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# Accessorizing Agency: Nineteenth Century Women's Fashion Adornments

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Accessorizing Agency  
Nineteenth Century Women's Fashion Adornments

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Accessorizing Agency: Nineteenth-Century Women's Fashion Adornments

In many of Queen Victoria's photographed portraits, from an online collection, she is captured on film decorated in twinkling baubles, from necklaces to earrings, and most often clutching a beautiful fan—sometimes of lace and other times ornately painted [plate 1].<sup>1</sup> Accompanying these accessories is always a delicate, seemingly soft headdress that blankets her dark hair and trails down her back. In outside group photographs, the fashionable Queen can be spotted with an assortment of feathered-and-flowered hats and often with a parasol clutched in her hands [plate 2]. To Queen Victoria, a woman known for her fashion, especially that of popularizing the mourning garb later in her life, accessories were significant to her. Almost every photograph on the online collection reveals some sort of fashion accessory on Queen Victoria, be it a delicate fan, riding gloves, her dainty veil, or sparkling gems. Feminine accessories conveyed a multitude of messages to the eye; what you wore and outwardly possessed indicated a great deal about your status, wealth, class, and gender. Queen Victoria's tiara and gems alluded to her richness and queenly status. Fans, parasols, hats, and the like embodied not only her femininity but her agency as a powerful woman in nineteenth-century England.

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<sup>1</sup> Accessed October 27, 2016, <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/search>.



[Plate 1: Royal Collection Trust. Digital image. "Portrait of Queen Victoria (1819-1901) during her Diamond Jubilee, 1897." <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk>. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017.]



[Plate 2: Royal Collection Trust. Digital image. "Queen Victoria and her page, Arthur Ponsonby." <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk>. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017.]



[**Plate 3:** Royal Collection Trust. Digital image. "Queen Victoria, Princess Victoria of Wales, and Princess Helena Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, Balmoral 1898." <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk>. **Royal Collection Trust** / © **Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017.**]

Historians seek to understand history through materials of the past, be it fashion items, such as dresses, crinolines, and hats, home decorations, like wallpaper and furnishings, and household possessions, anything from tea sets to book collections. There are many materials worth analyzing and observing in order to shed more light on societies of the past. Historians focusing on fashion items research, analyze, and discover what they can through the fabrics, styles, forms, prices, advertisements, and the progression of clothing throughout the decades to infer what they can about their importance in women's lives. Historians can use these tools to uncover the way society and culture worked. Fashion can reveal a great deal about femininity of the past, as well as the backlash from the patriarchy. The ever-evolving fashion trends enable a glimpse into the societal, economical, and cultural circumstances of each given era; each change and shift in fashion form tells historians much of societal history, for both women and men.

Susie Steinbach attributes the separation of genders during the Victorian era to the ideology of “separate spheres” which started during the late eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Men were everything women were not, and everything they could not be; men were public, providers, sexual, independent, social, political, and aggressive. Women were then undermined as dependent, “sexually passionless,” weak-willed, and confined to the domestic sphere where they enacted their sole job: household caretaker, or mother and wife.<sup>3</sup> Steinbach touches upon the inferiority of femininity, citing that “femininity meant dependence, subordinate status, domesticity, and sexual modesty.”<sup>4</sup> Masculinity, therefore, was the opposite, seen with acceptance and praise, and as something to strive for. Emasculation was a dirty word; to be anything but “manly” as a man was to then be a woman, to be of feminine disposition, and ultimately, a bad thing. Femininity was the complete opposite of masculinity and, with such status, had no hope in attaining the same freedoms, positivity, acceptance, and power that masculinity maintained in both the public and private spheres of society.<sup>5</sup> From this ideology, it is unsurprising to see that anything a woman did was under the critical scrutiny of men. Therefore, items for women and marketed toward women, were dismissed in the same way women were, for their femininity.

Ariel Beaujot states that “accessories helped women show off their position as feminine” which then perpetuated the “pronounced gender difference between men and woman.”<sup>6</sup> While these fashion objects allowed women to accessorize, to play and to parade their gender, they ultimately branded themselves as inferior. Women embraced femininity in their fashion identities,

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<sup>2</sup> Susie L Steinbach and Steinbach Susie, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 133.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>5</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 133-135.

<sup>6</sup> Ariel Beaujot, *Victorian Fashion Accessories* (London: Berg Publishers, 2012), 9.

as society enforced, and yet were vilified for it. They were constantly trapped within their gender, within society, within their fashion, and by their actions. Nineteenth-century society both supported and required women the use of “accessories as props that helped them perform passivity, asexuality, innocence, coyness, and leisure.”<sup>7</sup> The necessity and usage of these fashion materials continued the stereotyping of femininity, creating a vicious cycle of ridicule and undermining of gender.

Amanda Vickery’s works often revolve around the Georgian period. During the eighteenth century, women were perpetually hounded for their splurging shopping ways and yet Vickery reveals that men were just as guilty in their expensive purchases, especially in their equine hobbies.<sup>8</sup> Vickery also discusses the gendering of items in the eighteenth century; a pocket watch, which was the masculine form of a chatelaine, was considered to be “an important accoutrement of independent manhood.”<sup>9</sup> It was a symbol of masculinity in its entirety, being “a prestigious piece of male jewelry.”<sup>10</sup> Encompassing the pocket watch were the ideas of “adult success, inevitable affluence and a command of technology” for the male wearer.<sup>11</sup> Ideas that women were not deemed to possess. Instead, Vickery claims that women were associated with domestic items such as pots and pans rather than anything scientific and technological. Interestingly, both sexes would seek out fantasy through their accessories. Women imagined romantic endeavors with their fashionable trinkets while masculine items, like the pocket watch, “reflected a man’s fantasy of himself, perhaps; a creature of questing intelligence or

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Amanda Vickery and A Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 124-125.

<sup>9</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 264.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

buccaneering freedom.”<sup>12</sup> Despite the ideology of society forcing men and women into opposite spectrums of worth, both used materialism to carve their own individuality, to shape themselves into the person they imagined themselves to be.

Materials continued to be gendered into the nineteenth century. Even items that were essentially the same, such as the parasol and umbrella, in style and use—one to protect from the sun and the other from the rain—were gendered in that men dominated the umbrella market and women were almost always seen outside covered by some decorative parasol to protect her precious pale skin. Gendered accessory items revealed the chasm between man and woman, in the ways that feminine items were dainty, delicate, and despised; masculine items were then sturdy, standard, and supreme. Women’s items often tied them to their domestic job whereas men’s items were often advancements of technology and intellect.<sup>13</sup>

Parasols, gloves, fans, and chatelaines were all fashion accessories that allowed agency in sexuality, in romance, in ability and, in their subversion, disrupted patriarchal power. These accessories were popular staples of women’s fashion and were coded feminine in England. Although these accessories were often created by men, and their original intentions were both to conceal women and make them desirable to men, women found ways to gain status and agency through them. As soon as they did, however, they were mocked by men, labeled as flirts and worse, in *Punch* magazines and written pieces, continually shoved into the compartmental mentality of the Victorians. As Lynda Nead states, the bigger women became, especially by feminine fashions such as the crinoline and bustle, the more presence and power they gained from the patriarchy.<sup>14</sup> Stealing space and acquiring autonomy was seen as a problem to many

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Lynda Nead, “The Layering of Pleasure: Women, Fashionable Dress and Visual Culture in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 35, no. 5 (December 2013), doi:10.1080/08905495.2013.854978, 499-500.



men, the same men who both denounced femininity and yet harassed women who abandoned them for more masculine fashions. Women found themselves in a constant tug-of-war between confinement and agency; accessories did both, at once, being complex materials women used. Women toyed with communication and their sexuality through the commodities marketed and gifted to them. Accessories were pieces of a woman's identity, public embodiments of their femininity, and despite the gender inequality, women found ways to use their feminine items to their advantage, possessing not only items, but autonomy that they could play with. In this essay, I will argue how fashion accessories, such as parasols, fans, gloves, and chatelaines, enabled women to communicate desires and act sensual outside of the domestic sphere, allowing them a sense of agency amongst a sphere more masculine-dominated.

This essay will be organized into five sections: history surrounding these fashion accessories, the uses of these fashion items, such as the communication women conducted with them, the importance of status and wealth in relation to accessories, the sensuality and eroticism of the particular fashion items, and the masculine criticism women received. I will be using a multitude of primary sources in conducting my research, including newspaper articles, advertisements, magazines, photographs, novels, and cartoons. Since magazines were such a cheap and bountiful commodity, often costing a penny worth and printed weekly for the majority of readers, preservation has been hard, and even harder for finding scans outside of England. Fortunately, I have been able to track down a few magazine scans online of *Girls' Own Paper*, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, and *The Ladies' Treasury*, which feature articles that address fashion, from what dress to what material and cut a woman should wear if she wished to be most fashionable at the time of the printed magazine, as well as stories that feature the fashion accessories to be discussed, which will then reveal the underlying attitude in society of these

objects and of their femininity. Books such as Anthony Trollope's *Doctor Thorne* and *Eustace Diamonds*, and Emily Bronte's *Jane Eyre* will be examined by the roles accessories played in the stories. Gustave Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* and Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes* will be lightly discussed for the way accessories are perceived and thought of by male characters in their connection to female characters while Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* will offer further insight into the value and status accessories imbued.

## I. HISTORY OF FASHION ACCESSORIES AND THEIR FEMININITY

Many of the accessories used by women during the Victorian era were not of English origin. Due to the influence of the Empire, many of the established colonies under England's control had their culture—and more specifically their materials—borrowed by the English and adapted into their society and culture. Foreign items instantly became wanted, seen as “exotic” and “different” by those who could afford them. Their popularity was derived from their origin, and with that demand, these items spread across the country as the latest in style and fashion. As seen in Gaskell's *North and South*, which will be discussed later in more detail, Indian scarves were coveted by many women for both their foreign beauty and the emblem of status and wealth they projected (being pricy and in demand).<sup>15</sup>

Of the Victorian accessories greatly discussed in this essay, only the chatelaine had been an original European creation [plate 4]. While waist-hangers and their items, more aptly called equipages, were recorded as early as 2000 B.C., the usage of chatelaines as a fashion device for

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, *North and South*, (London: Penguin Group (USA), 1996, originally published in 1854), 5.

women began during England's early nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> It was in 1828 that the chatelaine was described as a jewelry piece for women, rather than as the original term, which meant 'mistress of the castle,' by the fashion magazine, *The World of Fashion*: "several ladies wear, attached to their girdles, a gold clasp, surmounted by a coronet, either that of a duke, a count, or a marquis. Beneath the crown is a ring from which is suspended a chain terminated by a cap; this cap supports three or four other chains, to every one of which is attached a gold key. The largest chain of gold is called *la Chatelaine*."<sup>17</sup> From then onward, the jewelry of chains and pendants was revived from early times, becoming a fashion statement throughout the entire nineteenth century, and evolving throughout the decades into grand pieces that would eventually turn from stylish to useful in the following era.



[Plate 4: Victoria and Albert Museum. Digital image. V&A Images. Accessed on October 27, 2016. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O115481/chatelaine-banks-durham-joseph/> © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.]

Unlike the chatelaine, the fan, the parasol, and gloves were all items that originated outside of Europe. As stated before, the reasons for these materials coming into England and fastening themselves to fashion was majorly due to the British Empire's heavy hands on the colonies they had claimed and from trading with the countries in which they ventured. The fan, a

<sup>16</sup> Genevieve E Cummins, Nerylla D Taunton, and Genevieve Cummin, *Chatelaines: Utility to Glorious Extravagance* (Norwich, United Kingdom: Antique Collectors' Club, 1994), 19.

<sup>17</sup> Cummins and Taunton, *Chatelaine*, 16.

prominent accessory, came to Europe from Asia during the latter half of the sixteenth century, as mentioned by Rhead in 1910.<sup>18</sup> Japanese fans were first noted as being made “of the primitive palm leaf or of feathers” and were called hand-screens.<sup>19</sup> It was in the late seventh century that the Japanese created the folding fan, made from bamboo, which resembled the fans that British ladies would later carry with them.<sup>20</sup> In the hands of the British, these fans would transform into ornate, sentimental fashion musts, created intricately with handmade decoration for the hands of delicate ladies. Unlike in Britain, fans in Japan were not coded by gender and there were many types of fans for various meanings and uses; for example, a courtier possessed an ‘*akome ogi*’ (court-fan), a bride received a fan as a gift of marriage, and “on his sixteenth birthday the Japanese youth attains his majority and receives a present of a fan.”<sup>21</sup>

Whereas fans were majorly from Japan, parasols were introduced through British settlement of India during the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> India was one of four places in the world (others being China, the Middle East, and Egypt) where the parasol was first glimpsed in history, imbuing the sun-shading accessory with symbolisms of “power, prestige and religion for more than 3000 years.”<sup>23</sup> Since their introduction into British culture, parasols have been a staple of fashion to those who could afford them, and not long after them came the more durable, and more masculine, umbrella.

One of the earliest examples of gloves comes from Egypt, in the tomb of Tutankhamen.<sup>24</sup> From an article on gloves written in the magazine *The Girl's Own Paper*, after

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<sup>18</sup> Avril Hart, Emma Taylor, and Albert Museum, *Fans* (New York: Quite Specific Media Group, 1998), 10.

<sup>19</sup> G. V. Rhead, *History of the Fan*: (London, 1910), 146, accessed August 26, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 147.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 152-158.

<sup>22</sup> Nigel Rodgers, *The Umbrella Unfurled: It's Remarkable Life and Times* (New York: Bene Factum Publishing, 2013) 16-17.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Mike Redwood, *Gloves and Glove-Making* (United Kingdom: Shire Publications, 2016) 6-7.

citing evidence from the Bible as well as mythology as to the early existence of gloves, the writer mentions that “on the old Egyptian monuments and portraits may be seen long gloves” and that they were assumed to have been “tributes from Asiatic peoples to the Pharaohs.”<sup>25</sup> The writer then goes on to say that eventually the gloves ended up in Rome, before noting that “it is quite possible that the Romans introduced the wearing of gloves into the country.”<sup>26</sup> Early records of glove-making in England date back to at least the fourteenth century, as noted by writer B. Eldred Ellis in 1921, by the first glovers guild in 1390.<sup>27</sup> Ellis also writes that in Perth, where the first glove-making guild resided, “a charter was granted them in 1406 by Robert III” and around 1464, “London glovers were granted arms by Edward IV.”<sup>28</sup>

All four of these accessories are undoubtedly coded as feminine in England by the Victorian era. Although items like the fan and parasol were used by both sexes in other cultures and countries, and even different time periods, during the nineteenth century they were feminine accessories. Besides masculine-cut gloves, men were not seen using parasols, chatelaines, or fans. Women were the ones seen with these items and were not often seen without them when they left the house, especially in the case of the parasol, fan, and feminine-styled gloves—all devices that covered a woman’s skin from the dangers of sunshine or filth. Chatelaines of the century were worn only by women, and eventually the styles evolved so that gloves, parasols, and even a fan could hang off a woman’s waist, which is discussed later in this essay.

While accessories like the fan, parasol, gloves (of the feminine style), and the chatelaine were coded as feminine during the nineteenth century, men still had their all-encompassing touch upon them. When looking at the manufacturing of these accessories, especially as the late end of

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<sup>25</sup> Emma Brewer, “All About Gloves,” *The Girl’s Own Paper*, 1892, 555.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> B. Eldred. Ellis, *Gloves and the Glove Trade* (London: Sir I. Pitman & Sons, 1921), 5, accessed August 26, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 5.

the era moved into industrialization (where products were mass-produced and eventually had less of the personal touch of, say, a woman painting fans), it is men who produced them. Even in jewelry making, men created the alluring pieces women coveted and bought. While women had painted upon fans, decorating the leaf with romantic pictures, it was a man's name or a man's company that took the credit for the creation. Scanning through the makers of various feminine accessories on the Victoria and Albert Museum's online collection, all bear a man's name. Three chatelaines, each one produced in a different year during the nineteenth century, bear a man's name as their maker: Matthew Boulton (1800), Joseph Banks Durham (1850), and Thomas Spall (1875).<sup>29</sup> Fans and parasols were much the same. For fans, Wyatt (1869), Bellini Ltd (1880s), and Francis Houghton (1880) were credited as makers.<sup>30</sup> There was one parasol with a maker's name (or rather two) on the Victoria and Albert Museum's online database, George Creak and Thomas Weeks in 1810.<sup>31</sup> Women were not seen as creators of their own accessories. Sometimes women were attributed to fans for their paintings, as discussed in the previous section, and when factories were on the rise, women amounted to "57 percent of factory workers... most of them under age 20."<sup>32</sup> They were "widely employed in all the textile industries, and constituted the majority of workers in cotton, flax, and silk," but they were never accredited for the work.<sup>33</sup> Women were not often recognized for their skills, in their attribution to the creation of these feminine materials.

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<sup>29</sup> accessed on April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78584/chatelaine-boulton-matthew/>; accessed on April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O115481/chatelaine-banks-durham-joseph/>; accessed on April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O113912/chatelaine-spall-thomas/>.

<sup>30</sup> accessed on April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O87109/the-triumph-of-love-fan-wyatt-matthew-digby/>; accessed on April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O126346/fan-and-box-rosie-haughton/>; accessed on April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O87268/fan-houghton-francis/>.

<sup>31</sup> accessed on April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O135240/parasol-creak-george/>.

<sup>32</sup> "Report from Dr. James Mitchell to the Central Board of Commissioners, respecting the Returns made from the Factories, and the Results obtained from them." *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1834 (167) XIX, as cited on <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/women-workers-in-the-british-industrial-revolution/>, accessed on December 3, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Men even had their own masculine forms of women's accessories. Instead of a parasol, men guarded themselves not from sun but from rain by the use of umbrellas. Men had their own style, cut, and cloth for gloves. Their gloves were neither embroidered with pretty designs nor made of fabrics like silk or netting; instead, theirs were often made of fine, tough leathers [plate 5]. While women had their chatelaines, with a multitude of charms hanging off the waist, men wore pocket watches, looping their chains across their waistcoats. It is to be noted that while women's accessories were used in ways such as concealment and flirtation, men's accessories were more practical while maintaining a stylish appeal of status—to tell time with a pocket watch, to protect oneself from ill climate, to modishly keep hands clean—and as Vickery states, to have the essence of intellectual and industrial progress, which was coded masculine in and of itself.<sup>34</sup>



[**Plate 5:** Victoria and Albert Museum. Digital image. V&A Images. Accessed on October 27, 2016. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77826/pair-of-gloves-fownes-brothers/> © **Victoria and Albert Museum, London.**]

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<sup>34</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 264.

## II. USES OF THE ACCESSORIES: CONCEALMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Society intended these fashion accessories to be superficial beautifiers, and in some cases, modifiers of modesty, covering up the skin of women, which parasols, gloves, and fans did quite sufficiently. Accessories perpetuated the virginal innocence of women while catering to imaginative sensuality by playing with coyness and flirtation, as well as the stereotypes and demands of society against the desires and budding agency of women.

Initially, parasols, gloves, and fans were all concealment accessories. Fans fluttered before faces, covering mouths, chins, and necks. Parasols covered a woman's body from the harsh rays of the sunshine—as white, clear skin was seen as most beautiful during the Victorian era. In the making of parasols, one process was called 'covering,' seen in a 1805 advertisement for Jane Grant and Son's Umbrella and Parasol Manufactory; parasols were "made, covered, and repaired" at the business.<sup>35</sup> Gloves not only covered women's hands from dirt, but they covered soft, pale skin from view and intimate touch.

These popular items covered women up, hid their skin from men's wandering eyes, and confined them to innocence. Skin was not shown; it was, much like femininity, controlled and condemned, by society. There was little skin revealed unless one was in the privacy of one's own home. Skin was prized, from its smoothness to its whiteness, and therefore "erotic"—something that women were not supposed to be, but what men dreamed them to be. Newspapers were full of advertisements catering to the protection and beauty of skin—by covering it up in gloves or cosmetic lotion. On April 14th in 1883, *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, a London paper, featured an advertisement that said "PARISIAN COSMETIC GLOVES

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<sup>35</sup> Advertisement in *The Hull Packet*, May 7, 1805.



will render them soft, white, and of beautiful appearance.”<sup>36</sup> The following year, in *The Morning Paper*, a classified advertisement targeted “ladies of fashion” by appealing to their skin:—“To Ladies of Fashion—Sunburn, redness, and light cutaneous affections are cured by marvelous Creme Simon. It whitens, softens, and fortifies the skin.”<sup>37</sup> Classified advertisements in major London papers directed toward the male populace were not as superficial. They did not promote beauty, and were straightforwardly written. Newspapers were full of these types of advertisements, short and blunt, offering items deemed masculine, all for male viewers. Although women read newspapers, they were almost entirely masculine, whereas magazines could, and would, pander exclusively to female readers.<sup>38</sup>

With concealment came the idea of perfectionism. Beauty was to be perfect. If femininity was to be seen as second-rate in society, women fashioned themselves to perfection, amassing some form of acceptance and recognition. Fashion accessories reflected these desires. Parasols kept skin pale, away from sunburns and tans, as the above newspaper advertisements alluded to. Gloves were purposefully pinched and positioned women’s hands into idealistic presentation. Blemishes, dried skin, and other imperfections of the skin were disguised while the shape and individuality of a woman’s hand were maintained in popular gloves, such as the delicate Milanaise silk gloves.<sup>39</sup> This type of concealment played with imagination and sensuality, in which women could create bodily perfections that were false, and men could ogle the thin boundary between modesty and indecent exposure, all while presenting the ideals of beauty and femininity.

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<sup>36</sup> Advertisement in *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, April 14, 1883.

<sup>37</sup> “To Ladies of Fashion”, *The Morning Post*, May 8, 1890.

<sup>38</sup> Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman’s Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Taylor and Francis Routledge), 1996), 8-10.

<sup>39</sup> William M. Smith, *Gloves, Past and Present*, (Sherwood Press, Incorporated, 1917), 109.

Accessories were often gifts between lovers, friends, and family. They were used for romance, as those special tokens of adoration. Jewelry, fans, and gloves were especially used as courtship gifts. Men purchased these items for their lovers. Fans were one of the most popular romantic gifts, and were given for both courtship and matrimony, throughout the centuries. In 1760, Horace Walpole received a letter from his friend Sir Horace Mann, who asked him to purchase fans as a gift to Countess Marianna Aciaoli's sister. Mann writes "I desired you to choose me four to six fans, the merit of which to consist more in the choice or oddity than in the cost. Chinese mounts or the imitation of them, rather tawdry than too plain."<sup>40</sup> Even earlier, Mann writes about fan gift-giving to women he admired. On May 15, 1742, Mann pens to Walpole, "I had before given the fans to the little Albizzi who sends you many thanks. . . Madame Galli I have not seen though I have been twice to give her the pins and fans."<sup>41</sup> Fans were frequent accessories given to women. Although these letters are from the middle of the Georgian era, fan gift-giving continued on throughout the next era as fans were considered romantic, fashionable gifts. A fan's value as a present would not diminish until fashion dictated it to no longer be a suitable and necessary accessory—and when women could be more vocal and acceptably coquettish in the public sphere, eliminating the need of the fan to play with and translate feminine desires without condemnation, which they received regardless through vindication of items in masculine cartoons and newspapers.

Fans embodied romance. Not only were they a favored gift, but they reflected romance through the artwork painted on the mounts of a fan. In collections at museums, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston,

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<sup>40</sup> "Yale Edition of Walpole's Correspondence," 2011, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://images.library.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/page.asp?vol=21&page=462&srch=fans>.

<sup>41</sup> "Yale Edition of Walpole's Correspondence," 2011, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://images.library.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/page.asp?vol=17&page=416&srch=albizzi>.

Massachusetts, there are a multitude of fans dedicated to love. Painted delicately on a fan's mount were depictions of romantic scenes. A fan titled 'Triumph of Love,' made in England in 1868 by Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt, was a gift for his wife, and its mount depicts an allegory of love with cherubs and a woman. Upon the fan are the words 'For Love is Heaven and Heaven is Love.'<sup>42</sup> A French fan's mount from 1880 reveals the scene in the romantic fairy tale Cinderella where Cinderella is fitted with the shoe and reunited with her prince [plate 6]. A British fan, made also in 1880, painted in mostly blacks and whites, shows two lovers nestled together by the lake under the glow of the moonlight.<sup>43</sup> Romantic scenes painted upon fans encompassed the desires and courtship embedded within lovers' hearts.



[Plate 6: Museum of Fine Arts. Digital image. MFA collections. Accessed on April 14, 2016. <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/fan-121648> © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. ]

Other fans were less abstract in meaning. Some depicted scenes of matrimony, both of martial agreements and matrimonial preparations. Gifts of matrimony, fans reflected the joining

<sup>42</sup> "The Triumph of Love | Wyatt, Matthew Digby | V&A Search the Collections," April 14, 2016, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O87109/the-triumph-of-love-fan-wyatt-matthew-digby/>.

<sup>43</sup> "Fan | V&A Search the Collections," December 3, 2016, accessed December 3, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O126335/fan-unknown/>.

of two lives, two families. One French fan, just ten years shy of the nineteenth century, featured a painted scene of a groom and his bride with their two families joined together in the middle of the mount.<sup>44</sup> Fans could even be tokens acquired by participating in or attending weddings. At the Victoria and Albert Museum, there is a small bridesmaid's fan fit for a child, and it had "been a wedding favour for a bridesmaid at a 1887 ceremony."<sup>45</sup> The delicate, small fan provides further insight on just how much romance and matrimony was embedded within the fashion accessory [plate 7]. Fans were used for romance, as instruments of flirtation—which I will discuss further in the next section, as material gestures of love and desire.



[Plate 7: Victoria and Albert Museum. Digital image. V&A Images. Accessed on April 14, 2016. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O146193/bridesmaids-fan-unknown/> © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.]

Jewelry was a beloved gift as well. According to Margaret Flower, "Victorians liked jewellery; they were pleased to see it and delighted in wearing it."<sup>46</sup> Queen Victoria herself adored jewelry, and urged friends to wear brooches and necklaces by the gifts she bestowed upon them. She was known for jewelry gift-giving throughout her reign. One precipitant of her jewelry

<sup>44</sup> "Fan | V&A Search the Collections," December 3, 2016, accessed December 3, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O87193/fan-unknown/>.

<sup>45</sup> "Bridesmaid's Fan | V&A Search the Collections," April 14, 2016, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O146193/bridesmaids-fan-unknown/>.

<sup>46</sup> Margaret Flower, *Victorian Jewellery* (South Brunswick: A. S. Barnes, 1973), 3.

gifts was Florence Nightingale. During the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale was known for being the “Superintendent of the Female Nursing Establishment,” commanding a team of nurses to tend to wounded soldiers.<sup>47</sup> Her job had been unprecedented, because “no woman had previously been employed to nurse wounded soldiers.”<sup>48</sup> Managing her staff of able nurses, Nightingale created a better, cleaner environment for the injured and effectively established modern nursing by her dedicated and efficient caretaking.<sup>49</sup>

In her letter to Florence Nightingale in 1856, Queen Victoria writes “I need hardly repeat to you how warm my admiration is for your services, which are fully equal to those of my dear and brave soldiers, whose sufferings you have had the privilege of alleviating in so merciful a manner. I am, however, anxious of marking my feelings in a manner which I trust will be agreeable to you, and therefore send you with this letter a brooch, the form and emblems of which commemorate your great and blessed work, and which, I hope, you will wear as a mark of the high approbation of your Sovereign!”<sup>50</sup> To thank Florence Nightingale for her efforts in the war, Queen Victoria sent her jewelry; Nightingale became one of many who the Queen sent jewelry to as a gift. The brooch was designed by Prince Albert: “the Royal initials at the centre of the St George's Cross are surmounted by a crown from which gold rays spread out on to the white enamel at the back of the cross, representing the glory of England. The ribbon which ties the stems of the green enamel palms which frame the brooch is the pale blue colour of the ribbon of the Crimea medal, and the three diamond stars surmounting the whole represent the 'light of heaven shed upon the labours of Mercy, Peace and Charity, in connection with the glory of the

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<sup>47</sup>Elspeth Huxley, *Florence Nightingale* (London: Chancellor Press, 1975), 71.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 72-89.

<sup>50</sup> “Queen Victoria’s Letters”, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24780/24780-h/24780-h.htm#pageii.123>.

Nation' ."<sup>51</sup> In a way, Queen Victoria's brooch can be seen as the equivalent of a medal rewarded to soldiers, but in this case, something altogether feminine [plate 8].



[Plate 8: National Army Museum. Digital image. Accessed November 13, 2016. <http://www.nam.ac.uk>]

It is worth noting that, despite receiving such an honor by Queen Victoria, Nightingale did not care much for her brooch and the recognition that came with it. Cecil Woodham-Smith says that "Miss Nightingale was not gratified: praise, popularity, prints, jewels left her unmoved."<sup>52</sup> In July of that year, Nightingale writes "My own effigies and praises are less welcome. I do not affect indifference towards real sympathy, but I have felt painfully, the more painfully since I have had time to hear it, the *éclat* which has given to this adventure of mine."<sup>53</sup> Gifts, even from the Queen herself, were not always wanted by the receivers.

Jewelry was intimately exchanged between lovers. While jewelry was used for a multitude of reasons—friendship, fashion, power, prestige, beauty—it was also often used for sentiment. Locketts and miniatures were important sentimental jewelry pieces during the nineteenth century. When jewelry woven with hair went out of style, "most gold brooches and

<sup>51</sup> Charlotte Gere, *Victorian Jewellery Design* (London: HarperCollins Distribution Services, 1972), 243.

<sup>52</sup> Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Florence Nightingale: 1820-1910*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 164.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 164-165.

pendants still had a little glass box at the back in which a lock of hair could be kept."<sup>54</sup> In 1825, Anne Lister exchanged lockets with her lover Marianna. Within the pages of her diary, Anne Lister records the romantically significant moment, writing "Marianna put me on a new watch riband & then cut the hair from her own queer & I that from mine, which she put each into each of the little lockets we got at Bright's this morning, twelve shillings each, for us always to wear under our clothes in mutual remembrance. We both of us kissed each bit of hair before it was put into the locket."<sup>55</sup> Many Victorian lovers secreted hair or portraits within lockets, keeping their beaus close to their hearts. For some, like Anne Lister, love could continue on and be remembered through the kissed hair clasped within little, gold lockets. Others, like Queen Victoria, had her family as miniatures linked together into a stylish bracelet, and used much in the same way, for sweet sentimental reasons.<sup>56</sup>



[Plate 9: One of Queen Victoria's miniature family bracelets. Royal Collection. Digital image. Accessed on October 27, 2016. <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk>. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017.]

Chatelaines, the use of which evolved over time as women gained increasing agency, were considered to be favorable jewelry gifts. *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* featured a piece dedicated to praising the chatelaine as the perfect gift in 1868, "One of the most approved New Year's gifts this winter has doubtless been the Pampadour chatelaine in gold of several tints, inlaid with pearls, turquoises, or garnets. The mounting is rich and artistic. One

<sup>54</sup> Flower, *Victorian Jewellery*, 9.

<sup>55</sup> Helena Whitbread, *No Priest but Love: Excerpts from the Diaries of Anne Lister, 1824-1826* (United States: New York University Press, 1993), 131.

<sup>56</sup> Flower, *Victorian Jewellery*, 9.

would think it was a long-forgotten jewel found by chance in some corner of the Palace at Versailles or Marly."<sup>57</sup> Beautiful and ornate, the chatelaine made for lovely sentimental gifts to women. Jewelry of the era often had romantic words inscribed within the metal, often with pronounces of love and faith, between lovers or family members. One of the many items that hung from a chatelaine was a watch. Often watches were cushioned by watch paper, advertisements of the makers, and sometimes "expressed messages of love—sometimes with just a bow and arrow, or else a specific message: 'Love will find a way.'"<sup>58</sup> Like locket and miniatures, they possessed sentimentality and were used as gifts, both romantic and otherwise.

Parasols were also given as gifts to ladies, as they were seen as popular and necessary accessories to wear when outside of the house—stemming from the underlying racial tones of the era where pale, clear, white skin was seen as most beautiful, and women, once in public, needed protection, or rather to be covered from the rest of society. Parasol gift-giving is seen in Gustave Flaubert's 1869 novel, *Sentimental Education*. The protagonist, Frederick contemplates a gift in which to give to assuage "his awkwardness" and although he does not mull over a gift to represent romantic intentions, parasols are seen as an obvious gift of femininity. Flaubert writes "In any case, he would have to give Madame Arnoux a present on her name-day: and he naturally thought of a parasol to make up for his clumsiness. He happened to find a marquise sunshade in dove-coloured shot silk, with a little handle of carved ivory, which had just come from China" alluding to the particular gift as being one that is commonplace for women to

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<sup>57</sup> *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, as cited in Cummins and Taunton, *Chatelaines*, 86.

<sup>58</sup> Cummin and Taunton, *Chatelaines*, 260.



receive, especially in the significant way in which Frederick “naturally” thought of a parasol first.<sup>59</sup> As seen in Flaubert’s novel, parasols are associated with femininity.

### III. COMMUNICATING STATUS AND WEALTH

Accessories were also used to denote wealth and status. Before the mass production of these items, which caused fashion to be more readily available and less costly to all social classes, they were visible indicators of prestige and prosperity. Displaying costly jewels that sparkled around the neck, being shaded under a canopy of the finest ribbons, frills, and lace, or fanning oneself with a hand-painted fan inlaid with gold on its guard and had ivory sticks, a woman outwardly possessed status and wealth, becoming a manifestation of these qualities to the public eye and sphere.

Showing off one’s wealth was important to women of the elite. Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* reveals this importance and desire in the beginning of her novel, when Margaret is with her mother’s family celebrating her cousin’s lofty betrothal. As Margaret’s aunt boasts of the rich shawls she has given her daughter, one of the guests, Mrs. Gibson, says, “Helen had set her heart upon an Indian shawl, but really when I found what an extravagant price was, I obliged to refuse her. She will be quite envious when she hears of Edith having Indian shawls. What kind are they? Delhi? With the lovely little borders?”<sup>60</sup> The Victoria and Albert Museum has a few Delhi shawls on their online collection, showing what the patterned shawls the ladies in *North and South* had been discussing so desirously looked like [plate 10]. The scene not only

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<sup>59</sup> Gustave Flaubert and Robert Baldick, *Sentimental Education*, ed. Geoffrey Wall (London, England: Penguin Group (USA), 2004, originally published in 1869) 88.

<sup>60</sup>Gaskell, *North and South*, 5.

speaks of imperialism and all that encompasses it, but of women's desire to be presented and seen as upper class, as above normal social standing—a role they, as women in their femininity, could not ascend to easily in a society dominated by men and their overbearing masculinity. It was also the culture, in which those of higher social status were regarded far better than those of lower standing, and where emulation of the upper class trickled down through the lower, as seen with Queen Victoria's impact on fashion, for example.



[Plate 10: Victoria and Albert Museum. Digital image. V&A Images. Accessed on October 27, 2016. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O477146/shawl-unknown/> © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.]

In another literary example, Anthony Trollope's *Eustance Diamonds* revolves around a diamond necklace and the possession of it. Sir Florian Eustace bestows his family heirloom, the Eustace Diamonds, upon his wife, Lizzie, for one romantic evening. When he dies not long after, Lizzie is determined to keep the jewelry to herself; it is not for wearing that she wants them, but simply to have them in her own possession.<sup>61</sup> She firmly believes they are rightly hers, since her late husband had given them to her one evening for a party. This causes the Eustace family and their lawyer to fight Lizzie for the diamond necklace, claiming the rights of the jewelry as

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<sup>61</sup> Anthony Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds* (London: Penguin Books, 2004, originally published in 1871), 80-83.

belonging to the Eustace family: “they are appanages of the family which should not be in your hands as the widow of the late baronet, and they constitute an amount of property which certainly cannot be alienated from the family without inquiry or right.”<sup>62</sup> The necklace was not a gift which late Sir Florian could have legally given away (nor did he give them to her permanently); the Eustace family’s lawyer, Mr Camperdown, emphasizes this point by saying that “it represents an amount of property that shouldn’t and couldn’t be made over legally without some visible evidence of transfer.”<sup>63</sup>

Trollope’s delightful novel is all about the Eustace heirloom, covering the constant battle between the Eustace family and Lizzie for its possession. Like many pricey fashion accessories, such as diamonds and jewelry, the Eustace diamonds are seen as an emblem of status and wealth. Imbued with these qualities, the jewelry signified to everyone else that the family was of great status and power. The diamond necklace was coveted for its wealth, costing quite a fortune—“as they were supposed to be worth 10,000 pounds.”<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, although Lizzie is not what Trollope would ever call a heroine, being maliciously cunning, perpetually greedy, and a renowned liar, the story can be seen as a struggle between femininity and masculinity; a female fights for the rights of a fashion accessory from the men who want to take the very item away from her and, with it, its precious symbol of status and wealth.

Fashion and materials held great visual information, as indicators of high-class qualities. In the eighteenth century, Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, used “her accumulation of wealth and her deployment of material possessions to secure her ambitions.”<sup>65</sup> She accessorized

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>65</sup> Marcia Pointon, “MATERIAL MANOEUVRES: SARAH CHURCHILL, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH AND THE POWER OF ARTEFACTS,” *Art History* 32, no. 3 (June 2009), doi:10.1111/j.1467-8365.2009.00682.x., 486.

her family members in desirable, precious jewelry to ensnare attention, bestowed rich jewels as grand gifts, and artificially created a sense of status and power, politically and financially, in which to participate in the public sphere.<sup>66</sup> Much like Lizzie from *Eustace Diamonds*, Sarah Churchill played with the aspect of heirlooms as communicative power. Pointon states that “by purchasing jewels we presume that she was building heirlooms—that is, precious things that are alienable and only available for use during a subject’s lifetime.”<sup>67</sup> Jewelry was a way of presenting wealth outwardly, upon the neck, ears, wrists, and, for the chatelaine, waists, but also by the accumulation and distribution, such as gift-giving. In this way, women, realistic and fictional, gained agency within the public sphere by imbuing themselves with prestige.

Diamonds again play a role in power and wealth. Similar to *The Eustace Diamonds*, in which diamonds and heirlooms significantly denote status in society, Charlotte Brontë’s famous *Jane Eyre* makes such commentary. After Mr. Rochester’s proposal to Jane Eyre, he begins to affectionately tease her. One of Mr. Rochester’s comments is “This morning I wrote to my banker in London to send me certain jewels he has in his keeping—heirlooms for the ladies of Thornfield. In a day or two I hope to pour them into your lap: for every privilege, every attention shall be yours.”<sup>68</sup> But when Jane objects, not at all comfortable “clad in a court-lady’s robe” due to her lower station, Mr. Rochester continues on by teasing, “I will myself put the diamond chain around your neck, and the circlet on your forehead—which it will become: for nature, at least, has stamped her patent of nobility on this brow, Jane; and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings.”<sup>69</sup> This scene is indicative of the way

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 493.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre (Penguin English Library)* (London: Penguin Classics, 2012, originally published in 1847), 293.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 294.

fashions were importantly class-restrictive. Her ascension to ladyship gave her access to jewelry heirlooms, to further project her new status and the wealth of her husband's family. It was only natural that an upper-class woman would wear glittering diamonds, sleeves of bracelets, and a dainty accumulation of precious rings.

During the late nineteenth century, as industrialization, mass production, and shopping spheres grew, there was less distinction between the classes. Outfits could no longer offer a visible indication of one's status and wealth in society—not when middle-class men and women were able to actually afford dressing in the latest and popular styles thanks to the emergence of mass production. Since items and materials could be produced in greater amounts, and for much cheaper, clothing that had once been considered too expensive and of a high-class nature was then enjoyed by those lower in the hierarchy. There was a greater sense of accessibility, to these rich and coveted materials. Lori Anne Loeb states that “advertisers perceived middle-class women as the agents of material acquisition.”<sup>70</sup> Women made up a large number of consumers; in buying their dresses, their underclothes, and their multitude of accessories from hats to fans, women melded together into one collective feminine group, rather than women of separate groups denoting affluence and status. Also playing a large part in this blind social cohesion during this time was the increased income for the middle class, which allowed this group of people to seek out the material comforts and leisure that had been previously monetarily out of reach.<sup>71</sup> It was an age of materialism and consumerism in which most classes were actively and addictively participative in—most notably women.

As societal classes started to blur, and easy identifiers lost, panic erupted, especially within those of the upper class. After years of cloth, cut and style presenting wealth, where man

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<sup>70</sup> Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

and woman dressed to their means of status, there was suddenly fear of mingling, communicating, and befriending those beneath their lofty statuses because everyone was cloaked in homogenous clothing—much like the way identities are lost to the sea of concealment with masks at a debauched masquerade ball. Age old social barriers were breaking and the change, as changes always are, was scary for many people, especially those of a more snobbish and compartmental mentality. It soon became something of an identity crisis.

This prevalent fear about class and clothing is seen in an 1888 *Punch* cartoon drawn by George Du Maurier titled 'The Old Order Changeth' [plate 11]. In it, a man and a woman are talked about social order. The man, named Todeson, says to the duchess, "Fact is society's gettin' much too mixed, duchess. It's not amusin', after spendin' a pleasant evenin', to find you've been hobnobbin' with a shopkeeper, or sittin' next his wife at dinner, you know!"<sup>72</sup> The duchess' s response to Todeson is "Oh, dear me! Why my husband's a shopkeeper, Mr Todeson. He keeps that great bric-a-brac warehouse in Conduit Street! - And the toy-shop at the corner, that's mine! - And the confectioner over the way, that's my mother, the Duchess of Hautcastel!"<sup>73</sup> The image is straightforward in its societal commentary, revealing that *Punch* illustrators, like Maurier, and as such much of society, were very aware of the fashion identity crisis being prevalently experienced, which dredged up the long-standing pernicious aspects of snobbism and classism ingrained within British culture for centuries.

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<sup>72</sup> "George Du Maurier Cartoons from Punch Magazine," accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.punch.co.uk/>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



[Plate 11: Punch. Digital image. Galleries. Accessed on October 20, 2016.  
[http://www.punch.co.uk/.](http://www.punch.co.uk/)]

#### IV. SENSUALITY OF FEMININE ACCESSORIES BY EROTICISM AND BY PLAY

In addition to all the things in which accessories were used for, language was a key element that reflected emotions and desires, as well as evoking flirtatious play between beaux in public. The language of accessories have been documented in etiquette books and magazines of the era, explaining the ways in which the slight tilt or flutter of an item could mean a certain message. A New Zealand newspaper, dubbed the *Taranaki Herald*, published a multitude of short guides pertaining to fashion accessory etiquette and flirtation on January 9<sup>th</sup> in 1891. Following these guides, if a woman wanted to let someone know that she wished to be

acquainted, she could hold her gloves “with tips downward.”<sup>74</sup> With a parasol, she could tell someone to follow her by “carrying closed in left hand, by side” or by quickly opening and shutting a fan, she was letting the other know that they “are cruel.”<sup>75</sup> For each accessory, the newspaper explains at least ten different positions that all speak of various messages that may be conveyed between two people aware of the signs. All these visual messages revolve around romantic notions, further imbuing these items with a sense of sentiment, and by which women could then enact their passionate plays in a sweetly subtle way.

Magazines’ stories reflected this idea of language through accessories as well. In the first volume in 1866 of *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, the story “Familiar Lines,” described the character Sally as “the belle of the county” and at a parties, she had the habit of exercising flirtations through looks, flowers, cards, and would “loungue herself on a velvet couch and fan herself with a scented fan.”<sup>76</sup> Within an 1882 issue of *The Lady’s Treasury* is “An Eccentric Marriage,” with a scene in which the main character, Dolores, tries to gain the attention of her aloof husband with flirtations advised by her old lady governess, Mrs. Ray. One of the flirtation devices Mrs. Ray recommends is the use of the fan, in which Dolores describes the hopeful scene: “Then Mrs. Ray placed in my hands a fan of ivory and black lace, and made me pace to and fro in the room, fanning myself as I did so. I heard her murmur under her breath: ‘Exact, exact—He must be satisfied now.’ Then when she had minutely inspected every detail of my dress, she led the way downstairs to the door of the great-drawing room.”<sup>77</sup> Flirtatious fans were the most prominent accessory written about in these magazines.

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<sup>74</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, January 09, 1891.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* .. (London: S.O. Beeton, 1866), 82, accessed July 26, 2016.

<sup>77</sup> *The Ladies' Treasury: An Illustrated Magazine of Entertaining Literature, Poetry, Fine Art and Education, Domestic Economy, Needlework and Fashion* (London: Publisher Not Identified, 1866), 682, accessed July 26, 2016.



Inside the same issue of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, another story series called "Heart Errant," makes mention of accessories and body language: "Mrs Conroy continued, 'and it was at least decided that *I* should, since the interesting pair have not yet dined with us. And, Hilda, as it is an entirely family meeting, you may have a place at the table,' she concluded, furling her white silk parasol in high good-humour."<sup>78</sup> While this story does not include accessories being used in romantic or flirtation language, the woman, Mrs. Conroy, is still using her accessory to express her rather favorable feelings. Accessories were then appendages of the body, and given to an array of body language, from that of sensuality to expressions of various emotions being felt by the wearer.

This idea of body language, sensual and not, is seen in Anthony Trollope's *Doctor Thorne*, when the squire's son, Frank, is pestered by his aunt Lady de Courcy to try and woo the rich heiress Miss Dunstable. As the party moved to the drawing room for conversation after dinner, "his aunt, as she passed him, touched his arm lightly with her fan, so lightly that the action was perceived by no one else. But Frank well understood the meaning of the touch, and appreciated the approbation which it conveyed. He merely blushed at his own dissimulation; for he felt more certain than ever that he would never marry Miss Dunstable, and he felt nearly equally sure that Miss Dunstable would never marry him."<sup>79</sup> By subtle use of her fan, Lady de Courcy is able to silently communicate her wishes to Frank; her meaning with the fan to be a coaxing toward the pursuit of love-making with Miss Dunstable, a complex subject of romance and wealth. When Miss Dunstable leaves the de Courcy castle and Frank has given up trying to pursue her for the sake of her fortune and his aunt, Lady de Courcy again uses her fan to communicate silently with her nephew: "Then once again the aunt tapped her nephew with her

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<sup>78</sup> *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 323.

<sup>79</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Doctor Thorne* (London: Penguin books, 1994, originally published in 1858) 162.

fan. He looked up in her face, and his look was enough to tell her that the acres of Greshamsbury were not to be reclaimed by the Ointment of Lebanon.”<sup>80</sup> The fan is a tool of communication, whether by use of sensual situations or by private desires not for ears, as is the case for Lady de Courcy, conveying her questions of possible matrimony to Frank without a word spoken to be overheard.

Gloves gave off a sense of sensuality and eroticism. According to Willard M. Smith in his book on glove history, *Gloves, Past and Present*, published in 1917, he recalls “a novel by William Black, in which the guileless heroine all unconsciously captivates the hero the first time he sets eyes on her, by the graceful, ladylike manner in which she draws on and fastens her gloves.”<sup>81</sup> Fabrics and materials of accessories lent themselves to sensuality. Smith mentions in his glove book that “the glistening silk itself is peculiarly seductive, at the same time that it delights the wearer with its luxurious and cleanly contact.”<sup>82</sup> Many evening gloves were made of lace. In 1834, women wore “long black silk net mittens for evening dresses,” and two years later, during 1836, the popular style of evening gloves were “long black lace with ribbon edging” as stated in C. Willett Cunnington’s book, *English Women’s Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*.<sup>83</sup> These styles would later evolve into evening gloves that were half lace or netting and half kid glove, in a long-length style that went up to the elbows. Although originating in France, a pair of gloves from around 1880 to 1900 in the V&A Museum online collections, displays the hybrid evening glove style, being half net half leather [plate 12]. The cause of the style’s popularity was due to them being “cheaper than full leather gloves, easier to pull on and allowed a greater

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 208.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Gloves, Past and Present*, 29.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>83</sup> Willett C. Cunnington, *English Women’s Clothing in the Nineteenth Century: A Comprehensive Guide with 1, 117 Illustrations* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991), 114, 117.

variety of colour and decoration.”<sup>84</sup> These gloves of netting and lace were as sensual as they were popular. The gaps of flesh seen through delicate netting and lace teased soft, pale flesh to the viewer. They were seemingly far more intimate than their leather and satin.



[**Plate 12:** Victoria and Albert Museum. Digital image. V&A Images. Accessed on October 20, 2016. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O135231/pair-of-gloves-unknown/> © **Victoria and Albert Museum, London.**]

Notice how the evening gloves were often fashionably long, from hand to elbow, and even sometimes a touch longer. In the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* of 1866, a fashion article states that “gloves reach up as high, comparatively, on the arm as the fashionable boots on the leg.”<sup>85</sup> Two passages in 1882 *Ladies' Treasury* make mention of these gloves: “A black velvet band, or bracelet is then worn on the upper part of the arm above the elbow; and high gloves finish the rest of the arm covering” and “square bodice, no sleeves, but gloves covering

<sup>84</sup> “Pair of Gloves | V&A Search the Collections,” accessed October 20, 2016, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O135231/pair-of-gloves-unknown/>.

<sup>85</sup> *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 222.

the elbows.”<sup>86</sup> Long gloves accentuated the shape and curve of the arms. They amplified the attractive lines of the arm; from the covered part to the bit of arm and shoulder exposed, drawing eyes from the gloves to the flesh revealed.

Attraction due to the combination of accessory and its fabric is mentioned in Thomas Hardy’s *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. There is a sense of sensuality in the character Mrs. Swancourt’s critical description to Elfride, of the fashionable aristocratic ladies around them: “the satin of the parasol invariably matching the complexion of the face beneath it, yet seemingly by an accident, which makes the thing so attractive.”<sup>87</sup> While Mrs. Swancourt is coaxed by Elfride to say something of praise about the beautiful ladies after speaking both cynically and critically of them, the chosen diction is that of a sensual nature, in connection to parasols, ladies, and the fabric used in canvassing the popular sun-shading devices.

When looking at the materials that made up parasols in the nineteenth century—fabrics such as colorful cloth and silk and decorated with fetching lace, ribbons and tassels—it is not hard to see the sensual nature in which they represented, through ladies’ tastes in ‘dainty and delicate,’ of which their sex was often perceived to be and thus was eroticized by many men. The shiny silk and satin are set off by the glimmer of the sun, capturing attention by the bright reflections. In an 1882 issue of *The Ladies’ Treasury*, it is said that parasols are made of “satin, pongee, and watered silk, and are lined with bright tinted silk, and trimmed with coloured lace, embroidery, and brightly colored ribbon.”<sup>88</sup> In another article dedicated to fashion within the same issue year, parasols “should be of the same material as the dress. Otherwise, they are mostly of satin, edged with lace, and a bunch of flowers and ribbons at the top. The most dressy

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<sup>86</sup> *Ladies’ Treasury*, 404, 105.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London, United Kingdom: Wordsworth Editions, 1995, originally published in 1873), 155.

<sup>88</sup> *The Ladies’ Treasury*, 408.

parasols are entirely covered with frills of lace, but have still the flowers and ribbons at the top.”<sup>89</sup> The adornments can be seen as eye-catchers, attracting the eyes of men by the swinging of tassels or in the drapery of fine lace. Decorated as such, parasols were not only devices in which to hide from bright sunlight, or to be sheltered within the public sphere, but also as overt flirtatious extensions of women, allowing them control of their beauty and sensuality in this way.

Fans were made up of similar material to the parasols. In 1882, fans “are of lace, satin, or feathers, for evening wear, with handles as rich and rare as they can be made.”<sup>90</sup> Almost two decades later, feather-fans were still as popular with ladies, as seen in the newspaper, *The Graphic*, on November 6, 1897. In this particular issue is an advertisement by The Association of Diamond Merchants, Jewellers, and Silversmiths with illustrations of their jewelry goods, and included in the array of jewelry drawings is an ostrich-feather fan of fifteen inches long [plate 13]. Underneath the drawing of the feather-fan is a list of variations of fans available by the Association with their prices, such as “Black on Shell,” “White on Pearl,” “Superior Fans,” and “Marabout Mouchete Fans.”

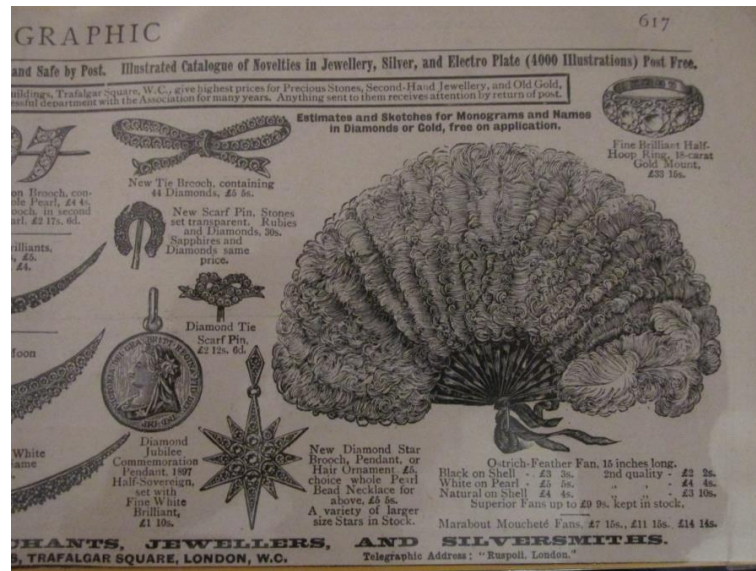
Even in America, where England’s fashions were being emulated, feather-fans were particularly popular with ladies. In a January 1884 issue of Peterson’s Magazine, a fashion article states that “fans are now carried of more moderate size, those of ostrich-feathers and tortoise-shell mountings being still the most popular...” and that “feather-fans, in ever grade of elegance, are all the rage.”<sup>91</sup> While there were fans with painted figures and flowers to depict feelings of sweet romance, feather-fans, especially those of ostrich, were more sensual in nature. Feathers are highly sensory; they evoke the sense of touch with the way they feel against the skin—soft, caressing, ticklish. The way they feel against the skin is playful and flirtatious.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 284.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 284.

<sup>91</sup> *Peterson's Magazine*, v. 85-86, January 1, 1884 (Philadelphia, 1884), 566, accessed July 27, 2016.



[Plate 13: *The Graphic*. November 6, 1897. From author's collection.]

Chatelaines, too, had their own special way of being made sensual. They were jewelry pieces that caught attention by their anatomy—a variety of trinkets dangling off the waist by long, dainty chains, making jingling, distracting noises as women moved. Made of steel, silver and gold, they, like many jewelry, attracted gaze by colors that illuminated the skin and gave the distinction of wealth and status. Even a chatelaine's location, at the waist and hip, are areas often seen as sensuous, drawing attention and sexual attraction by its placement. The flirtatious perception of chatelaines is seen in *The Natural History of the Flirt* by Albert Smith in 1848 where he dedicates half a chapter to the jewelry. Smith describes the chatelaine of the nineteenth-century as “lightly forged and imitated in sparkling steel chains, with everything annexed that could be thought of for a want.”<sup>92</sup> He then goes on, with a more poetic and romantic language, to write that “young hearts throbbed against it, making the lights flash from its polished facets at every pulsation: or, at times, the breath of low sweet words, whispered over it, and full of

<sup>92</sup> Albert Smith, *The Natural History of the Flirt* (n.p., 1848), <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=s5SAAAAAAAJ&rdid=book--s5SAAAAAAAJ&rdot=1>, 53.

meaning, dulled its lustre. Elsewise, too, the language, instead of coming from withered lips, was spoken by floating youthful eyes.”<sup>93</sup> Smith even mentions that flirts would use the chatelaine as a means of gaining long conversation with a lady, inquiring about the meaning of every pendant attached to the chatelaine.<sup>94</sup> Women could then use their chatelaine charms to quite literally charm men.

## V. FEMININITY AND FASHIONS UNDER CRITICISM

Although men were often active participants in the subtle flirtations women played with, many were actually none too pleased by the accessories themselves. Their ire was visually recorded in the infamous *Punch* cartoons and in rather biting opinion articles found in various newspapers of the time. While much of *Punch*'s cartoons are snide commentaries on society and famous figures, there is an unfortunate amount of images focused on women's fashions alone, as what can be seen of *Punch*'s online database.

There is a *Punch* cartoon drawn in 1852 that is the summation of the nineteenth-century masculine attitude toward a woman's mind [plate 14]. Pictured are two women, one telling the other that she was unable to sleep all night because she was tortured by thoughts of fashion—“Why, I don't know whether to have my new merino flock violet or dark blue!”<sup>95</sup> Evidently, if she was not busy in her role of domestic wife and care-giver of children, then she was wasting time thinking of foolish “feminine” thoughts. It is also worth mentioning that behind the two women is a decorative birdcage, which could further symbolize women's trapped sense of space, confined to the home, to the domestic sphere. Women's role of domesticity is seen in an image

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 53-54.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>95</sup> “John Leech Cartoons from Punch Magazine,” accessed October 21, 2016, <http://www.punch.co.uk/>.

titled 'Husband-Taming' from 1859 [plate 15]. In the picture, the roles are reversed for the sexes; women in riding outfits (one even has a riding crop or whip, and are seen as 'tamers') are standing before a scene of domesticity, where a man wearing an apron holds up a baby as crowds of women watch him as though he is an exotic specimen to marvel. Shifting the roles to reflect real life in the nineteenth century, women are ogled at by men, and are the primary care-givers and household maintainers while the men control, for the most part, the outside scene, the public sphere, with a sense of intellect, pride, and scientific progression.



**AN AFFAIR OF IMPORTANCE.**

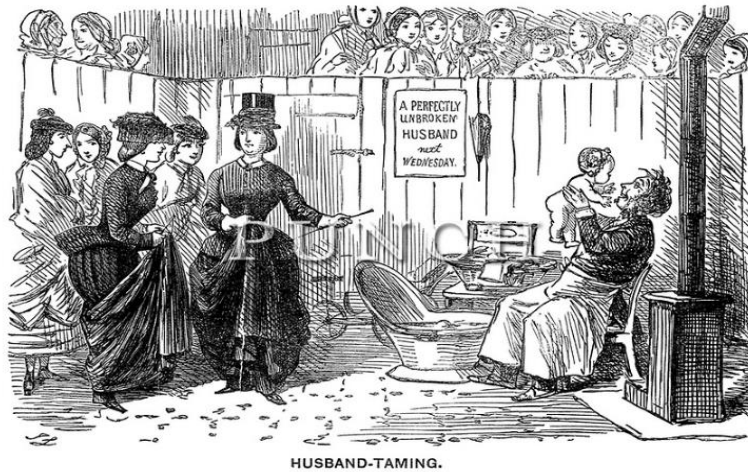
*Harriet.* "OH! I'M SO GLAD YOU ARE COME, BLANCHE! I HAVE BEEN SO PERPLEXED I COULD HARDLY SLEEP ALL NIGHT."

*Blanche.* "WELL! WHAT IS IT, DEAR?"

*Harriet.* "WHY, I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO HAVE MY NEW MERINO FROCK VIOLET OR DARK BLUE!"

[Plate 14: Punch. Digital image. Galleries. Accessed on October 21, 2016. [http://www.punch.co.uk/.](http://www.punch.co.uk/)]





[Plate 15: Punch. Digital image. Galleries. Accessed on October 27, 2016. <http://www.punch.co.uk/>.]

As mentioned above, women were stuck, locked in the compartment that society had made for females (and, naturally, their femininity). If they were feminine, they were stereotyped and disregarded; if they were masculine, they were ridiculed and misunderstood. A cartoon from 1852 makes fun of women cross-dressing, donning masculine clothing, for which they have no acceptance in doing—and is quite obviously seen as a fashion faux pas, a hilarious disaster [plate 16]. The drawing is of a woman dressed in both masculine and feminine clothing, and after the other woman in the picture comments on her “pretty waistcoat,” she responds with “Yes, dear. It belongs to my brother Charles. When he goes out of town, he puts me on the free list, as he calls it of his wardrobe. Isn’t he kind?”<sup>96</sup> It is a biting remark on women’s confined space of gender and sexuality norms, with the woman in the drawing appearing proud of her androgynous attire. Women were not allowed to be men—they cannot imbue themselves with masculine clothes or accessories, and yet they were not allowed to be women either—for to be feminine was something “lesser,” and of performing the life paved out for them by masculine society, as

<sup>96</sup> “John Leech Cartoons from Punch Magazine,” accessed October 21, 2016, <http://www.punch.co.uk/>.

players condemned to be mocked by the very ways society deemed acceptable for their “gentler” sex. Another *Punch* cartoon, drawn a year later in 1853, continues to portray this inferiority between the sexes; two older women are apprehending a masculine-clad young woman for her outfit, and the caption on the *Punch* website says, “The Ladies of the Creation; Or, how I was cured of being a strong-minded woman. The Arrest by Bailiffs. - "And serve her right too - extravagance in a man is, in some degree, excuseable, for he knows no better - but, in a woman, it quite unpardonable.”<sup>97</sup> As the caption suggests, a woman should not be seen as “strong-minded” and thus needed to be “cured” of her masculine-coded characteristics. To play another part, to move from social acceptability, to seek out progression and agency, was to be subjected to slander and face the rising tension within the dichotomy of masculinity and femininity—which is what is ultimately seen in these *Punch* cartoons.



SOMETHING LIKE A BROTHER.

Flora. "THAT'S A VERY PRETTY WAISTCOAT, EMILY!"  
 Emily. "YES, DEAR. IT BELONGS TO MY BROTHER CHARLES. WHEN HE GOES  
 OUT OF TOWN HE PUTS ME ON THE FREE LIST, AS HE CALLS IT, OF HIS WARDROBE.  
 ISN'T IT KIND?"

[Plate 16: Punch. Digital image. Galleries. Accessed on October 27, 2016. <http://www.punch.co.uk/>.]

<sup>97</sup> "John Leach Cartoons from Punch Magazine," accessed October 21, 2016, <http://www.punch.co.uk/>.

Therefore, it then comes as no surprise that women's accessories were the butt of many jokes in *Punch's* cartoons. They were ridiculed in both art and caption, under criticism for not only their feminine nature, but for the power and agency the accessories lent women. Accessories caught attentions, were attractive to the eye, enabled coyness and playful seduction, and ultimately established presence. From these feminine materials, women broadened their space outside of the domestic sphere and into the public—capturing attention, and having stores catered to these pieces (which in turn created female spaces in the market place for women to congregate for hours at a time, rather than being in their own homes, as noted by Erika Rappaport).<sup>98</sup> For garnering attention, the accessories became topics to mock, and because they were linked to women, being the wearers of such materials, they were simultaneously criticized.

A cartoon from 1889 depicts a group of women sitting inside holding Japanese parasols as they listen to a music performance—where the woman singing is shaded with a parasol thanks to the man beside her [plate 17]. The caption reads, “Happy Thought. Electric light, so favourable to furniture, wall papers, pictures, screens, &c, is not always becoming to the female complexion. Light Japanese sunshades will be found invaluable.”<sup>99</sup> The drawing mocks women of their parasols, pitting their “frivolous” fashion against the electricity, something that was a scientific progress, and thus found to be masculine (as science and technological advancement meant brain power, which women were not allowed to imbue upon their sex—they were then seen as their items—“frivolous”). In addition to this dig at feminine possessions and fashionable

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<sup>98</sup> Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ, United States: Princeton University Press, 2001), 76-79.

<sup>99</sup> “Victorian Era Cartoons from Punch Magazine,” accessed October 21, 2016, <http://punch.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/Fashion-Cartoons/G0000ZtYufr5d7ac/I0000rW43o4kwwFU>.

ways, the cartoon contains a double remark, to that of the Japanese, of the exoticism and racism nineteenth-century England was known for.



HAPPY THOUGHT.

THE ELECTRIC LIGHT, SO FAVOURABLE TO FURNITURE, WALL PAPERS, PICTURES, SCREENS, &c., IS NOT ALWAYS BECOMING TO THE FEMALE COMPLEXION. LIGHT JAPANESE SUNSHADES WILL BE FOUND INVALUABLE.

[Plate 18: Punch. Digital image. Galleries. Accessed on October 27, 2016. <http://www.punch.co.uk/>.]

The *Punch* database includes two cartoons dedicated to making fun of ladies' chatelaines, both done in 1849. Unsurprisingly, the images revolve around domesticity, chaining the woman wearer to her motherly occupation. The first one shows a woman on the streets reading while her children and dog are attached to her chatelaine [plate 19]. Attached to her are her children's toys, such as a puppet and a ball, and also a perambulator, instead of the usual trinkets hanging off the jewelry accessory. She is seen as only useful if she is conducting her job as society dictates—as mother. Her accessory is stupid and trivial if used for any other purpose. For what other way should a woman use her distracting, “silly” chatelaine than to make it a tool to better her place in life? This very Punch image is seen in *Jewellery in the Age of Queen Victoria*, a 2010 book dedicated to Victorian jewelry, where authors Gere and Rudoe briefly discuss the chatelaine's comedic fate; they make mention that the cartoon may allude to Queen Victoria, by saying that

“this particular one must refer to the fact that Queen Victoria acquired a chatelaine from Thornhill’s in 1849, and that coupled with her growing family probably prompted this joke” and that “very large chatelaines were a feature of the 1851 Great Exhibition in London two years later.”<sup>100</sup>

The second image is of a woman, named Laura, wearing a chatelaine, its charms and pendants discarded for a collection of domestic items—broom, tea pot, (figure out proper names for other items). She is weighed down by housekeeping, by her own domesticity. Her beloved looks proudly as Laura displays her present to the other woman in the drawing, and Laura says, “Oh! Look, Ma' dear; see what a love of a chatelaine Edward has given me.”<sup>101</sup> Her weight in the domestic sphere is heavy, with responsibilities and burdens only a wife and mother seems to take on. Women were literally encumbered by their household materials.



HOW TO MAKE A CHATELAINE A REAL BLESSING TO MOTHERS.

[Plate 19: Punch. Digital image. Galleries. Accessed on October 27, 2016. [http://www.punch.co.uk/.](http://www.punch.co.uk/)]

<sup>100</sup> Charlotte Gere and Judy Rudoie, *Jewellery in the Age of Queen Victoria: A Mirror to the World* (London: British Museum Press, 2010), 116.

<sup>101</sup> “PUNCH Magazine Cartoon Archive,” accessed October 21, 2016, <http://punch.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/Fashion-Cartoons/G0000ZtYufr5d7ac/I000065NCIE1M84Y>

While the online *Punch* archive does not have any cartoons wholly revolved around fans, as being the main joke, there are, however, quite a few that still end up demonstrating the less than warm feelings men had on this feminine object. Two cartoons drawn in 1879 by, once more, George Du Maurier, subtly reveal the frivolous feelings toward fans, as well as a not so subtle snub toward feminine fashions. The first, drawn in April of that year, depicts a musical concert in a room crowded by ladies and gentlemen [plate 20]. All the women in the room are holding large fans. Their fans are drawn with great exaggeration, looking more like giant decorative fans hung on walls than for ladies' gloved hands. The exaggeration of the fashion accessory puts emphasis upon them, drawing the eye to the uncommonly large quality, perhaps in commentary to how much attention the fans receive from not only the owners but of those around them and of whom they communicate with. Also, their larger size makes them particularly cumbersome, much too large for most hands and taking up a lot of public space, which may actually reflect the way some men felt about women's fans—as bulky and burdensome, and very much in the way. The other cartoon is of a group of gentlemen coming into a room of ladies after dinner had been eaten [plate 21]. All the women appear to be suckling their thumbs like babies with the caption 'Disastrous Result of Beautymania.' Just like the other Maurier cartoon, this one features women holding exaggerated fans with the hand not occupying their mouths all while the men imposingly stand behind them, judging their methods of 'beautymania.' This cartoon explicitly attacks women's beauty and fashion habits as a whole, making them look both infantile and foolish, reflecting the critical opinions of men who were adamantly against feminine fashions.



**KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE.**

Mrs. Pansy de Tumbler (calls now to her husband). "Pansy!"—"Yes, my Love!"—"How is that, Bessie is sitting?"—"Bessie, my Love, she favors you TONIGHT!"—"Bessie, JENKINS is out. THOU art VINCENZO's mistress!"—"Bessie, JENKINS is now at his own home, and sends his own MOTHER'S PORTRAIT!"—"But, my Love, Bessie, JENKINS claims FORTY GUINEAS!"—"TALK Bessie, JENKINS that it's to meet THE DUCHESS OF BRUNSWICK, and he won't CHANGE ANYTHING AT ALL!"—"But, my Love, THE DUCHESS OF BRUNSWICK will never come to see the LADIES OF ST.!"—"BESSIE, come FART AWAY to meet Bessie JENKINS! Do as I TELL YOU!" Pansy did as she said, and everything happened as she had anticipated. The Duchess came, and a good many more smart people besides; and the Signor sang for nothing, but to the immortal honor and glory of the dress of Tumbler. (Over Mrs. P. 7.)

[Plate 20: Punch. Digital image. Galleries. Accessed on October 27, 2016. [http://www.punch.co.uk/.](http://www.punch.co.uk/)]



**DISASTROUS RESULT OF BEAUTYMANIA.**

THE LAST NEW BEAUTY, HAVING AN INNOCENT CAST OF CONSCIENCE, HAS BEEN PAINTED, SCULPTURED, AND PHOTOGRAPHED WITH HER HEAD ON ONE SIDE, SUCKING HER THUMB. (N.B.—THE GENTLEMEN ARE JOINING THE LADIES AFTER DINNER.)

[Plate 21: Punch. Digital image. Galleries. Accessed on October 27, 2016. [http://www.punch.co.uk/.](http://www.punch.co.uk/)]

While being more of a political *Punch* cartoon than that of a fashion cartoon, an Edward Linley Sambourne drawing from 1884 suggests a flirtatious, sensual nature linked between fans

and femininity. Pictured are a man, presumably William Gladstone, and a woman flirting with him while holding a fan<sup>102</sup>. The title of the cartoon reads ‘A Dangerous Conference.’ Despite the cartoon’s allusion to imperialism, there is the implication that fans are flirtatious, being an item intentionally used during a “dangerous conference,” and with the disapproving tone, regarded as something negative, along with the salacious conversation taking placed.

Men did not limit themselves to just *Punch* cartoons. They also resorted to “informational” books and newspaper commentaries. In 1882, Dower Wilson and Charles H. Ross published *Flirting Made Easy*, “a guide for girls” written by men. The book talks about the many different ways in which women and men flirt with each other as well as providing lots of flirtatious imagery. One of the images connects women’s flirtations with their fans [plate 22]. The woman asks the man if he can “flirt a fan,” in which he replies to her with, “No, but I can FAN A FLIRT.”<sup>103</sup>



“ Can you FLIRT a FAN? ”  
 “ No; but I can FAN a FLIRT. ”  
 —Ancient yet applicable joke.

[Plate 22: From *Flirting Made Easy*, 1882.]

<sup>102</sup> Accessed on October 27, 2016. <http://www.punch.co.uk/>.

<sup>103</sup> Charles Ross and Dower Wilson, *Flirting Made Easy* (London, United Kingdom: Judy’s Shilling Books, 1882), 8.



In *Penny Illustrated Paper*, on December 17 1881, among classified advertisement listings, an anonymous writer harshly asks, “What is the difference between a woman and an umbrella?”<sup>104</sup> The punch line, feeling like quite a slap, is “an umbrella can be shut up.”<sup>105</sup> The crude joke, while being that of a sexist nature, links women with fashion—two “objects” inevitably intertwined. It is worth noting that in this particular slight, a woman is compared to a masculine fashion form, the umbrella, instead of the feminine parasol. Presumably due to its masculinity it is not only able to “shut up” (unlike a woman), but is naturally ranked as superior.

## VI. CONCLUSION

During the nineteenth century, women’s fashion accessories, such as the parasol, fan, feminine-cut gloves, and chatelaine, gave women multiple avenues in which to use them. For many women, accessories were used to conceal skin and ensure modesty. They were also massively considered as beautifiers, magnifying a certain prettiness to the user, adding a special something to a dress. Most importantly, fashion accessories were used as vehicles for women’s agency in an era that was predominantly masculine-powered.

Parasols, fans, gloves, and chatelaines allowed women to play with agency through their femininity. Women could express desires through these materials. Accessories sometimes embodied the romantic and sensual wishes of women, from the designs of fans to the body language applied to parasols and fans (as well as other accessories). These feminine items gave

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<sup>104</sup> *Penny Illustrated Paper*, December 17 1881.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

women another way in which to communicate, especially within the confines of the public sphere, where women did not normally possess a greater sense of autonomy. Therefore, women found a way through subversion, from large dresses that dominated space to pretty trinkets that communicated feminine desires in a normative, safe way.

Not only did these accessories provide a means for women to address their sensual side in a safe manner, but the items themselves encompassed the very idea of sensuality and romance in their very styles and materials. Chatelaine's shiny metals and collection of charms would capture a gentleman's eye. Fans were made with materials like lace, satin, and feathers, softly brushing and teasing the skin, and often were painted with romantic scenes. Like fans, parasols were made with satin, silks, and lace, but also flowers, ribbons, tassels, frills—all things that were eye-catching, evoking a sense of romance in the dainty and colorful materials. With gloves, their materials and size embodied sensuality; silk gloves were soft and flashy, and seen as seductive while long gloves accentuated the shape of the arm, drawing eyes to the skin exposed between glove and sleeve.

Despite having similar accessories of their own as well as involving themselves in the flirtatious language women used, many men were annoyed with feminine fashion accessories. Their anger toward these items revolved around the agency women acquired with them, in spatial power and expression of sexuality amongst the public sphere. Men turned to *Punch* cartoons and stinging newspaper comments as an outlet to their ire, expressing their annoyance through these mediums. They also wrote in women's magazines and authored their own 'girl guides' to denounce the flirtatious and romantic natures of women and girls alike. Feminine accessories were regarded as something lesser than that of masculine accessories, reflecting the general sexist attitude prevalent in nineteenth-century society by the gendering of materials. In

spite of criticisms from select men, women adorned themselves with their feminine accessories, communicating their desires and expressing their agency outside of the domestic sphere.

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