FASHION: A REFLECTION OF AN AGE

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Fashion, as related to the art of costume, reflects the spirit of the age in which it exists. This study presents a picture of fashion in the period divisions indicated, beginning with the reign of Louis XIV of France in 1643, to the great depression of 1929. The reflection of fashion in the contemporary era is not presented, for it is too near to us to be analyzed clearly. Therefore, the nature of fashion, its definition and power, may not coincide with current ideas, being based principally on periods prior to World War II.

I.

THE NATURE OF FASHION

A DEFINITION OF FASHION

Fashion is one of the greatest influences in life, pervading every field and reaching every class. From the standpoint of costume, it is the expositor of habits, social relations, in fact, of everything pertaining to the era in which each fashion exists. It is a thermometer of the infinitely various tastes of the day, reflecting the influence of external circumstances. It is said that fashion is a short custom whereas, in reverse, custom is merely a long fashion, for fashion affects an exceedingly wide range of human activity, undergoing continuous modification.

Fashion in dress and adornment is more than the prevailing style of milady's attire; it is a form of human behavior through which people constantly seek to improve their appearance or their social adjustments with their associates. In imitating a given example, people satisfy their demand for social adaptation. Fashion, however, satisfies a need for differentiation as well as similarity. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said in his "Letters and Social Aims," "The sense of being perfectly well dressed gives a feeling of inward tranquillity which religion is powerless to bestow." [1]

Style is a characteristic or distinctive mode of expression, presentation, or conception in an art field, and fashion is

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[1] A. B. Young, Recurring Cycles of Fashion, p. 197.

the prevailing style at any given time. In clothing, a person may impart her individual style to her attire, for style is part of the personality, a sense of the appropriateness of a dress in line, color, and composition. Fashion is everchanging, whereas style is eternal.

THE POWER OF FASHION

The power of fashion has been expressed in the statement that to be out of fashion is to be out of the world. It can be neither flouted nor neglected, for its influence over the human mind is such as to make a style, when accepted, seem beautiful, no matter its connotation when out of vogue. No one can be a part of contemporary society and be, at the same time, completely out of fashion.

There seems to be an entire system of morality attached to clothing and especially to fashion. Thorstein Veblen expressed this in his "Theory of the Leisure Class."

> No one finds difficulty in assenting to the commonplace that the greater part of the expenditure incurred by all classes for apparel is incurred for the sake of respectable appearance rather than for the protection of the person. And probably at no other point is the sense of shabbiness so keenly felt as it is if we fall short of the standard set by social usage in this matter of dress. It is true of dress in even a higher degree than of most other items of consumption, that people will undergo a very considerable degree of privation in the comforts or necessaries of life in order to afford what is considered a decent amount of wasteful consumption; so that it is by no means an uncommon occurrence, in an inclement climate, for people to go ill clad in order to appear well dressed. And the commercial value of the goods used for clothing in any modern

> community is made up to a much larger extent of the fashionableness, the reputability of the goods than of the mechanical service which they render in clothing the person of the wearer. The need of dress is eminently a 'higher' or spiritual need. [2]

This spiritual need is a psychological one seeking approval, and the condemnation of society at large is not as great as the conscience of the individual. Clothing is too much a part of the personality. One can not be entirely indifferent to apparel, for it seems but a natural extension of the person. The feeling of being well-dressed imparts a buoyant confidence to the person, and it is said that "a pretty woman, conscious of looking her best, never caught a cold however scanty her gown." [3]

Fashion, whose laws are imposed without formal sanctions, is obeyed with docility even when its demands are unreasonable, arbitrary, and sometimes cruel, whereas public opinion and formal regulations are invariably set at naught. Dress has often been the despair of the political economist and the administrator. They often condemn fashion because of its extravagance, its refusal to obey any reasonable laws of supply and demand. Fashion creates industries only to destroy them. Sumptuary laws have often been created to regulate fashion, but to no avail. An interesting example of the past were fabrics manufactured by Oberkampf in the time of Louis XVI of France. Oberkampf introduced "indiennes" which

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2 Q. Bell, On Human Finery, p. 11.

3 Ibid., p. 14.

were colored prints similar to those produced in India. He created extreme jealousy in the guilds whose members forced the enactment of laws prohibiting the import of these prints. Women wearing "indiennes" were liable to a fine on the mere accusation of guilt. Examiners at custom stations were directed to remove and tear by force any gown from a delinquent. By an accident, however, Oberkampf became famous and, therefore, accepted by court society. A princess, whose Persian cambric had been the envy of all, tore her dress and went to Oberkampf for aid. There he succeeded in producing a similar gown which proved to be a success fashionably at Versailles. In 1759, he obtained permission to establish a factory near Versailles, an example of the power of fashion over rules and regulations.

The church has always opposed fashion in that it is unnecessary adornment. Higher classes have imposed sumptuary laws in order to stem imitation by the lower classes. Judgments and pronouncements have been made against fashion in every age and against every innovation, yet fashion has pursued its course despite the condemnations of the church and governing bodies.

Fashion represents mass tendencies, the urge for change being fundamental in all human nature. Therefore, fashion pushes its way through customs and all institutions supporting custom, the church, the state, and the established orders and professions. Physicians point out certain fashions as contributing to ill health, low necklines and chest illnesses, for example. For years they condemned the evils of tight-

lacing. Now they equally condemn tight shoes and high heels.

Fashion is often opposed by those older people who have a more conservative and modest outlook, thinking that new fashions represent moral degradation and disintegration of the younger generation. This has its basis in the fact that most fashions are geared to youth. Older persons seem to forget, also, that present fashions were once thought of in the same manner.

Fashions change continually, in most cases an evolutionary change rather than an episodic one, and these innovations are followed eagerly. Why do people follow these changes, particularly women?

One answer is the psychological need for recognition and response. A woman in a new gown gains recognition and evokes in others a response, creating in them the desire to do the same and produce a similar result. This stems from a very feminine desire to step out of the realm of the ordinary, creating a need for novelty which is made more imperative by the keenness of competition. Among women there is a great deal of competition for the notice of the opposite sex in addition to the desire for social recognition. Suggestive disclosure in dress, the area of seductiveness, which is constantly changing, is an example of the desire for masculine attention. The disclosure loses its power of allure in proportion to its becoming commonplace. An interesting example is that of the ankle. During the nineteenth century

it gained a quality of seductiveness by its concealment. Today the ankle is such a common sight that it no longer has erotic value as such. Fashion changes receive important impetus from the constant need to re-establish the type of disclosure.

Fashion changes impart a feeling of superiority, but only in proportion to the inability of others to follow the same. A sense of great satisfaction comes to fashion leaders in surpassing others, a reaffirmation of their financial and social prestige.

Each season's fashion is usually a tentative experiment in partial departure from that of the previous season, and it is cautiously embraced by women until its general acceptance is assured. Extreme fashion changes may be adopted by those free from social compulsion, but most women want only to achieve the benefits of a slight change without incurring the penalties of a more radical one. Personal criticism may arise from a sharp change, for what is more personal than a woman's dress?

Fashion is based on imitation, and this imitation may be prompted by many reasons. It may be reverence for the one imitated, or it may be the desire to assert equality with the fashion leader. Many women copy fashion leaders in an attempt to identify themselves with that group of society. Actually, the desire of the majority of women who follow fashion is to achieve personal distinction, but to arrive at a happy mean, emerging discreetly into a distinguished class.

II.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF FASHION TO THE PERIOD

THE PERIOD OF ARISTOCRACY

The long and luxurious reign of Louis XIV witnessed the development of France as the leading fashion arbiter, imposing its taste on the whole civilized world. These seventy-two years marked the development of the finest and highest craftsmanship in furniture, interior decoration, textiles, and costume that the world had ever known. These remarkable handcrafts were only for the higher classes and the nobility, however. Thus it was a high point in the period of aristocracy. The magnificence established by Louis XIV set an example for all the courts of the world, for the few who could afford luxury. This period, prior to the French Revolution, stands for the ultimate reign of the fortunate few, before the rise of a middle class destined to play such a large role in the development of fashions.

The fashion leadership of France was developed under the guidance of this ambitious monarch and his brilliant minister of finance, Jean Baptiste Colbert. They established lace-making centers at Alençon, Quesney, Arras, Reims, Sedan, Chateau-Thierry, Loudun, and other towns, having brought Venetian lacemakers to France. Together in the seventeenth century they reorganized the textile industry, leading to its supremacy in Europe. Although the beginning of the

French silk industry dated back to the time of Catharine de Medici when Milan was the center of European fashion influence, the industry gained impetus in France with the introduction of seri-culture and increased silk manufacture. Through royal patronage and encouragement and the attraction of skilled Italian craftsmen and a wise extension of foreign markets, Louis XIV and Colbert established a prosperous native industry. Of further help to the silk industry was a reorganization of textile workers replacing the guilds and creating, instead, "communities" comprised of two principle groups. The first group was composed of master weavers, associates, and apprentices. The second group included all the lesser workmen so essential to the creation of superior products. A hierarchy was established, and the title of master weaver was greatly coveted. [4]

Necessary in the development of fashion centers was the supply of beautiful fabrics, a fashion-loving audience, either of noble lineage or high financial position, artists and artisans, and sympathetic official support. The paternalistic plans and guidance of Louis XIV and Colbert, the splendor of Versailles court life, and the quality fabrics produced in Lyons and other textile centers prepared a foundation for the many, many years of French fashion superiority.

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4 E. Lewis, The Romance of Textiles, pp. 199-200.

Thus under the leadership of Louis XIV was begun an era of unprecedented splendor, a period of conspicuous consumption with its setting the sumptuous Versailles. There fashions originated in the utmost splendor with the great monarch's love of magnificence and profusion displayed everywhere. Versailles, decorated, designed, and co-ordinated by the artist Le Brun, was the most magnificent court setting known, and it was the envy of the entire civilized world.

The long reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715) was divided into three periods. The first was a period of growth, for Louis reached his height in the second period when France became the established arbiter of the mode. Masculine dress was glorious with its enormous peruke, heavily cuffed and embroidered coat, ruffled breeches and high-heeled shoes. Feminine dress was quite similar to masculine dress with its elaborate ornamentation in gold and silver passementeries, laces and ribbons. The luxury of the fabrics was enhanced further by the play of light and shadow in the design of the textiles, a newly developed skill in weaving, and by the grandiose designs.

The third period of the reign of Louis XIV began with great pomp, although a sobering influence was felt as the king grew older and when he married Madame de Maintenon. Until 1675 only tailors had fashioned women's garments, but in the third period there were established couturiers or dressmakers, cloak makers, modistes, shoemakers, furriers, glovers, fan makers, jewellers, beauty specialists and

coiffeurs, all for the aristocrats and at great expense. The stage became an important setting in which to launch fashions in addition to the court, which was the foremost location of display. At this time powder, rouge, and patches were used excessively. Furthermore, there were rules set by the court for the length of trains and the wearing of certain fabrics, governed by the station of the wearer.

The status of women at this time was one of inferiority, for although authors were beginning to write in their behalf, they were considered weaker in body and mind than men. Women were expected to devote themselves to music, drawing, embroidery, and making sweetmeats. Some did study foreign languages and a little of the humanities, but it was believed that women could never attain the intellectual level of man. Despite the accepted idea of the inferiority of women, it is interesting to note the important fashion influence of the queens and royal mistresses over the court and the king. These outstanding women were Louise de la Valliere, Madame de Montespan, the Duchess de Fontanges, and Madame de Maintenon, and they played important roles in the life of the great Sun King.

The year 1715 marks the end of the luxurious reign of Louis XIV and the beginning of the Regency, a period of renewed gaiety and frivolity in court life in contrast to the sobriety of the latter years of the reign of Louis XIV.

Court life was brilliant with its balls, masques, and formalized pattern of dress as a stimulating stage for fashion experimentation, and French costume is considered to have reached its height of perfection. 5 During the Regency feminine costume was designed to reveal the charms of its wearer to the fullest possible extent. After the accession of Louis XV in 1723, however, the ideal shifted to a more delicate and piquant mode which was reflected in the textile designs, motives having been reduced to a near life-like size. Decorative art flowered, and it reached a pinnacle of perfection in delicacy and refinement during the years of his regime. This revealed the influence of his mistresses, the marquise de Pompadour and Madame du Barry. The prestige of the French court was at its height in its influence throughout the fashionable world. All Europe followed its example. Americans were even beginning to take notice, although until the American Revolution, they were primarily influenced by England.

The ladies of the court of Louis XV were quite extravagant in their dress, displaying to the common people and to the rest of the world their station of nobility. One mademoiselle settled a life annuity of six hundred francs on her dressmaker for one gown, a magnificent dress of blue satin amply decorated with marten fur, gold, and diamonds. Although many families could have lived in comfort at that cost,

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5 R. T. Wilcox, The Mode in Costume, p. 193.

no one thought of the poor.

This was a period of "Rococo" design, its basic motif being the shell which was combined with flowers, feathers, ribbon bowknots, and many curves and curls. During this time the principle fashion of women's costume was a gown designed by and named for the painter Watteau. The original gown was a loose sack or dress worn over a tight bodice and a full underskirt. Later it developed into what became known as the robe "à la francaise" with six box pleats, stitched flat to the back and ending in a train. From England came the return of the farthingale which became known as a "panier," or basket, in France.

A clever lady of the court sought new and different styles, and as soon as they were generally adopted, the search was begun for more original ones. These ladies exhibited extraordinary and brilliant fashions which were much too expensive for the lower classes. The impracticability of their taste was demonstrated in the high and fragile head-dresses which proved to be too high for their carriages. Fashion was truly an aristocratic preoccupation, and later, under Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, it assumed a privilege tantamount to royal decree.

Louis XVI (1774-1789) was a helpless leader, a weak and unpopular king, and under him the entire government became undisciplined and woefully corrupt. The extravagance and frivolity of his young and beautiful queen, Marie Antoinette, did not aid the situation. At this time there began a

mechanization of processes and the application, first of water, then of steam, to transportation and the production of goods. These beginnings of the Industrial Revolution started the rise of the middle class and the decline of aristocracy. There were a number of important inventions during this period: one, the steam engine invented by James Watt of Scotland in 1770; two, the wool-carding machine devised by Lewis Paul of England in 1748; and three, the first spinning mill, established in England by Sir Richard Arkwright. Four, the spinning jenny was invented by James Hargreaves in 1767. It was the beginning of a new industrial system composed of capitalists and workmen who later arose to political power during and after the French Revolution.

The beginning of the reign of Louis XVI was marked by a display of great extravagance, artificiality, and daintiness. This mode spread to all who could afford it, the number, however, being a small percentage of the populace. The fashions of the queen were followed with frenzied interest by all the court ladies and by the competitors of Mademoiselle Rose Bertin, the great couturière to the queen. She was the first famous woman dressmaker, and her shop was the forerunner of later couture houses. With no family connections or social standing and little education, but with great native ability, energy, and resourcefulness, she became the most outstanding fashion creator in Europe. It was reported that she and Marie Antoinette held daily

conferences concerning dress. It was Mademoiselle Bertin who sent fully-dressed dolls to other courts as models of the latest Paris fashions. These "fashion dolls" or "fashion babies" [6] were eagerly awaited by the entire fashionable world.

Early in this period costume exhibited the most extravagant use of pearls and other jewels as ornamentation, even slippers being encrusted with diamonds. Fashions then had curious and frivolous names. For example, a woman's outfit caused a sensational reaction when she wore a gown that was "a stifled sigh" trimmed with "superfluous regrets," the bow at her waist representing "perfect innocence," ribbons of "marked attention," and shoes of "the queen's hair." [7]

By 1780, however, there was a change toward simplicity, although for the queen it was an expensive simplicity. She became interested in playful peasantry and had built a miniature farm called "Le Petit Trianon" where she and the court ladies re-enacted pastoral life. This created new fashions, a vogue for cotton prints, sheer aprons, fichus, and large leghorn hats. The queen's influence was paramount. Once Marie Antoinette decided to wear a brown-toned dress, and this evoked from the king the remark that the "puce" (flea) color became her admirably. As soon as possible every lady wore "puce," and since it did not soil easily, it was

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6 Ibid., p. 209.

7 M. A. Challamel, The History of Fashion in France, pp. 169-170.

even adopted by the bourgeoisie. [8]

Around 1783 fashion changed from utter extravagance to extreme simplicity. There were several reasons other than the influence of "Le Petit Trianon." First, the loss of immense fortunes meant the loss of luxury in costume. Second, an admiration for the simplicity of English dress developed into a fashion. Also, the writings of Rousseau and Voltaire were beginning to have an influence over the populace. These authors believed that civilization was essentially decadent and that true virtue could be found only in a simple existence. Marie Antoinette's sentimental admiration for peasants was an outgrowth of this philosophy. These developments were all leading to the revolution of 1789 as well as to the simplicity of fashions.

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[8] Ibid., p. 167.

THE PERIOD OF UPHEAVAL AND TRANSITION

The French Revolution of 1789 is generally accepted by fashion historians as the close of the eighteenth century, for it is a focal point from which to observe a basic change in both masculine and feminine costume. Since it occurred in the fashion center of the world, the French Revolution left a widespread mark on clothing. It also marked the beginning of social transition and the upheaval of aristocratic forces.

The Revolution was not instigated overnight. Forces and influences which were to shape this uprising began even before the reign of Louis XVI. At the eve of the Revolution, France had a middle class that was growing in prosperity due to the rise of industry; whereas the government was bankrupt. The populace had generally been excluded from politics; and, therefore, they rebelled against their ineffectual monarch and his inefficient governmental machinery. Also, an articulate group of philosophers were resounding utterances against the social and political ills of the period, and they were finding an ever-widening sympathetic audience.

The populace revolted, and the influence of these terrifying years was soon evident in the costumes. The basic silhouette of the period in feminine costume did not change until after the fall of Robespierre and the end of the Reign of Terror. The costumes of the revolution did take a change for simplicity. In fact, anyone who wore a costume bearing the extravagant display of aristocracy was in danger for his life. Formality

had already been eliminated in English dress, and this simplicity was quickly adopted by the French. With the beginning of the upheaval, all magnificence in dress disappeared, the hoops, paint, powder, beauty patches, artificial flowers--everything. Cottons replaced brocades. The citizens scorned the costumes of the aristocrats.

The standard simplicity of masculine dress worn today stems from the French Revolution costume, for they made the basic change from breeches, or "culottes," meaning "without breeches." [9] Thus they were differentiated from the aristocrats. This term soon came to signify the patriot who wore also a bonnet or cap shaped like the Phrygian bonnet of ancient civilizations. Too, just as the cry of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" was on every lip, the Tricolor of red, white, and blue was seen on every garment.

Feminine costume retained the basic lines of the style of the last years of the Louis XVI period. Soon the waistline began to rise, however, due to the influence of Mademoiselle Rose Bertin, who had fled to London during the Revolution. London became the fashion center for a number of years following the complete demoralization of fashion in Paris and the destruction of the aristocratic social centers of magnificence in costume.

After the fall of Robespierre and the end of the Reign of Terror came the Directoire Period in French political history, from 1789 to 1799. It was then that the full effects

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[9] Wilcox, op. cit., p. 221.

of the French Revolution and the political ideals of the populace became evident in feminine costume. It was the period of the "incroyable" and the "marveilleuse," an age of extreme gaiety following the bloody years of revolt.

Politically and socially France became intrigued with the idea of the supremacy of the citizens of a city modeled after the city states of ancient Greece and Rome. Greek democracy and the republicanism of Rome became the ideals. Recent excavations increased the interest in these past civilizations, and the spirit of the times was such that the populace became entirely engrossed in their patterns of culture. This revival of Greek and Roman antiquity became manifest with the establishment of the Directoire.

Basic simplicity in dress was already in vogue, but with the admiration for Greece came the desire to dress in their fashions as well as govern in their manner. Men found the ancient draperies unsuited to modern apparel. Women, however, were more subject to the whims of fashion and were more willing to undergo change to express the ideal. They found that chemise gowns with a high waistline and flowing draperies expressed this admiration of antiquity. Scantily clad women donned their garments wet in order to enhance the illusion of classic marble statuary. There was a definite emphasis on the breasts, and this reached such extremity that a few women exposed their breasts in public. This fad, however, was short-lived.

Although the current idea influences the form which fashion will adopt, the actual impulse lies elsewhere, in the desire to please and the impulse of seduction. This impulse lies dormant during times of great political strife and crisis but emerges with the end of tension when people again feel free to enjoy themselves.[10] The Directoire was a period in which the pursuit of pleasure ranked foremost. Women found themselves suddenly quite free, and their first reaction was to cut their hair and to reduce the amount of clothing worn. A dance mania soon took precedence. It was a pleasurable occupation to the "nouveaux-riches" of the era. As public balls became numerous, they developed into launching places for fashions. The impulse of seduction became foremost in the public eye as the "marveilleuse" went forth in her extremely thin chemise gowns, scanty underwear, and little flat shoes. The "incroyable," an extreme dandy, on the other hand, bound himself over the chin in neck scarves. His trousers were extremely close-fitted, and he wore a jacket with prodiguous tails.

The Directoire Period marked the rise of the young Corsican militarist, Napoleon. His remarkable military success led to his high placement as a member of the Triumvarite, a three-man directory. He soon became the number one personage of the Triumvarite with the right to appoint his successor.

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10 J. Laver, Taste and Fashion, p. 19.

Napoleon was crowned Emperor of France in 1804, creating the political period known as "The Empire," a period that has given its name to the tubular garments of that time. The so-called "Empire Style," however, had appeared before the time of Napoleon, and it continued afterward. Napoleon's exploits before his reign had strengthened the fashion for classical dress which so fully expressed the spirit of the times in the interest in ancient civilizations, democratic citizenship, and ancient ornamentation.

During the Empire Period, costume showed little modification in the essential silhouette. The exhibitionism of the Directorate was modified, for women no longer dared expose completely their breasts, nor did they dampen their dress to produce the clinging effect of marble statuary. The pure Classic period with its emphasis on Greek ornament had passed. With Napoleon's campaigns in Italy and Egypt, however, came a new emphasis on Egyptian and Etruscan ornament. His campaign in Italy had revived an interest in jewelry, particularly cameos. This was soon followed by a melange of Roman, Etruscan, and Pompeian lines and ornamental motifs. His near disastrous expedition to Egypt opened a new exoticism to the French mind, a world of hieroglyphics and Sphinx's heads. Scarabs and reproductions of the Egyptian funerary figures became fashionable. This was combined with Orientalism, as an enthusiasm was arroused for objects of the Near East. This brought turbans into vogue as the female headdress. Shawls became an accessory

of utmost importance. The Indian shawl was soon imitated all over Europe, and the Paisley copy of Scotland became outstanding. These shawls must have been a welcome addition to a style of dress which provided inadequate protection from both rain and cold.

Across the English Channel the influence of French fashions had been evident for years. In the latter eighteenth century, fashion news was supplied through the medium of dolls which were circulated and copied. The spread of fashion news increased with the invention of printed fashion plates. As stated before, during the years of the Revolution, London had become a refuge for French dressmakers and milliners.

From the end of the eighteenth century French feminine fashions ruled the world with the exception of twelve years, from the Peace of Amiens in 1802 to 1814.

> This gap...is a very curious one, and led to a strange divergence of French and English fashion. It is only necessary to examine the fashion plates at the beginning of the nineteenth century-- to realize this divergence very completely. It is a curious fact that by 1812 the English had abandoned the high waist and had begun to wear corsets again, the true corset only being possible when the waist is normal....When Englishwomen flocked over to Paris after the first abdication of Napoleon they found themselves figures of ridicule. Both corsets and normal waists were immediately abandoned, and did not reappear for another six years. There has been no fundamental divergence between French and English female fashion since. [11]

English fashions had their own distinctive features even when inspired by those of France. Parisian extravagances such as the dampening of the dress to produce the marble

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11 Ibid., p. 26.

effect never reached England. During this classical period of exhibitionism the English did follow French examples.

> When the first engravings of the Grecian costume-- as nudity was called-- were brought to England, they shocked every modest woman; and it was not thought proper to look at them in the presence of gentlemen; how this delicacy wore away and how soon is truly surprising, but certain it is that e'er many months had elapsed, originals exactly representing the Prints were seen in every public place. [12]

In this tendency toward nudity sometimes a substantial area of the back was exposed, sometimes of the bosom. The shape of the breasts was always emphasized, either by their being pushed up into prominence by mechanical means, or by the lightest of coverings. Arms were often bare to the shoulder. Although the legs were never exposed, their outline was indicated by the clinging dress fabric. White muslin was the preferred material, giving a suggested resemblance to marble. The general effect of woman's dress was one of studied simplicity. Its aim was to draw a transparent veil over the allurements of anatomy, and its charm lay in its revealing everything it concealed.

An Englishwoman stated at the time, "When I behold the abode of virgin modesty, the tender mother's fountain of aliment for her new-born babe, thrust forward to the gaze of the libertine: when I observe the pains taken to attract his eye, I blush for my sex." [13]

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12 C. W. Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, p. 28.

13 C. W. Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 13.

This method of sexual appeal found its greatest expression following the Napoleonic wars. It was a period of extreme gaiety in England. All the ladies of London participated in a waltzing craze, and the great amount of dancing introduced a greater freedom with men.

The pure classic period, that of extreme exhibitionism in this vertical epoch, ranged approximately from 1800 to 1807. From then until 1821 was a period of debased Classicism and modified exhibionism.

The imperfectly-mannered young lady of 1815, following the war, wore a modified classic dress, its skirt narrowed and shortened almost to a tubular shape, hanging from a waistline even higher than before. The hem of the skirt was usually frilled with a narrow embroidered flounce, also the long sleeves. As the war ended, there began, however, a subtle change of manners and costume. A return to reticence and prudery, history has indicated, is not uncommon after an era of exhibitionism, and the imperfect lady was destined to become a symbol of a century of peaceful prosperity and moral refinements. The perfect lady of the mid-century had in her ancestry a lady whose economic roots lay in commerce, in war profits rather than lineage. Class distinctions had been shaken by the long war. The young girl was eager to learn the technique of being ladylike, and with this gradual moral transition, in costume came also a transition which expressed the romantic ideal of a new era.

THE PERIOD OF THE ROMANTIC

Costume began its transition to a more romantic silhouette following the war. Milady's cylinder-shaped dress began to widen under the bustline, making the outline that of an "X." Since women found the widening skirts under the breasts quite unflattering, they gradually lowered the waistline to its natural position. Hence, tight-lacing again came into vogue. In France after the fall of Napoleon, costume turned to the age of the Valois with its puffed sleeves and exaggerated ruffs. An element of prudery entered with the Restoration as French society, consciously or unconsciously, reacted against the libertinage of the revolutionary period and of the Empire. Dresses rose to the throat, finished with a lace frill. They had short sleeves worn with long white gloves. Prudery was seen in the growing unwillingness to wear a single sheath-like garment that revealed the lines of the figure, and petticoats were added, starting the transition to a bell-shaped silhouette.

The ideal of Romanticism transcended individual nations. It was, to a great extent, inspired by the literature of the era which emphasized a condition of romantic melancholy. George Byron, the poet, exemplified this ideal. It was a period of historic interest and fancy dress balls, the Romanticist looking backward to former ages because of his

dissatisfaction with his own. Everyone was a blighted being, although the invalidism of the Romantics was largely a matter of mentality. For women the ideal was fragility, and this was aided by tight-lacing. To look healthy was a social crime, and women suffered martyrdom for the ideal. A sallow complexion was a must. "Men strove to be pale, to look pale and distinguished as if ravaged by some secret sorrow; women to look frail and afflicted with a settled melancholy." [14]

In England the years 1822 to 1839 are termed the years of Romanticism, [15] and in costume these constituted the years of transition from the Classical form to Gothic. At first this change found expression in the ornament, the vandyking, gores, puffed hems, and flounces; later in the form, the increasing width of the bottom of the skirt and the narrowing of the waist producing Gothic angulation. By 1824, the waistline was at its natural level, and the triangular silhouette became increasingly conspicuous with the skirt expansion.

> The 20's was one of those moments in the century when Englishwomen meekly accepted French fashions; the novelty, after the long years of war, of a trip to Paris was irresistable, and countless British matrons returned triumphant with their French spoils; their charm was not so much that they were becoming, as that they proved that their wearers had really crossed the Channel. [16]

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14 Laver, op. cit., p. 39.

15 Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, p. 25.

16 Ibid., p. 75.

Thus were the Romantic costumes similarly displayed in both these countries.

As ornament became increasingly extravagant, so also did the silhouette. The waistline became so tightly corseted that a man was supposed to be able to span a woman's waist with his two hands. To emphasize the smallness of the waist, the shoulder line was widened until it surpassed all imaginable proportion. The sleeve first bloused out in a transparent bouffant oversleeve to the wrist, worn over the short puffed one. This soon became opaque, and in the Romantic period it varied from the upper, full silhouette of the leg-o'-mutton to the overall full lines of the elephant sleeve. To emphasize further the tiny waistline, the skirt began an expansion which continued until the 1860's. In illustration of the extremities which fashions had reached, in 1835, the leg-o'-mutton sleeves were so large and unwieldy that a fashionable lady had to enter a door sideways.

The melancholy maidens and Byronic heroes gave way in the late 1830's to the growing dominence of the bourgeois, the rising middle class. Fashions had become extreme along with the extreme actions of the young Romantics. The bourgeois, on the other hand, were the respectable, conservative people. Although they rarely inaugurated fashions, they were the ones who finally decided what the fashion would be, and they catered to the Gothic and to the sentimental in design.

The term Gothic was used in reference to a spirit, an

attitude of mind which seemed to influence the populace. It derived from a past period of history, and its influence was evident in the works of a writer like Dickens, a painter like Frith, a musician like Balfe, and an architect like Pugin, who designed the House of Parliament. [17] In contrasting the Gothic and the Romantic mind, the following was stated:

> The romantic mind uses its emotions to distort, and the sentimental mind uses its emotions to conceal reality. The former leans to flamboyant forms of expression, while the latter seeks shelter by 'turning all to favour and prettiness.' [18]

In costume these two were illustrated by those of 1830 and of 1845, the former exhibiting a clamorous demand for attention at the cost of extraordinary distortion, the latter giving an effect of shrinking timidity in its concealment. During the Gothic epoch women's fashions were largely concerned with the attraction of the opposite sex. This was achieved either by the fascination arroused by their audaciousness or by the apparent impregnability of defence. The romantic mind had no horror of exhibitionism as such, but despised its cruder forms. The sentimental mind shuddered at any bare facts and modestly concealed them, making corsets a virtue and ankles a sin.

The Romantic impulse was spent toward the end of the

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17 Ibid., p. 23.

18 Ibid.

1830's, and in costume was seen the growing influence of an increasingly powerful middle class. The bourgeoisie had been on the ascent, and they were rapidly rising to full power.

THE PERIOD OF THE BOURGEOISIE

The second quarter of the nineteenth century was an age of industry, and increased transportation by the railroads, canals, and ocean steamboats. A new class came into being, that of manufacturers and traders who had begun to acquire immense fortunes. Europe was a continent of unrest, strife, and upheaval as changes took place favoring republican forms of government. Royalty felt insecure with the rapid spread of industrialism and the rise of this new class to power, a power based on wealth rather than lineage. Capitalists and industrial managers began to participate in governmental activities. The laboring classes gained prominence as they became conscious of their growing power and influence. A philosophy of labor was developing as trade unions arose, attempting political party control or the establishment of new governments under the theories of socialism and communism. There were many other movements of social significance also. Public education was beginning to aid the new classes. Also, daily publications strengthened the interests and influence of the bourgeoisie.

Influences of the middle class were at work in France as well as in England. Louis Philippe was proud to be known as "the bourgeois king." [19] He dressed like a private

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19 Laver, op. cit., p. 48.

gentleman, in reflection of the social revolution, the increasing dominance of the bourgeoisie. This rise, however, was challenged in France, and the dislike of the Romantics for Louis Philippe did not add to the esteem for the middle class. Louis Philippe was a very unpopular king, and the first part of his reign saw some of the worst excesses of Romanticism, the revolt of artists against the growing power of the despised bourgeoisie. The French Romantics of the 1830's made the term "bourgeois" one of abuse. Even in France, however, the Romantic revolt faded about 1837.

In England the Romantic period was succeeded by what is termed Early Victorianism although the influence of the new queen was not extant until later. The impulse to propriety was largely the work of the Prince Consort, and his influence was even more potent after his death in 1861. This early Victorianism was not so much the influence of the court as that of the middle class which had come into being in English society since the days of the Regency. Since the Napoleonic Wars, manufacturers and traders who were outgrowths of the industrial revolution had begun to lay foundations of considerable fortunes. These men were not only wealthy but also puritanical. Although their aspiration was the gain of power, they did not compete by ostentation. Their lives were as simple as before. A growing number moved to London and set the tone of everything but court society. Most of them were very religious, sometimes intolerably prosy and sanctimonious. They believed in the gospel of work, and

although the standard of living of their workers was disgraceful, they kept no mistresses to flaunt their wealth. They never gambled, and they were prejudiced against strong liquor of any kind. Their wives and daughters ventured out of the house rarely and then were always accompanied by a footman. These men were proud of representing the new empire of the middle class. They lived by a doctrine of limited equality under which all gentlemen were free and equal. This was a gulf which the eighteenth century would have established between the nobility and the remaining populace. In the nineteenth century this separation was established several degrees lower on the social scale.

The fashionable world became less exclusive as this new stratum of society, whose tastes and inclinations had to be catered to, swamped the narrow confines which had previously dictated the vogue in costume. The womenfolk of the prosperous bourgeoisie claimed to be the slaves of fashion, and sedate respectability began to take the place of eccentric extravagancies. The "Perfect Lady" began to rise to significance as a proper representative of the Victorian middle class. She became a lady who did no work beyond a few light household duties. She was placed upon a pedestal of respect unique in history, and she dressed quietly, trying never to be too conspicuous and never to be talked about. Young girls were carefully sheltered from the world until the last possible moment. There was no career for a gentlewoman. She depended upon a prosperous father until she became married, and if she

remained single, she had to be supported with great humiliation by her father or some other male relative.

Young ladies of the middle class became more and more conscious of fashion and the art of being ladylike. The appearance of women's magazines with monthly articles on fashion brought information to a portion of the populace previously isolated from such news. There were also published little guides to etiquette and genteel behavior, and young ladies lived by these guides-- with the aid of a prosperous father.

> Let Beauty, whose soul is Virtue, approach with the chastened step of Modesty....The correct attitude of the Young Lady towards her Betters in the social scale should be one of reverential courtesy; while towards our Inferiors by keeping them at a safe distance we merely maintain ourselves and them in the rank in which a Higher Power has placed them. [20]

In the nineteenth century, the great feminine century in history, social ideals were constantly changing, and the young lady was supposed to suggest new refinements and new aspirations in her genteel life. She became a symbol of social progress as did her costume which was never insignificant but impressive in its expanding outline. "Mere sex attraction was not enough; she had to win a husband; but as a married woman she had still to present to the world that work of art, the Perfect Lady." [21]

A delicate form became the fashion keynote as women strove

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20 Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 13.

21 Ibid., p. 9.

to seem drawing-room-like and sedentary. Would-be young ladies must look genteel instead of jolly. The delicate form started with the shrinking of the huge leg-o'-mutton sleeve. This transition was incited by the lowering of fullneww to the forearm in a kind of leg-o'-mutton inverted. Then the sleeve narrowed to the wrist, which began to grow in importance, at first gathered, then open and bell-shaped. The bodice of the dress was severe and moulded to the figure. It rose to the throat with the exception of the evening dress which had a straight line of decolletage extending across the shoulders. Skirts expanded even wider, with an increasing burden of petticoats. Seven petticoats were not unusual, and the weight of clothing was enormous and very hampering. Women, however, moved as little as possible in their new role. Skirts extended to the ground instead of being several inches above it as in the Romantic period, and women seemed to glide rather than walk. Only the tip of the slipper showed, and ankles gained an erotic value by being hidden. The Romantic "femme fatale" had become completely demoded. "Woman took her place as wife and mother with a demure self-effacement very different from the manners of a former age." [22]

This state of affairs did not pass without protest in France, as the following explains:

> ...the year 1840 saw the advent of the 'lionnes.'... The 'lion,' her male counterpart, had prowled the boulevards for some years. He was a dandification... of the young Romantic, and his name may have originated from his flowing mane; but everything

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22 Laver, op. cit., p. 51.

> about him had some kind of zoological name. His groom was his tiger. His 'danseuse' at the Opera was called his rat. Uzanne quotes a novel of the period which begins with the words, 'Le lion avait envoye son tigre chez son rat.' Another writer defines the 'lionne' as 'a rich married woman, pretty and coquettish, who can handle the ship and the pistol as well as her husband, ride like a lancer, smoke like a dragoon, and drink any quantity of iced champagne.' 23

This 'lionne' was a kind of early feminist, a preview of the years ahead. She was a woman who imitated masculine habits as nearly as she could. She was revolting against subjection, and she resented the dominance of the bourgeois ideal, that of confining women to the role of wife and mother, a role in which women were almost unseen and quite untalked about. This revolt was personalized in George Sand, a feminine author of the period who adopted this masculine identification as her pen name.

The Englishwoman, however, at the height of Victorianism, represented the triumph of the middle class. She was physically less active than at any period of the nineteenth century, absorbed in acquiring the art of expressing emotions by graceful attitudes rather than by movement. Her dress was designed for just such passive poses, constructed in such a way that no unladylike activity was possible. The fact that her masses of clothing were particularly unhygienic did not bother her, for it expressed her mental attitude in that her body must submit to its encumbering mouldings. Also, the appearance of good health was scarcely considered ladylike.

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23 Ibid., pp. 51-52.

During the 1840's the average Englishwoman seemed to be at a standstill of development. Her life was that of a cloistered existence, and it is characteristic that passing historical events were less reflected in the dress of the 1840's than in any other period of the century. Although railways provided greater facilities for travelling, and there were political upheavals and economic problems which so disturbed the habits of the average man, they did not affect the average woman at that time. She neither traveled nor understood politics. Although she was acquiring an increasing consciousness of her own social importance, she was afraid to assert herself in any form of action. Thus the fashions remained static for a few years except for the increase in the area occupied by the skirt, which steadily expanded as if to represent her growing sense of importance.

In the middle of the century men's evening clothes became stereotyped to a certain degree. In fact, in 1850, men's clothing seemed quite stereotyped, for Englishmen, in particular, always wore dark clothing, even in the far away, hot colonies and in summertime. This sudden darkening of clothing in London was a result of the soot and smut. With women living a complacent existence and men uniformed in dark clothing, "it seemed in the middle of the nineteenth century that the triumph of the bourgeoisie was complete, the clothes of their women varying only between narrow limits, and the clothes of their men stereotyped forever." [24]

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24 Ibid., p. 58.

THE PERIOD OF THE EXPANDING WOMAN

The listless young lady of the forties had been a delicate creature, "a being of delicate perceptions, tremblingly alive to the least infringement of decorum." [25] She spent most of her time indoors at sedentary occupations requiring no physical or mental effort. At mid-century, however, she found that the burden of her fashions required a good deal of physical strength. Being a lady of leisure had become an onerous occupation requiring muscular power which, in contrast to the ideal, was unladylike to possess, for the fashionable skirt had increased to alarming proportions. With the expansion of the skirt came a corresponding growth in the size and increase in the number of petticoats, and the total weight was an intolerable burden.

In the year 1856, came the application to feminine costume of all the principles of steel construction in the crinoline. "It was, indeed, from one point of view, the first great triumph of the machine age." [26] Women immediately found it more practical than the layers and layers of thick petticoats and the additional wads of horsehair which the crinoline replaced. Women "accepted it, nay, welcomed it, as it seemed

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25 Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 22.

26 Laver, op. cit., p. 59.

to express in unmistakable fashion their growing sense of importance, as though they were determined to occupy a larger space in the world." [27]

It had both its advantages and its disadvantages. To the lady of fashion the crinoline was a barrier against the aggression of the lower classes, for not only could she keep them at a petticoat's distance, but also outdo them in the expanding and growing extravagance of her costume. This idea was short-lived, however, for by the end of the decade every factory girl and lady's maid had to have a crinoline also, and complaints were issued that "in modern days the distinction in dress between the higher and the middle classes is in many respects nullified." [28]

Skirts had reached the greatest possible expansion point by means of petticoats. With the invention of the crinoline, however, it was possible to increase the size of the skirt even more, and before long eighteen or more yards were required for a dress. The expense of a lady's wardrobe became severe in view of the greater amount of material required and, in England, the rise in prices after the Crimean War. Also, a great deal of lace, which was quite expensive, was used as trimming.

The circular hoops in the cage-like crinoline were constructed in diminishing sizes and sewn into an underskirt,

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27 Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, p. 170.

28 Ibid.

giving the impression of an enormous number of petticoats without, actually, wearing any at all. The limbs were free, though still invisible-- unless there was a mishap. In case they might be seen, they were enclosed in white, lace-trimmed pantaloons which extended to the ankles. Little girls also wore pantaloons, ankle-length even though their skirts were shorter.

The main advantage of the crinoline was its alleviation of the problem of excess weight. It had its disadvantages too. In addition to those stated, the crinoline proved to be a great fire risk, especially with flimsy dresses, for it was impossible to extinguish the flames by compression. Its size proved to be very inconvenient, especially when worn in narrow railroad cars and other crowded areas, for it was not unusual for a day dress to have a diameter of four to five yards. Moreover, it was difficult to walk gracefully in the wobbly cage, for a delicate appearance could be achieved only by taking very short and equal steps. In addition, the crinoline was a device susceptible to embarrassing-- though seductive-- mishaps.

Nothing could curb the force of this fashion until it had spent its force and until a reaction had been provoked by its excess. The crinoline reigned for nearly twenty years, not without protest, though it was symbolic of the epoch in which it was worn. "Woman is an unapproachable goddess," [29] was the mid-Victorian convention, and they were unapproachable--

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29 Laver, op. cit., p. 63.

physically.

> Surrounded by a complicated bastion of cloth, sometimes equal in diameter to their own height, they could be shaken hands with, but hardly embraced in any more intimate fashion. It was impossible to sit beside them on a sofa, for the folds of their dress took up all the available space. It was almost impossible to enter a room beside them. The man had to fall behind to allow for the passage of the majestic ship which woman had become. 'Touch me not,' said the crinoline.... [30]

Yet the crinoline was quite successful as an instrument of seduction, for it was in constant agitation, swaying from side to side or riding up in front. It was like a "restless, captive balloon." [31] Any pressure on one side of the steel hoops was immediately communicated by their elasticity to the other side, resulting in a sudden upward surge of the skirt. Sitting in a crinoline was a very cautious procedure. The erotic significance of boots and shoes received definite encouragement from the invention of the crinoline.

The crinoline was chiefly a product of France, although adopted enthusiastically by the mid-Victorian and proper Englishwomen. The seductiveness of the crinoline, in particular, suited the immorality of France at that time, for during the second Empire the social history was that of the "cocotte" and the "cocodette." Also, Paris was the social center of the world, led by the brilliant court of Napoleon III and Eugénie, who became Empress in 1853. It was a gay period in

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30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

the history of France, for the bourgeois ideas of the reign of Louis Philippe had changed. Additional factors were that in 1850, there was an increased efficiency in transportation. Railroads enabled people to travel more easily than ever before, and more cheaply, so that all classes of the populace found it possible to travel widely for holidays. Thus arose the popularity of watering-places and cities of leisure, resorts in which it was extremely difficult to maintain a rigid line between the classes which had existed in a more static society. Women of pleasure sat side by side with women of lineage and wealth, creating a competition for luxury. The Parisian male of fashion found himself quite attracted to the grand "cocotte," and her expensiveness made her that much more attractive. To To have been known to support the extravagances of such a woman gained fashionable significance. Laver categorizes the second Empire as an age of prostitution, and prostitution in the grand manner, favoring the "grande cocotte," an older woman. [32] Consequently, fashions favored the older woman, and the crinoline was a principle component in these fashions.

The court of Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie was a glittering social center, and it is said that the Empress was the last ruling sovereign to have dictated the mode. She did not create the mode, actually, but she was the leader of it, for she was compelled, in her position, to be in the forefront of fashion. Her extravagance in dress was in direct contrast

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[32] Ibid., p. 66.

to that of Queen Victoria of England, whose clothing was quite sober, a factor not conducive to fashion leadership. Empress Eugénie tended toward a flair for Spanish colors, creating a vogue for brilliant colors during this period.

During the second Empire, France's fashion supremacy was further strengthened by the rise of great designers, in particular male designers, the couturier, of whom the most outstanding was Charles Frederick Worth. He had come to Paris in 1850, and had become associated with the Gagelin firm, the first concern to handle ready-to-wear coats and shawls. Worth began to revolutionize this fashion and to transform the business of dressmaking into an art. Before there had been no real dress-making industry or styling. A woman carried her worn coat and her new fabrics to a seamstress who would fashion a new coat after the lines of the old. Worth began to design new coats rather than repeat designs. Empress Eugénie began to patronize Worth, and his clientele soon included most of the royalty of Europe. He was the first dressmaker to exhibit his new creations on living mannequins, creating the present system of the couture in Paris. Assisted by the Empress, Worth gave the silk industry in Lyons new impetus. She appeared in a dress designed by the House of Worth and created of Lyons silk brocade, and Lyons regained its former glory as manufacturer of beautiful fabrics.

Worth was the master of the new race of fashion dictators, as the following indicates:

> Women will stoop to any baseness to be dressed by him. This little dry, black, nervous creature receives them in a velvet coat, carelessly stretched out on a divan, a cigar between his lips. He says to them, 'Walk! Turn! Good! Come back in a week, and I will compose you a toilette which will suit you.' It is not they who choose it; it is he. They are only too happy to let him do it.... [33]

During this decade there were two technical improvements which were directly influential to clothing. One was the crinoline, and the other was the sewing machine, at first the chain-stitch sewing machine, followed by the invention of the lock-stitch machine in the latter part of the decade. In 1858, the use of the sewing machine began to be recognized in publications. "The dressmakers of Paris are beginning to use the American sewing-machine; I am told it has for some time been silently in use at the principal dressmakers." [34] Increased use of this machine brought increased tolerance.

America was beginning to come into prominence. Fashion, however, was not a nation-wide indulgence there, although greatly influenced by the modes of Paris and London. American women, in contrast to the decorative but sedentary Victorians, were leading a life of speed and vigor unknown to their predecessors. With the pioneer movement and the Gold Rush of 1849, thousands of American women were trailing their petticoats across the prairies. The influence of fashion was felt, however, in that even under extreme hardships women

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33 Ibid., pp. 68-69.

34 Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, p. 192.

would not relinquish their impeding petticoats.

Fashion magazines were coming into their own in America. Godey's Lady's Book had been started in 1830 by Louis A. Godey and Sara Josepha Hale. Demorest Monthly Magazine was established by Madame Demorest, an American who was making a name for herself in New York as a dressmaker. Fashion plates and printed dress diagrams aided the American woman also. Magazine diagrams gave measurements for copying a pattern on paper. These were used and exchanged with friends and relatives. During this period Ebenezer and Ellen Butterick established the first dress pattern company, thus helping women to construct their own garments.

An American woman, Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, became very dissatisfied with the impeding skirts and tight-lacing of that era, finding corsets poor for women's health. She tried to reform dress in 1851 by popularizing Oriental bloomers. The idea was squelched, for the moment of introduction was inopportune. This early attempt at sensible and rational clothing, however, did succeed in immortalizing Mrs. Bloomer, her name having been given to all such garments.

During the fifties, women began to emerge from their modest domesticity and to assert their presence in the outer world. They were beginning to acquire social privileges and to talk about their rights. The first feminists of America were led by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who, in 1848, conducted the first Woman's Rights meeting, a public declaration of revolt. The National Woman Suffrage Association

was soon established also.

In England the Victorian perfect lady still reigned although she was beginning to emerge from the stereotyped concept of bourgeois respectability. At least her ransacking of the masculine wardrobe seemed to indicate some progress. Englishwomen found no sympathy with Mrs. Bloomer's idea of wearing trousers; however, they found a happy compromise in man's waistcoat. At the beginning of the century women had stolen man's most intimate undergarment, which, at least, was invisible. At mid-century they had taken over his waistcoat, and a few years later, his collar and tie. Before the close of the century women adopted his knickerbockers, and today, "we see him forced to share his trousers with the modern young woman." [35] The theft of each masculine garment symbolised a further step in woman's progress.

> ...we can attribute the ransacking of the masculine wardrobe to an irrepressible exuberance on the part of woman; the waistcoat episode of 1851-'52 was a sign of the times. In the same spirit the soft harmonious colours which satisfied the '40's gave way to 'the brilliance obtained by contrasting primary colours,' noted an observer in 1850, a taste becoming more noticeable at the close of the decade. It seemed to express 'the want of harmony that pervades the age; the restless anxious desire to embody thought in actual life; the dissatisfaction that the actual falls short of the ideal, and the want of faith in truth.' [36]

The crinoline had reached its height in the early sixties. In 1866 a change appeared in this underpinning. It was no longer symmetrical, projecting as much to the front as to

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35 Ibid., p. 169.

36 Ibid., p. 170.

the back. Instead it slipped backward, and the uppermost ring of the cage became smaller, creating an almost perfect triangle from the waist downward. In 1867, the decline of the crinoline had begun, and in 1868, it was only half as wide as its wearer's height, while some of the dresses designed by the couturiers showed masses of material behind, ending in a train. Others looped fabrics into a kind of bunch, creating the embryo bustle. The excesses of the crinoline fashion had become exhausted, creating a reaction.

Cunnington states that the final defeat of the crinoline was due to three factors. First, the crinoline had become commonly used and no longer signified social rank. Second, young ladies were beginning to take part in outdoor activities. Third, he states that there was a growing impulse to express a sexual instinct symbolically by curves, tracing this to democratic changes affecting the economic position of the upper classes, as the following quotation illustrates:

> All those profound changes in our social system which began to be noticeable in the middle '60's, the decline of the aristocracy, the increasing difficulty in finding husbands for superfluous daughters, the higher education for women, the rivalry of the sexes in an economic sense, and the tension of unsatisfied sex instinct, can be traced to a basal cause-- a disturbance in economic equilibrium. It would have been extraordinary if such a revolution had not produced an outward sign in women's fashions. [37]

When the crinoline began to lose its amplitude, at the same time the fortunes of the second Empire began to decline, and the prestige of Napoleon III sagged visibly. The

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37 Ibid., p. 221.

brilliant court of the Emperor and Eugenie lasted few years, its demise speeded by foreign wars, an ill-fated expedition to Mexico, internal criticism, political enemies, and Napoleon's inability to deal with the complexities and errors of his reign. By 1868, the Empire was dead, and so was the crinoline. This expansive undergarment had been, principally, a product of France, and its collapse at the same time of the collapse of the Empire proved an interesting coincidence.

> It almost seems as if the mode reflects sub-consciously or semi-consciously the subterranean movements of society rather than its obvious wishes or habits. The crinoline was wiser than those who wore it. It diminished its pretensions and took shelter before the coming storm, while the 'monde' and the 'demi-monde' continued to lead that wild life of gaiety, that breathless competition in luxury and ostentation, which is the dominant mark of the Second Empire. [38]

While the 'Grandes Cocottes' and the 'cocodettes' continued their plunder of lovers, a war cloud was rising, that of the Franco-Prussian War. Thus ended the Empire, and the years 1870-'71, proved tragic for France, not only in the seige and privations, but also temporarily in the dressmaking industry of the nation.

The middle of the nineteenth century had marked the first practical stage in the physical and mental emancipation of women. Whereas they had been stamped with the mark of the perfect lady, women began to emerge from static refinement. Also, more and more women were becoming fashion conscious. In the past there had been times when singular

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38 Laver, op. cit., p. 70.

fashions had been the possession of a small and select group; however, by mid-century fashions were far-flung. Railways and the increasing numbers of ladies' magazines rapidly spread the latest news from the fashion front. Too, with the advent of ready-made clothing, cheaper copies of expensive fashions were becoming available. Fashion had ceased to be the luxury of the few and had become the necessity of the many, a number which increased rapidly in the following years.

THE PERIOD OF THE BUSTLE AND THE NEW WOMAN

The proper Victorian lady had reached a social pinnacle, and her pre-occupation, henceforth, was to retain that elevated position, to remain on her pedestal. In the social realm, however, there were signs of change. A number of young women of the middle and higher classes were beginning to express dissatisfaction with the conventional career set forth for them. Feminine emancipation was in the air, and it materialized as a rebellion against traditional restrictions and a demand for greater physical freedom in clothing. For the rest of the nineteenth century young women began to undermine the former foundations of fashion, changing the fundamental conception of the art of costume by demanding greater mobility as well as appearance. Many women were starting to earn their own living or to achieve a higher education, and they began to drift from the strict control of fashion.

The gentlewoman of the sixties and seventies strove to resist the emancipatory movement. In her prosperous position she could afford the luxury of fashion, and in extravagance of dress she attempted to outdo the rebels.

> Whereas the Fifties had been simply 'theatrical' in spirit, now in the Sixties taste had become discordant. A growing sense of discontent was in the air, at least among the rising generation, inducing revolt against the conventions. This emancipatory movement the Perfect Lady strove to resist. Her social group was still prosperous; she could still afford the luxury of being a gentlewoman and her preoccupation was to

> remain one. She had wrung from the other sex all those agreeable privileges. Could she be expected to exchange them for arid and elusive rights? [39]

As the silhouette changed and as gentlewomen pursued extravagance, costumes became more and more complex in construction. In expensive clothing women hoped to curb the tide of sensible clothing and overpower the new woman who threatened to abandon the prerogative of their sex, the art of dress-attraction. Thus, the strategy of fashion seemed to be expensive glamor which meant more than physical charm, the property of all classes. It meant that the dressmaker's art must be raised to levels out of reach of the small purse. Even though the sewing machine made home construction more feasible, the intricate draperies and excessive trimmings on costumes made fashions the work of the professional dressmaker. Costumes became so complex that they reached a degree which defied even the professional fashion journalist to describe.

Essentially, the silhouette changed from the symmetrical roundness of the crinoline to the bustled back-fullness of the crinolette. The over-all cycle began in the sixties when the fullness of the skirt was shifted to the rear. The silhouette underwent a number of variations, the bustle reaching its zenith about 1885, at which time it protruded rigidly from the bodice.

When crinolines were still the vogue the skirts were quite heavy due to the excessive amount of fabric required.

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39 Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 38.

Thus, little supporting pads were worn with the crinolines in order to distribute the weight evenly. As the gathers of the skirt were pushed to the rear these so-called "dress-improvers" [40] became more important and remained in fashion after the hoopskirt was discarded. Thus the bustle grew as a connecting link over the flat spot created by these two panniers.

In 1869, there was a frank revival of the modes of Louis XVI, this being most eminent in the panniers. A brief vogue for such was illustrated in the Dolly Varden dress, created after the death of Charles Dickens in imitation of one of his literary heroines. There was a revival of tight-lacing, the tiny waist being emphasized by huge sash-bows at the back. There were opulent undulations of puff and bustle behind, high heels, and the new manner of carriage, the "Grecian Bend." "With the mass of back drapery, everyone affected the 'Grecian Bend,' and the degree of grace with which the tilt was managed was a passport to the realms of 'the elect.'" [41]

Once the form of back-fullness was established, the tendency was to carry it to extremes. There were actually two bustles, quite different in character, separated by a period of very close-fitting dresses. The pannier was the early form. At first the back-fullness dress was comparatively loose in front, but the instinct for seductiveness entered

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[40] C. A. Hall, From Hoopskirts to Nudity, p. 54.

[41] Ibid., p. 55.

the picture, and couturiers discovered that the fullness of the skirts in back enabled them to be drawn with extreme tightness over the hips in front, thus outlining the figure. The bustle took on a new aspect, that of providing leverage for a straining of cloth in front of the body.

By 1877, tight-lacing was just as extreme as it had been in the 1830's. Paris at that time introduced the "polonaise," which was a dress named for the Polish national costume. Its reign was of short duration, but it was a different silhouette. It consisted of a waist and overskirt cut in one piece and worn over a separate skirt. The skirt was cut extremely tight to the knees, then widened by flounces. In the more exaggerated models the skirt was so tight that women found it impossible to go up or down steps.

Sex-attraction was a main factor in the design of these dresses, and it was produced by various devices. There was an exaggeration of curves, attention being placed on anatomical display by means of extremely tight dresses. This was largely confined to the lower half, for the upper half was disguised by corsets. The corset became an object of peculiar fascination and was exploited in the cuirass bodice. This was a corset worn over the skirt as part of the bodice. It was very tight, running down to a sharp point in the front, underneath which the skirt appeared, adorned with drapery. This drapery widened the apparent size of the hips in order to make the waist look smaller. The symbolism of the corset and the corset-like bodice was never so marked. The cuirass bodice

gave the impression that the wearer had not completed her attire.

Another device used to attract the male was the scarf swathed either around the knees or around the sexual region. "It is significant that the small ornamental aprons were called by the ladies themselves their 'fig leaves.'" [42]

> The influence of sexual instinct was detected more obviously in this decade than in any of those preceding. It was not that the instinct was stronger, but that normal forms of satisfaction had become blocked by economic conditions. Under these circumstances it found a means of expression, as it always does when hampered, in unconscious symbolism. [43]

During this period of close-fitting, the hips became quite smooth, the bustle of the early seventies having slipped down halfway to the ground instead of flouncing out from the waist. The princess gown was introduced by Maison Worth during this decade. Worth also developed the gored skirt. The tie-back dress came into vogue. These dresses were pulled tight across the knees and tied behind, ending in a train usually. A statement of the period was the following:

> Dresses must now be very flat at the back and very tight in front shewing the hips and figure as much as possible; puffs and bustles have disappeared. Were it not for the back-train, dresses would look like a towel wrapped round. All bodies, high, low or square, day or evening, should be made long and tight over the hips; some descend halfway down to the knees; soon we shall have dresses all bodies! [44]

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42 Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, p. 256.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., p. 276.

Fashionable dress became so uncomfortable that it led to the custom of ladies appearing at the breakfast table in a loose dressing gown. This, even, arroused the suspicion that loose clothing meant loose conduct. The fashionable lady needed breathing space, though, and an English fashion journal admitted this in the following:

> The amount of discomfort an elegant will bear in order to preserve the encased swathed appearance which Fashion decrees her limbs should present is incredible. It would be impossible to make closer drapery; the limit has been reached. The modern gown shews the figure in a way which is certainly most unsuitable for the ordinary British matron. 45

Within this period of the rise and fall of the bustle was a movement in the mid-seventies called the Aesthetic movement, led by William Morris, whose aim was to reform the entire existing system of interior decoration and architecture. The followers of this movement extended its realm to that of costume, producing the Aesthetic Dress which reached the public eye in 1878. Although this form of dress never seriously affected the masses as a popular form of attire, it did serve as an influence in the downfall of the bustle. For women the Aesthetic Dress of this circle of individualists was a kind of mixture of the Empire gown with its straight-flowing lines and loose drapery and the Romantic gown with its large sleeves. She wore no corset, enveloping herself in loose robes embroidered with large sunflowers, also flat shoes, and she brushed her hair forward over her eyes. She soon adopted an affected manner of walking with a slouch and

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45 Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 45.

a droop, an affected manner of talking, and an extreme affectation of judgment and taste. For some individuals this costume proved genuinely artistic, but as its use spread, it became degenerate and as a dress reform, failed. It did tone down the violent color mixtures of the seventies in its decree that dress should harmonise with the surroundings of the interior, creating a vogue for drab tones which would be safe in any decorative scheme. One lady stated, "Above all, one must avoid looking like one of those vulgar coloured fashion-plates which a later generation accepts as portraits of the period." [46]

The perfect lady of England, in particular, viewed the Aesthetic Movement with suspicion, thinking that it might be indelicate. Despite the growing number of women seeking emancipation, most ladies clung to Victorian outlooks. To them physical facts were unmentionable. They continued to ignore reality and thought that men were coarse-grained animals, and they were shocked at being compelled to associate with them. Their budding daughters had to be trained to present a mentality of alluring ignorance in a costume chastely sensual. Such was the road to an early marriage, and so they strove to preserve their spotless ignorance.

The bustle continued to be the principle silhouette of the over-all period, reaching its peak of extravagance in

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46 Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, p. 311.

1885. At that time the back of the skirt extended rigidly a distance of eighteen inches to two feet. This, the second bustle in the back-fullness cycle, was essentially different in character from the original bustle. It had ceased to be a pad and had become a wire cage, the crinolette. Just as the crinoline had reached an excess, so did the crinolette, and like the crinoline, it was destined to collapse.

The period of the bustle was also that of the New Woman, a woman seeking emancipation and freedom. As long as the bourgeois ideal was in the ascendant, the independent woman who wished to live her own life was necessarily a rarity. A product of several factors, the New Woman was chiefly a creation of the 1880's. One factor was economic depression, forcing many women to seek careers other than marriage. Another factor in woman's emancipation was the growing enthusiasm for sports and outdoor activities. Also, many women simply felt the urge for freedom and independence.

The new enthusiasm for sports was a great liberation for confined young women. In the earlier part of the century riding was the only sport, and it was strictly an aristocratic privilege. In the seventies three new sports became popular, roller-skating, bicycling, and lawn tennis. Ice skating, too, was widespread, and in 1871, there appeared a skating costume comprised of a satin quilted skirt, one and a half inches off the ground, with a velvet tunic edged in fur, bell sleeves, open bodice over a satin vest, and high-heeled

button boots, also a velvet hat with gold tassels. [47] The young skater seemed to insist on elegance more than convenience.

A distinct tennis costume appeared in 1879, comprising "a cream merino bodice with long sleeves edged with embroidery; skirt with deep kilting; over it an old-gold silk blouse-tunic with short wide sleeves and square neck, the tunic looped up at one side with a ball pocket sewn to it." [48] For tennis there appeared also the jersey bodice worn over a kilted serge skirt, but this, however, was recommended only for perfect figures. Tennis, at first, was a very refined sport, fitting easily into the open air summer life of English middle classes. It provided a new opportunity for the parade of eligible daughters which was one of the main preoccupations of the British matron. This new social custom was practised without great expense. It brought young people together, enabling them to make friends under the eyes of their elders. Thus it gained in popularity. The only influence of roller-skating was to make skirts a little shorter.

The greatest influence on costume was exerted by the sport of bicycling. The bicycle became immensely popular and was adopted by women with as much enthusiasm as by men. It, however, created a new set of problems which agitated both fashion designers and moralists for many years. It was soon conceded, nevertheless, that a lady did not lose caste

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47 Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 41.

48 Ibid., p. 45.

by riding a bicycle. This sport called for a special outfit, for the restraining costumes of the day were hardly conducive to pedaling. The lady cyclist was compelled to wear either a shorter skirt or to adopt the knickerbockers of male cyclists. Soon was created a special outfit consisting of a divided skirt or bloomer-like attire. The bicycle accomplished quickly and easily what Mrs. Bloomer had failed to obtain in 1851, and also what, in England, Lady Harberton and Mrs. Oscar Wilde had attempted for sixteen years to introduce through their Rational Dress Society.

The bicycle opened new means of pleasure as well as many new places to go. More important still, it created new freedom for the younger generation in that it lessened parental control. Youthful couples pedaling on a bicycle excursion found that they could easily outdistance the elder chaperone.

Thus were sports an important factor in an age of rapid advance for young women. In addition to participation in outdoor activities, they began to read advanced literature and faced facts which horrified their mothers. The perfect lady of the past viewed this emancipatory movement with alarm as the old ideal of early marriage began to become elusive. Young girls were beginning to realize that marriage was not the aim and end of their existence. On the other hand, they desired to go out boldly into the world and mix freely with the opposite sex. They were caught between the

conflict of emancipation with its unknown perils and past notions of prudery. Their fashions expressed this in the eighties, especially the day costumes which seemed rather drab. Their outfits exhibited elements of smartness and dowdiness, sex appeal and grim prudery, and colors which looked either high-spirited or like a nervous breakdown. [49] The historian could "perhaps see in the prevailing restlessness that of a generation who, having drifted away from the traditions of its forefathers, has not yet formulated the code that is to rule its future." [50]

The day dress suggested a solid block of masonry draped with flags or sacking. The reserved lady clung to draping as an air of refinement. Dresses became heavy, too much so for the New Woman who was not leading the sedentary life of women of the 1840's, when abundance of clothing scarcely mattered. Thus the burden of clothing did not express a physical need, rather the armor of prudery. The New Woman found favor with the tailor-made outfits which, with their marked austerity, seemed to imply disdain for sex appeal.

> Those early and middle Eighties provided innumerable examples of what might be called 'pathological fashions,' illustrating the struggle between the restrictions of prudery and the urge for physical liberty. While the two forces were nicely balanced in the tailor-made costume, in the 'sports' scale became gradually tipped, with a good deal of hesitation,

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49 Ibid., p. 50.

50 Ibid.

> in the direction of a body 'rightly struggling to be free.' [51]

The tailor-made dress, so endorsed by young women engaged in outdoor activity and in the economic thralls of earning a living, threatened to destroy the voluminously draped and bustled skirt and the long pointed corsage with its armor-plated stays. This emancipated woman with her new freedom of economy, activity, and education was ready to deal the death blow to the encumbering bustle.

The moment was psychologically opportune when, in 1888, Sarah Bernhardt appeared in Sardou's play, "La Tosca," wearing a stayless dress, and she charmed the fashionable world in a series of Directoire and Empire costumes. She influenced the appearance of simple undraped skirts throughout Europe. She had abolished the overskirt and threatened the long waist, leading to a simplification of the skirt. She demonstrated to women a way of ridding them of superfluous garments. She encouraged the open bodice and loose-fitting blouse, also the shortening of the day skirt almost to the ankle.

> Such changes in any case were no doubt imminent; the impulse in that direction came from the English-woman's growing activity but the French actress supplied the model at 'the psychological moment.' It is therefore one of those interesting cases where an eminent person seems to have started a new fashion which would, however, have inevitably arrived at another moment, in some other form. [52]

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51 Ibid., pp. 53-54.

52 Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, p. 312.

THE PERIOD OF GAIETY AT THE 'FIN DE SIÈCLE'

The 1890's earned the adjective "naughty," for people seemed to accept the idea that the end of a century is always decadent, always a little world weary and perverse. The gay nineties terrified those who saw in the 'fin de siècle' spirit a threat to all the canons of decency which had been upheld throughout the long Victorian reign. It was a period marked by the definite revolt of women. The new enthusiasm for athleticism did not burn itself out. Too, young men no longer married as early as they had done a generation before, creating a surplus of women who were destined to remain unmarried. Whereas in the Victorian period proper they would have been content to accept a life of dependency as companions or poor relations, they now began to strike out for themselves. They began to accept, somewhat timidly, positions in offices, making their first assaults upon the professions, entering into a competition with man of a new and purely economic nature.

This growing revolt of women found expression in literature which "showed an interest in the psychology of woman which was very disturbing to those who had comfortably imagined that nice women had no psychology at all, and that those who were not nice were hardly fit subjects for discussion." [53]

In America most fashionable women were still sheltered,

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53 Laver, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

based on the European pattern of perfect womanhood, the old Victorian ideal. Women of well-to-do American families were placed on an even higher pedestal than European women. The unmarried daughter was concerned with the finer things of life, the social amenities, travel, and the arts in a modest way. If the family fortunes failed, she might become a teacher. As times changed, however, with the advocation of higher education for women and new job opportunities, the American woman also began to enter into professional competition with men.

At the end of the nineteenth century all the old standards of class distinction were breaking down. The ownership of land, particularly in Europe, no longer carried the same prestige. The stigma attached to trade was disentegrating so long as the trade was carried on in a sufficiently extensive scale. The financier who did nothing but juggle money was making his way to the front.

The Victorian period was one of colonial expansion for England as it became the Empire on which the sun never sets. At the same time the influence of America was being felt, for since the time of the Civil War, the wealth of Americans had been growing. The metropolis New York had a new aristocracy, created of the old Social Register families and those who had recently amassed larger fortunes than history had ever known, in railroads, steel, oil, and even pork-packing. These wealthy Americans began to visit Europe, taking with them higher standards of living than those of the old world. Also, they

crossed the ocean with no sense of inferiority, for they were extremely civilized and sophisticated as well as very rich. Impoverished English aristocrats realized that they would do well to wed an American heiress, obtaining a vital and attractive wife as well as re-establishing the family fortunes. The Americans, not yet denuded of the snobbery of birth, were quite willing to see their well-dowered daughters assume European titles.

Women's magazines reflected an increasing prosperity and settled social regimes. Women of all classes were able to copy the rich and fashionable attire since fashion illustrations and patterns were available. The use of photographs in newspapers presented vivid accounts of the pastimes of the rich, and women everywhere devoured the news of society. Women were further enlightened by numerous helpful articles on such subjects as home dressmaking, advancement and careers, community interests, propriety, moralization, cookery, literature, child raising, and famous people.

When the bustled silhouette passed away, costume emphasis moved to the waist and the bodice. During the nineties the tailor-made suit, consisting of a shirtwaist, a jacket, and a separate skirt, became increasingly popular. Sleeves expanded into the leg-o'-mutton silhouette, reminiscent of those of the 1830's. This sleeve underwent a curious evolution, starting with a little peak of material formed at each shoulder. The upper sleeve gradually expanded until by 1893, the true leg-o'-mutton was at its peak, accentuated by frills

and flounces. Soon sleeves became so large that cushions were necessary to keep them in place. They then gradually became smaller until in 1898, they were purely vestigial. In 1899, they were a mere gathering on the shoulders, vanishing entirely the following year.

Skirts were shortened for walking, this being considered a great convenience. One type of skirt was devised for rainy weather, and it was known as the "rainy-day skirt" or "rainy daisy." 54 The trend definitely was to shorten skirts, and the universal train was discarded, the bicycle having proved its impracticality.

The extensive use of the bicycle continued to raise the question, had women legs? One authority declared that "the amplitude of the skirt is all-important; if it is too scanty then the ankle is unduly exposed and the rider loses some of her femininity"; while another discovered that "bicycling is not an exercise intended by Nature to exploit to the best the outlines of the feminine form divine." 55 The problem of pedaling as a monolity was not insoluble as some ladies discovered when they weighted their skirts with shot. The New Woman, however,pedaled forth in bloomers and short jackets. In protest, one authority argued that bicycling was not only "far beyond a girl's strength but it tends to destroy the sweet simplicity of her girlish nature; besides, how dreadful it would be if by some accident she were to fall off into the

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54 Hall, op. cit., p. 90.

55 Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 51.

arms of a strange man." 56 Perhaps this was a disguised wish of women of the period. Thus were the bicycling costumes ambiguous, as women's motives might have been perchance, for the bicycling outfit was an attempt to achieve freedom of movement while, at the same time, retaining the modesty of a proper young lady. In addition to bicycling, bloomers and trouserettes were used for gymnastics, which was a new activity for young women.

There were innovations in the construction of skirts, many unlined. There were straight English skirts, tailor-made and ankle length, also those with front and sides gored, worn with a yoked blouse and jacket. Women imitated men in wearing reefer jackets and starched shirt fronts with a separate skirt. The shirtwaist was an American innovation, and it soon reached widespread popularity. The ready-made blouse dealt a deadly blow to the dressmaker, for it could be worn evening and day. Bulging blouses and huge sleeves expanded to the exhaustion point.

The ideal appearance of the day was that of the "Gibson Girl," immortalized in the drawings of Charles Dana Gibson. She wore a Gibson waist, an elaborately decorated blouse, and her hair was brushed upward from the neck. She was shown in bathing suits and sportswear. At that time the neck was encased in a jabot or a collar of lace reaching almost to the tips of the ears and held in place by celluloid or whalebone

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56 Ibid., p. 59.

supports. This neckline was worn until 1911, when at its timid abandonment, preachers said that low necklines were immoral and a danger to good health, not remembering that the prudish Victorians had been far more decolleté, even in daytime.

The proper lady began a counter attack to the New Woman by adopting fluffs and frills. There developed a contest between the two types of women, one demanding rights, the other clinging to privileges, and this contest went below the surface into the realm of undergarments. The New Woman was scornful of the new frilly underwear, or "lingerie," and proceeded forward in hygienic combinations of serge knickerbockers and rational pairs of stays. Privilege, meantime, assumed a graceful attitude in silk petticoats and lace.

> The petticoat is now at the zenith of its glory, an ever-present enemy to the New Woman. Foamingly soft, adored by Man, while the clinging folds and soft outlines of the tea gown add a subtle attraction, varying and dangerous, and treble the fascination of her slender form. In a teagown a woman will appear just 'adorable,' and what more can a woman want to be? 57

During the latter part of the century there was an increase in the number of couturier establishments in Paris until, in 1898, there were 1932 couturier salons. The House of Worth was still the byword for fashionable and creative costume.

C. W. Cunnington denounced the supremacy of Paris at that time, however, in the following conclusion:

> A study of the nineteenth century destroys the illusion that feminine fashions always originate in

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57 Ibid., p. 61.

> Paris. During the whole century the Parisian designers were essentially conservative in their ideas, relying on recurrent revivals of modes borrowed from the eighteenth and earlier centuries. Even the high-waisted dress associated with the First Empire had originated in England a few years before 1800.[58] Paris led the world of fashion after Waterloo until the middle of the '60's when the emancipatory movement began in this country and in America, and English fashions started to deviate along their own lines. The United States, in the person of Mrs. Bloomer, may, if they choose, claim to have driven the first wedge splitting the monolith in two from which the modern biped eventually emerged; but we look in vain to France for any fundamentally new idea in dress. The '80's may claim to have introduced, among cultured people, a degree of individualism in styles of dress, in opposition to the rigid decrees of fashion, an enterprise mainly of English origin, and traceable to the English Aesthetic movement.[59]

At the end of the nineteenth century M. Jean Worth expressed the following:

> The love of the modern woman for athletics, though perhaps to be deplored from the aesthetic point of view, has made any revival of the crinoline impossible; besides, latter-day modes have a tendency to become more and more utilitarian, while at the same time those woman who live for dress no longer slavishly follow the fashion; the lady of the twentieth century will realise that it is her duty to look her best under all circumstances and not to follow the blind dictates of fashion.[60]

With the turn of the century came a return to the ultra-feminine in fashions, modes favoring the mature figure. The

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58 The high-waisted dress of the Directorate and First Empire in France was originated by a French designer, Mademoiselle Rose Bertin, who had been the dressmaker of Marie Antoinette. During the French Revolution she had been forced to flee to England where she re-established herself as designer and dressmaker.

59 Cunnington, English Woman's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 426-427.

60 Ibid., p. 411.

Hour-Glass silhouette became the idealized type as women padded their hips and the side lines of the bust. Women again resorted to tight-lacing in order to make their waists appear as small as possible-- anything to attain the desired figure. The New Woman, however, continued her campaign for more sensible clothing, adopting universally the coat and skirt, an outfit akin somewhat to the costume of men. This costume expressed the character of the "fin de siècle" woman, in essence, energetic, spirited, and sensible.

THE PRE-DISASTER PERIOD

With the beginning of the twentieth century the change in mental attitudes and outlooks was so complete that the closing century seemed a world apart. There were new ideas in many fields-- the beginning of physical education for women, increased desire to travel, the opening of the business and professional world to women, and the complexity of living in a modern, faster-paced world. Literature at the time was full of sentiment. In literature America was pictured as a fairyland of wishes and fulfilment, and its costumes reflected that atmosphere.

The United States was becoming important in international affairs. Under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt the building of the Panama Canal was completed, a construction task which had been started by France. France, at the time, was expanding territorially, just as England had been doing in the nineteenth century. Italy was growing in socialism and in organized labor. Germany, a nationalistic country, was the leader in education and scientific knowledge, also a manufacturing and trading power.

The motor car entered the scene, beginning its revolution in feminine costume. At first, motoring was merely a fashionable pastime, and a special costume, consisting of hats, caps, motor veils, coats and capes, gauntlets, gloves, and goggles, was created for it. "Ladies who could afford the new sport

plunged headlong into the Twentieth Century at twenty miles an hour, while others complained of 'these forward, fast and frantic days' and the perils ahead...." [61] Later, as motoring became more commonplace, it lost its prestige as a fashionable pastime and entered the realm of necessity, worn with ordinary day dress instead of a special costume. It was an additional factor in the simplification of clothing.

Women the world over were becoming economically independent as their number increased in the clerical, trade, and professional groups. Education for women became widespread, and the college girl became the idealized standard for the proper taste in clothing. The housewife expanded her knowledge to literature, music, the arts, sciences, drama, and better homemaking and child care.

With the beginning of the twentieth century, fashions became significant not as creations of an individual but as symbols of impulses affecting entire communities. The picture of fashion was a picture of mass-psychology, and its study became an important part of the study of mass social history. Class distinction declined, spreading fashions over a far wider field than formerly, so that ultimately on the poorest section of a community remained unaffected. Fashion became a democratic expression instead of being, as once, the exclusive symbol of the upper class.

At the turn of the century fashions entered an epoch of

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61 C. W. Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Present Century, p. 39.

extremely feminine curves and frills. The return to curves was new in its addition of long elliptical concave curves in the skirt to contrast with the convexities of Nature. The young lady presented an invincible illusion in curves, chiffon, and lingerie. The hips became the prominent feature, presenting a very definite smooth curve. As skirts became tighter around the hips, walking became impossible. Thus a gliding motion became the fashionable gait. This was a provocative pelvic roll, borrowed from professional ladies of easy virtue. [62]

The blouse pouched in front suggesting a figure while, at the same time, concealing its shape. Gradually the outline of the hips became toned down by rows of tucks and pleats. The proper lady of England thought,"We seem to have got rid of the severely masculine style of girls and we do not hear anything more about rational dress and the knickerbockers and divided skirts for the bicycle." [63] Fashions maintained a whimsical vein of finesse and delicacy with lace, embroideries, and cobweb transparencies.

Essentially it was a flared skirt period in fashions. This was an important innovation, for hitherto, the outline of the skirt had been either straight-sided or convexly domed. The sides and especially the front had never before presented concave surfaces, any such curve having been confined to the

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62 Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 63.

63 Ibid., p. 65.

lower part of the back of the skirt when it was trained. "The essential of the flared skirt was that every aspect of it presented a concave curve; that, in fact, it was bell-shaped." [64] Its outline comprised a convex curve at the hips passing downwards into a long elliptical concave curve to the hem.

The gracefulness of the elliptical curve depended on its length, and, therefore, the height of the wearer. Thus fashions began to favor the taller woman. The Junoesque figure became the fashionable ideal, and every item of attire was designed to favor this type. The entire spirit of design of this period was to combine suggestion with concealment, tending to favor the mature form of the matron rather than the more youthful figure. Throughout the period the floppy, pouching blouse or bodice by day and the lace valance protecting the decolletage in the evening composed a refined denial of anatomical facts. "Gorgeousness is the keynote of fashions of to-day, and the suggestion rather than the revelation of the female form beneath." [65]

The innovation of the straight-fronted corset in 1902, created a new silhouette, blocking out the famous shape of the Gibson Girl, the Hour Glass outline. In the new corset the shape of the breasts were completely merged into a sculptured figure, veiled by hanging drapery or by the cut of the garments,

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64 Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Present Century, p. 27.

65 Cunnington, The Perfect Lady, p. 67.

presenting an impressive but innocuous outline. This corset added to the curved silhouette so much in vogue.

> The Perfect Lady was exploiting the mature, the 'arriviste' attitude of mind and outline of body. Armed with a corset designed to control that region where maturity is apt to be redundant, she could affect to despise the hoydenish lines of youth and all that the rising generation seemed to threaten. 66

This soft-flowing silhouette was fashionable until approximately 1908. Women of the twentieth century found that the picturesque fashions were misleading in their increasingly active lives. An important influence in the decline of ultra-feminine curves was the rise of the Militant Suffragette in England in 1904. Whereas the New Woman of the nineteenth century had refused to employ sex appeal in her attire, ranging the normal instincts of both sexes against her, the Suffragette was correctly and fashionably dressed. Using feminine charm, she combined it with an intellectual grasp of political problems. She represented a gentlewoman with modern ideas, at the same time remaining feminine. When she was man-handled by the police and attacked by hooligans, however, it became evident that the privileges hitherto associated with a proper lady were illusory. Although she was posed as a delicate ornament, not to be roughly handled, she could and did retort with stone-throwing and window-smashing. Thus the evening confection passed away, and the tailor-made costume became more and more prevalent.

> Such events shattered more than one illusion, in particular that ancient belief that women had

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66 Ibid., p. 68.

> but one function in life. Now it was discovered that they could break as well as make. In effect, the Suffragettes did both. They broke that illusion and created the modern woman. 67

About 1908, there began a fundamental change of style. Whereas the basic structure of the feminine costume had been a composition of curves, the silhouette adopted a decisive vertical line. The costume presented a diagram of the letter "H," with the sidelines vertical and the crossbar represented by the high waistline. Fashions seemed to have a masculine air, with their clean-cut outline, emphasis on the upright, and the absence of curves and superfluous ornament. Perhaps this style was in sympathy with the world-wide emancipatory movement for women. It developed, however, into a mode which was far from emancipating in its restriction of activity.

The Hobble Skirt came about as an exaggeration of the tubular emphasis. To define the vertical silhouette to an even greater extent, the side seams were sloped inwards as they descended to the hem. These skirts proved so hampering that women tried in vain to climb stairs, to step onto a bus, or carry on any active movement. Walking was reduced to short tripping steps, thought by many to be quite feminine in contrast to the development of the long stride which was thought to be an outcome of participation in athletics.

By this time the emancipatory urge was affecting large numbers of women. Their fashions seemed, however, to overcome reason in their desire for freedom. The Hobble Skirt might

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67 Ibid., p. 70.

have been a paradoxical symbol of woman's demand for decontrol.

> Men are never averse from seeing women wearing symbols of bondage, and to-day it seems that women, too, tend to become tired of compulsory liberty. Perhaps in the Hobble skirt they discover that comforting-- if uncomfortable-- control which freedom lacks? [68]

Economic pressure was reducing the number of idle rich, and it was no longer possible for more than a very few to sustain extravagant fashions. The tubular fashions catered to a wider clientele, for they were much less expensive and far more endurable than chiffon confections. Fashions had become more democratic, in keeping with the political mood of those pre-war years.

Henceforth, novelties were to be heralded to the world not by a social leader but by theatrical and cinema stars. All social classes would be simultaneously informed of every fashion change, the only exclusive privileges left to the wealthy being the quality of material and construction.

Not only had the fashion silhouette changed, but also the ideal fashion figure. Early twentieth century fashions had favored the older, mature figure with its more voluptuous curves. The new vertical lines lowered the ideal age by at least ten years, transferring its favor to youth, a forecast of future modes.

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68 Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Present Century, p. 85.

THE PERIOD OF WORLD-WIDE DISASTER

The Great War began in Europe in 1914, the United States entering the fight in 1917. It was the most disastrous war the world had ever known, and for the first time women were not mere spectators. They began to play an increasing role as the constant departure of men for the services left vacancies in civilian life. Women began to be recruited as chauffeurs, bus conductors, lift attendants, and land workers. Countless numbers worked in and for the Red Cross. Eleven thousand enlisted in the Navy, and there were even a few aviators. This resulted in a gradual change of fashions, away from the impediments of the Hobble Skirt.

When the hostilities first broke out in 1914, women's dress followed the same lines of the pre-war years. Skirts remained long and rather narrow, topped by a tunic that was hemmed about the knees. Fashion, behaving in a manner usual in an important war, attempted romantic attitudes, more or less in a Gothic style, and the heightening of sex appeal.[69] Before long, however, a more sober, or sombre, note appeared in fashions, as women realised that a modern war is far from romantic.

Active women soon found their long skirts an encumbrance. This resulted in a shortening of the skirt, accomplished

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69 Ibid., p. 126.

economically by abolishing the underskirt and lengthening the tunic slightly. The skirt flared out sharply from a normal waistline.

The war had an immediate effect on the quality and choice of fabrics available. Also, there was a steady decline in the quality of dressmaking, and, gradually, all classes were driven to accept lower standards and to wear very much the same quality of clothing. The art of costume was compulsorily democratised. The tailored suit and the ready-made frock became more and more important. These had to be fitted in such a way that they could be worn by a considerable range of possible purchasers. Thus, fashions began to have a loose and adaptable fit. The old practice of having a dress made to measure after innumerable fittings practically disappeared. Fashions were catering to a much wider clientele and one with much lower standards. Whereas dress of pre-war years was distinguished by its cut and fit, this rapidly diminished during the war, and its complete absence was made a fashionable feature.

As women became involved more and more in war work, uniforms entered the fashion scene, a phenomenon unknown in history. It produced both immediate and remote effects on fashion. In wearing uniforms women found that personal taste was entirely absent, for they were designed for safety and working ease rather than appearance. Uniforms had a leveling effect, entirely detached from social class distinction. This outfit, adopted by women performing men's work, helped to overcome the

horror associated with their wearing men's trousers. Also, women began to wear a more masculine style in tailored suits without provoking hostile comment.

Uniforms and working costumes did more than break down past prejudices. Women, for the first time, were supplied with a kind of costume which was wholly without sex appeal, for in many cases it was an outfit worn indifferently by both sexes. A new generation began to realise that men and women were not built so differently, and the art of costume was deprived of one of its powers of charm, the contents of a dress no longer being mysterious. By the end of the war fashions began to denounce the existing figure, creating a boyish silhouette. Here, in symbolic form, was a gesture of sex equality.

With the exception of uniforms and work clothing women wore much the same style until the end of the war. Their costumes were essentially practical and somewhat military, eminently suited to the times. The Great War did have a profound effect on feminine costume; however, the change came with the end of the conflict, not during its process. The change corresponded to a profoundly significant event, but while the Great War was still in progress, the variations which it introduced were hidden. It was parallel to the effect of the French Revolution on clothing, for not until after the death of Robespierre did the French political situation become reflected in clothing. Similarly, not until after the First World War did change become apparent.

THE POST-WAR PERIOD

The emancipation of women had been proceeding for a long time, but so slowly that its effect on clothing had been negligible. The First World War stimulated this process of emancipation immensely. Women were given many more privileges. Suffrage was granted to women in England and in the United States. Bills were written for new equality for men and women. What was more important at the moment was the new economic freedom of women, an effect more tangible than their newly-granted rights. In particular, war gave liberty to the young girl just out of her teens. She had money to spend, she was free, and she began a dictation of fashion that lasted for the next decade. Thus the pronounced feature of fashion expressed a triumphant note of youth in a silhouette based on masculine proportions.

There were many influencing factors inherent in this spirit of the times and the post-war fashions from 1918 to 1930. After the war with its immense destruction of young men, the normal balance of the sexes was, for the first time in modern history, violently upset. The communal sexual impulse was faced with a novel situation, one encouraging abnormal forms of satisfaction, and a wafe of psychological homo-sexuality was the inevitable result. The mass mind of the community moved perceptibly in that direction, away from the inhibitions which had governed the past heterosexual

standards. These abnormal psychological conditions found expression in the characteristic fashions, and the first phase produced a glorification of the 'boyish' ideal. The schoolboy figure became the structure on which fashion was built, and young women sought by every physical means to obliterate their feminine outline and assume that of the immature male. [70] Waist and buttocks were flattened into a cylinder. The breasts were reduced by compressors. Hair was shortened to masculine proportion, and the exposure of legs and arms added to the appearance of youth.

> The essential quality of the fashions all through the Twenties was the expression of youth, gradually changing from a sort of 'neutral' sex, verging on the male adolescent, towards the female adolescent and finally emerging by about 1930 into womanhood. Never before had such an extraordinary change been compressed into so short a time. [71]

Another influence was that of the demobilised man from the armed forces, returned home to seek a mate. Economic conditions, however, were such that he was discouraged from starting a family. He, therefore, desired a companion capable of helping him earn a joint income, and children would have been a financial disaster. Therefore, men were not attracted to the maternal type of woman, and they found a peculiar appeal in the non-maternal, school-boyish girl.

An influencing factor was that of the new social domination of Youth. The younger generation intended to cut itself adrift

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70 Ibid., pp. 146-147.

71 Ibid., p. 148.

from all elderly and obsolete traditions, blaming the older generation for instigating the Great War. Youth personified a fresh beginning.

The Twenties stand out as the Nineties did with a flavor of moral decadence. The expanding and expansive Twenties were a phase of moral upheaval and change, actually marked by growth rather than decay. The First World War had extirpated many obsolete ideas from the social system, resulting in a feverish period of recovery and adjustment.

James Laver compared the abolishing of the corset during the Twenties to the spirit of the times in the following:

> It is a curious fact in human history, and one well worthy of more attention than it has received from the social pshcyologists, that the disappearance of corsets is always accompanied by two related phenomena-- promiscuity and an inflated currency. No corsets, bad money, and general moral laxity; corsets, sound money, and the prestige of the 'grande cocotte'-- such seems to be the rule. In any case, the period immediately following the Great War showed a marked resemblance to the Directoire period, when also women flung their corsets into the dustbin and their bonnets over the windmills. [72]

In America the roaring Twenties produced three characteristic types of women, the sophisticate, the flapper, and the careerist. American women were enjoying a new social and intellectual freedom, even though it shocked the older generation.

The youthful, rather masculine look prevailed throughout the decade. Women abandoned any pretence of having a waist, and in 1923, the tendency was to make the hips appear as wide

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72 Laver, op. cit., p. 125.

as possible. Shortly this silhouette was discarded in favor of a straight, simple dress, completely tubular. The simpler clothes favored the lower classes, for never had dressmaking been so simple or inexpensive. "A wide shawl wound round the body under the armpits and kept in place by two narrow shoulder-straps-- such was all that was required for the construction of a fashionable evening dress." 73

Once the pretence of having a waist was abandoned, there was no reason for the waist to retain its normal position. Instead of rising as it had done in the Directoire period, it sank. The waistline was around the hips, an innovation in the history of costume. The tubular impression was further emphasized by the abolition of that long-prized feminine attribute, the breasts. For this a new corset was created, one without bones which exerted its pressure not on the waist, but on the bust.

Gabrielle Chanel, an outstanding Paris couturiere of the period, introduced the idea of shortening skirts to match the shortened hair, and the world followed the example she set forth. She became known as the sponsor of the short-skirted, low-waisted frocks. In addition, she introduced the use of pearls for daytime wear and popularized the wearing of imitation jewelry. Her use of jersey and tweeds in feminine costume was an important feature also.

By 1925, the short dress had reached its high mark, the

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73 Ibid., p. 126.

waist its low mark, making the skirt little more than a scant flounce. Along with this short dress, bobbed hair and the cloche hat were universal. A new erotic-aesthetic arose based upon the newly discovered seductiveness of the feminine leg. This awakened the need for flesh-colored stockings, which proved to be quite expensive in view of their perishability. The Twenties was a period of great uniformity in dress, the basic ensemble consisting of a cloche hat, a simple, straight-lined dress with a very short skirt and an extremely low waist, long silk stockings, and low shoes.

The Twenties were marked by a growing attention to facial make-up, resulting in a mask-like face. The plucked eyebrows and unnaturally colored mouth produced a staring expressionless face. Young girls imitated film stars, and even the humblest could acquire theatrical beauty at little cost. It, too, was an effective method of sex attraction or, at least, attention. Make-up was a mask for emotions, for in the Twenties the hiding of real feelings was part of the fashionable attitude of mind, made almost necessary by the free mixing of the sexes. It concealed any lack of confidence, an element, perhaps, in the apparent bold face which post-war young women presented to the startled world.

The silhouette of the Twenties marked a temporary eclipse of the Frenchwoman with her well-developed figure, and the dominance of the English, and still more, the American type. The lean, angular woman became the accepted type of beauty. Women exercised desperately, ate as little as possible, and

suffered tortures at the hands of masseurs in an endeavor to attain and preserve the new line. In accord, fashion drawings grew taller and thinner, approaching the El Greco ideal.

The social history of the Twenties was similar to that of the Directoire, but in an even more abandoned, more cynical, and more extravagant manner. Dancing was the craze, and dance halls and night clubs appeared everywhere, as the following illustrates:

> ...the whole world, or that young part of it which now more than ever set the tone, shuffled round exiguous floors locked in a close embrace to the blaring of a negro band. Even in Paris, where the Tzigane orchestra had reigned for forty years, real or pseudo gipsies were driven out by the real or imitation negroes. The saxophone was the new magic pipe whose strains set everybody dancing. The night club established itself everywhere, not only in England, where the licensing restrictions provided some excuse, but in Paris and Berlin. Formal dances were discontinued, largely owing to the poverty of those who had formerly given them, and with formal dances disappeared the chaperone and all that surveillance of the young which had been considered a duty of parents from time immemorial. 74

The ideals of home and children had fallen into disuse as the young generation carried on amorous affairs and entered marriages that were hardly expected to last. Automobiles increased in number and use, making the problems of parental control even more difficult. Daughters of the middle classes were wheeled away in two-seaters, the daughters of the lower classes on motor-cycles. The counsels of the old were discredited in view of their credited responsibility for the Great War. As the pace of living increased, the skirts

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74 Ibid., p. 128.

decreased, to reach a crashing climax in the great depression at the end of the decade. Skirts came down with the aid of dripping draperies, and the economy of the world crashed downward also with the collapse of stock markets.

Fashions entered a new era during the time of depression. They once again reflected femininity and greater maturity. The study of these nearby fashions, however, is less comprehensible than the study of those of a more remote era, for the fashions of an epoch can be appreciated only when they are far enough in the past to erase any prejudice.

Today fashions have reached a point of universality, affecting the masses as well as the upper classes. With the aid of ready-to-wear clothing, mass-production, transportation, fast communications, and great technical improvements, fashion no longer is the privilege of the aristocrats or the upper classes. It is a world-wide necessity for all.

III.

INFLUENCING FACTORS OF FASHION

INFLUENCING FACTORS OF FASHION

Fashion is the style accepted and adopted by a large number of people. It is a phenomenon of social psychology, of like-mindedness, and common thinking and acting. Therefore, fashion must represent that which appeals to people, reflecting what is inherent in their thinking and acting. Fashion is not directly influenced by the unfolding of events of the times. The events, rather, influence the spirit of the age, the thoughts and actions, which, in turn, influence fashion. Three important factors influencing fashion are, first, dominating social groups, second, dominating ideals, and third and indirectly, dominating events.

Dominating social groups have changed during the course of the centuries. In the time of Louis XIV, fashion was a matter of the extravagant whims of nobility and the aristocracy. They set a fashion pace which other groups found impossible to follow. With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution came the rise of the middle class, forcing its ideals on the evolution of fashion.

Fashion is a European phenomenon, changing with the degree of rivalry between classes in an ever-changing society. The aristocracy made magnificance so fashionable that a distinct line was drawn between them and the lower classes. The middle class grew in financial and political power and vied with the upper class in the conception of fashion. To

have a changing fashion, there must be a changing society, which Europe has, in contrast to the static society and fashion of China in the past. There the same mode of dress reigned for centuries.

Dominating ideals of the influential are reflected in fashion. This influence depends upon the dominance of the social group. During the time of the Directoire in France, the ideal of the populace was democracy and citizenship based on Greek antiquity, and this was reflected in the chemise dresses which imitated the chitons of old. The libertine notions, the gaiety and freedom were reflected in the exhibitionism of the thin dresses. Later, the ideals of the Bourgeoisie proved to be prudery and modesty, seriousness and the gospel of work, all of which were reflected in the enveloping feminine dress, and the modes and manners of Victorianism. The ideals of the New Woman, seeking emancipation, were reflected in her choice of tailor-made garments, severely rejecting any signs of sex appeal. The status of the post-war Twentieth Century woman was reflected in the adoption of a masculine silhouette and the exhibitionism of the short dress.

Dominating ideals approve or disapprove activities which may influence dress. The bicycle, a sporting activity, was approved, and it influenced the wearing of shorter dresses, less confining, and also, the wearing of knickerbockers, a part of masculine dress. Increased activity through sports and means of transportation have had a definite liberating

effect on costume.

Dominating social and political events are reflected indirectly in fashions, but only after they have become evident in the spirit of living of the times. During the upheaval of an important event, the populace is too engrossed to realize its effect on them, and to express this effect in costume. During the French Revolution, for example, costumes continued in the basic silhouette of pre-revolutionary years. Yet the French Revolution is accredited with the basic change in silhouette which followed it. This can be accounted for in its effect on the ideals of the people. With the end of the Reign of Terror they adopted a dress based on Greek antiquity which expressed their ideals of citizenship and which also expressed the gaiety of this period following disaster.

The Great War of 1914-1918 saw little change in silhouette until the turmoil had ended. Then women, whose emancipation had suddenly been accelerated, released the tension of the past and stepped forth in youthful garb which reflected masculine proportions.

In such a way does fashion reflect the spirit of the age, and as James Laver has stated in the following:

> In every period costume has some essential line, and when we look back over the fashions of the past we aan see quite clearly what it is, and can see what is surely very strange, that the forms of dresses, apparently so haphazard, so dependent on the whim of the designer, have an extraordinary relevance to the spirit of the age. The aristocratic stiffness of the old regime in France is completely mirrored in the brocaded gowns of the eighteenth century. The

republican yet licentious notions of the Directoire find their echo in the plain transparent dresses of the time. Victorian modesty expressed itself in a multitude of petticoats, the emancipation of the post-War flapper in short hair and short skirts. We touch here something very mysterious, as if the Time Spirit were a reality, clothing itself ever in the most suitable garments and rejecting all others.... [75]

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75 Laver, op. cit., p. 250.

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HONORS DESIGNS

by

Barbara Alley

Gray woolen dress-

The design was inspired by a dress of 1840, and it repeats the square neckline filled in with lace. The panel line gives, somewhat, the effect of the fitted bodice which ran to a point at the waistline. The side panels are bloused, in line with a contemporary silhouette which allows a good deal of ease for modern activities. The sleeves are slightly bell-shaped at the hem and are trimmed with a touch of lace.

Tan polka-dot suit-

The suit is basically a fitted one, its main point of interest being the fichu collar which was inspired by collars and necklines of the end of the eighteenth century. The skirt is peg-topped.

Green velveteen cocktail dress-

The basic design is a sheath, enriched by a back panel or short train lined in a co-ordinated print. The gown was inspired by costumes of the early nineteenth century during the period of the Empire in France. The back panel was devised in order to give the illusion of a high-waisted, gathered skirt without actually being one. It hangs in a box center pleat with inverted pleats at the sides. The sheath conforms to the figure in a style acceptable to contemporary use. The corded shoulder straps are set wide, resembling the outline of many necklines of the Empire period. The front bodice is tucked on the bias, reflecting the fullness of that area in the gowns of the early nineteenth century.