**Modelling Masculinity
The Return of the Dandy in Contemporary Society
by
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Abstract

This work explores the dandy renaissance in contemporary society and locates the dandy within the perpetual grey areas of society. Dandyism is a *style* of aesthetic masculinity that provides a mechanism of distinction. The dandy's highly refined sartorial and bodily regimes construct a unique dandified body and create a coherent self-identity.

Dandyism's difference and disengagement are expressed through a particular fashionability that emphasizes the dandy's sang-froid or self-possession. This poise moves dandyism beyond sartorial display and exhibits the embodied nature of style. Through the creation of a historical typology and in examining the socio-political conditions that gave rise to dandyism, it is apparent dandies are no less capable of thriving in contemporary culture. Amidst increasingly mass forms of consumption, fashion, and the development of contingent self-identities, the dandy's ritual of taste provides contemporary men with a salient masculine mode.

Keywords: dandies, dandyism, style, self-identity, body, consumption, fashion, masculinity

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>page ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page iii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>page v</i>
<i>List of Plates</i>	<i>page vii</i>
Introduction	page 1
Chapter I: Portrait of a Dandy	page 5
The Dandy As Male	page 6
The Self-As-Art	page 9
Sartorial Beauty	page 11
“Sang Froid”	page 15
The Power of “Bon Ton”	page 18
The Dandy As Spectacle	page 20
Chapter II: A History of Dandyism and Dandies	page 23
Proto-Dandies and the Late Eighteenth-Century	page 24
The Regency and the Birth of the Dandy	page 25
Beau Brummell: “King of the Dandies”	page 29
Anglomania and the French Dandy	page 36
Count d’Orsay: The Butterfly Dandy	page 37
Baudelaire and the “Moral” Dandy	page 45
Oscar Wilde: A New Dandyism Amid Decadence?	page 51
Chapter III: Consumption and the Cult of Self	page 63
Identity and Self	page 64
This Is What I Like. This Is Who I Am	page 65
Consuming Dandyism	page 73
Chapter IV: The Dandified Body	page 85
The Body – The Self	page 86
The Dressed Body	page 90
“Putting On the Dog”	page 95
The Sensuousness of Style	page 97
(Anti) Fashion	page 99
Chapter V: The Twenty-First Century Dandy	page 112
Another Crisis in Masculinity or Brand New World?	page 113
The “New” Man Cuts A Dash	page 119
The Contemporary Dandy	page 122

Conclusion

page 136

Bibliography

page 138

List of Plates

i.	George Bryan (Beau) Brummell	page 30
ii.	Charles Baudelaire	page 30
iii.	Count Alfred d'Orsay	page 31
iv.	Constantin Guys, <i>Meeting in the Park</i>	page 46
v.	Oscar Wilde	page 62
vi.	"It's All in the Detail" Pulsar Prestige Collection Advertisement # 1	page 123
vii.	"It's All in the Detail" Pulsar Prestige Collection Advertisement # 2	page 123
viii.	Advertisement for Hugo Boss	page 133
ix.	Advertisement for Ralph Lauren Purple Label	page 134
x.	Advertisement for Yves Saint Laurent <i>Rive Gauche</i>	page 135

Introduction

“Dandyism . . . plays games with the rules while continuing to respect them. It suffers from their constricting effects and takes its revenge, tolerating them all the while. It invokes them even as it breaks free from them. It governs them and is governed by them in its turn. A dual-natured, volatile thing, this Dandyism!” Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly, *On Dandyism and George Brummell*, 1844

When I was sixteen years old, I went on a trip to Toronto with my parents. Walking down Queen Street west, we came upon a group of three or four young men unlike any males I had ever seen. They didn’t look that much older than I myself, but they possessed an intriguing exoticism that made them seem ageless. They radiated a self-assurance and self-possession that completely contrasted with what I felt was my immaturity and obvious provinciality. They were carrying wooden handled umbrellas and silver tipped walking sticks. They had on slim suits with short pants exposing leather boots with pointed toes or loafers with striped dress socks. They had Beatle-esque hairstyles. One of them had dark-rimmed eyeglasses on. I asked my parents who they were. One of them replied that they were “Mods”.

The sartorial mode of these young men was a defining factor in their level of conspicuousness to the observer. Nevertheless, the impact of this fleeting encounter and the clarity of my recollection is only partially attributable to the dress of these mods. Instead, it was something that they brought to the clothes; something human that animated the lifeless garments. It was their style that was so intoxicating.

Much like these mods, the dandy uses a particular mode of being that visually articulates his sense of self and displays his superiority to others. The dandy uses style to portray an awareness of beauty. Style possesses a transcendent power that may also be used as source for critical knowledge (Fillin-Yeh, 2001b: 23). More than the actual

garments individuals wear, style must be recognized as an embodied activity that includes sartorial expression, bearing, and vernacular. The dandy illuminates how style may be used as a strategy to gain power and effect change. His elusiveness and ambiguity reflect the ability of his style to transcend the boundaries set by historical epochs and cultural definitions of gender, sexuality, and individuality. Dandyism is not a lax ethic into which anyone may enter and adopt its pose. Despite its relative marginality in academic literature and in popular culture, the dandy is being increasingly invoked to describe various modes of sartorial display. Nevertheless, at its simplest, dandyism reinforces the fascination that stylistic expression provokes within all of us. At its most significant, dandyism comments on society's dichotomies, in that, the dandy resists becoming subsumed in the conformity of the masses whilst remaining aloof from social elite, all while shopping. The underlying attitude of the dandy is duality, in that "he displays on the one hand aversion to loud and open rebellion, on the other an even greater disgust at conformity" (Lehmann, 2000: 31). The dandy's contempt for the middling and pedestrian moves beyond attempts to socially separate himself. Rather, he is able to challenge society's constraints whilst seemingly playing along. This work seeks to shed light on this type of aesthetic masculinity as it has appeared historically and in its present incarnation.

Chapter one is a study of the essential elements of dandyism. Admittedly, certain attributes of the dandy have changed over the past two hundred years. Nevertheless, basic characteristics remain the same that close the door on the possibility of the dandy becoming *any* well-dressed person. The most oft-cited dandies are examined in Chapter

Two. The context within which these dandies emerged and the variations between their forms of display offer insight into the possibilities of dandyism. Not an exhaustive history, this chapter offers the possibility of confirming the typology suggested in the previous chapter. Dandified display offers insight into the urban male's engagement with the commercial marketplace as he constructs a sense of self. The dandy challenges the division of personhood into an authentic, essential self and a coexistent presentational, artificial self. Chapter Three seeks to elucidate the similarities of the nineteenth-century dandy and the contemporary dandy and dispel some of the assumptions regarding the categorical "modernism" or "postmodernism" of the dandy. The dandy's consumption of commodities to distinguish his superior taste makes him as relevant today as he was historically. Although the dandy does not buy his identity, his dress is the most readily visible aspect of identity. As such, his focus upon visually organizing his body plays a major role in the construction of his self-identity. In addition to examining the dandy's brand of sartorial anti-fashion, Chapter Four approaches dress as an embodied activity. Hence the dandy's allure is an intrinsic aspect of self that cannot be stimulated by the mere adoption of a certain uniform. Dandyism is a style that is beholden to clothing on one level, yet cannot be reduced to it. Chapter Five is an exploration of dandyism as a style of aesthetic masculinity that is re-emerging in contemporary society. This materialization is partially due to the increasing acceptance of masculine display and a concurrent redefining of masculine identity. The dandy proffers a compelling opportunity for twenty-first century masculinity.

As Lehmann writes “the profound and eternal are considered worthy of analysis; what is transient and fugitive will nearly always be equated consciously with the facile and the futile” (2000: 4). In its association with fashion, dress, and clothing, style has consistently been regarded in opposition to content. However, “attention to what people wear can tell us much about the tensions and anxieties of time and place” (Hunt, 1996: 43). The dandy’s charisma ensures that his sartorial expression of disengagement and distinction remains unique to each dandy, in each context. Nevertheless, the use of material objects to visually express this authority ensures that dandyism appears replicable. Finkelstein warns of identifying a single individual as a social catalyst as it merely reflects the current discourse of individualism (1991: 123). The following work is not an attempt to lionize the dandy nor is it an attempt to demonize him. Dandyism has been neglected and misconstrued, in part, due to accepted notions of what is essential and what is trivial. The significance of the dandy ethic is his use of the transient to express the profound.

Chapter I – Portrait of a Dandy

“Ideology and style are the same thing.”
Imamu Amiri Baraka, *In Our Terribleness*, 1970

The dandy remains a compelling figure despite the fact that he is often relegated to being a footnote in discussions of the city and modernity (Benjamin, 2000; Shields, 1995); historiographies of fashion (Entwistle, 2000; Hollander, 1994; Wilson, 1985); gender, sexuality, and literature (Feldman, 1993); and consumption (Campbell, 1987). In the contemporary fashion media, any clearly defined sense of whom the dandy might be has been obscured, replaced by a vague representation of the well-appointed man. In the most recent academic discussions of the dandy and dandyism, the primary focus appears to be on broadening historical definitions to include non-Caucasian, non-European, and female dandies (Fillin-Yeh, 2001b). In the haste to offer a more inclusive rendering of the dandy, certain theorists have tended to haphazardly select various abstract aspects of the persona, tailoring them to fit their “new” dandy form. Simultaneously, the traditional rendition of the dandy costume is accepted and these contemporary dandies emerge as perpetual outsiders, rebellious performers, or women dressed in formal men’s clothing. A conglomeration of singly meaningless and universally applicable traits replaces the important specificities of the dandy guise. Although it remains important to move beyond the limiting nineteenth-century definition of the dandy as a European upper-class male to fully construct a contemporary portrait, it is nonetheless important to be mindful of the historical dandy’s qualities.

This chapter develops a portrait of the dandy that clarifies the salience of this personality at this juncture in history. The dichotomous nature of the dandy mystifies

and confuses theorists, yet remains the dandy's most compelling and relevant feature. It also makes him a threatening figure, seemingly inert yet hard to pin down. The dandy exists in the perpetual grey areas of existence. In trying to thwart mass culture, he sequesters himself from the mediating effects of the system (Garelick, 1998: 5). Nevertheless, the proliferation of a mass culture is what gives rise to such a being and nourishes him. His identity concurrently reinforces and casts into doubt the binary categorizations that modernity has imparted (Feldman, 1993: 5). The dandy is effeminate, yet an exemplar of aesthetic masculinity. His "self" is his art. His sexuality is ambiguous, however he retains an intimidating potency. The dandy is less anachronistic than he is derivative. Rather than being an outmoded relic, the dandy desires a return to the highly stratified societies of the past. To retain his superiority, the dandy must be aware of those around him; however, to be on display is essential to his survival. He is singular yet reproducible (Garelick, 1998: 6). The dandy's emergence is a result of historical processes and his existence is supported by the conditions of the present, making him a perfect figure to flourish in the contemporary landscape.

The Dandy As Male

The dandy is an instance of aesthetic masculine identity. All men may be dandies, regardless of their culture or ethnicity. Varying cultural norms will inevitably affect the specific sartorial choices that these men make. Not only will the styles of these dandies vary, the reactions of others to their particular brands of dandyism will also differ. A Yoruban dandy of the present will probably present himself differently than an American

aboriginal dandy during the nineteenth century would.¹ Different types of dandies will also have varying proximities to power and will be forced to use differing techniques to project their superiority (Stanton, 1980: 4). Clothing aside, these particular men share the other aspects that inform dandy style.

Some theorists argue that the androgyny of the dandy ensures that this figure may be either male or female (Fillin-Yeh, 2001b; Garelick, 2001; Lucchesi, 2001). However, the dandy is less androgynous or genderless than effeminate. The preoccupation with externalities and the presentation of a highly manicured self is the aspect that makes a man a dandy and makes a dandy effeminate. The dandy “self” is developed and perfected through the ritualized attention to grooming and clothing. This self-presentation is constructed with the intention of portraying the dandy’s eminent superiority over others. As a ritual of taste, dandyism may be characterized as possessing a feminine subtext. Nevertheless, the dandy never truly embraces women preferring to use them as physical props or borrow ideas from them to further enhance his dandyism. Aspects of femininity emerge as part of the dandy’s selfhood (Feldman, 1993: 6). Effeminacy guarantees that the dandy remains a man rather than a hermaphroditic figure, while calling into question the basic traits of conventional masculinity. Garelick argues that the dandy’s preoccupation with self-control and stasis necessarily excludes women from dandyism’s sphere (1998). Women’s biology and the capabilities for procreation

¹ For a discussion of these two types of dandies, please refer to the following texts: Miller, K. (2001). Cross-Dressing at the Crossroads: Mimicry and Ambivalence in Yoruba Masked Performance. In S. Fillin-Yeh (Ed.), *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture* (pp.204-216). New York: New York University Press.

Moore, R. E. (2001). “Indian Dandies”: Sartorial Finesse and Self-Presentation along the Columbia River, 1790-1855. In S. Fillin-Yeh (Ed.), *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture* (pp.59-100). New York: New York University Press.

are suggestive of evolution and flux. It is culturally accepted that women possess a distinctive and intimate connection with Nature. This is very un-dandified (Garelick, 1998: 5). Dandyism espouses that the natural world must be controlled rendering it compliant and coherent. Various historical dandies believed that art was the means for providing the necessary restraint. However, by disembodied the tenets of dandyism and reorganizing them into a pure philosophy, theorists have been able to ignore the relationship between masculinity, the body, and clothing (Breward, 2000: 227-228).

Women are reputed to be dandies when they conform to notions of dandyist self-construction, presentation, and sartorial elegance. Occasionally, these female dandies are allowed to dress as women or are described as being dandies “in drag” (Fillin-Yeh, 2001a, 2001b; Garelick, 2001; Lucchesi, 2001). It would seem that a female dandy, in order to live by such a disembodied dandy creed would have to espouse a derivative sartorial style, as indicative of her “aristocratic” bearing. Describing women dressed in men’s apparel as dandies or labelling “femininely” attired women as transvestite dandies merely reinforces the male as normative.

Coupled with this specific synthesis of gender, a distinct division between homo- and heterosexuality is obscured. Yet, the dandy’s seeming lack of sexual potency does not result in a neutralized figure. Rather this ambiguity makes him more intimidating. The effeminacy of the dandy became linked with homosexuality at the fin de siècle. The infamous sodomy trial of Oscar Wilde irrevocably linked the two qualities. Ideas regarding the essential masculine and feminine qualities were being increasingly deliberated. The conception of male sartorial excess as being “un-gentlemanly” and “un-

masculine’ was encouraged by the resonance of Victorian ideals emphasizing the virtuousness of asceticism.² Rather than homo- or heterosexual, the dandy’s sexuality remains ambiguous. The dandy’s self-discipline makes demonstrating an interest in anyone other than himself improbable, if not impossible. For the dandy, desire remains a question of control.

The Self-As-Art

Dandyism is a “strategy of selfhood” that originally emerges in response to the reversing social hierarchies and allowed the dandy to negotiate this new cultural climate (Breward, 2003: 217). The dandies’ attempts to thwart the inexorable march of the democratizing forces of mass culture focus upon the establishment of a new social elite. According to Baudelaire, this “nobility” is far more entrenched, its immutability involving “divine gifts which work and money are unable to bestow” (1964: 28). Without the guarantee of birthright and financial status, individuals would not expect to find themselves amid the good graces of the upper crust. The dandy becomes an extremely modern type of social climber, in that he uses all the opportunities at his disposal to move his way up to the top of the exclusive set. Part of this strategy of social mobility (and integral to the dandy’s campaign) is the need to create a wholly unique person (Baudelaire, 1964: 27). Elizabeth Wilson discusses the dandy’s self-focus as being an exemplar of modernity. It is one of the reasons why the dandy is particularly relevant at the present. Wilson maintains that the dandy creates an image and is not preoccupied with discovering or exposing an authentic self (1985: 231). Rather than fully accepting this notion and the accompanying

² The historical context within which the dandy faded is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

ideology that a highly affected surface cannot be authentic, is it not possible that the dandy believes his attention to external detail epitomizes who he “truly” is?

This notion of appearance as façade and reality as something borne of nature is a persistent belief. Authenticity is located by penetrating the surface. Dandyism complicates this idea by uniting notions of authenticity and artifice in its credo. The dandy espouses a presentation of self that corresponds with contemporary fixations upon the self-conscious creation and modification of identity. He, like many individuals, believes that his externals depict who he is, internally. The ritualized style that the dandy meticulously develops is also believed to bolster his “innate superiority”. In effect, the dandy’s bodily management creates his self. The interplay between authenticity and artifice becomes reflexive. As a dandy, the Count d’Orsay viewed “himself as an artist, with himself as both medium and finished work” (Foulkes, 2003: 204). With every breath, the dandy reaffirms his status as art.

In his work on youth culture and youth subcultures, Brake identifies the components of style as being those of image, bearing, and argot (1980: 12). Style becomes an entire mode of being that communicates things about the wearer. These three elements reaffirm that style moves beyond mere sartorial display to include an individual’s deportment and the manner in which she/he “wears” particular clothes. Stanton also uses similar categories of choice when discussing the physical, aristocratic self (1980: 109). The signs conveyed through the clothing, ornamentation, vocabulary, body language, and attitude of the dandy reveal his dandyism. D’Aurevilly writes of the dandy that “his art was his life itself, the ceaseless sparkling of faculties not given to men

who are born to live with people like themselves” (2002: 112). Although it is possible to be a well-dressed man and not a dandy, the distinction can usually be made in the amount of attention paid to developing a “cult of self” (Baudelaire, 1964: 27). Men have always used clothing as either a diversion or to distinguish themselves, nevertheless these aims do not necessarily indicate dandyism. “Metrosexuality” has become a significant catchphrase in contemporary culture. The metrosexual is a label affixed to a *heterosexual*, urban male unafraid to express his “femininity” through grooming and sartorial display. Metrosexuality is not dandyism in that sexuality is not an ambiguous aspect of the masculinity it represents. The practice celebrates the locating one’s feminine side through an interest in cosmetics and costume. Clothes alone do not the dandy make.

Dandyism becomes an ethic of total control, to assist an aestheticization of the self (Garelick, 1998: 3). It is this ethic that moves dandyism beyond mere masculine egotism. Although vanity and self-absorption play a distinct role within the construction of the self-as-art, it is not all. A dandy’s attempt to cultivate and portray his innate superiority cannot be dismissed as the results of excessive self-love. The posture of the dandy or his “sang froid” emphasizes the restraint of the dandy persona and moves him away from the stereotypic picture of the hysterical fop. The resultant argot of this glacial being is that of exclusivity.

Sartorial Beauty

At present, pastiche has become the prevalent mode within fashion (Wilson, 1985: 172). Fashion mines the vaults of the past, in order to create atmosphere and combat the fact

that no single style dominates in contemporary culture. In many cases, the contemporary dandy uses the clothes of the past to signify his artful self. This has less to do with a single dandy uniform than the current conditions of fashion. The continual allure of men's formal wear is that it has retained its visual authority. Wilson argues that dandyism is a form of "oppositional dressing", in that it attempted to introduce the notion of a "classic" sartorial style (1985: 183). Previously, masculine fashion had been comprised of shifting trends that bear little resemblance to the relatively static nature of men's fashion choices since the Regency. The Regency dandy's attire was a statement to illustrate a conspicuous opposition to the burgeoning middle-class and their perceived philistinism. It also became a mode of gaining attention and inserting himself into the ranks of the elite. These dandies believed that tailored clothing emphasized their magnificence. It created a visual coherence imbuing the figure with an aura of power (Hollander, 1994: 5). The simplicity of the dandy's dress subverted the ornamentation and ostentation of the elite. The dandy refuted the notion that authority accompanied the sartorial symbols of birthright.

The development of the suit almost certainly brought with it the relief of glossing over less than outstanding physical attributes. The suit became the uniform of all men, as it was believed to represent an intrinsic moral fortitude (Hollander, 1994: 91). The suited dandy continues to predominate as the dandy's dress of choice. The coherence and impenetrableness of the suit visually (re)affirm the dandy's *sang froid*. Women wearing traditional male suits are thrust into the definition of a dandy. Hollander suggests that rather than impressing their androgyny upon the observer, these "suited" women appear

almost hyper-feminine (Hollander, 1994: 41). Strangely incongruous, the suited woman draws attention to her womanliness. At the same time, she may be making a political statement about her disinterest with traditional feminine realms and appropriate sexual behaviour (Hollander, 1994: 41).

Overt political declarations do not interest the dandy. In fact, they are antithetical to the dandy pose. The use of dandyist imagery to challenge conventional social, political, or aesthetic values at the end of the nineteenth-century effectively annulled dandyism's potency and opposed the dandy's aims. It is at this point that dandyism loses its connection to masculinity and elitism (Breward, 2000: 230; 2003: 164). The elegant subversive becomes someone else entirely. It is problematic when the motives of the dandy are romanticized into something resembling a revolution or rebellion. Dandies were revolted and repulsed by the prospects of being subsumed by waves of democracy and perceived mediocrity. Contemporary dandies are also repelled by the increasing accessibility of culture. Nevertheless, the idea that the dandy is a revolutionary neglects the fact that he is merely trying to locate a source of power for himself. Their tenuously political efforts are self-serving. Wilson does acquiesce that the dandy remains an ambiguous rebel at best, as their rebellion is waged through a continual reaffirmation of self (1985: 183).

This declaration of self permeates fashion at present. Fashion has moved away from merely being a form of displaying an individual's membership in a particular class or caste to indicating significant things about one's identity (Wilson, 1985: 155). The nineteenth-century dandy, in his quest to remodel the social elite and insert himself as a

prominent force within it, reinforced a process transforming sartorial display from an indicator of class to an entrenched belief that it reflects of the personality of the individual. By suggesting that his sartorial refinement reflected his innate superiority, the dandy cemented the link between display and identity. In many ways, this has helped promote the mass culture that the dandy so despises.

The historical dandy is accompanied by fantastical descriptions of his daily sartorial preparations and laborious toilette. Wilson warns against reducing the practice of dandyism to a form of “overdressed effeminacy”, rather conceiving of it as a ritual (1985: 180). The original dandy, Brummell, is reputed to have devoted more than two hours every day solely to a cleansing routine that included washing, shaving, and meticulously plucking (Moers, 1960: 33). Increasingly, men are performing daily rituals mimicking those of the historical dandy. A growing number of specifically “male” beauty products are being developed. Immoderate preoccupation with grooming and refinement is indicative of the dandy’s refinement. Baudelaire argues that material elegance becomes a symbol of the “superiority of mind” (1964: 27). The dandy understands that he is superior just for “knowing that this is what one is supposed to do”.

The best-dressed individuals in all fashion genres possess the most self-knowledge and consequently display this through their superior style. Anne Hollander’s book, *Sex and Suits*, explains this self-knowledge as the understanding of one’s body and sexuality (1994: 189). These individuals possess the ability to view their appearance with the eyes of a stranger. The dandy possesses this self-knowledge, in that he implicitly understands how he looks. His ambiguous sexuality is a concerted aspect of his image

and does not indicate a lack of self-understanding. It would be inaccurate to describe the dandy's attire as a costume, in that it implies that he is simulating someone else (Ratcliff, 2001: 110-111). The dandy knows who he is. His clothing allows him to consciously fashion his self and articulate it to others. This allows that different dandies potentially dress differently. Dandified self-knowledge may either be the result of a concerted study of the body or an innate ability to "get outside" oneself. These individuals are able to disregard or dismiss any "false personal myths" that inhabit the subconscious and influence individuals' beliefs about the way they look (Hollander, 1994: 189). The dandy believes that his superiority emanates from this self-knowledge and his continual exercise of this skill. Beau Brummell recognized that using clothing to accentuate the body without constricting or denying its realities would result in a more flattering picture (Moers, 1960: 35, 62). He possessed an intimate understanding of how his body looked. The dandy is able to modify his gaze from merely self-focused to that of dispassionate spectator.

"Sang Froid"

The stance of the dandy may be characterized as an ultimate self-possession. At its most inoffensive, this attitude may resemble a blasé air, as Baudelaire characterized it (1964: 6). However, the preoccupation with control would suggest that the dandy is less laid back than offhand. The term "sang froid" is often used in historical accounts of dandies. The use of the French term acknowledges the influence that France and its people have had on dandyism. Nevertheless, the idea of an individual with "cold blood" ingeniously captures the dandy's consciousness. Of Beau Brummell, d'Aurevilly writes,

Sometimes there came into those clever eyes a look of glacial indifference without contempt, as becomes a consummate Dandy, a man who bears within him something superior to the visible world (2002: 111).

The dandy's desire to control every aspect of his identity and the experiences that might impact his construction of self must be viewed as an issue of self-restraint. It becomes attractive to romanticize this as a method of resistance to societal constraints. While the dandy is opposed to an equalization of power, his methods of resistance imply none of the idealistic struggles that might be reassuring to attribute to them. The dandy cannot be viewed as a revolutionary or a pioneer of the avant-garde, as he permits "none of his behaviour to serve any purpose save the maintenance of his frozen equipoise" (Ratcliff, 2001: 102). Dandyism espouses the ideal that an individual possess total control over his actions and responses, regardless of the situation. The ability to function while maintaining such strictures suggests a calculating mind, able to recognize opportunities and take advantage of them. According to another description, Brummell was possessed with the ability to "calculate to a nicety the practical limits of impudence" (Moers, 1960: 30). This opportunism does not preclude a dandy's ability to be charming. However, his congeniality is largely based upon the "likeness" of another to himself. Consequently, the dandy is able to distance himself from daily moral dramas due to his self-glorification. His sense of superiority and drive to participate only in that, which affirms it, ensures that the issues affecting all others are insignificant. This narcissism is potentially menacing as dandyism experiences a revival. The possibility of cruelty or death becoming justifiable in the name of style and beauty increases when humans are able to dissociate themselves from society. A distinctive aspect of inhumanity exists in

the “sang froid” for which the dandy strives. Wilson cautions that the stylization or aestheticization of politics can lead to fascism (1985: 204). At the very least, “dandy cool” represents a barrier that deters the expression of vulnerability. Benjamin writes, “fashion determines, in each case, the acceptable limit of empathy” (2000: [J75, 73]).

The dandy’s effeminacy and his ambiguous sexuality are part of the equanimity he portrays. This self-control extends to every aspect of dandy life. The image of the dandy involves a preoccupation with sartorial display. These activities continue to be viewed as essentially feminine. The effeminacy of the dandy is entrenched within these fixations. The dandy’s effeminacy does not affect his ambiguous sexual preference. However, like his version of gender, his choice or lack of sexual partner is directly influenced by his pose. To openly desire an individual is to allow that person a degree of control over the situation and its outcome. One aspect of the dandy’s sexuality is that he evades the binary labels of homo- and heterosexual. It is possible that the dandy is too self-involved to ever aspire to be with another (Moers, 1960: 36). Various historical dandies have been “romantically” linked with members of both sexes; however, no confirmation of such dalliances exists. The display of sexual desire would be to allow someone other than the dandy enormous control over a situation in which the dandy is intimately implicated. Any expression of desire or passion may be attributed to a loss of a dandy’s self-control, thus should be avoided (Breward, 2000: 25). It is highly unlikely that all dandies remain celibate, although their public demeanour might suggest it. The exclusivism that characterizes the dandyist worldview is “provocative in its coldness” (Baudelaire, 1964: 28).

The Power of “Bon Ton”

The suggestion that dandyism is anachronistic neglects the idea that the dandy is purposely striving to reaffirm distinction, generally and exclusivity, specifically. The dandy reconstitutes a hierarchy based upon subjective markers such as taste and beauty rather than the traditional ones of wealth and birthright (Breward, 2003: 162). This effort to reinvent themselves as society's elite confirms that dandies are derivative rather than old-fashioned. The Regency Exclusives used the term “bon ton” to describe their sophisticated style and their civility. It was also used as a label for this group. The dandies elevated the “good tone” of this fashionable elite. To maintain its exclusivity, membership to this group was tightly monitored. Even during the Regency, “Society” realized that it could no longer exclude on the basis of financial wherewithal. The growth of the “nouveaux riches” meant that admittance to various functions was obtained only upon scrutiny by a panel of elite women (Moers, 1960: 44). Baudelaire's description of dandyism as a type of religion with its autocratic and fixed set of rules extends to describe those of the fashionable elite (1964: 28). One must possess the right style, in order to be considered. The innumerable variables that constituted the “right” style made gaining approval very difficult. Social events downplayed extravagance or visual opulence to thwart attempts at replication by non-Exclusives. According to Moers, it was “ostentatious simplicity” that gave these gatherings that “je ne sais quois” (1960: 44). The Regency dandies flourished in such a context. Although the dandy's self-aggrandizing manner can be viewed as an attempt to defend the existence of an

aristocracy against the forces of mediocrity, it must also be noted that the dandy's obvious autonomy subverts conventional aristocratic norms (Moers, 1960: 17).

The "self-fashioned nobility" of the dandy places him outside the purview of the existing elite (Garelick, 1998: 21, 24). His self-control ensures that he remain socially disconnected. During the Regency, the dandy influenced society through a "tweaking" of the rules rather than blatant disregard. He operates within the boundaries of social privilege whilst influencing the change of this realm. The dandy continues to believe in the idea of the aristocratic as it unites superiority with power rather than allowing these notions to be held as mere opinion (Stanton, 1980: 1-2). The essence of dandyism began as an anti-bourgeois sentiment and this continues to be the driving force. However, dandies gain their access to the upper crust through the most bourgeois of methods in climbing the social ladder through force of their own personalities. Entwistle argues that this makes the dandy a new figure, more modern in bearing (2000: 129). The idea of this upwardly mobile figure is tempered by his social dislocation and inertia. Brummell's father became an influential and prosperous civil servant, despite his "upper-servant class" pedigree (Moers, 1960: 24). D'Orsay's story is similar, in that his family had taken advantage of slackening laws of taxation, allowing them to become very prosperous. The money obtained by these families allowed budding dandies access to the very class that they eventually influenced. By attending schools of privilege and fraternizing with the "bon ton", the dandy is able to develop his eye for the finer things. Possessed with self-knowledge and a grasp of their habitus, the dandy is able to influence the influencers. Sometimes an innovator, the dandy uses his knowledge of the world

outside the elite to his advantage occasionally adopting styles of the lower classes.

Without romanticizing the dandy's rise to power, the ascension of these men did not rely upon tradition. Nevertheless, the linking of sartorial display and power makes dandyism "no less feudal" in its strict conventions than any other aristocratic rule (Breward, 2000: 225).

Dandyism yearns to emulate a society with defined strata, in which symbols of pre-eminence are unmistakable and largely unattainable. In many respects, this nostalgia is for an imaginary time and place (Stanton, 1980: 9). Dandies have never known such a reality. If it existed, they would never have gained the prominence that they have been accorded. The dandy's success is straddling the boundary between appropriating cultural symbols that have a patina of exclusivity and creating his own. In other words, the dandy needs the democratizing effects of mass culture in order to exist.

The Dandy As Spectacle

Within dandyism, the dandy's physicality and his performance are fused (Garelick, 1998: 23). The body is an integral aspect of the self. Dandy style requires an audience.

Although a dandy must possess a requisite amount of self-knowledge, he cannot exist in total isolation. The dandy's efforts must be legitimated by the reactions of others to him.

The effect that the dandy has is ephemeral, in that it is a reaction from those who encounter him. It is the paradox of the dandy that in an effort to distinguish himself and remain detached, he must mingle with the crowds. Physically interacting with others, the dandy gains the respect of occasionally reluctant admirers and keeps himself in the public eye (Breward, 2000: 225). This is not to suggest that the dandy socializes with *any*

public. To interact with those outside the spheres of influence or merely “the wrong kinds of people” would not serve the dandy’s goals.

The flaneur and the dandy have come to be linked, as they both rely upon “an outsider” in their self-construction. Both these masculine types emerged in the context of the “modern” city.³ Breward writes that the dandy’s “newly fashioned identity drew its meaning from the urbane and multi-layered culture of a rapidly expanding metropolis” (2003: 163). However the flaneur remains a resolute voyeur and the dandy an exhibitionist. The tendency to conflate these figures has emerged from an overstatement of their similarities. Both the flaneur and the dandy are urban men of leisure. However, the power of the flaneur lay in his ability to navigate the street and its inhabitants, in an effort to satisfy his curiosity. The dandy may walk the street of his “quartier”, but he never endeavours to meet those whom the flaneur encounters. The flaneur may use the knowledge that he gains through observation to some “productive” end. Artists of all kinds are frequently cast in the role of dandy. Their association with the city, their preoccupation with aesthetics and possibly intimate knowledge of the body make them convenient mannequins on which to pin the dandy’s costume. Nevertheless, the dandy is industrious only to the extent that he is trying to (re)produce himself everyday. The dandy is the spectacle whereas the flaneur is the spectator (Jenks, 1995: 153).

A renewed dandy has gained primacy as classes and their particular sartorial choices have merged. Mass consumption and democratized fashionability have allowed

³ The flaneur has retained its academic utility as a method of analysis and a device for studying space and knowledge. The dandy’s embodiment of excess and dubious sexual leanings did not render him a serious figure at the end of the nineteenth century. In Chapter Two, I discuss the contextual reasons that resulted in the continued prominence of the flaneur over that of the dandy.

symbols of status to be appropriated by other groups, who give new meaning to these items. Modernity's developments gave birth to the dandy and his *raison d'être*. The contingent self and the body as the site of identity facilitate the dandyist project. These contemporary "postmodern" perceptions give credence to the dandy and signal his renaissance. Despite the dandy's seeming adherence to tenets of these opposing perspectives, he remains firmly located in a "grey area" between them.

The dandy represents a dialogue between corporeality, masculinity, sexuality, and consumption. He may be likened to a piece of fine art, a decorative piece of furniture, an elegant bauble, or a mannequin (Breward, 2000: 31; Garelick, 1998: 18). However, he strives to create his self as an artist would an artwork. The dandy looks to appropriate the hierarchical past in this quest for self-construction and distinction. More than sartorial display, dandyism is a particular style. Although dandies from varying cultures will portray different images, this particular sartorial stance and its vernacular of elitism, however expressed, remains the same. The ability to straddle boundaries and flourish amidst ambiguity ensures the dandy's continued survival.

Chapter II – A History of Dandyism and Dandies

“Yankee Doodle went to town/A-riding on a pony/Stuck a feather in his hat/And called it
macaroni.”

Yankee Doodle Dandy, *Traditional*

The dandy was “a nobody, who had made himself a somebody, and gave the law to everybody.”
Catherine Gore, *Cecil: or, The Adventures of a Coxcomb*, 1841

The dandy emerged as a social type and a new form of aesthetic masculinity within the historical context of the late eighteenth-century. In examining the socio-political conditions, the temptation to discuss dandyism merely as a disembodied philosophy is diminished (Breward, 2000: 227-228). Consequently, any analysis is able to avoid the trap of merely identifying well-appointed individuals and inserting them into the category of “dandy”. The practice of dandyism must be viewed as the result of a relationship between gender, the body, and adornment. However, the milieu within which the dandy originally surfaced allows one to fully realize the past and future significance of this form of masculinity without attempting to plumb the depths of the dandy’s soul. As Moers notes, this route leads to mere conjecture and absurdities (1960: 38).

The various historical personalities that are profiled throughout this chapter serve to reaffirm the idea of the dandy as real. The means by which these men evoke dandyism differ, however the essence of the movement remains the same. Qualities such as sartorial elegance, sang-froid, and an encompassing elitism define the dandy style. The characters described below share these essential aspects of the dandy ethic. Nevertheless, there remains a “contagious mirror-game of fiction and reality inherent to dandyism” that must be acknowledged (Garelick, 1998: 10). It is impossible to completely ascertain the extent to which dandyism as a social reality generated the literary representations of the

dandy or whether real men imitated the characters within these texts. It is probable that it was a combination of both. This chapter uses both biographies of dandy figures and the writings of others on the subject of dandyism to develop a social history. This narrative will be constructed without examining every instance of dandyism or dandyist writing. Stanton's description of a "typology" suggests that a phenomenon may be so interpreted, if the chosen instances are diverse enough to illustrate the consistencies and incongruities, whilst suggesting a coherent portrait (1980: 11).

Proto-Dandies and the Late Eighteenth-Century

In the late eighteenth-century, a group of English gentlemen imitating French and Italian fashion were labelled the Macaroni Club. Their travels to the continent had influenced their foreign tastes in costume and gastronomy, hence the moniker. As wig powder had yet to be taxed, the Macaronis wore elaborate wigs and costumes. Every inch of their clothing and many of their accessories were embellished with tassels and ribbons, braiding and ruffles. Although the Macaronis' style never gained widespread acceptance, it was used to ridicule the unkempt Yankee soldiers. "Yankee Doodle Dandy" is considered an American patriotic song, despite being originally written by the English to mock the colonials' provincialism and vulgarity (Moers, 1960: 12). This is one of the first references to the dandy and continues to be the most recognizable. Although the Macaronis did not represent him, dandy was presumably a label that had been posthumously given to them. The Macaronis' flamboyant and elaborate attire influenced the popular portrayals of dandyism in the latter parts of the nineteenth- and into the twentieth-century.

As the century progressed, the continual disturbances on the Continent and the war between the English and French offered notice that the old social order would be permanently altered. Moers argues that dandyism moved beyond the perennial foppery of men and constituted a movement borne of a confluence of social and political factors (1960: 12). The revolutionary upheavals of the late eighteenth-century had altered established norms and values and signalled the rise of the middle-classes. Wealth could no longer be the exclusive mark of the nobility, in the face of this new moneyed class. With wealth came power. The concurrent drive for social equality meant that democracy became a relevant force. Increasing numbers of property owners meant increasing numbers of eligible voters. The dandy became a figure who justified superiority without relying on the previous justifications of wealth and power (Moers, 1960: 122). He balked against the vulgarity and mediocrity that he believed would accompany democracy. Replying to an enquiry as to why he did not pursue more lofty ambitions, the dandy Brummell stated:

He knew human nature well, and that he had adopted the only course which could place him in a prominent light, and would enable him to separate himself from the society of the ordinary herd of men, whom he held in considerable contempt (Jesse, 1844: 135 cited in Moers, 1960: 38).

The Regency and the Birth of the Dandy

The Regency in England is generally accepted as falling between 1795 and 1830. The mental illness of George III resulted in his son being handed the reins of power. Until the death of the monarch, the Prince could not ascend to the throne. Although the Prince of Wales did not become Prince Regent until 1811 and was not crowned king until 1820, the entire period is designated as the Regency. As the wealth of the bourgeois classes grew

and the aristocracy's monopoly of wealth weakened, new markers of social stratification emerged. Ephemeral ideals about an individual's style were developed in order to set new rules of admittance to exclusive society (Moers, 1960: 12). During the Regency, clubs such as White's or the weekly balls at Almack's Assembly Rooms would only admit those who possessed the appropriate amount of "ton" or sophistication. The ambiguity and subjectivity of this assessment ensured that entry could not be "bought" with either money *or* aristocratic influence. Like the newly wealthy bourgeoisie, the dandy possessed no true birthright. Exclusivist principles such as "ton" became the means by which the dandy rose to prominence and exercised power. He used the subjectivity of such a concept to validate his ascension to the existing elite (he possessed an indescribable quality) and used it to limit access to those who might wish to follow in his footsteps. Moers asserts that Regency society was unique in its single-minded determination at thwarting undesirable hangers-on through "prominent, elaborate and efficient" exclusion (1960: 41). This rigid brand of elitism ensured that society members were despised by the growing middle-class who espoused different philosophical ideas. Romantic ideals such as equality, individualism, and the authenticity of nature and emotion were antithetical to aristocratic thinking. According to Moers, the dandy's preoccupation with superficialities, his irresponsibility, his lack of productive purpose, and his aversion to egalitarianism ensured that he was also despised by this new segment of society (1960: 13). Nevertheless, the dandy represented more of hybrid creature between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. In opportunistically ascending the social ladder and espousing the self-as-artwork, the dandy defied conventional definition as an

aristocrat. The new elite that the dandy represented was an adaptation of the traditional aristocratic system (Campbell, 1987: 170). Dandyism sought to replace the aristocracy with an elite based upon taste. The dandy's beliefs uniquely reflected the neoclassical viewpoint of the disappearing nobility and the newly emerging romanticism of the middle-class.

The influence of the neoclassical movement is seen in the original dandyist costume. The Regency focused on male dress more than any other period (Moers, 1960: 61). Rather than an overdressed, extravagant fop, the dandy's attire was a model of neoclassical form and style. The precise tailoring that characterized English craftsmanship emphasized and celebrated the overall contours of the body (Hollander, 1994: 92). The continued use of sensuous details such as brocade, jewels, or colour served to detract from the quality of the cut and the physical lines of the wearer. As the century progressed, form-fitting pantaloons and stiffly boned collars gradually ceded to looser trousers and more forgiving shirtsleeves. These new costumes became the precursor of the modern suit. The severity of the clothing at the beginning of the period made activity difficult and were impossibly constraining for any corpulent man, such as the Prince Regent (Hollander, 1994: 101). The dandy's effort to showcase his body would only succeed through the creation of a flattering covering. Conscious attention to details of cut and fabric were the way of achieving such a distinguished look. Hollander argues that "the wearer showed his potency by the ease with which he seemed unaware of the difficulty of his clothes and exhibited a transcendent nonchalance" (1994: 100). It

was not until later in the period that the dandy embraced less restrictive garments. The ease of movement facilitated by these clothes served to reinforce the dandy's poise.

The "daily fashion parade" of the social elite was held in the early evenings in Hyde Park (Foulkes, 2003: 28). Other than the balls at Almack's, this was the only activity in which both women and men participated. The late hour allowed the dandy to retire in the early morning after a late night of eating or attending a salon and gambling into the early hours of the morning. Once up, the dandy still possessed the requisite amount of time to prepare himself for his ride through the park. As all activities, in which the dandy partook, the promenade provided the dandy with the opportunity to display himself to others. Even late into the Regency, these exhibitions in the Park had yet to be democratized. It was understood that only the social elite were to be involved and any who dared to participate "without proper authority would be treated with a merciless severity" (Foulkes, 2003: 28).

When the former Prince Regent, George IV died in 1830, the good favour of the king that the dandies and exclusive society had enjoyed also died. A new king and a new Whig Prime Minister brought forth the Reform Bill of 1832. This signalled the death knell to sanctioned exclusivism and "oligarchical politics" by partially reforming the electoral system to include more male voters in the growing industrial centres (Moers, 1960: 185). Despite the increasing levels of social equality and growing Victorian sensibilities about propriety and solemnity, the dandy endured. Romanticism became increasingly popular as an aesthetic and philosophical movement. It emphasized the natural and authentic over the artifice of culture (Entwistle, 2000: 121). Appearance

came to be taken as an indication of one's inner self, the frivolous and excessive costume indicating a person of likewise character. The growing bourgeoisie espoused an ethic similar to the eighteenth-century Puritans with its mistrust of luxury and decadence. It is the awe-inspiring power of the dandy that allowed this figure to fascinate even the staunchest Victorians (Hughes, 1995: 195).

Beau Brummell: "The King of the Dandies"

George Bryan Brummell (Fig. i) was born in 1778 to a "gentlewoman" and an influential civil servant. Like all dandies, Brummell was not of aristocratic stock, however his father's prosperity allowed the son to consort with the landed gentry. He attended Eton College where it is reputed that his fashionable taste first manifested itself (Moers, 1960: 25). "Beau" Brummell never attempted to conceal his non-aristocratic lineage, never viewing his background as having any bearing on his eminence. His superior self propelled him to the top of English society. Notwithstanding this outstanding refinement, Brummell's close association with the Prince Regent ensured the dandy's ascendancy. It remains unclear where Brummell and the Prince met, although it is probable that it was at Eton. The Prince Regent (then the Prince of Wales) commanded the Tenth Hussars, the most fashionable and idle regiment in Britain and Brummell gained admittance at age sixteen (Moers, 1960: 25). The subsequently inseparable relationship between these two men ensured that Brummell had access to the most exclusive clubs and society circles. It was from within the confines of the aristocratic world that Brummell affected the social changes that ensured his reign. His ambition to transform himself into "a social artwork" was becoming a reality (Garelick, 1998: 9).

Fig. i. George Bryan (Beau) Brummell, 1810. Engraving. AKG London

Fig. ii. Charles Neyt, *Charles Baudelaire*, 1864. Modern print. Archive of the Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M.

Count d'Orsay by Daniel Maclise, 1834

Fig. iii. Daniel Maclise, *Count d'Orsay*, 1834. Illustration.

The Beau's costume established the boundaries of appropriate male attire from the Regency to the present (Moers, 1960: 33). The attire that he adopted and popularized were the first changes in a series that resulted in the modern suit. In adopting a neoclassical approach to clothes and taking advantage of superior English tailoring, Brummell relinquished the embroidery and embellishment of previous generations. He wore coats fitted at the waist with high, stiff lapels ending at the ears and tails finishing above the knee. Brummell was renowned for his cravat and was known to try many each morning until one neck-cloth met with his approval (Laver, 1963: 84). His sleek, tight pantaloons were covered with knee-high "Hessian" boots during the day. For the evening, Brummell favoured silk stockings and pumps (Moers, 1960: 34). The blue and camel colours of the day were exchanged for a blue coat, black tights, and white waistcoat at night. Upon meeting Brummell, the Prince Regent was renowned for fanciful, colourful costumes with high-heeled shoes that made movement difficult. The Prince became Brummell's first and most influential convert to this new mode of dress (Moers, 1960: 34). Brummell's clothing demanded a certain erectness of posture, to showcase the best possible figure. Nevertheless, Brummell recognized that completely denying the realities of the physical body would result in grotesque contortions rather than elegant lines. His particularity about fit and line resulted in each article of his clothing being tailored by separate individuals (Laver, 1963: 84). The simplicity of colour and fabric allowed physique and the quality of cut and material to dominate the picture. Brummell is credited with inventing a style of pant that buttoned around the ankle and was held taut by a strap underneath the foot (Moers, 1960: 35). This "stirrup"

type of pant was fitted without being unflatteringly tight. The apparent simplicity of the dandy style belied the meticulous preparation that preceded it and that was required for its maintenance.

The grooming regime and sartorial preparations of the Beau were much discussed at that time. It was noted that Brummell spent over two hours every day preparing himself (Moers, 1960: 33). The ritualism of this routine is indicative of the reverence the dandy feels toward his body. His external appearance is the tangible key to the dandy's power. Brummell used plenty of water and scouring to render himself "clean". It was a matter of pride for the Beau that he did not need to use perfumes and scents to mask any by-products of dirtiness (Moers, 1960: 32). After shaving, a close inspection was required to seek out any errant hairs that would have to be manually plucked. The control with which Brummell governed his appearance extended to all aspects of his behaviour. It is this composure and self-possession, this "sang-froid" that certifies his dandyism.

The Beau's self-control extended to every facet of his life, including that which might be construed as private. He never appeared to favour anyone from either gender. This ambiguity may be characterized as a "sexual sterility" (Hadlock, 2001: 59). It is remarkable that no written gossip or memoirs mention any sexual escapades or social intimacies that might have been construed as sexual (Moers, 1960: 36). It is possible that Brummell was too self-involved to desire another. The lack of control that desire induces almost certainly precluded him from experiencing anything of that nature. Whether he

refused to entertain such a notion or was incapable of that depth of feeling is unascertainable.

Brummell had inserted himself within exclusive society and began setting the standards by which this segment was governed. Moers suggests that this society fancied itself as the only people worth identifying with and that Brummell had convinced this group to follow his lead by merely insisting that he was, in fact, superior to them (1960: 26). The extent of his intelligence is not known, although he was a careful observer of minute details. Moers writes that “Brummell would guide, merely by the cold irony of his glance, the contemporary world of fashion” (1960: 34). His charismatic leadership enabled him to gain power that was independent of the Prince and his influence. When the Prince of Wales became the Regent in 1811 many of his former intimates had to be relinquished, in order to project a statelier persona. Brummell’s true dandyism emerged after his dismissal from the coterie surrounding the Prince Regent (Moers, 1960: 27). He was able to keep the rift alive in the minds of the Exclusives and in popular mythology by slighting the Prince at every available opportunity. Moers writes of an occasion in which the Prince Regent and a companion came upon Brummell and his friend whilst walking. The Prince in an attempt to snub Brummell stopped and addressed only Brummell’s friend, completely ignoring the Beau. So as not to be shown up, Brummell turned to the escort of the Prince and asked, “Who’s your fat friend?” (1960: 26-27). In perpetuating the bad feeling, Brummell demonstrated his ability to remain unscathed by the estrangement. He had effectively created anecdotes that would be gossiped about for

years. In the minds of others, Brummell was the Prince's equal (Moers, 1960: 28). In audacity alone, he was king.

In 1816, Brummell left for Calais, France to escape the massive debts that he had accumulated. He had lost many of his sources of credit when he parted company with the Prince Regent (Moers, 1960: 28). Nevertheless, Brummell's equanimity would never have allowed such vulgar discussions as money or income to taint his conversation. Once his initial inheritance had been expended, his debt would have been significant. As he aged, Brummell appeared to lose the very qualities that had made him a dandy (Moers, 1960: 30). Fewer and fewer Londoners visited him as the years wore on, partly due to this loss of refinement. At the end of the Regency period, Brummell's renown had disappeared, in part due to his lengthy absence from the social stage. He plummeted into depression becoming less and less lucid, eventually dying in a Sisters of Charity sanatorium in 1839.

Moers writes that "there remains an irreducible firmness to the Brummell figure, something compounded of assurance, self-sufficiency, misanthropy, nastiness, even cruelty, that made him feared in his lifetime and will never be explained away" (1960: 38). The single-mindedness with which Brummell approached his life sets him apart from other dandies. He is also acknowledged as the first and most infamous of the dandies. Although his reign ended in a manner completely antithetical to how he had lived his life, the memory of Brummell's distinction triumphed. It became the standard against which all other dandies were measured.

Anglomania and the French Dandy

Dandyism emerged in France sometime between 1815 and 1830. It was not until the first abdication of Napoleon that the French were exposed to the dandy. In part, the lure of the dandy was his very “Englishness” (Moers, 1960: 108). This sense of exoticism meshed with the Romanticism of this post-Revolutionary world. Dandyism had appropriated elements of the French in its ideas of the salon and its vernacular. These familiar elements made it a palatable and safe exoticism resulting in a general mania for all things Anglophone. The popularity of English-styled products had existed prior to the Revolution. French theorists admired the comparative liberty of the English and used an English gentleman’s country costume as a mode of protest against the Ancien Regime (Laver, 1963: 74). Nevertheless, it was after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 when the victorious Wellington went to Paris that anglomania exploded. The officers of his regiment were noted as being dandies in their manners and their attire (Moers, 1960: 111). The superior quality of English couture impressed itself upon the French. English tailors had been working with weightier fabrics for some time and their ability to manipulate wools and linens set them above their French counterparts (Laver, 1963: 84). The French were also impressed by the behaviour of the English “conquerors” compared to that of the Prussian military commanders (Foulkes, 2003: 32). The chivalrous manners of the British ingratiated them to the populace and influenced prevailing fashion.

In their emulation of the dandy, the French synthesized Byron-style Romanticism and English and domestic aristocraticism (Stanton, 1980: 53). Originally, dandyism had been an opportunity for men to “dress up”, however as the 1830s approached dandyism

began to possess a social function. The dandy appealed to the reactionary and the revolutionary in that he was viewed as representing the past, the future or both simultaneously. He appealed to the aristocrat as he justified the existing social stratification without relying upon wealth. The dandy's superciliousness was "an affirmation of the superiority of the aristocracy, his way of life an 'exaltation' of aristocratic society, however his independence proclaimed a subversiveness not in line with aristocratic life" (Moers, 1960: 17). In the 1830s, the movement became the pose of the rebellious intellectual. Dandyism was closely associated with professional writers, especially the influential press. The new "journalist" was an amalgam of the dandy and the Bohemian. Individuals such as Balzac and Baudelaire were too industrious to be dandies and too prosperous and dismissive of social equality to be Bohemians (Moers, 1960: 127). The idea of a "self-fashioning nobility" was the dandy's alluring quality for the French (Garelick, 1998: 20-21). After the Revolution, the beleaguered aristocracy did not reassert its former supremacy and the middle class had successfully established itself as a new moneyed class with burgeoning power. Dandyism became a defensive pose against the philistinism of "les nouveaux riches" (Moers, 1960: 122).

Count d'Orsay: The Butterfly Dandy

The Count Alfred d'Orsay (Fig. iii) thrived during an transitional phase between the viciously refined Regency and the high moralism of the Victorian era (Foulkes, 2003: ix). His exact year of his birth remains unclear, being either 1800 or 1801. Up to that point, the d'Orsay family had managed to survive and thrive despite frequent changes in national leadership. The regimes represented extremely different ideologies.

Nevertheless, the family possessed an easy ability to transfer allegiance from the Bourbons to the Republicans, to the Empire, and/or to the conquering English despite it (Foulkes, 2003: 23; Moers, 1960: 113). The ability to please a variety of individuals stood Alfred in good stead for the rest of his life. In characteristic dandy style, Alfred did not come from the aristocracy. His great-great-grandfather had risen to prominence and incurred substantial wealth as a “fermier-general” or a provincial tax collector. The tax system, being incredibly complex and discriminatory, offered a perfect “fast track” for those seeking to move up in the world (Foulkes, 2003: 14). Alfred’s great-grandfather also worked as a tax collector and with the family’s increasing wealth had bought a fifteenth-century castle. The real benefit of acquiring this property was the title of “Count” of the surrounding areas that accompanied it. With this newly found legitimacy, Alfred great-grandfather was able to wed an aristocrat as his third and final wife (Foulkes, 2003: 15). This union allowed the family to justifiably move within the ranks of nobility. With the purchase of a “hotel particulier” in Paris, the ascension of the d’Orsay family seemed complete. These residences were the equivalent of London’s Hyde Park mansions and represented a tangible symbol of a family’s wealth to commoners and aristocrats alike. Foulkes maintains that the even by the most luxurious standards, the Hotel d’Orsay was a major attraction within Paris (2003: 16). During the Revolution, this mansion was “looted” by the state and its noted art collection was distributed among the various museums, never to be returned to the family. Never to regain their position in society, the family’s sense of worth remained forever influenced by their former grandeur (Foulkes, 2003: 69). Alfred’s grandfather moved to what is now

considered Germany at the beginning of the Revolution in 1788-89. This is where his children were raised including Alfred's father. Like his son would be later, this Count d'Orsay was known as a dandified character with dashing good looks and a wealth of self-confidence. He impressed Napoleon with his military record and aplomb and moved back to Paris where he married and raised a family. The General Count d'Orsay was able to weather Napoleon's exile and the return of the Bourbons in the guise of Louis XVIII. Nevertheless, when Napoleon returned from exile in 1815, the family moved to England, where Alfred d'Orsay got his first taste of English society.

Like Brummell, the young d'Orsay was "discovered" by an established member of the elite. On the occasion of a hunt in Paris, Wellington spotted the dashing youth in his "daring Anglophile fashion statement" atop a magnificent horse (Foulkes, 2003: 24). D'Orsay had been pampered and spoiled as he was growing up. His mother and his grandmother had treated him as a prodigy and this self-importance encouraged his extravagant dress and showy accessories (Foulkes, 2003: 69). He spent significant amounts of money without having a secure financial situation. His family's former dignity had not translated into vast wealth for its descendents. However, it is evident that d'Orsay felt a sense of entitlement. Even at an early age, his sang-froid impressed others. He possessed that indefinable dandyist ability to conduct himself favourably in any situation. When d'Orsay accompanied his sister and her husband, the Duke de Guiche, to London in 1821 he caused a sensation (Foulkes, 2003: 37). His exoticism, however slight would have appealed to the rampant Romanticism. As Brummell had already fled to Calais, the dandy style had altered in his absence and taken a more Romantic turn.

The prevailing men's fashion was a combination of the dishevelled, melancholic, Byronic poet and Brummell's severity (Foulkes, 2003: 43-44). A monochromatic palette had emerged in men's clothing. Embroidery and embellishment had re-emerged. Padded coats with tight waists made movement increasingly difficult once again (Moers, 1960: 62). Conversely, d'Orsay was perfectly groomed, full of energy, and wearing clothes that suggested vivacity. He stood out from the crowd.

In typical dandy style, d'Orsay was able to charm his way into society and change the existing modes of fashion. Unlike Brummell, he inserted himself into the elite without evincing a supreme haughtiness (Foulkes, 2003: 38). D'Orsay was genuinely good-natured and sociable. He was considered to be "breathtakingly" good-looking and this only bolstered his charm (Foulkes, 2003: 6). He thrived on attending dinners, gambling, and riding. His "hotheaded gallantry and exaggeratedly chivalric behaviour" made him vivacious company (Foulkes, 2003: 137). Nevertheless, this dandy did possess the requisite sang-froid to make him a formidable social force. Even at a young age, such social lions as the Lady Holland did not intimidate d'Orsay. At a dinner party he attended while first in England, the hostess, Lady Holland proceeded to drop several items to the floor with the intent on having the youth retrieve them. After gallantly returning each article, d'Orsay instructed a servant to place his dinner on the floor to better convenience the Lady Holland (Foulkes, 2003: 46-47). D'Orsay possessed composure in every situation and like Brummell could come across as impertinent. Rather than mean-spirited, d'Orsay's audacity usually came across as cheeky.

Nevertheless, the Lady Holland never forgave d'Orsay for his audacity and remained one of his most vitriolic critics.

When d'Orsay met the Earl of Blessington and his wife it was a fortuitous match. The Earl and Countess had left London for the Continent where d'Orsay had a commission in the military. Having been acquainted with the young Count during his time in London the Earl approached his father, General d'Orsay, to negotiate the "purchase of the ultimate male companion" (Foulkes, 2003: 78). The details of the agreement included that Alfred be financially looked after for life and that he would eventually marry the Blessington's thirteen-year old daughter. Whether intended or not, these imminent nuptials served to thwart some insinuations as to the impropriety of this ménage between the Earl, the Lady, and d'Orsay. It remains unclear if d'Orsay was sexually involved with either of the Blessingtons or both. What is clear is that d'Orsay was rarely, if ever, intimate with Harriett Blessington after their marriage (Foulkes, 2003: 159). It became accepted legend that Lady Blessington had forbid d'Orsay to consummate his marriage until four years had past. The significance of this time period and the veracity of this story are unknown. Although Foulkes asserts that the Earl was "sexually confused", d'Orsay's sexual ambiguity persists (Foulkes, 2003: 79). According to Moers' account, this dandy did not captivate women as he embodied a sexual ambivalence that went beyond mere effeminacy (1960: 161). However, this lack of sexual interest did not appear to extend to any overall disenchantment with the young Count. Many of his contemporaries noted his extremely good looks. The social elite loved d'Orsay and later this affection extended to the public who were enchanted by his

antics. All his life, he had been spoiled, envied, and mimicked by those around him and lusted after for his physique, “it would have taken an iron will to resist being seduced by the glowing opinion of him formed by others” (Foulkes, 2003: 109). It is possible that like Brummell, his self-love precluded any demonstration of desire for another.

Lord Blessington died in 1829 and d’Orsay, Harriett, and the Lady returned to London. The 1830s and early 1840s saw d’Orsay in his prime. The Blessington party had travelled throughout Europe and wherever he had gone d’Orsay had been a leader of fashion and the apotheosis of aesthetic masculinity. Upon meeting d’Orsay, Byron had been enchanted by his “peculiar charisma” (Foulkes, 2003: 94). Upon his return to England, d’Orsay reasserted his hold on exclusive society. He effectively ruled every aspect of Society life influencing equestrianism, décor, entertaining, and gastronomy (Foulkes, 2003: 247). Being older and more experienced, d’Orsay demonstrated more élan and was more astute about people than ever before. His dalliances with Harriett Blessington had made him more mysterious and intriguing, whilst they stigmatized the Lady Blessington for her indiscreet past and the perception that she had “sold” her poor daughter into marriage (Foulkes, 2003: 244). D’Orsay’s marriage with Harriett ended upon their return to London and he nominally separated from Lady Blessington. This departure allowed d’Orsay to separate himself from his status as a “pet” and his power within society increased. He became increasingly famous or infamous much as Brummell had before. His dress became increasingly flamboyant. Unlike Brummell, d’Orsay enjoyed the ostentatious. He pushed the limits to see how far he could go and to see what he could make others do (Foulkes, 2003: 248). He did not adhere to the

increasingly black palette of the day, preferring pastel-coloured clothes. D'Orsay wore coats fitted at the waist with full skirts that exposed a couple of waistcoats and dangling chains and seals. Scented gloves were changed frequently throughout the day and were the colour of "feuille morte" or a pale yellow (Foulkes, 2003: 254). His beauty and showy clothes secured him the designation of "butterfly".

The coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837 ushered in a period interested in social responsibility and industriousness. Victorian society was less offended by the dandy's effeminacy than by his "parasitical" mode of living. Arrangements such as d'Orsay's with the Blessingtons were viewed with increasing disapproval (Moers, 1960: 161). In allowing Lady Blessington to worry about their increasingly dire financial situation, d'Orsay was acknowledging that such matters were entirely too vulgar to merit his attention. The Victorians could not reconcile such lack of prudence. By the mid-century, clothes reflected the Puritanism of the age. The English monarch shared the middle-class suspicion of display and indulgence (Laver, 1963: 91-92). Although seemingly analogous, Victorian costume did not mirror Brummell's dislike of ornamentation and embellishment. Brummell's neoclassicism was reflected in his focus upon simplicity of style and colour with the intent of highlighting the cut. The clothes of mid-century were stiff and shapeless and there was little, if any difference between the clothes of the merchant and those of the aristocrat (Laver, 1963: 92). Couture was not constituent of this new gentleman. As the 1840s progressed, D'Orsay grew increasingly pained at his loss of looks and mounting weight (Foulkes, 2003: 262). Although he still attired himself as before, his debtors had confined him to his house. It was at this time in which d'Orsay

began to seriously transform himself from dandy to artist. His crushing debt forced him to develop his talent for portrait sketches. Feldman asserts that d'Orsay's talent and artistic recognition deny him dandy status as "the true dandy gives of neither his person nor his creative powers" (1993: 94). By this point in his life, d'Orsay had ceased to be a dandy. His previous grandeur had been replaced by the attempts of an urbane, middle-aged man to grapple with reality. He was finding that the "pressures of life and his own waning star could affect his once perpetually sunny mood and destroy his sang-froid" (Foulkes, 2003: 354).

At the end of 1848, d'Orsay was finally forced to flee to France to escape his crushing debt. Like Brummell, d'Orsay's flight from London was less than poised. He could take very little of his beloved possessions and he never regained his status once in France. He was increasingly seen as an irrelevant dilettante artist. Lady Blessington followed him to Paris in the spring of 1849, dying later that year. D'Orsay died three years later.

The Count and the Blessingtons had operated within a fantasy world of their own making, successfully avoiding the harsh light of reality through the insulation provided by their self-absorption and money (Moers, 1960: 153). Alfred's effervescence in his sartorial styling and behaviour ensured that he was labelled a "butterfly". He was able to fly above the realities of his background and circumstances and become Society for a time. As Foulkes writes:

He was himself a penniless young spendthrift, who had effectively been sold by his parents to the Blessingtons; the bearer of a French title admittedly, but one purchased relatively recently by a socially ambitious, *arriviste* ancestor (2003: 130).

In most other instances these facts would have ensured exclusion, however the Count d'Orsay was too captivating to be denied admittance to Society.

Baudelaire and The “Moral” Dandy

As dandyism gained salience in France, Victorian disapproval forced it underground in England. The dandyism of the Regency had produced fashionable novels penned by socialites. These documents became importance reference guides for French dandies and resulted in the movement's inextricable link with texts. Intellectuals and professional authors began styling a French dandyism that espoused a more philosophical orientation (Moers, 1960: 125).

Charles Baudelaire (Fig. ii) continues to be cited as an exemplar of the dandy and his work as *the* guide to dandyism (Fillin-Yeh, 2001a; Ratcliff, 2001). His 1859 work, *The Painter of Modern Life*, discusses the dandy in relation to his examination of Constantin Guys' art (Fig. iv). Baudelaire reiterates the same characteristics that had been attributed to the dandy to that point. He formulates a vision of beauty and the artist's role in articulating it that has become a starting point for many contemporary theories on dandyism. The paradoxical nature of Baudelaire's work has been taken as an expression of his “dandified refusal to engage any topic in a way that the general reader recognizes as effective” (Ratcliff, 2001: 111). The dandy thwarts conventional categorization. However, the idea that the dandy may be characterized by mere abstruseness effectively reduces his importance as a social kind. Baudelaire's dandy must be viewed within the context of beauty. He theorizes that fashion is a “particular” aspect of beauty that must be acknowledged. He recognizes that the ethos of

Fig. iv. Constantin Guys, *Meeting in the Park*, n.d. Pen and water-colour. Metropolitan Museum of Art

the time will consider the preoccupations of the dandy to be frivolous. Nevertheless, he conceives that:

Beauty is made up of an eternal, invariable element, whose quantity it is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which will be, if you like, whether severally or all at once, the age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions (Baudelaire, 1964: 3).

One cannot perceive the perpetual aspects of beauty without an understanding of the temporary aspects. Modernity is the transient element of beauty. Although perceived as antiquated by those looking back, each age believes itself to be modern (Baudelaire, 1964: 13). In depicting this modernity, the artist allows the eternal elements of beauty to be perceived through its lens. This artist becomes a “man of the world” (Baudelaire, 1964: 6).

Before describing Baudelaire’s vision of the dandy, it is important to acknowledge his treatment of dandyism as an expression of the artist-flaneur. In *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire profiles the artist, Constantin Guys. It has been theorized that “Monsieur G.” is Baudelaire’s depiction of the dandy (Fillin-Yeh, 2001b). However, he only admits their similar moral orientation. Baudelaire does not embrace the era’s Romantic notions of the authenticity and pure beauty of nature. Art represents the triumph of reason over the instinctual drives of nature. Instinct can drive humans to commit horrific deeds; calculation and reason are needed to counter these animalistic forces. For Baudelaire, striving to create beauty from the chaos of nature is a virtuous enterprise (1964: 32). The construction of art through the construction of self certifies the dandy as a beacon of morality in a bourgeois society. The dandy observes the existent evil in nature and acknowledges its permanence (Moers, 1960: 282).

Nevertheless, he attempts to improve upon nature. His excessive attention to his toilette imbues the dandy with a moral grace and intelligence (Moers, 1960: 272). The dandy expresses modernity through his sartorial beauty, however the artist-flaneur is able to interpret the eternal aspect of beauty through his depiction of modernity. For Baudelaire, Guys is a superhuman figure who establishes modernity through his art (Gluck, 2003: 77). Like a dandy, Guys notices the minute details of fashion on those around him. Baudelaire writes:

If a fashion or the cut of a garment has been slightly modified, if bows and curls have been supplanted by cockades, if *bavolets* have been enlarged and *chignons* have dropped a fraction towards the nape of the neck if waists have been raised and skirts have become fuller, be very sure that his eagle eye will already have spotted it from however great a distance (Baudelaire, 1964: 11).

Nevertheless, Guys possesses the power of artistic expression making him more than a dandy. Essentially, the dandy is the spectacle whereas the flaneur is the spectator (Jenks, 1995: 153). The flaneur is a detective riveted to the spectacle of the street and its occupants (Benjamin, 2000: M13a, 12). He is an observer who visually gathers valuable knowledge. Entwistle asserts that the conception of the dandy as an artist is a corruption of the dandy type (2000: 130). The only art that the dandy produces is himself. Conversely, the flaneur may use his observations to some “productive” end. Guys observes life as a flaneur, in order to artistically render what he has seen. The world is “reborn” on paper (Baudelaire, 1964: 12). Unlike the artist-flaneur, the dandy is an idle observer of the world around him. This does not suggest that his behaviour is even dictated by a need to observe everything. The dandy observes in others, and in himself, that which will allow him to continually distinguish himself. The dandy accomplishes

this differentiation through a project of self-beautification (Moers, 1960: 282). His aim is the creation of himself as a distinguished piece of art. Baudelaire constructs the flaneur as a coat hanger, upon which various facades might be hung. The dandy represents the guise or mask that the flaneur assumes most often (Gluck, 2003: 77). In Baudelaire's conception the flaneur is an individual, whereas dandyism is a style available to him. The compartmentalization of the dandy within the category of the flaneur explains the tendency to conflate these separate types. Although Baudelaire constructs these guises as coexistent it does not follow that they are one-in-the-same.

The dandy's *raison d'être* is to create a wholly unique individual (Baudelaire, 1964: 27). He is a model of self-control. The sang-froid of the dandy derives from his ability to astonish others without ever being astonished himself (Baudelaire, 1964: 28). To display such surprise would suggest a vulnerability that mars the dandy's impenetrability. Baudelaire acknowledges that the dandy does not covet money nor aspire to love. These preoccupations distract him from the solitary process of self-creation; they would also betray a dandy's essential poise. Baudelaire suggests that the vulgarity of these concerns make them unworthy of his dandy's attention (1964: 27).

Baudelaire himself is often depicted as a dandy. Although intrigued with the idea of dandyist self-construction and the dandy's self-presentation, Baudelaire himself was not a dandy. He did experience many of the same financial difficulties as the previous dandies had. Baudelaire was known to overspend despite his limited income. He also believed that the dandy's excessive concern with his toilette was a symbol of his spiritual aristocracy (Moers, 1960: 272). Nevertheless, his incidental similarities with the dandy

are only fleeting. Benjamin offers a description of Baudelaire from someone meeting him on the street:

“Black trousers drawn well above his polished boots; a blue workman’s blouse, stiff in its new folds; his black hair, naturally curly, worn long – his only coiffure; bright linen, strictly without starch; a faint moustache under his nose and a bit of beard on his chin; rose-coloured gloves, quite new... Thus arrayed and hatless, Baudelaire walked about his *quartier* of the city at an uneven pace, both nervous and languid, like a cat, choosing each stone of the pavement as if he had to avoid crushing an egg” (Maillard in Benjamin, 2000: J1a,3).

This description of Baudelaire is a description of the flaneur. His “working clothes” represent the protest garb of the intellectual revolutionary displeased with the monarch, Louis-Philippe (Laver, 1972: 175). Baudelaire was anti-bourgeois. He yearned for a return to the simple, clear class distinctions, in the face of consolidating democracy (Garelick, 1998: 28-29). Dandyism became a justification for social stratification. The criteria for acceptance within this new elite were far more entrenched than the wealth and power of bygone days. This new “aristocracy” was based upon taste (Baudelaire, 1964: 28). The dandy’s eye for beauty was an innate ability. Work and money could not bestow such talent (Baudelaire, 1964: 28). Baudelaire writes that “dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid decadence” (1964: 28). There was a pessimism in this description of dandyism as a drowning movement among the “floods of oblivion” (Baudelaire, 1964: 29). Despite the acknowledgement that the dandy could heroically oppose the increasing mediocrity, Baudelaire seemed to admit the dandy’s fallibility.

Baudelaire’s dandyism was derived from the dandies of the Regency. He expressed no inconsistent ideas about the dandy, except in his attempts to make the dandy’s “heroism” coincide with the production of art. The idea about the multiplicity of

selves and the dandy as a pose of the artist has become the catalyst for contemporary theories that seek to view the dandy as a member of the avant-garde.⁴ The dandy as “rebellious performer” is a notion that ignores the context within which he inserts himself.

Oscar Wilde: A New Dandyism Amid Decadence?

By the late 1800s, Victorianism and the British Empire were well-established and the popularity of the Queen was in an upswing. Conditions for industrial workers had slightly improved and the worst of the Irish famine was over. The English dandy exemplified by Brummell and d’Orsay had disappeared amidst the intensifying Victorian morals position against self-indulgence and indolence. The culture of the day was not entirely repelled by the notion of an aesthetic masculinity despite the overarching Victorianism. A prevalent mode of fashionable masculinity did exist, however it emphasized a decided heterosexuality (Breward, 2000: 232). The dismissal of the dandy as a reputable persona had to do with a “crisis in masculinity” (Breward, 2000: 230). Wilde’s public persona and his literary use of the dandy began to solidify links between effeminacy and homosexuality. The label of flamboyant fop took on pejorative connotations that had not existed previously. At the fin de siècle, the dandy’s status as a man was called into question.

As Oscar Wilde (Fig. v) gained prominence in Britain and the United States, dandyism became increasingly linked with his image. Some writers have theorized that

⁴ Theorists frequently view the dandy as representative of any artistic movement that challenges and innovates conventional techniques or applications. Turning dandyism into a disembodied philosophy allows these writers to find dandyist qualities in many varied artistic works. For examples, please refer to (Fillin-Yeh, 2001a; Lucchesi, 2001).

his unbridled ambition and thirst for fame ensured that his flamboyant dandy pose was merely to gain notoriety (Ellmann, 1988: 137; Moers, 1960: 298). Encouraging the mockery of others became part of Wilde's strategy. The question of whether Wilde is representative of the dandy may be resolved by examining his motivation for invoking dandyism and its particular tone.

Wilde was born mid-century to two prolific writers. Oscar's mother, Lady Wilde was a poet and essayist while his father, Sir William Wilde was an accomplished doctor and medical writer. Having eccentric parents facilitated Oscar's predilection for precocity. He always displayed a developed aesthetic sense. He made certain that he possessed the nicest looking editions of the required texts at school and he possessed a preoccupation with clothing early on (Ellmann, 1988: 20). At thirteen, Oscar had developed some dandified tastes. He preferred lilac and scarlet coloured shirts and commented with distaste about the flannel shirts belonging to his elder brother (Ellmann, 1988: 4). Lady Wilde was known for her outrageous fashion sense, wearing large and unusual jewellery and fantastical headdresses. Being nearly six feet tall she cut an imposing figure. Ellmann asserts "immoderateness was a policy for her" (1988: 8). Wilde doted on his mother and it would appear that he followed her example.

Wilde thrived at Oxford when he arrived in 1874. Although he had started to dress in dandy fashion in Ireland, it was at Oxford that Wilde became known for his clothing (Ellmann, 1988: 34). After graduating, Wilde possessed a lisp and an Irish accent both of which he promptly dropped. In developing his new voice, he "adopted that stately and distinct English which astonished its hearers" (Ellmann, 1988: 38).

Wilde was beginning to fashion himself in a manner that would differentiate himself from the others. His clothing was to undergo changes throughout his life. It was “dandiacal in London”, “outré in America”, and “elaborately decorous afterwards” (Ellmann, 1988: 311). Whatever the trend, Wilde took the trend to its extremes. Ellmann writes that when sporting clothes were fashionable, he donned tweed jackets with even larger checks...bird’s-eye-blue neckties, tall collars, curly-brimmed hats balanced on one ear” (1988: 38).

Wilde’s sexuality was not in doubt until his second year at Oxford. There had been several young women with whom he had been linked. There had even been some talk of marriage to one Florence Balcombe. Nevertheless, Ellmann suggests that any of Wilde’s “affection [for this girl, in particular] may have been largely self-regarding” (1988: 58). That same year at Oxford the first indication of Wilde’s sexual ambiguity appeared. Friends began noticing the letters from unknown men that hinted at an intimacy more sexual than affable (Ellmann, 1988: 59). Despite many rumours, it wasn’t until after Oscar had married Constance Lloyd in 1884, that he first physically experimented with men. Upon marrying Constance, Wilde appeared to be passionate for his bride. He was eager to match her worship of him and matched her love “heartbeat for heartbeat” (Ellmann, 1988: 246). Their marriage appeared happy enough. Wilde designed Constance’s clothes, including those of the bridal party. He continually lectured on aesthetics and shocked the public with his pronouncements on the supremacy of art. His affair with Robert Ross in 1886 was the first in which he engaged in any physical acts with a man (Ellmann, 1988: 275). Although Ross and Wilde professed not to be

exclusive, Wilde did not feel the same way about Constance. They remained married through it all, even attending the openings of his plays together during his trials. Wilde saw his homosexuality as an opportunity to heroically challenge Victorianism in words and deeds (Ellmann, 1988: 278).

Despite his obvious physical attraction to them, Wilde saw his relations with young men as a fertile ground for intellectual exchange (Behrendt, 1991: 180). This resembles much of the homosocial atmosphere of the Regency and mid-nineteenth centuries. Once a upper-class couple was married, they occupied entirely separate social realms and many times were separated for their entire lives (Moers, 1960: 48-49). The dandy operated in a world almost entirely populated by men. Society women such as the Lady Holland and Lady Blessington, and even Lady Wilde organized salons. Nevertheless in 1828, d'Orsay and the Duke de Guiche organized the all-male "Cercle de l'Union" club. This permanently shifted the social power base away from women whom had played a major role up to that point (Foulkes, 2003: 181). The later denigration of homosocial activities was not the result of a Victorian discomfort about all-male associations. Male friendship was viewed as completely acceptable and desirable, in athletic, military, and educational environments and leisure environments involving alcohol. The male body was celebrated in popular accounts only in the context of physical fitness and brute strength (Breward, 1999: 53-54). Victorianism prompted the re-evaluation of essential masculine qualities and linked them with activity. Sartorial richness was not wholly rejected as anti-male. The suit had entrenched itself as the modern male uniform. Flamboyance in colour, cut, and accessories were regarded with

suspicion. Nevertheless, the dandy's inactivity *and* focus upon sartorial elegance became problematic. The dandy had been relegated to the status of an "incidental" character as idle display became irrevocably tied to "sexual dissonance" (Breward, 2000: 230).

Wilde possessed a certain sang-froid that meant that he approached situations unafraid of the consequences. There was nothing that he did not believe he could weather. During the trial that marked his demise, it was as if he was finally shocked by his inability to charm his way out of trouble (Behrendt, 1991: 181). During the early stages of his sexual exploration, Wilde met with whomever he chose, hiding nothing. Knowing the dangers of being labelled a homosexual did not stop Wilde from consorting with those who were (Ellmann, 1988: 275). At Oxford he had treated the dons with insolence, brazenly breaking the rules, and missing curfew and class. At the opening of the new Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, Wilde decided to have a coat made with the back in the shape of a cello. This debut in London society was a success, in that once garnering attention for his clothing, he was able to keep it with "wit and enthusiasm" (Ellmann, 1988: 79). Wilde did what he liked with a supreme confidence, most times succeeding in his efforts for social recognition.

Critics of Wilde have frequently disparaged his fixation upon celebrity and ambition. His dandy pose is viewed as an attempt to gain attention in the hope that it might translate into success. Like the other men described in this chapter, Wilde perpetually overspent and financial worries followed him throughout his life. After his father had died in 1876, Oscar's income had become significantly smaller. He found

himself in serious debt at various points in his life (Ellmann, 1988: 85). Moers asserts that any dandyism that Wilde displayed was the result of ambition and the desire for money (1960: 294). His lust for the very thing that dandies have considered to be vulgar might preclude him from being characterized as such. His need for money and the impossibility of merely running up debt and escaping from creditors made financial success a requirement. However, the essence of any critique of Wilde's dandyism is his linkage between dandyism and homosexuality. As he got older Wilde's pose took on the added meaning of distinguishing himself as a gay man. He no longer possessed the requisite sexual ambiguity of a dandy. Wilde's dandy in literature and the dandified character that he represented were increasingly voyeuristic. Wilde's dandy increasingly became a flaneur in that he observed the society from which he separated himself. From there, the dandy became social critic.

Without acceding to Moers' notion of the late Victorian dandy as pathological, it is true that the Brummellian version had disappeared (1960: 314). Wilde's adoption of dandyism as a critique of Victorian heterosexual society distorted the essential aspect of sexual ambiguity. Wilde had given homosexuality a platform in the persona of his dandy characters (Behrendt, 1991: 125). In his work at the beginning of the 1890s Wilde perpetuated a bleak vision of heterosexuality as a union between naturally incompatible individuals (Behrendt, 1991: 120). Women and men are portrayed as fundamentally different. Women are intrinsically emotional and cannot fulfill the intellectual needs of men. The dandy is portrayed as a superior intellect and the seer of human nature who looks beyond the masks of the other characters (Behrendt, 1991: 126). Rather than the

dandy's art-as-self, his (pre)occupation becomes social analysis. Wilde's dandy is a voyeur that more closely resembles a flaneur. The flaneur is potentially able to produce something from his observations. In this case, he offers a valuable critique of society from which they have been excluded (Behrendt, 1991: 121). The notion of Wilde's dandy being an "outsider" counters the sense that the dandy remains the ultimate "insider".

In arguably Wilde's most successful and recognized play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, he created an environment in which the dandy is no longer the outsider (Behrendt, 1991: 168). Wilde had constructed this play in the manner that a dandy would construct himself. He paid attention to surface, ritual, yet he managed to remain purposefully ambiguous in the dialogue. This is not to say that it is abstruse. Rather, the play is "like a mirage-oasis in the desert, grateful and comforting to the weary eye – but when you come up close to it, behold! it is intangible, it eludes your grasp" (Archer in Behrendt, 1991: 167). The play itself becomes the dandy with all of the characters being imbued with aspects of dandyism. There is a harmony among the characters as they all possess the dandy voice (Behrendt, 1991: 168). The verbal sparring of the characters does not allow this unity of style to suggest uninteresting accord between characters. Behrendt argues that in Wilde's plays the dandies use "aggressive" conversation mirroring the belligerence that previous dandies were known for (1991: 130). This aggression effectively promotes oneself through manipulation, domination, and fascination. Even the generous d'Orsay is known to have taken "malicious joy in the exquisite snub and killing put-down" (Foulkes, 2003: 138). The dandy torments and

tantalizes, effectively “teasing” other individuals (Behrendt, 1991: 169). The dandy manipulates and coerces others and, in this case, the audience into acquiescing on matters which they might not agree upon. However, in the same manner as his previous plays, this one focuses on social realities denied by Victorian morality; the dandy convinces the audience to laugh at their own conventional notions regarding marriage and heterosexuality (Behrendt, 1991: 170)

Wilde’s flight from Victorian England’s conventions was completed when he began a relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie) in 1892. Wilde helped the youth extricate himself from a situation of blackmail regarding an indiscreet letter. It was the beginning of their tumultuous life-long affair and the beginning of the end for Wilde. Wilde’s contravention of society’s notions of propriety and humility would not be tolerated for much longer. His lifestyle and public relationship with Douglas was his attempt to compel English society to “take him as he was” (Ellmann, 1988: 435). He believed himself to be a hero fighting against the hypocrisies of society. Wilde had also cleverly used his work to throw these duplicities in the face of a Victorian audience. Despite Wilde’s self-assurance, he had yet to encounter Bosie’s angry and disgusted father. The Ninth Marquess of Queensberry was “as arrogantly indifferent as Wilde to what the world thought of him, and much less vulnerable” (Ellmann, 1988: 388). After being harassed by Queensberry with notes, confrontations, and threats about his immoral influence on his son, the ill-advised playwright filed a suit for libel against him. Wilde promptly lost the suit. Immediately following the loss, he was criminally charged for facts that had emerged during the suit outlining his sexual involvement with other young

men. Ellmann notes that “the French newspapers commented with some bewilderment, [that] in England sodomy ranked only one step below murder” (1988: 458). Wilde was eventually convicted after a second criminal prosecution for sodomy with other men was launched. He was sentenced to two years imprisonment. Once released from prison, Constance having left him, and many of his friends forsaking him, Wilde escaped to the Continent. He died in 1900.

The struggle to define a gentleman had ceased to be important at the fin de siècle, as individuals became preoccupied with divining what it was to be a man (Moers, 1960: 308). The suffrage movement had succeeded in disrupting the conventional notions about gendered spheres and the accompanying essentialist notions about gender. The “New Woman” disturbed the established social power of the dandy. The preoccupations of these figures collided on many fronts and this new exemplar of femininity usurped the dandy’s aestheticism (Moers, 1960: 308). Many of the representations of dandies were depicted as dependent upon these women. Dandies became kept men. During this questioning of gender roles, the dandy’s effeminacy became allied with a sense of weakness and emasculation. Wilde’s dandies’ inextricably linked effeminacy with homosexuality, in a way that had not existed before. The increasingly irrelevant aristocracy was no longer an ally and the politics of the dandy became solely linked to aesthetics (Moers, 1960: 314).

Wilde disseminated an aestheticism that began as “art for art’s sake” and gradually became more refined. Wilde admired the artificial, “the decorous surface” (Moers, 1960: 300). Throughout the evolution of his aesthetic position Wilde continued

to possess contempt for the belief in an inherent morality of Nature that scandalized his critics and the public. Like Baudelaire, Wilde believed that art is the highest form of action. He concluded that it is art that “illuminates” nature (Behrendt, 1991: 128).⁵ The appeal that dandyism possessed for these writers was its possibilities for transforming the natural body into an artistic work. Nevertheless, Wilde’s preoccupation with clothing and his use of the dandy as a foil to bourgeois mores appear to follow the traditional dandy route. However, his use of the dandy to critique heterosexuality made overt statements entirely unsuitable for a dandy. Wilde used the dandy as one “possibility” of the self (Ellmann, 1988: 311).

One of Wilde’s most relevant claims for dandyism is the idea that self-knowledge is born through an understanding of the relationship between the mind and the body (Behrendt, 1991: 182). This is characteristic of the dandy who possesses an understanding of how he physically appears to the detached observer. This insight is enabled through the dandy’s ability to separate himself from “false, personal myths” and intuitively know what makes him look good (Hollander, 1994: 189). Gaining this awareness may be facilitated through observation and study. The dandy’s laborious routine of grooming and dressing continually reaffirms his awareness of his body. In looking at himself, he is able to critically assess how he looks in various positions and in movements. This knowledge is refined through time and effort that is not spent on moral

⁵ Romanticism conflated Nature and the Feminine. This provided artists with the opportunity to develop the idea that art and masculinity were a forum for ordering such chaos and unaccountability (Hollander, 1994: 151). Socially, the ramification of this association was that it became acceptable for woman to engage in variegated sartorial displays whereas the form of men’s dress became decidedly more sober.

or even, physical improvement (Hollander, 1994: 190). This “sexual self-knowledge” is what makes the dandy so alluring and allows him to transgress boundaries.

Fig. v. Napoleon Sarony, *Oscar Wilde*, 1882. Photograph. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Chapter III – Consumption and the Cult of Self

“Everyone is convinced of the reality of a better self, and of the cult or homage which is due to it.” Earl of Shaftesbury, 1671-1713

“He who esteems trifles for themselves is a trifler – he who esteems them for the conclusions to be drawn from them, or the advantage to which they can be put, is a philosopher.”
Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Pelham or The Adventures of a Regency Dandy*, 1842

The dandy’s emergence during “modernity” cements the linkage between dandyism and that period’s emerging consumerism. However, the dandy presents a figure that thwarts conventional classification despite his correlation with a period that some theorists posit has disappeared. His emergence at the beginning of the modern period makes him no less capable of thriving in contemporary culture. He skirts the boundaries between historical epochs. The dandy illustrates how the ideal types of the modern class culture and the postmodern fragmented culture are merely ideals. The dandy is neither a static persona nor is he merely a succession of masks. In “assembling” his identity through consumption, he exemplifies how the consumption of objects may be a manner of *creating* a distinctive and authentic self. It is as much a way of the individual reflexively viewing his identity, as it is a means for presenting himself to the world. The dandy is neither modern nor postmodern. Thus, he boldly endures.

The dandy’s acquisition and use of material objects cannot completely account for his unique style. One cannot buy all the attributes of a dandy. Nevertheless, consumer practices do constitute the most visible manifestation of the dandy style. As such, dandyism forms a compelling comment on the rise of consumer culture and “its shifting relationship to the presentation of self” (Breward, 2003b: 167). The dandy uses consumption as a tool for social distinction that also facilitates his construction of a

coherent, authoritative self. He emphasizes the importance of uncompromising taste as an exemplar of superior selfhood. In so doing, the dandy underscores the simplistic separation of authenticity and artifice. The dandy's acquisitions are designed to best exemplify his innate distinction. He fastidiously selects commodities that allow him to "make real" the dandy. Corporal projects "make the man, not because they make up or invent what the man is or dress him up for show but because they actually create his conscious self" (Hollander, 1978: 444). This conscious engagement with commodities in the construction of a style cannot help but promote the dandy's self-knowledge. This awareness is a large part of the dandy's *sang froid*. Thus, the presentational self is the essential self.

Identity and Self

Oftentimes the concepts of identity and self are used interchangeably. Gabriel and Lang warn that conflating these conceptions may distort the possibility that identity is itself a fashion, asking "could it be that identity, like other fashions, will eventually exhaust itself, its appeal shrinking to a niche market kept alive by nostalgia" (1995: 99)? Acknowledging that identity is a hegemonic concept does not diminish its primacy in shaping individuals' perceptions of reality. In this chapter, a distinction between identity and self is made whereby identity represents the assemblage of characteristics by which a person is known or recognized. These traits are physical and psychical. The self is used to define reflexivity. It is one's consciousness of oneself as possessing a unique identity. The individual becomes the object of her or his reflection. The self is what we tell ourselves we are, comprised in part by what others tell us we are (McVeigh, 2000: 13).

This Is What I Like. This Is Who I Am.⁶

Consumerism is the method that individuals use to conceptualize who they are and to distinguish themselves from others. Commodities, whether they be mundane or not, depict images about the object and about the possessor to others (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 89). The relative democratization of consumption has ensured that self-presentation has become an prevailing concern in society. The greater accessibility of goods and services does not diminish the inherent differences that exist in what is consumed and how it is consumed. The images that individuals choose indicate the economic and cultural capital that is driving the formation of self. The dandy's continued devotion to self implies a unique agency illustrative of how he is able to continue to thrive in contemporary society.

In the past, identity was a "technical, forensic question" making it essentially a political matter rather than the existential one that it has become (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 82-83). In order to prove one's place within the family lineage and qualify for any commensurate benefits, the identity of the individual had to be demonstrable. In this milieu, identity was characterized by sameness, continuity, and difference (Friese, 2000; Gabriel & Lang, 1995). Individuals were identified or recognized as particular "kinds" of people and then distinguished from others who possessed similar characteristics. A continuous plot between an individual's past and present was presumed to exist that rendered their future predictive. A person could not change so drastically as to become someone else during a lifetime. The possibility that individuals may radically and permanently alter their appearance, gender, and world-view did not exist. There was no confusion as to the nature of individuality and uniqueness. Individual display was the

⁶ Postrel, V. (2003), 101.

domain of the social elite and individuals at court. Their self-presentation was elaborate because it could be. Nevertheless, Breward suggests that

Elite lifestyles shifted from the isolated, provincial concentration of material power identified in the sixteenth and seventeenth century towards a metropolitan existence that necessitated a greater concentration on fashionable display and consumption (1995: 133).

These processes of urbanization, mass production and consumption, and increasingly impersonal work ensured that selfhood became a project during modernity. The rise of the bourgeoisie signalled the equalization of financial power among the population. Calls for democracy grew stronger. The growing urban centres and their anonymous multitudes introduced the possibility of the inscrutable stranger. Identity became segregated into aspects that could be displayed or concealed. Finkelstein notes that the individual increasingly began to reflect upon how she or he was viewed, was interpreted by others, and how that impression was influenced by one's own actions (1991: 158). All individuals began actively constructing their identities through appearance. The environment and material goods necessary for dandyism were enabled through colonialism and the rise of the industrial manufacturing sector (Breward, 2003b: 225). The dandy used the burgeoning market to acquire distinctive merchandise from a variety of sources. The Count d'Orsay is reputed to have asked a banker from Frankfurt to source a particular shade of yellow gloves on the Continent (Foulkes, 2003: 180). This modernized consumption differed from previous incarnations not only through the increased ability of all social strata to spend money on consumables. Purchasable goods had played a role in identity formation since their inception. Nevertheless, the consumption of material goods solely to preserve the status and honour of the nobility

had yielded to the consumption of goods for the increasing reasons of aesthetics and style. The self-conscious engagement with commodities and their symbolic potential changed how individuals regarded their identity. The existential self was born.

This self was discrete and ontological; it was concerned with “being”. At this point, identity became regarded as a largely subjective condition. Individuals could reveal their personal essences through self-analysis and by comparing their similarities and differences with others. Lears argues that the pervasive piety of Protestantism during the nineteenth-century promoted that “salvation lay in faith rather than works, in inner being rather than outward form” (1989: 76). The idea of inner consciousness is further advanced during the development of the psychological disciplines and the “scientification” of its truth claims (Rose, 1997: 226-227). As the century progressed, the conception of individual nature as entirely determined faded and individuals began viewing every experience as directly impacting their identity. The modern individual emerged from these conceptions, emphasizing individual rights, privacy, and the self as a product of experience (Anderson, 1997: 20-21).

The dandy emerged during this period of “self-fashioning”. From decidedly bourgeois beginnings, he climbed his way up the social ladder embedding himself within the echelons of elite society and dictating a new ethos. The self-conscious development of his particular style reinforces the possibilities of the time. Such a concern with the construction of self may have been an adaptation to social and cultural disorganization (Crane, 2000: 13). An elite consumer group and their bourgeois equivalent developed alongside each other attempting to influence the burgeoning consumerism. The elite

believed that they could transcend the banality of daily existence through consumption whereas the bourgeoisie believed that they might rescue consumption by making it a social and political statement (R. Williams, 1982: 110 in Craik, 1993: 185). The dandy succinctly combined these two efforts in his charge for power. He was distinguished from the middling classes and distinguishable from the elite standing “on an isolated pedestal of self” (Moers, 1960: 17).

During the twentieth- and into the twenty-first centuries, the global growth of the market has ensured that elite commodities have become more broadly available. Increased spending power across all social classes allows individuals to purchase status symbols in their expensive form or as cheaper facsimiles. Elite groups attempting to align themselves with economically and culturally inaccessible goods have had to move farther afield for new markers of prestige. Mass-market availability affects the exclusivity of conventional sources of cultural capital. However, this need not imply that innovation only emerges from the social elite and then “trickles down” to the lower classes (Hunt, 1996: 50). The search for prestige objects may lead to situations in which the clothing, speech patterns, and music of a lower class segment become influential. An increased tolerance for difference, the rise of youth culture, the rise of fashion, and the ceding of a single aesthetic standard have led to an increasing number of objects being accorded significance (Peterson & Kern, 1996: 905). One consequence of this “democratization” of consumable objects is that individuals must find ways of appropriating the same items and being noticeable. As Wilson points out, general styles have been democratized, however status differences continue to emerge when the quality

of materials and workmanship in items such as clothing are considered (1985: 12).

Rarity and novelty also serve to distinguish items. Rather than signalling the death of the dandy, this new consumer market and the possibilities for the self promise a dandy renaissance.

Individuals construct and revise personal narratives over their lifetime. It is this continually changing narrative that constitutes self-identity. Identity and the process of seeking an identity are the same things (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 86). Rather than a static core housed within an individual, the self is a mobile “becoming” (Rose, 1997: 234). In this way, the self is always performative. It is the project of mediating between the individual as configured by past experience and their future aspirations. The oscillation between unity and continuity and the fragmentation that postmodernists choose to emphasize is accounted for in this notion of self (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 94).

The autonomous individual is posited as an illusion of modernity. The consumer as a postmodern identity-seeker is believed to account for the fetishism of images; the preoccupation with brands, signs, and difference; and the death of self. Consumers at this juncture are thought not to be looking to create authentic selves rather they desire to create identities that are context appropriate. Crane asserts that consumers make choices requiring “the continual assessment and evaluation of consumer goods and activities in light of their potential contributions to identities or images they are attempting to project” (2000: 10). The choosing and dismissing of commodities leads to greater levels of agency. Some theorists interpret this as the complete disintegration of a focal self. However as Gabriel and Lang note, the argument that a postmodern carnival of images

and fashions exists does not take into account the lived reality of contemporary consumers (1995: 93). Individuals remain highly preoccupied with the validity of their identity and their own self-conception. The dandy's agency has not resulted in his evaporation as a significant masculine figure. This logic suggests that a consistent dandyism is insupportable in a climate of pastiche and bricolage. However, the dandy has always exemplified the art of appropriation in his quest for self-determination.

The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems. In modern social life, the notion of lifestyle takes on a particular significance (Giddens, 1991: 5).

The stylization of personal life represents individuality, self-consciousness, and a mode of expression in contemporary consumer culture (Featherstone, 1991: 83). The consumer has become more than an individual who covets, purchases, and uses commodities for reasons of emulation or need. Individuals make choices about what to purchase or display based upon the image they wish to convey, their aesthetic preferences, and their economic and cultural capital. These are decisions about who to be (Giddens, 1991: 81). As social class has become less of an overwhelming influence in the construction of self, individual agency has become more significant. Thus, an individual's identity is organized within the plethora of possibilities that the capacity to consume or their "lifestyle" allows for.

The freedom of the individual is the freedom of "choice" and the result is a technique of self that emphasizes fulfillment and taste (Slater, 1997: 87). The element of transience that accompanies "lifestyle" ensures that its characteristics may change. Individuals must be able to navigate these changes or change themselves. Aesthetic

choice becomes a responsibility. It becomes impossible for an individual to “opt out”. Despite the fact that identity and class are no longer inextricably separated, it still plays somewhat of a role. Cultures make available the particular narratives by which we live our lives (Rose, 1997: 237). Without overstating the homogeneity of society or its segments, this understanding accepts that certain conventions continue to exist. Plus, the utility of objects has become of equal, if not lesser importance to objects’ aesthetic qualities for all consumers (Friese, 2000: 11). That being stated “there are major differences in orientations toward consumption both within and across social classes” (Crane, 2000: 12). The social origins of the earliest dandies always favoured self-creation through practices of consumption. Individuals within mobile groups for reasons of occupational status, money, or non-traditional values are more likely to favour display as a means for distinction. The belief that status may be achieved facilitates such striving for distinction.

While further segmented than class, lifestyles are located within them. This stylization of life has not resulted in the unleashing of a riotous cavalcade of empty images that individuals relentlessly adopt or cast off. It has provided means for a general disciplining or regulating of individual self-presentation through consumerism (Warde, 1997: 13). According to Bourdieu, lifestyles are systematically produced and perceived in relation to class cultures and become symbols that are branded as distinguished or common (1984: 172). Any notions of a postmodern consumer free-for-all neglects the fact that individuals continue to perceive style as a meaningful strategy to express selfhood. As dandyism has always symbolized, “today’s aesthetic imperative overturns

the simplistic dichotomy between ‘rebellion’ and ‘conformity’, or ‘individual’ and ‘mass’” (Postrel, 2003: 100). The self is created through consumption practices. The often linguistically inexpressible aspects of identity are tangibly formed through the collection of commodities that one prefers. Whether individuals seek to express their resistance to consumption or their unqualified acceptance of it, they are still operating within its margins. One presents the self to others and “to one’s own awareness” through one’s lifestyle (McVeigh, 2000: 13). These groupings establish cultural sensibilities through their attitudes and values, their consumption practices and leisure activities that are mutually contingent upon class (Muggleton, 2000: 30). Not all consumers are becoming hedonistic individualists, neither are they becoming dandies. Nevertheless, the consumption of cultural goods has become increasingly characterized as the means to express one’s self-identity. This has opened up a space for dandyism to grow rather than obstructing it.

The appeal of aesthetics continues to be viewed with suspicion. Critics assert that style exists only at the expense of substance (Postrel, 2003: 67). Contemporary consumers, in their efforts to style an identity are considered dupes, ignorant to the ills of the capitalist market. At its inception, modern consumerism was viewed as the reclamation of pleasure from the piety and duty of the Protestant work ethic (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 100). Without arguing that hedonism is wholly positive, the converse argument of the consumer as a victim manipulated by the forces of capitalism is unsatisfactory. Rather like the general consensus of most perspectives, consumption at

this juncture “is the area where personal and group identities are fought over, contested, precariously put together and licked into shape” (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 81).

Consuming Dandyism

One consumes to be a dandy and consuming allows the dandy to be. In attempting to display his innate superiority and distinguish himself from the masses, the dandy self-consciously develops himself as *the* arbiter of taste. Baudelaire classifies dandyism as a “cult of self” (1964: 27). A dandy is identifiable through his preoccupation with his appearance and the objects used to construct that look. Dandyism is the “aestheticization of the self” or the self as an artistic rendering (Garelick, 2001: 3). He accomplishes this through the development of a style that combines an attention to sartorial refinement with an ethic of control and elitism. The power of the dandy’s style rests in the opportunities for the display of this dandy self. His fondness for the surface indices of superiority is facilitated by the possibility of obtaining commodities. He uses their combined symbolic meanings to portray his self-identity. The dandy’s obvious charisma allows him to wheedle his way into the social elite influencing their manners and tastes and distancing himself from the masses. Men cannot transform themselves into dandies by mimicking the clothing of other dandies. Nor can they purchase the requisite *sang froid* and sophistication as this power results from the dandy’s charisma. This allure is a direct result of his confidence and poise. The dandy’s self-knowledge is a partial effect of his connection with commodities in the creation his style. It his autonomy that allows the dandy to successfully endure over time. In so doing, he undermines the dualism of the expressive self versus the presentational self.

The dandy's consumption practices are conspicuous to the extent that he is a spectacle. The nineteenth-century dandy did emulate the exclusivity of the elite in an effort to distance himself from his bourgeois origins, ingratiate himself to his sanctioned "betters" and gain inordinate social influence. To this extent, the dandy was practicing a certain amount of status-striving. Nevertheless, these earliest dandies used the opportunities of the increasingly varied consumer world and the increasingly threatened aristocratic world to their advantage. The ethic that has prevailed cannot be reduced to social imitation. Rather, the dandy's preoccupation with self-fashioning reflects his belief that his individual superiority is exemplified by his appearance. The dandy does not desire the look of wealth. This vulgar aspiration has no place in dandyism's creed. In striving to be the superlative man, the dandy attempts to differentiate himself from everyone without using standards that he does not possess. It is not about money, name, and/or professional title. It is about using commodities to project dandyism. Baudrillard maintains, "a need is not a need for a particular object as much as it is a 'need' for difference" (1988: 45). The dandy seemingly balances his desire to differentiate himself from the masses and the existing elite and his desire to beat both groups at their own game. The dandy plays by the rules while he attempts to subvert them. He expresses no desire for a level playing field. There is no postmodern, demotic dandy. His goal remains the reinstatement of a new type of nobility based upon the nobleness of refinement. To accomplish this, the dandy must portray the appropriate symbols that will convince others of his advanced taste and obvious pre-eminence. As consumption

practices have been largely democratized, the dandy has had to find the most dandified way through these changes.

Taste is a cultural precept that is embodied within the individual and emerges as preferences dictating everything that the individual “ingests, digests and assimilates”, physically and psychologically (Bourdieu, 1984: 190). It is borne of the hegemonic discourses that shape life for each social category. It manifests itself through an individual or a group’s style. Lifestyle is the articulation of a group’s taste as expressed through all of the items with which individuals surround themselves (Bourdieu, 1984: 173). These preferences distinguish lifestyles from other lifestyles and individuals from other individuals. Thus, the aesthetic ethos of the dandy partially mirrors that of the traditional upper class with its emphasis on overall quality and exclusivity. The dandy’s immoderate preoccupation with taste reinforces the belief that material elegance is a symbol of the superiority of the mind (Baudelaire, 1964: 27). The dandy’s style is a hybrid of the habitus or philosophy of the upwardly mobile and/or the affluent. These groups have perpetually espoused consumption as a means for constructing self-identity (Crane, 2000: 12). The specific configurations of economic and cultural capital characterizing the habitus of specific classes delineate the legitimate choices available to the individuals within them (Bourdieu, 1984: 260). Making the right choices becomes essential to maintaining one’s authority. Individuals recognize that their lifestyle is subject to the critique of others who will view it in terms of its taste or lack thereof. The allure of the dandy lies in his ability to make distinctive choices and make them desirable

to many and unattainable for most, despite their relative reproducibility. His success in maintaining his exclusivity is attributable to his charm.

As Featherstone writes, “cultural capital has its own structure of value, which amounts to convertibility into social power, independent of income or money” (1991: 89). The dandy’s potent self-knowledge about who he is and what he represents is fostered by his consumption. He creates his particular style and uses his abilities rather than money or pedigree to gain influence and power. The dandy need not own the most expensive commodities. Nevertheless, he is able to project such exclusivity. The cultural capital that the dandy possesses ensures that he is able to navigate within elite social circles, despite potentially lacking significant economic wealth. The dandy is simultaneously able to formulate his appearance and consciously create his dandyism. He is able to dispassionately examine himself and use this knowledge to formulate a style of superiority that effectively mystifies others. As Bourdieu maintains:

Charm and charisma in fact designate the power, which certain people have, to impose their own self-image as the objective and collective image of their body and being; to persuade others, as in love or faith, to abdicate their generic power of objectification and delegate it to the person who should be its object” (1984: 208).

The democratization of consumption has not resulted in the demise of high-status groups. Despite the ability of consumers to purchase similar items and the fluidity of objects considered prestigious, a hierarchy still exists. This explains the current contradiction of increasing social inequality and the appearance of a “flattening cultural hierarchy” (Bryson, 1996: 897). Although some theorists argue that cultural breadth is a new and powerful source of cultural capital, the dandy has always exhibited this

exclusionary taste practice. It is not a case of indiscriminately liking anything and everything. This also does not suggest that the notion of taste has been eradicated or that meaningless practices of bricolage govern. The manner in which individuals consume and reflect upon objects becomes central to their distinction from others. Social “omnivores” are able to distinguish themselves through their ability to critique aspects of culture that, in turn, showcase their varied cultural knowledge (Peterson & Kern, 1996: 904)⁷. Omnivorous taste has boundaries that ensure that it is a “pattern” rather than indicative of the demise of high-status groups or snobbery (Bryson, 1996: 888). The dandy as a social omnivore explains how the dandy moves beyond the social emulation of the upper classes. He possesses a varied social knowledge that invests his self-knowledge with authority.

Dandies do not attempt to subvert existing consumer culture; rather they operate within its confines. It is their quest “to do it better”. Making superior consumer choices and employing objects in visible ways is equated with being a better type of person. The dandy employs the activities and products of a mass consumer society to propel him above the fray. This paradoxical nature of dandyism seemingly allies it with forms of “resistance consumption”. McVeigh characterizes such consumption as a mischievously provoking diversion that seeks to distract from the dominant, established structures (2000: 158). It does not make overt political statements or attempt insurrection. Despite the dandy’s lack of overt rebelliousness, his main goal remains the introduction of a remodelled social order in which he will possess newfound authority and power.

⁷ For a more detailed understanding of how omnivorousness is not antithetical to Bourdieu’s earlier conception of status distinctions, please refer to Peterson and Kern (1996).

Dandyism as “ironic consumption” ostensibly works as the dandy expresses his contempt for mass culture while continuing to participate in it. Ironically consuming goods means abandoning oneself to consumerism entirely but keeping a critical eye on its meanings and intentions (Klein, 2000: 78). The dandy remains autonomous while navigating a system that he cannot hope to overthrow or physically escape. The dandy and the ironic consumer reject Puritanism, the earnest quest for revealing an authentic, natural self, and the concomitant belief in aesthetics as artifice.

In some accounts, the dandy cannot exist in a contemporary consumer society due to his controlled, refined ethic (Campbell, 1987). Despite his seemingly appropriate focus upon individuality, the dandy’s *sang froid* is argued as being incommensurable with the hedonism present-day consumption. Admittedly, passion is not part of the dandy’s emotional disposition. According to Campbell, modern hedonism requires a special form of self-control using the imagination to manage objects’ meanings for the purposes of seeking emotional pleasure (1987: 76). Commodities are props that allow the consumer to dream about the pleasures that these products might afford. The immediate sensory effects of objects are of lesser importance. Individual taste is merely that individual’s pursuit of pleasure stimuli. Nevertheless, this rendition of self-control cannot be differentiated from that espoused by the dandy. His *sang froid* results in the careful calculation of commodities’ ability to effect and communicate his self-identity. Despite the dandy’s lack of emotional expressiveness, it is hard to concur that his rituals of consumption do not gratify him. This is particularly true when the desired effect

allows him to gain influence. This contention that the dandy cannot represent a present-day consumer does not allow that the self may be composed through “performance”.

McVeigh argues that the authentic self and the self-as-performed cannot be so conveniently separated (2000: 35). Levels of intentionality, on the part of the individual, thwart easy categorization of one persona being a façade and another as being an authentic expression of one’s soul. It is a dubious suggestion that the dandy’s controlled style necessarily masks a decidedly different type of person. According to Breward, both the dandy and the Romantic bohemian sabotage the distinction between an orchestrated, public identity and a private version (2003b: 220). They heralded the arrival of the current consumer who displays status and personal preferences in their consumerist behaviour. It is difficult to argue that consumption is merely the product of self-indulgence when it has become the basis for crafting the self.

The dandy is a figure that originated the art of commodifying his personality (Garelick, 1998: 3). However, postmodernists assert that contemporary consumers only look to create context specific, transient selves without being interested in creating authentic selves. This impression suggests that the dandy is merely a relic of the past. His quest to create a coherent self using the tools of consumption makes him an incongruous figure in today’s reality. The vision of a sovereign individual is believed to be an illusion perpetuated under modernity. Nevertheless, Gabriel and Lang argue that authenticity is what individuals “crave” in their pursuit (1995: 93). This authenticity must not be viewed as the equivalent of seeking to reveal one’s soul. Neither does

acknowledging the contingent nature of the contemporary self discount its accuracy or its logic. It is accepted that individuals order their reality by speaking of a subjective “I” and “me”. While there is no actual structure called “the self”, it is a way of representing and addressing one’s identity subject to the conditions of the moment (Finkelstein, 1991: 159-160). This conditionality merely reflects the continual revision of one’s biography using the available choices within consumer culture (Giddens, 1991: 5).

Many of these accounts imagine a progeny of the nineteenth-century dandy as having become more demotic and democratic (Breward, 2003a; Garelick, 1998; Walden, 2002). The rise of mass consumption and mass culture are thought to have prefaced the development of a new dandyism that is unrestricted in access and popularized in mode. This dandy’s style represents democratic ideas about clothing, manners, and opinions (Walden, 2002: 48). This dandy is a woman, a “pop star”, a well-dressed fashion model, and a designer jeans-wearing athlete. This account of the contemporary dandy suggests that these individuals are mass-produced and mass-producing. They encourage the proliferation of many ordinary dandies who will follow them on to their next stylistic phase. This argument does not take into account that the dandy emerged in response to an increasing openness in consumption. It does not follow that the dandy of the present would be so radically different from his predecessors. It is insufficient to argue that the difference between the demotic dandy of today and the elitist of yesterday is “merely social and numerical” (Walden, 2002: 48). It is illogical that the popularization of style and increased spending power has led to an everyday dandyism. The dandy is “a man dedicated solely to his *own* perfection through a ritual of taste” (Moers, 1960: 13,

emphasis added). The re-emergence of the dandy does not represent the decadence of democracy anymore than he represented the decadence of the aristocracy. Dandyism represents the attempt to restore hierarchical social order in times of transition.

As outlined in Chapter Two, the dandy does not abide by the tenets of Romanticism or its more contemporary branches. Romanticism's vision of the inherent morality and authenticity of nature is a belief that dandies attempt to subvert. Instead art is advanced as a means for revealing and tempering the natural world. This has implications for how the dandy reflects upon his identity and presents himself. Nevertheless, individuals have always used external style to visually articulate who they are. This has the dual effect of conveying individuals' identities to others and allowing them to consciously create themselves. African American men have a history of using personal style to assert themselves. One author writes how "style represented a challenge to non-existence ... Style said I am. No matter what" (Summers, 1998: 41 in Postrel, 2003: 62). This stylistic self-expression allowed these men to challenge their social position as subordinates. It also enabled them to conceptualize themselves as "selves", in the same manner as dandies. Postrel maintains that it is the very "aim of aesthetic meaning – to capture and convey identity, to turn our ineffable sense of self into something tangible and authentic" (2003: 109).

Not only does the dandy complicate the idea that the essential self and the expressive self are different, he also challenges the notion that an artistically rendered appearance is artificial. Throughout the literature on dandyism, a distinction is made between the artifice of the dandy style and the opposing authenticity of the Romantic

style (Breward, 2003b; Campbell, 1987; Entwistle, 2000; Finkelstein, 1991). An unaffected, untreated appearance is the articulation of the “essence” of that individual. It is an authentic and sincere attempt to “be oneself” (McVeigh, 2000: 34). It is commonly assumed that these expressions are natural and pure, free from guile. The idea that such style is “artless” is advanced as a positive thing, as art necessarily implies contrivance. Hippies and bohemians are examples of this stylistic category. Their “natural”, non-constrictive clothing, lack of cosmetics, and long hair obstruct the obvious fact that they are constructing a particular look. However, an elaborate, controlled presentational self is considered to be a deceptive façade. The individual is manipulating the version of self that they are portraying. This assumption reflects a puritanical attack on all that is considered inauthentic (Lears, 1989: 75). A judgement is made accounting for the frivolity of objects, their fabricated “uses”, and the deceit that inevitably “made” consumers purchase them. The belief that certain clothes are more natural than others or that certain products are more justifiably coveted continues to pervade society. The perception of the dandy is often couched within this narrow discourse of stylishness as necessarily trivial and often disingenuous. Even theorists attempting to look at the dandy without moralizing about his narcissism inevitably speak to his artifice or his pose. In assuming that the dandy is “hiding” something these theorists inevitably avow the existence of an animating essence, spirit, or soul.

Lehmann writes that during the nineteenth-century’s rapid industrialization and commercialization, Romantic figures of the day longed for the idealized past whereas certain artists used their creative powers to offer up an antidote and a mirror (2000: 10).

In constructing a self, as an artist would construct art, the dandy manages to fulfill such a role. He uses cultural dictates to challenge the existing (albeit faltering) order, in the hope of instituting something new and personally advantageous. Featherstone argues the success of artists and intellectuals to “charismatically” produce something from their “natural talents” cannot be reduced to money (1991: 89). Dandyism emerged at a point when individuals could ascend the social ladder in a way that was previously unavailable to them. By using clothing, accessories, furniture, and carriages, the dandy was able to construct a distinguished self that did not rely on birthright. His consumption practices were informed by his *sang froid*, in return advancing this self-possession. His style influences his self-identity which then reflects back onto his style. As Bourdieu maintains:

It would seem that the logic whereby the ‘great’ are perceived as physically greater than they are applies very generally, and that authority of whatever sort contains a power of seduction which it would be naïve to reduce to the effect of self-interested servility (1984: 208).

Despite a desire to reconstruct the social hierarchy with dandies at the pinnacle, dandyism is the ultimate belief in the self and the ability of consumption to create it. Rather than a whole-hearted endorsement of solipsism, the dandy merely uses commodity consumption as a tool for self-expression and social distinction. Consumption is an instrument that assumes, manages, instructs, and assembles a particular structure that influences the kind of selves to be had (Rose, 1997: 246). The dandy has not become redundant in contemporary society nor has he been transformed into an archetype of the “average Joe”. Dandyism is not a practice of the wealthy nor is it the domain of the “cool” masses. It is not just about distinction in any form. It is social distinction through the tasteful

consumption of things, the dandy determining what constitutes refinement. Dandyism is as salient as ever.

Chapter IV – The Dandified Body

“For a man’s facial expression lies beyond wrinkles’ reach, and a man whose main distinction lies in his physiognomy is a good deal less mortal than others.”

Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly, *On Dandyism and George Brummell*, 1844

Clothing is the most visible facet of the dandy’s style. It is through dress and deportment that the dandy articulates his self-identity. Theorists acknowledge that the body is the medium of being (Entwistle, 2000; Giddens, 1991; Hollander, 1994; Sweetman, 1999). It articulates the reflexive self and cannot be separated from it. The body is dressed or, in the very least, adorned in some way. These practices on and of the body allow the individual to interact with the self. The precise regimen of the dandy’s daily toilette and his fastidious sartorial preferences and preparations construct his dandified body and create his selfhood. These carefully calibrated rituals cogently demonstrate the dandy’s sang froid. In constructing his sartorial beauty, the dandy engages with the mirror to develop a detached understanding of his physical appearance. This sexual self-knowledge is an integral aspect of his poise.

The interactions between the self, the body, and dress are perceived as a totality by others and should be examined as such. To try and isolate these aspects into separate and distinct categories means that each becomes intangible abstractions with little relation to people’s lived experiences. Entwistle maintains that “embodiment is an a priori fact of existence and it is through the body that we come to know and act in the world” (2000: 148). The body is sculpted through particular bodily regimes. The dandy’s style drives his sartorial choices beyond those based upon mere chic. Taste is inscribed upon and within the body of the individual. The dandy is expressing his fundamental superiority through his superior taste. Although the individual performs

these rituals, they remain embedded within society and must be viewed as socially constituted (Entwistle, 2000: 11). Fashion, like lifestyle and gender, is a socially structuring force that influences the production of the body, dress, and style. Within the juggernaut of fashion, the dandy's style articulates a rejection of the conventional modes of fashion whilst endorsing a self-styled elegance. Dandyism challenges the democratization of display. Thus, the increasing accessibility of fashion signals the appropriate conditions for a dandy renaissance. This chapter seeks to relate the dandy's anti-fashion to his controlled self-identity, reinforcing the relationship between his refined bodily rituals and any possibility of being a dandy.

The Body – The Self

In espousing a neo-classical aesthetic, the Regency dandy paid specific attention to the body, the man rather than merely focusing upon the elaborateness of the costume (Hollander, 1994: 92). The dandy pays attention to the tasteful appearance of the man rather than any symbols of pedigree. As these symbols have broadly disappeared over time, the dandy's project has become more relevant. The need to distinguish himself from the masses has increased as the hierarchical separation between the elite and the throngs has blurred. The dandy's presentation reinforces his mysterious allure and allows the dandy the self-absorption necessary to cultivate his refinement. His awareness of his body leads to a greater awareness of self.

It is problematic to interpret this self-knowledge as mere narcissism. The vestiges of the argument that function is morally superior to form continue to pervade society. The persistent view is that character dwells in the realm of the soul and the bodies of

individuals are mere casings. The elevation of external appearance to a position of importance is theorized as being detrimental to both society and the individual.

Finkelstein argues that despite our hypocritical assertions our understanding of human character has never strayed completely away from using physiognomy (1991: 1).

Individuals are prejudged based upon their external appearance. People realize that saying appearance matters is looked upon derisively. Appearance is superficial and despite its inconsequentiality, potentially disingenuous. This rhetoric appears increasingly hollow as the fetishization of self-presentation increases. The vacillation between saying that appearance is deceptive and saying that it is insignificant continues in society. Nevertheless, individuals risk being labelled shallow should they admit that personal appearance is important.

That we hastily read character physiognomically, knowing all the while that the other may have had a face lift, or be wearing contact lenses, or have had a hair transplant or be using hair dye, infers that we are less interested in knowing character than the value we place upon it would suggest (Finkelstein, 1991: 156).

In many ways, these things do say something about the person; however what they say does not indicate whether they are good or bad, intelligent or dim, compassionate or malicious. To argue that physical appearance may be altered and become “deceptive” underscores the idea that appearance is important. The inference is that individuals’ “natural” appearances are truly reflective of whom they are. The argument becomes one of authenticity and artifice. Admittedly, it is problematic to judge people’s virtues *solely* on the basis of their external appearances. Yet, to refuse to acknowledge that the body might be meaningful indicates the persistence of an ethic proposing that individuals may be “understood” in a disembodied fashion. This idea never addresses the significant role

the body plays in shaping how individuals conceive of themselves and interact with the world.

Giddens argues that the awareness of one's body is essential to constructing a distinguishable and distinguished self (1991: 77). Familiarity with the body is necessary to formulate an awareness of one's identity. It is that "the body constitutes the environment of the self, to be inseparable from the self" (Entwistle, 2000: 6). The body visually articulates individuality. It is impossible to think of oneself in nonfigurative terms considering that our existence is a corporeal one. The discrete mind and body is inconceivable. These two elements comprise a "unitary reality" (McVeigh, 2000: 13). The body is not a static entity that one owns; it is more than merely an envelope or inessential covering. It is a mode of praxis, a mode of being; it influences how individuals practically interact with their environment (Giddens, 1991: 99).

Bodily appearance and demeanour are two aspects of the body that Giddens believes possess significance for the self (1991: 99). Appearance, as a physical manifestation of self connects the individual to the social environment. Individuals must take responsibility for the design of their bodies and selves. Unlike the contentions of some postmodernists, Sweetman maintains that body projects are the antithesis of superficial eclecticism and represent the individual creating a durable self (1999). Body rituals cannot be dismissed as meaningless fads or the indulgences of inauthentic individuals. Attention to the body is not merely the sign of manipulated consumers distracted from more profound concerns. Rather than mere pastiche, contemporary body projects such as dress are attempts to anchor a sense of self (Sweetman, 1999: 52-53).

Despite his focus upon tattooing and piercing as corporeal *expressions* of the self, Sweetman's conceptualization that bodily regimes are necessary to the creation of a coherent self is valuable. It is the regimes that individuals enact on the body that create it. As Entwistle notes, "different techniques of dress produce different bodies" (2002: 134). The dandy style is produced through specific sartorial and bodily rituals. These practices on/of the body create an awareness of corporeality that, in turn, creates selfhood. They allow the individual to construct her or himself as an object upon which to reflect. Rather than a mere representation of an inner nature, body projects are "a means of reflexively influencing the project of the self" (Giddens, 1991: 105). The separation of an essential self and a presentational self becomes immaterial. The dandy and the tattoo practitioner employ body projects to express their individuality. Their bodies are a resource; its social and actual plasticity exploited in an effort to define individuality, despite these individuals' memberships in broader cultural groups. The dandy uses sartorial display to define his pre-eminence. However, the ritual aspects of body modification and its level of commitment make it akin to dandyism. Contemporary dandies could very well have "tasteful" tattoos and piercings.

Demeanour "sustains a link between 'feeling at home in one's body' and the personalized narrative" (Giddens, 1991: 100). This link enables individuals to "feel like themselves" and allows others to recognize them. This recognizability means that individuals are understood as being the same person all the time and are differentiated from others (Hunt, 1996: 108). The dandy's *sang froid* is such a central narrative. This self-control informs every aspect of his life. It is a defining feature of his self-identity. It

manifests itself and is bolstered through his meticulous rituals. A constant demeanour against shifting settings allows for the development of a coherent identity (Giddens, 1991: 100). Disposition will vary according to the individual and the social context; nevertheless, individuals will conduct themselves in the manner that makes the most sense to them at that time. It does not suggest the fragmentation of self or an inauthentic fluidity. Demeanour implies that the body is assembled according to the conventions that comprise daily living (Giddens, 1991: 99). The interaction between individual disposition and delimiting social customs will manifest itself within individual bodily practices. The manner in which the dandy's self-discipline emerges will depend on the social and cultural conditions.

The Dressed Body

When discussing the body, one is necessarily discussing the dressed body. Even the naked body is adorned with objects such as jewellery, tattoos, or perfume (Entwistle, 2000: 6). Dress imbues the body with meaning and a unique identity. Dress and the body possess a dialectical relationship to one another, in that dress manages the constructed body and the body animates dress (Entwistle, 2002: 134-135). Dress is a specific activity; it is the act of clothing the body with an aesthetic intent. Clothing is a description of garments whereas dress is a description of a combination of articles of clothing forming a unified "look" (Davis, 1992: 25). Clothing and dress in the Western world are frequently dismissed as possessing only fleeting meaning. Anthropologists look at non-Western societies and their "traditional" dress as possessing stable truths about culture (Breward, 2003a: 63). In many instances, theorists who choose to study

Western dress and fashion choose to view clothes as objects and fashion as frivolous. Rather than seeking to uncover the haptic qualities of clothing or the routines and habits that imbue dress with meaning, dress is “deciphered” through theoretical formula or the exposure of particular discourses. This disregards the fact that dress is an embodied practice. In addition to looking at *what is done to the body*, it is imperative to look at *what the body does* (Entwistle, 2002: 148). The ethereal presence of clothing in the daily lives of individuals belies its centrality to issues such as identity and cannot be explained by semiotics (Woodward, 2002: 352). Finkelstein argues that “clothes convey information to those skilled in reading them, and those who wear them purposefully” (1991: 108). Clothing and dress always convey information about the wearer. The individual who best conveys their intended effect to the observer is the individual most able to reflexively view her- or himself. To fully understand the nexus of dress, the human body, and the self, dress must be looked at as the actions of the individual “attending to the body with the body” (Entwistle, 2000: 11).

The experience of dress is a personal, instinctual one that informs our experience of the body at that moment (Entwistle, 2002: 134). How certain fabrics feel on the body and to those who might touch them, how fabrics sound when the body is moving are important considerations when discussing clothes. These sensory observations are as important as the visual conclusions that are drawn about how clothes make a person look. “Epidermic self-awareness” is the consciousness of clothing on the body, how it feels, and most importantly how it makes someone aware of their body (Entwistle, 2002: 133). The garments act as a second skin forming a membrane that reminds individuals of what

they are wearing. All individuals possess preferences for certain garments that make them “feel good”. An individual may feel confident about how the clothes fit and move with the body or the item may be too constrictive or too loose and make the individual feel uncomfortable or even embarrassed. When epidermic self-awareness is accompanied by a profound understanding of what cut, fabric, and colour flatters the moving and motionless body, it becomes “sexual self-knowledge”. The dandy cannot comprehend his physicality without being aware of the details of the clothing that he wears. This knowledge is a dispassionate understanding of how one looks to the observer (Hollander, 1994: 190). In wearing clothes, not only are individuals able to create themselves; the clothes they are wearing may influence them. It does not follow that “dressing up” will change a person into a completely different one. Epidermic self-awareness suggests that wearing clothing affects our experience of the body that, in turn, influences our sense of self. The dandy is able to exercise his distinct charm when his dandyism is omnipresent. It is the dandy’s *style* that makes the dandy who he is and links the interactions of self and body.

As a bodily practice, dress is “situated” within culture (Entwistle, 2000: 11). This allows dress to be understood as a part of the relationship between the body of the individual and with culture as a whole. Dress is both the result of individual preference and aesthetic sensibility and socially constituted by such things as class and gender. Tailoring and textiles allow the body to assume various forms, these styles being located within a specific cultural context (Entwistle, 2002: 134). Dress is regarded in fundamentally moral ways. It may evoke feelings of decency or indecency, pleasure or

indignation. It is the manner in which individuals learn to live in their bodies and feel good by wearing the “right” attire (Entwistle, 2002: 139). Conversely, individuals feel shame or embarrassment when they make miscalculations in dress. There is a social obligation to learn to dress “appropriately”, dictating that individuals perform their identity in particular ways (Entwistle, 2002: 139). Accepting the sociality of dress tempers any predilection for discussing it *solely* in terms of personal preference. Baudelaire argues that the dandy epitomizes this morality as he struggles to create beauty from the maintenance of his body (1964: 32). It is incumbent on the dandy to dress both for the pleasure of others and to exemplify *sang froid*.

Social identity and self-identity remain linked as do dress and social identity. These associations endure despite the increasing acceptance that dress is reflective of self-expression. Modes of dress are influenced by factors such as class and gender that continue to promote standardization over individual distinction (Giddens, 1991: 99). There is a tension between the individual being increasingly free to choose whatever types of clothing they wish and how they are able to combine these clothes into a coherent style of dress and a coherent sense of self. In order for individuals to understand each other, there needs to be some similitude between their interpretations of clothing and dress. Individuals attempting to distinguish themselves through the adoption of subcultural styles must adopt sartorial strategies to illustrate their unconventional identities. To dress in a manner that conveys something different would be incongruous.

Different situations require differently clad people. Black tie events ask that individuals dress in a formal manner. Even though the variety of attire that is accepted at

such events has increased, there is still a range of garments considered suitable. It would be considered unacceptable to wear shorts or bring a backpack. However, some men (namely celebrities) might be able to get away with wearing designer jeans with a tuxedo shirt or tie. McVeigh argues that such ritualized situations are pre-scripted encounters that one knows how to navigate from having acquired a “sense of ritual” (2000: 22). Individuals acquire this “common sense” from their habitus. The dandy’s sang froid allows him to navigate situation with ease and poise and his elitism affords him the ability to instinctively know the expectations of the occasion. These specific events are characterized by a self-scrutiny in which the individual monitors every aspect of their self-presentation (McVeigh, 2000: 23). The dandy treats every occasion with a high level of formality. His clothing, conduct, and speech are all controlled so as to preclude any embarrassing faux pas and emphasize a certain pre-eminence. The dandy does not “let his hair down”. If he were to treat any situation unceremoniously, *no one* would be privy to it. Wilson argues that the dandy is always psychologically onstage (1985: 182). The dandy breaks down the private/public, hidden/exposed binaries; every situation is treated with a similar formality. The dandy’s body “expresses a continuous tension ... between a controlled exercising of restraint and an abandonment to sensation” (Breward, 2003b: 167).

“Putting On the Dog”⁸

Dandyism provides the opportunity to acknowledge the importance of the body when discussing fashion and dress. The dandy-figure forces this association, in that his rituals of dress and the management of his body cannot be separated. His sang froid fuses these elements into a coherent style. At the time of his emergence, the dandy’s lack of rank or birthright reflected itself in attire characterized by careful tailoring rather than extravagant flourishes. This attention to cut and fit emphasized the dignity and elegance of the dandy’s body and focused attention on his personal qualities (Hollander, 1994: 92). A man’s excellence was wrought upon the body through meticulous hygiene practices and the careful maintenance of his clothing. Clothing allows for the articulation of elitism in a way that verbal communication cannot (Woodward, 2002: 352).

The dandy was the first modern figure to demonstrate how the disciplining regimes of the nineteenth-century were changing. His self-discipline marks him as a precursor to the present-day individual who uses self-disciplining regimes to achieve the current standards of physical beauty (Entwistle, 2000: 20-21). However, unlike the current bodily regimes, the dandy also espouses external forms of control. Dress provides a method of showcasing the body in the best light. It envelops the figure and hides or downplays negative features of one’s anatomy. The dandy straddles the boundaries between the modern and postmodern and, in this, resembles the practitioners

⁸This is an expression dating back to the mid-nineteenth century meaning “dressing up” in a stylish and ostentatious manner to display one’s superiority. “Put(ting) on the dog” literally meant putting wealthy women’s fancy lapdog “accessories” on one’s lap to show them off. This expression is a forerunner to the phrase “put(ting) on the ritz”. WORDS@RANDOM (December 19, 1999) *The Maven’s Word of the Day*. Random House. Retrieved July 26, 2004 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.randomhouse.com/wotd/index.pperl?date=19991214>

of body modification. Although the dandy's body is not necessarily characterized by tattoos, scarification, or piercings, like these "modern primitives" dandyism is a rejection of the "get fit" mentality. This approach advocates the spontaneous and "valid" changeability of the body. By altering their appearance through "hard work", for reasons of greater health or to better reflect their inner selves, individuals avoid being labelled conceited or narcissistic. The dandy does not seek to improve himself morally or physically (Hollander, 1994: 189-190). The dandy is not interested in self-help or psychotherapy, aerobic exercise or yoga. The dandified body is an expression of an unemotional self-scrutiny that is unpopular at present. Consequently, it is often viewed as the ultimate expression of artifice. Nevertheless, the dandy's bodily practices create his body in the image of the dandy. This "physique" is the environment of the self and cannot be separated from it.

Dandyism is more than pure vanity as the vain man is not necessarily a dandy. However, the dandy as a narcissist is an understandable interpretation considering the fundamental relationship between the dandy's sense of self and his body.⁹ The dandy's search for perfection through sartorial and cleansing rituals makes his narcissistic commitment to self compelling and authoritative. Theorists perceive narcissism to be the result of the body being treated as a medium of sensual gratification (Giddens, 1991: 170). According to this idea, this universal quest for self-fulfilment has ensured that individuals merely pursue experiences that will abet their projects. This pursuit of selfhood determines everything; this narrow understanding of sensuality discounts others

⁹The story of Narcissus in Greek mythology recounts the tale of a beautiful mountain youth who cruelly shuns the affections of all the nymphs that desire him. Seeing a reflection of himself in a pool of water, Narcissus promptly falls in love. He dies, pining for the elusive and beautiful creature.

and is detrimental to the forming of social bonds. Dandyism is such a preoccupation of self. However, the dandy's body communicates his distinction to others and is developed in response to them. Despite his individualism, the dandy requires the reactions of others. Like the contemporary individual, the body has become an integral part of the reflexive self. Managing the body has become a normal part of life that does not necessarily indicate a narcissistic withdrawal from the social world. Giddens argues that this engagement with the body is a direct engagement with the outside world (1991: 178).

The Sensuousness of Style

Taste is a bodily sensitivity, in that it directly refers to the preference for the particular sensual qualities of an object (Entwistle, 2000: 50). Habitus is the bodily disposition of classes and determines taste. It is the subjective process that is represented by symbolic exclusion. Habitus negotiates which cultural cues are acceptable, in which situations, and for whom (Bryson, 1996: 885-886). This forms boundaries around groups of people and allows others to be socially excluded. This has particular significance for the relationship between dress, the body, and the self. As a "situated body practice", dress is influenced by culture and its categories. Thus, the notion of habitus suggests that the taste deemed appropriate to certain classes is inscribed upon and within the body of the individual in these classes. The resultant bodily techniques require specific knowledge that, in turn, produce and demand specific postures, gaits, and vocabularies. Bourdieu maintains:

The body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste, which it manifests in several ways. It does this in the seemingly most natural features of the body, the dimensions (volume, height, weight) and shapes (round or square, stiff or supple, straight or curved) of its visible forms, which express in countless ways a whole relation to the body, i.e., a way of treating it, caring for it, feeding it, maintaining it, which reveals the deepest dispositions of the habitus" (1984: 190).

In constructing the body of the individual, these practices construct the selfhood of that person. Entwistle argues that habitus is a fruitful way of thinking through embodiment as it links the individual and the social; it is a fruitful way of thinking about how habitus predisposes individuals to particular modes of dress (2002: 149).

“Quality” has become the defining feature of class when it comes to dress (Entwistle, 2000: 134). The taste for quality items implies distaste for what is cheaply made. In some instances, cachet has little to do with actual quality and refers to branding or rarity. Having better tailored or bespoke garments constructed of expensive and rare fabrics is one symbol of superiority. It may be indicative of an individual’s economic status. In other instances having the latest fashion indicates superiority. To distinguish between good and bad quality or know about trends, an individual requires a particular level of cultural capital. Essentially, one must have had previous contact with high quality clothing in order to differentiate them from those of lesser quality. Individuals must have knowledge of fashion to stay on top of the continually changing fads. The dandy embodies quality whether he is wearing the highest examples or not.

The spare time required to perform the dandy’s daily rituals place him in a segment above the average person. Brummell and d’Orsay’s wardrobes might have been easier to copy than their aristocratic predecessors but they still took refinement to another level. The quality of the dandy style surpasses others and the dandies’ knowledge of what constitutes superiority sets them apart. In a certain sense, it allies them with the existing elite despite beating them at their own game. The dandy’s body “expresses a continuous tension between notions of elite and mass taste” (Breward, 2003b: 167). The

dandy knows what is fashionable and what is in vogue. Nevertheless, he is not a follower of fashion. He walks a tightrope between conformity and eccentricity. However, the manner in which dress is embodied is as important as its quality in determining an individual's status (Entwistle, 2000: 134-135). This is what makes the dandy a dandy. His self-knowledge ensures his ability to wear his clothes better than anyone else. Nevertheless, dandies need not purchase designer labels or the most expensive fabrics to be dandies. Their ability to construct an appearance that perpetually substantiates his superiority is the dandy's sole goal. He has that *élan* that makes everything he wears look better than anyone else.

(Anti) Fashion

Fashion is a generic process that only partially deals with sartorial expression. While dandyism exists within the realm of sartorial fashion, it is an expression of difference rather than similarity. Baudelaire defines fashion as one of the conditions comprising beauty (1964: 3). Its fusion of the eternal concept of beauty and beauty's ephemeral representation is suggestive of fashion's significance. Lehmann describes it as the ultimate expression of the contemporary spirit, in that "it changes constantly and remains necessarily incomplete; it is transitory, mobile, and fragmentary. This quality ties it in with the pace and rhythm of modern life" (2000: xii). This basis in fleeting aesthetic concepts allows fashion to speak to the character of society at that moment. These unceasing changes of "what is in vogue" and "what is out of vogue" give fashion its power and, consequently, are what critics most frequently cite as the reasons for its inconsequentiality. This constant change appears innovative despite constantly quoting

from previous styles (Polhemus & Proctor, 1978: 16). This ability to mine the past ensures that fashion becomes self-directed and cannot be viewed as the imposition of the desires of a few powerful designers or industry executives. Neither are changes in fashion attributable to individual choice alone. Fashion is largely self-governing. Thus it is continually renewed and never loses its relevance. It always seems novel. It always just eludes replication by the majority of people.

Sartorial fashion is a system of dress (Entwistle, 2000: 48, 238). It shapes how individuals experience dress and what they find to be beautiful. This schema dictates what clothes are trendy and what are passé through a system of continual “modernization”.

Its creators in haute couture ‘anticipate the things to come’ so well because they do not anticipate at all – they merely create the perfect expression of the contemporary spirit, which, ironically manifests itself in clothes whose design is drawn from a past sourcebook (Lehmann, 2000: xix-xx).

This changeability is what sets fashion apart from style. Changing styles do not necessarily represent fashion. The breaks between one stylistic approach and another must be significant enough to be recognizable as change to a significant number of people (Davis, 1992: 15). Whether or not these changes are recognized first by a fashionable elite is of no consequence. The majority of people latch on to fashions after they have ceased being “the latest thing”. The involvement of a myriad of individuals in the production, distribution, and consumption of fashion ensures that as system it is not governable by a select group of individuals. The link between these processes and the individuals implicated within them is a “conscious valuation on change” (Hunt, 1996: 44).

Fashion produces discourses on the body and prescribes methods of producing these types of bodies (Entwistle, 2000: 237). By extension, selves come to be ordered in the same manner. Certain types of selfhood go out of vogue and others come to be fashionable. The psychological self in contemporary society is such an example. These selves find form in fashionable bodies. Using fashion, individuals are able to creatively express themselves. For it is the body and its practices that establish the human being and it is sartorial fashion that establishes “the social being” (Lehmann, 2000: 6). This dress provides communicative codes and stirs emotions within the wearer and observer. Being fashion, these symbols are temporary and the meanings that fashionable garments possess can change over time. Denim jeans were originally a work garment for men. They were strongly associated with blue-collar jobs and working class people. Hippies wore jeans in the 1960s to distance themselves from their middle- and upper-middle class parents and their conventional values. Jeans were an anti-establishment symbol that hippies had adopted from working-class heroes depicted in film, like James Dean. They have since emerged as an omnipresent garment for both men and women. As clothing has become less rule-bound and less prescribed it has, nevertheless, become more disciplined by fashion ensuring that different types of people begin to wear similar clothing and look alike (Finkelstein, 1991: 127). In this way, fashion has become a latter-day sumptuary law. Despite the ability of more people to wear fashionably styled garments, it readily distinguishes people “in the know”. Wearing designer-label jeans has more prestige than wearing a generic brand from a department store, even if both are similarly styled. Fashion becomes a test that consumers set for each other. It is a vehicle

for a personal coherence that allows individuals to interact socially (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 79). Individuals must decipher others' appearances to find out who they are. Hollander maintains that interpretation is getting more complex as individuals learn "that not only may disparate wardrobes cohabit in one person's closet, as if on a backstage costume rack, but they may now be combined" (1994: 166).

Individuals require symbols that they can grasp onto in order to stabilize their identities and interpret the symbols of others. Possessing "fashion sense" means that individuals are able to appreciate and recall fashionable dress and interpret those details for themselves in a fashionable manner (Gladwell, 2000: 180). Wilson argues that fashion is no longer a unidirectional process of individuals directly imitating advertisements (or others) rather it is a less conscious identification of the individual with a "mirage of a way of being" (1985: 157). Although the suggestion is that this vision is illusory, sartorial fashion's communicative code allows individuals to construct a coherent sense of self. It helps to manage the indecisive dialogue between the inner self, contemporary culture, and the historical epoch (Davis, 1992: 24-25). Nevertheless, fashion is also invigorated by the resultant identity quandaries. Some theorists believe that individuals are plagued by the identity ambivalences emerging from the ephemeral representations of identity (Davis, 1992; Entwistle, 2000; Finkelstein, 1991; Giddens, 1991). Individuals become less certain about who they are oscillating between various and, oftentimes, contradictory identifiers. These ambivalences may be related to processes such as aging, gender, and sexuality scripts that represent the self in particular ways. These representations and the individual or society's beliefs about them may

conflict. The resulting ambivalence leads individuals to a state of vacillation (Davis, 1992: 24). However, the dandy is not of two minds about himself. His power emanates from his certainty about his self-identity. The ambiguity that surrounds his personality is part of his charisma.

Fashion determines style however style need not be trendy. Style requires rigorously adhering to a set of underlying aesthetic premises rather than a changing chic that does not have any recollection of the past (Lehmann, 2000: 15). Style requires a certain level of dedication. The dandy's commitment to the maintenance of his style is undeniable. The dandy is characterized as being "a man dedicated solely to his own perfection through a ritual of taste" (Moers, 1960: 13). The dandy does not obsessively follow or mimic the current trends. He is more of a connoisseur able to distinguish quality, longevity, or elegance. He formulates a sartorial appearance that meshes with his style. In this, the dandy may be characterized as anti-fashionable.

Anti-fashion finds its sartorial expression in oppositional dress (Davis, 1992: 161; Wilson, 1985: 203). These styles proliferate in an attempt to modify dominant ideologies. Through the use of the very behaviour that informs mass consumption, these stylized individuals seek to forge distinct identities. For the dandy this includes the quest to embed himself at the top of the social order. Anti-fashion does not rest outside of the fashion system. Non-fashion is the opposite of fashion. This may be the dress of those individuals completely indifferent to fashion or of those whose dress lies outside the realm of fashion such as folk costumes. Anti-fashion is a rejection of the ascendant fashions of the time (Davis, 1992: 161). This approach does not dictate that the dandy be

unfashionable or even outdated. He is not interested in buying his way into the heart of Society nor does he want to follow mass consumer trends. More accurately, the dandy seeks to visually express his personal sophistication.

Mass consumption provides a cogent motivator for the dandy. While traditional distinctions such as class and gender have not disappeared, mass culture has created spheres of consumption around standardized forms of dress (Davis, 1992: 42). Distinctions have been blurred, however they have not been replaced by total homogeneity. Anti-fashion presumes that taste and display have become increasingly democratized (Davis, 1992: 165). This gives anti-fashion purpose. It becomes a means for differentiation. These standardized forms do not foretell the dandy's demise. Barthes maintains that the fashion effectively eradicated dandyism by "neutralizing" it (1971: 312-315 in Garelick, 2001: 35). Discernable differences emerge within these clothes when considering factors such as fashionability and quality. Breward warns of the dangers in viewing increasing consumption of luxury items as a complete social leveller (1995: 131). Hierarchical social groups have not disappeared into the morass of consumers. The consumption of fashion reinforces existing societal divisions based upon such things as gender, class, and locality (Breward, 1995: 132). Dandyism needed fashion for it to emerge and continues to require the subtle distinctions that it affords. Without fashion's emphasis on change, the dandy would never be able to challenge the dress of the elite. Sartorial dissent need not abandon the formal schema that fashion offers. Dandyism presents a powerful depiction, in that it looks sane and achievable (Hollander, 1994: 169).

The dandy's dress may be interpreted from seemingly diverging positions (Breward, 2003b: 163; Wilson, 1985: 183-184). The dandy's efforts to epitomize unforgettable elegance are believed to characterize his desire to be non-fashionable. He attempts to move beyond the frenetic adoption of trends and reveal his visual authority through references to sophistication. The result of Brummell's sartorial styling was the precursor to the modern suit. This dress was popularized after Brummell for the same reasons that he originally favoured it. The suit gives the impression of unity and invulnerability. Rather than an expression of nonfashion, this emphasis on staying power is an example of upper-class anti-fashion (Polhemus & Proctor, 1978: 68). Groups possess their own symbols of anti-fashion depending upon their particular worldview. The dandy favours dress that emphasizes the corporal qualities of the man. This anti-fashion position is firmly ensconced within fashion's framework. It is a mechanism for distinction that emphasizes excellence.

Being that anti-fashions do not reside within the remit of fashion, the possibility exists that they may be subsumed by fashion. Nevertheless, one of the defining features of the dandy is his reproducible singularity. Seemingly contradictory, this is what makes him an exemplar of anti-fashion. The dandy fuses an ostensibly replicable form of dress with rigorous bodily maintenance and a certain inimitable quality. The combination of these things, in addition to a sophisticated understanding of himself and the way he looks distinguishes the dandy from others. The dandy's ambiguity about who he is and whence he came makes him powerfully mysterious. The dandy's ambiguous masculinity is viewed as decidedly effeminate because of his preoccupation with sartorial display. He is

neither titled nor middle-class akin to a cosmopolitan sartorial elitist. Mass culture allows for the dandy existence, however his *raison d'être* is to distinguish himself from the accompanying “mediocrity” and reinstate a hierarchy of taste. The approval of the elite is essential to dandy (Entwistle, 2000: 128). He cannot operate within their social circles, if he cannot win their approval. The dandy desires to implement a hierarchy of taste to replace the faltering social elite. In mimicking the snobbery of the patrician class, the dandy desires to dictate the rules to them.

According to Entwistle, the dandy uses fashion to “fix” his identity in the form of a particular style (2000: 139). This seemingly suggests that the dandy is a trendsetter. It is more beneficial, however, to view the social power of fashion as something that the dandy is able to use to his advantage. The advent of fashion legitimates an obsession with externality. Modernity promotes fashion and the ambivalence and chaos of this world is exhilarating to the dandy (Entwistle, 2000: 138-139). Dandyism’s anti-fashion exists within this fashion apparatus whilst working to subvert its existing modes. The dandy successfully navigates this realm, as he experiences none of the ambivalence and uncertainty that others grapple with.

Hollander maintains that the last twenty-five years of fashion has been characterized by pastiche and the chance “to play more or less outrageously with all the tough and solid old [forms], to unleash a swift stream of imagery bearing a pulsating tide of mixed references” (1994: 166). However, the dandy has always been an appropriator of garments, seizing styles of dress, fine-tuning them, and reinterpreting them to his benefit. The dandy’s non-elite origins offer insight into how the “other half lives” that

the insular world of the upper crust cannot. This has ensured that the dandy's sourcebook has been more eclectic. The dandy's magnetism makes his sartorial appropriations daring, yet not threatening enough to have him denied entrance or excommunicated from the elite community. According to Walden, the indicator of the contemporary, demotic dandy is his ability to "look and behave" in a way that will become fashionable soon after (2002: 49). He is able to predict and pre-emptively embody the style before it becomes fashionable. However, the dandy is not a fashion trendsetter. To be so caught up in fashion would necessitate constant stylistic change to stay relevant. The dandy style is quite fixed. He displays constants in demeanour and vernacular. Fashion rebels that do not conform to these elements of style are not dandies. Being anti-fashionable does not mean that the dandy's clothes are unfashionable. Rather they are shrewd efforts to undermine and usurp power.

D'Orsay's clothing often had an ironic edge to it. Although he was admired for his beauty, d'Orsay did not exhibit the same sartorial restraint as Brummell had. There was a sense that d'Orsay was testing the limits that he might be afforded. Foulkes suggests that, in this manner, "he exerted power over others far richer and better born than he" (2003: 248). Like Brummell, d'Orsay appropriated the clothing of other groups to communicate his difference. D'Orsay is credited with being the originator of the paletot, the first overcoat that was not fitted at the waist. It hung loosely and straight over the body. Being caught in the rain without a proper coat, d'Orsay is said to have purchased a passing sailor's duffel jacket and promptly wore it to Hyde Park (Foulkes, 2003: 256). This 'new' garment caught on and soon many of the elite were sporting the

paletot. For d'Orsay, wearing such a garment provided an opportunity to test the social circle that he was essentially gate-crashing. This type of anti-fashion may be an opportunity to see if others could accurately decipher the intended meaning of one's dress (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 76).

It is argued that the dandy has become a footnote in discussions about aesthetic masculinity because his derivation and his very existence implicitly acknowledge fashion's potential to affect change (Breward, 2000: 226). To concede such ideas is frightening to many people. According to Hunt, "fashion derives its distinctive characteristics from the attempt to emphasize the human body and its beauty in a culture that has tended to despise and denigrate the sensual" (1996: 47). The belittlement of fashion and dress as nothing more than triviality, at best, and immorality, at worst, continues to resonate. However, this positing of appearance as something opposed to reality has been a familiar refrain for centuries. The opposition between aesthetics (artifice) and function (authenticity) is a product of Puritanism, Romanticism, and the technocracy of the twentieth century (Postrel, 2003: 62). The discernment of sartorial austerity has, in the past, and continues to be linked with moral rectitude (Breward, 1995: 134).

Fashion is a social force that structures dress and individual embodiment. Within the auspices of fashion, anti-fashion offers a sartorial position to express difference. For the dandy, the disparity is due to his superiority. The laborious rituals of dress and toilette that the dandy performs serve to generate his dandified body. The body has increasingly become envisaged as "the site of identity" (Entwistle, 2000: 138). The idea

of the body as praxis allows that the body mediates an individual's interaction with the world. It is inconsistent to argue that one may separate the authentic self from their body and its "superficialities". The dandy explicitly illustrates that the body is not "natural" instead representing "a system of meaning through which culture is constructed and may be understood" (Breward, 2003b: 161-162). The self is shaped through an individual's attention to and awareness of themselves. This reflexivity is necessarily embodied.

In the period of the mid- to late nineteenth century, fashion authorities sought to bridge the gap between the authentic experience and the authentic self and appearance (Lears, 1989: 82). Fashion became "justifiable" in Victorian society only insofar as it expressed the "true self" through simplicity. Dress reformers of the 1880s and 1890s promoted unaffected styles that allowed for unrestricted movement and free expression. Despite the Regency dandy's promotion of sartorial simplicity, he cannot be aligned with the Romantics. Their aesthetic sensibilities were connected to their overall philosophy of the natural world as pure. The dandy rejected this vision of the world.

But despite the ubiquity of the image, the physical experience of 'artistic dressing' proper remained largely the home-spun preserve of an *avant-garde* creative minority, or the expensive hobby of a self-proclaimed *progressive* urban elite (Breward, 2003b: 66, emphasis added).

A schizophrenic belief that appearances are superficial but "simple" dress more accurately reflects a person's true self suggests that certain garments are more "natural". However, no dress is "natural" and all clothing signals an attempt to somehow modify the body (Entwistle, 2000: 109-110). To dismiss fashionable dress as artifice is to ignore that it is a practice of the individual attending to their body and their self-identity.

Nevertheless, critics continue to believe that “fashionability” pertaining to appearance precludes individuals from thinking about human character in any respect (Finkelstein, 1991: 111). The transience of fashion is thought not to provide any social sustenance for the self. Individuals are solely concerned with conforming to appropriate trends and roles that block their interaction with others (Finkelstein, 1991: 191). In blocking sociality, fashion undermines a search for distinction. It substitutes “real” human character for “a series of images” (Finkelstein, 1991: 152). Fashion makes people behave in consort and look similar rather than be more distinct. Following trends means that the serious cultivation of taste and judgement are no longer necessary (Finkelstein, 1991: 148). This analysis wholeheartedly accepts that hierarchies have disappeared and that contemporary society is composed of autonomous consumers following fashion’s meaningless fads. The inference becomes that individuals have been manipulated by the nameless “fashion industries” into thinking that commodities are representative of selfhood or personal preference. Consumers are deceived into thinking that such things matter and that their place in society should be based upon ephemeral things such as style or external appearance. The inevitable implication is that individuals should be judged on more “genuine” attributes and “objective” qualities such as cultural and economic status (Postrel, 2003: 84). While it is dangerous to determine a person’s worth on the basis of how they look, many an individual would argue that how they look is who they are. Who one is, is an amalgam of their individual interpretation of fashion according to personal preference and their social identity.

The dandy's actions have "anticipated and mirrored the re-formation of style as an active component of cultural change" (Breward, 2003b: 161). At the same time, the dandy forces the acknowledgement that the self, the body, and its practices are culturally determined and cannot be tidily separated. The dandy believes that his ritualized toilette and attention to sartorial detail convey his superiority. It is the very act of performing such tasks that help him to construct this distinguished self. Dandyism is a physical practice (Breward, 2000: 225). This very tangibility makes the allure of the dandy more interesting. The dandy exhibits a sense of self that stems from his intimate bodily awareness. His "sexual self-knowledge" makes him a potent force. Garelick surmises that the dandy's "very materiality serve only to dematerialize him, to render him pure presence ..." (1998: 23). This suggests that the dandy's mysterious impression has much to do with the reactions of others. He is singular, but not so inimitable as to be peculiar. It is not that the dandy has the most perfect personal characteristics or bodily features; it is that he is able to completely cogitate about his identity. This self-regard is what makes the dandy both revered and reviled.

Chapter V - The Twenty-First Century Dandy

“Dandyism is a velvet shroud in which certain men who are neither leaders nor followers will always seek solace. An institute of higher initiation, dandyism teaches us that although all men are created equal in the eyes of the law, they don't remain so for long. A few brave spirits will always rise above the common herd in the quest for immortality”. Christian M. Chensvold, Dandyism.net

When hip hop entrepreneur P. Diddy declares that he will remain a “fashion god” no matter what is written about him, when the “metrosexual” emerges and he is wearing pink, and when increasing numbers of style publications are directed solely at men it is clear why “dandy” becomes a tempting moniker to use for the twenty-first century man.¹⁰ Despite these superficial signs, contemporary social ideas are providing a fertile base for the propagation of dandyism. The atmosphere of contemporary society precludes notions that dandyism is a relic of past centuries incompatible with existing fashion's pastiche and bricolage. Theorists are increasingly focusing attention on the “new” man and attempt to explain the reasons for his emergence (Chapman, 1988; Craik, 1993; Mort, 1988, 1996; Nixon, 1996). This style of aesthetic masculinity seemingly allies itself with dandyism, in its promotion of the “spectacular” man. This chapter seeks to explore the developments that have led to this form of masculinity and how they portent the arrival of the twenty-first century dandy. Without wholly accepting that this is a brand new man and without accepting that he is the dandy, it is possible to see the similarities between these two styles of masculinity. In effect, the “new” man heralds the proliferation of dandyism.

¹⁰ Specter, M. (2002, September 9). I Am Fashion: Guess Who Puff Daddy Wants to Be? *The New Yorker*, 116-127.

The blurring of social status distinctions and the challenges to conventional masculinity have ensured the dandy's vigour. Grossly hierarchical patterns of consumption and display have disappeared as society has become increasingly defined by leisure. Dandyism's quest for distinction through the cultivation of self has found an increasing foothold. Like the "new" man, the dandy combines conventional masculine traits such as individuality, aggressiveness, and competition with narcissistic qualities. The average male consumer possesses the potential to be a dandy despite the fact that the dandy is not the average male consumer. Exclusivity provides the dandy the means of separating himself from the consumer hordes. Nevertheless, the accessibility of elite style makes dandyism increasingly penetrable and achievable. As a ritual of taste, dandyism moves beyond mere fashionability and indicates a level of commitment and self-awareness. It is this anti-fashionable style that sets the dandy apart from the well-heeled and well-dressed. His brand of self-awareness cannot be purchased despite the possibility of being cultivated. Therefore, contemporary dandyism is neither popular nor egalitarian. The dandy's permanence lies in his seemingly paradoxical ability to operate above the binaries that continue to exist.

Another Crisis in Masculinity or Brave New World?

With the end of the nineteenth-century looming and the disgrace of Oscar Wilde, men renounced fashion's frivolity and the inability of style to express the essence of masculinity. Characterizing the dandy as effete lent the resultant connotations of infertility and weakness to the popular portrayal of this style of masculinity. From the turn of the nineteenth-century, dandyism became a deviant pose and was commonly

linked with homosexuality. This erroneous depiction ensured that the dandy became of minor importance when discussing prevalent masculinities. The uncritical linking of Wilde and the dandy also limited the applicability of dandyism to the culture of the new century. Wilde's mockery of "the ideals of gentlemanly deportment" shattered an "unproblematised relationship between middle-class men and the construction of their outer selves" (Breward, 2000: 231). The rhetoric of the "great masculine renunciation"¹¹ became the standard refrain of the twentieth-century asserting that the normative male did not care about issues of personal style and clothed himself for the sake of practicality or serviceability. Nevertheless, Breward warns that accepting this interpretation of men's general disinterest in sartorial expression denies the possibility that:

The self-denying rhetoric of tailoring journals and etiquette manuals, and its reflection in novels and on the stage actually reveals a rigorous attention to the rules and details of dress which in itself constitutes an alternative fashion system (1999: 60).

Throughout the twentieth-century, men's use of style to construct specifically masculine identities never disappeared. However, stylistic expression predominantly became the jurisdiction of subcultural groups attempting to set themselves apart from conventional society. The code characterizing feminine style was to present a particular "look" for others to gaze upon. Men who appeared to favour such display were abnormal. Dandies have always used style as a tool to distinguish themselves. While acknowledging that men did not wholly renounce stylistic expression at the end of the

¹¹ The "great masculine renunciation" is a description of the changes in male dress that occurred during the Victorian era. The gravity and significance of men's roles within the public sphere, in addition to their energy and aggression were mirrored in their dress. Men's clothing became more sombre in colour, more loosely fitted, more sharply tailored with less ornamentation and frippery. Women's dress became a foil to this male renunciation of triviality and self-indulgence (Entwistle, 2000: 157-158).

nineteenth-century, the style of the new century's normative male was calculated to best exemplify and enhance occupational and social statuses (Craik, 1993: 176). As employment became the means whereby men secured social status, the relevance of aristocratic dress codes that emphasized leisure and indulgence was diminished (Craik, 1993: 179). The effort that went into creating these modes of dress was not viewed as legitimate labour for men. Strong, active archetypal men (John Wayne, the Marlboro Man) had a particular look, however they did not spend time cultivating their style. Clothing was not supposed to define their brand of masculinity; while in reality, style completely characterized who they were.

Particular groups during the twentieth-century successfully asserted their presence through a restoration of these dress codes. Marginalized, these groups used ostentatious display and the blatant attentiveness to appearance to affirm their social position outside conventional mores. These precursors of the "new" man expressed their masculinity through a distinct style. Subcultures epitomized an increasingly spectacular society in they used style to distinguish themselves as superior, dangerous, or different (Entwistle, 2000: 136).

Teds or teddy boys and mods are often cited as examples of mid-twentieth-century dandies (Brake, 1980; Breward, 2003a, 2003b; Wilson, 1985). These "working-class" dandies are so characterized because of their upper-class sartorial style. Teds were unskilled, male workers who favoured an Edwardian style of dress (hence their name) that resembled the effeminate fops of the past. Their loutish behaviour set off the irony of their precious look and warned others about their potential dangerousness (Brake,

1980: 73). It is problematic to liberally apply the term “dandy” to any group that places weight on an elaborate form of dress. To do so neglects the importance of demeanour and gait in the construction of style and necessarily results in an overly broad and inclusive category. Subcultural groups such as bikers and punks have specific styles that illustrate their ideals, however this does not make them dandies.

Mods more accurately display the tenets of dandyism. They emerged in 1960s Britain, their name referring to an interest in all things “modernist”. The detached, “cool” presence of these men mirrors the dandy’s *sang froid*.¹² Like the dandy, these working-class youth possessed aspirations for moving outside of their ascribed social position (Brake, 1980: 74). The mods’ dress was characterized by elegant and expensive slim suits. Their fetishization of consumption was revealed in their choice of chic dress, their Italianate motorized scooters, and use of drugs (Breward, 2003b: 224). Stuck in lower-status clerical positions, the Mods used leisure to indicate their higher status. These youth were able to spend their ample pay on the drugs, clothing, and clubs setting them apart from their working-class contemporaries. Despite the obvious affiliation with dandyism, the characterization of the mod as dandy is problematic. More like the dandy’s younger brother, the mod represents a definite youth subcultural group. Perhaps due to age, the mod was never able to exercise the extensive social power that the dandy did. The mod was confined to the world of working-class youth. He did not possess the social mobility of the dandy. Nevertheless, the mod challenged traditional values through “his subversive potential as a threat to the older assurances of class- and gender-based

¹² Although there were female mods, their status within the group is characterized as marginal and often they were mere adjuncts to their male counterparts.

hierarchies and traditions” (Breward, 2003b: 224). His look possessed the possibility to confuse. Nonetheless, the variations that accompanied this faction meant that the “mainstream mod”, to which the dandy has the most likeness, was short-lived. The poorer and less refined version of the mod eventually transformed into the skinhead (Brake, 1980: 76).

As feminism gained strength and conventional structures of gendered power were questioned, a concurrent pessimism about the nature of masculinity developed (Chapman, 1988: 226; Mort, 1988: 195). Women began to enter universities and the public sector in record numbers. Bastions of male power were being infiltrated and corresponding notions of appropriate behaviour between men and women were changing. The breadwinner model of masculinity was being undermined. As the last two decades of the 1900s arrived, signifiers of authority and strength were also changing. The gay rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s had ensured the general acceptability of gay culture. This subcultural group promoted the idea of men’s style as intrinsic to one’s identity. The size of this group was significant enough to constitute a market to which advertisers and product developers spoke. The preferences expressed by some members of gay subcultures became the standard of taste for the rest of the male population (Crane, 2000: 94). Nevertheless, it was not the only group to emphasize the importance of style. African-American men have a history of sartorial display that has existed since slavery. The visual display that these men created held the captivated gaze of white individuals and, in so doing, challenged white authority (White & White, 1998: 35). Black athletes, actors, and musicians of the twentieth-century were at the forefront of promoting

masculine display. Their emulation by mainstream male youth has resulted in a heightened consciousness of the expensive tastes displayed by these celebrities. The spending power of adolescents has increased dramatically and young men are experiencing greater autonomy in selecting and buying personal effects. The opportunities to mimic their icons have increased. Yet, by the turn of the last century, a schizophrenic vision of masculinity surfaced that emphasized perceptive self-expression without betraying any over sensitivity.¹³ Men were supposed to communicate their feelings, know what they want, know who they were, and know how to take care of themselves. Nevertheless, the line between confident and arrogant, well-groomed and vain, and vulnerable and weak remains finely drawn. As one woman told a magazine interviewer: "It's not like we're looking for a guy to look after us, but there's something about a big, tall guy with broad shoulders that just makes you feel very comfortable" (Deacon, 2002: 35).

The media has recognized the contradictory and diverging nature of the images of the ideal man. Recent articles cite the possibility that "the pop-culture signals all seem crossed" and that "being bombarded by such a mixed bag of images [has] confused our sense of masculinity" (Deacon, 2002: 31; Hyman, 2004). Other sources offer up the possibility that this new climate is liberating for masculinity (Purves, 2004). It is thought that men are allowed to express aspects of their identity that they were previously unable to. The possibility for a dandy resurgence within such a climate is highly credible.

Consumerism is speaking to individuals as the means for distinction. Marketing

¹³ Women are also experiencing this vacillation about appropriate gender-specific attributes. Hollander suggests that mutability and multiplicity are not new to women who have dealt with these types of mixed messages for longer than men (1994: 182).

campaigns and advertisements are speaking to men as a community of men (Mort, 1988: 212). Men are being told that success rests in the cultivation of themselves as proprietors of personal and cultural knowledge and taste. Nevertheless, this is risky as it links the normative man with fashion and sexuality. Historically, conventional masculine sexuality has involved a denial of self-confident fashionability (Gladwell, 2000: 188).

The “New” Man Cuts A Dash

The rise of consumer culture offers new possibilities for displaying masculinity and individuality (Mort, 1988: 193). Leisure activities, rather than occupational status are beginning to shape an individual’s perceptions of who they are (Crane, 2000: 175). Leisurewear is gaining importance in the individual’s wardrobe. This is particularly significant for men, as their predominance in the public sphere has diminished. The “new” man or the metrosexual has been invoked to explain the ensuing alterations in masculinity. While many theorists admit that this man is not completely new, most point to the rapid shifts in consumer patterns as being the reason for this new visual imagery and focus. Men’s style magazines espouse the creation of a distinctly masculine individuality expressed through dress and bodily maintenance. It is promoted as a serious undertaking requiring cultural capital and effort. Accompanying these images are society’s new expectations for men. Society is becoming an increasing spectacular one. Individuals grapple with notions of who they are by constructing how they present themselves. Style provides the means for making these intangible character traits tangible; individuals actively consume in the pursuit of selfhood. As the locus of identity, the body becomes an increasingly important communicator. The “new” man

constructs a masculine counterpoint of the macho-man and the wimp. This dualism is similar to the feminine dualism of the Madonna and the whore (Chapman, 1988: 227). The vision of this man fuses traditional characteristics of normative masculinity such as individuality, aggression, homosociality, and competition with an unabashed pride in external appearance. Advertisers and marketers use this combination in particularly fruitful ways to avoid connotations of effiteness when promoting products to care for the body. This masculinity provides an adaptation that is able to better maintain patriarchal control in the prevailing consumer culture (Chapman, 1988: 235; Mort, 1988: 222).

The emphasis upon masculine display has not been accompanied by a renegotiation of gender relations. In many ways, the reality of this incarnation is that it reasserts masculine power through a dismissal of women. Mort contends that while moving beyond limiting notions of traditional manliness, “it is the freedom to be without/above women – to go it alone like in the standard male romance” (1988: 223). As with the nineteenth-century dandy, this hybrid masculinity successfully appropriates constructed feminine traits. He can outshine women at their own game (Chapman, 1988: 248). It also reintroduces into the mainstream the homosociality that had been relegated to the sports field or locker room, at the same time as it incorporates elements of the homoerotic. The “new man” is an object of desire. His portrayal in advertisements and in the media set up the possibility that men will long to be him/be with him. For the first time, men are being targeted as consumers in a sexualized manner. This potent style of masculinity that disregards women sets up an interesting context within which the dandy may surface.

One example of a product symbolizing this hybrid masculinity is Pulsar's "Prestige Collection" of watches. The print advertisements for these products combine the traditional masculine traits of individuality, courage, straightforwardness and the recent emphasis on appearance. The advertisements feature shots of the torsos of different male models as they face the camera. The pictures of their shirts have been erased leaving a white area upon which their "personal profiles" are written in black. These men are effectively wearing their self-identities. As Pulsar writes in every advertisement "it's all in the detail". In one such instance (Fig. v), the man is portrayed as different, fearless, active, and cerebral yet straightforward. It reads in stylized script "Plays the bagpipes, Owns a pet snake, Loves Hitchcock films, Owns 15 pairs of jeans, Only needs 5 hours sleep, Still uses a typewriter, Reads Sci-fi, Wears a Pulsar." The fact that he owns many types of jeans is indicative of a moderate interest in clothing rather than an excessive interest in effeminate high fashion. In another ad (Fig. vi), the message is the same, albeit the bold, simple font and message suggest a slightly more conventional masculinity. This Pulsar wearer "Loves horror movies. Drinks Tequila. Owns a kilt. Supports Dundee United. 80s music. 70s décor. Addicted to The Simpsons. Grows sunflowers. Favourite colour is dark grey. Talks to plants. Wears a Pulsar." The implication about a style of masculinity remains the same throughout the series. Pulsar wearers embody the characteristics of the "new" man. He is a perfect combination of traditional masculine strength and newly expressed sensitivity. He may watch cartoons but they are smart ones; he may not love foreign films but he doesn't love "action" movies either; he has plants and pets and reveals a decidedly gentle side to his

personality. The portrayal of these men indicates a style of masculinity that combines the “armour-plated masculinity” of icons of virility and the acceptance of the “feminine” within them (Chapman, 1988: 227).

At this time, men are being targeted and addressed through their gender. Mort argues that masculinity’s former “best-kept secret” was that it was the norm around which everything else was defined; men are now being forced to look at themselves self-consciously as men (1988: 195). Masculine display and the formation of a consumer society in which men are spectacles have encouraged hegemonic masculinity to entertain the inclusion of additional attributes in its definition. This man is not the dandy, however the mounting reacceptance of men in roles unrelated to the breadwinner model of masculinity encourages the dandy’s proliferation. Within this climate of change and disorientation, the dandy is able to offer an imposing and convincing masculine style.

The Contemporary Dandy

Attempts to (re)define dandyism are complicated by the paradox of the dandy’s overwhelming individuality and the necessity of defining this style. Characterizing dandyism as the eccentric behaviour and sartorial style of the privileged few obscures its social and cultural significance. Muggleton’s conception of “distinctive individuality” highlights the possibility that individuals use style to distinguish themselves at the same time as they use it to ally themselves with a particular group (2000). Thus debates proclaiming the incommensurability of modern collective affiliation and postmodern fragmentation and individuality are more ideal than real. Accepting this fusion of individualistic and collective expression means that dandyism must be regarded in terms

of style rather than clothing. It is the combination of image, demeanour, and vernacular that are important in locating dandyism.

Dandyism has not been popularized. Walden believes that “in an egalitarian society the dandyism and the vanity it implies may be inverted, but it is dandyism nonetheless” (2002: 36). This suggests that the dandy may be invoked whenever an individual displays the fashion of the moment in dress, manners, and opinions. A democratic dandy “glamorizes the multitude” (Walden, 2002: 48). This notion of a “pseudo-proletarian” dandy neglects the fact that the seeming democracy of dandyism masks its restrictedness. In contemporary society, the possibility exists that men from various ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds may adopt a dandified sartorial style. The requisite sexual self-knowledge of the dandy *may* be developed through the careful study of one’s body and deportment. Nevertheless, this understanding does not recognize that adornment cannot entirely constitute dandyism. The dandy consciously creates an entire mode of being. Dandyism is more than just a type of clothing behaviour. It is an attempt by the dandy to demonstrate his mastery of a rarefied knowledge. He is the cognoscente up against the masses. The allure of the dandy is not something that can be gleaned from an expensive wardrobe thus making the ritual aspects of the dandy’s preparations exceedingly important. More than creating a highly refined and distinguished appearance, these daily procedures allow the dandy to garner an intimate understanding of his body. The resultant poise is viscerally communicated to others. As Cicolini writes “dandyism is at once an exclusive and democratic stance – democratic

because it appears so easily attainable, but elusive in that so few succeed in getting it right” (2003: 1).

It is also elusive in the amount of time and effort required to sustain it. Few men have the daily opportunity or inclination. Practicing dandyism is hard work. It requires significant commitment that extends beyond owning designer clothing. One cannot be a dandy one day and something else the next. The time required to prepare the body to “receive” the dandy’s dress and assume the mantle of dandyism is exhaustive. It is more than using expensive shaving equipment and designer aftershave. These rituals separate the well-dressed, chic man from the dandy. These rituals illustrate the dandy’s bodily and spiritual superiority.

The “seeming democracy” of dandyism does not mean that the dandy’s clothes are just designer versions of mass taste. Although dandyism is not static, it is not a transitory fashion statement that focuses solely on *the latest thing*. However, it is also a flawed assumption that the dandy’s dress is eccentric or intentionally anachronistic. The dandy of the present does not represent a stylistic throwback to Brummell or Wilde. Dandies espouse an anti-fashion that does not denote an indifference to fashionable dress.

Despite the predilection of historical dandies for sporting garb, the contemporary dandy provides a counterpoint to the growing importance of leisurewear. These types of dress blur existing class hierarchies and social distinctions. At present, two monolithic clothing cultures exist that separate the world into work and leisure (Crane, 2000: 178). Work clothing continues to indicate social difference, in that it personifies the nature of the occupation. While some jobs require uniforms or sturdy articles of clothing to

withstand manual labour, others require a professional, refined mode of dress. Dress usually indicates the level of training, education, and the practitioner's economic worth. Nevertheless, the accessibility of work clothing such as the suit ensures that it no longer carries a patina of complete exclusivity. Seemingly contradictory to the strategy of the Regency dandy, the contemporary dandy is no longer faced with strictly demarcated social hierarchies. Leisurewear does challenge the demarcation of strict social lines. Clothing associated with relaxation or sporting activities no longer differs between classes. There remain few activities or pursuits that are prohibitive for the majority of the population. Existing leisure clothing does not have the automatic simplicity that made it so appealing to Brummell. Nevertheless, the dandy continues his attempts to stylistically hinder processes of social levelling. The dandy's sartorial choices are more likely to reflect a derivative desire to retreat from the levelling effects of leisurewear.

Dandyism is a type of clothing behaviour that is related to a non-occupational identity (Crane, 2000: 179-180). Despite the fact that many designers are constructing high-fashion versions of traditional fitness clothing, jeans, or sports team clothing, the dandy will not inevitably be wearing Prada running shoes or Hugo Boss turtlenecks. Less an indication of a leisurely life, the dandy's seeming detachment from reality is an avowal of his labour to look good. Even Brummell's decision to adopt an eighteenth-century sporting look was not done to espouse relaxation. The dandy's idleness indicates a disconnection with the practical concerns of daily life. The dandy wants to reinforce his social superiority; his *sang froid* being more than a blasé pose. Although the dandy's look appears effortless, it does not appear to be thrown together. The dandy is not the

sartorial embodiment of contemporary “cool”. The dandy’s style epitomises self-containment. The dandy does not favour garments that do not express this control. Dress that is too loose, too open does not adequately convey dandyism. The dandy’s *sang froid* requires a deliberate and immaculate look. Irregularities or defects serve to distract from the overall aura of discipline. To be effective, the dandy style must be considered as a whole. Fraying seams, stains, or wrinkles potentially force observers away from considering the dandy to looking at specific imperfections. Hollander maintains:

The appeal of the modern suit in our period is still its combined look of comfort and crispness, with its neat collar and tie that perpetually defy the forces of hot weather, hard work and high anxiety, its unruffled tailored envelope suggesting an invincible physical aplomb, including sexual. No sweat-suits, cycling gear, or wrinkled khakis can hope to convey such a superior level of ease (1994: 100).

Without overstating the formality of the dandy’s clothing, some of these men may only wear three-piece suits and ties. Others may choose a different mode of sartorial expression. As outlined in Chapter Two the dress of the various dandies differed even as each of these men possessed the dandy style. This is not to suggest that dandyism might be glimpsed in any assemblage of clothing or decoration. Dress that distracts from an impression of discipline is detrimental to the dandy. Clashing colours and peculiar combinations of garments do not construct a unified impression. The dandy’s overall appearance should reveal upon closer inspection that such a look is hard to find, hard to replicate, of evident quality or the appearance thereof, and have been executed with evident care. Even though the dandy wears replicable clothing, it is apparent to those who observe him that his look is special, different somehow. This style should not convey ridiculousness. The dandy would not sport the latest line of jackets with lingerie

linings or pant legs suspended by garters despite their appearance on fashion catwalks.¹⁴ This does not imply that the dandy's costume is purchased as a matched set. A certain heroism exists in putting the dandy style together with articles culled from various sources. A dandy may shop in second-hand stores, discount outlets, and/or designer boutiques. Although an essential element, dress does not completely establish who the dandy may be. Being a dandy requires skill and knowledge. This is part of what is being communicated to others.

The dandy's *sang froid* makes his superiority potent and mysteriously agreeable to the observer. It is something that is overwhelmingly apparent to those that encounter him. The dandy completely embodies authority and mastery. He intimately understands that the "control of oneself leads to power over others" (Moers, 1960: 76). The dandy's influence and visibility makes the connection with contemporary celebrities too easy. Attempting to make the connection between these "personalities" of the nineteenth-century and a present-day version, often leads to assertions that the dandy is a celebrity. In a spectacular society, the patina of poise is easily attributable to "stars" viewed through the medium of the screen and television. They are separate from the rest of society, by the very fact that they are being gazed at from afar. The dandy is a spectacle that necessarily requires the interaction of the observer. The dandy's success lies in the reaction that he is able to extract from others. The personality that dandyism implies means that the dandy is "a somebody". This has been translated in contemporary society

¹⁴ These are examples of featured garments in the John Galliano Menswear Collection for Fall 2004. For further information see Blanks, T. (2004, September). How to Read the Runway. *TORO*, 43-44.

to inevitably mean a famous superstar. The dandy is not necessarily a celebrity but that is not to say that individual celebrities cannot be dandies.

It is impossible and undesirable to treat dandyism as a circumscribed category, into which well-dressed men may be labelled and inserted. Nevertheless to affirm the actuality of dandyism, examples from contemporary society ought to be chosen. The diversity of these examples illustrates consistencies and incompatibilities that allow the construction of a “type” (Stanton, 1980: 11). For the sake of clarity, I have chosen several advertisements that feature men that I consider to be dandies (Fig. vii-ix). That these advertisements are for elite fashion houses or clothing designers has less to do with who I believe the dandy to be than the reality that fashion represents men in distinct ways. Crane asserts that the discourse of elite fashion attempts to push masculinity beyond conventional norms (2000: 195). It is not a coincidence that these advertisements move away from more conventionally styled men that one might see in advertisements selling alcohol or cars. These men display the requisite aplomb, sartorial panache, and ambiguous sexuality. They exude a certain “something”. I have also chosen to outline examples of publicly known men. The writer Tom Wolfe wears a personal uniform of Brummellian simplicity. His bespoke, white, three-piece suits have occasionally changed with variations of collar and lapel widths (Purves, 2003: 62). Like Brummell, this stark outfit has become his signature style. Personalities such as *Vogue* magazine’s “editor-at-large” Andre Leon Talley and the musician Prince display the flair of a peacock. Their extravagant and opulent sartorial styles are reminiscent of the Count d’Orsay. During Prince’s earliest incarnation, he wore dandyish ruffles at his wrists and down his chest,

crushed velvet jackets, and high-heeled boots. As time passed, Prince's look lost its overt derivativeness. However, he maintains an extravagant appearance and does not shy away from flourishes of jewels or cosmetics. These men possess the requisite self-restraint and self-possession of a dandy. They are never caught in a state of dishevelment or disarray. As Garelick writes, there is no "backstage Prince" (1998: 155). Prince's music and manner are highly sexualized, in a way that is antithetical to the dandy's non-phallic sexuality. Nevertheless, his use of female musicians and dancers as muses, at times, resembles a dandified use of female props. The fact that Prince and these women strongly resemble each other reinforces his sexual ambiguity and accents his feminine qualities and role as boss (Garelick, 1998: 158). Despite their obvious professions, these public figures are still dandies. There are fewer opportunities to survive outside the practical considerations of employment and money. However, the dandy's livelihood should never be of greater importance than his vocation of self. If anything, all activities should further his dandy style. The aforementioned celebrities also embody the enigmatic ambiguity of the dandy. Their sexuality not easily discernable and their unique combination of potency and delicacy further exemplify these men's dandy qualities. Most importantly, these "stars" exemplify a relative constancy that flies in the face of fashion's unrelenting change. Their style separates them from the masses and from other luminaries who continuously transform themselves.

However urbane the dandy is, he is not a gentleman. The dandy cares for his appearance in immoderate degrees. His civility does not necessarily include deference or politeness. Dandyism is fundamentally disloyal to its elite patrons and cannot be equated

with conformity. As Walden explains, perfectly judged manners are not the same as perfect manners (2002: 32). Foulkes writes that d'Orsay was "self-possessed to the point of impudence" (2003: 46). The Count tacitly understood who he was and what he represented. His conduct is guided by his astute readings of situations and how he might be best served.

Unlike the "new" man, the dandy is the antithesis of the breadwinner model. He does not have a family or obvious attachments. The dandy is a social opportunist and an exclusive; the ritual of taste played out through his body. Dandies celebrate beauty. This unabashed celebration of the self as art is what has separated them from the normative man in the past and probably will continue to do so. Dandyism is a truly original stance; one cannot feign being a dandy. It involves commitment and exertion to achieve this look. This self-presentation unavoidably comments on the essential aspects of the individual. The glorification of oneself leads the dandy to distance himself from any aspects of social reality that do not relate directly to him. This is particularly relevant in a society that is increasingly apathetic about many political issues. Nevertheless, the dandy remains concerned with questions concerning *his* potential influence.

Fashion and pop-culture journalism's generous use of the term "dandy" tends to link this figure with couture labels and outrageous sartorial creations. Consumer culture research tends to merge dandyism with the practice of masculine shopping or the "homosexualization of culture" (Purves, 2004: 39). Cultural change has ensured that the dandy has become increasingly relevant and potentially powerful. The sexualizing of men's bodies as spectacles has made the dandy's ambiguity promising. He possesses a

charisma and power that remains comfortably masculine. Yet, as men are increasingly encouraged to embrace the femininity within, the dandy's obvious mastery of such a task will allow him to easily navigate the "new" social order. This does not imply that dandyism has become inclusive or popular. As an anti-fashion, dandyism presumes that taste and display have been democratized (Davis, 1992: 165). It endeavours to reintroduce a hierarchy of taste that the dandy will rule.

Fig. viii. Advertisement for Hugo Boss, 2004

Fig. ix. Advertisement for Ralph Lauren Purple Label, 2003

Fig. x. Advertisement for Yves Saint Laurent *Rive Gauche*, 2002

Conclusion

The elusive dandy climbs above society's constructed binaries as he ascends the social hierarchy. His ambiguity makes him powerful and he intuitively understands this fact. He skirts the boundaries of historical epochs, gender, and sexuality. He juxtaposes individuality and community and elite taste and the mass market. In accomplishing this, the dandy illustrates his duality. He destabilizes the rules whilst continuing to play by them. The dandy desires social conventions, although he emerges during periods of variation. This is part of the dandy's success. He is able to best individuals as he seduces them at their own game. Theorists argue that society has become preoccupied with pastiche. Some argue that this "creolization" of ideas and identities is beneficial while others argue that individuals and communities are losing their distinctiveness. The current consumer society with fashion as its henchman is perceived as soulless and artificial. Individuals or consumers have been both wittingly and unwittingly deceived by arbiters of vacuity to believe that "things" might be expressive of selves (Ewan, 1988; Finkelstein, 1991).

The dandy presents a vision of a self-reliant character, a character both unique and self-composed within this contemporary climate of appropriation. He is not revolutionary in his aims or his appearance. The potential amorality of dandyism is a frightening prospect as the opportunities for his proliferation increase. Nonetheless, the dandy is obviously a distinguished figure. His notability may extend internationally, in the case of the famous dandy or may only extend to the circle and strangers that a less "known" dandy encounters. The essence of dandyism becomes the ability to exercise

power through a distinct tastefulness. The dandy uses his presentational self or his appearance to construct an awareness of who he is. Thus, the process of clothing and preparing his body that informs a large portion of the dandy style creates the dandy. His bodily rituals enable him to create a coherent self-identity. However, dandyism is not merely the product of sartorial beauty. The dandy's *style* is informed by something that emanates from him, animating his appearance and signifying who he is. His sang froid is the lynchpin of dandyism and separates him from other chic men. Although he is able to develop his self-possession from his interactions with the body, the dandy demonstrates how style cannot be purchased. Regardless of the surfeit of opportunities for analysis that the dandy affords, it is his sang froid and how it radiates from him that makes him so captivating.

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