenor of these protocols stipulates that it is imperative that fellow participants set good examples as models of the Lolita style, especially online, to discourage mass misrepresentation of the Gothloli identity. As already mentioned, rules of dress must be determined, clearly explained, and followed, so as to avoid the confusion between Lolita fashions and cosplay outfits, and in order to define Lolita style as separate from the costume of Maids. It has become customary to label Lolita participants who do not get these regulations right as "Ita," denoting someone who is not a full Lolita—a pseudo-Lolita. Tinged with disparagement, those who are called "Ita" seldom meet it with equanimity.

To return to Theresa Winge's stages of ritualized identity, the first (preliminal) and second (liminal) phases mark periods in the Gothloli's life when she would be most likely subjected to being called an Ita. It is at this point that a participant may either leave the community or feel pressured to learn the rules and regulations in order to be fully accepted.

In the popular online guide, "How to Avoid Being an Ita," Caro Dee (2009) writes:

> Oh the dreaded Ita! It's what every new Lolita fears she will be branded. . . . "Ita" is a less-than-nice term for someone trying to dress Lolita but doesn't quite get it right. The common Ita mistakes are usually made by beginners—who simply don't know better and often fall for buying a barely costume-quality dress simply because whoever was selling it was claiming it was Lolita—but it is indeed possible to continue being an Ita for years. . . . I would just like to say [that] you can wear whatever you want. If you love stuff that would normally be considered Ita, go for it. Rock the hell out of it . . . ! Just don't call it Lolita and you'll be alright.[63]

Dee then continues with her list of ways to avoid this label, elaborating on each of her points, which include: "Don't try to make a Lolita outfit out of clothes you have lying around"; don't wear anything made with cheap costume satin or stretch velvet; stay away from black dresses with cheap white lace; avoid two "Gothic" color combinations such as purple with cheap black lace; avoid all dresses with too much cheap lace; and, importantly:

> **Keep your *anime* out of your Lolita**—Lolita is *not* cosplay. This means that you shouldn't be wearing a character costume and calling it Lolita. Avoid other things that are typically featured in *anime* as well, including cat ears and tails, bell collars, neon wigs, and extremely exaggerated details such as huge areas of corset lacing or extra-wide, gravity-defying ruffles. . . . **Don't try to sexy it up—**if you want to wear Lolita because you're looking for a new and sexy . . . style to wear, you don't know the first thing about the fashion, and maybe Lolita isn't for you. To avoid being labeled an Ita, don't show off your boobs . . . keep your upper thighs and butt covered . . . [and] don't forget to wear something on your legs.[64]

Learning about the right way to wear Lolita style is, therefore, just as much a way of protecting oneself from shame as it is a means of curbing misappropriation. Failure to follow acceptable standards often results in

much more than embarrassment; it leads to being "outed" on the Internet and bullied (i.e., cyberbullied). An online blog utilized for this purpose in the past was Lolita Secrets, a LiveJournal page, shut down only to be replaced with another on the same site, Behind the Bows (BTB), which has become notorious for cyberbullying. One of the most harmful of the pages I have discovered, however, is the Ita thread on the cgl—Cosplay and EGL site—on 4chan, an "image-board" website. Here, anonymous contributors can post photographs of so-called Itas in order to expose and tease them, while others can also comment on the posts anonymously. Due to its anonymity, some very serious bullying can occur, especially as respondents do not have to register their details to have access, and cannot be caught out. Besides the denigration of the victims' taste in—or poor understanding of—Lolita fashions, the teasing can extend to derogatory comments about beauty, weight, size, ethnicity, and age. And, while the posters and commentators can remain anonymous, the subjects are often identified and humiliated. This type of behavior has become such a problem that Gothloli, on a global scale, are beginning to fight back. An example of the backlash is an initiative, begun in 2015, titled LACE (or L.A.C.E., i.e., Lolitas Against Cyberbullying and Exploitation).[65]

Unfortunately, though, some Lolita participants mistake the need to fight *against* with fighting *amongst.* Perhaps because there is an online culture of "speaking out" and "speaking up" about the Lolita subculture, the need to become *defensive* is often confused with being *offensive*. Some members will demonstrate their defiance not to defend the subculture and its intentions but to prove that they are the leaders, the experts, and the most "authentic." This authoritative, superior attitude, which I call "Lolitism" (i.e., Lolita + elitism), can, in itself, amount to bullying.

Measurements of one's authenticity become especially elitist when one's class is brought into question. Sadly, this amounts to how much one can afford to spend on the Lolita wardrobe. This has partially to do with the necessary delineations between Lolita style and costume, and Gothloli and Maids. As Gagné (2008) has highlighted, class is determined especially in regard to the quality of fabrics and taste, but communities are also inclined toward a certain snobbery that you aren't "real," or can't be accepted, if you cannot manage to buy the leading designer-label brands. As such, a supportable assertion is that many of the most antagonistic Lolitists are merely shopping experts rather than experts.

Conclusion

Members of the Lolita subculture need to distinguish the difference between educating others—thus, defending the subculture—and intimidating or attacking novices, rather than informing them. Fortunately, although a site that simultaneously enables bullying behavior, the Internet is also a way of disseminating positive information and helping to combat exploitation and misappropriation. The need for online methods of communication has become particularly imperative for members of the Lolita subculture outside Japan, especially in situations of limited immersion. While global Gothloli may be physically separated from the Japanese movement, it was originally through virtual Lolita communities that knowledge was largely distributed, and it is still here that they are united and can share facts. As Rahman et al. state, the Internet "plays a critical role in shaping a Lolita's values, beliefs, and attitudes." And "[i]t is clear that the Internet reinforces Lolita boundaries and strengthens its community. . . . Users . . . obtain abundant information about . . . the Lolita ideology, culture, clothing styles, and experiences."[66]

In tracing my own knowledge, it is obtained as both an "insider"—as a member of the Lolita subculture in real space, as well as via virtual global communities—and as a critical observer, or "outsider" research analyst. Much of my information is gleaned through participation and personal conversation, face-to-face, and in virtual space. Since the MySpace days, I have continued to keep in touch with some of the original people and communicate with thousands more through social networking and in real life. Examples of sites of interaction are my Facebook page, Lolita Subculture; my group, Gothic Aristocrat and Lolita Community Wellington; our local Greater Wellington Region Lolita Community; and various online international Lolita societies, in places such as Hawaii, Mexico, England, Australia, and Japan.

In my past experience with MySpace, where members could construct an online identity using an alternate name, even age and location, the use of this form of research facilitated, perhaps ironically, closer relationships with the respondent group. The level of anonymity one could create, if they wished to, meant that members could be more open and real about their personal feelings and opinions. This option of using a pseudonym also enabled Gothloli to paste up real photographs of themselves more safely, without the fear that predators could easily discover their real identities and actual whereabouts.

The same type of privacy is not available these days, with relatively newer technology, such as the ability to upload or link a picture into an image search, which often reveals the subject's true persona. However, sites like MySpace set a precedent for the expansion of the Lolita subculture, helping to allow it to shift from an insular Japanese movement to an increasingly worldwide phenomenon, continuing through blogs and other social networking facilities. This creates an opportunity for members to meet each other, first online and later in real space. Quite often, without the existence of these virtual communities, Gothloli would not have the chance to ever meet others. In fact, a real-life Lolita community occasionally starts on the Internet and then branches out into organized meetups in public places. This was the case with women I spoke with on MySpace who actually first met online and later formed communities that would get together. "Harcole," from Nordrhein-Westfalen, relayed that what she enjoyed the most about this experience was having made real friendships with like-minded women, stating, on February 10, 2010, "We meet about two to three times a month and we visit churches, castles (Germany has a lot), make fotos [*sic*], go to a café or a restaurant and eat there. I love to be with the others and without Lolita I would never have known them."[67] Similarly, on 16 January of the same year, "Duplica" said: "I like to meet other Lolitas [*sic*] who share my interests. We have the same passion and because of that I was able to meet some wonderful girls who became my friends."[68] She, too, had originally met her community online.

Internet networks and communities thus play a huge part in creating unity within the international Lolita subculture, while determining to develop a "universal" voice. That community solidarity, and online education, is crucial in controlling some of the misunderstandings of, and negative aspects misassociated with, the movement, as well as handling misinformed reactions, is illustrated in this last anecdote. While walking along the streets of Auckland during a meetup in 2013, accompanied by several other Gothloli, all of us dressed in Lolita style, a young man shouted out to his own group, angrily: "What the ____ are they meant to be dressed as?!" Followed by one of his mates, addressing one of us: "Girl, you are SEX on a stick!"

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

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positions in Contextual and Theoretical Studies in New Zealand and Australia. She is most recognized for her focus on the Japanese fashion-based Lolita movement, on which she has published widely, and presented at public talks and conferences internationally. In 2007, she was invited to curate the exhibition, *Loli-Pop* (Lolita and Popular Culture), for Auckland War Memorial Museum (15 September–26 November). She delivered the keynote address, "Gothic & Lolita: A Japanese Subculture and Worldwide Phenomenon," for Gothic Convergences: VI International Gothic Congress, at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, in 2014.

NOTES

1. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5.

2. I use the term, "Gothloli," rather than "Lolita," when speaking of members of the Lolita subculture, in order to differentiate between them and the title of the movement itself.

3. *The Addams Family*, directed by Sidney Lanfield and others (Sonoma County, CA: Filmways Television, 1964–66), TV series; *The Addams Family*, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 1991), feature film; *Addams Family Values*, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 1993), feature film. In this case, I refer to the figure of Wednesday played by Lisa Loring in the television series, *The Addams Family* (1964–66), as her image set the tone for the later film portrayals by Christina Ricci (1991, 1993). She was also a much younger, little-girl version (according to the narrative, six years old), in keeping with the cute-gothic, child-like sensibilities of the Gothloli. In regard to her nature, the Wednesday Addams of the 1960s is both sweet and macabre; she is endearing, she embodies the innocence of a young child, and yet she is also known to cut off the heads of her dolls and to keep spiders. Her clothing style also fits with this angelic but dark dichotomy. She wears the girl-child look of the times, in her long-sleeved, A-line frock with dainty collar and wrist cuffs, buttoned up to the neckline, and worn over a pair of full tights. In her manner of dress, she is the picture of modesty and orderliness. Her hair is also neatly presented in two tightly braided pigtails. Her Gothic edge is evoked by the palette of her attire: a very deep navy-blue (which appears to be black) with accents of white, as if she is in traditional mourning garb, which is also one of the influences on the Gothic Lolita style.

4. Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* (New York: Knopf, 1976); *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*, directed by Neil Jordan (Burbank: Geffen Pictures, 1994), feature film. The character of Claudia of *The Vampire Chronicles* novels, written by Anne Rice, is a vampire-child who will never physically mature. In the 1994 film adaptation, her eternal age is raised from five to twelve by the casting of the young

Kirsten Dunst. This Claudia, now of popular imagination, is poised on the precipice of girlhood and young adulthood, epitomizing the woman-child image of the Goth-loli. Not only does she depict a cute-gothic, "sweet-but-scary" little-girl identity but she wears girl-children's garments of the 1790s (designed by Sandy Powell). This is the period in which part of the film is set, although it is also an era from which frilly Lolita fashions are drawn. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1st ed. (London: MacMillan, 1865); Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, 1st ed. (London: MacMillan, 1871). Another inspiration for Lolita style is the image of Alice, the young-girl heroine of Lewis Carroll's Victorian tales, as illustrated by Sir John Tenniel. It can be observed that some of the fundamental design elements of Lolita style follow the aesthetics of this archetypal Alice, particularly the silhouette of her dress, with its puffed sleeves, full skirt, and slightly high-waist, tied at the back with a large bow-sash and supported by a full petticoat to give it shape. This frock is covered by a white pinafore apron, also tied around the middle. However, the relationships between Alice and the Lolita subculture are more complex than surface values. For more on this Alice-Lolita connection, see Kathryn A. Hardy Bernal, "Lolita through the Looking-glass: Alice, the Japanese Lolita Subculture, and the Lolita Complex," in *Communicating Transcultural Fashion Narratives: Image Identity Ideology*, ed. Anne Peirson-Smith, Vicki Karaminas, and Joseph Hancock II (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, forthcoming 2016).

5. The dressing up as and mimicking of a known figure from literature, film, television, comics, cartoons, etc. This usually includes the "parading" of the character in a public space.

6. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, 1st ed. (Paris: Olympia Press, 1955); Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, 1st ed. (New York: Putnam, 1958); Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, 1st ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959); Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, trans. Yasuo Okubo, 1st ed. (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1962). The plot of this narrative revolves around an older man's obsessive, sexual relationship with a girl under the age of consent. Stemming from this novel, the name Lolita has become synonymous, particularly in the English language, with the notion of a promiscuous female.

7. The "Lolita Complex" (*rorita konpurekkusu*), which takes its label from Vladimir Nabokov's novel, *Lolita* (see previous note), is the term for a psychological condition designated by an older man's obsession with younger (underage) girls. This is often a sexual attraction and so it can be another term for pedophilia.

8. Without the assistance of the worldwide web, one may wonder if the Lolita subculture would have progressed off the streets of Harajuku and spread internationally. While the printed press and television does much to globalize subcultural movements, without the Internet, members would not have been/not be able to purchase the fashions required in order to participate. Then, again, it may have just shifted how the Lolita subculture operates, with less of a focus on designer brands

and more of an emphasis on DIY. In any case, though, it is via online media that worldwide members are enabled to participate in regard to a sense of community.

9. On the merits of an insider/outsider methodology, see Rhoda MacRae, "'Insider' and 'Outsider' Issues in Youth Research," in *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes*, ed. Paul Hodkinson and Wolfgang Deicke (New York: Routledge, 2007), 51, 52; and Paul Hodkinson, *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

10. Holly Hobbie is a fictional, but semi-autobiographical, little-girl character created by Denise Holly Ulinskas (born in 1944), an American author and illustrator whose images of this figure were extremely popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Printed on greetings cards, fabrics, bed linen, and a range of household decorative objects, such as plates, vases, etc., Holly Hobbie was also released as a rag doll by Knickerbocker Toys (New York) in 1974. Her appearance was very similar to the child-girl characters of *Little House on the Prairie* (see previous note), although the fabrics of her pioneer-style clothes were more colorful, generally made up from "dolly-print" floral and gingham patterned patchwork swatches.

11. *Little House on the Prairie*, directed by Michael Landon, William F. Claxton, and others (New York: National Broadcasting Company, 1974–83), TV series. Set during the 1870s and 1880s, this semi-biographical narrative tells of a family living on the prairie (or grasslands) of Walnut Grove, Minnesota. The young-girl characters of this show generally wore the historical pioneering fashions for North American girl-children of this era. Their clothing was comprised of ankle-length, loose-fitting smocks with long sleeves; worn over long slips, pantaloons, and stockings; and covered in full aprons. This outfit was often completed with a soft bonnet, which included a wide brim at the front and a gathered frill at the nape of the neck, to prevent sunburn. Befitting the bohemian, hippie trend of the 1970s, this look was influential on everyday fashions of not only Japan but also other countries where the *Prairie* series was broadcast. On the Japanese streets, however, this image was made more "cute" by combining it with the style of the show's middle-class, girl-child characters, adding elements such as ringleted hair, ribbons, bows, lace, and frills, mimicking the appearance of an antique doll.

12. The Japanese "Dolly *Kei*" street fashion represents a fusion of inspiration, from antique and vintage dolls, historical illustrations of fictional little-girl characters from Western fairy tales (such as Red Riding Hood), Eastern European bohemian or gypsy clothing, aspects of colonial or pioneering fashions, and frilly elements of Rococo and Victorian garments, sometimes adorned with rosaries, cameos, crosses, and crucifixes. The overall appearance is akin to and was a forerunner of the creepy-cute-gothic aspects of the Gothic Lolita style.

13. The New Romantic subcultural movement grew out of the British post-punk era of the late 1970s. It was largely spawned by the nightclub scene, particularly by regulars of Billy's in Soho, London. Hosted by Steve Strange and DJ'd by Rusty

Egan (both of the band Visage), this group attended organized evenings known as "Bowie" 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 patrons, began to be referred to, alternately, as the "Kids with No Name" or the "Blitz Kids," especially by the media. It was also the press that came up with the moniker 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), Tony Hadley (Spandau Ballet), Gary and Martin Kemp (Spandau Ballet), Martin Degville (Sigue Sigue Sputnik), and Siobhan Fahey (Bananarama). In regard to 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 hugely influential in regard to this subcultural fashion evolution, from the early glam days through to punk, post-punk, New Romanticism, and the beginnings of goth subculture. They were also responsible for bolstering the music scene associated with this movement (as they had been with the Sex Pistols and punk), with McLaren managing influential bands like Adam and the Ants and Bow Wow Wow, while Westwood, in collaboration with McLaren, designed their fashion identities.

14. See note 4.

15. Isaac Gagné, "Urban Princesses: Performance and 'Women's Language' in Japan's Gothic/Lolita Subculture," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (2008): 130.

16. I adopt the Japanese convention, whereby "Lolita," or "*rorita*," is both the singular and plural noun. This also applies to "Gothloli," or "*gosurori*."

17. Gagné, "Urban Princesses," 142.

18. Ibid.

19. 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: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 56–57.

20. Ibid., 57.

21. Ibid., 57–58.

22. Osmud Rahman et al., "'Lolita': Imaginative Self and Elusive Consumption," *Fashion Theory* 15, no. 1 (2011): 10.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 11.

25. Winge, "Undressing and Dressing Loli," 58.

26. Gagné, "Urban Princesses," 142.

27. Hiroyoshi Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles: Idol Performance and Symbolic Production in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 211.

28. Gagné, "Urban Princesses," 142.

29. Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures* (London: Berg, 2012), 72.

30. Ibid., 72–73.

31. Chris Kincaid, "What Are Maid Cafes?" *Japan Powered: Otaku Culture*, 17 May 2015, accessed 20 August 2015, http://www.japanpowered.com/otaku-culture/what-are-maid-cafes.

32. Patrick W. Galbraith, "Maid in Japan: An Ethnographic Account of Alternative Intimacy," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 25, February 2015, accessed 20 August 2015, http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue25/galbraith.htm, 12.

33. Ibid., 4.

34. Kincaid, "What Are Maid Cafes?"

35. Steven Le Blanc and Masami M., "Shady Maid Cafés Found in Osaka Ask, 'May I Clean Out Your Wallet, Sir?'" *Rocket News 24*, 28 December 2012, accessed 20 August 2015, http://en.rocketnews24.com/2012/12/28/shady-maid-cafes-found-in-osaka-ask-may-i-clean-out-your-wallet-sir/

36. Source: "*Fuzokuten ga zoku zoku sannyu Nipponbashi meidoten ga mokunin suru '1,000 en ura saabisu*,'" *Shūkan Jitsuwa*, 13 December 2012, 51. *Shūkan Jitsuwa* is a weekly periodical aimed at an adult male audience.

37. Kenji Nakano, "Osaka's Maid Cafes Offering Below-the-Belt Services," *The Tokyo Reporter: Salacious News on Crime and Culture from Japan*, 13 December 2012, accessed 2 August 2015, http://www.tokyoreporter.com/2012/12/13/osakas-maid-cafes-offering-below-the-belt-services/.

38. Galbraith, "Maid in Japan," 4.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 1.

41. D/S = Dominant/Submissive sexual activity.

42. BDSM = Bondage/Discipline/Dominant/Submissive/Sadist/Masochist.

43. Jordan Mounteer, "What It's Like inside a Japanese Maid Café," *Matador*, 30 May 2014, accessed 20 August 2015, http://matadornetwork.com/abroad/like-inside-japanese-maid-cafe/.

44. Ibid.

45. Kincaid, "What are Maid Cafes?"

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Gagné, "Urban Princesses," 141.

49. Ibid.

50. Bevan Chuang, who held an administrative position at Auckland War Memorial Museum, invited me to curate the exhibition, *Loli-Pop* (i.e., "Lolita + Pop" = Lolita and popular culture), which ran at the institution from 15 September to 26 November 2007. Chuang's photographic and video documentation of Japanese Gothloli, taken in Harajuku and Shinjuku during our research trip for the show, became the backdrop for the main display of fashion garments (designed by Angela Finn, Lize Niemczyk, Gabriella Trussardi, Yvonne Stewart, Carmel Donnelly, and myself) and dolls from my personal collection.

51. Gagné, "Urban Princesses," 140.

52. Kawamura, *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures*, 66.

53. In Harajuku, two of the main retail areas for Lolita clothing are Takeshita Street and the Laforet shopping mall.

54. Gagné, "Urban Princesses," 139.

55. MySpace participants are cited in this article using their online pseudonyms.

56. Personal communication with "E.G.Lolita of S. Florida" (Oirsbeek, Netherlands) on MySpace, 16 January 2010.

57. Personal communication with "Duplica" (Germany) on MySpace, 16 January 2010.

58. Personal communication with "Loli-Bee" (Hong Kong/Auckland, New Zealand) on MySpace, 18 January 2010.

59. Personal communication with "Harcole" (Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany) on MySpace, 10 February 2010.

60. Personal communication with "Kasutei" (Kirkcaldy, Scotland) on MySpace, 17 January 2010.

61. Personal communication with "Mental Tart" (Auckland, New Zealand) on MySpace, 14 April 2010.

62. Personal communication with "BeliaMadHatter" (Stuttgart, Germany) on MySpace, 17 January 2010.

63. Caro Dee, "How to Avoid Being an Ita," *F Yeah Lolita*, 2 November 2009, accessed 20 August 2015, http://fyeahlolita.blogspot.de/2009/10/how-to-avoid-being-ita.html.

64. Ibid.

65. See http://lacecommunity.tumblr.com/ and https://www.facebook.com/lacecommunity.

66. Rahman et al., "Lolita," 19.

67. "Harcole."

68. "Duplica."