

Regency Fashion: The Muslin Round Gown

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Authorization to Submit Thesis

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Abstract

Fashion mirrors culture. In the late Georgian and Regency Periods, the evolution of a particular gown reflected the political, social, economic, and religious attitudes and movements of the time. The white, round gown made from Indian muslin grew to popularity in the last decade of the 18th century. Originating in France then moving across the Channel to England, I demonstrated how changes in the round, muslin gown reflected socio-political events occurring during the period from 1799 to 1828. In the 1820s the fashion was declining and by 1830 gone from the world of dress in the nation and beyond.

Contemporary women's journals of the era provided articles including images of current fashion. These sources offered primary information in a form from which data could be extracted and tabulated. Points were assigned to each garment based on the "Classification System for Types of Dress and their Properties" (Classification System) created by Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher and the features suggested by Alden O'Brien; columnar shape, low neckline, high waistline, and white muslin fabric. For each image a zero per feature matching the criteria requisite to distinguish it a Regency gown was charted. For features such as attachments to enclosures indicated by Roach-Higgins and Eicher, one to three points were assigned. For example, if the skirt had a flounce it was given one point. More than one attachment increased the points for that skirt (enclosure for the lower body). The same method was applied to the bodice and sleeves as necessary. In viewing the data table created it was possible to see how and when the fashion was modified during the twenty-eight-year span of time. Consulting contemporary culture via historical accounts offered insight into what may have prompted a minimal or greater alteration in style.

The table illustrates how the specific features of the gown morphed throughout the years. The greatest alteration occurred in the shape of the gown, which declined by 84% from columnar to a bell-shaped form, then the waistline which dropped by 48% from a very high waist to one that rested at or very near the natural waistline. The neckline and fabric (muslin) declined by 42% and 24% respectively. The feature with the least percentage of adjustment was the color of the gowns at 6%.

Attachments to the enclosures signified the greatest change. Flounces on the skirts were the first to emerge followed by quilling and mancherons on the bodice. Each of these components increased over the period until there were multiple flounces, appliques, and puffings, on most gowns. As the attachments were added, the width of the skirt grew, the waistline dropped, the neckline rose, and the shoulders broadened. New fabrics and colors emerged also. The Regency gown of the early nineteenth century was gone by 1828.

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Dedication

To my children, Erin, Ian, and Marilyn, whose love and encouragement throughout this adventure cannot be equaled, I say thank you. This thesis demanded my presence away from my husband, Jack, for two years. My thanks to him and appreciation for his love and patience is beyond what words can express.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Many years ago, there was a television commercial with a lovely jingle. No words were spoken by the actors, just the song provided a message that went like this; “the touch, the feel, the fabric of our lives; the touch, the feel of cotton, the fabric of our lives.”¹ It was a catchy tune that along with the images it accompanied, evoked powerful emotions of nostalgia hearkening back to the simplicities of life. Cotton was and is the cloth that binds the memories we make as individuals, friends and families together, at least that was the message conveyed. Use cotton. Your life is worth it. Yet few stopped to consider from where it came, or whose lives might have been part of its story. In the United States we have very powerful memories associated with cotton.

It was British fashions of the late eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth century, designed and constructed of primarily cotton muslin from India, that was the focus of this paper. Through clothing, a universal phenomenon, I demonstrated a visual connection to how structures of power, economics, trade patterns, politics, and social ambition intersected and transformed society and were in turn altered by the society which they influenced. The round gown provided a lens through which it was possible to examine how structural and functional alterations of society occurred and the fashion theories that explained them, a relatively new phenomenon in the study of history, but one that shed light on a sector of the population that had little illumination; early nineteenth-century women.

1. Cotton Inc., *Cotton, the Fabric of Our Lives*, November 23, 1989.

Background of the Problem

Dress

Dress carries the potential for assigning values to people based on how their appearance is interpreted by another individual or society across space and time. Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher created a tool wherein it is possible to study dress from a neutral perspective. Their, “Classification System for Types of Dress and their Properties” (Classification Chart), provided descriptors explaining the various aspects of dressing the body. According to the authors, there are two main categories of dress: body modifications and body supplements. This thesis addressed only body supplements: those items which a person puts on their physique such as a shirt or shoes, not those which modify it such as tattoos or piercings. Moreover, within this supplement category were several sub-categories including enclosures that are wrapped around the body, suspended from the body, pre-shaped or a combination of any or all of the aforementioned components. To these supplements may be added additional supplements in the form of buttons, ruffles, and flounces.² While these multi-layers may seem overwhelming to the uninitiated, they provided an excellent means of describing dress in a non-biased manner.

The round gown in this research was described as an enclosure that was a combination of suspended (hanging from the shoulders), pre-shaped (bodice and sleeves are sewn into a fitted shape) and wrapped (encircles the whole body). The original round gowns,

2. Joanne B. Eicher, Sandra Lee Evenson, *The Visible Self: Global Perspectives on Dress, Culture, and Society*. (New York, NY: Fairchild Books, 2015), 5.

were described by Peter McNeil as, “a simple tube tied with a sash.”³ Phyllis G. Tortora and Sara B. Marcketti state they were, “...dresses that did not open at the front to show a petticoat.”⁴ Furthermore, the fabrics used were fluid allowing the dress to move softly as the wearer walked or danced. Alden O’Brien, in his article entitled, “Empire Style,” in the Berg Fashion Library states the following,

In its broadest sense as a term in contemporary fashion, “empire style” (sometimes called simply “Empire” with the French pronunciation, “om-peer”) refers to a woman’s dress silhouette in which the waistline is considerably raised above the natural level, and the skirt is usually slim and columnar. The reference is to fashions of France’s First Empire, which in political terms lasted from 1804 when Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself Emperor, to his final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. It should be noted that the styles of this period, when referring specifically to English or American fashions or examples, may be termed “Regency” ... or “Federal.”⁵

O’Brien also described the gown as having a columnar silhouette, and smooth front with gathers at the center back. The waistline was raised and could be as high as the armpit. New undergarments were employed, and the gowns were made from imported Indian muslin. Classical Greek statuary provided the inspiration behind the gowns as the New Republic in France hearkened back to early forms of democratic government.⁶ Prior to the round gown, dresses were open, often at the front and closed with decorative or practical fasteners. The bodice might have had a stomacher that married the sides together, and a petticoat at the

3. Peter McNeil, "The Structure and Form of European Clothes." In *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion: West Europe*, edited by Lise Skov, 33–38. Oxford: Berg, 2010. Accessed November 20, 2019. <http://ida.lib.uidaho.edu:2153/10.2752/BEWDF/EDch8008>.

4. Phyllis G. Tortora, Sara B. Marcketti, *Survey of Historic Costume* (New York, NY: Fairchild Books, 2015), 315.

5. Alden O’Brien, "Empire Style." In *The Berg Companion to Fashion*, edited by Valerie Steele. (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 247-248. Accessed November 21, 2019. <http://ida.lib.uidaho.edu:2153/10.5040/9781474264716.0005393>.

6. O’Brien, “Empire Style.”

bottom, which encircled the body with a skirt over the top, open in the front showing the fabric and supplements attached to it.

Fashion and History

Fashion, dress, and the theories undergirding the concepts are manifold and complex. Moreover, there has been, and still remains, a wall of resistance to recognizing the seriousness of the study by scholars, although fissures are emerging. According to Sandra Niessen and Anne Brydon, anthropologists, “Fashion and clothing have for a long while remained scholarly unmentionables.”⁷ Philosopher, Gilles Lipovetsky, in a work edited by Yuniya Kawamura, adduced similar sentiments.

The question of fashion is not a fashionable one among intellectuals...Fashion is celebrated in museums, but among serious intellectual preoccupations it has marginal status. It turns up everywhere on the street, in industry, and in the media, but it has virtually no place in the theoretical inquiries of our thinkers. Seen as an ontologically and socially inferior domain it is unproblematic and undeserving of investigation; seen as a superficial issue, it discourages conceptual approaches.⁸

Early in the twentieth century, history was a male dominated discipline, which focused on political and economic history. With the emergence of the field of anthropology, which looks at people and cultures, and sociology, a study of relationships within and across society, dress and fashion study transpired. Despite this slow adoption by formal academia, the volume of research surrounding the phenomenon steadily increased over the past one-hundred years, with the variety of recent perspectives expanding exponentially.

History and sociology traditionally approached their respective specialties via divergent methodology. Historians, through the employment of documents, images, and

7. Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashion-ology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies* (New York, NY: Berg, 2005), 8.

8. Kawamura, *Fashion-ology*, 8

additional physical evidence, sought answers to all that happened in the past. Sociologists focused solely on relationships of individuals and institutions within and across their respective societies through a modern lens. Each discipline eyed the other with suspicion. According to sociologists, the attention of historians to the dead past is fruitless and contributed little to the modern world, while according to historians the myopic devotion of sociologists to the present neglected potential case studies offering insights from the past. The round gown served to link modern sociology and the theories emanating from that discipline, including fashion, to history for a richer, more holistic interpretation of a slice of women's history during the late Georgian Era.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine influences that determined fashion change during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which I believed were tied to the rise of the cotton industry in England mirrored by the demise of the cotton industry in Bengal, India, now Bangladesh. This examination illuminated how women responded to external factors that affected their daily lives. While the focus was on the island nation of Great Britain, some reference to France could not be ignored. The physical proximity of the two nations encouraged political and economic advantages as well as detriments, with "balance of power" amongst the nations on the continent continually demanding a shift in loyalties which could and did lead to conflicts and wars.

Round muslin gowns enjoyed a relatively short period of popularity, emerging during the French Revolution and reaching their peak around 1810. Prior to, and after those years, the fashion waxed and waned. The nations of France and Britain were at war during

most of this period of time, however, French women still purchased muslin from the British East India Company, despite laws opposing it. Women on both sides of the English Channel had muslin round gowns; those of the French were far more revealing than those in England as the British women utilized undergarments to create opacity in their dress.

What stories did these gowns tell? What contemporary socio-cultural factors shared a role in their lifecycle, and what hidden insights of 18th and early 19th century women's history can this study unveil? Some scholars indicated that fashion ebbs and flows according to the zeitgeist (spirit or mood of the day). In her *Adorned in Zeitgeist*, Barbara Vinken states: "Fashion has become what art had wanted to be: the Zeitgeist expressing itself in visible form." She went on to indicate that fashion is of the moment, and at the point that it is acknowledged it is already heading towards death.⁹ According to Sandra Evenson this "spirit of the times" also served as a link between popular cultural phenomena such as film, music, theater, and literature, and a consuming public, infusing notions of style to emulate.¹⁰ During the late Georgian Era, clothing served women functionally, but also psychologically and socially. Clothing was a means of retaining body heat and protecting oneself during the conduct of daily activities. Women also used dress as a means to create an image, projecting to public the character for which they wanted to be known. As events, both negative and positive swirled around them, women employed agency, consciously or

9. Barbara Vinken, "Adorned in Zeitgeist." In *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 60. Accessed November 23, 2019. <http://ida.lib.uidaho.edu:2153/10.2752/9780857854094/FASHZEIT0005>.

14. Sandra Lee Evenson, "Dress as Costume in the Theater and Performing Arts," in *The Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion: Global Perspectives*, eds. Joanne B. Eicher and Phyllis G. Tortora (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 136-145. Accessed November 23, 2019. <http://ida.lib.uidaho.edu:2153/10.2752/BEWDF/EDch10018>.

subconsciously in the face of outside forces, to maintain a sense of self. As during any other era, the consumers of this fashion clothed their bodies in reflection of evolving social, political, and economic currents; the zeitgeist.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on gowns during the years from 1799 to 1828. Although cotton muslin dresses existed prior to that time, they were not common for adult women to wear, however, it was usual dress for girls up to their teens. It was specifically the round-gown, or regency gown created from muslin that was addressed in this thesis.

Additionally, while these same gowns were in vogue in other parts of the western world, such as the United States and on the European continent, it was strictly those found in Britain that was of interest here. I wanted to see how a homogenous population responded to social and cultural factors outside their control. Women on the Continent and America were not experiencing the same events as those in England. The English population served as a control factor in this study.

Finally, images in this thesis depicting the regency gown derived from three sources. *The Lady's Monthly Museum: or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction*, *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics* and *La Belle Assemblée* illustrated trends throughout the period such as changes in the silhouette, attachments that were added to the enclosures such as flounces, belts, ruffles, and the adoption of textiles that had been in disuse for a significant time. Each of the journals were available in digitized format from <https://www.hathitrust.org>, and were contemporary to the time of the gown. During the eighteenth century, the publishing of popular reading materials expanded and after the turn of the nineteenth century grew exponentially. Magazines for

ladies that included stories, news, and fashion helped disseminate the current trends. These periodicals yielded not only images, but written explanations or descriptions of how the gowns were made and from what materials.

Definition of Terms

Blond—a lace made of unbleached silk. Also known as Nankins or Blondes. ¹¹

Also, silk lace of two threads in exagonal meshes. Originally of raw silk color, now white or black.¹²

Cambric—fine, plain-weave linen fabric originally made at Cambray in Flanders. Cambric muslin was a muslin which resembled cambric through the appearance of its yarn and weave. It was calendared (pressed through rollers) to create a polished finish.¹³

Chemise—basic woman’s undergarment. It was made of linen edged with plain linen or lace frills at the neck and sleeves.¹⁴

11. George S. Cole, *Dictionary of Dry Goods and History of Silk, Cotton, Linen, Wool and other Fibrous Substances Including a Full Explanation of the Modern Processes of Spinning, Dyeing and Weaving, with an Appendix Containing a Treatise on Window Trimming* (Chicago: J. B. Herring Publishing Co., 1894), 25.

12. Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women’s Clothes, 1600-1930* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1968), 315.

13. Penelope Byrde, *Nineteenth Century Fashion* (London: B. T. Batsford Limited, 1992), 182.

14. Aileen Ribeiro, *A Visual History of Costume: The Eighteenth Century* (London: B T Batsford, 1983), 142.

Day Dress—May be the same design as an evening dress, but with less expensive or lower quality fabrics used in its making. Usually long-sleeved and some kind of neck/chest covering was employed to provide daytime modesty.

Dress—An assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body.¹⁵

Evening Dress—Fancy dress for formal occasions. Elegant or fancy fabrics such as silks, brocades, or chintz were chosen as were low necklines and short sleeves.

Flounce—a strip of fabric that is gathered or pleated and attached usually to the bottom of a gown.

Gros de Naples—a plain weave silk fabric of Italian origin made with organzine or ply warp and heavier two-ply filling, producing a pronounced grain.¹⁶

Indian Muslin—most likely the variety known in India as Turundam or by the English as terendam. It was a plain muslin with a thread count of 1,000 to 2700.¹⁷

15. Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne Bubolz Eicher, and Kim K. P. Johnson, eds. *Dress and Identity* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1995), 7.

16. Phyllis G. Tortora and Ingrid Johnson Eds., *The Fairchild Books Dictionary of Textiles* (New York: Fairchild Books and Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc., 2014,) 272.

17. Saiful Islam, *Muslin: Our Story* (Artron: Drik Picture Library Ltd., 2016), 3.

Mancherons—A flounced epaulette, shoulder decoration at the top of the sleeve.¹⁸

Pelisse—A coat lined with fur, or other warm material.¹⁹

Petticoat—Contemporary name for a woman's skirt.²⁰

Puffings—Shapes or designs of fabric that have been filled with stuffing, so they create dimension.

Quilling—A narrow bordering of net, lace or ribbon, pleated, crimped, or fluted so as to resemble a row of goosequills laid in successive ridges: ruffling.²¹

Round Gown—A gown that went completely around the body, without a split in the front revealing a petticoat underneath.²²

Sarsanet/Sarsnett—A thin silk, plain or twilled.²³

18. Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Clothes*, 135.

19. Ibid 447.

20. Ribeiro, 143.

21. George S. Cole, *Dictionary of Dry Goods*, 294.

22. Iris Brooke, *Dress and Undress: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1958), 136.

23. Waugh, 318.

Stays—Corset

Tucker—A strip of fine linen or muslin used as sort of ruffle round the uppermost verge of a woman's stays covering part of the breast and shoulders.²⁴

Vandyke—A serrated edging on collars and dress trimmings imitating the 'V' shapes of lace collars and cuffs in the portraits of van Dyke in the 1620s and 1630s.²⁵

Walking Dress—A dress with a shorter skirt to prevent soiling the hem on the debris in the unpaved streets.

24. Iris Brooke, *Dress and Undress*, 64.

25. Ribeiro, 144.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In order to place the muslin gowns into proper context it was necessary to research the history of the period as well as the fashions and the theories through which they might be viewed. Therefore, a combination of fashion theory, history, and fashion history books and articles were consulted to create a holistic account of the time.

Fashion Theory

Joanne Eicher, a foremost authority on non-verbal communication, dress and fashion, cultural dress, and more, along with her colleague Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins defines dress as, "...an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body."¹ Thus, cosmetics, perfumes, jewelry, handbags, hairstyle, function as critical components along with actual garments. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I looked only at body supplements—those items that are made of fabric, suspended, wrapped, or pre-shaped on the body. Thus, cosmetics, jewelry, and hair adornment were not addressed, nor were items such as handbags, parasols, gloves or shoes.

Why Do Humans Wear Clothes?

Fashion Foundations establishes a base from which to construct the remainder of this thesis. One of several questions addressed in this small volume of edited works is why humans wear clothing, a topic of interest that dates back centuries. The answer is critical, for without clothing there would be no fashion, at least as we know it. The editors included several accounts from which the following answers came; protection from the elements,

1. Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne Bubolz Eicher, and Kim K. P. Johnson, eds. *Dress and Identity* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1995), 7.

modesty, and adornment. Modesty was quickly discarded, which, coming from a Judeo-Christian background surprised me. Protection carried more merit. Alfred E. Crawley, anthropologist of the early twentieth century when the discipline was new, explained clothing for protection. According to him, protective covering may have evolved in a Darwinian fashion. In the tribal populations he studied, the adoption of an inter-crural string to combat insects attracted to the mucous membrane surrounding the reproductive organs may have over time, been added to and ultimately resulted in the custom of employing protection from the elements of climate. An added advantage was that the wearer could attach pouches to the waist-string thereby creating pockets.²

However, far earlier, Montaigne, a sixteenth century French essayist and philosopher, mused over the protection argument and indicated humans simply adopted a new custom by donning clothing. He provided an account of interaction between a peasant and his master to illustrate the contradiction regarding clothing for warmth. The master encountered his peasant and found him wearing far less outer clothing to protect himself from the elements than expected. Because the master was quite cold, he questioned his servant about his physical comfort to which his servant replied he was quite comfortable, he was accustomed to the cold.³ Modesty and protection fell prostrate before adornment as a

2. Alfred E. Crawley, "Dress," in *Fashion Foundations: Early Writing on Fashion and Dress*, eds. Kim K. P. Johnson, Susan J. Torntore and Joanne B. Eicher (New York: Berg, 2003), 24, 26; J.C. Flügel, "The Fundamental Motives," in *The Fashion Reader 2nd Edition*, eds. Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun (New York: Berg, 2011), 106.

3. Michel de Montaigne, "Of the Custom of Wearing Clothes," in *Fashion Foundations: Early Writing on Fashion and Dress*, Kim K. P. Johnson, et al (New York: Berg, 2003), 16.

cause for dressing the body and the vehicle through which novel adornment moves is fashion.

Theories and Theorists

Herbert Spencer, nineteenth century philosopher, sociologist, and anthropologist known for his ideology of Social Darwinism, a concept describing movement from a less developed state to that of a more advanced one, when referring to fashion indicates,

And the motive thus coming into play early in social evolution, and making equals vie with one another in display, similarly all along prompts the lower to vie, so far as they are allowed, with the higher. Everywhere and always the tendency of the inferior to assert himself has been in antagonism with the restraint imposed on him: and a prevalent way of asserting himself has been to adopt costumes and appliances and customs like those of his superior.⁴

What is sometimes referred to as ‘trickle-down’ fashion influence refers to the Early Modern Era and the rise of industrialism. Division, between the royals and court, landowners, laborers and poor, was strictly enforced previously but relaxed with the emergence of a new middle class arising as a result of industrialization. Many, who had barely eked out a living under an agricultural regime, now had spare cash to spend and with it chose to emulate the highest reaches of society. Bernard Mandeville, during the early eighteenth century stated,

People, where they are not known, are generally honour’d according to their Clothes and other Accoutrements...It is this which encourages every Body...to wear Clothes above his Rank, especially in large and populous Cities where obscure Men may hourly meet with fifty Strangers...and consequently have the Pleasure of being esteem’d...not as what they are, but what they appear to be.⁵

4. Herbert Spencer, “The Principles of Sociology” (originally published 1879), Vol. VII, “The Works,” 180, quoted in Michael Carter, *Fashion Classics: From Carlyle to Barthes* (New York: Berg, 2003), 32.

5. Bernard Mandaville, “The Fable of the Bees: Or Private Vices, Publick Benefits,” 1714, as quoted in Beverly Lemire, *Fashion’s Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1991), 14. (Written as directly quoted)

Georg Simmel, father of sociology, is quoted in *Fashion Foundations*,

fashions differ for different classes-the fashions of the upper stratum of society are never identical with those of the lower; in fact, they are abandoned by the former as soon as the latter prepares to appropriate them. Thus [sic] fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization the desire for individual differentiation and change.”⁶

Not to be confused with the ruffraff, the aristocracy updated their attire only for the cycle to repeat. Therefore, fashion is a means to both group membership and individuality.

Thorstein Veblen, best known for “conspicuous consumption” one concept along with “conspicuous waste” and “conspicuous leisure” a tri-partite theory explaining displays of wealth by the hegemon of the late eighteen-hundreds adds to the socio-cultural-economic school of thought on fashion. Where Spencer saw the cycle of fashion as a result of individual behaviors, Veblen’s perspective considered it the dynamic workings of a group who are interacting to and with each other. Through the vehicle of dress, a public phenomenon, can the “superiority of one class over another be evidenced.”⁷ Influenced greatly by Marx, Veblen assigned to fashion the economic perspective where those with pecuniary plenty derive pleasure from displaying through their clothing the fact that, not only did they have a great measure of discretionary income, they did nothing to produce it.⁸ Thus, were they establishing their position at the pinnacle of social status hierarchy. This pull factor of seeking to always remain in the forefront of social power, whether it was during the period of the royal courts maintaining supremacy over the ruled or during the

6. Georg Simmel, “Fashion,” in *Fashion Foundations: Early Writing on Fashion and Dress*, eds. Kim K. P. Johnson, Susan J. Torntore and Joanne B. Eicher (New York: Berg, 2003), 105.

7. Thorstein Veblen, “Dress and the ‘Leisure Class,’” in *Fashion Classics: From Carlyle to Barthes*, ed. Michael Carter (New York: Berg, 2003), 46.

8. Veblen, “Dress and the ‘Leisure Class’” 46.

Gilded Age, has been the most frequently offered by earlier fashion historians, particularly during the era of political and economic history. Not until 1968 when Herbert Blumer published his article entitled *Fashion* in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences V* did this ‘trickle down’ concept lose status. Indeed, Ted Polhemus, anthropologist in the late twentieth century spoke of a “bubble up” effect of fashion.⁹

In response to the overall conservative nature of politics in the early twentieth century, J. C. Flügel, heavily influenced by Freud and the new discipline of anthropology, fought against what he saw as a repressive society controlled by groups comprised of individuals with an imbalance between the Id and Superego; the Id being primitive man whereas the Superego is moral man. The constant tension between the desire of the primitive nature of the Id to abstain from restrictive coverings, or adorn themselves in a decorative, alluring nature, such as he found in the Andaman Islands and Tierra del Fuego, and those of simple utility demanded by the moralistic Superego feed the need for a continual changing of apparel as the two natures attempt to maintain an equilibrium they both found satisfactory.¹⁰ Thus the push toward novel designs, shapes, fabrics and finishes nourishes the somatic health of the individual, which leads to a healthier, more productive, but most of all, contented populace.

Interestingly, in addressing the difference between the sartorial inclinations of men and women, Flügel saw men as more exhibitionist due to the greater degree of narcissism

9. Ted Polhemus, “Trickle Down, Bubble Up,” in *The Fashion Reader*, eds. Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun (New York: Berg, 2011), 453.

10. J.C. Flügel, “Psychology of Fashion: The Fundamental Motives,” in *The Fashion Reader*, eds., Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun (New York, Berg, 2011), 171.

they develop. A covert action to seek emancipation from the “claims of the Christian myth of Eve and her destruction of innocence”¹¹ taken by women as early as the end of the Middle Ages explains the evolution in their dress habits from more modest to more revealing.

Fashion as a system was mentioned by several authors in the mid-twentieth century, two of which are, Herbert Blumer and Roland Barthes. Some employed methods wherein they believed the impetus for change in the phenomenon is readily interpreted through the use of semiology. Blumer, after studying the theories of George Simmel, considered many points of Simmel’s analysis on fashion were accurate, but he also indicated there were shortcomings in Simmel’s thesis.

Applying the social science method of Symbolic Interactionism wherein meaning is created through the process of individuals’ communication, a simplified example of which is: person one sends out a non-verbal message through a look or a gesture, and the recipient of that interprets it according to personal history, Blumer developed a theory of fashion that paralleled Simmel’s in that it required a “certain type of society;” prestige was of critical importance, and “the essence of fashion lies in a process of change, a process that is natural and indigenous and not unusual and aberrant.”¹² Where Blumer differentiated from Simmel was his stance on fashion as a social event, and indicated Simmel’s was an outmoded theory for a twentieth century phenomenon where modernity offered many additional enclaves for fashion to function. As to the aforementioned trickle-down theory propounded by Simmel and others, Blumer states, “I think this view misses almost completely what is central to

11. J.C. Flügel, “Men’s and Women’s Clothing,” in *Fashion Classics: From Carlyle to Barthes* ed. Michael Carter (New York, Berg, 2003), 108.

12. Herbert Blumer, “Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection,” in *Fashion Theory: A Reader*, ed. Malcolm Barnard (New York, Routledge, 2007), 235.

fashion, namely, *to be in fashion*.”¹³ Instead of the prestige of the elite countenancing a style and causing it to become fashion by their adoption of it, Blumer indicated it is due to the “potential fashionableness of the design which allows the prestige of the elite to be attached to it.” Moreover, “the design has to correspond to the direction of incipient taste of the fashion consuming public.”¹⁴ Essentially, fashion embraces all who follow fashion, including the elite, through which they derive or maintain the esteem they so intensely seek.

It is essential that three components be present for the system of fashion to function. First, wealth, or the ability to attain to it is necessary in order to differentiate consumption practices. Second, a stratified society where differences in purchasing power are evidenced through appearance is required. Finally, there needs to be a means of dispersing, or disseminating the styles sported by the leaders of society outward to those who want to emulate them or who simply appreciate the look and want it for themselves. These requisite components were in evidence during the Regency period in the United Kingdom.

Throughout the late Georgian Era, fashions changed, albeit the rate at which modification took place was distinctively much quicker than had occurred in previous times. Whether analysis derives from one, or a combination of the fashion theories discussed, this short time period of dynamic social upheaval lends itself to an in-depth study of fashion. Louis XIV stated, “Fashion is the mirror of history. It reflects political, social, and economic changes, rather than mere whimsy.”¹⁵ In this statement is encapsulated fashion, theory, history, and the makers thereof, and, which is the inspiration behind this study.

13. Herbert Blumer, “Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection,” 237.

14 Ibid. 237.

15. Beverly Lemire. As quoted in Michael and Ariane Batterbury, *Mirror Mirror* (1977), 145.

The Target Consumer

Status Requirements

For the purposes of this thesis, I have focused on a specific group of late eighteenth-century women of childbearing age. They derive from what Amanda Vickery, in her book, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, suggested is the genteel sector of society. They were not aristocrats but did enjoy high status, which was determined by the place their fathers, husbands, uncles or male guardians held in local, regional, or national employments and/or associations. There were requirements for achieving the level referred to as minor gentry. Men attained this status through ownership of property: a gentleman had to account for one-hundred pounds per year in rents for land, in today's value that is in the range of \$115,000.¹⁶ They also had to pay taxes on five or more male servants to attain to the level of minor gentry.¹⁷ Female servants were not mentioned, but it would seem they existed in a household utilizing five males. Professional men, such as lawyers, doctors, merchants, and clergy also enjoyed membership in what appeared to be an evolving upper-middle class, regardless of whether they met the financial requirements. Because her father was a clergyman, Jane Austen's family fit into this category even though they did not enjoy great monetary excess. Her father ran a school for boys, which his wife helped manage. The school, together with his parish responsibilities, yielded him significant esteem and raised his status in society.

16. MeasuringWorth.com.
https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare/result.php?year_source=1800&amount=100&year_result=2018. Accessed 11/7/ 2019.

17. Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 25.

Case Studies

Vickery shared noteworthy insight into the lives of many women of the Georgian Era. Many of the case studies she researched were situated in the north of England. Her study derived from the, “letters, diaries, and account books of over 100 women,” and she referred to them as “the merchants’ daughters, the solicitors’ wives and the gentlemen’s sisters.”¹⁸ In the case studies she presented, I found consistent themes pertaining to the everyday life of women during the Late Georgian Era. I will address these through the lens of the woman’s primary responsibility, the home.

Marriage

Young women were assigned the task of making a good match regardless of whether affection was shared between the partners. The season of her introduction to society—a time she was shown off by family and friends to attract a husband, was of particular enjoyment for the woman. She attended dinners, balls, the opera, theater, and promenaded through parks and shopping districts. For some a trip to the nearest metropolitan area served this purpose however, London was the site for women of gentility to seek conquests. She was responsible to find a man of status and means.

The accession to or maintenance of existing familial power still traveled through the marital contract. Vickery indicated that filial love was no guarantee of happiness for a young woman contracted in marriage. She may be sacrificed to an overbearing, or brutal man in order for her family to obtain money or power, a situation in sharp contrast to the romantic literature that emerged during the eighteenth century permeating the atmosphere of female

18. Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, 1.

life. Unmarried women were particularly susceptible to the idea of finding the perfect mate who could also create a drum roll in their heart. Should a prospective husband of no means entrance the lady, her parents and extended family would declare him unsuitable for her.

Secret assignations, which were not uncommon, held the danger of the lady losing her virtue, socially and realistically. The women heeded their emotions to the peril of their parents, and their parents to the peril of their ardor. An article speaks to their vulnerability as follows, “No man can safely be trusted who affects secrecy or encourages artifice. That person will never be faithful in love who pays no regard to duty; and little dependence ought to be placed on the professions of him, who will not avow his partiality in public as well as in private.”¹⁹ Hannah More, in her book, addressed this matter, “The lover, deeply versed in all the obliquities of fraud, and skilled to wind himself in every avenue of the heart which indiscretion has left unguarded, soon discovers on which side it is most accessible.”²⁰ If the young woman was fortunate, she was able to make a match that offered upward mobility, or at the very least, maintained the level of social status to which she was accustomed, while at the same time, quickened her heartbeat at the thought of her betrothed.

By the end of the century, according to Vickery, “Ladies’ debating societies were still deliberating ‘In the Marriage State, which constitutes the greater Evil, Love without Money, or Money without Love.’”²¹

19. The Lady’s Monthly Museum, Vol. 12, 1804, 4.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pr8&view=lup&seq=12>. Accessed December 8, 2019.

20. Hannah More, *Essays on various subjects, principally designed for young ladies*. London, MDCCLXXVII. [1777]. 87. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. University of Idaho. 29 Oct. 2019
 <<http://ida.lib.uidaho.edu:7236/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=mosc00780&tabID=T001&docId=CW3313410949&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCI MILE>>.

21. Vickery, 44.

Societal Expectations of Women

Female versus Male Power

A pervasive ideology regarding women in the past, which continues today, relates to her social power. Eighteenth-century philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, in writing his pedagogical treatise, *Emilius and Sophia: or, A New System of Education*, suggested that while Emile was expected to rise above the social pressures that might impinge upon his freedom, it was nonetheless acceptable for Sophia to be “enslaved by public opinion”.²² He went on to say when referring to the two, “He needs knowledge to speak; she needs taste.”²³

Conversely, British female philosophers of the Late Georgian Era bristled against the romantic promotion of women as the center of virtue; shapers of a perfect society. Although she adopted some of Rousseau’s ideas regarding modern society, Mary Wollstonecraft led the charge against his stance that women existed to please men. She promoted education for women as a means to achieve an equality with men. Although she recognized that the sexes did have differences—childbearing—Wollstonecraft argued that women, if they were allowed to receive training, would develop the mental faculties needed to process complex,

22. Noah W. Sobe, “Concentration and Civilisation: Producing the attentive Child in the Age of Enlightenment” *Pedagogica Historica*, Vol. 46, Nos. 1-2, February—April 2010, 155. Although women in the twenty-first century may bristle at such a statement, it is still very true today. According to Kimberly Miller in writing about “The Body in Cultural Context,” women are viewed as powerful if they are attractive and fit the cultural ideal whereas men’s power derives from their ability to perform a necessary function such as earning a living. (Mary Lynn Damhorst, Kimberly A. Miller, ad Susan O. Michelman. *The Meanings of Dress* (New York, NY: Fairchild Publications, 1999), 15.

23. *Ibid.*, 156.

intellectual ideas. Therefore, relegation to just the domestic sphere hindered women from reaching their full potential as citizens of the world. ²⁴

Domestic Empowerment

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, according to Penelope Byrde, women were empowered through their domestic role. She stated, “Women were the creators of the home and the guardians of virtue; they were dependent on men but within their own sphere they could exert an enormous influence for good.” ²⁵ This is an idealized perspective, but the writings of Hannah More, a religious activist during the period in question, corroborate this view of the importance of women’s contribution to society. More conducted Sunday Schools, wrote pamphlets for improvement, and worked tirelessly to improve the lives of women with the objective of cleansing society of corruption.

Conflicting theories surrounding women’s place in society were dispersed via romantic novels, journals, news pamphlets and, debated at dinner parties or other gatherings. At one end of the continuum were those, such as Hannah More, insisting that women remain domestically bound, nurturing their families in Christian principles for the benefit of society and the future power of the nation. At the opposite end, Mary Wollstonecraft and a host of female philosophers encouraged women to seek education for the purpose of breaking down male-centric traditions and to raise women to influential positions in a political world. All women, consciously or sub-consciously, fell somewhere on the continuum between these two poles and exercised agency through their decision-making to the fullest extent possible.

24. Riet Turksma, "Feminist Classic Philosophers and the Other Women," in *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 17 (2001): 1413-424. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4410545>. Accessed November 2, 2019.

25. Byrde, *Nineteenth Century Fashion*, 20.

Gentility was the expected demeanor of higher-class women in the eighteenth-century. Those who labored physically fell outside of this restrictive framework, although women in the garment industry such as dressmakers and/or milliners, did have to meet the standard. For them, any appearance of impropriety could destroy their reputation leading to a loss of business along with their social standing. The gentle woman of town and country was expected to properly manage her household. This included practical and decorative actions. She had to supply food necessary to feed her family and helpers, sew children's underclothes and simple garments, care for the household furnishings, tutor her children, and support her husband in his work.

Daily Life

A day in the life of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century woman included the dressing and feeding of her children, or, depending on her income, ensuring that the nanny took charge of these necessities. According to Vickery, "Nursemaids were seen as a supplement to the mother, not a replacement."²⁶ She also had to oversee that the staff completed their duties and address her household accounts. Managing employees served as a challenge to the character of the housemistress. In this, the account of Ellen Stock illustrated the most challenging aspect of the role. Vickery accessed Stock's own words and summarized her situation as follows. "Ellen Stock struggled from the outset to establish her authority in the household but was thwarted by her stepdaughters and disloyal servants."²⁷ Throughout her marriage, Ellen Stock was physically and emotionally abused, a

26. Vickery, 113.

27. *Ibid.*, 77.

condition that was hopefully not widespread in society. However, this case illustrates how easily the servants took their tone from the stepdaughters and exacerbated an already difficult situation for Ellen Stock.

The housemistress had to stand her ground when it came to addressing insubordination or laziness. She also had to walk a tightrope to prevent an unhappy staff member from leaving her without notice, or one she had hired not appear, particularly if she had an event imminent that required great preparation in the house. Jane Austen referred to the capriciousness of household servants in a letter to her sister dated November 1, 1800, “Mary’s promised maid has jilted her, & hired herself elsewhere.”²⁸ Moreover, she had to exercise vigilance in the face of potential thievery by her helpers. Having a staff of servants did not always create an easy life.

In the afternoon she might call on friends and walk in the city, the park or other promenade grounds then return and have tea with her children. In the evening, she might have had have a dinner party or other function to attend. Her hours were filled with responsibilities, some more pleasant than others. The activities of a genteel woman during this period necessitated a wardrobe that included daywear and evening wear. Additionally, garments that could withstand the elements were needed for the outdoor events to which she was called.

Record Keeping

During the Eighteenth-Century mistresses of the home needed to be literate and numerate. They kept a list of the cost of household purchases for maintenance of the home,

28. Jane Austen, 81.

foodstuffs, clothing, and entertainment. If she was involved in trade, such as the sale of her cheese or butter, she would also note that in her pocket diary, which served as a type of ledger book.²⁹

Social Image

In addition to her everyday responsibilities, the genteel lady's presence at social functions where her husband, father, brother or uncle held authority, was also required. Attending social engagements such as dances, dinner parties, theatres and operas offered her opportunities to show to the world her husband was a man of means; that she did not have to work for a living and that he could dress her in fine dresses and perhaps jewels. Thorstein Veblen explained this ideology in his *Theory of the Leisure Class*, a treatise explaining what he termed as "conspicuous consumption" where the purchase of and display of expensive goods served as the litmus test for membership in high society.³⁰ Not all economists or sociologists agreed with his thoughts. Recent scholarship views goods as a means to create character rather than display status. Regardless of why, the wearing of expensive clothes, attending exclusive parties, a coach and four were some of the institutionalized criteria of the social elite. Nevertheless, while attending the above-mentioned functions, the lady was not to engage in overly loud conversation or boisterous laughter and heaven forbid she wear a gown out of season. Her role was to be as attractive as possible, well-read, able to hold an intelligent conversation, and observe the recommendations put out by the current ladies' magazine.

29. Vickery, 133.

30. Thorsten Veblen as quoted in *Fashion Classics from Carlyle to Barthes*, ed. Michael Carter (New York: Berg, 2003), 46.

Following Fashion

Spending Theories

Early in her chapter on ‘Elegance,’ Amanda Vickery made the following observation, “Unquestioned belief in the shallow selfishness of female desire has dogged historical discussion for decades.”³¹ There exists the notion that women spend more on fashionable items and always have. However, prior to the 18th century, men’s fashions were as elaborate or more so than women’s, and they cost as much or even more. Moreover, Vickery noted, “The Lancashire manuscripts suggest the provisional conclusion that while female consumption was repetitive and predominantly mundane, male consumption was, by contrast, occasional and impulsive, or expensive and dynastic.”³² Conversely, after the rise of the business class, men’s choice in costume grew conservative as a means of displaying their seriousness in the work environment. For men, moderate clothing styles indicated stability, and the emerging businessman wanted to assure his contemporaries that he was not a risk in financial matters.

Advice and Purchasing

Women’s purchases reflected extensive research into the current trends in London and Paris. Those living a distance away from the city relied on friends or family who either resided there or went for a visit. A type of mail order system thus existed where women relayed their wishes to those in the city and received their items either in person or via

31. Vickery, 168.

32. Ibid.

shipment. More often than not, these same individuals were free with their advice on what type of costume a woman should wear.

City dwellers were not as restricted in their choices for dress as were those women in the country. Women in the provinces were encouraged to purchase based on the versatility of the garment. It should not only be in fashion; it should also be of good quality so as to last longer. But most importantly, it should be appropriate for her age.³³ Younger, unmarried women had the greatest freedom of choice. They could opt for bright, fancy and somewhat more alluring gowns than their married sisters whose dresses had to be more subdued and modest. It was considered inappropriate for a married woman with children to bring unwanted attention to herself through wearing a style showing too much of the current erogenous zone. James Laver, curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum early in the 20th century stated, "...the female body consists of a series of sterilized zones, which are those exposed by the fashion which is just going out, and an erogenous zone which will be the point of interest for the fashion which is just coming in. This erogenous zone is always shifting, and it is the business of fashion to pursue it, without ever actually catching it up."³⁴ Laver's theory provided an explanation for why extremely low necklines were acceptable at the same time the display of the ankles was not. While outward appearance carried more weight in the choice of clothing, it's serviceability and value could not be overlooked.

33. Vickery, 177.

34. James Laver, *Fashion Foundations: Early Writings on Fashion and Dress*, ed. Kim P. Johnson, et al (New York: Berg, 2003), 116.

Legacy

At a time when women had few, if any rights, clothing was similar to having money in the bank. Under dire circumstances, she could sell parts of her wardrobe for sustenance and shelter. Moreover, she could bequeath it to family, servants, or friends upon her death. Because a woman's domain was the home, her actions fell into the arena referred to as unskilled labor. There is no doubt that women then, as do women and even men now, find housework repetitive bothersome, and unfulfilling. Personal, material objects allowed her to create tangible evidence of her existence in history. Not even her children could accomplish that, as it was the father's surname that endured the passage of time.

Textiles

Muslin and Silk

Muslin first entered Britain through trade early in the seventeenth century. On December 31, 1600, Queen Elizabeth I authorized the charter of what resulted in the earliest international corporation; the British East India Company (Company). During the first century of trade with India, trade goods included spices and textiles. At that time, the traders were more interested in spices as they held what the company believed to have a greater commercial factor. However, competition with the Dutch, whom they were unable to dislodge from the Spice Islands initially refocused the Company's trade to soft goods, such as the cotton textiles found in abundance in South Asia. The British response to the cloth led to new patterns of consumption and further cemented its importance to the Company. In the mid eighteenth century the French and British were at war; in the American Colonies and also in India. In 1757 the French lost at the Battle of Plassey, and by 1759, the British were

able to drive the Dutch out of India and the French followed in 1769. This allowed the British East India Company to gain control of trade.

Although never free of greed and its attendant vices, the French and Dutch departures left the British without a rival that could check her behavior toward the producers of her trade commodities. According to Saiful Islam, "...due to the disappearance of competitor activities the weavers were now involuntarily locked to a single customer (known as *khatbandi*) namely, the East India Company."³⁵ No longer did the Company have to treat its suppliers well to maintain the relationship. Ultimately, corruption increased. A letter written to Lord North in 1773 by an individual whose initials are A. B. addressed the issues existing in India at that time. The Company was in debt and appealed to Parliament for funds to carry them until such time as income increased. North proposed to provide aid for the Company, but A. B. indicated why such beneficence should be withheld. He stated:

The sober, honest, and discreet Proprietors of the late lists retired from the Company, satisfied with a large and unexpected increase of fortune; and were succeeded by adventurers and gamesters, a fluctuating set, who bought in or sold out as their ever-varying speculations directed them... In either event the interest of the publick was sacrificed, and the plunder of the Indies made the reward and wages of corrupt services while the uncertainty of the tenure spread quicker and wider the scenes of cruelty and devastation.³⁶
Unfortunately, A. B.'s concerns were justified, and corruption continued to increase.

Severe restrictions imposed on the Indian manufacturers resulted in famine that decimated

35. Islam, *Muslin: Our Story*, 155.

36. A. B. A Letter to the Right Honorable Lord North, etc., etc., etc., on the Present Proceedings Concerning the East India Company. (London: J. Dodsley, 1773), 9.
https://ida.lib.uidaho.edu:7420/gdc/artemis/MonographsDetailsPage/MonographsDetailsWindow?disableHighlighting=&displayGroupName=DVI-Monographs&docIndex=&source=&prodId=&sid=primo&mode=view&limiter=&display-query=&contentModules=&action=e&sortBy=&>windowstate=normal&currPage=&dviSelectedPage=&scanId=&query=&search_within_results=&p=ECCO&catId=&u=mosc00780&displayGroups=&documentId=GALE%7CCW0105620637&activityType=BasicSearch&failOverType=&commentary= Accessed December 8, 2019.

the population. It is possible that millions died, families were broken apart, traditional ways of life disappeared, and a nation's history partially lost as a result of several factors hinging on actions taken by the Company to increase its bottom line. Nevertheless, aid from England kept the Company afloat. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, the export of muslin had declined by half, and by 1817, Islam stated, "it had ceased altogether, and the art of spinning and weaving cotton had become near extinct. The deliberate 'de-industrialization of India' was complete, and a total silence shrouded Bengal's charkas and looms."³⁷ Hameeda Hossain stated in the conclusion to her book, *The Company Weavers of Bengal*, "It was not until the early nineteenth century that Bengal's textiles became redundant to the Company's commerce."³⁸ For a genteel woman during this time, it is likely that knowledge of the events occurring in India, should she be aware of them, would have tainted anything associated with the Company.

But the East India Company and shifting trade patterns was not the only culpable entity regarding the demise of the Indian factories, although not all were as negatively affected as the ones in Bengal. Parliament had continually imposed tariffs on Indian cottons to benefit the English textile industry. Over the decades, the import of woven fabric to England declined while the import of raw cotton to feed Manchester's looms increased. This occasioned the need for the weavers in India to absent themselves from textile production to put to the plow cotton that could be sent to England. This further hindered their ability to feed themselves and their families. They lost both income and the ability to grow foodstuffs.

37. Islam, 170.

38. Hameeda Hossain, *The Company Weavers of Bengal* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1988), 173.

According to K.N. Chaudhuri, “In Europe itself the use of cotton and silk goods in house furnishing and daily and fashionwear presaged a more civilized and higher standard of living.”³⁹ Thus demand for the distinctive cottons from India grew. Appearance notwithstanding, additional factors contributed to the popularity of the cotton: it was washable, inexpensive, and took dyes well. Moreover, for discriminating women of fashion, cotton offered design choices heretofore not available with wool. However, Beverly Lemire shares the difficulties women experienced in their choice of dress. She writes of calico chasing in 1719, “when calico-garbed women were hounded through the streets and the gowns of Indian fabric torn off their backs by disgruntled weavers.”⁴⁰ Although she is referring to a character in a Daniel Defoe novel, the implementation of a government ban on most cotton products in 1721, which led to riots, corroborates the violence visited upon the wearers of cotton. Lemire shares the account of Elizabeth Price in her book, *Fashions Favourite, The Cotton Trade and the consumer in Britain 1660-1800*. While looking for new lodging Price was in the midst of visiting a house when neighboring individuals spied her cotton gown beneath her riding coat. They attacked her and tore off her gown.⁴¹

However, plain, white, muslin cotton was not banned as cloth printers in England used it to manufacture their own textiles. They purchased the plain cloth from the British East India Company, then with the use of blocks or rollers, imprinted a design on the surface,

39. Chaudhuri, K. N. *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 277.

40. Beverly Lemire. *Dress, Culture, and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade before the Factory, 1660-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 6.

41. Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite*, 36.

creating their own line of textiles. Consequently, over the remainder of the century, K. N. Chaudhuri stated, "...that the great ladies in England were prepared to pay exorbitant prices for the superfine muslins of Bengal, not seen in Europe before."⁴²

Although muslin gowns did not rise to prominence until the mid-1780s, muslin was employed in the design of neckerchiefs, tuckers, aprons, and shawls for women, and cravats, for men as early as the 17th century. Moreover, as a result of Enlightenment thought promoted by philosophers such as of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for the first time, children were not confined to the same type of garments worn by their parents; they were viewed as too restrictive and encumbered the child as he or she was developing. According to Rousseau, interacting with objects was the conduit through which the impressions leading to the development of knowledge occurred.⁴³ Children tightly dressed in adult clothing could not freely enjoy nature, therefore, their ability to create meaning from the natural world was impeded. The result of this ideology is that young girls up to their teen years escaped their constricting clothing and donned muslin dresses that required no boning or stays, and young boys were dressed in "skeleton suits," an outfit of long pants and shirt that was buttoned together at the waist.

In the 1780s, royals and wealthy women on the European Continent and the United Kingdom adopted the muslin gown in its earliest iteration of loose bodice gathered in at the waist, with a flounce at the scooped-out neckline; the shepherdess dress style of Marie

42. Chaudhuri, K. N. *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 277.

43. Noah W. Sobe, "Concentration and Civilisation: Producing the attentive Child in the Age of Enlightenment" *Pedagogica Historica*, Vol. 46, Nos. 1-2, February—April 2010, 155. See also: Ann Buck, *Dress in eighteenth-century England* (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1979), 204.

Antoinette in France. According to Buck, “Once again, women and girls were dressed alike.”⁴⁴ The skirt was full, with another flounce or two encircling the bottom at the ankles. However, by the end of the 1790s, the tubular shaped round gown with predominating back fullness created by the addition of small tucks, pleats, or gathers directly below and between the shoulder blades, had replaced the flounced dress.⁴⁵

During this same period, the silk industry increased output in Britain, a by-product of the opium trade. In operation for well over one-hundred years, production expanded into new territories on the island nation. During those one-hundred years, in cooperation with the wool industry, lobbying parliament led to restrictions of the imports of cottons from India, and of silks from France, Italy, China and India. According to Gerald B. Hertz in an article from 1909, “Between 1765 and 1826 fully manufactured silk imports were prohibited. And duties on other silks were proportionately high.”⁴⁶ Raw silk to feed the English looms was imported from the east, and the quantities illustrate the growth of the British industry. Again, referring to Hertz, “Before 1770 the amount of annually imported raw silk from the East never exceeded 100,000 lbs., but in 1780 close to 200,000 lbs., in 1800 to 500,000 lbs., and in 1823 to 1, 218, 661 lbs., more than six times the quantity then introduced from either Turkey or Italy.”⁴⁷ Moreover, it was a 900% increase over the quantities imported in 1770. Therefore, silk cloth was also available in abundance, a factor which drove down the price

44. Ann Buck, *Dress in eighteenth-century England* (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1979) 207.

45. Agnes Brooks Young, *Fashion Foundations* (Berg, New York, 2003), 120-122.

46. Gerald B. Hertz, “The English Silk Industry in the Eighteenth Century” in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 24, No. 96. October 1909, pp 710-727. This content downloaded from 129.101.79.200 on Fri, 08 Nov 2019 21:36:06 UTC All use subject to <https://about.jstor.org/terms>

47. Gerald B. Hertz, “The English Silk Industry in the Eighteenth Century.”

of goods and likely led to the attraction of silk too, as a textile for gowns, particularly during a time when the costs and availability of imported goods was high due to blocked shipping lanes.

The Regency Gown

Round gowns rose to their greatest popularity between 1790 and 1830. I will refer to this period as the late Georgian and Regency Era. George III was still in control of his faculties, most of the time, until 1811. After that, the porphyria from which he suffered overwhelmed his brain requiring his son, George IV to reign in his stead until he took the throne upon his father's death in 1820 and then reigned from 1820 to 1830. His brother William ascended the throne at that time, ending the Georgian Era.

Muslin was used in clothing as aprons, flounces, tuckers and as neckerchiefs prior to its implementation in gowns. The infamous portrait of Marie Antoinette painted by Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun around 1783, illustrates one of the earliest, if not the earliest examples of a muslin dress for an adult woman. See plate 2.1 page 36. Prior to this event, women's gowns—of silk, wool, linen, or blends of these textiles—covered multiple layers of white undergarments. To be seen in public in white, frothy gowns was likened to a woman being seen in her underwear; it was quite shocking. For a queen to appear publicly in such a manner was an invitation to criticism from the highest circles of the court to the lowest level of peasant. From the queen, via Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire, the fashion spread to consumers across the channel in England where it was modified and made uniquely British.

What made these gowns so special that the queen would dare to wear them? In addition to fitting the shepherdess image of which she was so fond, the cloth was beyond anything heretofore employed in European garments. Created in Bengal, India, what is now Bangladesh, the cotton plant from which the fiber derived was unique to the region.



Plate 2.1
Queen Marie Antoinette
painted by
Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun
Courtesy: The National Gallery of Art
Washington, DC, US

Its traditional locations were near the convergence of the Brahmaputra, Ganges, and Meghna rivers.



Plate 2.2
Saiful Islam, Muslin: Our Story
Drik Publishing, 30.

No other Old-World cotton, or New-World cotton either, had the properties of Phuti Karpas—*Gossypium arboreum*, i.e. var. *Neglecta*. The plant died out due to lack of husbanding, and it is unknown at this time whether it exists anywhere in the world. In 2018, I had the privilege of meeting Saiful Islam in London, a Bengali specialist whose research about the history of the cotton industry in Dhaka, Bangladesh was put into book form. In it he discusses his search for extant plants and questions whether they exist anywhere.⁴⁸ He has traveled extensively throughout the world in search of viable plants but has been unable to locate any at this point.⁴⁹ One characteristic of the fiber was its fineness. According to Sonia Ashmore of the Victoria and Albert Museum, in 1837 a one-pound skein of cotton (Phuti Karpas) spun in Dhaka was unreeled, it measured 250 miles in length!⁵⁰

Moreover, only women under the age of thirty were allowed to spin it as their hands had more dexterity than women of greater age. It was not possible to spin these short cotton staples on spinning machines, a factor that played into the demise of the Bengali industry. Additionally, only men wove the cloth and it was done on a pit loom—one that is set over a pit dug into the ground. The weaver had to begin early in the morning when the dew was still on the ground. As the day wore on, it was necessary to place bowls of water around the loom to provide the required moisture to effectively weave the cloth. Once the air dried out from the heat, the weaver had to stop for the day. Unfortunately, this cloth is no longer manufactured. This is just one of the varieties of cotton cloths the Indians manufactured.

48. Saiful Islam, *Muslin: Our Story* (Artron: Drik Picture Library Ltd., 2016), 46-47.

49. Saiful Islam, *Muslin: Our Story* (Artron: Drik Picture Library Ltd., 2016), 38.

50. Sonia Ashmore. *Muslin* (London: V & A, 2012),14.

They are myriad, and the British East India Company exported many to the home country and continent.

What is curious about these gowns is that they did not fit into the seemingly accepted pattern of fashion change, which at that time, was small changes over time. Modern fashion changes occur rapidly; design companies work several seasons in advance to produce a line of clothing. For example, during the fall a design company works on the line for six months into the future or possibly later. It was much different in previous centuries; an industry compared to our modern structure did not exist. Women and men had clothes made for them by the local tailor or dressmaker. He or she would consult designs they had seen in public and private by the leaders of society. They may receive fashion information from France, possibly in person or via an acquaintance or friend. Regardless, clothing was made in a bespoke manner; custom made to order and over time evolved from one style to another in small increments.

Fashions may have not looked radically different or utilized significantly diverse fabrics for many years. According to Agnes Brooks Young there are three principles which characterize fashion changes. She stated "...fashion change in women's dress is always a continuous process." It is also, "...a slow process," and, "The third principle is that fashion change in women's dress always proceeds by the modification of what has previously prevailed, and never by abrupt departure from it."⁵¹ The adoption of the Regency gown in

51. Agnes Brooks Young, "On the Nature of Fashion" in *Fashion Foundations: Early Writings on Fashion and Dress*, ed. Kim P. Johnson, et al (New York: Berg, 2003), 119.

Britain was not as gradual as Young sets out as the norm, nor was its decline as slow either. The fashion arose in the 1790s. During the French Revolution thoughts turned to the ancient societies of Greece and Rome, locations of early democracy. Robes resembling Greek and Roman statuary inspired the Merveilleuses, women who flaunted style, thereby establishing it in France. From there, it spread to Britain. A treaty in 1802 between the two countries turned out as just a lull in fighting. However, it opened the door to travel again as the channel between England and the Continent was open and allowed for fashion exchange; a practice that was interrupted due to the war. The gown's style peaked in the 1810s and declined until it was gone by 1830.

Britain 1790-1830

Wars and Diplomatic Issues

Life in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was as dynamic, possibly more so than other eras in the nation's history. Britain was involved in building empire around the world and protecting her interests both home and abroad. The American Revolution was not long past. In the East in 1784, the British East India Company (Company) lost part of their control of India to the British government due to corruption and mismanagement. Until 1757 the French, British, and Dutch vied for control of the sub-continent, but France had given up her East Indian territories, a result of the French and Indian War in the American Colonies and territories. France refocused her attention to the West Indies, a more prosperous location from which to garner wealth. The evacuation from India by the French left the Company to enlarge their holdings to the detriment of the Indian people, and the ignorance of the home government. Moreover, it altered established trade patterns for both countries. Spain was making attempts to overtake Nootka Sound on the

northwest coast of America; a site of British interest. The English were settling Australia, Russia was in an expansionist mood and looking to Ottoman lands; another threat to British trade, and Irish independence was an issue. The latter was settled in 1801 by the Act of Union. By far, however, the most forbidding event to shake the nation was the French Revolution, which broke out in 1789. For more than the next twenty-five years, Britain and France were at war more than they were at peace with each other. Initially, some in Britain saw the Revolution as a means for progress in France, but after the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, fear overtook the leadership of the Island. The overzealous nature of revolutionaries in France appeared to be migrating to other parts of Europe, Britain included.

Parliament, concerned that radical factions would overtake the country, imposed restrictions on speech; anyone involved in disseminating subversive writings or speeches was prosecuted. Moreover, as the war wore on, additional actions were taken. Habeas Corpus was suspended in 1794 and the Seditious Practices Act and Seditious Assemblies Acts were passed in 1795.⁵² Strife was not limited to civilian life; military uprisings in 1797 yielded conflicting results. One naval mutiny was successful; the government and sailors reached an agreement without bloodshed, which allowed the Channel Fleet to sail for France. Another fleet was not so lucky. Finding the government impassive and unwilling to respond to their demands, the fleet broke into factions and created their own failure. Many of the organizers were hanged while others were arrested.⁵³ In London, tower guards who were influenced by unrest by their compatriots, frightened an already nervous Parliament,

52. Birdsall Viault, *English History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 215.

53. David Andress, *The Savage Storm: Britain on the Brink in the Age of Napoleon*. (London: Little Brown, 2012), 34-36.

receiving in return for their behavior a raise in pay. Furthermore, at the Woolwich Arsenal, artillery personnel unhappy with leadership threatened local stability there and had to be corralled by infantry and cavalry. Finally, an insurrection in Plymouth was put down. The blame for it was lodged against Irish agitators who were later hanged.⁵⁴ Instability permeated the government as factions, both pro-war and anti-war battled to promote their agendas. The Revolution in France led to additional military action across the Irish Sea, and in America.

Attempts by France to invade Britain via Ireland during the war brought further action from the British Parliament. Using the opportunity presented, Irish activists sought the aid of France to obtain independence from England. Their efforts were futile but spurred William Pitt, prime minister, to address the issue. Pitt created new peerages and doled out financial and material persuasions. Thus, he dissolved the Irish Parliament and positioned Irish representatives in London to sit in the English Parliament.⁵⁵ Unification with Ireland remedied one difficulty, but the Americans were still an issue. France had been America's ally during their war for independence and when the war broke out between France and Britain, some Americans wanted to assist their former ally. However, neutrality ruled due to economic reasons. Both England and France were trade partners and the new nation did not want to jeopardize their ability to exchange goods across the seas. Later, in 1812, the impressment of ships and sailors by Britain during the war years, plus the desire by some leaders in the American Congress to obtain Canada, led to a declaration of war from the

54. David Andress, *The Savage Storm*, 37-38.

55. Birdsall Viault, *English History*, 218.

fledgling nation.⁵⁶ British soldiers and sailors were spread thin during the Regency Era due to military actions taking place across the globe. This must have weighed heavily on the hearts of the women in their lives. Mothers had nurtured boys from childhood who grew to become soldiers killed or maimed in battle or lost at sea.

Civilian Strife

Civilian life fought its own battles. Hunger, taxation, and grief from the loss of fathers, sons, and brothers to the war effort created an atmosphere of angst and sorrow. Additionally, jobs and incomes declined due to the interruption of trade from blockaded shipping lanes. Radicalism from trade unions ushered in the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 making such unions illegal.⁵⁷ The restriction on unionism resulted in the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 where industrial workers took to the streets in riot, and the military took action to disperse the crowd. Unfortunately, several hundred people were injured and close to twenty died.⁵⁸ Moreover, additional factions of English radicals observing the turmoil in France, found fodder to promote their own agenda of social and economic equality. Those who supported the Revolution in France were called English Jacobins. But there were also dissenters who throughout the eighteenth century pushed the movement for the Englishman's "birthright," suffrage.

56. Ibid., 222-223.

57. Ibid., 215.

58. Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 356.

Nearly a full year prior to the formation of the First Coalition, a group of radicals met in London and created the “London Corresponding Society.”⁵⁹ Despite imprisonments and factionalism, which tore at the fabric of unity, members of this group retained enthusiasm for the Revolution in France. The events occurring across the Channel served as a mirror to their own perceived or real concerns regarding British society and spurred the movement forward. During the early years of the Revolution, they were visibly active, but became less so over the course of time due to government restrictions. It is also possible they went underground to disseminate their program of equality. E. P. Thompson stated that, “Even in the darkest war years the democratic impulse can still be felt at work beneath the surface. It contributed an affirmation of rights, a glimpse of a plebeian Millennium, which was never extinguished.”⁶⁰

Additional strife created instability in the warring nation. Luddites, laborers influenced by a movement undertaken in the past regarding the use of machinery in industry, re-emerged during the war years as a result of the continued mechanization of the textile industry. Textile workers, including weavers and knitters, frustrated over declining work opportunities, took to burning the newly developed machinery. Their violent actions, which occurred mostly in the provinces where the cotton textile industry was developing, spread discord throughout Britain.⁶¹ Additionally, in 1815, taxes imposed, such as the corn laws designed to benefit the landed growers during a time of otherwise free trade, exacerbated the

59. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 17.

60. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 181.

61. Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, 421.

existing suffering, particularly but not exclusively, of the lower and working classes of the nation by increasing the costs of grains. Hunger, and declining jobs and wages drove the distressed population to riot. The government erroneously determined them to be in the camp of the English Jacobins whose focus was a radical change in government structure whereas these working class and poverty-stricken populations simply wanted work to pay their rents and food to fill their stomachs. The effect on the genteel woman who is at the center of this study may have been mixed, depending on where she lived. She might have had difficulty obtaining food to nourish her family, or at the very least, if food was readily available to her, experienced pangs of guilt when considering those who were starving. As were so many others at the time, women were hemmed in by a male-centric world engaged in expansion and nation building.

Technological Improvements

In the midst of social foment during the war years, advancements in technology brought improvements. Transportation in the form of canals and toll roads (paid for by a group of local citizens) around the country were either built, or in regions where they already existed, linked together minimizing the time required to move people and products about. Moreover, with the development of James Watt's improved steam engine, railroads emerged, providing the opportunity to move large shipments over land without having to ship them around the island to another port before moving them inland again. These same advancements in transportation facilitated movement of people. Where in previous days travel to and from family and friends was difficult due to lack of, or inadequate roads, the railroad, canals, and toll roads brought them together more easily and frequently. In water travel by ship, the lifeboat was invented offering a measure of security against automatic

drowning should a disaster on the seas strike. And in medicine, the lifesaving vaccine against smallpox, which Edward Jenner perfected in 1796⁶² aided in destroying a scourge responsible for the deaths of many in the British population with the preponderance of them children.⁶³ The military lauded him for saving the lives of many service members also.⁶⁴

The improvement in machinery led to the expansion of the silk industry in England. French Huguenots (protestants) escaped religious persecution that was imposed by a Catholic monarch and settled in Spitalfields, which then grew to be the silk center in London as a result of the industry they brought with them. Much later, in the early 1800s, the industry spread beyond the metropolis to include cities to the northeast, the west, and the northwest. Most of these locales were within seventy miles of London, however, Whitchurch in the northwest region was quite near the northern border with Wales: a 175 mile, three-and-a-half-hour drive. Due to price imbalances, the weavers working at the center of production in London lobbied parliament to require labor laws ensuring that all weavers received the same pay thereby balancing the selling price of the cloths, which were less expensive in the provinces. Those in the city feared losing their livelihoods as manufacturers could opt to have their silks produced away from London where their costs were lower and the potential for profits much higher. This came at a time when the East

62. Christine MacLeod, *Heroes of Invention: Technology, Liberalism and British Identity 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72.

63. S. R. Duncan, Susan Scott and C. J. Duncan, "Smallpox Epidemics in Cities in Britain," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Autumn, 1994): 265. accessed 10/29/2019. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/206345>

64. MacLeod, *Heroes of Invention*, 83.

India Company was heavily involved in trafficking opium from India to China. They obtained opium in India, Bengal where it was overtaking the farming of cotton. They then delivered it to China in exchange for raw silk to carry back to England. China had earlier refused trade items from the Company, instead seeking bullion instead. The continual outflow of gold and silver from British coffers led to innovative problem solving. By developing an addicted population China, the Company could control trade with that nation, thereby attaining supremacy of trade, which had previously been in China's favor. The result was an abundance of raw silk that could be manufactured into cloth to export throughout the British colonies and beyond. Trade practices and imperialism functioned hand-in-glove to wreak havoc on foreign society to the benefit of British businessmen and the clientele they served.

Religion

Parents facing the loss of a child or children needed a support system on which to assist them during sorrowful times. *The Lady's Monthly Museum* of January 1809 shares in its *Essay on the New Year* thoughts regarding the triumphs and tragedies that a person can experience during a year. Religion was the answer, or more precisely, Christ was:

On what can I rest with a secure hope? Where place my happiness, without the fear of disappointment; or where find compensation for the enjoyments I may lose? The reply to this inquiry will be at once consoling and satisfactory; for it will be 'on the promises of Him whose lips never uttered an untruth; who has assured us, that an unspeakable portion of happiness is reserved for the righteous in a future and more durable world.⁶⁵

65. *Lady's Monthly Museum*, January 1809, 24-25.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383881&view=1up&seq=38>. Accessed December 3, 2019.

It is impossible to tell just how deeply religion actually permeated society, but periodicals for women certainly disseminated Christian messages. Indeed, religion, or Christianity was a central theme in these periodicals throughout each of the years of their publication. Some people believe it was part and parcel of the domesticity surrounding the home, therefore pertaining especially to women and the genteel nature expected of them. Additionally, however, evangelicalism predominated in Britain from the mid-eighteenth century as a result of the evangelism of the Wesley brothers and continued into the nineteenth century. Jane Austen mentioned evangelicals in her letters. To her sister Cassandra, dated January 24, 1809, she stated, “I do not like the Evangelicals.”⁶⁶ Five years later in a letter to her niece Fanny surrounding the suitability of a potential husband, she appeared to have had a change of heart saying, “I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals, & am persuaded that they who are so from Reason and Feeling, must be happiest & safest.”⁶⁷

According to Daniel Wilson, cleric at the time, it was the rise of imperialism and colonization that called forth missions focused evangelicalism in the early 1800s.⁶⁸ As early as 1780, Barnhart stated, “evangelicals of all denominations mobilized to delegate themselves as those most qualified to oversee the moral health of both the nation and the

66. Jane Austen. *Jane Austen’s Letters to her sister Cassandra and others*, edited by R. W. Chapman. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 256.

67. Jane Austen, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 410.

68. Daniel Wilson as quoted in, “Evangelicalism, Masculinity, and the Making of Imperial Missionaries in Late Georgian Britain, 1795-1820” by William C. Barnhart, *The Historian*, Vol. 67, No. 4. Winter 2005, pp. 712-732. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24453406>. Accessed 10/29/2019

empire, claiming that their organizations were the best vehicles not only to reform the home front, but also to spread true (i.e., Protestant) religion and civilization across the globe.”⁶⁹

Evangelical leaders saw in missionary work the opportunity to redeem Britain from the sins of slavery and war against fellow protestants in the American colonies during the Revolution there. Moreover, Thomas Raffles, in a sermon of 1814 indicated that Britain was the chosen nation of God to spread the hope of the second coming of the Messiah.⁷⁰

69. William C. Barnhart, “Evangelicalism, Masculinity, and the Making of Imperial Missionaries in Late Georgian Britain, 714.

70. *Ibid.*, 717.

Chapter 3

Research and Design Procedures

The history of fashions throughout the era was recorded in magazines, periodicals, catalogs, literature, plays, and opera. Many of these records were victims of aging, and have not endured, but those that did are housed in museums, libraries, and with private parties. HathiDigitalLibrary.com is a repository rich in digital materials to benefit the modern researcher. Consequently, it was feasible to paint a picture of fashions during the period from approximately 1790 to around 1830. This study was both qualitative and quantitative in methodology. I accessed materials from which data was collected and tabulated. From there it was possible to see trends in fashion change as they emerged and related them to social, political, and economic events. That same data led to the theory that wars created their own zeitgeist and with further research could be verified.

Types of Sources

A combination of primary and secondary sources comprised this thesis. A substantive search through secondary sources shaped the direction of study. In *History of Western Dress*, a dress history course taught by Dr. Sandra L. Evenson at The University of Idaho, I was introduced to muslin gowns, and my interest was piqued. I sought secondary sources, those that were developed from a second-hand perspective. Most of these books were written by costume historians. Consulting this type of resource allowed me to narrow my focus so that I could zero-in on the appropriate primary materials; those created by someone directly involved in wearing, producing, or recording images and textual information about them during the Late Georgian Era. In order to ensure that I was not introducing bias into my findings, I utilized a variety of sources. I read scholarly books and

journals, looked at images and descriptions, and consulted art books and online museums. Popular culture, such as novels and plays contained useful details of women, fashion, and culture of the time. The following journals were rich sources of information, including clothing images and their descriptions: *Lady's Monthly Museum: or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction (Lady's Monthly Museum)*, *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashion and Politics (Repository of Arts)*, and *La Belle Assemblée*. In addition to visual data, these journals also provided meaningful insight into the social norms of the time period as was indicated by the table of contents, not unlike a typical woman's magazine of our current time. Topics such as manners, child rearing, etiquette, beauty, literature and theatre reviews, travel accounts, and music and poetry were all available to amuse and instruct the audience of readers. Not included in these journals, unlike today, was any mention of sex, except as in reference to a person of the opposite gender. It was not considered a polite topic for genteel persons to mention.

Other primary sources included the *Letters of Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra and Others* along with the writing of Hannah More. Jane wrote of daily activities such as taking walks, making calls on neighbors and friends, attending balls, and nursing her mother and father through illnesses. She also spoke of her brothers in the military during the war with France, and the deaths of friends and family. Her letters confirm the fashion of muslin gowns at the turn of the nineteenth century. In a letter dated November 1, 1800, Jane wrote to her sister, "I wore at the ball your favorite gown, a bit of muslin of the same round my head." More directed her words to instructing young women through such works as *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies*.

Creating the Data Table

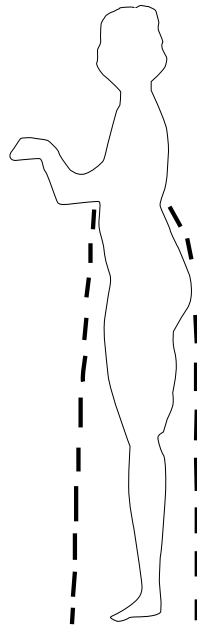
The images I provided illustrated the fashion changes over time, but it was necessary to compile data to verify what those changes were and when they occurred. For this I chose the dominant characteristics of the gown/body enclosure, which were very specific; shape or fullness, the color white, muslin fabric, waist height and neckline depth. Fullness referred to the circumference of the skirt at the hem. I then created a table using the images I collected from *Lady's Monthly Museum, Repository of Arts, and La Belle Assemblée*. The raw data from these images was then tabulated and scored with the results in the table included in the appendix

I recorded the color and type of cloth used, the height of the waist, and the lowness of the neckline. Also included was the width of the skirt at the bottom. Attachments such as flounces, ruffles, quillings, mancherons, tuckers, etc. were valued at a point each. Many gowns bore multiple attachments. The Regency gown (see plate 4.3, page 56) was tubular in shape—meaning the hemline width appeared to be about the same as the width at the hip. As soon as the hemline began to flare, I counted it as bell-shape, or full, not tubular. The height of the waist was another critical measure. It had to fit snugly right up under the breasts. Once there was definition between the waistline and the breasts, the gown ceased to fit into the Regency category. Midriff waistlines counted for one point and those that dropped to the natural level counted for two. Finally, the neckline was quite low. There may have been gathers or pleats at the bodice, but cleavage had to be visible with about one third of the roundness of the breasts displayed. As the neckline rose, it gained points. At the Regency low it was valued at zero but increased to two points if it reached to the collarbone. Midway between those levels it was accounted at one point. Some gowns had trains, but I did not

count that as a marker in this study because those employed for walking had short hems, right at the ankles to keep them from dragging through the muck of eighteenth and nineteenth century streets. All of the gowns were compared to the Classification System of Roach-Higgins and Eicher. They were all enclosures—they covered the body; all were pre-shaped—parts were sewn together based on a set of measurements. For example, the bodice was cut and sewn together to fit closely to the body above the waist, including the arms. Additionally, each gown was suspended—it fell from the shoulders to the length of the body, usually to the floor or close to it. This data, illustrated by two graphs, can be found on pages 86 and 87 respectively. (See appendix of raw data on page 103.)

Chapter 4

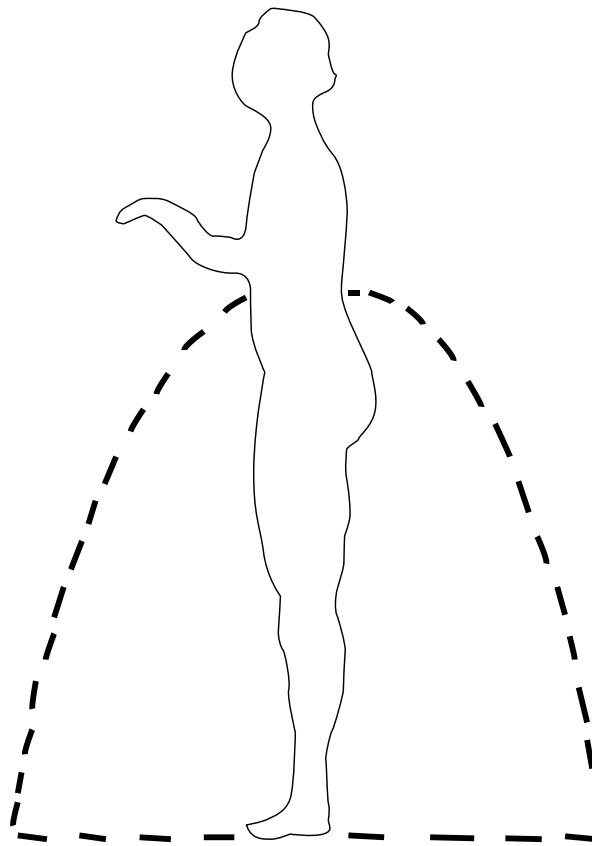
Reporting Results



Columnar Silhouette
Agnes Brooks Young, *Fashion Foundations*, 121.

Plate 4.1

This represented the shape of the columnar, Regency gown. The width at the hip was almost the same as the width at the hem. There was no fullness visible at the waistline.



Bell-Shaped Silhouette
Agnes Brooks Young, *Fashion Foundations*, 119.

Plate 4.2

This represented a bell-shaped gown. The woman who wore this would have used a corset and cage crinoline to achieve the fullness that began at the waist. In the United States, this shape was associated with the Civil War era. However, the gowns in this study designated as bell-shaped do not meet the requirements of full bell style such as shown above, but they are moving in that direction. The fullness developing in the skirt would accommodate the furniture utilized in the traditional bell-shape, therefore I used it as the designation.

Plate 4.3 represents the basic Regency, or round gown as was described in chapter 1. As is visible in the image, the dress had a very high waist and low neckline. The front waist had very little excess room, fitting almost smoothly against the skin except for a few minor gathers. The back waist, on the other hand, had gathers, or pleats that were compressed

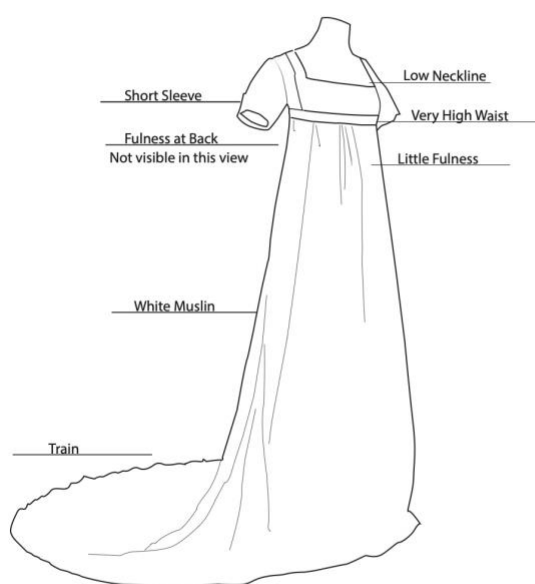
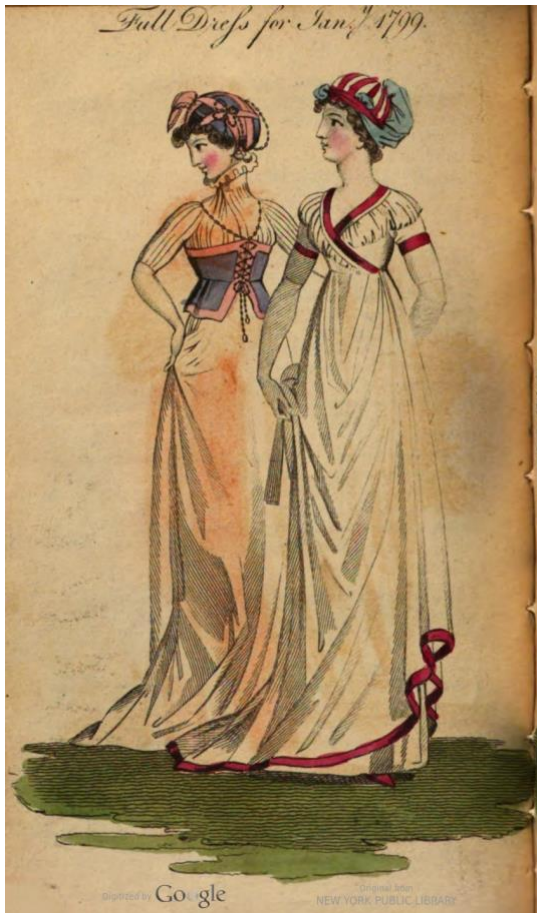


Plate 4.3
Paulette Brook

between the width of the shoulder blades and directly below the high waist in the back. This ease facilitated movement. The sleeves were short and slim, although they could also be puffed or even long depending on the time of day the gown was worn. A low neckline and short sleeves were considered formal dress that was worn in the evening. In the first years of its

popularity, the gown had a train, although for walking dresses, this was omitted for cleanliness purposes. Indian Muslin was the fabric of choice. The cotton industry in Manchester was manufacturing a variety of cloths, including muslin by the time this dress grew in popularity, but a woman of discernment would not have looked twice at a gown made of domestic muslin. No expense would be spared on a society lady's wardrobe; only that which cost more and came from foreign lands carried the élan which she required. W those of the upper echelon.

January 1799



June 1799



Plate 4.41

The models on the left are both wearing a round gowns of white muslin. However, there are attachments to the bodice not consistent with Regency style. The contrasting band at the hem is also outside the style's norm. However, fashion exchange between Britain and France is frozen at this time due to the war.²

Plate 4.53

Again, in this plate, the gowns are of muslin and they are white. But they have fullness in the skirt, and attachments to the bodice. Additionally, the waistlines are too near the natural waistline for a Regency gown.⁴

1. "Cabinet of Fashion" In *Lady's Monthly Museum: or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction* (London: Vernor & Hood, 1799), facing page

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825231&view=1up&seq=72>. Accessed 11/2/2019

2. "Cabinet of Fashion." 60. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825231&view=1up&seq=70>. Accessed 11/2/2019

3. Ibid., facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825231&view=1up&seq=520>. Accessed 11/2/2019

4. Ibid., 480. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825231&view=1up&seq=518>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1800



June 1800

Plate 4.65

Both gowns in this image are made of white muslin. However, there are attachments to the bodice (ruffles and tuckers), the waistlines are too low, and there is fullness in the skirt. Both gowns are growing closer to the ideal but have not achieved it yet. They meet the cloth and color components, but are also nearing the neck, waist, and shape designation. 6

Plate 4.77

Both models in this image are wearing muslin gowns, however, they are colored. Notice the waist is rising and the neckline is dropping further into the cleavage. 8

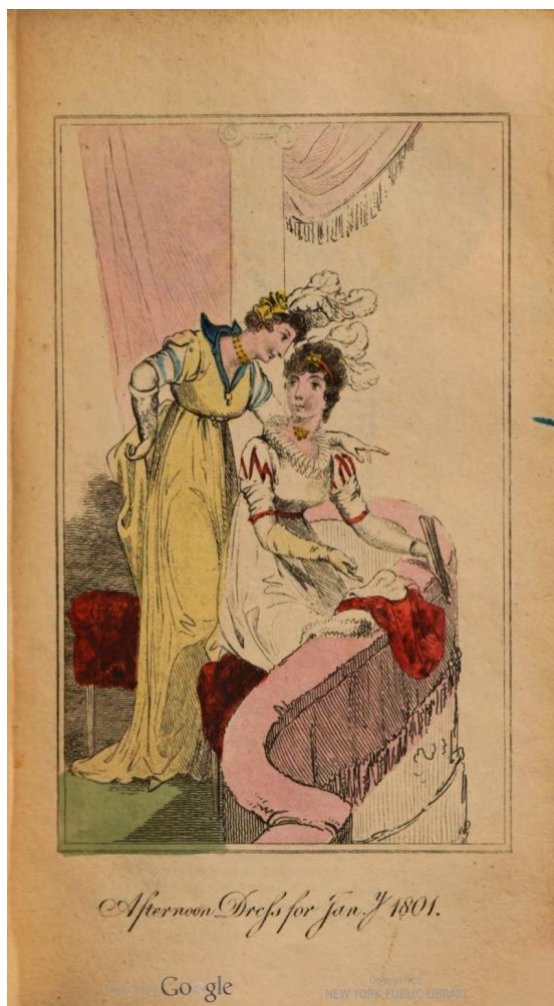
5. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825264&view=1up&seq=75>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

6. Ibid., 60. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825264&view=1up&seq=72>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

7. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825264&view=1up&seq=519>. Accessed 11/2/2019

8. Ibid., 474. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825264&view=1up&seq=516>. Accessed 11/2/2019

January 1801



June 1801

**Plate 4.89**

These women are wearing variations of the round gown. The cloth is muslin and they seem to be experimenting with the shape, neckline and color. There are attachments to the bodices not in keeping with a Regency gown.¹⁰

Plate 4.911

These enclosure are pre-shaped, suspended, wrapped, and one is of muslin and white so the gown on the right is very close to Regency. The neckline is not visible. On the left, the silhouette is similar to that on the right, but the color does not meet Regency dress style.¹²

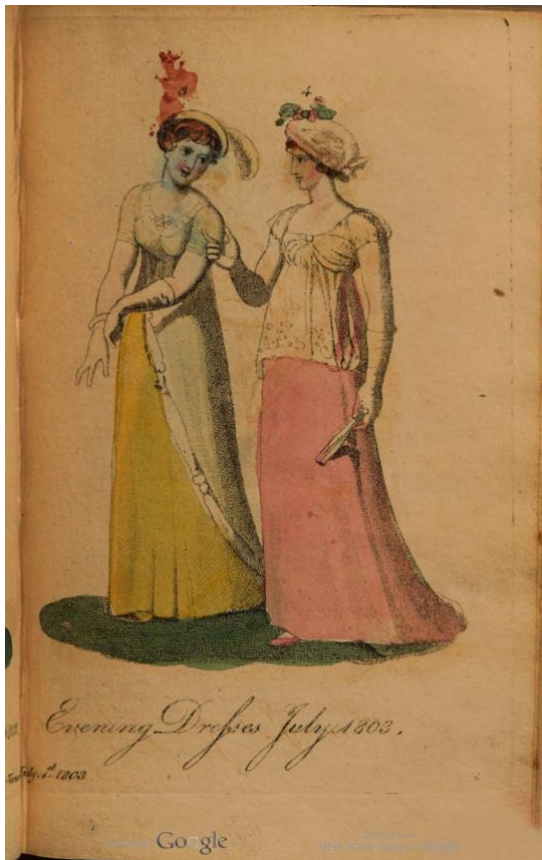
9. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825272&view=1up&seq=89>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

10. Ibid., 72. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825272&view=1up&seq=86>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

11. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825272&view=1up&seq=535>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

12. Ibid., 490 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825272&view=1up&seq=532>. Accessed 12/8/2019

July 1803



December 1803

Plate 4.10¹³

In this plate both women are wearing muslin, however on the left it is in the outer robe over a silk gown. On the right, the muslin is colored and topped with a lace spencer. Notice, however, that the shape, waist height, and neckline all meet the criteria.¹⁴

Plate 4.11¹⁵

The model in this picture is wearing a Regency gown. All components are in evidence: tubular shape, cloth, color, neckline and waist height.¹⁶

In 1802, Britain and France signed the Treaty of Amiens to end the war. The treaty did not last, fighting was taken up again the following year, but cross-pollination of style occurred in the interim.

13. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825306&view=1up&seq=75>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

14. Ibid., 60. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825306&view=1up&seq=72>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

15. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825306&view=1up&seq=505>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

16. Ibid., 420. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825306&view=1up&seq=504>. Accessed 11/2/2019

January 1804



June 1804



Plate 4.12¹⁷

Both dresses in this image are of white muslin. What is visible indicates the shape, and all other components meet the Regency gown criteria.¹⁸

Plate 4.13¹⁹

These two women are both wearing muslin gowns. On the left, however, the gown is topped with a shorter pink gown also of muslin. All other aspects of the Regency model are evident. There are attachments to the gown on the right, but it is still quite close to the Regency style that had no attachments.²⁰

17. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825330&view=1up&seq=75>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

18. Ibid., 60. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825330&view=1up&seq=74>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

19. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825330&view=1up&seq=455>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

20. Ibid., 420. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825330&view=1up&seq=454>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

July 1805



December 1805

Plate 4.14²¹

The woman on the left displays fashion from 1805 while the woman on the right that from 1755. The contemporary dress carries the correct silhouette; the waist is high, and the fullness is in the middle back. It would seem that the neckline is low. The over gown is muslin train trimmed in lace.²²

Plate 4.15²³

The woman on the left in this image is wearing muslin under her pelisse. On the right, the woman is in full evening dress: a long gown of white satin and silver tassels. The text indicated that the gown on the right was of satin. It is not possible to determine how closely these gowns meet the Regency gown standards.²⁴

21. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825348&view=1up&seq=76>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

22. Ibid., 64. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825348&view=1up&seq=80>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

23. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825348&view=1up&seq=453>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

24. Ibid., 420. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825348&view=1up&seq=452>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1806



June 1806



Plate 4.16²⁵

Both gowns in this plate are of white muslin and each is covered by a robe or pelisse of a different color. Although they have attachments at the hem, they still meet the criteria of a day dress in the Regency style.²⁶

Plate 4.17²⁷

In this image, the enclosures are meeting the standards in everything except color and cloth. The lady on the left side of the frame wears a straw colored, short muslin. The woman on the right is wearing a dress of white sarsenet with a long train that is trimmed with lace²⁸

25. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383923&view=1up&seq=75>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

26. Ibid., 60. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383923&view=1up&seq=74>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

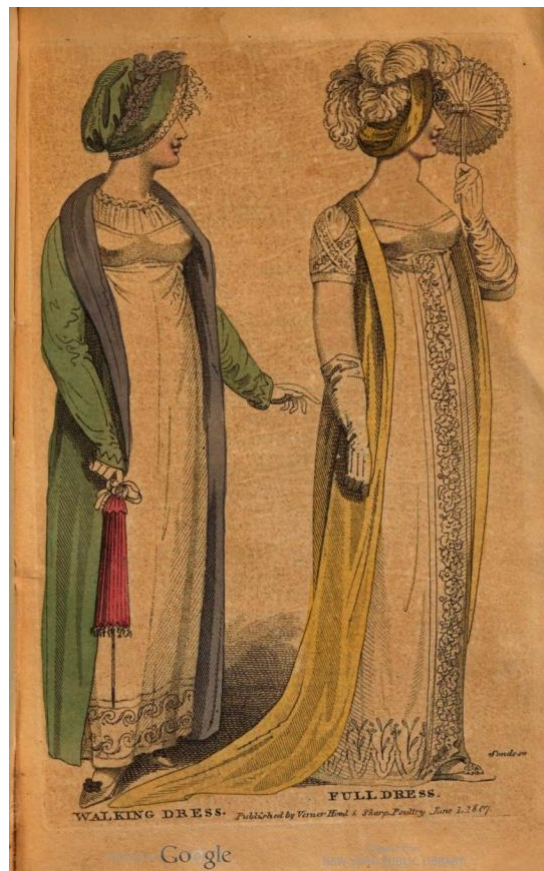
27. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383923&view=1up&seq=455>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

28. Ibid., 420. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383923&view=1up&seq=454>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

February 1807



June 1807

**Plate 4.18**²⁹

These gowns display variations on the theme of the gown. Their shapes, necklines, and waistlines continue in the Regency fashion, but the cloth and colors vary. Moreover, both gowns have attachments. The pelisse has contrasting bands of color and the full dress has contrasting bows along the side of the skirt.³⁰

Plate 4.19³¹

These gowns appear to meet the norms established for the Regency gown, however, the cloth in both is not muslin. On the left is a woman dressed in a round dress of cambric. On the right, the woman is wearing a walking dress of plain leno. Also, each has attachments to the skirt.³²

29. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383949&view=1up&seq=107>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

30. Ibid., 88. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383949&view=1up&seq=106>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

31. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383949&view=1up&seq=315>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

32. Ibid., 280. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383949&view=1up&seq=314>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1808



June 1808



Plate 4.2033

Again, in this image the women appear to be wearing the Regency gown. However, I discovered in the accompanying text that the dresses are of white cambric and white sarsnet, from left to right.³⁴

Plate 4.2135

These women are wearing round gowns but the one on the left meets Regency requirements while that on the right wears a round gown of pale pink sarsnet, which is covered with a robe of white crape or net.³⁶

33. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825322&view=1up&seq=55>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

34. Ibid., 40. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825322&view=1up&seq=53>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

35. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825322&view=1up&seq=347>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

36. Ibid., 312. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825322&view=1up&seq=346>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1809



June 1809



Plate 4.22³⁷

Most components of the Regency gown are in evidence here except the color and the cloth. On the left is a white cambric gown, and on the right a honey-toned silk dress. There is relatively little embellishment on either of these gowns.³⁸

Plate 4.23³⁹

These two women are both wearing white, round gowns. On the left, the model is wearing a white satin dress, and on the right, the model wears a white, cambric, walking length dress. While the gown on the right appears simple, that on the left is embellished with festoons of pearls down the front bordered by an edging of lace. These are considered attachments.⁴⁰

37. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383881&view=1up&seq=55>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

38. Ibid., 48. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383881&view=1up&seq=54>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

39. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383881&view=1up&seq=345>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

40. Ibid., 320. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433115383881&view=1up&seq=344>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

February 1810



June 1810



Plate 4.24⁴¹

This woman is wearing a muslin gown with a jacket and stomacher. The waist appears lower than in any of the preceding gowns. This may meet some of the Regency gown criteria, however it is difficult to discern. The skirt has a contrasting trim attached at the hem.⁴²

Plate 4.25⁴³

The model on the right wears a round gown of Indian muslin. It is walking length, has short puffed sleeves and removeable lower sleeves for formal wear. The waistline appears lower in this model also and there is an attachment around the hem and bodice.⁴⁴

41. "Fashions" In *La Belle Assemblée*. Vol. 2 New Series (London: J. Bell, 1810), Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044092530799&view=1up&seq=65>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

42. *Ibid.*, 41. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044092530799&view=1up&seq=67>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

43. *Ibid.*, Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044092530799&view=1up&seq=289>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

44. *Ibid.*, 245. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044092530799&view=1up&seq=291>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1811



May 1811



Plate 4.2645

Both gowns in this image fit the Regency parameters in shape, and waistline height, but the model on the left side of this image wears a pelisse of French gray cloth and on the right is a white gown made from white crape. Her neckline is above the normal gown's depth, but the waistline appears to be at the right height. There are no noticeable attachments to the enclosures.⁴⁶

Plate 4.2747

On the left the model displays a walking dress made from embroidered muslin, and on the right a pink robe of satin. Again, these gowns are lacking significant attachments.⁴⁸

45. "Mirror of Fashion" *In Lady's Monthly Museum*. Facing page.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825397&view=1up&seq=68>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

46. *Ibid.*, 54. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825397&view=1up&seq=74>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

47. *Ibid.*, "Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825397&view=1up&seq=323>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

48. *Ibid.*, 288. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825397&view=1up&seq=322>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1812



June 1812

Plate 4.2849

The fashionable model on the left is wearing a white muslin dress with a pleated ruff while her companion on the right wears a pelisse of green. The columnar shape is retained as is the high waist. However, the neckline on the left is higher, and that on the right is not visible. Colors are varying also.⁵⁰

Plate 4.2951

The woman in this picture wears a white, jaconet muslin gown that appears to meet the four other Regency gown components for a day dress. It is difficult to discern if the design work on the front is embroidery or applique.⁵²

The war of 1812 broke out during this year.

49. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825405&view=1up&seq=64>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

50. Ibid., 52. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825405&view=1up&seq=68>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

51. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825405&view=1up&seq=386>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

52. Ibid., <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433104825405&view=1up&seq=384>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

April 1813



Plate 4.3053

This model is wearing a robe and petticoat of fine cambric or jaconet muslin. Over her gown is a robe with attached ruffles, which makes it difficult to determine the shape. However, the color, neckline and sleeves indicate a typical Regency day gown.⁵⁴

Plate 4.3155

This woman is wearing a round gown of white crape, over a “white gossamer satin slip.” Overall, it meets some of the Regency gown requirements. The attachments to the bodice are very noticeable.⁵⁶

September 1813



53. Repository of Arts, Facing page.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657599&view=1up&seq=307>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

54. Repository of Arts. 242. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657599&view=1up&seq=304>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

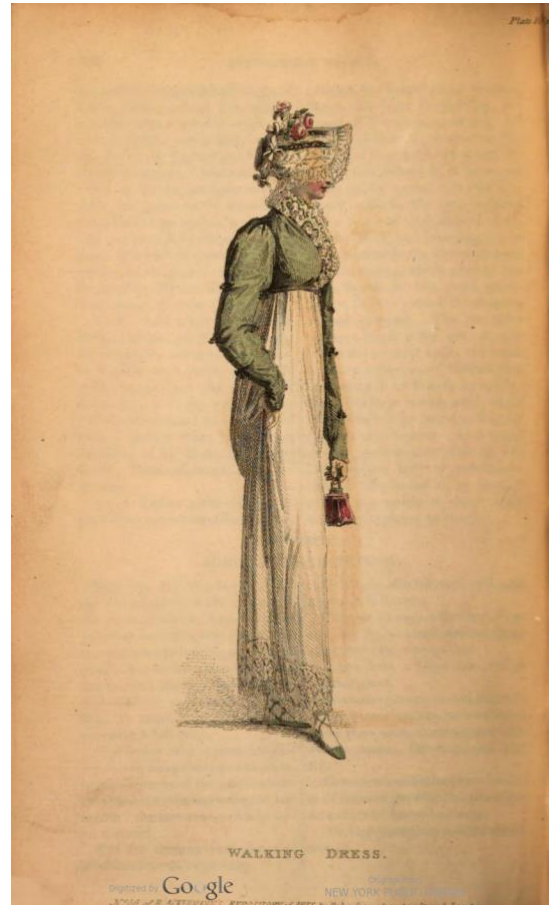
55. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657615&view=1up&seq=224>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

56. Ibid., 176. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657615&view=1up&seq=222>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1814



June 1814

**Plate 4.32**⁵⁷

The woman in the left image is wearing a cambric dress of which only the collar is visible. It is not possible to determine anything about it except the color, and shape, which is white and columnar. The text that accompanies the image states it is made from cambric.⁵⁸

Plate 4.33⁵⁹

The dress on the right is a walking length round gown of French cambric or muslin. The bottom is trimmed in a series of three small flounces (attachments). The waistband is high, but the neckline obscured so it cannot be analyzed.⁶⁰

57. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657623&view=1up&seq=82>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

58. Ibid., 56. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657623&view=1up&seq=80>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

59. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657623&view=1up&seq=462>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

60. Ibid., 367. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657623&view=1up&seq=465>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1815



June 1815

Plate 4.34⁶¹

The woman on the left is modeling a gown of blue crape over a slip of white satin. At the bottom is an attachment of net lace, blue embroidery, with chenille edging. Another attachment, a flounce, flutters below the edging and the dress appears fuller than any thus far. ⁶²

Plate 4.35⁶³

On the right the model wears a gown of “French figured gauze.” Underneath is a slip of white satin. This gown shows the changes occurring in fashion. Attachments to the bodice and skirt, which has increased fullness illustrates the first significant modifications. ⁶⁴

61. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657649&view=1up&seq=76>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

62. Ibid., 56. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657649&view=1up&seq=74>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

63. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657649&view=1up&seq=440>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

64. Ibid., 366. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657649&view=1up&seq=438&size=300>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

July 1816



December 1816

Plate 4.3665

The woman on the left is wearing a day dress of jaconet muslin. At the bottom is a deep flounce (attachment) finished in lacework. It does not alter the width of the gown, however.

66

Plate 4.3767

According to the text, the woman in this image is wearing a gown of cambric muslin with a high ruff at the neck and a flounce at the hem. That is all that can be determined, however.⁶⁸

65. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657680&view=1up&seq=67>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

66. Ibid., 52. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657680&view=1up&seq=64>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

67. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657680&view=1up&seq=442>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

68. Ibid., 361. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657680&view=1up&seq=445>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

July 1817

Plate 4.38⁶⁹

The gown on the left is made of white gauze over a satin slip. It has a very high waist, but attachments at the bodice and hem are gaining in size and texture. They are adding dimension to the enclosure (gown).⁷⁰

December 1817

Plate 4.39⁷¹

On the right is a woman shown wearing a cambric muslin walking dress. Attachments at the bottom of the skirt are a deep flounce and puffings of muslin.⁷²

69. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657672&view=1up&seq=75>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

70. Ibid., 54. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657672&view=1up&seq=70>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

71. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657672&view=1up&seq=377>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

72. Ibid., 300. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081657672&view=1up&seq=374>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

February 1818

August 1818



Plate 4.4073

These gowns continue with the high waistline and low neckline. White is still a common color; however, extensive embellishment appears throughout the design of the dress. Attachments are increasing in size, color and volume. Additionally, fullness increases in the skirt section as there are gathers front and back at the waistline.⁷⁴

Plate 4.4175

These women both wear white gowns with high waists. On the left the neckline is not visible, although a ruffled collar rests atop her spencer. The gown on the right sports the low neckline, but the gown is of unknown fabric while that on the left is of muslin and is decorated by many rows and flounces of very fine muslin.⁷⁶

73. "Mirror of Fashion" In *Lady's Monthly Museum*. Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pra&view=1up&seq=124>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

74. Ibid., 109. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pra&view=1up&seq=125>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

75. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prb&view=1up&seq=126>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

76. Ibid., 109. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prb&view=1up&seq=127>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1819

June 1819

**Plate 4.4277**

These models are wearing gowns that have little resemblance to the Regency gown. The color, shape, and cloth (satin) do not meet the requirements although the waistlines and one of the necklines are still in keeping with the fashion.⁷⁸

Plate 4.4379

Although the color of these gowns is lighter than their counterparts of January, they are not white nor are they muslin. Additionally, both bear embellishment and flounces not in keeping with the Regency gown. Moreover, the gown on the right is open with a petticoat skirt.⁸⁰

77. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prc&view=1up&seq=60>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

78. Ibid., 49. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prc&view=1up&seq=61>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

79. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prc&view=1up&seq=372>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

80. Ibid., 343. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prc&view=1up&seq=373>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1820

June 1820

**Plate 4.4481**

These women are dressed in white enclosures with high waistlines. The evening dress on the left is very low-cut, white satin, while that on the right is typical of a muslin morning dress. Attachments include flounces on the skirts and ruffles on the bodices. Both skirts are full at the bottom.⁸²

Plate 4.4583

On the left side of this image the model is wearing a white, lace dress over a lilac satin slip. The waist is high and the bodice tight. The sleeves of satin, lace, and ribbon festoons are full. On the right is a muslin gown with high waistline and bodice around which are attached tuckers or ruffles.⁸⁴

81. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pre&view=1up&seq=60>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

82. Ibid., 49. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pre&view=1up&seq=61>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

83. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pre&view=1up&seq=374>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

84. Ibid., 341. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pre&view=1up&seq=375>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

July 1821



December 1821

**Plate 4.4685**

On the left of this image, the model is wearing a round gown of fine cambric. Attachments to the full skirt are two lace flounces. On the right is an evening gown. The high waistline has an attachment of ruffled lace and the very full skirt bears applique and a flounce. Both gowns are white, but neither is muslin.⁸⁶

Plate 4.4787

These enclosures are round and pre-shaped. The fabrics are cambric and poplin in pink and blue respectively. They have full skirts with attachments of flounces at the lower skirt, and attachments on the bodice on the right include quillings of lace.⁸⁸

85. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prh&view=1up&seq=60>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

86. Ibid., 49. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prh&view=1up&seq=61>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

87. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prh&view=1up&seq=390>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

88. Ibid., 341. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prh&view=1up&seq=391>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1822



June 1822

**Plate 4.4889**

These enclosures are both for formal wear. That on the right is of muslin and on the left of cashmere. The waistlines have dropped and the necklines re-shaped. Both have attachments to the bodice—quillings of lace that are matched on the skirt of the right gown. The left gown has a cashmere shawl attached horizontally around the hem. 90

Plate 4.4991

The gowns in this plate have full skirts and waistlines close to the natural level. The bodices are tight and have attachments. The blue has appliqued leaves that match those on the skirt while the white has contrasting pink leaves appliqued over ruffled crape. There is a rouleau attached to the hem. They both have full skirts. 92

89. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pri&view=1up&seq=66>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

90. Ibid., 51. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pri&view=1up&seq=67>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

91. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pri&view=1up&seq=394>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

92. Ibid., 341. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pri&view=1up&seq=395>. Accessed 11/2/2019.

January 1823



June 1823

**Plate 4.50**⁹³

On the right side of the image the woman is wearing an evening dress of net over a satin slip. The bodice is cut low with a waistline that is close to the natural level. Attachments to the skirt are of lace flounces, which are matched on the bodice. The sleeve tops bear attached mancherons.⁹⁴

Plate 4.51⁹⁵

These gowns are white; muslin on the left and satin on the right. Both have full skirts with attachments in the form of flounces, puffings, rouleaus and bows. The bodice on the right gown is very low and attached to it is a lace tucker.⁹⁶

93. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prk&view=1up&seq=66>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

94. Ibid., 49. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prk&view=1up&seq=67>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

95. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prk&view=1up&seq=394>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

96. Ibid., 341. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prk&view=1up&seq=395>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

July 1824



December 1824

**Plate 4.5297**

The women in this plate are both dressed in enclosures of types of silk. The Walking dress has simple decoration of attached velvet trim. The waistline is low and the collar very high. The bodice of the evening gown has attachments in the form of seaweed lace, rosettes, and manchérons on the tops of the sleeves. Flounces are attached to the skirt.⁹⁸

Plate 4.5399

On the left side of this image is a woman in an evening dress of white crape over a white satin slip. The skirt has attachments in the form of flounces in a festoon style embellished with flowers. Attachments to the pre-shaped bodice are a rouleau around the neckline and leaves fixed over the bosom.¹⁰⁰

97. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prn&view=1up&seq=68>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

98. Ibid., 51. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prn&view=1up&seq=69>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

99. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prn&view=1up&seq=400>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

100. Ibid., 343. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prn&view=1up&seq=401>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

January 1825



June 1825



Plate 4.54¹⁰¹

These colored gros de Naples gowns have full skirts, pre-shaped bodices with nearly natural level waistlines. Their necklines are high and the pink gown sports attachments; a rouleau around the neck with puffings falling diagonally down the front. Both skirts are full, with attachments at the bottom.¹⁰²

Plate 4.55¹⁰³

Body enclosures of silk, these gowns have full skirts and bodices with attachments. Width is now emerging at the top, leading to a broad-shouldered appearance. Sleeve fullness is also increasing. A belt and gold clasp encircle the waist.¹⁰⁴

101. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prp&view=1up&seq=66>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

102. Ibid., 51. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prp&view=1up&seq=67>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

103. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prp&view=1up&seq=400>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

104. Ibid., 345. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prp&view=1up&seq=401>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

January 1826



Fashionable Carriage & Evening Dresses for Jan.
 Invented by Miss Keppel, Edward Street, Portman Square.
 Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

June 1826



Fashionable Carriage & Evening Dresses for June
 Invented by Miss Keppel, Edward Street, Portman Square.
 Pub. June 1826. by Lane & Knapp, Strand & Pall Mall.
 Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Plate 4.56¹⁰⁵

The woman on the right side of this image is wearing a white satin evening gown. The skirt has a “broad flounce in fan fluting, surmounted by scrolls of crape and white satin rosettes.” Attached to the bodice are two rows of tuckers in the Van Dyke fashion. The waistline is at the natural level, the neckline high. 106

Plate 4.57¹⁰⁷

On the left side of this image the model is wearing a dress of fine muslin. The lower skirt is encircled by two rows of flounces of muslin in the Vandyke style. The bodice is pleated, the sleeves full, with quill trim matching the bottom of the dress. The waistline sits at the natural level. Blue crape makes the gown on the right. It has high bodice and low waist. Attachments on the skirt are three rows of quilling. 108

105. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pr&view=1up&seq=68>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

106. Ibid., 53. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pr&view=1up&seq=69>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

107. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pr&view=1up&seq=394>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

108. Ibid., 343. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1pr&view=1up&seq=395>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

January 1827



Fashionable Walking & Evening Dresses for Jan. 1827

Invented by Miss Vespert, Edward Street, Portman Square.

Pub. Jan. 1827, by Dean & Munday, Threadneedle Street.

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

May 1827



Fashionable Evening & Morning Robe Dresses for May 1827

Invented by Miss Vespert, Edward Street, Portman Square.

Pub. May 1827, by Dean & Munday, Threadneedle Street.
Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Plate 4.58¹⁰⁹

According to the journal, the woman on the right of this image is wearing, “A dress of ethereal blue silk: the skirt is very long and ornamented with a bell trimming, edged with silk cord, each bell divided and looped on one side.”¹¹⁰

Plate 4.59¹¹¹

The woman on the right, is dressed in an open dress, not round, that is made from jaconaut muslin with scalloped edges from the neck down to and encircling the hem. There are three rows of decorated muslin that comprise the falling cape of the bodice. The woman on the left is wearing an evening gown of gold colored satin. Attached to the skirt are two flounces that are pulled up to a point in the center front. The bodice is edged with an attachment of blonde quilting.¹¹²

109. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prt&view=1up&seq=64>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

110. Ibid., 49. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prt&view=1up&seq=65>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

111. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prt&view=1up&seq=397>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

112. Ibid., 342. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prt&view=1up&seq=396>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

January 1828



June 1828

**Plate 4.60**¹¹³

The woman on the left is wearing an evening dress of crimson gros de Naples with an attached flounce in the Vandyke style and French feather trimming on the edge. The bodice is very wide at the neckline with an attachment of lace at the neckline.¹¹⁴

Plate 4.61¹¹⁵

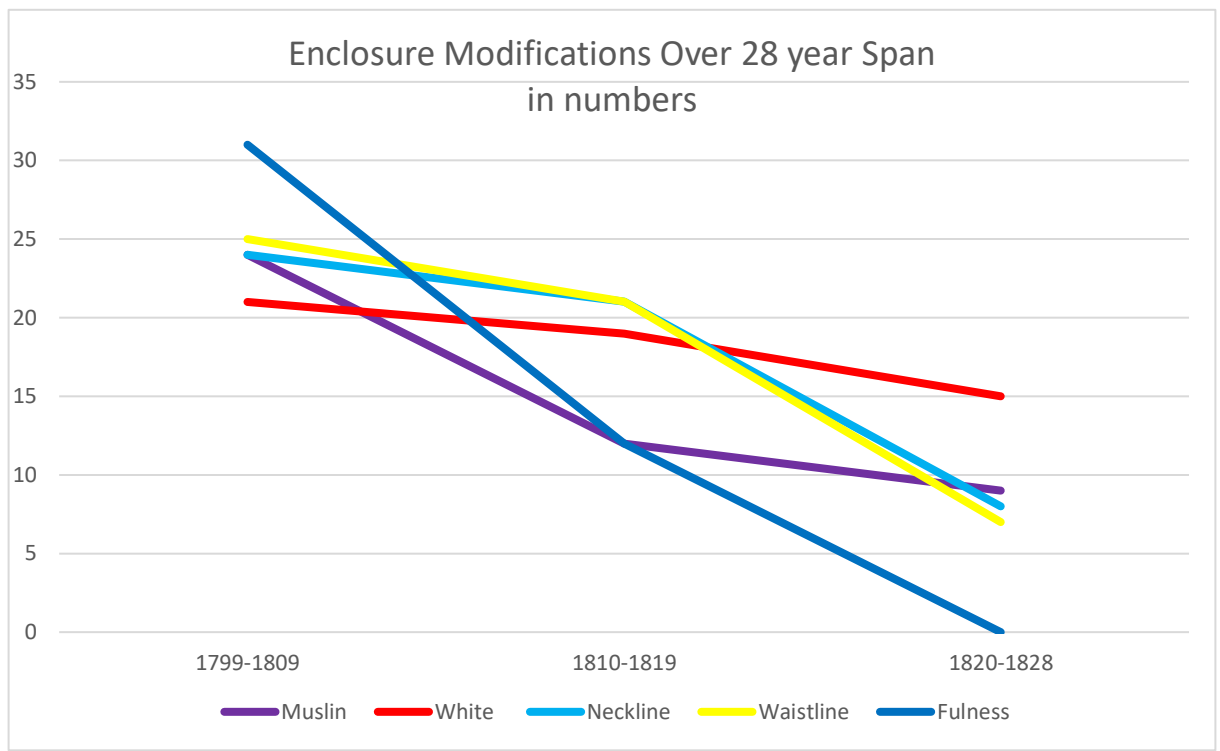
These women are dressed in enclosures with full skirts, and bodices that are broad at the shoulder. The garments are made of types of silk. The waistline is at the natural level for both, and there are attachments to the enclosure below the waist. Sleeves are very full, with attachments. Bows and/or lace are attached to the bodices at the neckline.¹¹⁶

113. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prv&view=1up&seq=62>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

114. Ibid., 51. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prv&view=1up&seq=63>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

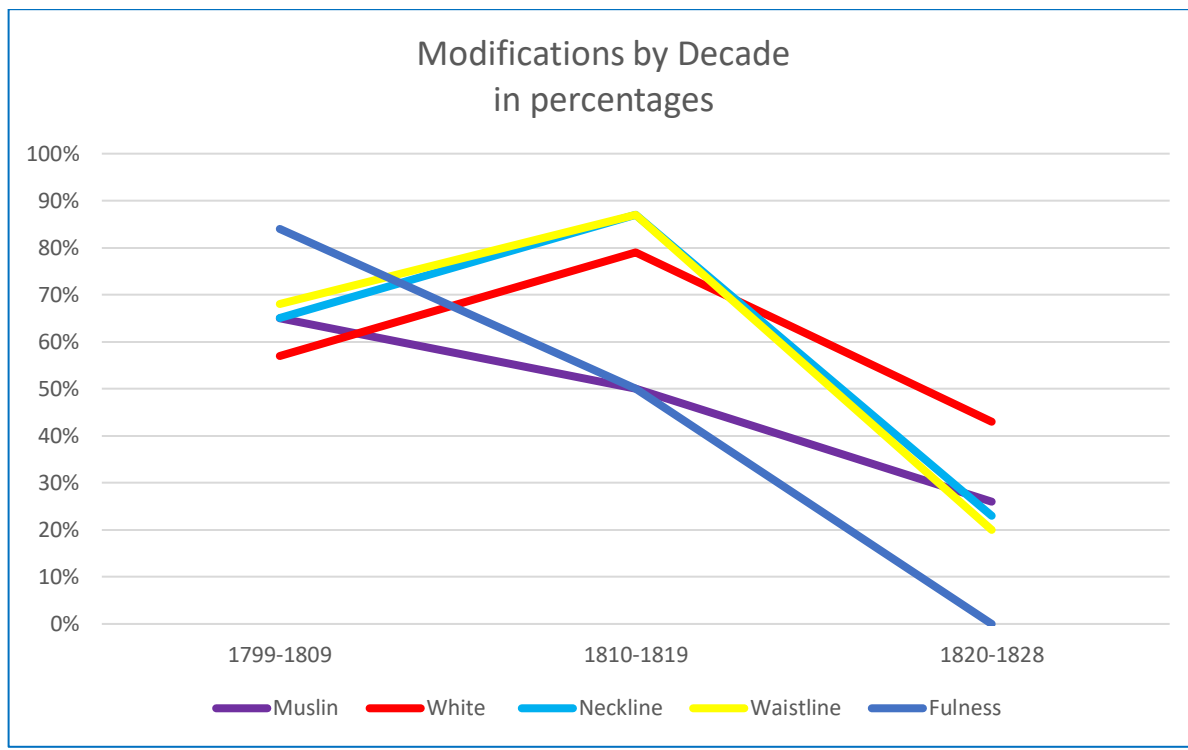
115. Ibid., Facing page. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prv&view=1up&seq=375>. Accessed 11/3/2019.

116. Ibid., 344. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1prv&view=1up&seq=374>. Accessed 11/3/2019.



Graph 4.1

The data indicated that in the first decade of study the number of body enclosures (gowns) meeting the criteria as set forth in Chapter 1 by McNeil, O'Brien, Tortora and Marcketti were greater in number than during the remaining decades. Declination of components was not consistent. The neckline and waistline retained their popularity somewhat steadily throughout the first decade, then dropped in the second and third. White, as a choice of color, did not experience a major decline throughout the entire period, although it appeared that muslin did. The width of the gown at the ankles grew tremendously from 1799 to 1828.



Graph 4.2

Initially this graph appeared to contradict graph 1. However, closer examination indicated it did not. There were fewer images of body enclosures during the second decade, but they met the Regency criteria by a greater percentage than the previous or following periods. This corroborated the belief that the Regency gown was most popular up to the end of the second decade.

Chapter 5

Summary

The purpose of this study was to see how culture was reflected through and imposed upon dress. I chose a style and era that seemed to lie outside of what the norm had been for fashion change, which was a slow evolution over time with small modifications occurring. This study occurred during the Regency Era. I undertook research in primary and secondary resources and used triangulation to ensure corroboration existed between my sources. I then created a table based on the visible images and written text to help track what the modifications were and when they occurred.

I studied ninety-six gowns throughout a twenty-eight-year period. As I stated earlier, the components of the dress that indicated it was a Regency gown were the fabric, shape, color, waist, and neckline features. As seen on Graph 2, during the first decade (1799-1809), I found that the shape/fullness (84%) and waist height (68%) features represented the highest percentage meeting the criteria during the period, followed by the neckline (65%), and fabric (65%) and lastly by the color (57%). In the second decade (1810-1819) the neckline and waistline percentage that met Regency gown criteria, was at 87% for both, while the color white dominated in 79% of enclosures and muslin cloth and fullness of the gowns were both at 50%. Finally, during the third decade, from 1820-1828 the numbers changed significantly. White as the choice of color was at 43%, followed by 26% of the gowns were of muslin, 23% had low necklines, 20% had high waists, and there were no gowns with a columnar silhouette, the fullness from the waist down expanded making the hems much greater in circumference than that of a Regency dress.

Muslin gowns for adult women emerged over a period of time beginning around 1783. The first iteration followed on the heels of the same style gown for adolescent girls,

blousy, loose with a flounce at the neck and full gathered skirt. This type of gown was known as having a bell (full) silhouette. The first radical alteration in the gown occurred in the 1790s. Women in France altered the shape drastically but kept the fabric to create their own columnar gown. Although British women were cut-off from the Continent at the time, due to the war, and unaware of the new shaped gown, they had narrowed the bell shape somewhat. However, cross-pollination of ideas once again took place when there was a brief respite in fighting; a result of a temporary truce between France and Britain. During that time, travel between the two nations resumed. Subsequently, British women discovered the modifications in the round gown design and adopted it in their own way.

For several years little changed. The cloth used was mostly muslin from Bengal, the waist high, neck low, sleeves short for evening wear, long for daywear, with a train trailing behind. Some had minor attachments in the form of embroidery or lace insets, but nothing that altered the columnar silhouette. Around 1806 the train started to lose length and after 1812 none of the gowns in my research were trained. Most likely this was an issue of practicality. Flowing, draped fabric of the train clung to any aberration in the surface over which it traveled. While women wrapped it over an arm while walking outdoors, the ballroom was the site of potential horrors. One step on the train and it tore completely away from the dress. No woman wanted that shame to befall her.

Another radical change I observed was after 1815 when the gowns adopted a flounce at the hems. This first attachment was somewhat simple, however, over time, the flounces gained in complexity and adornment. Moreover, attachments started appearing at the neckline, the sleeves, shoulders and waistlines. Ruffles, quilling, puffing, lace, ribbons, and embroidery were just a few of the ornamentations that emerged. As the waistline dropped, stylish belts encircled the body. Elaborate attachments to the bodice and sleeves were quite

noticeable. Lace alternated with cloth to create layers of delicate finishes. Fabric-shaped flowers, lozenges, and bows added elegance to an already beautiful gown.

Initially I thought I might find there was a practical problem surrounding the care and maintenance of white gowns. Despite the fact they could be laundered frequently, it may have been quite difficult to keep them clean; also, the muslin was so fine it could have easily worn out just from frequent washing. I considered the possible connection between the fashion changes and the availability of the requisite textiles due to alterations in trade patterns. I also thought a link with religion and politics with the Regency gown's evolution may have played a part too. Because we have little primary information from the wearers themselves related directly to the garments—Jane Austen did not comment on this and she is one of the most reliable sources—speculation continued to reign in determining a definitive answer. Nonetheless, the speculation was no longer based on just guesswork but on information derived from a close study of events and movements, ebbs and flows of the time.

Addressing the first concern I had regarding maintenance, I found no evidence to indicate it had any bearing on the demise of the style. Although the cloth was not durable, it was easily replaced, and the cost was lower than getting a new dress of silk or wool. The ease with which it was cleaned was certainly attractive also. Drying time was very short, allowing a woman to have her gown laundered and ready for use in a short period of time. Of course, because they were less costly than a silk or similarly expensive fabric, albeit not as inexpensive as domestically produced cottons, most women had more than one muslin gown already hanging in their wardrobe.

Conversely, modification in trade patterns played a role in the change in popularity of the muslin gown. Muslin from India was traded by the British East India Company from the

early 17th century through the mid nineteenth century when the company was disbanded. However, due to the domestic cotton industry in Britain, Indian cottons, muslin included, was reexported to other parts of the empire in order to facilitate establishment and growth of the fledgling domestic market. Additionally, the raw cotton of the long staple variety the weavers did grow, was sent to England and returned to India in the form of yarn for the weavers to weave. Ultimately, the tables turned entirely. Britain purchased cotton from the Southern region of the United States, further affecting the East Indian industry. India finally resorted to purchasing cotton cloth for their own use from England as they were unable to produce sufficient quantities of their own! The trade in cotton, which during earlier times was almost exclusively an Indian product, shifted to be an industrially produced commodity controlled by England, except for the inter-Asian trade. Thus, a cloth once highly prized by British women of fashion for its exquisite fineness and exotic overtones disappeared and, in its place, a quotidian product created by machinery in a nearby province emerged. Again, outside influences affected the materials available to make fashion decisions, but women navigated the issues and designed new images within the confines of accessible textiles to continue to maintain the power that appearance afforded them.

As I indicated earlier, women of distinction—the genteel and their betters—considered locally manufactured muslin as below their status. It did not carry the air of the exotic like that imported from the East offered. Anyone could afford to purchase gowns made of cotton from the Midlands. To wear one from such cloth did not set a person apart and signify status or character. When women from the lower rungs on the social ladder adopted a domestically produced muslin gown, those in the upper echelon no longer stood out.

My consideration that religion might have influenced the fashion was negated by the data. The neckline, which was quite low, did not go completely out of fashion during the twenty-eight-year period. Modesty displayed a person's piety, according to Hannah More. While she objected to the low neckline of the gown, it did not appear to be a major concern for others regarding the fashion as low necklines continued, with some deviations beyond the period studied. Moreover, white was and is a symbol of purity. Because English women employed layers of undergarments—chemise and soft stays—the gowns were opaque and did not invite the scorn targeted toward their French counterparts who were not as circumspect in creating an image of modesty.

On the other hand, elaborate embellishments (attachments) on the gowns increased as the popularity of the Regency gown declined. These spoke of luxury and ostentation; indicators that godliness resided in fancy clothes or was, in the least, not compromised by them. Aside from the fact they could not be worn to work, white, muslin gowns hardly carried the negative connotation that silk, brocade, sarsnet, or gros de Naples did regarding excessive luxury; another vice in the face of piety according to Hannah More and others of like mind. It was also possible that the evangelical sympathies indicated by period novels, journals and pamphlets circulating throughout society did not have as great an influence on women and decision making as previously thought.

There is no doubt politics and trade patterns affected the import of cotton muslin and therefore, the Regency gown's attraction to discerning women. But another influence that drove a change in the fashion was that which created its initial demand; its simplicity. After a period of wearing heavy gowns shaped with layers of undergarments including stays and panniers, the minimalism of the muslin gown with lighter stays and fewer layers seemed like liberation to a generation of women experiencing the throes of living at the end of a century;

a seemingly always dynamic period. But women eventually discovered the simple lines, plain weave cloth, and continuous shades of white were boring. Pastel colored muslin added an option, but it too had a limited shelf-life. Because the lines of the gown were so classic, attachments, either on the dress itself, or on the body of the wearer appeared inappropriate, out of balance.

For a woman accustomed to displaying a vibrant image to the public, having only the Regency gown in her wardrobe limited her creativity and ability to appear unique. Lower-class women, with the infusion of domestic cottons, diluted the uniqueness associated with the muslin gown further diminishing its attraction. Additionally, colored gowns with bell or rear-fullness-shaped silhouettes offered more options to create a distinct image and thereby portray the status or character a woman desired. Furthermore, fashion magazines, or more accurately magazines which displayed fashion were more easily obtained as the old century aged and new century grew. A woman enjoyed recurrent images of white or near white columnar gowns for a time, but eventually she required new stimulus. The publisher altered content or lost customers. The dissemination of the printed word accompanied by illustrations served as powerful arbiters of change.

Although women made decisions based on the availability of consumer goods, affected by trade patterns, social discourse, and politics, those factors told only part of the story. Human agency was also a critical component of the evolution of the fashion. Women in the Late Georgian, Regency Era enjoyed little power. They could not own property, could not vote or hold public office, were not supposed to travel alone, and lost their children to their husbands should they choose to leave a marital situation where they suffered abuse.

Women of the era studied appear as victims in a male-centric society that had little use for them beyond serving their masculine superiors. Outside of a few known, such as Mary Wollstonecraft and the female philosophers of her day, little was heard about the genteel woman discussing dissatisfaction in her role. This is not to say they did not have thoughts on the matter, just that it was not an overt part of the discourse available through the printed word. Women of the Regency Era were not passive victims of society. Within the established parameters of their world, they exercised agency, and fashion was one of the means with which that agency was illustrated.

At the point when imported cottons were diminishing in availability, Regency gowns were evolving. The employment of fabrics such as white silk, cambric, or satin were emerging, but muslin was still in evidence into the 1820s. Embellishments in the form of lace borders, mancherons, tuckers, festoons, embroidery, and ribbons and bows altered the simplicity of the Regency gown more gradually than did the flounce, which arrived abruptly in 1815 at the end of the wars with France and the United States, but even with those modifications, the intervening time was much shorter than changes occurring previously in fashion, most likely a result of the dissemination of ladies magazines.

This study explored society, women, and fashion through the lens of a garment. In the midst of multiple wars, civil and military uprisings, social unrest, technological improvements leading to job loss, and shifting trade patterns redistributing commonly utilized commodities, women continued to exercise power through their choices in fashion. The pool of options to create their fashions may have diminished, but they chose how to respond. They were not at the mercy of a ready-made market wherein the only choices were those hanging on a rack. Their clothing was bespoke; it was made to order, and they chose

how they wanted to dress in order to make a statement with the greatest impact. To repeat a statement from earlier in this thesis by Kimberly Miller, "...women are viewed as powerful if they are attractive and fit the cultural ideal."¹ Late Georgian women knew by experience that the improperly attired woman who ignored her appearance carried no authority at home, in her vicinity, or region. She was overlooked or seen as less than her sisters whose appearance was sparkling. If a woman wanted to persuade her husband, or anyone else for that matter, her first objective was to put on character. It is said that clothes make the man. In this situation, clothes made the woman. Clothing empowered them. So, when overpowering events occurred, disrupting their sense of authority, fashion served as a means of regaining strength. It was the one thing they could manipulate to their own satisfaction.

Nonetheless, according to a close analysis of the images, the most abrupt alteration in the gowns came in the year after the wars with France and America were decided. From that point, fashions rapidly moved away from the muslin round gown to a fuller silhouette with elaborate attachments. The atmosphere of oppression permeating the nation lifted somewhat. Taxation and labor issues created angst, but the concerns that Britain would again lose to America, or worse, to France evaporated. Families welcomed home their soldiers and sailors, and a celebratory mood was evident in the fashions the women designed. With myriad textiles at their disposal and renewed spirit, women opted for elegance.

Textiles were opulent silks and silk blends for dress and printed cottons and blends for day. Pashminas (cashmere shawls) arrived from India adding to the already highly ornamented gowns. The fashions emerging post-wars, were as opulent as those prior to and during the

1. Kimberly Miller, "The Body in Cultural Context," Mary Lynn Damhorst, Kimberly A. Miller, and Susan O. Michelman eds., *The Meanings of Dress* (New York, NY: Fairchild Publications, 1999), 15.

wars were understated. The era of the simple, white muslin gown was rapidly pushed aside by an era of increased optimism visible in the clothing of the genteel woman.

Early in the twentieth-century, George Taylor, an economist, indicated that hems rise as do stocks.² To be sure, fashion and the economy are closely intertwined, but Taylor's theory has been debunked. Even so, there was a distinct relationship between the end of the wars and the transformations in dress in the early nineteenth century. The data supported the idea that military conflicts have a direct and visual impact on society. The women in this study illustrated through the dress they wore, their response to the zeitgeist—one that war, or in this situation, multiple wars, created. During such years, dress was understated, as if the donning of glamorous garments contradicted the seriousness of the times. However, once military engagement was at an end, a lightheartedness appeared as is seen in the almost frivolous attachments to dress. Further research and analysis involving a population experiencing military conflict could legitimize the theory that wars create their own zeitgeist.

Fashion trends during the Regency Era were subject to a combination of factors; shifting trade patterns, rapid dissemination of new styles due to the increase of the printed word, and human agency. However, the most significant factor was the effect of the wars between Britain and France, and Britain and the United States.

2. David Gilbert, "The Looks of Austerity" in *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, July 2018, Vol. 21 Issue 4, pp477-499. Accessed December 5, 2019.

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Appendix
Graph of Raw Data Derived from Journals

Values for attachments		Decade											
		1799				1800				1801			
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Dress													
Body Enclosure		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suspended		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre shaped		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
wrapped		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
muslin		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
white		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
neckline	0-2	0	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
waistline	0-2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
fullness	0-3	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
attachments													
bodice	0-3	1	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
skirt.	0-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		3	3	4	4	6	4	5	3	4	3	4	2
		Decade											
		1803				1804				1805			
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Dress													
Body Enclosure		0	0	0			0	0	0	0		0	0
Suspended		0	0	0			0	0	0	0		0	0
Pre shaped		0	0	0			0	0	0	0		0	0
wrapped		0	0	0			0	0	0	0		0	0
muslin		1	0	0			0	0	0	1		0	1
white		1	1	0			0	1	0	1		1	0
neckline	0-2	0	0	0			0	0	0	0		0	1
waistline	0-2	0	0	0			0	0	0	0		0	0
fullness	0-3	0	0	0			0	0	0	0		0	0
attachments													
bodice	0-3	0	0	0			0	0	0	0		0	1
skirt.	0-3	0	0	0			1	0	0	1		0	0
Totals		2	1	0			1	1	0	3		1	3

	Values for attachments	Decade											
		1806				1807				1808			
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Dress													
Body Enclosure		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suspended		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre shaped		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
wrapped		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
muslin		0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
white		0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
neckline	0-2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
waistline	0-2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
fullness	0-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
attachments													
bodice	0-3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
skirt.	0-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		0	0	1	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	0	2
	Values for attachments	Decade											
		1809				1810				1811			
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Dress													
Body Enclosure		0	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
Suspended		0	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
Pre shaped		0	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
wrapped		0	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
muslin		1	1	1	0	0	0			1	1	0	1
white		0	1	0	0	0	0			1	0	0	1
neckline	0-2	0	1	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
waistline	0-2	0	0	0	0	1	1			0	0	0	0
fullness	0-3	0	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
attachments													
bodice	0-3	0	0	0	0	1	0			0	0	0	0
	0-3	0	0	1	0	0	1			0	0	0	0
Totals		1	3	2	0	2	2			2	1	0	2

	Values for attachments	Decade											
		1812				1813				1814			
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Dress													
Body Enclosure		0		0		0		0				0	
Suspended		0		0		0		0				0	
Pre shaped		0		0		0		0				0	
wrapped		0		0		0		0				0	
muslin		0		0		0		1		1		0	
white		0		0		0		0		0		0	
neckline	0-2	1		0		0		0					
waistline	0-2	0		0		0		0				0	
fullness	0-3	0		0		0		0				0	
attachments													
bodice	0-3	1		0		0		1				0	
skirt	0-3	0		0		0		0				1	
Totals		2		0		0		1				1	
	Values for attachments	Decade											
		1815				1816				1817			
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Dress													
Body Enclosure		0		0		0		0		0		0	
Suspended		0		0		0		0		0		0	
Pre shaped		0		0		0		0		0		0	
wrapped		0		0		0		0		0		0	
muslin		1		1		0		0		1		0	
white		1		0		0		0		0		0	
neckline	0-2	0		0		0		1		0		0	
waistline	0-2	0		0		0		0		0		0	
fullness	0-3	1		1		1		1		1		1	
attachments													
bodice	0-3	1		1		1		1		1		0	
skirt	0-3	2		1		1		1		2		2	
Totals		5		4		3		4		5		3	

		Decade															
		Values for attachments				1818				1819				1820			
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d*	a	b	c	d				
Dress																	
Body Enclosure		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Suspended		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Pre shaped		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
wrapped		0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
muslin		1		0		1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0				
white		0		0		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1				
neckline	0-2	0		0		1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0				
waistline	0-2	0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
fullness	0-3	1		0		2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3				
attachments																	
bodice	0-3	1		1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
skirt	0-3	2		3		2	1	2	3	3	3	2	1				
		5		4		8	5	5	6	6	7	6	6				
		Decade															
		Values for attachments				1821				1822				1823			
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d				
Dress																	
Body Enclosure		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Suspended		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Pre shaped		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
wrapped		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
muslin		0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1				
white		0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0				
neckline	0-2	0	1	1		1	0	2	0	2	1	0	0				
waistline	0-2	0	0	0		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
fullness	0-3	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2				
attachments to enclosures																	
bodice	0-3	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1				
skirt	0-3	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	3	3				
Totals		5	7	9	5	8	6	9	8	10	9	7	8				

		Decade												
	Values for attachments	1824				1825				1826				
		a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	
Dress														
Body Enclosure		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	
Suspended		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Pre shaped		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
wrapped		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
muslin		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	
white		1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	
neckline	0-2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	
waistline	0-2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
fullness	0-3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
attachments														
bodice	0-3	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	
skirt	0-3	3	0	3	2	3	3	3	1	2	3	2	3	
Totals		11	7	10	12	13	14	14	10	12	11	9	13	
		Decade												
	Values for attachments	1827					1828							
		a	b	c	d*	a	b	c	d					
Dress														
Body Enclosure		0	0	0	0	0		0	0					
Suspended		0	0	0	0	0		0	0					
Pre shaped		0	0	0	0	0		0	0					
wrapped		0	0	0	0	0		0	0					
muslin		1	1	1	0	1		1	1					
white		1	1	1	0	1		0	1					
neckline		2	1	1	1	1		1	1					
waistline		2	2	2	2	2		2	2					
fullness		3	3	3	3	3		3	3					
attachments														
bodice		1	1	1	2	1		2	2					
skirt		1	2	3	1	2		3	2					
Totals		11	11	12	9	11		12	12					