The Multiple Lives of Clothes:
Alteration and Reuse of Women’s Eighteenth-Century Apparel in England

By

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Abstract

Employing a practical material culture approach, the primary aim of this thesis is to address the diverse alterations that women’s eighteenth-century apparel underwent in both form and context. Evidence collected through extensive direct examination of several hundred clothing objects held in museum collections across England including the Museum of London, the Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall in Manchester, the Wade Costume Collection house at Berrington Hall and the Fashion Museum at Bath is combined with archival research of household accounts, wills, trial records, letters, and journals at numerous libraries and archives around the country to develop a foundational narrative of the reuse and recycling of English women’s eighteenth-century dress.

The theoretical concept that objects possess social biographies is applied here to form the suppositional basis that these clothes experienced multiple lives and incarnations. To this end five main themes are explored beginning from shortly after the point of first acquisition. The thesis begins with day-to-day care and maintenance of clothing, tracking how garments transition from new to worn and methods employed to prolong their usefulness. Next, resizing requirements are detailed first for lifecycle events such as pregnancy, then as a consequence of new ownership. Following on this, various modes of the incessant redistribution of used and old clothing is examined in depth involving the second-hand market, bequests in wills, and the perquisite system whereby clothing was cast-off by employer to servant. Stylistic alterations for changing fashions are then identified and mapped to reveal women’s real-life practices and attitudes towards fashionability intersected with thrift. Finally, post-eighteenth-century reconceptualization as fancy dress costumes and historical museum artefacts are introduced as representing further chapters in the lives of garments rather than the end of the story. This thesis contributes to a burgeoning scholarship on post-acquisition consumption of dress and material
culture, its use, reuse, and recycling; and seeks to complicate women’s engagement with the fashion system and assumptions around novelty and escalating consumer culture, their relationships with clothing over time, and with each other.
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Glossary

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ALAMODE: A thin light glossy black silk.

BAISE, BAIZE, BAYS: A woollen textile resembling a thin serge. (*) Used in the 18th c as a utilitarian textile such as for ironing cloths.

BEDGOWN: A loose-sleeved dressing-gown worn only as négligée in the bedroom or for comfort.

BLOND LACE: A silk lace of 2 threads twisted and formed in hexagonal meshes.

BROCADE: A fabric with a pattern or raised figures in coloured silks, formed by the extra weft.

BURDET: A mixed fabric of silk and cotton.

CALICO: Originally of Indian cotton but from c. 1600 to 1773 the weft of cotton with warp of linen; since then entirely of cotton.

CAMBRIC: A very fine quality of linen

CAMLET: In 18th c. sometimes of wool or silk or hair or mixtures.

CAPUCHIN: A soft hood worn out of doors. [...] It had a coloured lining and a deep cape.

CARACO: In 18th c. a thigh-length waisted jacket worn as the bodice of a gown and forming with the skirt the ‘Caraco dress.’

CARDINAL: In 18th c. a ¾-length hooded cloak, usually of scarlet cloth.

CHEMISE DRESS, GOWN, ROBE: In 18th c. the top drawn in round a low neck and always worn with a sash; long tight sleeves. [...] Chemise gowns were always of thin muslin, cambric, or coloured silk and cut with the waist-line according to the fashion of the day.

CHERRYDERRY: An Indian cotton fabric similar to gingham.

CRAPE: A transparent crimped silk gauze; originally black and as such used for mourning.

DAMASK: A figured fabric of silk or linen of which the woven pattern appears reversed on the back.
DART: A narrow dart-shaped piece cut out and the edges sewn together to improve the fit of a garment.

EVERLASTING: A stout worsted fabric with double warps and single weft.

FERRET: A narrow ribbon of silk or cotton; a kind of tape.

FONTANGE: c. 1690 to 1710. An indoor linen cap with a small flat crown behind and a tall erection of lace or lace and linen frills in front, kept erect by the commode (a wire frame). Two long lack or linen streamers called ‘lappets’ hung down at the back or were sometimes pinned up to the crown. The front hair was arranged in curls mounting up from the forehead in front of the fontange elevation.

FUSTIAN: A coarse twilled textile with linen warp and cotton weft.

GALLOON: A woollen or thread kind of ferret used as an edging of garments.

GOWN: A term indicating a woman’s dress.

HANDKERCHIEF: A square of linen or silk, often edged with lace, carried about the person and used for wiping the face or nose; the more elegant styles being used for display only.

HOLLANDS: A fine linen first imported from Holland; later the name applied to any fine linen.

HOOP or HOOP PETTICOAT: c. 1710 to 1780. An under-petticoat variously distended with cane, wire or whalebone hoops.

JUMPS: a loose, unboned bodice worn instead of stays for comfort or during pregnancy.

LACE: (1) A tie for fastening or pulling together opposite edges, as for boots, stays, etc.  
(2) Braid used for trimming.  
(3) An openwork trimming of many patterns.

LATCHET: A strap to fasten a shoe or clog.

LAWN: A very fine semi-transparent linen cloth.

LINSEY-WOOLSEY: A cloth of linen and wool.

MANTUA: Mid 17th to mid 18th c. A loose gown, the bodice unboned, joined to an overskirt which had a long train behind and was open in front exposing a decorative underskirt called a petticoat. It was worn on all social or formal occasions.

MANTUA MAKER: 17th and 18th c’s. A mantua dressmaker.
MITTEN: Fingerless gloves with open thumb, usually decorative; of lace or net and often embroidered. 18th c. Mittens were usually elbow-length and the fingers emerged together through one opening covered along the back by a prolongation of the mitten into a pointed flap which usually had a decorative lining, visible when the flap was turned back. These mittens were made of kid, cotton, silk or – in plainer styles – worsted.

MUSLIN: A fine cotton fabric.

NIGHTGOWN: An unboned comfortable but often very elaborate dress worn indoors and out, and sometimes on formal occasions as at weddings. [...] Similar to MANTUA.

OSNABURG: A German linen.

PADUASOY: A strong corded or grosgrain silk, usually black.

PATTENS or CLOGS: Over-shoes to raise the wearer above the dirt. [...] The shape followed the fashion of foot-wear of the day.

PELERINE: 1740 to end of 19th c. A cape-like collar.

PET-EN-L’AIR: c. 1745 to 1770s. A thigh-length or sometimes knee-length jacket-bodice with sac-back, short elbow sleeves and often a stomacher front. Worn with a plain skirt (then called a petticoat).

(*)PETTICOAT: An underskirt; may be visible and either matching or contrasting the over gown, or worn as an unseen undergarment.

PIERROT: 1780s to 1790s. A close-fitting, low-necked jacket-bodice with short basques. Generally worn with a flounced matching skirt (‘petticoat’); for day wear.

POCKET: A separate article in the form of a small flat bag or a pair of such bags attached together by a tape. [...] These pockets, tied on round the waist under the dress, were reached through the placket hole. Those of the 18th c. were frequently ornamented with coloured needlework patterns.

(*)POCKET HOOP: 1770s. Small side hoops made in two parts that tied in front and behind around the waist and hips rather than a full hoop petticoat.

RIDING HABIT: A costume specially designed for women riding (side saddle) on horseback. [...] Consisted of coat and waistcoat modelled on the male garments, together with a skirt, called a ‘petticoat’, made without a train, until 1780 when a train was added.

(*)ROBE A L’ANGLAISE: Late 18th c term for a fitted-back dress with either sewn-down pleats or seams.
ROBINGS: Broad flat trimmings decorating a gown round the neck and down the front of the bodice, and sometimes continued down the borders of an open overskirt to the hem. (*) may be cut in one with the bodice or added separately.

SAC, SACK or SACQUE: c. 1720 to 1780. Originating from France and there worn earlier. The essential feature of the Sack was the Sack-back consisting of two box-pleats, single, double or treble, stitched down on each side of the back seam from the neckband to the shoulders and thence left loose to merge into the fullness of the skirt below. From 1720 to 1730 the gown fell loose all round, sometimes confined by a girdle. From 1730 the bodice was shaped to the figure in front. (*) a fitted back lining piece helped shape the fitted front.

SARCENET: A thin soft silk textile having a slight sheen on the surface.

SHALLOON: A loosely woven woollen stuff twilled on both sides.

SHIFT: The name in the 18th c. [...] for the under-garment known in the 19th c. as ‘chemise’. Worn next to the skin; of homespun, linen or cotton.

STAYS: An under-garment with whalebone ribs embracing the chest and compressing the natural waist-level.

STOCKINGS: A close-fitting covering for the foot and leg. [...] The materials and colours varied: wool, cotton, thread, and silk, plain or embroidered.

STOMACHER: A long ornate panel forming the front of an open low-necked bodice. The stomacher descended to a sharp or rounded point at the waist and the upper horizontal border formed the limit of the decolletage.

STUFF: A medieval name still surviving, for worsteds made of long or combing wool.

UNDRESS: A term indicating unceremonial attire such as worn for everyday purposes, especially morning dress.

WORSTED: A cloth made of long-stapled wool combed straight and smooth before spinning.

WRAP or WRAPPER: A term used for a woman’s bedroom négligée which might also be worn in bed.

ZONE: 1770s and 1780s. A fill-in for an open bodice of a gown, the shape varying according to the shape of the exposed gap.
Chapter One: The Multiple Lives of Clothes: Alteration and Reuse of Women’s
Eighteenth-Century Clothing in England

1.1 Introduction

The story of clothing is inextricably tied to the stories of the people who made, traded, wore, and altered it. In eighteenth-century England, and indeed throughout the world, the high cost of hand-woven textiles meant that clothing represented a significant financial investment, as a result, the care and maintenance of clothing and textiles was a significant concern. Taking a practical approach, this thesis explores the purposes and processes underlying the modifications of English women’s eighteenth-century dress. The goal of the project is to introduce a social history surrounding the use, maintenance and modification of garments with the aim of establishing a foundation from which to develop greater understanding about how pre-industrial people lived with and felt about their clothing and the different “lives” clothes experienced as they passed through successive cycles of use.

Central to my thesis are the garments themselves: how they were made, maintained and altered for various reasons at different times. Close examination of alterations made to surviving objects combined with investigation of related archival materials provide invaluable insight into various aspects of the functions and meanings of clothing in the day-to-day lives of eighteenth-century women, and the business of everyday life itself. This is set within a broader context of post-acquisition consumption where these alterations reveal the purposes of the garments changed along with their forms and appearance, and as they passed through multiple sets of hands. These hands belonged to needlewomen, owners/wearers, second-hand traders and new owners - sometimes in succession, sometime simultaneously. My thesis takes up the narrative
just after creation and first procurement and descriptively charts the course of their transitions from crisp and new through worn and familiar to passed on and repurposed.

The prevalence of clothing modifications found amongst extant garments and personal accounts is a clear indication of the importance of this practice. However, these remain neither systematically studied, nor have the processes been interrogated through in-depth examination and research. Therefore, investigating the multiple lives of historical garments during this era contributes substantially to understanding both the intimate and commercial relationships between early modern English women and their clothing; which is, by extension, a way to better understand the workings of pre-industrial British society.

The point of acquisition has dominated consumption studies within material culture and dress history for the past thirty years. During that time this area has blossomed to encompass different time periods, socio-economic strata and geographic locations. Increasing focus not

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just on nuances of what or how people consumed but the meanings behind why they did means that study of clothing consumption is now also inextricably fused with socio-historical investigations. However, some scholars are moving beyond this, recognizing acquisition as only one singular moment in the consumption of objects by people. How people live with objects, how they use them and dispose of them is gradually receiving increased scholarly attention. Beverly Lemire was arguably the first with her investigations into early modern Britain’s second-hand clothing trade.\footnote{Beverly Lemire, \textit{Dress, Culture and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade Before the Factory}, 1660-1800, Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1997.} She illuminated the vast, yet previously invisible commercial recirculation of clothing (and other goods) involving nearly the entire length and breadth of English society. In \textit{Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges}, editors John Brewer & Frank Trentmann work from the principle that consumption is complex, multi-layered, inconsistent, and varied. To this end they look at consumption and consumerism beyond the point of purchase and beyond the belief that it is simply an act of exchanging money for goods or services. They assert the desire, planning, and intent to consume originates long before the point of sale and, afterwards, goods experience a lifecycle of use, disposal, and recycling.\footnote{Brewer and Trentmann, eds., \textit{Consuming Cultures}, 3-6.}
In their respective essays, Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff both espoused the idea that things, similar to people, possess social lives or biographies.\(^7\) Their intent was not to anthropomorphize objects, but to demonstrate that an object’s existence could exhibit features similar to a human life. These include: what are a thing’s status possibilities in a given period and culture? Where does it come from? Who made it? What has been its career thus far and what do people consider an ideal career for it? What are the recognized ‘ages’ or periods in its life and what are the cultural markers for them? How does age affect it? What happens when it reaches the end of its usefulness? What is the life-expectancy? Kopytoff argues that the answers to these questions and their contexts provide a wealth of cultural data about not only the object but societies. As people have multiple biographies (psychological, economic, familial, political) so too do objects. They were among the first to identify that ‘commodity’ was simply a potential phase in the course of a thing’s existence. This means that an object may move in and out of several different phases through time and space, its functions, meaning and influence altering along the way.\(^8\) Subsequent scholars have built on this nascent idea to develop the concept of object agency alongside increased interest in consumer agency.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) See also James Skibo *People and Things: A Behavioural Approach to Material Culture*. New York: Springer, 2008. Skibo developed a similar theoretical model of the object’s life history/behavioural chain encompassing all the steps and interactions throughout its “life” from how it came into being, through use and maintenance to deposition and beyond.

Building on Appadurai and Kopytoff’s legacy, editors Ariane Fennetaux, Amélie Junqua and Sophie Vasset in their recently-published volume, *The Afterlife of Used Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century*, focus specifically on what happened to objects after production and acquisition.10 They view recycling, reusing, salvaging, transforming as “a modus operandi that ran through the whole fabric of eighteenth-century society” which, “poised between the early modern economic model of scarcity and want and the modern world of consumerism and waste,[…] was marked by a specific relationship to the material where objects went through not one but several lifecycles.” 11 They asserted that objects traversed cyclical processes of “valuation, devaluation, and re-evaluation” in not only economic terms, but also social, aesthetic, political and moral.12

As consumption-related studies began moving beyond acquisition and turning towards how people lived with and used the things they bought, the relationships between women and objects, including dress and fashion, have also been complicated. A significant result of this has been to argue against the notion that women were, and remain, merely passive dupes of an unrelenting patriarchal fashion machine.13 While women have long been associated with consumption, perspectives on the nature of their consumption practices have been changing. Traditionally, women were viewed as frivolous and rapacious consumers, while paradoxically passively subject to fashion and vanity. This belief was largely predicated on long-standing pejorative stereotypes underpinned by innumerable contemporary and later texts proclaiming that

11 Ibid., 2.
12 Ibid., 3-4.
such vices were inherent characteristics of womanhood.\textsuperscript{14} When scholars decided to look beyond what certain men were saying publicly about women and discover what women said about themselves they arrived at startlingly different conclusions. They discovered that women’s consumption motives and practices were varied and could have little to do with concerns over fashion.\textsuperscript{15} For example, Amanda Vickery in her discussions of middling class Georgian women’s lives, discovered primary concerns were decency, respectability, cost, personal taste, and usefulness when considering purchases.\textsuperscript{16} Although many demonstrated some interest in fashion, it was rarely a strong motivator for their consumption decisions; they were often more occupied with duties of domestic provisioning. Additional scholarship also challenges stereotypes around historical women’s perceived indolent and retiring lifestyles and the de-valuing of women’s work, particularly as relates to the needle.\textsuperscript{17}

The existence and regularity of clothing alteration in eighteenth-century England has been widely acknowledged and noted by dress historians throughout the past thirty or more years. Anne Buck recognized it as a recurrent feature of eighteenth-century clothing practices and Janet Arnold briefly discussed it in articles on servant dress and the classical influence at the

\textsuperscript{14} For example, M. Astrell, \textit{A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest by a Lover of her Sex} (1697); J.A. Blondel, \textit{The Power of the Mother’s Imagination Over the Foetus Examine’d} (1729); T. Marriot, \textit{Female Conduct, being an Essay on the Art of Pleasing to be Practised by the Fair Sex} (1759).
end of the century.\textsuperscript{18} Barbara Burman offered compelling insights into the gendered and ‘social’ lives of pockets including eighteenth-century women’s tie pockets, how they were made, how women used and lived with them, and how they were changed and altered by those women.\textsuperscript{19} Bridget Clarke and Edwina Ehrman touched on clothing maintenance and alteration habits in published articles on late seventeenth and eighteenth-century clothing practices based on personal correspondence and accounts of a 1690s Somerset MP and his family, and middling class widow of Cookham and London, respectively. In her article on the intersections of the whalebone trade and women’s stays, Lynne Sorge-English considered mending, alteration and use of stays by women over time and the lifecycle and introduced the idea that women might prefer older, worn-in stays for personal, physical comfort.\textsuperscript{20}

However, thus far, Linda Baumgarten has conducted the most in-depth study with an article and a book chapter dedicated to altered historical clothing.\textsuperscript{21} Her first contribution, published in \textit{Dress} in 1988, argued for the worth and value of altered clothing in museum collections based on their ability to tell a story, a ‘moving picture’ rather than just provide a ‘snapshot’.\textsuperscript{22} She advocated a mix of pristine and modified garments in dress collections for mutual contextualization. She further suggested methods of categorization and a framework with which to study altered garments: in-use alterations, recycling material into something else, re-making into a costume and restoration by museum conservators. Her essay deals with the first

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\textsuperscript{22} Baumgarten, “Altered Historical Clothing,” 42.
\end{flushleft}
three of these and touches on what some alterations consist of, look like, how they might be done, and for what reason(s). Baumgarten argues that altered clothing tells us something about how people lived with their clothes, and that clothing altered in a much later period can tell us how people related to and connected to their past (such as alterations made for fancy dress). It also helps us connect today in that we still alter clothing and textiles with the same unconsciousness as in the past, just not as extensively (for example women who alter and get married in their mother’s or grandmother’s wedding dress).

Baumgarten revisited this area as part of her ground-breaking book, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (2002). Interested in how clothing figured within day-to-day lives, the fourth chapter is devoted to ‘common’ dress. In this section Baumgarten recounted the casual clothing of the elite and everyday work clothing of plebeian society, including that of slaves. Chapters five and six deal with the relationship between clothing and Colonial life passages, and the life-cycles of clothes themselves, respectively. In the former, clothing is linked to benchmark moments in people’s lives such as birth and christening gowns, a boy’s passage from Infanthood to boyhood with his first ‘breeching’, all the way through to mourning dress. Baumgarten demonstrates that clothing held a significant, intimate place as a visual marker for each of these moments. The last chapter focuses on eighteenth-century clothing alteration practices, revealing some of the multiple lives clothes could lead, as well as ingenious methods people used to prolong the life of costly textiles, or favourite garments.

Ariane Fennataux’s chapter, “Sentimental Economics: Recycling Textiles in Eighteenth-Century Britain” in the recently-published volume, *The Afterlife of Used Things* appears to be part of a vanguard seeking to address the dearth of scholarship around the reuse and recycling of
material goods in eighteenth-century Europe.\textsuperscript{23} Heavily referencing Lemire’s work, Fennataux’s chapter follows clothing and textiles through the second-hand market, then further to complete disassembly and re-processing in which metal threads were harvested from old garments and melted down, and linen-turned-rags became paper to help feed the ever rising demand of an increasingly literate society. She also introduces sentimental attachments and associations that clothing and textiles hold and accrue as they pass through time and different sets of hands by way of inheritance or the practice of patchwork quilting.

Using Baumgarten’s work and methodology as a springboard, this thesis largely revolves around extensive object analysis I conducted and my findings. I carried out the majority of my object study at the Museum of London, but also pursued in depth research at Platt Hall (part of the Manchester City Galleries), Hereford Museum, Berrington Hall and Worthing Museum with additional visits to the Fashion Museum at Bath and the Victoria and Albert Museum. I thoroughly examined approximately four hundred articles of women’s clothing dated from the late seventeenth to early nineteenth-century, spending approximately a half hour to an hour with each. This work built on a combined foundation of object study conducted for my master’s thesis in 2008 and twenty years of sewing and dressmaking experience.

I believe that central to a material culture methodology for history is the object itself and considerations of what it can tell us about the past. Traditionally object-study for dress history was primarily employed for stylistically descriptive and dating purposes, yielding a valuable foundational body of knowledge from which we still draw, but providing little socio-cultural

interpretation. At the same time, academic-oriented research relied almost entirely on textual sources which carry and perpetuate the biases of their times and reveal little about actual practice; this research largely ignored surviving objects apart from their use as illustrative examples. As dress historians begin to follow the example of material culture scholars in viewing the object as a form of document which can be ‘read’ and interpreted our work is greatly enriched and the recognized value and usefulness of objects increases. To paraphrase Henry Glassie, meaning is the sum of the relations between people and objects.

In an early yet still-influential article Jules Prown claimed that complete reliance on the written word does a disservice to historical research. Historical artefacts are survivors from the past and all that is left when people die; they are surviving witnesses of history. He pointed out that throughout the course of human history only a few people have been privileged with literacy, while all peoples have engaged with objects. Objects, then, can represent a wider range of human experience, despite problems created by what survives and why. Prown asserts that certain cultural knowledge may also be so taken-for-granted that it is never written down or even verbalized, and that it may be more honest for being an unconscious expression with no intentional agenda.

To that end he provided a simple methodological guide synthesized from art history and archaeology for working directly with objects. This comprises close sensory examination and intuitive theorizing to aide in unlocking objects’ secrets that is still considered a pillar for research today and forms the foundation of my own approach to objects. The first step is

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24 For example, The Cunningtons’ *Handbook of Costume* series, (Boston: Plays Inc., 1963-1972), which describe in minute detail men’s and women’s costume in England from the medieval period to the nineteenth century.
27 Ibid.
description wherein both substantial and formal analyses are performed. The former refers to taking a physical inventory of the object while the latter describes its visual character including arrangement of lines, colours, textures. The second step is deduction involving sensory engagement (physical interaction with the objects), intellectual engagement (consideration of an object’s function and how that is achieved by the object), and emotional response (an intentional conscious recognition of one’s subjective reaction to the object). The final step is speculation entailing the formation of theories and a program of research. Theories are derived by summing up the data retrieved during the prior steps. One then develops a program of research to prove or disprove one’s theories or hypotheses. At this point we turn from an internal consideration of the object to an external one. Prown cautions that this last step should not mean the end of direct engagement with the object, rather the researcher should continue to move between internal and external study of it as the latter can continuously influence, modify and shed new light on the former. I would only extend this to full reciprocation: each type of examination impacts findings from the other.

Daniel Miller extended Prown’s thoughts on how to look at objects from a materialist stance by including seeing the object as a manufactured thing, the relationship between an object’s form and function, and how they operate within space and time. These tenets also influenced my engagement with objects. Neither Prown nor other scholars suggest privileging objects over text; rather they insist combinations of the two are necessary to achieve the richest

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28 Ibid., 7.
29 Ibid., 8.
30 Ibid., 9
and most holistic outcome. Either one used alone results in ‘impoverished’ historical narratives. Lou Taylor advocated a rapprochement between the museum (object, concrete) and the academy (text, abstract) and a new order in which they would work together. Her sentiment has been echoed in much of Christopher Breward’s work and at the end of Naomi Tarrant’s article on object-based study in which she appeals, as a historical dress curator, for recognition of the value of these collections to both the public and academic scholars. Giorgio Riello used the social history of footwear as a platform from which to comment on dress history practice in general. He employed footwear as a case study for the microcosm in which “diverging methodological approaches and narratives influence our understanding of the past.” His approach was both theoretical and practical; thus, while giving a social history of footwear he also suggests a methodology for dress history scholarship as a whole. He advocates multidisciplinarity and broad analysis over wide historical questions in order to frame a new research agenda. To achieve this he believes a synthesis of many sources and methods is required, including object-based research combined with textual analysis. In fact, he warns against allowing the future of dress studies to become so theoretical that the objects themselves are forgotten.

37 Ibid., 10.
Admittedly, there are considerable limitations to object-based research. The amount of surviving garments, in any significant volume, dates only as far back as the mid-eighteenth century. Much of what museum collections house is weighted towards elite-level clothing, representing only a narrow sliver of society. This often problematizes use of extant garments for speaking about wider social issues and practices. However, the deficit of non-elite clothing may be felt less here by the very fact that most garments in museums are altered elite clothing. Thus, if elites altered their clothes then, surely too must have non-elites, thereby introducing a common practice that permeated boundaries of status representing an area of common material experience between the high and the low. The evidence of use and alteration I see on clothing objects is often mirrored in textual sources that relate to various social strata. Neither objects nor textual sources present complete pictures on their own, so I synthesized the two to fill in some gaps and for corroboration. Text sources can tell us who, what and when, while objects show us what, when and how.

Lou Taylor introduced a potential formalized guide to methodological practice specifically for dress history studies.\textsuperscript{38} She asserts that there are multiple avenues and types of research material available, such as object-based research, literary research, visual analysis (ranging from painting to photography to film), and oral-history. Similar to Prown, she believes that only by using them in tandem (wherever possible) can a truly holistic picture of dress history be obtained.

Inspired by scholars such as Amanda Vickery, Edwina Ehrman and Lynne Sorge-English, I discovered a veritable font of data and insight within household account books; I

consulted fifteen such volumes.\textsuperscript{39} A core group of seven provided the greatest and most detailed information.\textsuperscript{40} The accounts are recorded differently from each other and sometimes inconsistently within themselves, but they still open up a window onto day-to-day lives of the women who wrote them, and often their home lives at large. Martha Dodson’s twenty-year long account book began when she was a comfortable widow in her sixties during the mid-1740s. She had an estate in Cookham, Berkshire but spent about half of almost every year in London during the season (roughly December to June). Most of her entries and purchases pertinent to this investigation occurred during her London visits, but not all. She was a detailed record-keeper and often included specifics such as colour and pattern of textiles she bought, which dress she had specially washed, what type of soap she stocked up on. Gertrude Savile was another \textit{femme sol}, but a spinster. Much of her life was unhappily spent living at her brother’s house as a dependent, and then with her mother and aunt where there was even more friction. Eventually, around the age of forty, she came into her own inheritance which afforded her a very comfortable financial independence. At this point her more than twenty-year long account books begin in the late 1730s. Initially, she divided her time between an estate near Nottingham and London, but in 1746, after her brother’s death, she purchased the London house she often rented and relocated there permanently. Another detailed recorder, she provided enough specifics to enable tracking the ‘social life’ of several of her garments whilst in her possession. Anne Brockman’s account book documented looking after a wealthy Kent household with children. Indeed, a large portion


\textsuperscript{40} Martha Dodson’s Account Book, 1746-1765, Museum of London 80.71; Account Books of Gertrude Savile, Nottinghamshire Archives DD/SR A4/45-46; Anne Brockman her Account booke begun December 26:1700, British Library MS 45208; Account Books of Isabella Wrightson, Doncaster Archive DD/BW/A/4; Account Book of Mrs Diana Eyre, 1749-77, Doncaster Archive DD/DC/H6/1; Account Book of Elizabeth Dodson, National Art Library, V&A 86 SS 77; Accounts of Mrs Francis Hamilton, 1797-1800, Somerset Heritage Centre DD/FS 5/2.1-5/2.2.
of her entries deal with expenses relating to her daughter and two sons. Interestingly, the surviving account book (which continues for twenty-five years from 1700) began at the birth of her younger son, Jack (?). This account is less descriptive than the former two. Nonetheless, evocative images of clothing use, purchase, maintenance and concern emerge from the pages. Another difference was that the family did not travel to London for the season, despite her husband being an MP, so a greater sense of continuity and stability runs throughout. Isabella Wrightson and Diana Eyre were also genteel women running households, mid to late century and in the environs of Doncaster. Their accounts are both more scant and fragmentary than the former three, but provide valuable supplementary material. Elizabeth Dodson’s (no known relation to Martha Dodson) surviving account book tracks her expenditures during the year before her marriage and for one year afterwards during the late 1720s. The first part of the book is almost entirely taken up with various clothing related expenses, most of them quite minor. The second half includes far fewer such entries and more general household expenses instead. All of these women, younger and older, enjoyed comfortable to affluent lives (at least during the periods of their surviving account books), except possibly for one. Mrs Francis Hamilton’s three-year-long book beginning in 1797 includes regular entries relating to managing a farm in the vicinity of Taunton in Somerset. The impression given is that she is a widow, and her account is the most modest in terms of personal expenditure. Most entries seem to relate to her household and farm’s maintenance and provisioning.

These were supplemented by several other manuscript sources. For example, letters between Mary Clarke and her husband, Edward, MP for Taunton in Somerset during the 1690s, discussed familial provisioning.\textsuperscript{41} The 1760s and 1770s bills and receipts of Lady Louisa

\textsuperscript{41} Letters of Mary Clarke to her Husband Edward Clarke, M.P., Somerset Heritage Centre DD/SF 7/1/31.
Fitzpatrick follow the maintenance of an elite young girl as she passed through her adolescence to approaching womanhood. At the opposite end of the social spectrum, bills for clothing expenses of Hannah French, housekeeper to the Orlebar family, and her niece Mary French reveal provisioning for labouring class women by a patron family and preparation for the niece’s future employment. The diary of staymaker Richard Viney chronicled a year of his working life making, mending and altering stays for clients ranging from the lesser nobility to his own neighbours. Published letters and journals provided further valuable augmentation, including the Purefoy Letters, the Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke, Reverend Woodforde’s Diary, the Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the Verney Letters, and the letters of Lady Newdigate. I was inspired by an essay written by historian John Styles to consult and use the searchable online database of all Old Bailey trials and Ordinaries’ accounts, which opens up the world of everyday life of non-elite society. Since this was a court for ‘common’ people and descriptions are given first-hand (as transcribed by the court recorder) this is a rich resource for information on everyday people’s everyday lives and their objects. Possessions and personal habits are brought to life as ordinary people speak about them in their own words.

42 Bills & Receipts for Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick, 1763-1770, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Office R.O.32/16/1/3a - R.O.32/16/12/8.
43 Hannah French’s Dress Bills, 1714-1719, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Office OR 2071/130; Mary French Bills, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Office OR/2071/150.
44 Diary of Richard Viney, Staymaker, 1744, British Library MS 44935.
Wills presented another rich source of information and speculative jumping off points. Although highly inconsistent in their mention and description of clothing, bequests provide sufficient detail to begin extrapolating patterns of dispersal and to distinguish between pecuniary and sentimental motivations on the part of the testator. Caveats extend to these as well, for one must possess something in order to pass it on, and be recognized as a person under the law. Therefore, very poor people and married women as a whole were excluded from the process. However, wills do reach somewhat further down the socio-economic chain than most other sources such as account books and personal correspondence. And occasionally, married women were able to compose informal wills to make their wishes for the dispersal of their personal possessions known. For this thesis I consulted approximately three hundred wills between The National Archives (at Kew, London), the Hereford Archives, the Bedford and Luton Archives and Records office and the Doncaster Archives. Taken together these sources cover the entire long eighteenth century and span very wealthy to comparatively modest economic situations.

Carefully selected examples of visual sources including painting and portraiture and print culture are invaluable for showing how component parts of clothing were worn together - how clothing looked and worked on living bodies in different situations. Historical photography visually demonstrates later uses of women’s eighteenth-century dress. As Aileen Ribeiro might say, depictions of complete ensembles can provide greater visual context than the object alone, lying on a table.\(^47\) And, in my own research, photographs act as extension of my object study showing such images can be used for more than illustrative examples.

\(^{47}\) Aileen Ribeiro, professor emeritus at the Courtauld Institute of Art is arguably the foremost scholar in this area with multiple book and article publications (1991, 1995, 2005). Closely analysing a wide range of visual material she interrogates the meanings of fashionable eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English and French dress as expressed in the arts. In this way she demonstrates how changes in dress reflected social, political and cultural developments in the two countries. See for example, Aileen Ribeiro, “Fashion in the Eighteenth Century: Some
The nucleus of this thesis is alteration of women’s eighteenth-century clothing in England both throughout that century and afterwards. However, it is situated within the broader scope of what I term “post-acquisition consumption” thereby following the social biographies of garments past the point of initial manufacture and first acquisition. I am keenly interested in how people (women in this case) lived with their clothes, used them, passed them on, and used them again. With this thesis I begin building an account of women’s relationships with their apparel. Textual evidence of the everyday use of clothing in daily life is difficult to locate, and clothing alterations are an important physical, tangible manifestation/embodiment of use and reuse patterns that provide valuable insight into various aspects of the social biographies of dress.

Also, as women were primarily responsible for care and maintenance of household linen and clothing, there seemed a natural affinity for focusing on the care, maintenance, repurposing and reuse of their dress. Furthermore, I believe the histories of women’s and men’s post-acquisition consumption of clothing are each rich enough to warrant their own studies and thus beyond the reasonable scope of a thesis.

My narrative begins just after the point of initial purchase and/or construction and follows garments through everyday use and abuse, periodic changes for size and situation (such as pregnancy), epochal style changes with the evolution of fashion, generational shifts in ownership and value, to eventual use (in some instances) as costume, and finally comparative fossilization within the museum as antique items on their way to becoming ancient artefacts. Emphasis is placed on clothing continuing to be used as such despite considerable changes in form and function; however alternate destinies involving disassembly are also acknowledged.

In chapter two, “Changing States,” I examine processes of new to used, clean to dirty and then clean again; fresh to faded to refreshed. This represents the beginning of use, chronicling the mundane but vital processes of day-to-day maintenance and care. This was also big business, requiring a multitude of materials, equipment and skills ranging from potash and lye to silk twist, and capacious copper tubs to thimbles.

The humblest, but most ubiquitous activity was laundering, which is revealed as multifaceted, complex, and involving significant time, energy, resources and strategizing. Specific methods were required for both different textiles and various types of soiling. The process of cleaning wrought changes to textiles and garments beyond cleaning off dirt. Linen textiles increasingly soften with each washing, and printed or dyed colours tend to fade upon repeated application of cleaning agents. These textiles literally wear the passage of time on their surfaces.

Mending remedied both long and short term effects of wear. Some causes arose gradually such as pulled seams from long-term stress or fabric weakness from mild abrasion, or instantaneously if, for example, a hem caught on a nail or a sleeve on a pin. Mending and alteration were a mantuemaker’s or tailor’s bread and butter, far more frequent activities than making new clothing. But work was performed in the home as well, by owners or their maids. Household account books are littered with purchases of sewing supplies to perform mending and maintenance alterations revealing significant investments of time, energy and money. Activities included darning, turning or replacing worn out garment components such as sleeves or cuffs and likely presented a steady stream of industry within households and without.

Chapter three confronts the reality that all human bodies change over time. We grow from children into adults, from young adults into elders with time marking its passage on our
forms, changing our shape and size. Health and illness create different bodies too; and women experience the additional impact of pregnancy. None of us stay the same throughout our lives, so neither can our clothing. Today, we usually discard and replace apparel that no longer fits; in the eighteenth century women were far more willing to alter their clothes to suit. Thus, garments grew and shrank as their bodies responded to time and life events.

Pregnancy is among the most fascinating of these in terms of women’s relationships to their clothing. Maternity wear as we know it did not exist, despite the greater frequency and average number of pregnancies women experienced. Amanda Vickery theorized the lack of dedicated maternity wear tracing it to the unease and apprehension women experienced during this time. While actual childbed mortality rates were low, most women knew someone who had perished in this way and waited until safe delivery before celebrating and marking the occasion. Instead, women adapted their regular clothing in ways of varying ingenuity.

Most size alterations I observed on surviving garments could have been performed for either the same wearer or a different person. However, in this chapter I take the opportunity to detail what these alterations look like and how they were performed to achieve desired results.

Garments frequently changed hands and for various reasons, the two primary modes of these being the second-hand clothing trade and inheritance. Thus chapter four explores the multiple owners and wearers many items of clothing had throughout the course of their “life”. Drawing on a combination of secondary source literature and my own investigation of Old Bailey trials, I look at how clothing entered and circulated around this market - who bought and

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sold it. Used clothing is not new in form, but can be new to someone else who may need to alter or otherwise modify it to suit their needs and tastes.

Wills, both formal and informal, from throughout the century can provide rich and nuanced insights into different ways clothing was valued according to different intentions. Some clothing bequests were made in lieu of cash legacies, others for reasons of sentiment. In this way, clothing objects transitioned from wardrobe component to commodity or token of remembrance and affection. Patterns emerged in the types of clothing passed on and to whom. The majority of research material relates to women of lower middling prosperity to significant wealth; however, a few key documents such as the inventory of Hannah French’s wardrobe and those itemizing its dispersal allows a glimpse into both a domestic servicewoman’s clothing possessions and their later usage.

Other modes of transference such as theft, gifting and loaning are also introduced. These forms further complicate the relationships between women and clothing and the circuitous journeys they could make. They also elaborate on relationships between women, as mediated by clothing, whether it be criminal activity (often involving the dynamic of paid help and an employer), conventions of politeness and hospitality or friendship and affection.

Chapter five, “Changing Fashion,” begins with the premise that the primary value in an article of apparel lay in its textile; the labour to make it up into something was comparatively very cheap. Thus, textiles were used and maintained as long as they remained serviceable and potentially long after their pattern became unfashionable. However, just because the textile design was out of style, did not mean the garment itself need remain so. Clothing was routinely altered, even completely made-over, as fashions changed. In fact, it was these stylistic changes
that first alerted me to the prevalence of altered clothing within museum collections. Stylistic alterations, especially, complicate the narrative of the eighteenth-century consumer revolution. Improvements in transportation over the century led to ever faster means of information transmission, including fashion changes. As cotton became more available and less expensive to purchase, greater amounts of material were available and accessible to greater swathes of society than ever before; this put larger wardrobes and more fashion changes within reach of more people. However, the large number of surviving garments altered for style (sometimes several decades later than their original construction) aptly shows that increased consumption of new things was strongly tempered by attitudes of thrift and moderation. This is thrown into especially stark relief when one considers that nearly all the surviving clothing in museums today belonged to the elite level of society, and it is their clothing I have examined and found altered. Thus, if this was a regular practice among the financially comfortable, it seems reasonable to presume it was at least as common among non-elites. Alteration then, is an activity that spans all social levels and speaks to these values of prudence and care being shared by society at large, connecting people up and down the social ladder.

The chapter is divided chronologically according to available research material and major stylistic shifts throughout the century. The late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century is treated as one section largely because of the comparative dearth of object and textual material providing examples of types of stylistic alterations practiced. However, some types of stylistic changes are uncovered along with tracking the lifecycle of one gown through Gertrude Savile’s account books. Stylistic alterations that occurred for reasons other than fashion changes are discussed as well. The most significant fashion-inspired alterations began post-1770 with the transition from a rococo aesthetic to the neoclassical. This change escalated until, at the end of the century, the
fashionable women’s silhouette had utterly transformed. The chapter follows a few objects into the early Victorian period and even beyond as examples of continued use as clothing (as opposed to costume, for example) through the nineteenth century.

Change in context and change in form often overlap and coincide at any given point along an object’s time line. Chapter six focuses on two particular, pivotal changes eighteenth-century (and many historical) garments experienced: from clothing to costume and clothing to historical museum artefact. As fashions continued to evolve throughout the following century, eighteenth-century women’s clothing was mostly passed over as a source for altering into fashionable dress and, instead, entered the realm of forgotten antiques – as far as regular wear was concerned. There was significant interest in this apparel, however, for a new purpose: costumes. The first section of this chapter discusses eighteenth-century clothing’s usage for fancy dress and theatrical wear. This is the first main contextual shift: from clothing to costume worn as representation of the past. Physical alterations often accompanied this new usage as later fashionable silhouettes differed significantly from the eighteenth-century. Additionally, Victorians and Edwardians sometimes put their own “spin” on eighteenth-century aesthetics, even when working with an original specimen.

The next contextual shift removes the clothes from the body entirely and encases them within the museum. While this can seem like a final, deadening transition, and the museum akin to a mausoleum, it can also be interpreted as a new chapter in the social lives of garments. Instead of de-contextualization, I think of it more as a re-contextualization from contemporary cultural actor to historical informant. There are multiple ways clothing performs this new function: as a stop on the timeline of fashion; a product of manufacturing processes; an intimate part of people’s lives. Interpretive agendas within the museum also could modify the object’s
form. Conservation treatment was and is performed to stabilize objects and safeguard them for the future. Restoration, a more invasive procedure, alters appearances, usually to reverse the effects of changes made at some point after initial construction.

This thesis is not a complete social history of eighteenth-century women’s clothing alterations or post-acquisition consumption. Rather it seeks to build a strong and solid foundation of extensive in-depth object-based study synthesized with substantial archival material to identify and describe processes fundamental to everyday life for so many women. It is a narrative that strives to explicate the multiple lives and incarnations of garments worn by women during the long eighteenth century.
Chapter Two: Changing States: Clothing Mending and Maintenance

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses various methods and techniques employed to maintain women’s clothing throughout the eighteenth century. Because of the significant investment clothing represented to people at multiple social levels, ensuring garments’ longevity was a common and pressing concern. Consequently, considerable time, energy and ingenuity were devoted to this endeavour. Examining the various ways this type of work manifested offers glimpses into the responsibilities and activities of women’s daily lives, their habitual practices and their determination to “make it work.”

This chapter is divided into two main categories of clothing maintenance: sewing-related and solvent-related. Sewing-related maintenance comprises mending and darning, what I term maintenance alterations, and turning. Mending and darning are related and similar practices, but I use the terms distinctly. While both refer to repair work darning is a specific technique and mending a more general practice. What I term maintenance alterations refers to larger scale intervention rather than typical mending such as replacing whole parts of garments. Turning referred to flipping around the pieces of a garment to make the “wrong” side the new “right” side. It could be included among maintenance alterations, but was a recognized practice in its own right during the eighteenth century. The solution-related category concerns laundry and the application of emulsions to garments and textiles for maintenance purposes. I divided this into the areas of washing (referring to general laundering) and cleaning which often involved specific garments. I also discuss additional related finishing practices including starching and ironing,
calendering and scouring. Finally, I analyze re-dyeing clothes as a means to refresh their appearance.

The material for this chapter derives primarily from my direct examination of surviving garments combined and cross-referenced with analyses of personal and household accounts. For the section on washing I also consulted contemporary manuals on household management.

2.2 Mending

Mending was likely the most frequent post-production sewing work performed on women’s clothing. Although largely unexplored, historical resources reveal great variety within this universal practice. Virtually every type of garment women wore was subject to mending throughout its life. This encompassed both undergarments such as shifts, stays, stockings, pockets and hoops, and outer garments such as dresses, petticoats, jackets, cloaks, shoes, aprons, shawls/fichus, mittens, gloves and hats.

English wardrobes generally expanded throughout the eighteenth century as accessibility to greater numbers of goods increased,\(^1\) however, most people’s complement of clothing remained limited.\(^2\) The household and personal accounts I consulted show that even prosperous women acquired only one or two new dresses or ensembles per year. Only the wealthiest possessed very large wardrobes. Individual garments, particularly dresses, petticoats, cloaks and

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\(^2\) No definitive assessment of average wardrobe sizes has been published but Anne Buck’s discussion of dress among the “common people” of eighteenth-century England suggests that labouring class wardrobes consisted of one or more full working ensembles and usually a single new or best set of clothes for Sundays supplemented with additional pieces such as multiple aprons, caps and handkerchiefs. Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Batsford, 1979) 139-155. More recently, John Styles’ book on eighteenth-century plebeian clothing corroborates Buck’s findings concluding that ordinary people often succeeded in owning changes of at least some items of clothing. John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 55.
stays were kept and worn for many years, even decades – for as long as the material remained serviceable. Consequently, the individual pieces of women’s wardrobes were exposed to oft-repeated instances of wear and tear. Extant garments and anecdotal written evidence demonstrate that the specific causes, forms and quality of mending were as varied as the garments themselves.

Identifying eighteenth-century in-use mending and repairs on surviving clothing is often difficult. Many garments were altered or mended in the nineteenth century and this work has confused or even obliterated much of the earlier work. Additionally, a certain portion of garments were entirely re-made at some point in the eighteenth century, also erasing prior mending. However, I examined eighteen dresses, nine jackets/bodices and several each of petticoats, stays, aprons, stomachers, pockets, mittens, handkerchiefs/fichus and shoes that do present in-use mending and repair. Furthermore, several of these display multiple instances of repair work.

Potential damage to clothing fell into two main types: internally derived and externally inflicted. The first category affected garments from the inside out stemming from causes related to the human body itself. Throughout the eighteenth-century women’s clothes were fitted through the upper torso and arms, resulting in specific stress points for the garment, particularly across the back and over the top of the shoulders, at the underarm - where the sleeves joined with dress or jacket bodices - and along waist seams of dresses. Over time the mechanical tension exerted by the body on seams led to pulled stitches, weakened fabric and tears.

I found mending frequently along upper centre back seams of women’s dress and jacket bodices where the seam and fabric were pulled and stressed from tension across the back, likely
caused by everyday movement of the arms (fig. 2.1).\textsuperscript{3} This type of stress could also necessitate mending at the back of the shoulders as seen on at least one example (fig. 2.2).\textsuperscript{4} Many bodices were cut and constructed with a strap running over the shoulder into which sleeve heads were pleated and sewn. The linen linings of these often have patches applied over a weakened area, fabric piecing to replace a worn out section or mending stitches to reinforce weak points or repair tears and frayed fabric edges (fig. 2.3).\textsuperscript{5} Many stays also had shoulder straps, sewn only to the back allowing fit adjustment at the front of the body. Such straps are now frequently in poor condition from the stress of being pulled taut over the shoulders and wear from friction against the body.\textsuperscript{6}

Underarm areas experienced both stress to seams and significant amounts of abrasion from arms rubbing against the side of the body. Several of the women’s dresses I examined exhibit patches applied to the underarm area where sleeve meets bodice or show signs of mending in the same area (fig. 2.4).\textsuperscript{7} As with shoulder straps I found this form of wear and tear on stays as well. Staymakers must have anticipated this, often adding leather binding at the underarms as reinforcement. However, even these deteriorated through use and some examples feature patches applied over top of these bindings (fig. 2.5).\textsuperscript{8} The exteriors of stays, apart from the armholes, were also prone to wear and several are patched through the body, along the centre

\textsuperscript{3} For example, Manchester Art Galleries, Platt Hall accession number 1947.1604, dress, c.1760-80.
\textsuperscript{4} Manchester Art Galleries, Platt Hall accession number 1947.503, sack dress and petticoat, 1760-70.
\textsuperscript{5} For example, Museum of London 35.35/1, dress c.1750-80.
\textsuperscript{6} For example, Manchester Art Galleries, Platt Hall accession number 1947.1625, stays c.1800.
\textsuperscript{7} One dress I examined at the Fashion Museum in Bath (BATMC.I.09.40) along with two dresses (35.46, 38.199X1) and one jacket (A12414) at the Museum of London have patches applied to the underarm area. One dress at Worthing Museum (1981/417/1), the same two dresses and jacket plus a set of jumps (A7591) at the Museum of London have additional mending.
\textsuperscript{8} One pair at the Museum of London (56.73/4) and another at Manchester City Galleries, The Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall (1970.202).
fig. 2.1 Dress (bodice back interior detail), c.1760-80, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester 1947.1604 (author’s photograph). Showing mended centre back seam.

fig. 2.2 Dress (proper left back shoulder interior), 1760-70, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester 1947.503 (author’s photograph). The rough stitching and untidy appearance strongly suggest mending.
fig. 2.3 Dress (bodice back interior detail), c.1750-80, Museum of London 35.35/1 (author’s photograph). The ends of the shoulder straps have been patched. Also, one is lined with the dress fabric (unusual) while the other with the more typical linen. Both of these features indicate repair or re-working.

fig. 2.4 Dress (proper left sleeve detail), 1780-90, Museum of London 38.199X1 (author’s photograph). Self-fabric patches have been subtly applied to the sleeve and bodice around the underarm seam.
back lacing edges and on the waist tabs (fig. 2.6).9

Waist seams are another area that experienced stress. Several of the dresses I examined show mending of the seam itself and sometimes also darning of tears in the fabric. Although skirts of women’s dresses throughout the entire century were typically floor-length and very full, dress textiles were rarely heavy enough to cause such damage on their own. Therefore, this stress must have derived from physical activity combined with how closely bodices were fitted.

In addition to direct mechanical effects of the body on clothes, the multiple layers that made up women’s daily ensembles also impacted each other through friction. For example, stays could themselves create the need for mending as they formed a rigid layer against which dress or jacket bodice linings lay and were likely abraded. Numerous examples feature bodice linings mended and patched at seams and other random areas throughout the body (fig. 2.7). Petticoat waistbands – which also rested directly over the stays - were particularly prone to wearing out, requiring extensive mending and even full replacement (fig. 2.8).

External causes for repair and mending ran the gamut from normal, everyday wear to the exceptional one-off accidents and incidents that peppered life and warranted re-telling in letters or journal entries. They also affected different types of garments from those damaged by internal causes, such as aprons and handkerchiefs. Possibly the most common type of such wear and, subsequently, repair on women’s garments were to dress and petticoat hems. Constantly brushing across floors or dragging across the ground not only dirtied hems but also damaged them. Mending solutions included re-stitching segments where hems had come down, darning, and

fig. 2.5 Stays (proper right upper edge detail), c. 1750, Museum of London 56.73/4. The irregular shapes of the leather patches, in addition to their rough placement over top of the binding and application indicate repair work.

fig. 2.6 Stays (proper right detail), 1760-80, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall 1970.202 (author’s photograph). Showing small white (leather) patches on the tabs along the lower part of the stays.
fig. 2.7 Dress (bodice back interior detail), 1769-70, Museum of London A12409a (author’s photograph). Showing mended bodice seams.

fig. 2.8 Petticoat (waistline detail), 1740s, Museum of London 50.6/1b (author’s photograph). This petticoat waistband was patched in two places.
patching worn and abraded areas. Hems were often bound with silk or wool tape or deeply faced with a thin silk textile to protect the dress or petticoat fabric. These too were mended, patched and had sections replaced. For example, a dress at the Museum of London has a hem faced with thin silk cloth. One part of the facing is light-coloured silk while the rest is dark green; most likely one of these is a later addition to replace an area of damaged cloth (fig. 2.9). Another Museum of London dress shows multiple rows of stitching and inconsistent techniques suggesting this hem was re-stitched (fig. 2.10). A third dress has a hem deeply faced with thin silk but also with narrower silk tape. Since no other dress I examined shows this combination it seems most likely the tape was added sometime after the facing to cover up damage and/or to reinforce the hem (fig. 2.11).

Many women’s dresses and other garments were fastened by pinning at the bodice fronts and pins easily harm textiles. During much of the eighteenth century bodice fronts were filled in with a separate stomacher to which the bodice front edges were pinned (fig. 2.12a-b). In addition to the numerous pin marks still visible on many bodice and stomacher edges, tears and holes were also inevitable consequences. The style of bodice fronts changed during the last quarter of the century to edges that met at the centre front, eliminating stomachers. The new bodices featured very low necklines that were filled in with voluminous white handkerchiefs, sometimes called *fichus*. The ends or corners of fichus were sometimes tucked into bodice necklines, but were also pinned directly to the bodice fronts. Frequent pinning damaged the outer fabric sometimes necessitating repairs made to the bodice fronts on dresses either dating from

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10 Museum of London A7564, dress 1770s.
12 Museum of London 55.47-1, dress, 1780s.
14 ibid. 267.
15 ibid. 326.
fig. 2.9 Dress (skirt hem interior detail), 1770s, Museum of London A7564 (author’s photograph). Showing two different fabrics used to face the skirt hem.

fig. 2.10 Dress (skirt hem interior detail), c. 1750-1780, Museum of London 63.135 (author’s photograph). Multiple rows and styles of stitching indicate repair work.

fig. 2.11 Dress (skirt hem interior detail), 1780s, Museum of London 55.47/1 (author’s photograph). Binding applied over a deeper facing strongly suggests this was for repair.
fig. 2.12a Ensemble consisting of gown, petticoat and stomacher, 1751-55, Museum of London 89.56a-c.

fig. 2.12b Stomacher from the ensemble above, 1751-55, Museum of London 89.56a-c (author’s photograph).
fig. 2.13 Dress (bodice front detail), 1770-80, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall 1947.825 (author’s photograph). The small dark dots scattered near the bodice front edges are from pins.
after 1770 or remodelled at that time (fig. 2.13). These repairs took the form of piecing, patching, darning or mending stitching.\(^{16}\) Pinning left its mark on the fichus as well and surviving examples bear the marks of darning, particularly along edges and at ends (fig. 2.14).\(^{17}\)

Aprons were a ubiquitous utilitarian component of nearly every woman’s everyday dress - even when worn decoratively among the upper classes.\(^{18}\) No self-respecting woman went about her day entirely without one. As such, they often took the brunt of any mess or damage at a woman’s front in order to protect the costlier dress fabric underneath - as was their purpose. Rents and tears must have been very common and anticipated; however, this did not mean aprons were considered disposable. Most aprons I examined show signs of mending, darning or other forms of repair. One example at the Museum of London is darned in numerous places with very careful stitching mimicking the textile’s weave (fig. 2.15).\(^{19}\) The waistbands and ties of aprons were also subject to injury in the course of daily life. For example, a witness at an Old Bailey trial in February of 1790 deposed that “here is the apron string which I am sure I tore off; and it tore off a little bit of the apron; it was torn in turning out a fat hog”.\(^{20}\) Many of the aprons I examined (at the Museum of London) were decorative and not intended for hard labour. However, even among these were some with damaged or broken ties, and others now missing their ties altogether. Pockets were further universal items in a woman’s daily sartorial arsenal.\(^{21}\) Capacious and worn close to the body underneath petticoats and dresses they represented an entire inner and personal

\(^{16}\) For example, Platt Hall 1960.219/2, dress 1780-90 exhibits repairs to bodice fronts with self-fabric.
\(^{17}\) Seven out of the seventeen handkerchiefs I examined at the Museum of London were darned.
\(^{19}\) Museum of London 92.111-2, apron, 1770-1800.
\(^{20}\) Proceedings of the Old Bailey, t17900224-1
fig. 2.14 Handkerchief (corner detail), 1791-1800, Museum of London Z1033COS (author’s photograph). A tear was darned in this gauze handkerchief or fichu.

fig. 2.15 Apron (bottom front detail), 1770-1800, Museum of London 92.111-2 (author’s photograph). Darned tears and weakened areas near the hem of an apron.
world of activity and meaning. Forerunners to modern purses, pockets contained anything and everything a woman felt she needed close and easy access to throughout her day. The famous nursery rhyme:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Lucy Locket lost her pocket,} \\
&\text{Kitty Fisher found it;} \\
&\text{Not a penny was there in it,} \\
&\text{Only ribbon round it.}
\end{align*}
\]

derives from eighteenth-century England. In addition to intimating the place of pockets within the social subconscious of the period it also acts as a vehicle for specific cultural clues: Kitty Fisher was a famous beauty and courtesan of the mid-century.\(^{22}\) Linking her with pockets alludes to their peculiarly feminine intimacy. More prosaically, worn in pairs or singly attached to a waist tie their constant use subjected them to significant wear and tear. Hands continually delved into them, stressing their openings and scraping their fronts while daily fastening and unfastening wore out the ties. Rarely mentioned in account books or other manuscript writings, many surviving examples tell stories of use and repair that written documents neglect. Unlike many other garments, pockets were easily made at home by the women who used them.\(^{23}\) Since pockets were one of the most safely private places women could lay claim to, it seems only natural they developed caring attitudes towards them. In addition to being embroidered these accessories, which primarily remained hidden, were darned, mended, patched and had their waist ties and bindings replaced (fig. 2.16).\(^{24}\)


\(^{24}\) For example, Museum of London pocket 49.23/2 has been darned and on Museum of London pair of pockets 49.91/2 one was patched at the back and had a tear darned while the other had the opening binding repaired.
fig. 2.16 Pocket (opening detail), 1701-25, Museum of London 49.23/2 (author’s photograph). Showing an area of darning to the right of the pocket opening.
Petticoats and gown fronts were also subjected to assaults of daily life, despite aprons. Lady Mary Coke recounted some misadventures that befell one of her petticoats. For example, in 1766:

I amused myself for some time with a great Monkey that is chained in the yard; it was nursing a small cat, but as I thought it teazed it, I desired the Mistress to take it from her, by which I incur’d the Creature’s displeasure so highly She flew upon me, catch’d hold of my petticoat & bit a piece out of it immediately, upon which I quitted Mrs Peggy to write my journal, which I believe a safer employment.  

And a mishap at court in 1769:

The King & Queen were very civil: when her Majesty had done speaking to me unfortunately the flounce of my petticoat intangled with hers, & tho’ I tore my own it was some little time before I cou’d separate them: the Queen smiled & saide to Ly Holdernessse, ‘Lady Mary seems to have no mind to part with me.’

Both of these instances would have necessitated mending to make the garments presentable again. Few surviving dresses or petticoats show evidence of in-use mending; however, information gleaned from Old Bailey trials indicate that mending dress skirts and petticoats may have been commonplace for everyday dresses of non-elite women. Most references to gown mending are unspecific, but a few do relate or allude to the skirts more directly. For example, at her 1787 trial for theft Elizabeth Parry deposed, “I have had that gown these five years, and more than that; there were two pieces tore off the skirt, and I had them sewed on again”.

Sometimes, garments exhibit multiple layers of mending, each one unique and distinct caused by both internal and external forces, revealing narratives of use and care over a prolonged period of

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26 The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke Volume 3 1769-1771, (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, 1970), 152.
27 Old Bailey Proceeding t17871024-20.

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fig. 2.17a Jumps, 1741-50, Museum of London A7591 (author’s photograph). Showing the garment interior; the squares and strips of solid yellow and brown are repair patches.

fig. 2.17b Jumps (proper right side detail), 1741-50, Museum of London A7591 (author’s photograph). The square of yellow fabric is a repair patch and was applied over prior darning work.
time. One example is a set of jumps at the Museum of London (fig. 2.17a-b). Patches applied to the original layer of construction were overlaid with additional patches, both inside and outside the garment, primarily at seams. Many of the patches are also surrounded by darning. Added together, a suggestive timeline of work emerges. Most likely, when fabric at the lower edges of the seams first began to wear and show signs of stress it was mended. At some point the mending weakened and a patch of matching fabric was applied to the area. In time, the patch itself degraded at the bottom corner of the seam and another smaller patch of matching fabric was applied over the first. Still later on, the fabric around the patch began to pull and deteriorate, so extensive darning around the entire area and over top of the patches was performed. The actual length of time this garment remained in regular service is unknowable, yet the extensive amount of work put into it strongly suggests a determination to keep it functional over many years.

Determining the frequency that most garments were mended is nearly impossible. The percentage of total mending work represented by account entries is unknowable and the vast majority of mending was no doubt performed on an as-needed basis rather than according to any schedule. However, occasional patterns sometimes unfold. For example, starting in 1749 at intervals of nine to eighteen months Gertrude Savile simultaneously purchased a new set of stays and brought in old ones for mending and maintenance. This happened nine times until November 1756, less than a year before the accounts stop. She did not have stays mended at other times, nor did she purchase new ones outside these times when old ones were also repaired. Evidently, she developed a routine for managing her stays that particularly suited her. Tellingly, Savile only developed this pattern after she permanently moved to London suggesting better or more regular access to such services in the capital as compared with provincial Nottingham. Similar behaviour

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extended to other garments such as dresses and caps.\textsuperscript{29} Although this happened far less regularly, Savile herself, Lady Louisa FitzPatrick and Mrs Francis Hamilton all recorded instances of concurrently having something new made and something old mended.\textsuperscript{30}

Mending was typically performed by any one or combination of three parties: the owner of the item; a personal servant of the owner; or an outside worker such as a seamstress or mantua maker. Household account books supplemented with Old Bailey records were particularly informative on this topic. Interestingly, class was not the primary determinant of who might execute repairs. Elite women did not automatically consider mending a task beneath their dignity,\textsuperscript{31} nor were socio-economically humbler women, even those on parish relief, always forced to mend their own clothes.\textsuperscript{32} With cost of labour generally so low, having someone else perform one’s mending was an option available to people on many different economic levels.\textsuperscript{33} Instead, the source material (such as household and personal accounts and Old Bailey trial records) suggests garment type was the stronger dictator of who mended it. Products of specialist trades such as staymaking, hoop making, and shoe making were typically brought to those same specialists for mending and repair jobs, regardless of the owner’s status.

\textsuperscript{29} Account Books of Gertrude Savile, Nottinghamshire Archives DD/SR A4/45-46.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.; Bills & Receipts for Lady Louisa FitzPatrick, 1763-1770, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Office R.O.32/16/1/3a - R.O.32/16/12/9; Accounts of Mrs Francis Hamilton, 1797-1800, Somerset Heritage Centre DD/FS 5/2.1-5/2.2.
\textsuperscript{31} In 1727 Gertrude Savile petulantly recorded in her diary “Ellen [maid servant] is good for so little, she cant (sic) mend Stockings [...] nor indeed do anything else [...] mending Stockings 2 hr” Diaries of Gertrude Savile Nottinghamshire Archives DDSR 212/10/1 Tuesday July 25, 1727. Savile also recorded working on mending her own pockets, Ibid. Wednesday August 2, 1727.
Entries for mending and repairing stays feature regularly in account books of women occupying various positions within polite society, suggesting they rarely performed such work domestically. For these women, stays routinely cost somewhere around two pounds, representing a major financial outlay.\textsuperscript{34} Conversely, stays mending was typically recorded at one to five shillings, a significant savings over commissioning a new pair.\textsuperscript{35} Labouring class women also entrusted their stays mending to experts. For example, Elizabeth and Mary French were nieces of Hannah French, housekeeper for the Orlebar household in Bedfordshire. After Hannah French’s death it appears the Orlebars supported the nieces in fitting them out to start their working lives. In addition to school fees and travelling expenses, bills paid by Mr. Orlebar encompassed their wardrobes, including mending stays for both young women.\textsuperscript{36} Even if this was an uncommon arrangement it demonstrates that not only did labouring class women wear stays, but they were not necessarily expected to mend them. The 1744 diary of staymaker Richard Viney corroborates this, recording several instances of making repairs to stays for a spectrum of customers ranging from local elites (gentry or petty aristocracy) to his own, humbler, neighbours.\textsuperscript{37}

Hoops, or hoop petticoats, were structural garments made from ovoid cane hoops encased in linen or silk short petticoats, creating the fashionably wide skirt silhouette from the 1730s to the 1770s.\textsuperscript{38} Tears in the cloth could be repaired at home, as Gertrude Savile recorded in her

\textsuperscript{34} Based on costs recorded in Account Books of Gertrude Savile, Martha Dodson’s Account Book, 1746-1765, Museum of London 80.71, Bills & Receipts for Lady Louisa FitzPatrick, Account Book of Elizabeth Dodson, National Art Library, V&A 86 SS 77, Account Book of Mrs Diana Eyre, 1749-77, Doncaster Archives DD/DC/H6/1, Account Books of Isabella Wrightson, Doncaster Archive DD/BW/A/4.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Elizabeth French Bills, Bedfordshire Archives OR 2071/142; Mary French Bills, Bedfordshire Archives OR 2071/150.
\textsuperscript{37} Diary of Richard Viney, Staymaker, 1744, British Library Add MS 44935. Either brought to his home (which doubled as his workplace) or which he worked on in the customer’s home.
\textsuperscript{38} Cunnington, \textit{Handbook of English Costume in the 18\textsuperscript{th} Century}, 106.
diary in September 1728: “Mended a hoop petticoat all day.” However, damage to the hoops themselves likely required specialist intervention. Despite cane’s pliability, snapped hoops must have been a regular occurrence. Hoop petticoat mending appears in three account books. Gertrude Savile paid for mending “old” short hoop petticoats in October 1749 and April 1752 alongside purchases of new ones. Isabella Wrightson paid for “My hoop mending” in December 1743 and July 1748. Diana Eyre had her hoop petticoat(s) mended in October 1751 and September 1752. In Savile’s accounts the entries for simultaneous mending and purchase of hoops indicates the old ones were brought to the hoopmaker for repair.

Shoes-mending also features prominently in several of the household and personal accounts I consulted. Most women, even among the prosperous, owned limited quantities of shoes. And work involving the hard leather heels and soles were beyond the scope of most women’s sewing abilities. While typically nowhere near the expense of stays, shoes still represented a significant sum per pair and likely wore out more quickly than stays. Most women led domestically very busy lives actively managing households within the upper echelons of the society or working for wages at the trade level(s) or below. Wearing a few pairs of shoes day in and day out meant the leather soles and heels required regular attention. Shoe mending appears in most of the account books examined for this study, featuring most prominently in

40 Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
41 Account Books of Isabella Wrightson.
42 Account Book of Mrs Diana Eyre.
43 Gregory King estimated an average shoe consumption of 2 pairs per person per year in 1690s England and calculated that only 2 percent of the populace went unshod, N.B. Harte, “The Economics of Clothing in the late Seventeenth Century,” Textile History 22, no. 2 (1991): 277-296, 284. However, per capita consumption still had not increased substantially over half a century later, Giorgio Riell, A Foot in the Past: Consumers, Producers & Footwear in the Long Eighteenth Century, 22.
those of Anne Brockman, Gertrude Savile, Diana Eyre, Martha Dodson, and Mrs. Francis Hamilton. In fact, entries for shoe repairs form the majority of repair expenses recorded by Mrs. Francis Hamilton - fifteen entries over three years regarding her own shoes and many more for her servants or household. New pairs of shoes cost these women approximately five to seven shillings while mending them was generally a matter of pence. The most frequent phrase used is simply “mending Shoes” and tends to appear far oftener than purchases of new pairs. This strongly suggests mending was the shoemaker’s real bread and butter. One shoe of a pair at the Museum of London provides an example of this type of work with a leather patch applied to the sole (fig. 2.18).  

Based on my direct observation, most fashionable women’s shoes were seamed up the centre back and up either side of the arches. These seams were typically covered by silk tape that was also used as binding around the opening, tongue and latchets (see fig.2.20). However, both the silk tapes and the seams themselves became worn and stressed resulting in the need for repairs. While soles and heels required professional expertise, repairs to seams of fabric shoes might be performed at home, demonstrated by the testimony of a witness in a 1783 Old Bailey theft trial. The witness, a servant of the prosecutrix, identified a pair of shoes stolen from her mistress by a back seam she had sewed up only the night previous. Several pairs of shoes at the Museum of London provide material evidence of mending work that may have been performed domestically. For example, a pair of black satin shoes from 1785-1800 have been darned with contemporary thread at the back of the heel (fig. 2.19), the binding on a shoe from the 1750s shows repair.

46 Museum of London A15015a-b, shoe 1720-50
47 Old Bailey Proceeding t17830226-67.
48 Museum of London 52.27a-b shoe 1785-95.
fig. 2.18 Shoe (detail), 1720-50, Museum of London A15015 (author’s photograph). Showing the leather patch on the sole.

fig. 2.19 Shoe, 1785-95, Museum of London 52.27a (author’s photograph). Showing an area of darning to the right of the back seam binding, near the heel.
fig. 2.20 Shoe (detail), 1730-50, Museum of London 39.133/6 (author’s photograph). The rough stitching around the piece of green ribbon binding at the centre of the image indicates repair work.

fig. 2.21 Shoe (detail), 1700-25, Museum of London 33.303/2 (author’s photograph). The lacing hole has been overcast stitched to prevent further fraying.
stitching (fig. 2.20), and a pair of tie shoes from 1705-15 had their torn lacing holes repaired (fig. 2.21).

Gown or dress mending appears at some point in almost every set of accounts, but inconsistently and surely far less frequently than actually required. This points to a dual approach likely employed by women: sometimes an outside professional (mantuamaker, milliner, seamstress or laundress) was paid to mend and other times the work was performed in-house by either a servant or oneself. The criteria for deciding to mend a dress domestically or professionally are difficult to determine from the evidence I consulted; however, one suggestive trend emerged. Middling-elite women may have sent their dresses out for mending more than those above them. Both the very wealthy Anne Brockman at the beginning of the century and Lady Louisa FitzPatrick in the third quarter of the century almost never record charges in their accounts or receipts for having dresses mended, while the more modestly prosperous Gertrude Savile in the middle of the century recorded several instances of gown mending and repair work in their accounts. Presumably, very wealthy women boasted enough maidservants to not require outside assistance, while women with more modestly sized households periodically needed it. However, Martha Dodson, also of middling fortune, recorded no entries for gown mending, suggesting personal preference also may have come into play. Women at the lower end of polite society may have been more inclined to perform the work themselves. During the three years covered by Mrs Francis Hamilton’s account book only one possible entry for gown mending was recorded, although hers is the most active account for shoe mending. In her article on a family facing progressively reduced circumstances, Mary Anne Gary relates, “it is in

49 Museum of London 39.133/6a-b, shoe 1730-50.
50 Museum of London 33.303/2, shoe 1700-25.
51 for example, “Mending Grey Silk Gown 1s,” 18 September 1738, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
52 Accounts of Francis Hamilton, March 17, 1797.
1794 after the departure of her housekeeper that Mrs Larpent first records doing ‘useful work.’

Useful or plain work included mending. Old Bailey records show the division of mending between domestic and professional spheres extended to non-elite women as well. Out of thirty-eighteenth-century trial records I found wherein the mending of women’s clothing was mentioned, eleven times the mending was performed by the garment’s owner, two times by a household servant and fourteen times by sending the garment(s) out or bringing someone into the house for the purpose (three instances were indeterminable). For example, Elizabeth Parry (mentioned above) testified that she “had (italics mine) [the pieces torn off her gown’s skirt] sewed on again,” rather than that she sewed them on again. Similarly, witness Ann Hyam testified at a trial in 1745, “I had this gown from Mrs Rayner to mend, and it was very much torn when it came to me.” Alternatively, a witness for a trial of June 1778 deposed “I had only five farthings, and that they gave me for thread to mend my gown, which they had torn.” And in 1790 prosecutrix Mary Wood identified an apron stolen from her and boasted, “I always mend my own clothes.”

Pieces and lengths of costly hand-worked lace were highly fashionable items worn about women’s heads and necks. From time to time these required mending, possibly from being snagged by pins on clothing, either functional or decorative. In addition to purchases, lace mending periodically appears in most of the household and personal accounts I examined. In

53 Mary Anne Gary, “‘After they went I worked’: Mrs Larpent and her Needlework, 1790-1800”, Costume 39 no.1 (2005): 95.
54 Old Bailey Proceeding t17871024-20.
55 Old Bailey Proceeding t17451016-10.
56 Old Bailey Proceeding t17780603-39.
57 Old Bailey Proceeding t17900224-1.
58 Most of the account books I used are littered with purchases for lace, either on its own or to trim caps, handkerchiefs and aprons. Additionally, virtually any piece of 18th century visual culture (paintings or prints) depicting women includes lace on their person somewhere, whether they were fashionable women or not.
June 1708 Anne Brockman paid “for mending ye Lace & joyning with new edging”. In May 1737 Gertrude Savile paid for “Mending a black Lace Hood 3-6.” Later in the century Martha Dodson’s account book includes twelve entries for mending pieces of lace or small articles such as caps made from it, and most entries date from her annual London visits. Whether the account book entries represent all her lace mending or whether only problems considered sufficiently severe were given to professional London needlewomen, is impossible to know. However, she was certainly more willing to pay specially for this work in London than at home in Cookham. This suggests she may have reserved such work for periods when professional needlewomen of the capital were directly available to her.

By comparison, although many eighteenth-century handkerchiefs and aprons I examined at the Museum of London were mended and darned, such work rarely appears in account books. This strongly suggests that among elite women such articles were generally mended within the home, either by the owner or by a servant as part of her regular duties. Of course, there are always exceptions. After attaining financial independence and her own household, Gertrude Savile was more willing to pay someone outside the home to perform this work. In October 1739 she recorded having a laced handkerchief mended for one shilling; in December 1744 she recorded having a laced apron mended for nine pence. The addition of lace to an article rendered it more costly than a plain one, possibly justifying the expense of paying someone specifically to mend it. Among women who appeared at the Old Bailey there was a more even split between mending these items at home and paying for such work. In February 1762 Jane Henning deposed that a handkerchief in question was bought by her previously and kept in her

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59 14 June 1708, Anne Brockman her Account Booke.
60 19 May 1737, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
61 For example, “Paid mending lace mob 0.1.6,” 11 April 1747, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
62 15 October 1739, 29 December 1744, Account Books of Gertrude Savile. “Laced” refers to an article trimmed with lace.
box “till [she] could find time to mend it.”\textsuperscript{63} However, a witness in a December 1781 trial described, in detail, repairs she had made to an apron for a Mrs Moore, also for purposes of identifying the item. This witness stated “I cannot swear to a few stitches, it was a seam tore in the middle, it is a whipt seam, if it is Mrs Moore’s apron.”\textsuperscript{64} Furthermore, even though much mending was performed domestically it was contracted out often enough to form the primary occupation for some women. A witness in Elizabeth Harwood’s 1754 trial described her work as “She used to mend, and such like”.\textsuperscript{65}

Other garment types appear intermittently in account books including gloves, tippets, cloaks, capuchines, shifts, stomachers and ruffles of varying sorts. Some of these such as cloaks, tippets and capuchines probably needed mending very rarely. Gloves, ruffles and shifts must have required repair more frequently than their appearances in the account books represent suggesting particular circumstances attended decisions not to mend an item at home, possibly the degree of repair required and/or the owner’s situation at the time.

Costs for paying someone to mend clothes varied considerably, although they were always significantly less than even the low labour costs for buying new. In August 1743 Gertrude Savile recorded having a new gown made for two shillings and three pence and at the same time having three gowns mended for the same amount.\textsuperscript{66} Different costs for mending the same type of garment appear constantly in all of the accounts studied, strongly suggesting that the nature or extent of work determined the price and was decided on a case by case basis. For example, amounts for mending Gertrude Savile’s stays ranged from one to five shillings and

\textsuperscript{63} Old Bailey Proceeding t17620224-2.  
\textsuperscript{64} Old Bailey Proceeding t17811205-55.  
\textsuperscript{65} Old Bailey Proceeding t17540424-35.  
\textsuperscript{66} 15 August 1743, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
mending shoes were two pence to a shilling. Martha Dodson paid from six pence to three shillings to have items or pieces of lace mended. Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick’s stays cost anywhere from one shilling and sixpence to eleven shillings to mend.

### 2.3 Maintenance Alterations

Repair work consisted of not only mending and patching but also re-covering and replacing component parts of clothing. Re-covering was not applicable to all garment types, only those made up of multiple layers such as stays and stomachers. Anne Brockman recorded several payments for re-covering stays between 1706 and 1721 in her account book and one instance of “new covering” a stomacher. Identifying instances of re-covering on extant garments is often difficult unless poorly executed and/or with materials demonstrably at odds with the whole. One rare example at the Museum of London is a set of stays dating to the late seventeenth century which appear to be covered with reclaimed embroidered fabric from a dress bodice. That these stays absolutely represent an instance of re-covering is uncertain. However, given the labour-intensiveness of staymaking from the late seventeenth century through the eighteenth it seems highly unlikely that old fabric – however sumptuously embroidered – would be used to cover new stays.

In addition to re-covering, personal and household account ledgers indicate that replacing certain parts of garments was performed as a form of maintenance. Re-lining a garment or part of

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68 For example: “mending lace of ruffles 6[d],” 20 April 1754; “paid mending lace of hankerchief 0.3.0,” 22 May 1751 Martha Dodson’s Account Book.

69 For example: “To mending Lady L: Stays 0-1-6,” 1 September 1763, R.O.32/16/1/3a; “pd for mending Stays 0-11-0,” 1766, R.O.32/16/4/4, Bills and Lady Louisa FitzPatrick.

70 For example, “pd Goody Baker for covering my Stayes & materiallls 0-4-9”, 4 May 1706, Anne Brockman her Account Booke.

71 Museum of London A12525, stays 1670-90.
one was the most common type of replacement I encountered in account books. Like cases of recovering, replaced linings are difficult to identify on much surviving clothing. Linings of stays were expressly intended for replacement and were added at the very end of the construction process, basted around only the perimeter edges to facilitate their removal. \(^{72}\) Stays were expensive garments, routinely costing ten shillings to two pounds depending on the client’s status. It was anticipated that the linings would soil and wear out soonest, being separated from the skin by only a thin linen shift underneath. Making their linings easily replaceable both prolonged the life of the stays and maintained their clean and neat appearance. Diana Eyre recorded payment for lining her stays in 1756 and Martha Dodson specified three instances of having her stays re-lined between 1751 and 1764.\(^{73}\)

In a similar vein a riding jacket at the Museum of London displays either replaced facings or forethought for such activity.\(^{74}\) On the jacket’s outside the buttonholes are worked with buttonhole stitch, however on the facing inside, the corresponding slits are only whip stitched around the raw edges. This indicates both that the buttonholes were worked prior to the facing being added and that it was constructed for relatively easy removal later on (fig. 2.22a-b).

Other common items to have linings replaced were cloaks (long and short) and sleeves. Martha Dodson had a long cloak lined in 1751 and a capuchine (a type of short cloak)\(^{75}\) lined in 1753.\(^{76}\) Gertrude Savile recorded “New Lineing & Wadding for old Capuchine 12-6” in late October 1748. In late December 1744 Savile paid 0-1-6 for Persian cloth to line the sleeves of an

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\(^{72}\) based on personal examination of more than 25 surviving examples.

\(^{73}\) 21 July 1756, Account Book of Mrs Diana Eyre; 18 June 1751, 20 March 1753, 1 May 1764, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.

\(^{74}\) Museum of London A12984, riding jacket, c.1740-60.


\(^{76}\) 24 December 1751, 31 January 1753, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
fig. 2.22a Riding Jacket (proper left front exterior detail), 1740-60, Museum of London A12894 (author’s photograph). Showing the exterior of the buttonhole.

fig. 2.22b Riding Jacket (proper left front interior detail), 1740-60, Museum of London A12984 (author’s photograph). Showing the interior of the same buttonhole and how the yellow facing fabric is roughly whip stitched to the back of the buttonhole. This would facilitate the facing’s removal and replacement.
“old Sack” and 1-6 for “Lineing for Sleeves” in January 1755. 77 Sleeves were also replaced in their entirety. In March 1797 Mrs Francis Hamilton recorded paying four pence for “putting in Sleeves to a Gown for myself” and Savile paid for “Makeing Sleeves to Green Sack 1s” in 1748. 78 Sleeves are never mentioned individually in the cost for initial construction as they were sewn in one with the garment. Therefore, these must refer to replacement. Replacing the facings of sleeves appears in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century sources. The 1690s correspondence between MP Edward Clarke, in London, and his wife, Mary, home in Chipley, Somerset, includes frequent instructions regarding maintenance of family members’ clothing. Re-facing sleeves on their adolescent daughters’ gowns appears at least twice in their letters. 79

Entire skirt panels were also replaced – with varying degrees of success. In 1759 Christian Williamson wrote to her brother Edmond: “I tryed above 20 Shops to match the Damask but could not do it in my mind, however it is put under the Apron & therefore will not be minded”. 80 Apparently, part of a gown front needed replacement fabric. Furthermore, it appears that people were willing to compromise on this when perfectly matching cloth was unavailable, as long as the discrepancy was not glaring. A dress in the collection at Platt Hall, Manchester attests this was not an isolated incident. The mid-century dress (altered c. 1780) of green silk damask has a back skirt panel that slightly differs in pattern and colour from the whole (fig. 2.23). 81

77 26 October 1748, 29 December 1744, 25 January 1755, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
78 17 March 1797, Accounts of Mrs Francis Hamilton; 30 September 1748, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
80 Christian Williamson to Edmond Williamson, 29 May 1759 Bedfordshire Archives M10/2/112.
81 Platt Hall, 1947.1597, dress c. 1780.
fig. 2.23 Dress (back detail), c.1780, The Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester 1947.1597 (author’s photograph). The central, pleated portion of the dress back is a slightly different fabric from the rest of the garment.
Stockings were another article with a replaceable section. They were commonly made in two pieces on a knitting frame with the bottom of the foot a separate piece sewn in. The foot piece could be later unpicked and replaced.\textsuperscript{82} Instances of this work appears in some of the household accounts; for example, Anne Brockman recorded paying “for footing a pair of Silk Stockings at Cant 0-4-0” in March 1718.\textsuperscript{83} This even appears in literature of the time such as Tobias Smollett’s 1771 satirical comedy, \textit{The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker}. For example, one character, ladies-maid Winnifred Jenkins, wrote from Bath to Brambleton Hall’s housekeeper Mary Jones,

Having got a frank I now return your fever [favour], which I received by Mr Higgins, at the Hot Well, together with the stockings, which his wife footed for me.\textsuperscript{84}

In addition to the general phrase “shoe mending” account books frequently include entries for more specific shoe repair. Payments for “heel piecing” and “topping shoes”, which refer to replacing the cap on the bottom of a heel,\textsuperscript{85} appear in the accounts of Anne Brockman, Gertrude Savile, Martha Dodson and Francis Hamilton. These accounts literally span the century with Anne Brockman’s beginning in 1701 and Francis Hamilton’s ending in 1800, yet the same terminology and phrasing referring to specific shoe mending tasks remains consistent, if not absolutely identical. A plebeian girl’s leather shoe at the Museum of London (a particularly rare item and probably excavated, according to the database record) bears evidence of having the heel (now missing) repaired or replaced at some point.\textsuperscript{86} A gaping hole through the sole and footbed of this shoe is also very telling being located at the ball of the foot. Even if the hole was enlarged by decay over time, it provides proof of a very hard-worn left shoe. Linings wore and required

\textsuperscript{83} 6 March 1718, Anne Brockman her Account Booke.
\textsuperscript{84} Tobias Smollett, \textit{The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker} (1771), (London: Penguin English Library, 2012), 47.
\textsuperscript{85} I derived this definition through interaction with the Museum of London’s database entries for eighteenth-century shoes.
\textsuperscript{86} Museum of London A3800, shoe 1760-85.
replacing too, as in the case of a 1720-50 shoe with the vamp lined in yellow linen when the rest of the shoe lining is white.\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{2.4 Turning}

A particularly ingenious method of prolonging the lives of both textiles and garments was a practice called turning. This involved entirely disassembling a garment, flipping the pieces over, and then re-assembling it with the original underside of the fabric as the new outer side. When a fabric’s surface faded or became worn the reverse side of the cloth usually remained unaffected. Thus, turning potentially doubled not only the useful life of a garment, but also its smart appearance.

The best fabrics for turning were either plain solids, damasks in a single colour, or those with woven stripes that were near identical on both sides. Most brocaded fabrics were unsuitable as their weave resulted in long loose threads on the underside of the cloth that spanned the distance between the design’s motifs. The underside of such textiles would be unattractive and impractical to use for the outer side as those long threads could so easily catch, break or be marred some other way. Brocaded patterns are also indistinct and usually unattractive from the underside (fig. 2.24). Neither were printed fabrics ideal for turning as the dyes often inconsistently penetrated the cloth leaving the underside blotchy in appearance. However, I found two examples at the Museum of London that “prove the rule”. The most surprising was a yellow silk shantung dress brocaded with motifs of red flowers (fig. 2.25).\textsuperscript{88} In this instance the threads making up the floral motifs were cut close to their edges. The motifs are spaced far enough apart that carrying the silk threads between them would have been wasteful. This reduces

\textsuperscript{87} Museum of London A5999, shoe 1720-50.
\textsuperscript{88} Museum of London A10002, dress 1775-85.
fig. 2.24 Dress (skirt hem interior detail), 1761-70, Museum of London 33.92 (author’s photograph). The underside of this silk brocade would be unsuitable for turning.

fig. 2.25 Dress (proper right front detail), 1775-85, Museum of London A10002 (author’s photograph). This silk brocade dress was turned, the underside of the fabric is now the outside. A small area of the fabric’s right side (now on the dress interior) is visible in the bottom right corner of the image.
fig. 2.26a Dress, 1775-85, Museum of London Z656X1 (author’s photograph). The bodice front of a turned silk jacquard dress.

fig. 2.26b Dress (skirt hem interior detail), 1775-85, Museum of London Z656X1 (author’s photograph). The original right side of the fabric, now on the dress interior.
the obviousness of the fabric’s underside and turning was identified only upon close inspection. The other example is a dress made of a silk with both woven stripes and panels of jacquard patterns in multiple colours. In this case, the threads are very short and simply create an abstract sort of design. However, the original right side of the fabric shows distinct floral motifs, visible now on the interior of the skirt (fig. 2.26a-b). A jacket kept at Berrington Hall may also have turned fabric. Altered from an earlier dress the c. 1800 jacket or short gown is made from a blue & white woven floral & stripe silk. The fabric is nearly reversible, but the white floral pattern with blue background currently on the underside has a slightly finer and more finished appearance than the current outer side.

Some garments were better for turning than others. The vast majority of turning recorded in account books and letters involves women’s dresses; however other garments such as jackets, petticoats and cloaks could have received the same treatment. By their constructed nature garments such as stays and quilted petticoats would have been particularly ill-suited for turning. However, a surprising entry in Martha Dodson’s account book records local Cookham woman Hannah Emblin turning a black bonnet (an unlikely candidate) for one shilling in July 1754, illustrating the lengths to which people might go to prolong serviceable wear.

Between 1750 and 1763 Martha Dodson recorded five further instances of garment turning. Three specified the textile: in November 1750 she paid Hannah Emblin, five shillings for “turning a blew damask gown;” in March 1761 she paid Mrs Brownless, in London, for “turning a Stuff gown, etc;” and in November 1763 she paid Emblin again for “turning my red

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89 Museum of London Z656X1, dress 1775-85.
90 Wade Collection SNO40, National Trust property Berrington Hall, Herefordshire.
91 28 July 1754, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
Stuf (sic) gown.” 92 Gertrude Savile recorded having four gowns turned between May 1747 and December 1751 and specified the fabric in two instances: a black sack dress and a yellow gown in May 1750; and a brown and white gown in 1751. 93 Elizabeth Jervis also recorded having two gowns turned, a scarlet gown of unknown fabric in 1753 and a lutstring negligee in 1757. 94

As with mending, turning could be performed either inside the home or by a professional needlewoman depending on the situation or preference of the owner. Both Martha Dodson and Gertrude Savile chose to employ either mantuamakers or other needlewomen to perform this work, at least on occasion. An Old Bailey trial from 1781 includes testimony of a London mantua maker, prosecutrix in a case of theft, identifying a gown stolen from her and later found on the defendant’s person as one which she “had to turn”. 95 Silence on this subject of the other account book writers suggests more that they or their domestic help performed the work rather than never practiced this form of economy at all.

2.5 Mending & Maintenance Supplies

Regardless of where mending work was performed or by whom additional supplies to do it were usually needed. Sometimes consumers anticipated this when purchasing materials or by keeping remnants leftover from initial garment construction. For example, when Gertrude Savile paid for a new “Satten Nightgown” in September 1746 she also bought “A Yd more Satten same of my Nightgown 0-11-0.” 96 Surviving garments patched with pieces of self-fabric corroborate this such as the underarm patching mentioned above. There are even a few instances where some

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92 23 November 1750, 21 March 1761, 3 November 1763, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
93 7 May 1750, 31 December 1751, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
95 Old Bailey Proceedings t17810425-62.
96 17 September 1746, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
leftover material was kept with an altered or re-made garment including one yellow lutestring dress at the Museum of London. This particular dress was altered multiple times involving some additional yellow silk slightly different from the original. Scraps of both silks along with older sleeve pieces were kept with the dress, doubtless in anticipation of further modifications or repairs. In a December 1781 Old Bailey trial a witness recounts “she came down in the morning and brought a petticoat to mend it, she asked me for some pieces to mend it with, I searched the drawer for some.” Clearly, this witness kept cloth scraps for the purposes of mending and small bits of sewing work.

Oftentimes supplies were obtained specifically for the purpose of mending and maintenance. In fact, such purchases represent a sizable portion of account book entries, and, consequently, significant investments in time, money and effort. Among them, purchases of cloth for linings were one of the most frequent. Some entries are explicit, such as Diana Eyre buying “5 yds of Crape for a Lining 0-5-0” in November 1772, Gertrude Savile’s October 1748 entry for “New Lineing & Wadding for old Capuchine 0-12-6”, Martha Dodson’s April 1750 purchase of long lawn for “new body and sleve lineing [for a gown] 1s4” or procuring “1/2 a yard of caleco to line my Stays 0-1-8” in April 1764. Several letters from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu written in 1721 to her sister in France include inquiries regarding twenty yards of plain lutstring Lady Mary commissioned her sister to send her. At one point Lady Mary chides “I wish you would think of my Lutestring, for I’m in terrible want of Linings”.

Some goods were bought to replace worn or damaged parts of garments. In February 1760 Martha Dodson “paid holland to mend Sieft (sic) Sleves 1-6”, Elizabeth Jervis paid eight

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97 Museum of London 64.130, c. 1770-1800.
98 Old Bailey Proceeding t17811205-57.
shillings for holland linen for shift sleeves in 1764 - presumably to replace ones that had worn out, and Gertrude Savile did much the same in November 1745. Ready-made pieces for the purpose of replacement were also available. Elizabeth Dodson bought “Sheift (sic) Sleves” in March 1728. The sleeves were purchased as finished pieces for sewing into an existing shift, replacing former ones. A provincial milliner’s shop inventory of 1785 also lists garment pieces including “1 pr. of Sleeves”, “6 Scarlet Hoods for Cardinals”, “2 wt (white) Hoods for Clokes” and pieces of lace as part of the stock.

Supplies other than cloth were recorded, such as the “yard ¾ black lace to mend capuchine 0-2-4” in April 1754 and footings for aprons Martha Dodson bought in February 1753. In January 1754 Isabella Wrightson “pd for Worsted to mend my Worsted Stockings 0-1-0” referring to either yarn or thread. And in July 1714 Lady Fermanagh wrote to Ralph Verney, “If I knew what fineness Mrs Verney would have the thread I could tell where it might be gott, and whether she wants it, ‘to make Lace or to mend Lace.’” This tidbit suggests how commonplace mending lace was by the existence of thread specifically for that purpose. The account book of Mrs Frances Hamilton is positively littered with entries for heel pieces and tops for repairing shoes, twelve occasions between April 1797 and June 1800, besides the entries for the repairs themselves. And in August 1755 Diana Eyre purchased “a pr of Glove Tops 0-0-8”.

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101 “An Ell of fine Holland for Shift Sleevs (sic) 0-9-6”, Account Books of Gertrude Savile, 6 November, 1745.
102 5 March 1728, Account Book of Elizabeth Dodson, National Art Library, London 86 SS 77.
104 Lace in this instance probably refers to a type of braid trim. Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume*, 39-40. Footing probably meant a type of hem binding or facing, based on usage in the account books I examined. 3 April 1754, 26 February 1753, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
106 5 August 1755, Account Book of Mrs Diana Eyre.
Many garments, including dresses, jackets, bodices, stays and shoes relied on additional finished pieces for closures. For example, purchases of stay laces feature regularly in the accounts of Diana Eyre, Gertrude Savile, Frances Hamilton, Martha Dodson and possibly Anne Brockman. This makes perfect sense considering stays were worn every day and the laces used for tying must have worn out regularly. Some shoes were also fastened with laces, others with buckles. The prevalence for fastening dress bodices with pins throughout most of the century meant women went through great quantities of them, and likely explains their regular purchase by the thousand in account books.

Old Bailey records provide tantalizing glimpses of women shopping for mending supplies. For example, the defendant in a shoplifting trial testified that: “After I had done my work, I went in to buy a bit of dark camblet, to mend the gown I had got on”. 107 In November 1814 Levy Hart, shop keeper and witness in an Old Bailey trial, deposed regarding the defendant: “then she asked me if I had got a piece of keyseymere (sic), to mend small clothes”. 108

Sometimes purchases were made with a garment in mind without specifying its intended use. In April 1752 Martha Dodson bought “1 yard check cherry derry for pink & brown gown 0-2-4” possibly to augment or alter the look of the dress, but just as likely for repair work. 109 In April 1755 she bought “1/4 and nail irish hollan (sic) for Stays”, a quantity too small to use for anything other than repair, likely to the stays lining, and “3/4 yards of blew Stuf & ferrit for pettycoat 0-1-1” in May 1764, possibly for patching and repairing either the hem or waist.

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107 Old Bailey Proceedings t17921215-104.
108 Old Bailey Proceedings t18141130-103.
109 8 April 1752, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
In September 1744 Gertrude Savile acquired “Two Yds ½ Ell of Grogram to match Riding Pettycoat 18s”.\textsuperscript{111} While not an insignificant quantity, that it was to match an existing garment suggests it was for replacing panels of the petticoat rather than for making a new article. Conversely, purchases were occasionally recorded for mending supplies without a specific item mentioned, such as Gertrude Savile’s entry of “Cotton for darning 2 ½d” in September 1756.\textsuperscript{112}

Many supply purchases are more mysterious. Ferrit ribbon and tape appear frequently in nearly all sets of accounts, purchased in varying quantities. Ferrit was a type of silk tape,\textsuperscript{113} so at times it and “tape” may be synonymous terms; although I also found tapes of wool and linen on garments.\textsuperscript{114} Ferrit was commonly used to bind the hems of dress skirts and petticoats, sometimes also around the edges of stays, jumps, bodices, jackets and to bind the waists of petticoats and aprons and serve as ties for them and for pockets. While it is impossible to pinpoint within the accounts which of these entries related to mending/repair work, at least some were surely for this purpose. The same is true for purchases of other materials including small quantities of dress textiles such as silks, printed cloths or callimanco as well as plain goods such as dimity, holland, calico, scotch cloth, muslin, fustian, flannel, binding, thread, worsted, needles, buttons, small pieces of whalebone or lengths of cane for hoop petticoats.\textsuperscript{115} The small quantities of dress textiles are particularly suggestive since these fabrics were typically narrow,

\textsuperscript{110} 15 April 1755, 27 May 1764, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
\textsuperscript{111} 7 September 1744, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
\textsuperscript{112} 17 September 1756, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
\textsuperscript{114} I saw wool tapes most often on skirt hems and linen tapes used for waist bindings and ties on petticoats, aprons and pockets, primarily at the Museum of London.
\textsuperscript{115} I encountered small quantity purchases of all of these throughout the various account books I examined.
only eighteen to twenty-two inches wide, thus large quantities were required for full garments. Over the years Martha Dodson made numerous purchases of minimal yardage of textiles including “3 quarters of a yard of blew lutstring” and “3/4 yard of pink stuff”. Neither amount was sufficient to make pockets let alone garments. Among the clothing bills for Elizabeth French were a purchases of “1 whalebone” in January 1719, “bone 6d” in February 1722 and the same again on a bill from March 1723. These represent very small quantities of whalebone suggesting they were bought to repair stays - possibly even the same set.

2.6 Doing the Laundry

In eighteenth-century England, a neat and clean appearance (particularly regarding personal linens) was vital to respectability. This was especially significant since changing clean underclothing was the proxy form of bathing. Fearful of unclean water penetrating the skin and causing sickness, people generally shied away from full-body bathing and restricted their exposure to water to hands and faces. The connection only intensified over the course of the century as textiles and garments of washable linen and, increasingly, cotton became accessible to wider swathes of society. This greater feasibility of clean clothes rendered a dirty appearance excusable in only the ragged poor. In a missive among the Verney Letters, Catherine Verney advises her husband, Ralph, on getting neckcloths and cuffs washed, admonishing, “pray don’t

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116 I consistently observed this myself on the skirt panels of dresses and petticoats. Descriptions of goods as “1/2 ell wide” are also common in account books, an ell measuring 45 inches.
117 17 May 1748, 2 May 1749, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
118 27 January 1719, 27 March 1723, Elizabeth French Bills.
121 See Daniel Roche, “The Invention of Linen,” in *The Culture of Clothing*, regarding the proliferation of linen undergarments from the late 17th century through the 18th century and its evolving meaning. See Beverly Lemire, *Fashion’s Favourite*, for the rapid and exponential increase and eventual domination of cotton clothing during the same period.
A letter from Lady Anson to Marchioness Grey illustrates this point. In August 1751 Lady Anson indignantly recounted from Southampton an occasion when a woman “exhibited herself to me, the other day, just as she was come out of the Water, part of her Hair in papillotes, the rest running Streams of brine, in a dirty under-Petticoat, lacing on a dirty pair of Stays & in this situation, Madam, she made me a Curt’sy”. Lady Anson was horrified that anyone in such an appalling state should seek to attract her attention. Lest it appear Lady Anson’s repugnance stemmed purely from snobbery, an anecdote from Lady Mary Coke’s journal demonstrates that cleanliness was more associated with respectability and decency than wealth and status. In 1769 she recounted a conversation with Princess Amelia (daughter of George II and aunt of George III) wherein the Princess described the dress of Lady Rochford in unflattering terms. Not only was Lady Rochford’s attire deemed “so loose & so naked” but she attempted to amend it with “two napkins that She said She always wore upon her stomack & very dirty ones they were”. Cleanliness and the public decency it conveyed pre-occupied Martha Dodson to the extent that the very last entries in her detailed twenty-year long account book dated only three months before her death, were for washing. In May 1765 she recorded “pd Mrs Greenaway washing 2 pair ruffles 0.1.3/ washing & makeing 2 Hoods 0.2.0/ washing gause apron in full/ washing”. Washing was a concern to the last.

In Northanger Abbey Jane Austen used the prosaic reality of washing to poke fun at her heroine, Catherine Morland. She is thrilled at discovering a sheaf of old papers she suspects to be secret letters in an old chest in her room at Northanger Abbey – a place she imagines

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124 Lady Mary Coke Vol. 3: 100.
125 25 May 1765, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
impregnated with mystery and suspense – only to discover later that they are simply old laundry lists:

Instantaneously, with the consciousness of existence, returned her recollection of the manuscript; and springing from the bed in the very moment of the maid’s going away, she eagerly collected every scattered sheet which had burst from the roll on its falling to the ground, and flew back to enjoy the luxury of their perusal on her pillow. She now plainly saw that she must not expect a manuscript of equal length with the generality of what she had shuddered over in books, for the roll, seeming to consist entirely of small disjointed sheets, was altogether but of trifling size, and much less than she had supposed it to be at first.

Her greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page. She started at its import. Could it be possible, or did not her senses play her false? An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters, seemed all that was before her! If the evidence of sight might be trusted, she held a washing-bill in her hand. She seized another sheet, and saw the same articles with little variation; a third, a fourth, and a fifth presented nothing new. Shirts, stockings, cravats, and waistcoats faced her in each.126

Maintaining clean clothes in England’s perennially damp climate would have been particularly challenging. The ground is so often wet and most streets in the eighteenth century, whether in the country or in the city, were still dirt roads making mud a constant menace.127 Several entries in Lady Mary Coke’s journal express how taxing this could be on clothes: “The morning being very fine, a little before eleven I took a walk, but the Park was so dirty I was obliged to dress when I came in”.128 In October 1768 she recorded “I am very busy every Morning transplanting some Shrubs & filling up vacancys with new ones, but it is so terribly wet that I am obliged to change my shoes & stockings two, if not three, times in the day”.129 A new change of clothes because one’s morning walk or garden work rendered them unwearable created that much more laundry. Indeed, stockings must have been particularly vulnerable to wet weather and Lady Mary even briefly noted during an especially rainy spell, “having no boots, I’ve been above my shoes in

126 Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 1817, Chapter 22.
129 *Lady Mary Coke Vol. 2*: 383.
And when the roads were dry they were dusty. While travelling in 1773 Lady Mary complained of the dust and being faced with either accepting being covered in it or nearly suffocating from shutting the carriage windows.

Life indoors was not necessarily much safer for Lady Mary. Of a dinner in 1768 at the French Ambassador’s London house she wrote: “the dinner was indeed very fine, & the plate very clean, but the floor of the dining room so dirty that I felt some anxiety for my Cloaths.” And in 1771 she bemoaned the effects of the Prince de Paar’s “magnificent” house wishing “the Chairs had been less so, as they must dirty ones Clothes by being laced [trimmed] with two rows of gold lace (a type of braid).”

Efforts to mitigate dirtiness were employed, such as wearing platform overshoes called pattens. Worn by women of all social levels, from scullery maids to aristocratic ladies, pattens would protect both the shoes worn inside them and by extension the stockings along with hems of gowns and petticoats by raising them above floors and the ground. At the lower end of the socio-economic scale pattens were often either of iron or rough leather. The Museum of London houses one such pair made of leather in a plain design (fig. 2.27). Pattens worn by wealthy women could be as sumptuous as the shoes they were meant to protect. There were even matching shoe and patten sets where both pairs matched in colour, material and embellishment. The Museum of London houses an example of these as well with both shoes and pattens made of matching silk brocaded with silver (fig.2.28). Again, Lady Mary Coke’s prolific journal

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130 Ibid: 392.
131 *Lady Mary Coke Vol 4*: 215.
133 *Lady Mary Coke Vol 3*: 483.
136 Museum of London A12776a-b, shoes and pattens 1721-40.
provides a documentary example: “L[ad]y Holland [...] has provided herself with a pair of pattens, to walk in when it grows dirty.”\textsuperscript{137}

In addition to general cleanliness, washing was used to counter illness and even aid its prevention. In March 1698 Sir J Verney wrote to William Coleman “at such large Towns the Small Pox is very frequently (sic) & I believe the Apothecaries can best provide you with a nurse ... she must wash all that sick bodys linnen at Holmes’ house, for none of it must come to my house to be wash’t.”\textsuperscript{138} Preventive medicine could also precipitate washing complications. In 1772 Lady Mary Coke wrote about having her feet bled (blood-letting being a common practice for both the treatment and prevention of illness\textsuperscript{139}). The day after the blooding she believed her foot healed, but during a carriage ride to Strawberry Hill “the motion of the Chaise, tho’ I had a plaster, made my foot bleed”.\textsuperscript{140} Most likely she bled through her stocking presenting a challenging stain for her laundry maid(s).

For a long time the study of dress history was pejoratively viewed as the study of laundry lists.\textsuperscript{141} Ironically, actually studying laundry lists and washing practices reveals multi-layered and complex processes that speak to the very heart of how women organized and spent much of their time, whether with their arms elbows-deep in water and suds or as the manager-mistress of a household directing and supervising the work. Every household and personal account I examined mentions washing somewhere; many of them refer to it frequently.

My examination of these accounts revealed that the terms “washing” and “cleaning” often referred to distinct processes. All garments were subject to cleaning, but not all were

\textsuperscript{137} Lady Mary Coke Vol 3: 280.
\textsuperscript{138} Verney Letters: 26.
\textsuperscript{140} Lady Mary Coke Vol 4: 102.

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fig. 2.27 Pattens, 1761-80, Museum of London A13172 & A13173 (author’s photograph).

fig. 2.28 Shoe and patten, 1721-40, Museum of London A12776a-b (author’s photograph).
washed. This section focuses on the latter. Washing generally alluded to the domestic process most closely resembling ‘doing the laundry’ today. Household and personal linens formed the bulk of this category. Household linens included sheets, towels, napkins and tablecloths.\textsuperscript{142}

Personal linens included shirts, shifts, plain handkerchiefs, stockings, caps, aprons, ruffles and pockets.\textsuperscript{143} Dresses, jackets and petticoats made of linen or cotton might also be washed with the regular laundry or separately. Among Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick’s bills and receipts from 1766 to 1770 are numerous laundry lists.\textsuperscript{144} These provide a particularly detailed picture of what types of garments were considered washable. Although she was only eleven years old when the collection of bills and receipts began in 1763 during the eighteenth century children were dressed in a similar manner to adults by around five or six years old.\textsuperscript{145} Thus, the items that make up Lady Louisa’s laundry lists are likely nearly identical to those of an adult woman’s. The lists are detailed and remarkably consistent from one to the other. The same items appear on nearly all of them; only the amounts of each garment type change slightly over time, from list to list. Below is one representative example:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{May 10, 1766} & \\
10 Shifts & 0-2-6 \\
10 pr of Stockings & 0-0-10 \\
4 Caps & 0-0-4 \\
4 Pocket handkerchiefs & 0-0-2 \\
2 Neck Ditto & 0-0-2 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{142} An inventory of household linen taken in 1770 at Isabella Wrightson’s house provides a detailed example. Doncaster Archives DD/BW/A/10.
\textsuperscript{143} For an additional discussion of the making and management of household linen in polite society see, Vickery, \textit{The Gentleman’s Daughter}, 150-151.
\textsuperscript{144} R.O.32/16, Bills & Receipts for Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick.
A few contemporary eighteenth-century sources refer to “washing” gowns. For example, an anecdote printed in a 1786 issue of The Lady’s Magazine describes the wedding clothes and trousseau of an “old maid” about to be married, including “a washing Levite for mornings”. In July 1747 Gertrude Savile recorded paying for “Makeing Two Washing Sacks & One Washing Nightgown (at 4s each) 0-12-0”. In September 1749 she paid for “Washing a Nightgown 1s”. These two entries may or may not refer to the same nightgown but they do imply there was a specific type of dress that was made with washing in mind. Such dresses must have been made from washable textiles such as linen or cotton. However, since not all cotton or linen dresses are referred to in account books as of the “washing” type, perhaps particular varieties of these textiles were specially intended for laundering.

Doing laundry was a multi-step process. First thing in the morning a fire was lit underneath a large washtub designed and constructed for the purpose. Many buckets of water were needed to fill these tubs. Once the water was hot enough a lye-based soap was added and

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146 R.O.32/16/3/10, Bills & Receipts for Lady Louisa FitzPatrick.
148 4 July 1747, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
149 29 September, 1749, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
150 Information on the following discussion of laundry tasks was derived and synthesized from several sources: Jane Tozer & Sarah Levitt, Fabric of Society: A Century of People and their Clothes, 1770-1870, (Manchester City Galleries, 2010), 72-73; visiting house museums in England such as Berrington Hall, Hereford and the Charles Dickens Museum, London; and contemporary housekeeping manuals such as The Workwoman’s Guide (1838) and Madame Johnson’s Present, or Every Young Woman’s Companion (London, 1765).
articles from the “foul clothes bag” were soaked and agitated in the steaming tub with the fire continuing to burn beneath. Someone (often a maid) agitated the articles constantly working and stirring the clothes and linens with a large wooden spoon or paddle. This was hot, sweaty and tiring work and it could last for hours. The items were then vigorously scrubbed on a washing board to remove stains – another arduous task – and afterwards thoroughly rinsed. Finally, freshly washed items were hung on frames or “horses” to dry. In more confined spaces clothes were hung on outdoor lines. The theft of clothing from drying lines is a common trope of eighteenth-century life. For instance, Mary Reynolds reported the loss of her gown during an Old Bailey trial in 1755, deposing: “she had hung the gown and shift up to dry at her father’s, and they were taken away”. In 1798 Daniel Lorey deposed that a cotton gown of his wife’s hung up to dry was lost out of their yard.

The amount of time domestic washing took depended on the size of household. Within smaller establishments it took a day while several account entries for elite households record paying for extra help over two or more days of washing. The number of available hands also varied accordingly, meaning that the task of washing proved monumental across the socio-economic spectrum. Nor did washing always yield faultless results. In 1787 Mrs Mason deposed at an Old Bailey trial for theft that she recognized a stolen handkerchief of hers “by my washing, and not perfectly washing the corner clean”.

Because of laundry’s laboriousness it was typically saved up and accumulated for routine wash days on weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly or even yearly bases in an economy of

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151 Old Bailey Proceedings t18080113-72.
152 Old Bailey Proceedings t17550116-20.
153 Old Bailey Proceedings t17980523-35.
154 The accounts of Francis Hamilton, Anne Brockman, Gertrude Savile all include payments for not only outside washing help, but over two consecutive days.
155 Old Bailey Proceedings t17871212-74.
effort. The potentially vast quantities of articles for each wash necessitated good organization and the ubiquitous laundry lists found, for instance, among Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick’s bills and receipts. Furthermore, Edwina Ehrman posits in her article examining Martha Dodson’s account book that “a few printed gowns were also singled out in the laundry accounts, suggesting that certain colours needed washing with extra care”. It seems probable that careful laundresses separated the wash into loads, at the very least between whites and colours.

None of the writers of the household accounts, letters or journals I consulted likely engaged in actual washing themselves. All of them record paying for washing in some form or other. Washing was as menial a task as it was necessary, so genteel women rarely got their own hands wet and rather supervised, although there were exceptions. While washing appears in every account book no two recorded experiences are identical. Taking each in turn reveals the variety possible in household management systems.

Martha Dodson rarely recorded expenditure on general washing, only six times over nearly twenty years. This strongly suggests that her domestic staff took care of the household washing. Between March 1747 and June 1760 out of forty total entries relating to washing in Dodson’s account book thirty-one were specifically for washing gloves. Dodson is singular in this regard as none of the other accounts refer to such frequent glove washing. Such entries always refer to gloves making it unclear whether this may have included mittens as well. It appears that Dodson patronized one or a few London women for glove washing and that it may have been, in part, a form of charity. Dodson paid an average of three pence per pair of gloves

156 Ehrman: 36.
157 Vickery, The Gentleman’s Daughter, 146-7. Gentlewoman Elizabeth Shackleton may have engaged in the actual work herself from time to time.
158 These being 7 July 1757, 12 May 1761, 8 November 1762, 12 January 1763, 5 May 1763 and 25 May 1765, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
washed but on several occasions recorded giving the washer woman six pence to a shilling extra because she was poor. For example, Dodson recorded “gave the glove washer 6 paid 1 pair washing 0.0.9.”¹⁵⁹ She paid three pence for the actual washing and gave the washer six pence more, ostensibly as alms. She even once recorded “gave ye poor woman that washes gloves 0.0.6” without paying for any glove washing at all.¹⁶⁰

Dodson did purchase a lot of gloves and mittens. During the same period that she records paying for their washing she bought at least forty-four pairs, fairly evenly split between mittens and gloves, so many, in fact, that some must surely have been bought as gifts. Few entries for glove purchases specify material. However, kid leather, either white or coloured, is periodically mentioned along with one “washleather” pair in April 1753.¹⁶¹ Considering how frequently Dodson paid for gloves washing, that a significant number of the unidentified pairs were of wash leather is a reasonable supposition. Curiously, between May 30, 1759 and the end of the account book in May 1765 Dodson purchased a further thirty pairs, also fairly evenly split between mittens and gloves, but there are no further entries specifically for their washing.

As for her more general washing, Dodson’s entries indicate she likely had domestic facilities set up in both her Cookham home and London lodgings throughout most of the account’s span. Regular purchases of laundry supplies (soaps, starch, blueing agents) in conjunction with infrequent entries paying for washing evince she but rarely sent washing out. This routine changes toward the end of the account book when there is an upswing of entries to pay for washing. Martha Dodson was around sixty years old at the start of the accounts; in the

¹⁵⁹ 15 December 1753, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
¹⁶⁰ 16 March 1754, Ibid.
¹⁶¹ Washleather refers to “a soft leather usually made of split sheepskin dressed with oil in imitation of chamois […] a piece of washleather or soft cloth used for dusting or cleaning”, Merriam-Webster Dictionary.
last couple of years and nearing eighty years old she may have found it more manageable to send her washing out than supervise servants. Throughout the book are additional entries where she paid to have specific items washed (besides gloves), although not until four years in. There are five entries for washing gowns, four for washing handkerchiefs, two for aprons, four for caps and hoods, one for two pairs of ruffles and even one for washing a piece of calico intended for a lining. The special treatment suggests these were highly valued items requiring a particular level or type of care not possible at home and demonstrates the varied avenues available to women for maintaining a clean wardrobe.

Elizabeth Dodson’s account book of 1728-1730 is another example wherein expenditure for washing is largely absent. Like Martha Dodson the greatest number of entries are for washing gloves: five out of nine total entries relating to washing or cleaning. There is a single entry in June 1730 that reads “pd her (Ann Blaze) more for her washing 0-1-4”. However, unlike Martha Dodson’s account, Elizabeth Dodson’s book primarily records her pre-married life and largely concerns her own personal expenses, possibly from pocket money. As she was likely living with her parents or guardians and they were obviously well-off given the nature of Elizabeth’s expenditures, the management of laundry, along with other household responsibilities, largely unconcerned her.

Conversely from Martha and Elizabeth Dodson, Anne Brockman’s twenty-five year long account book is full of entries paying for “washing”. She employed a few local women especially for the purpose, primarily one named Goody Deall and/or another called Goody Read. They were usually paid six pence per day and were periodically brought in for two days of washing. There was a regular and frequent exception to the entries for general washing: Anne

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162 26 June 1730, Account Book of Elizabeth Dodson.
Brockman had her “head(s) & ruffells” washed specially. This makes sense as her account book begins in 1700 and spans the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Women’s fashions of this time included the “fontange” style of headdress comprising a wire framework covered in multiple rows of gathered or ruffled lace.\(^{163}\) These required careful handling while washing and a particular process of setting and starching afterwards. Brockman also periodically paid to have gloves washed, usually several pairs at a time, and occasionally other individual items such as pairs of ruffles (for sleeves), an apron, a sarcenet hood\(^{164}\) and certain petticoats and dresses. Goodies Deall and Read were not brought to the Brockman house to wash only, but also frequently performed weeding, occasionally gathered herbs and even periodically helped make mead.

As Anne Brockman had Goodies Deall and Read early in the eighteenth century, Isabella Wrightson had “Old Nancy” Dickeson in the 1750s. This appears to be another case of bringing a woman to the house either to perform the washing or provide an extra set of hands to assist the live-in maids. In addition to a few anonymous entries Nancy Dickeson is recorded by name nine times for washing between November 1753 and January 1755.\(^{165}\) Each entry mentions multiple times she came to help with washing, five, six, seven, nine, even twelve times, for a total of at least sixty-six times representing a very regular and frequent arrangement between her and Isabella Wrightson. After late February 1755 the accounts skip to 1765, when the Wrightsons were living in London. To the end of the book in late December 1767 Wrightson referred only to “Washer Woman”, and the amounts paid are significantly higher. During this time either the


\(^{164}\) Sarcenet was a thin silk. Cunnington, *A Dictionary of English Costume*, 272.

\(^{165}\) 10 November 1753, 1 January 1754, 7 February 1754, 30 March 1754, 6 May 1754, 25 July 1754, 2 October 1754, 14 November 1754, 8 January 1755, 28 January 1755, Account Book of Isabella Wrightson.
washing was sent out or their urban life in London lacked the personal connections with labourers as in country life.

Washing for the Purefoy household appears to have primarily occurred domestically. In a letter of October 1744 Elizabeth Purefoy describes the household washing routine to the mother of a prospective maid thusly: “Wee(sic) wash once a month, she & the washerwoman wash all but the small linnen, & next day she & the washerwoman wash the Buck”.\(^{166}\) Numerous letters survive from 1744 to 1753 in which Elizabeth Purefoy makes enquiries for maids who can wash. In one she wants a cookmaid who will also understand that her duties include washing “the small Linnen”\(^{167}\); in another she “should be glad of a young healthy girl to help […] who can stand at the Buck Tubb”.\(^{168}\) Several additional letters on the subject also require the prospective maid be adept at ironing.\(^{169}\) Thus, while the “small linnen” was excluded from the general, mass washing (the buck), both were performed in-house. Washing was clearly a major activity in the Purefoy household, to the extent that life was scheduled around it. In 1741 Elizabeth Purefoy wrote to her friend Mrs Susan Price, “Dear Sukey, [...] if you can’t come this week let mee know what day you can come the week after this that comes in, the next week being our washing week”.\(^{170}\) In October 1744 Elizabeth Purefoy wrote that her maid, Baldwin, had given notice and was determined to leave “as soon as our next washing is over, w’ch is this week”.\(^{171}\) These incidents further demonstrate the monumental task laundry represented for the Purefoy household by its apparently taking a full week.

\(^{167}\) Ibid: 142.
\(^{168}\) Ibid: 145.
\(^{169}\) Ibid: 145, 148, 149, 154.
\(^{171}\) Ibid: 148.
Diana Eyre’s washing-related record-keeping is inconsistent. For the first few years of her account book in the 1750s her entries for washing are irregular, but mention women by name such as Betty Whitehead and Mrs Gretton. Perhaps this indicates that most of her washing was handled by her own servants and she only called on these women when extra or particular assistance was required. From March 1756 to September 1762 (there is a three year break in references to washing in the account between 1756 and 1759) her entries refer simply to “Washing” but are far more regular at approximately once a month. As of early December 1762 Wrightson often pays a Hannah Benson for washing, interspersed with generic “pd for Washing” entries. Whether Wrightson simply tired of writing names, or employed different methods for the washing such as alternating between bringing someone in and sending it out to be done remains unknown.

At the end of the century Francis Hamilton employed local women to come and wash for her, or at least assist. Between September 1797 and late October 1799 Hamilton recorded seven entries on five dates paying for washing help. Like Isabella Wrightson, Hamilton’s entries include several days of washing work at once. One woman, Catherine, was twice paid five shillings for ten days of washing and once four shillings and ninepence for nine and a half days in 1797. While she was only mentioned as “washing” in 1798 she was paid for fourteen days of it in 1799. Another woman, Betty Shear, was paid for two days of washing in 1797 and a Jane P for two days, also in 1797. Hamilton’s accounts are the most modest among those I examined, demonstrating that outside help was relied upon and paid for throughout various levels of society.

172 16 September 1797, 23 May 1797, 24 December 1797, 21 January 1798, 26 October 1799, Accounts of Mrs Francis Hamilton.
173 16 September 1797, 24 December 1797, Ibid.
174 21 January 1798, 26 October 1799, Ibid.
175 23 May 1797, 24 December 1797, Ibid.
People who normally had their washing done at home by their own servants might still employ others or send their washing out when travelling. Ann Antonie records paying for “Washing when at Toeridge 0-14-6” in August 1739 and “paid their (sic) for Washing for my Maid 0-1-9” in May 1744. A subtle language shift in Anne Brockman’s account book also suggests this. The majority of her washing entries state paying Goody Deall or Goody Read for washing, or specify one or two days of it. However, between early December 1703 and March 1703/4, while the Brockmans were travelling, washing is recorded by the week and the manner of recording returns to normal by the end of March when Goody Deall is mentioned again. Clearly, the mode and frequency of washing changed when the Brockmans were away from home.

Lace demanded specialist attention. Anne Brockman and Gertrude Savile both recorded paying for washing items made of lace or trimmed with it. These items usually took the form of caps, “heads”, ruffles, aprons and handkerchiefs. Some women even sent their lace away to larger towns or London for washing. In 1771 Lady Mary Coke commissioned the recipient of her letter-journal to “order some of your people at Boughton to pay the lace Man at Northampton for the washing the ruffles: I think it is two shillings & eight pence”. Katherine Stewkley, of the Verney family correspondence, once inquired of her friend (relative?) “and do me the Favour to ask Mrs Gifford (who I think lives at the “Surgion Armes” in Charles Street) if she did not 3 weekes agoe receive a poyn Shape (referring to point lace) from me to wash, for if she did not Calloway has lost it”. Among some families unprovided-for spinster aunts and cousins became companion ladies maids to their more fortunate female relations and their social circles.

Washing delicate items such as lace was frequently among their duties. In September 1699

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176 22 August 1739, May 1744, Mrs Ann Antonie’s Account, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Office X800/26.
177 Lady Mary Coke Vol 3, 419.
179 Verney Letters Vol II, 163.
Nancy Nicholas wrote to Sir John Verney “...I have had much business on my hands, & one of them was to dispose of our Cosen Ruth Lloyd which I hope may be in a good waye. She is gone to wait on 3 of Ld Feverses [Feversham’s] daughters that air all women grone, her work is to do work for them & wash only ther lais & points”.\(^{180}\)

Between 1766 and 1769 Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick’s washables were subject to very regular monthly laundering. There are numerous bills for paying washerwomen on a monthly basis and these are accompanied by numerous lists inventorying the items washed and their numbers. Apparently she lived in a household where the laundry was not looked after on the premises; this is unsurprising considering her usual home was in London. The lists appear to have been written by the washerwomen themselves, a few of whom are named: Hannah Rayner, Mary Sondon (or London) and Jane Perkins.\(^{181}\)

Gertrude Savile’s account book illustrates how an individual’s routine changes over time and according to circumstances. During the first couple years of the accounts she records simply “washing”, mostly at intervals of three to ten days for amounts between one and a half and seven shillings. This is a very frequent but irregular laundry schedule, and for irregular costs indicating calculation by the piece rather than time, strongly suggesting she sent her washing out to be done.\(^{182}\) Beginning in August 1737 the entries switch to paying a washerwoman for two days work at a time, at the roughly usual rate of six pence per day. Paying someone for two days washing work implies Savile brought them into her home to do it. Beginning 9 June 1744 her entries change from paying for washing or the washerwoman to “Maids Breakfast at Washing

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\(^{180}\) Verney Letters Vol I, 39.
\(^{181}\) The hand writing of these lists is unrefined and the spelling sometimes inconsistent but it is a testament to the breadth of education throughout the English population that eighteenth-century washerwomen were literate.
\(^{182}\) Alan Mansfield’s survey of Wade’s account ledger for his cleaning and dyeing business show that specific fees were assigned to each garment type. Alan Mansfield, “Dyeing and Cleaning Clothes in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries; Costume, 2(1): 1968, 38-43.
4d”. For 23 June, 1744 Savile recorded buying the London house she previously rented for the season. Evidently, upon settling permanently in the capital Savile decided to make domestic arrangements for her laundry. Besides specifically referring to “Maids”, paying for breakfast would be insufficient compensation for an outside wash woman, but possibly an agreed-upon perquisite with her own staff. Additionally, in 1749 occasional entries for “Washing abroad” begin appearing and at costs commensurate with her pre-1744 practice, signalling Savile reverted to sending her laundry out when away from home. However, even when at home, Savile still sent certain items out for washing such as caps and head ruffles, typically alongside altering and making up new ones. This suggests that makers of these items also performed specialty laundering of them. For example, in May 1742 Savile recorded the details of a Milliner’s Bill (by the name of Bates) including “Makeing & Washing Mobs & Handcorch’s (sic) 7-1”. Between March 1738/9 and the end of the account books in 1757 Savile recorded seven instances of paying for washing particular gowns. Gowns (washable and otherwise) would require more frequent laundering than these entries allow, hinting that washable ones were usually included in her general laundry but occasionally sending them out was considered preferable. One entry in her account books reveals vulnerability when sending clothing out for laundering. According to an entry from October 1755 she recorded rewarding an inn landlord for “his trouble in getting me some Linnen which a Washer-Woman had Pawn’d.”

Non-elite people of modest means might also opt for paying someone else to wash for them. At an Old Bailey trial for theft in 1745 a witness, Frances Brown, revealed that she washed for the defendant, Ann Davis, and her husband. Ann Davis’s work was to “dress victuals, and

183 12 May 1742, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
184 23 October 1755, Ibid.
wash and mend for her husband” (the husband’s occupation was given as “carver”). Therefore, while Ann Davis’ responsibilities included washing, at times she felt it appropriate to supplement her own labour with outside help. A shift and an apron were specifically mentioned by the washerwoman at the trial, both very ordinary types of items not generally requiring especial care. In another trial of 1779 the testimonies reveal that some clothes purportedly stolen from a Henry Fasey, mantuamaker, were noticed missing from a bundle of laundry the washerwoman had. 

Although the clothes were recognized as the legal property of Fasey, they were, in fact, those of his apprentice, Sophia Chamberlain. If Fasey’s shop was a busy one, it may have been his regular practice to send the household’s laundry to a local washerwoman. In 1786 a Susannah Humphrys deposed at her trial that one of the witnesses, a young woman, sometimes washed for her and described going “backwards and forwards for my linen.” On the particular night in question she claimed she wanted a shirt washed. Presumably, she took articles over to the young woman as she desired them washed, possibly even a single piece at a time. In a 1794 trial witness Elizabeth Dewman, milliner, deposed that the defendant, her charwoman, had brought “a quantity of handkerchiefs to my house to wash them out.” Apparently, some people managed arrangements to do their own washing, but outside of their home.

Some women combined washing with other work, such as Gertrude’s Savile’s milliner mentioned above. Frances Solomon, an old clothes seller, indicated at an 1805 trial that it was her practice to wash at least some of the items in her shop. In a 1793 trial Mrs Ann Jordan

186 Old Bailey Proceedings t17790217-1.
188 Old Bailey Proceedings t17940917-26. Dewman recognized them as belonging to the prosecutrix, Madam Picault, both from the initials inked inside them and because she was sure they were ones Dewman had made for Madam Picault herself.
189 Old Bailey Proceedings t18050220-51.
described being given a bundle of clothes by her husband to “wash and mend”. 190 Margaret Tomkinson, witness in a 1781 theft trial reported she both washed and mended and was asked to identify an apron by recognizing her mending work and being familiar with it from washing. 191 This was a logical combination of tasks to earn a little extra money than either alone would provide. A statement from a 1746 trial suggests this was recognized as a normal practice: in clarifying an action a witness stated “I beg Pardon, he gave the Woman the Chints to mend, she was his Laundress, or something”. 192 A witness in another 1805 trial, Amy Dutton, deposed “I go out to cleaning and work at tailoring”. 193

The business ledger of Mark Thornhill Wade spanning 1787 to 1802 shows that cleaning and dyeing was another pairing. 194 On one hand this appears a natural union as they both concern refreshing clothing and textiles, and garments dye best when clean. Indeed, in September 1760 Martha Washington sent a gown all the way back to England from the American colonies with the direction that it should be cleaned or re-dyed – whichever would achieve the most successful outcome. 195 It seems quite possible she sent it to a shop encompassing both practices, like Wade’s. Similarly, in May 1746 Elizabeth Purefoy wrote, “I have sent a blue Damask gown & must desire Nelly to get it cleaned or dyed of any colour it will take best”. 196 However, it does seem risky to have washing and colouring processes happening in close proximity. Protecting garments intended only for cleaning from dyeing materials must have been a significant challenge requiring large and well-run premises.

190 Old Bailey Proceedings t17931204-1.
191 Old Bailey Proceedings t17811205-55.
192 Old Bailey Proceedings t17460903-37.
193 Old Bailey Proceedings t18050918-35.
195 Baumgarten, “Altered Historical Clothes,” 49.
196 Purefoy Letters, 317.
2.7 Other Types of Cleaning

Not all garments requiring periodic cleaning could be washed in water. Most garments made of silk or wool would be ruined if washed with the general laundry, so they were cleaned by processes akin to today’s dry-cleaning. A costly gown of Lady Mary Coke’s in white and silver was exposed to unusual wear one day while visiting a royal palace in Berlin. It had rained and she complained of her gown that “trained in [the sandy pathways] all the time I walk’d, and which made me return the sooner in to the House”. Not only would the hem have gotten wet, the sand would abrade the cloth and contribute to its weakening. The potential seriousness of soiling an un-washable garment emerges in an anecdote related by Mrs Tim Packer (and which she found highly amusing) to her friend Mrs Evelyn:

Madam tho it may not perhaps divert you so much as when you were last hear (sic) yet certainly it would not fail of makeing you laugh to hear ye ridiculous quarells among ye Ladys, for ye Dutchess of Grafton & her dear Mrs Fox fell out not long since & ye quarell was occasioned by ye Dutchess happening to shed some Sauce upon nice Mrs Foxs Cloaths, w’ch tho She begged her pardon for it & assured her She could not help it, yet Mrs Fox could not support so great a misfortune with patience but fell into a great passion & sed (sic) several sevear (sic) things to ye Dutches (sic).

While the great crime in this event was certainly the perceived affront and embarrassment suffered by Mrs Fox, spilled sauce on (probably silk and thus very expensive) clothes most likely ruined her evening. Even among washable garments some stains or soiling went beyond the scope of soap and water. For these, a common treatment was scouring. There were likely various specific techniques employed depending on what individual women (either washer women or household maids) preferred or learned over time worked best for them. However, it appears there were two main categories of scouring: an extension of the washing process; and dry scouring. In

197 Lady Mary Coke Vol 4, 196.
Gibbons Merle explains the former process: “the article to be cleaned is stretched upon a board, and the stains having been removed it is well brushed with soap and water or ox-gall and then the soap or ox-gall is subsequently washed out with clean water.” A possible description of dry scouring may be this one from Madame Johnson’s guide: “Rolls of a composition of Fullers Earth and Spirit of Turpentine are used by rubbing on the wrong side, and then the right, and then the material is to be brushed with a hard brush, then [with] a soft clothes-brush and lastly with a clean cloth.” The manual claims this procedure was useful for cleaning woollens, silks and linen. According to Madame Johnson this mixture and process also kills bugs – an important consideration in an age when fleas and lice afflicted both animals and humans with almost equal vigour. Lady Mary Coke recorded of her lodgings during a stay in Vienna “the bugs in such quantities, that as I sat in the rooms they were creeping upon my Clothes, & not only bugs but lice.”

The cleaning side of Wade’s business also included scouring. His ledgers recorded scouring dozens of coats, breeches and waistcoats but only one gown and two skirts. Considering only approximately one fifth of the ledger remains intact there were undoubtedly more gowns and skirts scoured over the business’s lifetime; nonetheless, it appears they comprised an overall small percentage. While women’s clothes may have been scoured infrequently, it was an available option throughout the eighteenth century. In the 1690s MP Edward Clarke of Somerset recorded payments for scouring two of his daughter’s petticoats. One entry specifies a dyer’s

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200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.
202 Lady Mary Coke Vol 3, 343.
wife performed the work, again demonstrating this particular trade combination.\textsuperscript{205} Later, in 1756 Elizabeth Jervis recorded “pd for Scouring Crape Sack and Coat 3s”.\textsuperscript{206} Gertrude Savile’s account books record several payments made for scouring clothing and textiles. The items she had scoured include gowns of silk and cotton, lengths of cotton cloth, a quilt and damask cloth. An entry in April 1742 demonstrates both the multiple treatments garments might receive:

“Scouring & Washing a White Taby Gown & Petty-Coat 6s/Cleaning a Coulerd Callicoe Gown 3-6”. There are also several entries along the lines of “Ale for Maids at Scouring 4d”. However, whether this type of entry refers to scouring clothing and textiles, or pots, pans, and floors remains unclear. Anne Brockman’s account book spans the first quarter of the eighteenth century and includes only five definite entries for scouring clothing, and they all pre-date 1716. The items include a satin gown and petticoat, some striped silk and two silk petticoats.\textsuperscript{207} In September 1710 Catherine Verney “sent up to Aunt Adams the mantle to be scowrd and desired her to look if the curtains of the cradle does not want it and for some blankets and odd things I could not shift without.”\textsuperscript{208} This snippet from a letter indicates both that items might be sent away to be scoured and that the process encompassed both personal items (the mantle) and household linens (the curtains and blankets).

Scouring might also be employed to refresh an old or second-hand piece. In the same letter where she mentions having stockings footed Winnifred Jenkins, in \textit{Humphrey Clinker}, also discusses a yellow collar her mistress, Lydia Melford, gave her. Winn gives it to a mantuamaker in Bath for refreshing, who claims that a scouring and smoking with sulfur will make it “look

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206} Hayden, “Records of Clothing Expenditure,” 38.
\textsuperscript{207} 30 March 1706, 10 April 1712, 1 March 1715, Anne Brockman her Account Booke.
\textsuperscript{208} Verney Letters, 189.
very well”. As women’s dress textiles towards the end of the eighteenth century became increasingly lightweight many of their garments may have been too fragile for scouring compared with their mother’s and grandmother’s gowns and petticoats, possibly explaining their absence from Wade’s ledger.

On the other hand, eighty dresses or gowns are recorded in the ledger for cleaning compared with only a few each of coats, breeches and waistcoats. Although the type of cleaning these garments received is unspecified, the fact that “cleaning” and “washing” are used distinctively in household accounts strongly suggests the dresses and gowns “cleaned” at Wade’s business were treated differently from general washing. Household accounts typically record “washing” on its own, while “cleaning” is used in reference to a specific garment; for example, in Gertrude Savile’s account books the regular and frequent entries for washing are occasionally punctuated by others such as “Cleaning Callicoe Nightgown 0-4-0,” the inference being that washing referred to submersion and agitation in hot and cold baths with some form of detergent and cleaning to more specific actions such as removing individual stains or treating un-washable textiles.

Certain textile finishes such as watering (now commonly referred to as moiré) were destroyed in the washing process or simply diminished over time. To refresh this finish the garment textile was put through a process called calendering. This involved running the cloth through large sets of metal rollers at high heat and pressure. The rollers could be smooth – creating a shiny, faux-satin appearance – or textured to create effects such as the watering

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209 Smollett, Humphrey Clinker, 47.
211 12 March 1738, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
mentioned above or to imprint embossed patterns into the cloth.\textsuperscript{212} This treatment generally involved costly textiles, thus was practiced less frequently than other forms of garment or textile maintenance. However, while infrequent it was practiced throughout the entire eighteenth century, as three household accounts reveal. Anne Brockman recorded payments for calendering clothing/textiles five times in her account book. In 1703 she paid for “callendering a callicoe Sute”, in 1705/6 a printed petticoat, in 1708 a calico gown, in 1712 a calico gown and petticoat, in 1714 a “Black Perdesway gown” and later that year “5 Small bits of dammask”. In 1769 a bill of Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick’s included payment for “Callendring a Gound (sic) 0-6-0”. The attendant receipt specifies the garment as a “Chints (sic) Slip”.\textsuperscript{213} In 1800 the accounts of Ann, Lady Rose of Walworth record payment of one shilling for calendering a gown.\textsuperscript{214}

\subsection*{2.8 Starching & Ironing}

The ideal of crisp white linens for both home and body was achieved through starching and ironing. Applicable textiles and clothing were soaked in solutions of starch and water then ironed. The heat and pressure of irons set the starch into the cloth to get the best/smoothest press possible – attainable only while the cloth was wet (this same basic approach is still used today). Irons were rudimentary tools comprising iron cast in the triangular shape familiar today. Some were solid blocks of iron while others were made like a hollow box. The former were heated over a fire or stove and the latter designed to hold hot coals inside them, as seen in Henry Morland’s 1765-82 idealized painting \textit{A Laundry Maid Ironing} (fig. 2.29).\textsuperscript{215} There was no temperature control so burns and scorch marks (to both textiles and hands/arms, I imagine) must

\textsuperscript{213}Lady Louisa May 10 1769 R.O32/16/10/15a.
\textsuperscript{214}Accounts of Ann, Lady Rose of Walworth, Southwark Local Studies Library, London A296, 7 January 1800.
have been common while learning to iron skillfully. During an Old Bailey trial of 1798 a prisoner, Maria Hipkin, used identifying ironing marks as part of her defense, deposing “there is an iron-mould and a seam in it [a petticoat], that I should know it again by; and the round gown has got an iron-mould upon the front of it.”

In domestic establishments possessing laundry facilities starching and ironing were performed in-house. However, there are numerous entries in household accounts referring to payments made for starching (and presumably ironing) specific items, usually accessory garments such as caps and handkerchiefs. As with washing, then, multiple options were available depending on the account keeper’s situation or preference. Martha Dodson’s account book contains the greatest number of such entries, twenty-six in total. The articles mentioned include aprons, ruffles, handkerchiefs, lace, caps, cloth and once a hood and black ribbon. Most often multiple items were starched at a time and only occasionally a single piece. Martha Dodson most likely switched between domestic and professional starching when she travelled from Cookham to London and back again. The dates of payments for starching all fall within the months she annually spent in London (usually November to June). And between 1754 and 1761 she purchased large quantities of starch, bluing agents and soap each May and/or June. As the timing was shortly before her annual departure from London, it appears likely these purchases were brought back to Cookham for use at her house there. That these purchases only begin in 1754 suggests these supplies may have been made in-house or acquired locally up until that date.

Conversely, Gertrude Savile’s account books contain only a few entries for starching, and those are within the first ten years of the accounts. It may be too that she changed her practices and preferences in London from year to year. In October 1736 she recorded “Starching 1s”,

\[2^{16}\] Old Bailey Proceedings t17980110-43.
fig. 2.29 Henry Morland (1716/19-1797) *A Laundry Maid Ironing*, oil on canvas, 1765-82, Tate Britain.
in May 1737 “Stiffening & Mending a black Lace Hood 3-6”, in March 1743/4 “Altering a Mob Starching joyning Lace etc = 4-0” and in May 1747 “Starching Caps, Hood & Ruffles 1-4”.\(^{217}\) The infrequency of starching entries and periodic purchases of starch (which increase after 1742) suggest Savile employed her own maids for the work, probably as part of the regular washing routine.

Anne Brockman’s account book contains several entries for starching, but unlike either Martha Dodson’s or Gertrude Savile’s, Brockman’s speaks very generally about it. Most often, starching is added onto payments for washing and rarely any specific items are mentioned. She refers to having a head dress (probably a fontange) starched in 1706 and “Scouring & Stifning (sic) a Stript Silk” in 1712.\(^{218}\) These entries do sometimes refer to being away from home; for example, “for washing at London & starching 0-5-9” in April 1712, then a couple of weeks later “for washing & Starching 6 weeks at Bath 0-12-0” and “for clear Starching & washing at Lond[on] ye first time 0-1-0” in December 1715.\(^{219}\) It seems most likely that outside these few instances the starching was performed domestically as part of the household laundry routine.

### 2.9 Laundry Equipment & Supplies

In 1771 an inventory of laundry equipment was recorded in Isabella Wrightson’s accounts revealing the contents of a large and well-ordered facility. In it are listed seven wash tubs, three water tubs, nine flat irons, one box for them, five stands, four horses (used for clothes drying), one mangle and four ironing cloths. Her account book also includes the purchase of “2 Close Baskits for Landry” for two shillings at the end of August 1754.\(^{220}\) There are a few entries for

\(^{217}\) 17 October 1736, 19 May 1737, 9 March 1744, 11 May 1747, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.

\(^{218}\) 23 December 1706, 10 April 1712, Anne Brockman her Account Booke.

\(^{219}\) 18 April 1712, 1 May 1712, 14 December 1715, Ibid.

\(^{220}\) 31 August 1754, Account Book of Isabella Wrightson.
semi-consumable ironing cloths and one for “14 yds of Green Baise 0-17-6”, a textile associated with ironing cloths in other accounts.  

221 In May 1739 Mrs Ann Antonie recorded paying for four and three-quarter pounds of “Hair Loyn [line] for the hanging of Cloaths on” indicating an alternate method to using horses.  

222 Running throughout Savile’s account books are periodic entries for laundry room items, further confirming that she kept her own laundry facility both when living both near Nottingham and in London. Over the course of her account books she bought two “Smoothing Irons” (and paid for their periodic repair), numerous ironing cloths, basins and washtubs (and their mending), apparatus for drying clothes, “Mending […] Linnen Press”, “Takeing off Hinges on Linnen Press door” and a clothes basket. These expenditures reveal not only Savile’s arrangement but also that this equipment represented investment pieces intended for many years use before replacement.  

Cleaning agents consisted chiefly of soap, starch, poland starch, powder blue and stone blue. Soap came in two main variants: black & white. Black soap was made from lime, potash and lye. Making these soaps was a long, laborious and unpleasant process. Castile soap was another common purchase, made from olive oil and animal fat that created another hard white soap. Diana Eyre’s account book also includes purchases of wash balls. Washballs were made of soap manipulated through drying, ground to a powder with an additional ingredient such as a  

221 5 September 1783, Ibid.  
222 May 1739, Mrs Ann Antonie Account.  
224 Ibid. “Three Posts for drying Cloaths & painting them 0-6-0” 29 February 1739, “Four Hooks for Cloaths Lines for the Garden 0-0-6” 6 May 1747, “Fifty Yards of Lines to dry Cloaths at 1d pr yd = 0-4-2” 3 October 1752.  
225 Ibid. 26 January 1743/44.  
226 Ibid. 16 March 1743/44.  
227 Ibid. 16 Feb 1754.  
229 Ibid, 399.  
colour and/or fragrance added, moistened enough to create a paste that could be shaped into balls and thoroughly dried again for a week or more.\textsuperscript{231}

Common starch apparently referred to that made from either bran or wheat by a further laborious and time consuming process of boiling the grain, soaking it, draining, rinsing and drying and could take up to a month.\textsuperscript{232} Poland starch appears in some of the accounts and looks to be the name for starch made from potatoes, a produce associated with Poland at the time.\textsuperscript{233} The purpose of bluing starches was to counteract the natural yellowing of white linens and textiles over time and keep them looking bright white.\textsuperscript{234} Stone blue was made from a small amount of indigo mixed with starch and formed into lumps.\textsuperscript{235} Powder blue was potassium cobalt silicate, “smalt”, added to rinse water for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{236}

Gertrude Savile’s entries for laundry supplies purchases are almost as regular as her washing - apart from a two-year gap between recorded soap or starch purchases between March 10, 1738/39 and February 28, 1740/41. Starch makes its first appearance in May 1738, two years after the start of the account books, but routinely features thereafter along with stone blue and powder blue. Although fairly frequent, the amounts and timings of washing supply acquisitions were less regular than her washing schedule. Savile bought soap, castile soap and ball soap in quantities ranging from a few pence worth to a stone\textsuperscript{237} and “half a firkin”.\textsuperscript{238} Starch, powder

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{231} Hannah Glasse, \textit{The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy: Which Far Exceeds Any Thing of the Kind Yet Published ... To which are Added, One Hundred and Fifty New and Useful Receipts. And Also Fifty Receipts for Different Articles of Perfumery}, (London: W. Strahan et. al., 1784), 399.
\item \textsuperscript{233} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{235} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{236} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{237} fourteen pounds.
\item \textsuperscript{238} thirty pounds.
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blue and stone blue are purchased in consistently much smaller quantities than soap; by the quarter or half pound up to three or four pounds, but never in the same quantities as soap. Apparently, a little of these other agents went a long way and they also cost much more. The constantly shifting amounts of soap, starch and bluing agents suggest that Savile bought these supplies on as-needed or as-anticipated bases.

Fuller’s earth, used during the eighteenth century for both laundry and household cleaning applications, also features regularly in Savile’s account books. This was (and is) more of a heavy-duty cleaner and probably reserved for heavily soiled textiles and/or grease stains. And in October 1755 Savile records two curious additional cleaning supplies in an entry reading “New Makeing a green Damask Nightgown 5s, Sleeve Lining 1s, Gimp 1-2, Hartshorn & bread to clean it 4d (italics mine)”. Hartshorn was a liquid ammonia solution made from the hooves and horns of male red deer and was used as a stain-removal agent. Mentioned in conjunction with hartshorn, the bread was likely used for its absorbent properties. Among the Purefoy letters is a request for “one pound of Hartshorn shavings, & six pounds of starch” indicating it was used within household laundries as well.

Martha Dodson’s laundry room purchases included “3 flat irons for cloaths” in May 1754, a “bottle of powder to get spots out of cloaths” in April 1755 and another bottle in May 1756, “2 yards white bays for ironing cloath” in January 1758 with a further two yards of the

239 A pound of soap cost approximately five pence while the same weight of starch or bluing agent cost around two shillings (or twenty-four pence).
242 Purefoy Letters Vol 1, 70.
same material in June 1760. Additionally, purchases of starches and bluing agents are frequent. However, there are only three entries for the purchase of soap. In May 1756 she recorded paying six shillings for twelve pounds of soap, in June 1758 four shillings and sixpence for nine pounds and in May 1761 simply mentions soap without an amount or specified cost. The recorded amounts are large – twelve and nine pounds – and the total bill for the unrecorded amount, along with starch and bluing is one pound five pence suggesting another substantial quantity. Yet, even these were not likely sufficient for five years worth of laundry and the account book continues until 1765 with no further mention of either soap or starches. Is it possible that soap for her household’s laundry was obtained through a combination of purchasing and making it at home? And after May 1761 how her laundry was done at all remains a mystery with no further entries for washing supply expenses and only six entries for washing clothes (apart from occasional individual garments) between July 1757 and May 1765 (the final entry in the book). It also appears her laundry practices changed more than once. The account book begins in July 1746, but there are no entries for soap or starches until May 1754. One of the first entries in the book is, however, payment for “3 hoops on washtub & one on pail” for one shilling and two pence. In July, Martha Dodson would have been at home in Cookham. Her house there would certainly have featured a wash house or laundry room facility. It seems most likely that while in Cookham her laundry was done by the domestic staff, and quite probably they made their own soap. However, she travelled to London almost every year that the account book covers, and there are no entries for soap or starches for her time there until 1754 and none after 1762.

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243 23 May 1754, 17 April 1755, 26 May 1756, 30 January 1758, 6 June 1760, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
244 Ibid. 20 May 1756, 5 June 1758, 23 May 1761.
245 Ibid. 25 July 1746.
There is but one entry for soap in Ann, Lady Rose of Walworth’s fragmentary accounts. It records payment of one pound fourteen shillings for “half Hundred Soap” in January 1807.\textsuperscript{246} This equated to about fifty six pounds or a firkin, a very large quantity. It may be this purchase represented a year, half year, or quarter’s amount of soap, depending on the size of Lady Rose’s household. In a 1699 letter Lady Verney inquires of William Coleman about delivery of a barrel of soap.\textsuperscript{247} Although far from conclusive, these entries suggest some households may have opted for obtaining large amounts of supplies a few times per year at possibly regular intervals rather than the as-needed basis Savile’s account implies.

Francis Hamilton recorded no purchases of soap or bluing agents. However, there is an entry for “Blacking for Shoes 0-0-6” from June 1797 and one for a “Bleaching-Ball 0-0-6” from April 1800.\textsuperscript{248} Possibly her soap was homemade or she employed other recipes from household products such as the vinegar, chamberlye (urine) and stale beer concoction in *Humphrey Clinker* that Winnifred Jenkins recounts learning from a fellow ladies-maid at Bath:

She has shown me all her secrets, and learned me to wash gaze, and refresh rusty silks and bumbaseens, by boiling them with winegar, chamberlye, and stale beer. My short sack and apron luck as good as new from the shop, and my pumpydoor as fresh as a rose, by the help of turtle-water.\textsuperscript{249}

Household hints and recipes for washing and stain removal agents abounded in the eighteenth century, many of which appeared in household manuals published during the period. For example, one claimed “stains of acid such as lemon juice, vinegar etc. may be removed from dress by the application of volatile alkali” and “wine stains may be removed by the vapour of

\textsuperscript{246} 15 January 1807, Accounts of Ann, Lady Rose of Walworth, Southwark Local Studies Library A296.
\textsuperscript{247} *Verney Letters*, 39.
\textsuperscript{248} 10 June 1797, 21 April 1800, Accounts of Mrs Francis Hamilton.
\textsuperscript{249} Smollett, *Humphrey Clinker*, 48-49.
burning sulphur”. Madame Johnson’s Present; or Every Young Woman’s Companion in Useful and Universal Knowledge, published in 1765 recommended “Rubbing [...] silks the right Way, with a cloth dipped in the Spirit of Turpentine” to effectively remove “Pitch, Tar, or Paint”. This and butter were also recommended for removing paint from linen. An unfortunate anecdote from Elizabeth Ham’s autobiography corroborates employment of this advice: after having some chairs painted in 1809 she was required to “proffer Turpentine and butter” to guests after sitting on the still-tacky furniture. Madame Johnson further advocated cleaning plain silks by “rubbing them on a Table with Bran heated before the Fire. N.B. A peck of Bran is enough for a Suit of Clothes”; and to clean satins and damask “the Crumb of a Threepenny loaf, two Days old mixed with a Quarter of an Ounce of Powder Blue is to be rubbed over them”.

The only account book that makes no mention of washing supplies is Elizabeth Dodson’s. Hers covers primarily the few years before she married, thus prior to having her household to manage. The account extends into only the first year of her marriage and still contains no entries for washing supplies and only one or two payments for washing other than gloves. Perhaps she had a housekeeper in her new home who managed such provisioning.

2.10 Dyeing

In eighteenth-century England the dyeing trade involved not only colouring new textiles but also re- or over-dyeing the cloth of garments already made and worn (probably for some time). Re-dyeing clothes was a popular option for extending and giving fresh life to older garments, making the old look new again. In Wade’s ledger the single most common article for dyeing was

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251 Ibid.
252 Ibid.
253 Ibid.
women’s dresses/gowns, totalling one hundred and three. Apart from gowns the women’s garments found in the ledger comprised primarily skirts, shawls/sashes, stockings, yards of lace, bonnets, cloaks and a few pairs of gloves. Additionally, there was an ermine tippet, a bodice, a net purse, a lady’s habit (possibly referring to a riding habit) and a pair of silk garters. The household accounts I analyzed align with Wade’s ledger and dyeing appears in nearly all of them. The majority of dyeing entries refer to gowns or gown lengths of cloth but also include a quilted petticoat, non-quilted petticoats, a riding habit, hats, stockings and a gauze handkerchief. Besides the shawls mentioned in Wade’s ledger for dyeing there are few, if any, mentions of personal linens such as shifts, caps or aprons. These types of garments were usually made of white linen or cotton with the maintenance effort focused on keeping them white rather than changing their colour. I also think it very unlikely that stays were re-dyed considering their make-up was multi-layered and involved multiple materials.

As common as dyeing was, not all garments were suitable. Monochrome and perhaps some printed textiles lent themselves best to re-dyeing. Not only would dyeing a polychrome silk brocade, for example, ruin the multi-colour effect but a brocade’s texture would likely remain recognizable and thus draw particular attention to its being re-dyed – something one probably still wished to conceal for sake of appearances. Furthermore, the chemical reactions of the original dyes to the new dyes might be inconsistent resulting in unpredictable and quite possibly unattractive outcomes. However, there are occasional exceptions. Wade’s ledger does record an instance of “A strip (striped) stuff skirt redyed green 2/6” in 1790.

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254 Ibid., 38, 40.
255 Ibid., 40.
Fading was probably the primary reason why clothes and their textiles were re-dyed. Over the many years, if not decades of their use, many garments would have developed a worn appearance earlier than the fabric itself was deemed worn out. Thus, re-dyeing was a popular option for refreshing the colour of certain textiles. Along similar lines to renewing the appearances of textiles, dyeing could also assist in covering or reducing the severity of stains. An additional reason for dyeing pre-existing clothing was as a preparation for mourning. Wade’s ledger includes several references to garments being dyed black; and one customer, a Mrs Davis, had a silk handkerchief, four bundles of lutestring fabric, a small sarsanet cloak, eleven yards of ribbon and one glove (curiously, only one) dyed black in 1789. In February 1759 Martha Dodson “paid dying Stuf (sic) coat black 0-2-0”. Shortly before this, she recorded paying for a black gauze handkerchief, a pair of black kid gloves, a pair of black shoe buckles, and shortly afterwards bought a new black flannel petticoat; likely she was outfitting herself for mourning. Early in the century Anne Brockman recorded a payment “for dying (sic) & dressing a black cloth sute 0-3-6”. This entry also coincides with a few other purchases of black dress items including six and a half yards of black silk fabric and black ribbons, suggesting this, too, was for mourning preparations.

Clothes were even dyed for purposes of theft concealment. Mrs Lucy Green deposed in September 1805 to numerous articles of her personal wearing apparel that were stolen and remarked that one in particular had been dyed. The dyer was questioned and stated that the accused contracted him to dye a gown for his wife. Described as a light gown with a flowered pattern on it – whether printed or woven is not specified - the dyer reported he changed the

256 Ibid.
257 9 February 1757, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
258 Ibid. 5 January 1757, 21 February 1757.
259 18 December 1703, Anne Brockman her Account Booke.
colour of the gown to a dark green, as requested and added that he did not find such a request unusual. He further affirmed that while the gown in question was “not quite new”, he was accustomed to dyeing ones that were. However, other testimony in the trial indicated that this particular instance of dyeing was considered remarkable by others who thought it “a great pity such a gown [almost new and much admired] should be dyed”. The accused’s wife, Mrs Taylor, supposedly defended her decision stating it was “only to wear every day”. However, it must have appeared suspicious when the witness reported never having seen Mrs Taylor wear the dress until after it had been dyed.  

Garments were not typically re-dyed in whole form. Instead, women picked the articles apart first, removing any linings, facings or trimmings in the process. The garment was then re-assembled afterwards. In her journal(s) of 1790-1800 Mrs Larpent rarely described the appearance or nature of her clothing, but relayed that she “often unpicked her gowns and cloaks, to have them […] redyed”.  

In 1712, Kendal-based businessman Joseph Symson sent to a London business contact “a striped poplin suit in a piece and 3 yards of new of the same which must desire your particular care in getting well dyed a full yellow. It is for my sister, an everyday suit”.  

In 1713 he sent to the same contact a striped satin gown in four pieces ‘to be dyed green to pattern’. This practice was very effective at enabling thorough dye jobs, but also makes identifying any re-dyed extant garments difficult. If articles were re-dyed whole this would be easily spotted; as it was, and was no doubt intended, the re-assembled garment looked very like one newly made. Linings were sometimes dyed, but again, separately from the rest of the garment. In 1711 Joseph Symson sent to his London contact “a cherry coloured silk gown lining

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260 Old Bailey Proceedings t18050918-35.
263 Ibid.
of a friend’s, which please to get dyed a good bright blue if it will take it, otherwise a good crimson or scarlet, and pardon all this trouble”.

The deposition of a London silk dyer, Francis Robins, during an Old Bailey trial of 1736 describes the dyers’ own preparation of the material: “It had been a Gown, but was in pieces, sewed together for the Conveniency of Dying (sic). There was about 10 Yards of it in all, when we had sewed it together.” Thus, the unpicked pieces and lengths of garment material were stitched together end-to-end, to keep them all together. Another trial in December 1769 shows this method continued through the century when silk dyer George Miller deposed “my shop was robbed of a white flowered saque and coat, a pink sattin night- gown, a gray watered tabby gown, all unripped and put together, in order for dying (sic)”.

The process of dyeing was, literally, multi-layered. Specific tints were not achieved by mixing the dyes themselves but by dyeing the cloth or article in first one bath of a “primitive” colour (meaning the direct colour from a given source) then another. The saturation(s) of the dye baths and the combination of dippings determined the intensity and particular shade of the final colour. All dyes at this period derived from natural sources, plant, animal or mineral such as madder root (for reds), the weld plant or saffron (for yellows when mixed with wood ash), woad or indigo (for blues), oak bark or alder wood (for browns), and logwood (for plum, violets and

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264 Ibid.
265 Old Bailey Proceedings t17360115-36.
266 Ibid. t17691206-3.
Saline solutions were used as mordents to fix the dyes to the cloth, as well as tin, chrome, alum and even bran.

No discernible patterns appear for certain colours of fabric being re-dyed other specific colours. Sometimes the transition is an obvious one, such as when Gertrude Savile had her scarlet padusoy dyed brown or when Elizabeth Jervis had a white silk gown and lining dyed – it could become any colour. Sometimes overdyeing cloth the same colour was desired, presumably for a straightforward renewal, such as with one of Martha Washington’s gowns. Even across the Atlantic, George and Martha Washington regularly acquired clothing and cloth from London and even sent away for its maintenance. On one occasion, George Washington wrote to their London agents, Robert Cary and Company, on behalf of his wife to have a green sack either cleaned or “fresh dyed of the same colour”. However, several recorded instances of dyeing have the garment or textile in question being dyed from one strong colour into another or even lighter one. For example, Martha Dodson had a scarlet gown of her daughter’s dyed yellow in March of 1760 and Joseph Symons requested a cherry coloured silk gown lining of a friend’s be dyed bright blue, if possible. In the latter instance, Symons accepted that radical change may be unattainable and added the alternative request for either “a good crimson or scarlet”. However, less than a year later he requested that a yellow gown be dyed “a full sky blue”. Therefore, a process must have existed for stripping the colour from textiles in order to

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268 Ibid.
270 16 May 1745, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
272 Baumgarten, “Altered Historical Clothing,” 49.
273 7 March 1760, Martha Dodson’s Account Book; Lambert, “Sent from town,” 75.
274 Lambert, “ Sent from town,” 75.
recreate a neutral base on which to re-dye cloth a desired colour. Otherwise, simply overdyeing a red dress with yellow would create orange or a red dress with blue would create purple.

Dyeing features less frequently in household and personal accounts than most other clothing alteration or maintenance activities recorded; however, it appears in nearly all of them. This indicates that throughout the century members of polite society were willing to employ this method of garment rejuvenation. In addition to the instance mentioned above Anne Brockman recorded several payments for dyeing articles such as stockings, lengths of silk, a handkerchief and one or two petticoats. Her account book even includes an entry for buying half an ounce of cochineal, the exotic and expensive insect from which rich red tints were achieved, in October 1715. Elizabeth Dodson’s account contains two entries in 1729, one for dyeing a gown and a month later dyeing a quilted petticoat. In May 1737 Gertrude Savile recorded payment for “Dyeing Red Damask Nightgown 0-6-0” in addition to the instance mentioned above. In mid-century Martha Dodson paid for dyeing a length of cloth, her daughter’s hat and both the petticoat and gown mentioned above. And Elizabeth Jervis had a length of damask fabric dyed for six shillings in 1752 in addition to the white silk gown and lining dyed for five shillings in 1749. The close price between the two entries suggests the damask may have been an unpicked gown. In April 1763 Diana Eyre “pd Mr Dockwrey for 9 ½ yds of Stuff Deying (sic) 0-0-9 ½” and in July 1770 paid for “a Gown Dyeing 7-6”.

Isabella Wrightson’s account book contains a single entry for “Mr Broadhead Dyer 0-17-8 (a significant sum)” in April 1778, but also includes the name and address of another, “Taylor Silk Dyer opposite the Chap’l King Street

275 Encyclopaedia Britannica, 199.
276 28 March 1729, 30 April 1729, Elizabeth Dodson’s Account Book.
277 21 May 1737, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
278 26 December 1749, 16 February 1757, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
279 Hayden, “Records of Clothing Expenditure,” 38.
280 30 April 1763, 27 July 1770, Account Book of Mrs Diana Eyre.
Golden Square” in London suggesting she may have patronized more than one.\textsuperscript{281} Between 1801 and 1808 the fragmentary accounts of Ann, Lady Rose of Walworth include several payments for dyeing gowns, a habit and hats.\textsuperscript{282} That this trade also surfaces from time to time in Old Bailey proceedings suggests it was employed by an even wider socio-economic spectrum of people. For example, in a trial of September 1798 one of the accused in a coining offences case, Sarah Willis, defended the dirt found on her hands that was presumed to derive from falsely colouring base coins as “copperas and logwood that I had been dying a gown with”.\textsuperscript{283}

2.11 Conclusion

The sizable monetary investment clothing represented necessitated considerable care for its upkeep in terms of ensuring both continued serviceability and a decent, respectable appearance. Diligent housekeepers, whether married or single, expended many hours on arranging and managing their own and their household’s clothing needs. Although repair and cleaning cost far less than buying new, significant resources and expenditure were also devoted to this. Most women had access to multiple (if not numerous) options and strategies for this continuous responsibility for which entire subsidiary industries developed, such as specialist cleaning, calendering and dyeing. Multitudes of other women found employment laundering and/or mending the apparel of others who, for whatever reason, chose not to perform these tasks domestically. Thus, whole swathes of the population among both labouring and so-called leisure classes were continually concerned and engaged with clothing maintenance. Perhaps the traditional saying ought to be amended to “the only certainties in life are death, taxes and laundry.”

\textsuperscript{281} 13 April 1778, General Accounts 1765-1770, Acct Book of Isabella Wrightson.
\textsuperscript{282} November 1801, 24 October 1803, 12 January 1807, 8 October 1808, Accounts of Ann, Lady Rose of Walworth.
\textsuperscript{283} Old Bailey Proceedings t17980912-18.
Chapter Three: Changing Bodies: Size and Life Cycle Alterations

3.1 Introduction

After laundering and mending, altering garments for size must have comprised the most recurrent work performed on eighteenth-century Englishwomen’s clothing. Again, the long years of use experienced by individual garments due to their significant monetary investment in materials primarily accounts for this. Garments owned by the same person for many years would have required adapting to inevitable bodily changes over time. Because girls were dressed in adult-like styles shortly out of toddlerhood until late in the century\(^1\) (one imagines as soon as they had achieved the eighteenth-century equivalent of “potty training”) it seems likely that just as their childhood dresses were lengthened and altered to accommodate growth spurts, so too at least a portion of their adolescent clothing was carried into adulthood. Many adult women went through more pregnancies than most western women of today, meaning regular, significant fluctuations in size. Illness was a constant threat and with its frequently attendant lack of appetite, prolonged bouts could result in severe weight-loss. This must have resulted in altering either the clothing itself or the way it was worn during sickness and subsequent recovery. Finally, simply the passage of time works on bodies, changing their size, proportions and tolerance for the period’s rigid bodices and potentially cumbersome skirt supports, such as hoop petticoats (which could reach extreme and impractical widths during the 1740s\(^2\)).

This chapter explores the types of common bodily changes women experienced and how their clothing was or may have been modified and adapted to suit. Evidence of alterations for

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size can be found on many surviving garments. However, because clothes also frequently passed between multiple owners while retaining little if any provenance, determining whether an alteration was for the same wearer or a different one is almost impossible. Similarly, while household and personal accounts are replete with entries for altering clothes, they but rarely describe the nature of the work, making it equally impossible to know whether it was to change the garment’s look or fit. Thus, primary and secondary documentary sources, print and visual culture and direct object examination (where possible) are all tapped and blended to reveal suggestive pictures of practice.

3.2 Pregnancy

Pregnancy is often overlooked in dress history studies. This is a grievous omission considering that many (if not most) eighteenth-century women spent a decade or more of their adult years either pregnant or having just given birth. On the other hand, the comparative lack of maternity clothing during this period renders the oversight more forgivable. Very few examples of purpose-made maternity apparel survive from the period and neither pictorial nor documentary evidence demonstrates it, apart from occasional references to “child-bed linen.” One notable exception is a British-made quilted maternity ensemble at Colonial Williamsburg from 1780-95. The outfit consists of a jacket with lace-up front, vest with lace-up back, and petticoat. Worn without the vest, the jacket edges meet at the centre front of the body, in accordance with prevailing fashion post-1775. The combination of lacing and matching vest allow the ensemble to expand, primarily across the lower abdomen (fig. 3.1). While purpose-made for pregnancy,

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4 For example, Anne Brockman’s early account book entries. British Library, Anne Brockman her Account booke begun December 26: 1700, Brockman Papers Add MS 45208.
Fig. 3.1 Maternity Ensemble consisting of petticoat, jacket and vest, 1780-95. Colonial Williamsburg 1936-666, 1-3.

fig. 3.2 Bedgown, 1731-40, Museum of London 2003.59.
even this example incorporates garment alteration for accommodating size increase via changing the way the individual pieces are worn. However, this represents but one, atypical example and the inevitable increasing of a pregnant woman’s abdomen could not be confined within the snug fitting clothing of the period.

Moreover, pregnancy did not automatically mean long-term confinement for all or even very many women. Experiences varied from woman to woman and pregnancy to pregnancy; many women remained active throughout while some were virtually immobilised. For example, Mrs Addison of Liverpool recalled, “I was so entirely confined to the house for the two months before that I could not even walk around the garden & I have always been active to the last before.” On the other hand, despite being “incommode by her sheer size” London schoolmaster’s wife Bessy Ramsden maintained an active social life of visiting, shopping and card-playing throughout her four pregnancies. She stated in a letter,

I am determined not to stay at home any Longer till I take to my bed, which I am at a loss to say when to expect the fatal moment. I give it out to my friends that I shall not give caudle till the first week in Feb[ruary] but they all say it is impossible I should waddle about till that time I am such a monster in size; and indeed I am under great apprehensions I shall drop to pieces before I am ready for the little stranger.

The active business of housekeeping required women’s attention and exertion despite their increasing condition. Nor was continued activity necessarily frowned upon. Dr William Buchan of Edinburgh, Scotland, wrote a how-to book for pregnant women that recommended activity and exercise. “In Advice to Mothers (1807), he suggested that the best exercises during pregnancy were those to which a woman was already accustomed, only in moderation. These

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6 “Despite the myth that women of the past secluded themselves when pregnant, such was not the case with those who left written records from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” Baumgarten, What Clothes Reveal, 147.
8 Ibid; B. Addison, Liverpool, to E. Whitaker, Roefield (29 October 1816).
9 Ibid, 100; B. Ramsden, Charterhouse, to E. Shackleton, Alkincoats (11 November 1767).
10 Baumgarten What Clothes Reveal 148.
included “Slow, short walks in the country, or gentle motion in an open carriage.” Buchan observed that labouring countrywomen suffered no ill effects by continuing their work throughout pregnancy, although he advised against dancing or “great bodily exertions.”

How, then, did women manage their attire? What did they wear during pregnancy that enabled them to perform their regular duties and schedules while also maintaining respectable appearances outside the home? The answer, by and large, is that they simply continued wearing their regular clothes, but in irregular ways. Most often they must have manipulated their clothing to accommodate their state while sometimes altering it as well. The very few purpose-made maternity gowns that survive date from the final decades of the eighteenth century when women’s bodice styles changed to have meeting front edges, eliminating much of the flexibility of fit the previous stomacher fronts afforded. Baumgarten also poignantly explains,

Another reason for the dearth of maternity gowns may lie in the perceived danger of childbirth during the period. There was genuine uncertainty regarding the survival of mother or child; the real life passage to be celebrated was not the pregnancy, but the successful birth. While ceremonial clothing of weddings and christenings was often identified as such and cherished by family as a reminder of happy events, few women set aside and preserved clothing that was worn during the stressful time of pregnancy. More likely, maternity clothing was altered back to regular size or given away to other family members.

Amanda Vickery further elucidates women’s anxieties around childbirth by citing instances in their letters mentioning childbed deaths of women they knew and stating that virtually every woman knew someone who had perished in this way. And while the actual risk to themselves may have been quite low, there was no way of knowing they would not be next. It seems likely,

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid, 152.
14 Ibid.
15 “Recent revisionism may stress that the average woman ran only a 6-7 per cent risk of dying in her reproductive career, and was as likely to die by infection disease or accident.” Vickery, The Gentleman’s Daughter, 97.
then, that women’s general approach to their clothing during pregnancy was simultaneously pragmatic and low-key. This resulted in apparel manipulation practices ranging from mundane and obvious to surprisingly ingenious.

Garments such as short gowns or bedgowns/jackets were highly convenient and easily adapted (fig. 3.2). Typically a form of undress for elite women or everyday dress for labouring class women, these were relatively unfitted articles worn with petticoats as two-piece outfits.16 Because of their full and loose cut these gowns required no alteration and could be worn throughout pregnancy and afterward.17 The Museum of London bedgown in fig. 3.2 is not specifically for pregnancy but one can easily see how its shape would comfortably suit.

In a 1735 letter, Sarah, the Duchess of Marlborough, reminisced to her granddaughter about her pregnancies early in the century and the clothing to which she resorted for comfort:

I remember when I was within three months of my reckoning, I could never endure any bodice [corset or stays] at all; but wore a warm waistcoat wrapped about me like a man’s and tied my petticoats on top of it. And from that time never went abroad but with a long black scarf to hide me I was so prodigious big.18

The Duchess did not avoid going out, but adapted her clothing to her condition. A type of garment called ‘jumps’ may have also served this purpose. These were waistcoat-like and either overlapped or tied at the front, allowing easy accommodation for size, and probably similar to

18 Ibid, 148.
fig. 3.3 Woman’s Waistcoat or Jumps, c. 1776-85, Museum of London 47.44/3 (author’s photograph).
the duchess’s waistcoat (fig. 3.3). Bib-front aprons and pinners could serve as additional possibilities for covering any gaps in bodice fronts in addition to the duchess’s “long black scarf” as shown in a detail of John Nixon Lewis’s print *Cornish Hug* (1781) (fig. 3.4). The woman depicted appears to be wearing her everyday clothes but she has put her apron on underneath her gown rather than overtop, as would be the usual placement. Although obscured by her arms, the apron may also be tied high upon her torso to fill any gap in her bodice front.

Although the upper torso of women’s fashionable clothes in the eighteenth century was firm and fitted, achieved through snugly laced stays and form-fitting bodices, their styles and construction also rendered them malleable and adaptable. Throughout much of the century women’s dress bodices were filled in at the front with a stomacher. While most stomachers were narrowly triangular in shape, some surviving examples are wider and more trapezoidal, such as one in yellow silk at the Museum of London (fig. 3.5). The width of this stomacher, and others like it enabled enlargement of the bodice by pinning the dress front edges to the stomacher farther and farther apart from each other. In her article on pregnancy and stays in eighteenth-century England, Harriet Waterhouse states, “The addition of a larger stomacher was a simple and economical solution enabling [women] to continue wearing their most fashionable clothing, both for their own social pride, and because otherwise, by the time they were next able to fit it, the style could be outdated”. The dress style known as the *robe a la françaïse*, or sack gown, also frequently incorporated a means for size adjustment. This style featured back pleats that fell loose from the shoulders, but made with a fitted bodice lining. This lining was often split up the

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21 Museum of London A7940, stomacher c.1770
22 Waterhouse, “A Fashionable Confinement,” 56. Although the statement is made in reference to a sixteenth-century context, I believe it equally applicable to the eighteenth century.
fig. 3.4 John Nixon (died 1818) *Cornish Hug* (detail), print, 1781, Lewis Walpole Library.
fig. 3.5 Stomacher, c.1770, Museum of London A7940 (author’s photograph). This stomacher is wider than usual, which would have been particularly useful during pregnancy; worn with the dress below.

fig. 3.6 Dress (front detail), c.1770, Museum of London A7940 (author’s photograph). In addition to the stomacher (above) the ties at the bodice back lining (here visible inside the dress) would have added more size flexibility.
centre back and furnished with either lacing or ties, thereby creating fit flexibility in addition to the stomacher front (fig. 3.6).\(^\text{23}\) Granted, this style was primarily accessible to elite women only and was more dominant on the continent than in England, where fitted-back dresses prevailed. However, it was still a popular fashion in England for several decades from the 1740s to 1770s. A shorter version called the *pet en l’air* was also widespread, could perform the same functions, and with its lower fabric yardage requirement was more affordable for a greater spectrum of women.\(^\text{24}\)

From the late seventeenth century and into the early eighteenth century some stays were adaptable in a similar manner to stomacher-fronted dresses. Staymaker Richard Viney recorded several instances of making and altering stomachers in tandem with stays, indicating they were part of the same overall garment.\(^\text{25}\) Such stays could be laced more or less tightly depending on the state of the body while still keeping it entirely and properly encased. It appears some stays constructed specifically for pregnancy may have existed. In his *Encyclopédie* Diderot illustrated a pair of stays for *les femmes enceintes*, or pregnant women (fig 3.7). The overall shape of the garment is consistent with other examples of stays he included. They are constructed with shoulder straps, a flat back, a point at centre-front waist, and tabs over the hips, with the addition of lacings under the arms to allow expansion.\(^\text{26}\) One extant example is a set from 1780-85 held in a private collection in the UK and featured in Jill Salen’s book of historical corsets for which she drafted patterns (fig. 3.8).\(^\text{27}\) These stays are furnished with sets of lacing at the sides in addition to the centre back and would particularly enable customizing the fit over an expanded

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\(^\text{23}\) I observed several examples of this among sack dresses at the Museum of London and Platt Hall in Manchester.  
\(^\text{24}\) Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume*, 130, 297.  
\(^\text{25}\) Diary of Richard Viney, Staymaker, 1744, British Library MS 44935.  
\(^\text{26}\) Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 149.  
fig. 3.7 Denis Diderot (1713-84), “Tailleur de Corps,” from Encyclopédie, 1771, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library.

fig. 3.8 Pregnancy Corset, 1780-85, in Corsets: Historical Patterns and Techniques. The side lacing could have helped accommodate an increasing abdomen during pregnancy.
abdomen. However, while such specimens are not isolated they are extremely rare and costly. Many women simply loosened their stays as their pregnancies progressed. For example, the visibly pregnant women in the 1774 print *The Man of Business* by Matthew or Mary Darly all wear fashionable dress with fitted bodices, which can only be worn with stays underneath (fig 3.9). The torsos maintain the requisite rigidity with the lines instead distended by lacing the stays to accommodate their abdomens. Along with the woman in *Cornish Hug* these ladies wear their aprons beneath their bodices, and also shawls, handkerchiefs and short capes for additional coverage. Indeed, disapprobation for corseting only emerged after boned stays fell from fashion in the early nineteenth century and were not discarded because of health concerns.  

After 1770 the prevailing fashion for women’s bodices was to fasten up the centre front, eliminating the need for a stomacher – and presumably any obvious means of adapting the dress for pregnancy. One easy solution was to fill in or cover the gap with a large handkerchief or fichu, as seen on a few of the women in *The Man of Business*. Additionally, it would have been a simple matter to devise insert panels for the bodice fronts and allow them to open up over an expanding belly, not unlike the Colonial Williamsburg maternity ensemble. Perhaps that outfit (made over from a cotton quilt) was inspired by an already established style of cutaway bodice fronts. These appear to have originated with the *robe à la polonaise* that emerged in the 1770s whose fronts fell away from the centre of the bosom and were filled in beneath with a false waistcoat or vest (fig 3.10). In Jean-Michel Moreau’s 1777 print *Le Jeune Le Rendez-vous pour Marly* both women depicted wear a *robes à la polonaise* allowing the viewer to see both the

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29 Ibid., 151.
fig. 3.9 Matthew or Mary Darly (1741-1778, 1756-1779), *The Man of Business*, print, 1774, Lewis Walpole Library.

Fig. 3.10 Jean-Michel Moreau (1741-1814), *le Jeune Le Rendez-vous pour Marly*, print, 1777, public domain.
front with cutaway and false waistcoat (on the right) and the seamless back (on the left). The comparatively relaxed fit and separate bodice front of the polonaise was noted for being particularly suitable maternity wear.\(^{31}\) In the 1780s and early 1790s this false-front idea was applied to the *robe à l’anglaise*, or nightgown as it was known in England, now sometimes referred to as a “zone” bodice front (fig. 3.11).\(^{32}\) This variant featured a cutaway bodice front filled in with a sort of false waistcoat or vest in an inverted stomacher shape but continued fully fitted all around. The effect is not dissimilar to that created by the Williamsburg maternity jacket and vest combination. In fact, the similarity is striking enough to suggest some form of cross-influence between this particular style and pregnancy. It seems at least plausible that if it were in fact inspired by a pre-existing fashion (the polonaise), combined with the ubiquitous presence of pregnant women, that it could have encouraged further dissemination and replication. This would account for women continuing to wear fashionable dress throughout pregnancy after the stomacher fronts of the late seventeenth century to early 1770s fell out of favour. A further suggestive example is a 1790 dress at the Museum of London (fig. 3.12).\(^{33}\) This gown made of delicate and sheer white cotton muslin richly embroidered with silk, has a lace-up bodice front which is currently on display at the museum and mounted with a cutaway bodice front that laces over a separate front/false vest. The adjustability the lacing provides coupled with the narrowness of this bodice opening as compared with other incarnations of the style introduces ambiguity to this dress’ intended function by suggesting it, too, would have well suited pregnancy.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 17.
\(^{33}\) Museum of London 51.20-1, dress and petticoat c.1790.
fig. 3.11 Dress and Petticoat, early 1790s, Museum of London 35.44/8. This dress style was known as a *robe a l’anglaise* and this particular variety features the cutaway false waistcoat front fashion.
fig. 3.12 Dress and Petticoat (front detail), c. 1790, Museum of London 51.20/1. This example was made particularly adjustable by the lacing holes at the bodice front edges.
Petticoats, which usually fastened at the sides with narrow tapes extending from the waist binding, were adapted to pregnancy by loosening those ties and wearing the petticoat above the bulge. This feature, too, is evident in *The Man of Business* and *Cornish Hug*, and plate 4 of *Diligence & Dissipation* (1796) (fig 3.13). Although this practice affected the hemline, pulling it up at front, little attempt was made to counteract this. A plate from the German manual *Elementarwerke für die Jugend und Ihre Freunde* (1774) depicts a heavily pregnant woman who modified the manner of wearing a short jacket to suit her condition and combines many of the same sartorial elements seen in the other prints (fig. 3.14). The front opening is caught by a bow at the chest and left open over her abdomen where the space is filled by her petticoat and an apron. Baumgarten notes, “[i]ndeed, many pregnant women wore a long apron tied over the clothing just beneath the breasts to cover the abdomen” and that “as early as 1669, English diarist Samuel Pepys associated aprons with pregnancy: ‘I waited upon the King and Queen ... she being in her white pinner and apron, like a woman with child.’”

As waistlines rose ever higher in the last years of the century and remained just below the bust for the first twenty years of the next, the need to modify how clothes were worn to accommodate pregnancy decreased. The new fashions easily suited an “increasing” state and being often fastened and fitted with drawstrings and/or ties rendered them particularly convenient.

In addition to modifying the way garments were worn, they were altered for pregnancy as well, sometimes permanently. Baumgarten concurs: “pregnant women were not limited to loose bed gowns, [...] given the expense of textiles, alterations were commonplace and the task was

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34 Baumgarten *What Clothes Reveal*, 151.
35 Ibid.
fig. 3.13 After James Northcote (1746-1831), *Diligence and Dissipation Plate the 5th*, print, 1797, The British Museum.

fig. 3.14 Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724-1790), Illustration. from *Elementarwerke für die Jugend und Ihre Freunde*, 1774, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library.
well within the sewing skills of most women.”36 Identifying this type of alteration on extant examples is difficult and never absolutely conclusive. However, certain clues on the garments themselves and the resultant silhouettes they create provide strongly suggestive evidence.

Among the original garments I examined four in particular stand out as examples of altered-for-maternity clothes.

First among these is an ensemble held in the collection of Worthing Museum comprising a silk polonaise short gown and matching petticoat (fig. 3.15).37 According to the museum’s costume curator the ensemble looked correct only when padding was added underneath the centre front of the bodice. Otherwise, it hung strangely on the mannequin.38 Furthermore, the gown was likely altered in the 1770s from a slightly earlier dress into a polonaise style short gown or jacket. If it had been cut as a polonaise in the first place there would be no waist seam as the lack of one was distinctive to the style.39 The current placement of the pocket slits are farther back than practical indicating the skirt was removed at some point and re-pleated to concentrate fullness towards the back, a characteristic of later eighteenth-century skirt construction; and the sleeves were lengthened from above the elbow to just below it by the addition of shaped cuffs, another feature of the polonaise style. The cutaway bodice front and inset pieces are stitched together at the neckline and were lined as one, indicating that the accommodation of a protruding abdomen was probably part of the overall re-fashioning (fig.3.16). A possible scenario is that the ensemble originally dates from the 1760s, was altered in the 1770s when polonaises were de rigueur and to accommodate pregnancy. Given the expense of new clothes modifying an existing dress for this purpose would have been the prudent choice. Considering that many women

36 Ibid, 151.
38 In conversation with Gerry Connolly, fashion curator at Worthing Museum, February, 2013.
39 Van Cleave and Welborn, “‘Very Much the Taste and Various are the Makes,’” 2.
fig. 3.15 Polonaise Gown and Petticoat, 1775-85, Worthing Museum 1972/59. Showing the exterior appearance of the false waistcoat front and how it is shaped to fit over an enlarged abdomen.

fig. 3.16 Polonaise Gown (interior detail), 1775-85, Worthing Museum 1972/59 (author’s photograph). The garment is here opened to show the false waistcoat front is sewn in one with the rest of the bodice and thus deliberately cut to be larger at the lower front.
continued leading active domestic and social lives throughout their pregnancies it is also logical to assume they would want to maintain a certain level of fashionability during this time, along with being economical.

A similar result appears on another 1760s-70s silk gown, this time in the Museum of London’s collection (fig. 3.17a).\(^{40}\) The shape and hang of the dress skirt has been significantly altered at the front waistline. Small wedges of self-fabric were inserted between bodice and skirt at the waist creating an overall crescent shape (fig. 3.17b). This causes the skirt fronts to bulge outwards below the waist. A reasonable hypothesis is these additions were made to accommodate a protruding lower abdomen while maintaining a fitted waist - bodily changes more consistent with pregnancy than regular weight gain. Although the work appears contemporary to the eighteenth century, the execution is rougher than usual. This suggests it was performed in some haste and may not have been intended as a permanent modification. The work is partially concealed beneath self-fabric trimming along the front edges of the skirt. However, these too have been modified with some of the gathering let out thus extending the trim to cover the extra distance created by the added wedges.

The third example is a jacket in the Snowshill Wade Costume Collection housed at Berrington Hall, Hereford.\(^{41}\) The jacket’s overall appearance strongly suggests it was re-made from another garment, probably a gown (fig. 3.18). Dress historian Nancy Bradfield is convinced it was used for maternity wear, citing the three sets of stitched bars on one side of the overlapping bodice fronts to fasten with hooks on the other.\(^{42}\) These would enable the jacket’s fit to change as the

\(^{40}\) Museum of London 53.101/14, dress 1760-1770.
\(^{41}\) Berrington Hall SNO41, jacket mid to late eighteenth century.
fig. 3.17a Dress (front detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 53.101/14 (author’s photograph). The puffs in the skirt front trimming have been partially unsewn and stretched out.

fig. 3.17b Dress (proper right front waist detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 53.101/14 (author’s photograph). Showing the crescent-shaped wedge of fabric inserted at the waist to make the skirt puff out at the front.
fig. 3.18 Jacket, mid to late-eighteenth century, Berrington Hall SNO41 (author’s photograph). Two rows of thread loops are worked on the proper left jacket front edge, presumably to accommodate pregnancy.
pregnant wearer grew in size. The jacket is lined with linen that actually forms a separate under-
bodice at the fronts. Eyelets are worked in each side beside the centre front edge and the lacing
would also have facilitated adjustments in size.

Finally, another jacket/bodice at the Museum of London demonstrates an additional
possible approach to fitting a pregnant body.\(^{43}\) The garment is made from costly reddish brown
silk brocaded with polychrome floral motifs; clearly it was once an expensive garment (fig. 3.19a). However, it has been significantly pieced and patched, particularly at the front edges. The type of construction and the meeting front edges indicate the current style dates from c. 1780
and the alterations to date to before 1800. However, the fronts have been pieced and added onto
to create a convex bowing of the centre front edges (fig. 3.19b). This modification would
perfectly accommodate a pregnant belly, particularly as the curvature is fullest at the lower end
of the fronts.

Two further sets of stays may have been altered for this life change. One set, at the Kyoto
Costume Institute (KCI) possibly for pregnancy, and the other, at Colonial Williamsburg
possibly for nursing. The KCI stays are referenced by Harriet Waterhouse in her article on stays
and pregnancy.\(^{44}\) According to Waterhouse they feature openings and lacing holes at the sides in
addition to the centre back. She noted that according to photographs of the stays the side lacing
was a later addition. She did not examine the stays personally, but contacted the Institute’s
curators who assured her “that the methods of construction are consistent throughout, and that

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\(^{43}\) Museum of London A12399, jacket c.1780.
\(^{44}\) Kyoto Costume Institute 1977-05-0002-AC in Waterhouse, “A Fashionable Confinement,” 60.
fig. 3.19a Jacket (front), c.1780, Museum of London A12399 (author’s photograph). A jacket possibly altered for pregnancy

fig. 3.19b Jacket (detail), c.1780, Museum of London (author’s photograph). Here the jacket front edges are turned out, clearly showing the curved lines, which are also boned to the shape.
fig. 3.20 Stays, 1775-90, Colonial Williamsburg 1986-111. These stays are theorized to be for nursing due to the flaps cut into the upper fronts, but this is a questionable supposition since a shift would be worn underneath the stays.
the side and back openings are contemporary.\textsuperscript{45} Thus, these may represent an instance of a pair of stays being altered during the eighteenth century for pregnancy, along the lines of those described by Diderot.

On the other set of stays flaps were cut into the fronts and bound with (probably) silk tape to neaten the edges (fig. 3.20). They lack any sort of fastening so would have been easy to push back and access corresponding openings. The efficacy of this method seems questionable as there was still the shift worn beneath to contend with, however, these stays are not an isolated example. I easily located two others: one at the Museu del Disseny in Barcelona, Spain; and another at the Musée de la Mode et Textile in Paris, France. Both of these exhibit near-identical flaps cut into the body of the stays.\textsuperscript{46}

Although rare, evidence of clothing alteration for pregnancy indicates that a variety of garments might be modified, even including humble shifts. During a 1786 trial at the Old Bailey, witness Mrs Kidd deposed, “I knew the shift, it had a very little bosom, and when I lay in, I had it cut bigger, and afterwards I sewed it with coarse groat thread”.\textsuperscript{47}

3.3 Other Size Changes

Sickness in one form or another was an ever-present threat.\textsuperscript{48} A frequent side effect of sickness, then as now, was weight loss. A person fortunate enough to reach the recuperating side of any of a number of fevers, influenza or the dreaded smallpox might well find their clothes too large and

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Museu del Disseny, Barcelona, Spain, boned stomacher of stays; Musée de la Mode et Textile, Paris, France Inventory number 10801.
\textsuperscript{47} Old Bailey Proceedings t17861025-21.
\textsuperscript{48} Liza Picard, \textit{Dr Johnson’s London: Everyday Life in London 1740-1770}, (London: Phoenix Press, 2003), 157-172. Chapter 16, “Dentistry, Health and Medical Care” provides a concise overview of various ailments and treatments encountered throughout the lifecycle in eighteenth-century London. Some are particular to the capital, but many would have been common throughout the country.
voluminous to make a decent appearance out of the home or even before visitors. While in the sickbed or still at home shifts, nightclothes and the versatile bedgown would have been appropriate and comfortable. However, once recovered sufficiently to venture back out in public surely at least temporary adjustments must have been made to convalescents’ clothing. In one of her letters, Lady Mary Wortley Montague colourfully describes her altered state thus, “from being as fat as Lady Bristol, I am grown leaner than any body I can name.” 49 If the change was really as dramatic as she felt it was, she surely must have had at least some of her clothing altered when she recovered enough to resume public appearances. Other, chronic ailments such as rheumatism impeded mobility and probably led to opposite fit issues over time.

While this project focuses on adult women’s clothing, I believe alterations made to girls’ clothes bringing them into adolescence and womanhood are also worth mentioning. During the first half of the eighteenth century girls began wearing (to our eyes) miniature versions of their mother’s clothing, including stays, at an early age, by around late toddlerhood. 50 In 1704 Mrs Blundell of Crosby, Lancashire had a mantua and petticoat made in London; several years later, in 1712, another one came for her daughter Mally, “tis the first Mantew she has had.” 51 As Anne Buck stated, “Mally at eight years old was beginning to dress like her mother instead of wearing the back-fastening bodice of childhood.” 52 Allan Ramsay’s 1739 portrait of Agnes Murray-Kynymond Dalrymple provides an apt demonstration of this approach to children’s apparel (fig. 3.21). Agnes was born in 1731, so was around the age of eight at the time the portrait was made. Apart from the lack of stomacher, the overall cut, shape and style of her gown closely resembles

51 Ibid., 185.
52 Ibid.
fig. 3.21 Allan Ramsay (1713-1784), Agnes Murray-Kynmond Dalrymple, oil on canvas, 1739, Newhailes Villa, Scotland.

fig. 3.22 Antoine Pesne (1683-1757), Friederike-Luise of Prussia, oil on canvas, 1734, Schloss Ansbach.
an adult woman’s (fig. 3.22). The smooth rigidity of her torso testifies to her wearing stays while the rotund fullness of her skirt (particularly the upper part) suggests there may be hoops or a hoops petticoat beneath. For every day the expense of clothing coupled with a child’s growth spurts would have made extending the useful life of their garments desirable by any means possible. There appear to have been two main approaches taken for achieving this aim: building in the ability to modify the garment at first construction, or altering it along the way.

Lynne-Sorge English examined a set of stays at Kenmore Plantation and Museum in Fredericksburg, Virginia that she speculates were made for an adolescent girl and altered as she grew towards adulthood.\(^{53}\) The stays have been lengthened around the upper edge by grafting more of the same material and was also sewn with boning channels and boned. The girth is quite small at thirty-one inches around the bust/breast and twenty-three and a half inches around the waist, but for some time in the girl’s life any expansion of girth that attended height growth could have been managed via the lacing. However, alterations in girth were also known, as an entry in Staymaker Richard Viney’s 1744 diary attests. For December 24 he recorded “went this morning to Jo’n Rhodes [...] and fetched a childs stay which I let out wider.”\(^{54}\)

From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards the approach to children’s clothing relaxed and it began taking on a form of its own, with girls starting to wear adult-like gowns about the age of twelve rather than six to eight.\(^{55}\) Most adult women’s dress skirts and petticoats are

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\(^{54}\) 24 December 1744, Diary of Richard Viney, Staymaker, British Library Add MS 44935.

\(^{55}\) Buck, *Clothes and the Child,* 207.
fig. 3.23 Girl’s Dress, 1771-80, Museum of London 39.5/4.

fig. 3.24 Girl’s Dress (sleeve cuff detail), 1771-80, Museum of London 39.5/4 (author’s photograph). Showing the turn-back cuff that could also be later used as a sleeve extension.
finished with relatively narrow hems of approximately a half to one inch. A girl’s dress at the Museum of London features a different treatment (fig. 3.23). The hem of this dress is much deeper, over two inches, and also has a half inch tuck taken along the upper edge of the hem. Additionally, the sleeves have deep turn-back cuffs sewn to the ends that could also be let down as needed. In order for the turn-back to show the right side of the cloth, the cuffs are sewn wrong side out to the sleeves; potentially, these could be removed entirely and reattached right side out to extend the sleeves further (fig. 3.24). These multiple techniques would work in tandem to provide additional length for a girl growing into adolescence.

Towards the other end of the life cycle, the natural tendency of the figure as one ages is to increase and spread out. With an average of six or seven pregnancies among child-bearing women, such an occurrence must have been particularly common. Many similar strategies to those employed by pregnant women would meet these needs, adjustable stomacher fronts and sack dresses especially.

Numerous surviving examples of garments also exhibit signs of letting out and enlargement. The most common areas on garments I examined were at side and side back seams of bodices, centre back bodice seams and letting out back bodice pleats, and along sleeve seams. The side back seams of one Museum of London dress clearly indicate letting out with a crease mark near the seam (fig. 3.25). The crease runs the full length of the seam with the distance widening towards the armhole seam; this suggests more accommodation at the bust than the waist was required. Additionally, the lining betrays no corresponding signs of alteration, which likely means the letting out was performed simultaneously with a stylistic remake c. 1780.

57 Ibid. Museum of London 48.46/1, dress c.1780.
fig. 3.25 Dress (proper left side back bodice detail), c.1780, Museum of London (author’s photograph). Showing the altered side back seam (white arrow) and the crease from the original seam (black arrow).
Another Museum of London dress, a sack, was enlarged through the body both inside and out.\textsuperscript{58} Strips of linen were inserted at the sides of the bodice lining with corresponding crease and stitch marks and piecing in the silk (fig. 3.26a-b). Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to determine whether these alterations were made to accommodate the same wearer or a different one.\textsuperscript{59} However, given the frequency of these instances among original examples it seems likely that at least some of them were altered for the same person over time.

Archival sources provide a little more evidence. Staymaker Richard Viney recorded one such instance in his 1744 diary: “Began work on Mrs Moors [stays] which I have to make wider.”\textsuperscript{60} In April 1739, forty-two year old Gertrude Savile recorded payments for “Letting out a pr of Stays 1-6 Altering a Wastcoat 1s.”\textsuperscript{61} While unclear, it seems logical the waistcoat was also let out. Additionally, in March 1744 she recorded “Widening a Silk Quilted Pettycoat 4s Stuff for it 1s” and a few months later in June 1744, “Putting a breadth into work’d Quilted Pettycoat.”\textsuperscript{62} Considering the dates of these entries they may also relate to the widening fashionable silhouette at this time, and the added breadth may be to accommodate a wider hoop petticoat. However, this trend is seen throughout her account books in further occasional entries including “A Pair of Stays 2-2-0, Letting out an old Pair 2-6” in September 1746, “Lengthening & Widening a Flannel Shift 0-2-9” in January 1747, “A Pair of Stays 2-2-0, Widening a pair of old Stays 2-6” in November 1748, and “Letting out two other pair of Shoose 0-3-0” in July 1751.\textsuperscript{63} The letting out of shoes is an intriguing entry, did they grow in size along with the rest of

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 35.55/2a-b, dress and petticoat 1760-1770.  
\textsuperscript{59} See Chapter 5: Changing Owners.  
\textsuperscript{60} 11 May 1744, Diary of Richard Viney, Staymaker.  
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid. 20 March 1744, 12 June 1744.  
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid. 8 September 1746, 19 January 1747, 23 November 1748, 16 July 1751.
fig. 3.26a Dress (bodice interior detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 35.55/2a (author’s photograph). The darker strips of linen were added to enlarge the bodice.

fig. 3.26b Dress (proper right bodice side back seam detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 35.55/2a (author’s photograph). Showing the altered seam line (white arrow) and the crease and stitch marks from the original seam (black arrow).
her, or was she perhaps afflicted with the gout? During the time period of Savile’s account books women’s gowns and many jackets had stomacher fronts, and her sack dresses may have been made with adjustable backs, thereby affording her apparel significant ease. Yet, recorded payments for altering gowns follow within two weeks of some of the more specific entries making it highly plausible they were size alterations. As her stays appear to have been steadily let out again and again during her later years, the innate flexibility offered by her garments must have reached its limits.

Conversely, for whatever reason, Martha Dodson recorded payments for having her stays taken in three times. The first occasion was in March 1753, then September 1762 and finally in March 1763. These entries are surrounded by other payments for clothes alterations strongly suggesting that at least some of them were also for making size adjustments. Anne Brockman’s account book includes a payment for stays alteration that may be interpreted as reducing the size; the entry reads: “for cuting a pair of Stayes behind 0-1-0.” It sounds as though she had a piece removed from the back of the stays to make them smaller; however, no other entries around this date refer to altering her clothing. Perhaps any necessary clothing alteration was contrived domestically but the lack of certainty about this leaves the stays work ambiguous. In December 1717 she “pd Lucy Hatton for 6 days work here in altering clothes 0-4-0,” it seems likely that size adjustments must have formed part of this work.

As if to corroborate Gertrude Savile’s account book entry for letting out pairs of her shoes a few examples in the Museum of London’s collection bear evidence of size alteration.

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64 12 March 1753, 7 September 1762, 26 March 1763, Martha Dodson’s account book, Museum of London 80.71.
65 16 August 1711, Anne Brockman her Account Booke British Library Add MS 45208.
66 Ibid. 9 December 1717.
fig. 3.27 Shoes (detail), 1761-75, Museum of London A12574 & A12575 (author’s photograph). Showing that the back seams of both shoes were taken in.

fig. 3.28 Shoe, 1745-70 Museum of London A13200 (author’s photograph). The lacing panel was added to enlarge the top of the shoe for a larger or swelled foot. The laces themselves would have enabled further size adjustment.
Two examples have had the back seam taken in\textsuperscript{67} and one has been enlarged through the vamp area and laces added for increased adjustability (fig. 3.27, fig. 3.28).\textsuperscript{68} While, again, it is impossible to know whether these changes were made to accommodate the same wearer or a new one, they do suggest the possibility that shoes might be subject to fit issues of an individual owner as were other clothes. In the case of the shoes that were taken in and made smaller, perhaps the fabric from which they were made gave and stretched out over time making them loose on the foot. Taking in the back seam of a fabric shoe would be a fairly easy stitching job. Conversely, there are numerous reasons a person’s foot might swell, notably as a symptom of pregnancy or from gout. Expanding a shoe through the vamp could well indicate accommodation of a swollen foot.

\textbf{3.4 Conclusion}

The very act of wearing a garment could alter its shape and size over time. Lynn Sorge-English speculates this is an important contributing factor alongside economy behind women’s common practice of purchasing new stays so rarely.\textsuperscript{69} The baleen with which they were typically boned moulded to a woman’s own figure over time, essentially breaking them in. Sorge-English posits this meant older sets of stays were more comfortable than new ones, with women unwilling to relinquish them before absolutely necessary.\textsuperscript{70} Thus women’s bodies altered their clothing both explicitly when they performed size alterations and implicitly as certain garments were shaped by those bodies over time. Evidence of size alterations made for the same person whether as a general consequence of life, for pregnancy, or illness is elusive, particularly among objects. But

\textsuperscript{67} Museum of London A12574 & A12575, shoes 1761-75; Museum of London 63.152/1, shoe 1740-50.
\textsuperscript{68} Museum of London A13200, shoe 1745-70.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
women’s material relationship with their clothing during these various life passages is an area
with rich potential for deeper study.
Chapter Four: Changing Owners: Clothing Transference and Alterations for New Bodies

4.1 Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter clothing was as likely to be altered for different bodies as it was for the same, changing body. Multiple owners and wearers were a common feature of the useful life of many eighteenth-century garments. And no apparel or textile type was too humble to potentially pass through multiple sets of hands. Such garments were changed not only in terms of physical alteration, but in more abstract ways as well. As they passed from their first owner’s possession they acquired the labels of “used” or even “old.” They also potentially carried some essence of their former owner with them, bearing the marks of wear, mending, possible cleaning, and also even remembrances.

Because clothing incessantly transferred between people, in this case primarily women, the methods by which it did so are integral to the objects’ post-acquisition consumption narratives. As Beverly Lemire stated, “Use and reuse defined the everyday of all but a tiny minority, with the careful reassignment of worn or used commodities into new types of service.”¹ Garments began new lives with new owners; they became framed within different contexts and developed new meanings.

Clothing travelled to new owners along various avenues. Perhaps the most trafficked and certainly the most dynamic among these was the second-hand trade. Engaged in throughout the country and at nearly every level of society (in one form or other) this form of commerce pervaded eighteenth-century England and involved vast quantities of clothing. Garments passed from first owners to temporary possessors plying the trade on to more permanent destinations.

with new owners. Another key pathway was bequests from the deceased. Many female will
writers included dispersal of their clothing. This ranged from very general instructions regarding
“all my wearing apparel” to detailed directions for passing specific items on to selected
individuals. Finally, conveying cast-off clothing to servants was probably at least as widespread
as bequests (whether formal or informal) and served to supplement their own wardrobes or feed
the second-hand trade. Additionally, activities such as theft, gifting and lending all played roles
in moving clothing between women. Finally, there was a distinct tendency to alter and re-make
adult clothing for children as a form of domestic economy. All of these activities interconnected
at some point forming complex webs and networks of relocation and reallocation.

4.2 Second-hand Clothing

The second-hand trade was a key means by which clothing changed hands and passed to new
owners/wearers during the long eighteenth century and beyond. Despite increased access to new
and novel goods England’s population still largely depended on reuse and resale.\(^2\) Beverly
Lemire extensively explored this form of commerce and affirmed: “The second-hand trade was a
ubiquitous and essential trade, critical for plebeian consumer practice, essential for domestic
budgeting.”\(^3\) She further insisted, “The apparently trivial exchange of new for old, payments in
goods or the pledging of items to obtain credit were among the commonest and longest-lived
economic strategies.”\(^4\) Clothing was ideally suited for this type of transaction, simultaneously

\(^2\) Ariane Fennetaux, “Sentimental Economics: Recycling Textiles in 18\(^{th}\) century Britain,” in The Afterlife of Used
Things: Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century, Fennetaux, Ariane, Amélie Junqua, and Sophie Vasset. eds (New

\(^3\) Lemire, The Business of Everyday Life, 82. See also Beverly Lemire, Dress, Culture, and Commerce: The English
Clothing Trade Before the Factory, 1660-1800, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997) and “Peddling Fashion: Salesmen,

\(^4\) Lemire, The Business of Everyday Life, 82.
fulfilling a basic human need and retaining quantifiable monetary value. Garments functioned as a secondary currency because most people possessed at least basic knowledge of textiles and their qualities, making that value easily assessable. Clothing construction labour was cheap throughout early modern England and the lion’s share of the substantial cost of new clothes and their continued value lay in their materials (fabric, braid, lace, metal buttons). Although this value diminished as the garment aged and became worn, it remained the foundation of the worth of second-hand clothing.

According to Lemire’s investigation into pawnbrokers’s probate inventories “in most cases, clothing was the most voluminous of the second-hand wares, if not the most individually valuable.” Virtually any and every article of clothing that could be made or owned likely found its way into the second-hand market at some point. Considerable variation in terms of locale, size, scope and formality characterized the trade and meant just about anyone could participate. Between 1679 and 1810 trade in old clothes appeared in approximately four hundred Old Bailey records (both trials and Ordinaries accounts). Even a cursory perusal of the records reveals activity ranging from well-established shops in London locations such as Rosemary and Petticoat Lanes to itinerant men and women crying “Old Clothes!” through the streets (fig.4.1). The most visible and formal sites of trade were the old clothes or second-hand and pawnbrokers’ shops. These consisted of more or less permanent premises with fluid but likely consistent stock. Additionally some sellers of new items supplemented their usual wares with second-hand goods.

5 Ibid., 86.
6 Ibid., 91.
7 Ibid., 97. The disparity between materials and labour costs, where the former is usually at the level of pounds and the latter typically five to ten shillings, appears continuously and consistently in all of the household accounts I examined.
8 Lemire, The Business of Everyday Life, 94.

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fig. 4.1 Paul Sandby (1731-1809), *A Man with a Bundle, Old Clothes*, ink on paper, c. 1760,

Yale Center for British Art.

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Slightly below these were stalls in outdoor fairs and markets tended by men and women who specialized in buying and selling old clothes. At the most informal level were individuals who irregularly dealt in used clothing and those who bought, sold and traded amongst their own acquaintance.

It appears trade in second-hand clothing occurred throughout England, but perhaps to varying extents. According to Lemire trade in second-hand goods was well established in London by the sixteenth century, but also spread beyond to encompass “regions and industries distant from the metropolis.” Anne Buck also found “a flourishing trade in second-hand clothing in the eighteenth century, particularly in London and other large towns.” An ad placed by a London salesman in an Oxford newspaper in 1770 points to the existence of interconnected trade networks in addition to local dealers:

John Matthews, Salesman from London buys ladies and Gentlemans cast off cloaths, either laced, embroidered, or brocaded, full trimmed, or not, of every colour and sort, will give the most money for nay: as I deal for London, the country and abroad, nothing can be out of my way, according to the price and if any person has any thing to dispose of and will favour me with the sight of it, they may depend on having the full value of their goods.

Anne Buck’s examination of second-hand clothes dealer Susannah Sommers of Biggleswade, Bedfordshire’s stock inventory from 1770 provides a snapshot of the items potentially found in such an establishment and their value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two New Black Sattin Cardinals</td>
<td>2.2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One New Silk Do</td>
<td>0.15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 Ibid., 96.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Cotton Gown Sprigg’d</td>
<td>0.14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Old other Do.</td>
<td>0.3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Old Silk Camblett Do.</td>
<td>0.2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One printed Lawn Gown</td>
<td>1.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Gown in Imitation of Dunjarr</td>
<td>1.7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One white Lawn Gown</td>
<td>1.7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Strip’d Silk Gown</td>
<td>1.12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One piece of Blue Silk for a Gown</td>
<td>2.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Scarlet Sattin Petticoat</td>
<td>2.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Old other petticoats</td>
<td>0.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Lawn Flowered Apron</td>
<td>0.4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Coarse white Aprons Table Cloth &amp; Pillow Beer</td>
<td>0.10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Lawn Aprons</td>
<td>0.7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five white Old half Handkerchiefs</td>
<td>0.3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three white double Neck Do.</td>
<td>0.6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five shifts and four pairs of Sleeves</td>
<td>0.12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One pair of Old Stays</td>
<td>0.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Silk and one Coloured Linnen Handkerchiefs</td>
<td>0.4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Gauze wired Caps and Hood</td>
<td>0.4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Coarse lace for Caps</td>
<td>0.1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One pair of White Silk shoes and Green Calamanco</td>
<td>0.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine Women’s Bonnetts</td>
<td>1.7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Old Black Hats and Chip’d Hat</td>
<td>0.2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One piece of New Strip’d Lawn</td>
<td>0.9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Gauze flowered Handkerchief</td>
<td>0.1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four pairs of old Stays</td>
<td>0.18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three pair of Ruffles</td>
<td>0.1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Old Muslin Apron</td>
<td>0.1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Napkin</td>
<td>0.1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three laced lawn Handkerchiefs</td>
<td>0.4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One white lace silk Do</td>
<td>0.4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One pair of laced Ruffles</td>
<td>0.2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One pair of plain Do</td>
<td>0.2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One flowered Lawn Apron</td>
<td>0.5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coarse lace for pair of Double Ruffles and Cap</td>
<td>0.3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Lawn Handkerchief</td>
<td>0.2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Wire Cap and Ribbon</td>
<td>0.1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Old laced lawn Cap</td>
<td>0.0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One pair of Gauze Ruffles and pr of plain Do</td>
<td>0.2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Old Fans</td>
<td>0.1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One pair of Stays Covered with Green</td>
<td>0.6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three pair of Black Calamanco Women’s pumps</td>
<td>0.7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One old Black Sattin cloak</td>
<td>0.3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Strip’d Stuff Gown and Brown Camblett Do</td>
<td>0.16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One yellow womans quilted petticoat</td>
<td>0.3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Scarlett Cloak</td>
<td>0.8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Crimson Stuff Gown and one Blue Do</td>
<td>0.9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One light Grey Stuff Do</td>
<td>0.4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One scarlet quilted petticoat</td>
<td>0.10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Black Do</td>
<td>0.4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Green Do</td>
<td>0.7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One old Brown Stuff Gown</td>
<td>0.3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Green Do</td>
<td>0.3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One printed Linnen Gown</td>
<td>0.8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One sprig’d Do</td>
<td>0.4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One old printed Cotton Do</td>
<td>0.2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One sprig’d Linnen Do</td>
<td>0.4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One white Linnen Do</td>
<td>0.8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Old Linnen Bed Gowns</td>
<td>0.3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One small white apron</td>
<td>0.0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four chip’d Hatts covered with Sattin three with black and one white</td>
<td>0.9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One white Sarcenett Bonnett</td>
<td>0.3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Womans Hatt Box</td>
<td>0.1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Buck noted, the variety in type and quality of women’s clothing pieces demonstrates the depth and breadth of offerings one might find in such a shop. Not only do garments range from gowns to hats and to shoes with many others in between but they also vary from new to “very old.” Levels of quality indicated by valuations and materials intersected the degrees of wear present on the clothing affecting its future wearability.

In February 1736 Gertrude Savile “Gave Mrs Pickance the odd Monney (in paying her Bill to L. Cole) for 2 pr old Sleeves 0-1-11 ½,” further demonstrating the extent of second-hand clothing wares potentially available. And, although the phrasing is unclear, the entry appears to indicate the “Old Sleeves” were for Mrs Pickance, possibly a member of Savile’s domestic staff rather than for Savile herself. This would make sense since an old pair of sleeves could be easily converted to a set of protective oversleeves to wear while performing household cleaning.

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15 Ibid., 234-236, an Inventory of the Goods and Chattels Rights and Credits of Susannah Sommers late of Biggleswade, Bedford, 11 August 1770, Bedford & Luton Archives and Record Office, PBwP/W 1770/28.
In a 1760 Old Bailey trial the principal witness, hackney-coachman John Cardin, testified that he drove the prisoner and her friend(s) one morning “in my coach to buy some cloaths in Smithfield, and Monmouth-street,” and later that day “I went with them again to Monmouth-street, for a gown they had left to be altered.”\(^{18}\) Although not explicitly stated, the gown bought was most likely second-hand and also likely left at the same shop or nearby to be altered for its new owner.

Some second-hand shopkeepers mended their wares to increase saleability. In 1786 fifty-four pairs of leather shoes belonging to Joseph Walker were stolen from his portion of a shop he kept with shoemaker Samuel Davis. Walker’s testimony included the following:

Prosecutor. Here are fourteen pair of old shoes. What are these fourteen pair of old shoes worth? – [Walker] They are not worth twenty shillings; I buy them, and mend them up for sale.\(^{19}\)

Lemire asserted “The second-hand trade depended on the existence of a modest surplus of goods in the general population (evinced by Joseph Walker’s supply of old shoes), beyond bare necessity.”\(^{20}\) One prime channel that fed old clothes shops was cast-offs given to servants. For example, in eighteenth-century Bedfordshire Thomas Faldo of Biddenham left to Anne Tarry “if in his service” a legacy of ten pounds and “all wearing apparel except my silk morning gown.”\(^{21}\) Most women would have little personal use for men’s clothes so clothing such as this went into the “flourishing trade in second-hand garments.”\(^{22}\) Indeed, according to Buck, “much of the

\(^{18}\) Old Bailey Proceedings t17601204-14.

\(^{19}\) Old Bailey Proceedings t17860531-20.


\(^{21}\) Will of Thomas Faldo, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Office X307/27.

\(^{22}\) Buck, “Buying Clothes in Bedfordshire,” 228.
clothing which was passed to servants in “castings” or bequests went into this market for it was recognised that it was an asset to be turned into money.”

In a 1789 trial for theft (of clothing), prosecutrix Bridget Granier said of herself “I carry on business, in selling and buying clothes.” The indictment included two sets of stays, two pairs of silk stockings, one pair of shoes, two waistcoats, two “clouts”, a pair of roblings, a hat band, a piece of gauze, two pairs of gloves, and one gauze handkerchief. Granier testified the items were stolen from her home, indicating it doubled as her business premises, placing it somewhere between the purpose-run shop and less formal facets of the trade, blurring distinctions between domestic and commercial spaces.

Pawnshops were not necessarily interchangeable with old clothes shops, despite the volume of clothing with which they dealt. Pawning was meant as a temporary arrangement, a quick way to raise some cash. However, not all goods were redeemed and unclaimed pledges were sold off. This continued despite legislation introduced in 1757 and afterwards “designed to prevent the pawning of stolen goods and to restrict the sale of unredeemed pledges by pawnbrokers.” In a 1773 trial for theft a witness deposed that one of the prisoners, Susanna Welsh, claimed having bought her new gown and petticoat “at the next door, which was a pawnbroker’s.” John Styles offered the example of George Fettes, a York pawnbroker in the 1770s, who purportedly took in between one hundred and fifty and two hundred pledges per week, two-thirds of which were clothes. Apparently over eighty per cent of the clothes pledged

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23 Buck, “Mantuamakers and Milliners,” 150.
24 Old Bailey Proceedings t17890708-16.
26 Old Bailey Proceedings t17731020-39.
27 Styles, “Clothing the North,” 159.
to Fettes as security were redeemed; however, even this low rate of default resulted in substantial accumulation (at least thirty articles per week) of unredeemed clothing to sell.\textsuperscript{28}

Pawnshops were a particularly popular venue for quickly disposing of stolen clothing, which may account for many unredeemed pledges. In a 1745 trial the prisoner, Anne Davis’s defense was that the clothing in question was pushed upon her by an acquaintance to pawn:

she told me, her aunt was dead, and had left her her clothes, and desired to know, if I could recommend her to an honest pawnbroker: I told her I knew a very honest man; then she desired me to pawn them for her; I said, I was not willing to do it, she had better pawn them herself; but as she desired me to do it, I pawned them to Mr. Sherrar, where I used to go.\textsuperscript{29}

In 1755 Catharine Moon went on trial for stealing “one woman's dimity gown, value 10 s. 6 d. and one linen shift.”\textsuperscript{30} These were the legal property of prosecutor James Reynold’s and belonged to his wife, who claimed she found the shift “at David Davidson's, a pawnbroker by London-wall” and that “the prisoner at last owned she had pawned the gown at Mr. Brown's on Snow-hill.”\textsuperscript{31} In a later trial of 1781 the prosecutrix Elizabeth Rich testified regarding the prisoner Anne Partridge’s capture and initial interrogation:

First of all she owned to the officer, where she had pawned the things: in my presence, and in the presence of Mr. Bowman, she owned the things were pawned at five different pawnbrokers, and the officer took down the pawnbrokers’ names. I asked what she had done with my black silk gown; she said she had lost it: I found it since at her lodgings, and I have it here to produce.\textsuperscript{32}

Presumably, Anne Partridge thought to cover her tracks with a wide dispersal of the stolen clothes to various pawnbrokers who also presumably asked few if any questions over individual

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Old Bailey Proceedings t17450530-15.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. t17550116-20.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. t17810425-62.
items. Conversely, some pawnbrokers developed a certain familiarity with individual patrons.

One such testified to this in an Old Bailey trial of 1786. Thomas Dobson testified:

I am a pawnbroker, in Butcher Row, Whitechapel; on the 11th of June, one John Orange came to my house with Mary Kidd and her husband; I was not at home, and asked for several things, which I shall now produce. (Produced) I had two cotton gowns, a Marseilles petticoat, one man's coat, one dozen and a half of clouts, one pair of stockings; that is all.

How came you by these things? - On the 6th of June, Elizabeth Ransom brought one cotton gown, which she pledged with me for two shillings and nine-pence; this is it; on the 8th of June, she brought the dozen and a half of clouts; on the 9th she brought one pair of stockings; on the 10th of June, she brought me the man's coat, the Marseilles petticoat, and on the same day, Elizabeth Sherberd 's sister brought me a gown, which when she used to use my shop, by sending of her parents, she always used my shop in the name of Bennett, but when she brought this gown, she asked me twelve shillings upon it; I said, I could not afford to lend no more than eight shillings; she returned in twenty minutes to take eight shillings, and desired a duplicate, in the name of Elizabeth Smith. 33

One of the prisoners’ own defence read “Since trade has been so dead, I have dealt in Rosemary-lane, in buying and selling old clothes; and I have sufficient witnesses that I do deal there.”34

Clothes also entered the trade less formally at outdoor fairs and markets. In a 1734 Old Bailey trial one witness mentioned “Next Morning I met Sarah Anderson (who buys old Clothes in the Fair).”35 No doubt second-hand clothes were available at outdoor markets throughout the country, but London also featured the specific “Rag fair” of Rosemary Lane, as mentioned in at least thirteen Old Bailey trial proceedings between 1744 and 1799 (fig.4.2).36 In a 1746 trial a witness claimed to recognize one Elizabeth Robinson, stating “I know her by Sight; she us'd

33 Ibid. t17861025-21.
34 Ibid.
35 Old Bailey Proceedings t7340116-37.

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fig. 4.2 Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), *Rag Fair, Rosemary Lane*, watercolour on paper, late eighteenth-century, the British Museum.
to deal in old Cloaths, and I saw her very often in Rag-Fair.”37 One witness at another trial in the same year testified of the accused “She deals at Rag-Fair in buying and selling old Clothes.”38 In a 1799 trial one witness was asked: “There are a great deal of clothes sold at Ragfair? – A. Yes.”39 Rag Fair’s location along Rosemary Lane (now Royal Mint Street) with the additional proximity of Petticoat Lane (now Middlesex Street) implies the area at large was a London centre for the buying and selling of second-hand clothing.

In addition to money, clothing was traded in exchange for various goods such as other clothes, food, lodging, household wares and even china (fig. 4.3).40 In fact, Lemire discovered a surprising prevalence of trading clothes for china, citing the 1740 advertisement by Hannah Tatum, of Fleet Street, “announcing that she ‘changes all Sorts of fine China for left-off Cloaths’” and “that Joseph Addison satirized the plight of husbands whose wives metamorphosed favourite breeches ‘into a Punch Bowl’ or ‘Tea Pot’ to feed their love of china.”41 It was also common for shops selling new wares to trade in second-hand as well. For example, one London dealer advertised “The most Money allowed for left-off Clothes.”42 Clothes were sometimes even sold to the tradespeople who made them, taking them as partial payment for new garments.43

37 Old Bailey Proceedings t17460903-37.
38 Ibid. t17460226-27.
39 Ibid. t17990220-26.
41 Ibid., 93.
fig. 4.3 Marcellus Laroon (1653-1702), *Old Shoes for Some Brooms*, c. 1688, from *The Cryes of the City of London Drawne after the Life*, the British Museum.
According to John Styles an enormous market for second-hand clothing thrived in the north of England.\textsuperscript{44} However, in contrast to the old clothes shops and fair sellers of London, Styles claims that the northern market “often operated on a purely informal basis” and that “just as it appears to have been reasonably unexceptionable to sell cloth door to door, so it was to sell garments in public.”\textsuperscript{45} Apparently, this was how much stolen clothing was disposed of outside of pawnbrokers and old clothes sellers.\textsuperscript{46} Of course, this manner of selling second-hand clothes occurred in London as well. The “old clothes woman” figures so frequently in Old Bailey trial records that one easily imagines the sight of her plying her wares up and down London streets and laneways must have been a common sight (fig. 4.4).\textsuperscript{47} Like the old shoe seller with the shop mentioned above, some itinerant traders also mended their merchandise to give them new life and increase saleability. In her 1746 trial Mary Beak asserted of herself “I bought old Clothes and old Shoes and us’d to have them mended.”\textsuperscript{48}

Pre-owned clothes were also bought and sold privately and informally between acquaintances. Anne Buck theorized that much of the clothing cast off to servants was probably sold, “either in the second-hand shops, or privately, and some distributed amongst other servants.”\textsuperscript{49} Although an early example, the process used by Elizabeth Busby to disperse linen she had been given in the mid-seventeenth century illustrates the point.\textsuperscript{50} Busby pawned a christening sheet to “goodwife Clark of Sandford,” sold a waistcoat and part of a ruff to “the

\textsuperscript{44} Styles, “Clothing the North,” 158.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Old Bailey Proceedings t17460117-28.
\textsuperscript{50} Lemire, The Business of Everyday Life, 93.
fig. 4.4 Paul Sandby (1756-1827), *Old Clothes to Sell*, ink and watercolour on paper, 1759,

Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery.
wife of Thomas Hitchman” and kept the rest to remake into garments for herself. A century and a half later, at her 1805 trial, Ann Allen testified “I went into Petticoat-lane to sell a few old cloaths” insinuating that such casual commercial activity was common.  

**4.3 Wills & Bequests**

Perhaps the most poignant means by which articles of clothing transferred between women was through bequests. Clothing’s personal and intimate nature means passing it on after death may be read as a method of passing on a part of oneself. Between the National Archives at Kew, the Bedford & Luton Archives and Records Services, Hereford Archives, and Doncaster Archives I read approximately seventy-five wills and bequests made by women throughout the eighteenth century that included the disposal of clothing in some form. These represent only a very small fraction of such wills covering the long eighteenth century; and indeed, a recent article by Miles Lambert on clothing in English wills over a similar period (1650-1830) includes figures for many more examples. Lambert states, “wills have long been recognized as the prime legal means to reallocate clothing for re-wearing, whether individually or en masse.” If true, this represented a sizable amount of alterations work to fit the clothing for its new wearers. Wearing garments of a deceased loved one must have been a powerful experience for at least some people, for clothes become “material companions through life’s journey [able] to accumulate meaning and value by sheer dint of their constancy in a life.” Even today, many women who wear their mother’s or grandmother’s wedding dress for their own wedding report a cherished feeling of connection with their forbears. The new owners of these garments must have frequently possessed both

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51 Old Bailey Proceedings t18050918-135.  
54 Ibid., 47.
different tastes and different body types and sizes, making alteration in one form and/or another necessary. Linda Baumgarten concurs in her article on altered historical clothing, stating “Clothing was routinely left in wills to survivors who presumably made it over for themselves or their family members.”

The overall majority of will-makers were men; however, a certain portion of widows and spinsters did likewise and were modestly more likely to make clothing bequests. Only widows and single women (spinsters) were permitted, by law, to write formal wills; however, such women represented a significant portion of the female populace, up to forty-five percent at any given time. Wills are rich resources, yet there are a few caveats to using them. Only a fraction of women possessed sufficient property or value in goods to justify drawing up a will at all and only a minority of these included clothing bequests. Furthermore, the majority of single women in society were spinsters while the majority of women who had wills were widows (approximately thirty percent of the overall female population were spinsters, but approximately eighty percent of women’s wills were made for widows). However, the wills do demonstrate that women were more likely than men to pass on clothing (and other household goods) as property more commonly at their disposal than land. As John Styles summarized, “women were

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56 Lambert, “Death and Memory,” 48. Lambert cites Maxine Berg’s work: “From a sample of 422 men’s wills and 126 women’s in Birmingham, dating from 1700 to 1800, she finds that 15.6% of men and nearly 27% of women left bequests of their clothing. [...] In Sheffield for a larger sample of 725 wills, 7.2% of men and 25.6% of women made clothing bequests.”
57 Ibid., 48-49. Lambert cites Peter Laslett’s sample of 100 rural and urban communities throughout England in the early modern period reveals that single women comprised over 30% of adult women, and widows another 15%.
58 Ibid. Lambert cites A.L. Erickson’s large scale analysis of 11,835 wills from Lancashire and Cheshire in four 20-year periods from 1660 to 1740 which reveals that between 20% and 27% were made by women, with the higher percentages in the earlier period. The vast majority of these women, over 80% were widows and the rest were spinsters. Erickson also draws attention to the propensity for women to select clothing as appropriate material for bequests: “Women more often bequeathed clothing than men, and less often land.”

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especially likely to use their wills to make gifts of specific, cherished items of clothing as tokens of affection.”

Wills, while requiring a certain level of prosperity and property, do reach down the social ladder farther than the household or personal accounts or personal correspondence I consulted. While most designate the testatrix simply as widow or spinster, among those I examined at the National Archives at Kew were many women of the artisan class with occupations of milliner, clothes seller, linen draper and haberdasher, silk dyer, hat dyer, hoop petticoat maker, child’s coat seller or maker, victualler and even goldsmith. Lambert further speculates that single individuals (both women and men, including widows and widowers), without children, had a particular penchant for leaving “detailed bequests, including clothing;” believing that such a position in society “does seem to have focused the mind on post-mortem arrangements.”

Among women without formal avenues for making wills, bequests might still be recorded and administered informally. For example, in 1784 gentlewoman Mary Cooke wrote a de facto will in letter form to her son, including the following instruction:

I desire you will return to your Sister the Suit of Brussels Lace Linen She gave me and that She may have any other of my Laces She thinks worth accepting of and all my other Linin Cloaths & wearing apparil I desire may be given to my Maid Jane Auckland provided she lives Servant to me at my decease but not otherwise.

Legacies of women at the lower end of the economic scale might also be managed with care and consideration by others. A group of papers belonging to the Orlebar collection at Bedford and Luton Archives concern the goods and chattels of Hannah French and their dispersal to her nieces, Mary and Elizabeth. Hannah had been housekeeper to the Orlebars and the first document

59 Ibid., 49.
60 Ibid., 53.
61 Mary Cooke’s Will, 22 March 1784 to her son in letter form, Doncaster DD/DC/H7/1/3.
of the group inventories her clothing possessions.\textsuperscript{62} What follows are a series of receipts issued
to each niece as portions of her legacy were delivered, administered personally by Mr Orlebar.\textsuperscript{63}
This process spanned more than two years with the final receipt dated 14 November 1721, to
Elizabeth French.\textsuperscript{64} For her employer to take such thorough and careful charge of her
possessions, even keeping them for an extended period of time, strongly suggests Hannah French
held a particularly esteemed position within the Orlebar household.

 Occasionally, men left bequests of clothing to women. For example, in 1757 Hugh Holt
left Sarah Johnson, spinster, his “late wife’s Black Silk Gown and Petticoat.”\textsuperscript{65} The widower had
both preserved some of his late wife’s clothing and passed it on to begin a new life with someone
else. An alternate possibility is that, since the bequeathed ensemble was black it was intended for
Sarah Johnson to wear in mourning. In 1798 Richard Gee of Bedford left “to my Said Daughter
(Amelia) at the discretion of my Executors my late Wifes Wearing Apparel.”\textsuperscript{66} After his wife’s
death in 1712 Manchester wigmaker Edmund Harrold divided his wife’s “workday” clothes
between her mother and a servant, Betty Cook.\textsuperscript{67} From her black mantua gown and petticoat that
he had bought her he made (or commissioned) a black suit for himself and declared “I will wear
them for her sake.”\textsuperscript{68}

\begin{footnotes}
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\item[62] Goods & Chattels of Hannah French, Mr Orlebar’s Housekeeper, 1719, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records
Office OR 2071/125.
\item[63] Receipts of Hannah French’s nieces for their shares in the property, 1719-1727, Bedford and Luton Archives and
Records Office OR 2071/126.
\item[64] Ibid.
\item[65] Lambert, “Death and Memory,” 52. Sarah must have meant a great deal to him or his late wife for such a valuable
gift.
\item[66] Will of Richard Gee October 18, 1798 Bedford wills GA 1852.
\item[67] Miles Lambert, “‘Small Presents Confirm Friendship’: The ‘Gifting’ of Clothing and Textiles in England from the
\item[68] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Most clothing bequests were general and simple. For example, in 1759 Elizabeth Broughton, Clothes Seller of St Botolph Aldgate in London bequeathed “unto my Granddaughter Mary Broughton all and singular my Goods Linnen Wearing Apparel Household Goods Bed Bedding if as I may have at my decease.”\(^6^9\) However, specific directions for dispersal were also common among the wills I examined, particularly that of dividing the testatrix’s wearing apparel between two or more recipients. This practice continued throughout the century. In 1708, Hereford widow Elizabeth Edwards left all her goods and chattels (including her wearing apparel valued at £1) to be divided evenly between her three granddaughters Elizabeth, Mary and Anne Wood.\(^7^0\) In 1710, widow Elizabeth Mann left her goods and chattels (including wearing apparel valued at £2) to be divided between her daughters Elizabeth and Frances.\(^7^1\) Later in the century (1784) Isabella Wrightson bequeathed “unto the Daughters of the said George Cooke [...] living at the time of my Decease as aforesaid all my Cloaths and wearing Apparel of the what Nature or kind soever to be equally divided amongst them” in addition to legacies of £100 each.\(^7^2\) Sarah Hill of Stanford, Worcestershire, made a similar proviso in her 1805 will desiring “all my Clothes and wearing apparel of all sorts and kind whatever to be equally divided between my said Sisters [Ann and Mary].”\(^7^3\)

Curiously, the phrase “share and share alike” (and variants thereof) appeared periodically throughout the century in wills of this type. In 1712 Elizabeth Holland of Hereford stipulated that her household goods and chattels be divided between her daughters Mary and Martha to

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\(^{6^9}\) Will of Elizabeth Broughton, Clothes Seller of St Botolph Aldgate, Middlesex 26 April 1759, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/845/255.

\(^{7^0}\) Will of Elizabeth Edwards 22 October 1709, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.

\(^{7^1}\) Will of Elizabeth Mann, widow, 1710, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.

\(^{7^2}\) Will of Isabella Wrightson 1 May 1784, Doncaster Archives, DD/BW/W/1/16.

\(^{7^3}\) Will of Sarah Hill of Stanford, Worcestershire 13 April 1805, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1424/43.
“share & share a like.”\textsuperscript{74} Her wearing apparel and the money found in her purse at time of death totalled a value of £1 10s and doubtless formed part of the legacy. Ann Walker, also of Bedford, included in her will of November 1754 the following, “I Give & bequeath unto Mary Mekin (?) my Blue Damask Suit of Cloaths Headcloaths Aprons & Ruffles And all the rest of my wearing Apparel I Give & Bequeath to Elizabeth Brooks Mary Winsall & Audry Chambers Equally to be divided amongst them Share & Share alike.”\textsuperscript{75} Ann Adams wrote in her 1758 will “I give to my two Cozens Frances Bute and Sarah Elkine all my wearing apparel to be divided Equally betwixt them share alike.”\textsuperscript{76} Later, Ann Pridmore directed in her 1780 will “I give unto my said Grandaughter (sic) Mary Perry [...] six pair of wearing Sheets [...] a Brown Silk Gown,” but also “I give to my Daughter Ann Eaton and the said Mary Tuston all my wearing apparel equally to be divided between them Share and Share alike.”\textsuperscript{77} At the end of the century Sarah Carter, a London Milliner, bequeathed “Wearing Apparel of all sorts to my Nieces Mary and Sarah Browning share and share alike” in her 1795 will.\textsuperscript{78}

Several women left at least part of their clothing’s disposal to their executor’s discretion, relying on their knowledge of clothing and its value. For instance, in 1762 Elizabeth Chandler left her “brocaded suit of Cloaths and my brocaded Lutstring Night Gown a piece of Silk and Stuff unmade and my long lawn Night Gown to and to be Equally divided between my said two Neices (sic) [Elizabeth & Sarah Florris].”\textsuperscript{79} Fulfillment of this bequest must have required some deliberation as the number of items total unevenly to five. Dividing the lot equally would have

\textsuperscript{74} Will of Elizabeth Holland Hereford, Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
\textsuperscript{75} Will of Ann Walker 5 November 1754, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, Z 793/10.
\textsuperscript{76} Will of Ann Adams, Spinster of St George Hanover Square, Middlesex 26 January 1758, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/835/8.
\textsuperscript{77} Will of Ann Pridmore 9 March 1780, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, X702/108.
\textsuperscript{78} Will of Sarah Carter, Milliner of Cranbourn Street Leicester Sq, Middlesex 7 October 1795, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1266/137.
\textsuperscript{79} Will of Elizabeth Chandler, Widow of Shoe Lane, City of London 17 June 1762, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/876/448.
entailed weighing the values of the parts against each other in order to achieve a fair decision. Penelope Evors directed “I give and bequeath all my Linen and Wearing Apparel to be equally divided between them at such time(s) and in such manner as my said Executors shall think proper.”

Alice Platt specified “To my relation Mary Sarah Gannum now in my house Ten Pounds together with such share or part of my Cloaths or Wearing Apparel as my Neighbour and good friend Mrs Ann Everingham above named [with a legacy of £20] shall think proper to give her.”

Sarah Hill kept it all in the family, writing “As for my Wearing Apparel I give the same unto my niece (sic) Mary Carter and such other of my Relations as She in her discretion shall think most convenient and necessary to partake with her of the same.”

Ann Antonie demonstrates she felt very strongly about a portion of her wardrobe, leaving “Mrs Malecket (?) 1 Gound 2 Shift 2 Apron 2 Night caps 2 Neck-handkerchiefs 1 Stript Dimotie petticoat one flannel petticoat” while “The Remainder of Wearing Apparel to be disposed of as ye [executor, John Antonie Esq her son] think well of.”

Mary Elton’s wearing apparel was inventoried and valued at a substantial £4 10s in 1708. However, she made no specific requests and left all her chattels and personal effects to her brother John to distribute as he saw fit.

Bequests to servants were often based on who in the testator’s employ attended them at their passing. For example, Anne Adams’s will reads: “I give unto my Servant Maid and my Neighbours that attend me at the time of my Death all my Wearing Apparel to be divided

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80 Will of Penelope Evors, Widow of Shoe Maker Row Blackfriars, Middlesex 29 July 1806, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1446/55.
81 Will of Alice Platt, Widow of New Street Square near Shoe Lane, City of London 30 April 1772, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/977/6.
82 Will of Sarah Hill of Richmond, Surrey 7 July 1749, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/771/358.
83 Will of Anne Antonie 13 April 1753, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services BS 2048.
84 Will of Mary Elton 26 January 1708, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
between them.”

Mrs Jane Wrightson left the best of her “wearing Aparell” to be divided between her sisters Anne and Jane Barrett and the remainder to whichever maid servant was living with her at her death. Mary Cooke was very definite in her aforementioned informal will of 1784 wherein she stipulated “all my other Linin Cloaths & wearing apparil I desire may be given to my Maide Jane Auckland provided She lives Servant to me at my decease but not otherwise.”

Other forms of specific direction include the example of Ann Liron’s will wherein she left to her niece Ann “all my Wearing Apparel and Linnen except a piece of Garter blue Sattin which I bequeath to [...] Elizabeth Birkwell”. However, an attached codicil reveals that Elizabeth Burkell pre-deceased Liron and the blue satin was bequeathed to an Ann Draper instead. Clearly, Ann Liron had very strong and particular feelings about the piece of blue satin. A luxurious and costly material that was meant for a gown (meaning there was a substantial quantity) possibly represented the single most valuable clothing-related item she owned. And London linen draper and haberdasher Sarah Hill directed “I give and bequeath to my Sister Jane Row all my Stock in my Shop Household Goods and wearing apparel for her use only” differentiating the personal from the commercial.

In some cases testatrixes left a certain amount of choice to legatees, as in the 1794 will of Elizabeth Armitt who stipulated, “my mother shall have any part of my clothes that she thinks

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85 Will of Anne Adams, Spinster of West Horsley, Surrey 18 July 1757, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/831/229.
86 Will of Mrs Jane Wrightson of Canterbury, 14 Mar, 1740 (copy), Doncaster Archives DD/BW/W/1/7.
87 Mary Cooke’s Will, 22 March 1784 (to her son in letter form), Doncaster Archives DD/DC/H7/1/3.
88 Will of Ann Liron, Spinster of Shoe Lane, City of London 23 October 1792, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1224/55.
89 Will of Sarah Hill, Linen Draper & Haberdasher of Enfield, Middlesex 20 December 1788, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1173/42.
proper and the remainder shall be divided between my sisters.”

In others, women could be exceedingly particular about the dispersal of specific clothing items. As Lambert stated, “bewilderingly complicated lists of bequests can be left, seemingly involving every item in a wardrobe but each reallocated after thought and planning,” and cites the example of Ellen Buxton, a childless widow of Manchester who included in her 1692 will “over 60 individual clothing bequests to 17 beneficiaries, mostly family members.” Her apparel was valued at the substantial sum of £15 and as Lambert notes, the descriptions of items are “precise”: “my black mantue, my petticoat with the silver fringes on it [...] my spotted gown lined with black [...] my black birdeye hood, my loope lace tippet.” Uniquely, Buxton also left items of her own to male relatives, and what is more, gave directions on their intended use. To her brother Buxton and brother-in-law Benjamin Warbutton she left “one half of my Flanders lace cornet for a Cravatt,” and to John and Thomas Warbutton she left one breadth of her “florished muslin for Cravatts.” This provides a further example of a way women’s clothing items might be altered for different wearers/owners.

Another feature of wills that include specific clothing bequests was the distinction given “best” and “new” items. These, too, are found in Ellen Buxton’s will: “my best stays, my best satin petticoat [...] my best mask, my best black apron [...] my new cercinett [sarsenet].” The same language features in Elizabeth Penner’s will of 1709: “my best stayes and my best broad Lace Pinners and my best plain hanckerchief [...] my best petty Coats [...] four of my best Shifts”

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90 Lambert, “Death and Memory,” 53.
91 Ibid., 54.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., and observed among the wills I examined as well.
95 Ibid.
left to a friend and a sister. Later, in her 1740 will Elizabeth Kells left her blue damask gown to
her sister Anna and all other wearing apparel and linen “except my two best Gowns and two
Suits of Laced Head Cloths” which were left to someone else. In 1774 Elizabeth Hurst left her
sister Mary “my new Short Cloak” and her servant, Ann Ireland “my new printed Linen
Gown.”

Catherine Hesketh’s will from 1763 demonstrates the reverse also occurred:

I give to my sister Margaret Greenhalgh of Standish the sum of twenty pounds and all my
common wearing apparel, that is to say the coarser sort of apparel both linen and woollen.
And all the better sort of my apparel, both linen, woollen and silk together with all my
goods and Household stuff and Furniture, I hereby order to be sold and the money I
bequeath as follows.

Lambert speculates that Catherine intended her best wearing apparel be sold to raise the fifteen
guineas she leaves in several cash bequests. He muses that “she was unusual in leaving so close a
member of the family as a sister what she prefixes second-rate or ‘coarse’ clothing, but she was
still anxious not to simply sell all her clothes.” However, two wills from 1733 show this was
not an isolated incident. Ann Smith left her sister Mary (among other items) “Six Gowns that art
my worst [...] and some of my worst pinoes.” And Hannah Wainwright left her niece, Mary
Scarborough “my Old Calamanco Gown [...] my Old Sattin Gown and a pair of my Coarse
Sheets” while another niece, Mary Marlow, received “my best Calamanco Gown lined with
Silk.”

96 Will of Elizabeth Penner 12 December 1709, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708-1723.
97 Will of Elizabeth Kells or Kello, Milliner of St Botolph without Bishopsgate, City of London 24 April 1740, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/701/546.
98 Will of Elizabeth Hurst 23 December 1774, Bedford & Luton Archives and Records Services, X216/.
100 Ibid.
101 Will of Ann Smith, 29 October 1733, Bedford & Luton Archives and Records Services, B.S. 804.
102 Will of Hannah Wainwright 7 March 1733, Bedford & Luton Archives and Records Services, APB/W 1734/36.
Another periodic tendency was ensuring certain former gifts were returned to the giver, a way of honouring both the giver and the memory of the gifting. Lambert identified this in the 1691 will of Ann Lancashire wherein three items are suffixed “she gave me” in leaving them to her daughters.\textsuperscript{103} Again, Mary Cooke’s informal 1784 will, provides an example: “I desire you will return to your Sister the Suit of Brussels Lace Linen She gave me and that She may have any other of my Laces She thinks worth accepting.”\textsuperscript{104} Mary Cooke wished to honour and solidify the affectionate bond the lace represented, and of which the offer of her own lace was further proof.\textsuperscript{105}

Many wills include both the date of initial drafting and that of probate or reading after death. The difference between the two ranged most consistently from one to two years.\textsuperscript{106} As Lambert points out, “[t]he clothes bequeathed therefore would still be recent enough to be in fashion and still desirable gifts, quite suitable for re-wearing.”\textsuperscript{107} Of course, there were exceptions. Joan Boynoll of Hereford wrote her will in 1706 but probate was not until just over three years later;\textsuperscript{108} Anne Edwyn, also of Hereford, wrote her will in December 1706, but the inventory of her effects upon decease did not occur until 19 August 1712.\textsuperscript{109} And Ann Battie, of the environs around Doncaster, wrote her will in June 1707 while probate was dated late February 1714. However, throughout much of the century even such protracted time differences were likely within the bounds of general fashionability if the garment(s) in question was current at the time of the will.

\textsuperscript{103} Lambert, “Death and Memory,” 51.
\textsuperscript{104} Mary Cooke’s Will, March 22, 1784 (to her son in letter form), Doncaster Archives DD/DC/H7/1/3.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Lambert, “Death and Memory,” 48. I also particularly observed this among several of the Hereford wills I read.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Will of Joan Boynoll 10 May 1706, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
\textsuperscript{109} Will of Mrs Anne Edwyn 3 December 1706, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
Additionally transfer of bequests to recipients was not always in-full and might be stretched out over a further period of time. Orlebar family housekeeper Hannah French’s wardrobe was inventoried in 1719.\(^{110}\) It was divided up and distributed to her two nieces, Elizabeth and Mary, in batches over the course of two years. Elizabeth received groups of items on 17 April 1719, 9 January 1720, 2 May 1721 and 14 November 1721. Mary’s portions were delivered on 22 June 1719, 9 January 1720 and 2 May 1721.\(^{111}\)

Yet other situations involved even greater time spans. Parson Woodeforde received his late Aunt Parr’s gowns sometime after her death in 1771; however, he only passed them on to his niece, Nancy in 1782 and 1790. The first gown she received was of brown silk, which she had altered by her local mantuamaker.\(^{112}\) The second was made of green damask a textile fashionable in the middle decades of the century and quite old-fashioned by the time Nancy received it and which she altered herself probably for style as well as size.\(^{113}\)

Wills also reveal the types of garments testators felt important to pass on. Most wills that mention clothing bequeath it en masse, referring to it in more or less general terms. The most general are cases such as Elizabeth Caldecott’s 1740 will wherein she left the remainder of her goods & chattels (after other non-clothing bequests) to John Allen in consideration for being her executor.\(^{114}\) In her 1741 will, Mary Sexton left the remainder of her estate and personal goods to her niece, Ann Wolsall.\(^{115}\) Sexton may have intended or anticipated that Ann would sell the goods or may have hoped she would find at least a few items worth keeping, either in memory of

\(^{110}\) Goods and Chattels of Hannah French, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, OR 2071/125.
\(^{111}\) Receipts of Hannah French’s nieces for their shares in the property, 1719-1727, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, OR 2071/126.
\(^{113}\) Cited from Anne Buck, Dress in Eighteenth-Century England, 80.
\(^{114}\) Will of Elizabeth Caldecott, Milliner of Covent Garden, Middlesex 11 August 1740, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/704/203.
\(^{115}\) Will of Mary Sexton, Widow & Milliner of Saint Pauls Covent Garder, Middlesex 9 January 1741, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/715/312.
her aunt and/or for their own desirability. However, many other wills do refer directly to clothing, if not specific garments. For example, Dame Elizabeth Miller’s 1800 will states “I give and bequeath to Ann White my Sister any Wearing Apparel which is all I have to give,” referring to all of her clothing as the rest of the will consists primarily of annuity arrangements.\footnote{116} However, the phrase “all I have to give” implies a strong desire, almost a plea, of Elizabeth Miller to pass something material of herself on to her sister. In 1782 Lucy Walker left her goddaughter Susanna Oldfield “the Sum of fifty Pounds and all my wearing apparel.”\footnote{117} Since the bequest already included a monetary component, it seems possible that Lucy also might have hoped some of her clothing would be kept as a form of remembrance. Earlier in 1715, Sarah Wrightson left her daughter Mary “Ten pounds to [buy] her mourning as Also All my Wearing Cloaths whatsoever.”\footnote{118} Other wills include one or more specific clothing bequests in addition to the lump disposal of a full wardrobe, reflecting the value of both the item and the relationship between the testatrix and the recipient. For example, in 1707 widow Deborah Burt of Hereford left her “black Mantua & pettecoate” to her daughter Elizabeth Powell (presumably for her mourning wear) and “all my Clothes & Wearing aparrell Except ye Cloth mant a fore” to her granddaughter, Deborah Burton.\footnote{119}

In wills that name specific garment bequests gowns make up the majority of these articles. Citing Anne Buck’s work on early seventeenth century Bedfordshire wills, Lambert states that gowns were “clearly the most important garment owned and bequeathed by

\footnote{116} Will of Dame Elizabeth Miller, Wife of Froyle, Hampshire 30 August 1800, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1346/252.  
\footnote{117} Will of Lucy Walker, Milliner & Child Old Warehouse Keeper of St Annes Westminster, Middlesex 5 April 1782, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1090/124.  
\footnote{118} Copy Will of Sarah Wrightson of Cusworth, widow, 13 June 1715, Doncaster Archives, DD/BW/W/1/5.  
\footnote{119} Will of Deborah Burton 9 December 1707 Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
women.”¹²⁰ This is unsurprising since these garments were often the single most expensive article in a woman’s wardrobe and continued so throughout the entire long eighteenth century. However, other specific clothing bequests such as petticoats, tippets, lace, aprons, handkerchiefs, and even sleeves also periodically appeared. Two wills from the first third of the eighteenth century demonstrate how thorough some women were in disposing of their clothing. Elizabeth Penner’s will of 1709 includes bequests of gowns and petticoats, handkerchiefs and other typical linen items, but also “my best black hood and my second best Pinners & pair of my best Sleeves and a pair of Worsted hose [...] my best stayes” and a further set of stays.¹²¹ Additional unusual items are found in the 1730 will of Alice Armetriding. Gowns, petticoats, aprons and linens form the bulk of her bequests, but also include stays (2 sets), “my best Fan [...] My little panier Linen petty coat [and] My Lute String [Hood].”¹²² In 1774, Elizabeth Hurst wrote a very careful set of clothing bequests comprising full outfits of outer and undergarments to the principle women in her life. To her sister, Mary, she left her “Green Gown and blue Petticoat with Linen suitable thereunto and my new Short Cloak;” to her niece Sarah Marsom, her “blue Damask Gown & the Linen belonging thereunto;” to a Mary Adcock her “cherry derry & Speckled Crape Gowns One Petticoat Cap Handkerchief & Apron;” to her servant, Ann Ireland, her “new printed Linen Gown a black petticoat Cap Handkerchief & Apron;” and to her cousin Hanna Gutteridge “all the rest residue and remainder of my wearing apparel both linen & woollen.”¹²³ The completeness of each ensemble suggests a highly conscientious giver who hoped her bequests would be as useful as possible. In 1733 Hannah Wainwright of Bedford wrote a particularly highly detailed and extensive list of clothing bequests:

¹²¹ Will of Elizabeth Penner 12 December 1709 Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
¹²³ Will of Elizabeth Hurst 23 December 1774, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services X216/13.
I give unto Mary Scarborough my Niece Daughter of my Late Brother Stephen Gray my hood and Cloak two Shifts my Old Calamanco Gown and brown Damask petticoat and my Striped Quilted Petticoat my Old Sattin Gown [...]

I give unto my late Sister Lydia Marlowe three Daughters Elizabeth Mary and Sarah [...] each of them a white apron and each of them a white laced handkerchief and each of them a pair of white hollan Sleeves (?) I give more unto the said Elizabeth Marlow One of the Said three Sisters [...] my Gown with Green Ribbands and my Watered petticoat

I give more unto the Said Mary Marlow One of the Said three Sisters my best Calamanco Gown lined with Silk and my Silk petticoat belonging to it and my Redd Tammy petticoat

I give more unto the Said Sarah Marlow one of the said three Sisters my Black and White Gown and petticoat a Black Silk apron [...]

I Give unto Hannah the Daughter of the Said Mary Marlow [...] my biggest Silver thimble and a White Apron

I Give unto Sarah Hookes Wife of John Hookes of Houghton Conquest [...] my hand irons [...] a white apron [...]

I Give unto Mary Hookes my God daughter Daughter of the Said John Hookes [...] my flowered Muslin Apron [...] my little Silver thimble my purse wrought with Silver [...]

I Give unto Judith Taylor my Niece [...] a white Striped Musling Apron and a fan

Not only was she possessed of a substantial and valuable wardrobe, but she must have devoted considerable time and energy towards deciding who should receive what. It seems reasonable to speculate that she matched gift with recipient based either on what she knew of or wished for each individual.

Most of the apparel singled out in wills for specific legacies is made of silk (including lutestring and brocade) or other costly textiles such as damask (which could be silk or wool or a
mixture of fibres). These further reflect the material value placed on the bequests. Items described as made of muslin or being white in colour also indicate they were luxurious rather than hard-wearing articles: muslin was a type of fine, translucent cotton, and keeping anything white required significant labour and supplies.

In the case of Hannah French, an entire wardrobe was divided and portioned out to the legatees, her nieces. With this set of documents we get a two-fold picture of clothing in a non-elite woman’s life. With the inventory we can see what she owned and thus had to give. With the subsequent receipts of delivery we can see how the items were divided. Hannah French’s wardrobe consisted of:

- Shifts (10)
- Aprons (18)
- Handkerchiefs (12)
- Lac’d underpins (?) (6)
- Pair of lac’d ruffles (5)
- Plain Muslin hood (7)
- Muslin Neck handkerchiefs (5)
- Black gauze (?) hood (2)
- Black Lawn hood (1)
- Pair of Gloves (6)
- A small piece of black silk
- A Camblet Cloak & hood
- A Black Cloth gown & pettycoate
- A poplin gown & petty coate
- Black Silk Scarf (1)
- Pair of Blew Stockings (5)
- Pair of Scarlet Stockings (1)
- Flannel wast coat (6)
- Flannel petty coat (3)
- Black Silk hood (1)
- Black Silk apron (1)
- Black gauze (?) handkerchief (2)
- Black gauze (?) hood (1)
- Black crape hood (1)

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A piece of gray Silk  
pair of cloggs (2)  
pair of Shooes (2)  
quilted petty coat (2)  
Callico gown & petticoat (1)\textsuperscript{127}

While only three gowns are listed the wardrobe is a substantial size overall with numerous supplementary pieces and multiples of each. The textiles of most pieces are far from luxurious, but good quality and serviceable nonetheless. This was a wardrobe worth passing on. It was divided thusly between French’s nieces:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elizabeth French</th>
<th>Mary French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Black Cloth gown &amp; pettycoat</td>
<td>1 new Shift &amp; 3 old ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An old crape Gown &amp; petty coat</td>
<td>5 Aprons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pair of blew worsted Stockings</td>
<td>4 handkerchiefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pair of Black gloves &amp; a black fan</td>
<td>1 pair of Sleeves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Camblet Cloak &amp; hood</td>
<td>A flannel petty coat &amp; pair of blew Stockings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Muslin handkerchiefs</td>
<td>1 pair more of blew Stockings &amp; 2 pair of Shooes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pair of Cloggs 4 Shirts 4 Aprons</td>
<td>2 Shifts one quilted petty coat, 1 lac’d pinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pair of Stockings one quilted petty coat,</td>
<td>1 pair of Ruffles 1 pair of gloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Lac’d underpin (? underlin?)</td>
<td>1 pair of Cloggs 2 pair of blew Stockings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pair of Ruffles 1 pair of gloves</td>
<td>2 handkerchiefs 3 flannel wastcoats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 handkerchiefs 1 pair of gloves 1 muslin hood</td>
<td>1 flannel pettycoat 1 Callico gown &amp; petticoat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A poplin gown &amp; petty coat, a flannel petty coat</td>
<td>one muslin hood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 lac’d pinner 1 underlin (?) 3 aprons 1 pair of ruffles</td>
<td>1 lac’d pinner 1 underlin (?) 2 aprons a pair of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruffles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 underlins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pair Sleeves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 hoods muslin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pockett handkerchiefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a piece of black Silk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 holland aprons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a black Silk Scarfe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a black Silk apron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a black hood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a piece of grey Silk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 old flannel wast coats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 pinners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 gause hoods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a pair of Gloves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a fann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Trunks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{127} Goods & Chattels of Hannah French, Mr Orlebar’s Housekeeper, 1719, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, OR 2071/125.
a small box
a pair of Scarlet Stockings

The division is noticeably uneven with, unfortunately, no clues given for why. Perhaps, for whatever reason, Elizabeth was in greater need of clothing than her sister, or maybe she was the elder and possibly closer in size to her aunt meaning the clothes would fit her better. We know from the bills that Mary French’s schooling was paid for by the Orlebars, along with an apprenticeship to a mantuamaker. The same information for Elizabeth is not given; could she have gotten married instead and her bequest counted as a sort of trousseau with which to establish and start a new life?

The primary motivators behind clothing bequests are thought to be monetary and/or sentimental. Clothing was so easily converted to cash via the second-hand market its bestowal could act as a proxy financial legacy. Although rarely explicitly stated in wills themselves, references to clothes in general terms such as “all my wearing apparel” or “the remainder of my goods and chattels” suggest a perspective of liquid asset rather than keepsake. One rare example expressing an intention for the clothing (and other items) to be sold is Anne Adams’s will of 1752. In it she leaves everything to her brother, William Adams esq, including all money “arising from the sale of Goods Books Manuscripts Cloaths Linnen Plate China all the Stocks or in my possession at the time of my Death,” after all lawful debts were discharged. Even more explicit was the disposal of Ann, Lady Rose of Walworth’s wardrobe. An inventory of her clothing was taken on 24 November 1809, consisting of:

- 42 Gowns
- 37 Petticoats & Peleass

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128 Ibid.
129 Will of Anne Adams, of Walberton, Sussex 11 May 1752, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/794/226.
130 Ibid.
A vast wardrobe for the period, the whole was valued at one hundred and twenty pounds. A death duty of four pounds and sixteen shillings was taken and the remaining hundred and fifteen pounds and four shillings was given to one Elizabeth Baker “as her legacy.” While Elizabeth Baker’s identity is unfortunately unclear, it is evident in this case that the clothing’s cash value was paramount. She must have been someone highly esteemed by Lady Rose to receive such a generous bequest, but not expected to use the apparel herself. The insinuation is that Baker was a close and valued servant, perhaps Lady Rose’s personal maid, and the bequest is a particularly lucrative version of those described above.

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131 Inventory of Wearing Apparal Late the Property of Lady Rose of Walworth Surry Taken the 24th Nov 1809, Southwark Local Studies Library, 1988/394.
132 Ibid.
A less obvious example is another Elizabeth Baker’s will (no known connection to the above) wherein she leaves everything to her son, John Baker.\(^{133}\) The inventory made of her property on 12 February 1711 valued her wearing apparel and “ready money” at a substantial seventeen pounds. While the portions of this figure representing clothing versus cash is unknowable; if it was mostly the former it would certainly have been worth converting to the latter. The near-liquid asset clothing represented is underscored in a letter written by Elizabeth Purefoy to a friend in dire financial straits upon being widowed. Elizabeth Purefoy urged her friend, Mrs Robotham, to:

> remove your cloaths & anything else that is yours out of the house immediately, for if the Landlord, for rent or any Execution, should come on ye Premisses they will take what they find thervon to satisfie their Debt. […] Mr Robotham told mee hee gave you all your Aunt’s linens and cloaths w’ch will be necessary for you to secure,\(^{134}\)

If the landlord got hold of the clothing it could be quickly and easily converted to cash via a pawnbroker or second-hand dealer and likely lost to Mrs Robotham permanently.

Conversely, bequests of specific garments, apparently carefully considered and chosen, left to family members and friends seem more likely to have been tokens of affection, as Lambert suggests, “intended to endure beyond the grave as potent reminders of the deceased.”\(^{135}\) The highly personal nature of clothing meant that over time garments could become “infused with significance beyond their material existence or monetary value, consolidating their status as memory objects.”\(^{136}\) The material and emotional considerations of clothing bequests were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Just because a garment carried sentimental value did not mean its

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\(^{133}\) Will of Elizabeth Baker. Probate 23 April 1712, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.


\(^{135}\) Lambert, “Death and Memory,” 48.

\(^{136}\) Ibid., 47.
monetary worth was lost on the recipient. And in many cases, such as Hannah French’s wardrobe listed above, these feelings likely overlaid more pragmatic and practical motives of usefulness. It seems very likely the clothing French’s nieces received was meant to be used by them and supplement their own wardrobes to extend both the breadth of their available clothing and the length of time for which they were thusly provided.

A piece of testimony from a 1745 Old Bailey trial suggests that some clothing bequests might be divided into sellable and re-usable portions.\textsuperscript{137} During this trial the prisoner, Ann Davis, stated in her (unsuccessful) defense that the clothes she was charged with stealing were given her by a friend to pawn. Davis claimed the friend, one Mrs Jones, had been left the clothes by a recently deceased aunt and wished Davis to pawn them for her. Davis further deposed that Mrs Jones was going to keep a black gown and petticoat from among the legacy and “pull [them] to pieces, to make herself mourning for her aunt.”\textsuperscript{138}

Recipients of clothing in women’s wills mainly fell into three main categories: relations, friends and servants. The most regular relations named were sisters, daughters and nieces, with granddaughters, cousins and mothers making occasional appearances. Bequests to female friends were not uncommon and servants were remembered periodically as well. There was a particular propensity among spinsters to leave bequests of various kinds to other women, “drawing attention to wider female kinship networks.”\textsuperscript{139} Spinsters’ personal circles were likely largely made up of other women. Single female relations (whether unmarried or widowed) often banded together, such as Jane Austen and her sister, Cassandra, and (much less happily) Gertrude Savile,

\textsuperscript{137} Old Bailey Proceedings t17450530-15.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} Lambert, “Death and Memory,” 53.
her mother and her aunt. And if they had few (living) female relations, close female friends might supply their place. Conversely, examples of bequests to female relations may demonstrate both depth of relationships and limited number of available kinswomen in the testator’s life. For instance, in 1711 Elizabeth Smith left her entire estate of house, land, goods and chattel to her sister Milbrow Smith, who was also executrix. In 1712 Hannah Lowry left everything she had to her mother, also named Hannah. Both women name only a single legatee, suggesting theirs were very limited familial circles.

In other wills a select few women are chosen to receive portions of the testator’s wardrobe. In 1709 Milborow Banton bequeathed “unto my Sister Elizabeth Knowler [...] My Best Mantua and petty Coate My best head Cloathes and Handkerchief” and “My best Muslin hood & best Cambrick Handkerchief w’ch I give and bequeath unto My Sister in law Ann Banton.” Lambert cites a “particularly poignant” example of Elizabeth Arnitt’s 1794 will wherein she instructed “my mother shall have any part of my clothes that she thinks proper and the remainder shall be divided between my sisters.” In her 1790 will Sarah Hill left a generous portion to her sister, Ann Wills, consisting of two hundred pounds and all the deceased’s “Wearing Apparel,” which likely also represented a sizable sum. In 1707 widow Deborah Burth gave to her daughter, Elizabeth Powell “my black Mantua & petticoate & five Shillings [...] I having given her a Large portion already” (her son Samuel was to receive £300), and to her

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141 Will of Elizabeth Smith 15 November 1711, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
142 Will of Hannah Lowry 26 December 1712, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
143 Will of Milborow Banton, Spinster 20 December 1709 Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
144 Lambert, “Death and Memory,” 53.
145 Will of Sarah Hill formerly Mansell of Souldern, Oxfordshire 20 March 1790, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1189/230.
granddaughter, Deborah Burton “all my Clothes & Wearing aparrell Except ye Cloth mant (sic) a fore.”\textsuperscript{146}

In her 1712 will Anne Barber left to her “kinswoman” Margaret Taylor, Spinster £100 and “also my best Suite of Cloaths” plus a bed and all that went with it; all the remainder (after bequests) went to her sister, Sibill Taylor.\textsuperscript{147} Referring to Margaret Taylor simply as “kinswoman” suggests that as relations they were not close while the generous legacy indicates that in terms of their relationship they were, possibly hinting at how relations could also be close friends. Among numerous bequests of monetary legacies and mourning rings, Susanna Furs left her goods and chattels to her cousin Mary Davis in 1736.\textsuperscript{148} This could suggest either a material legacy in lieu of cash, intended for sale, or a strong emotional connection between the women with Susanna Furs wishing to give something of herself to Mary Davis. In an apparent attempt to pass on a memento of herself to a relation, Ann Gomond left all her chattels to Ann, the daughter of her niece, Catherine.\textsuperscript{149} In 1711 Gomond’s wearing apparel was included in the probate inventory and valued at a total sum of £2 10s.

Conversely, Ann Walker’s 1754 will names several (presumably unrelated) women for clothing bequests.\textsuperscript{150} The will reads “I Give & bequeath unto Mary Mekin (?) my Blue Damask Suit of Cloaths Headcloaths Aprons & Ruffles And all the rest of my wearing Apparel I Give & Bequeath to Elizabeth Brooks Mary Winsall & Audry Chambers Equally to be divided amongst

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{146}] Will of Deborah Burt, widdow (sic), 78 yrs 9 December 1707, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
\item[\textsuperscript{147}] Will of Anne Barber 12 November 1712 Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
\item[\textsuperscript{148}] Will of Susanna Furs, Widow of St Dunstan in the East, City of London 13 September 1736, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/679/65.
\item[\textsuperscript{149}] Will of Anne Gomond, widow, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
\item[\textsuperscript{150}] Will of Ann Walker 5 November 1754, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, Z 793/10.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
them Share & Share alike.”¹⁵¹ This suggests her “kinship” network was comprised of friends rather than blood or marital relatives. In other wills female friends also feature either in conjunction with relatives or on their own. For example, Martha Hemsted’s will states “I give and bequeath unto my Sister Susannah Hemsted the Sum of ten Guineas with half of my Wearing Apparel except such things as are hereafter disposed of I Give and Bequeath unto my friend Elizabeth Ann Rippon my White Sattin Petticoat and to my friend Mary Laste (?) my Silver Buckles.”¹⁵² And in Elizabeth Miller’s will “all goods, chattels, wearing apparel, silver, plate, china” are left to Mrs Elizabeth White, with whom Miller was living at the time of the will.¹⁵³ In her 1760 will Elizabeth LeGay left everything she had to her friend and business partner, Sarah Bowde implying a strong connection between the two women.¹⁵⁴ The majority of bequests in Elizabeth Avery’s 1745 will were monetary, but she left all her personal effects of wearing apparel, household goods and furniture to Susannah Heath and her daughter Edith.¹⁵⁵ With no familial relation supplied it may be reasonably supposed Susannah Heath was a friend of Avery’s. Interestingly, in Alice Platt’s 1772 will a friend is given precedence and authority over a relation.¹⁵⁶ The will reads “To my relation Mary Sarah Gannum (?) now in my house Ten Pounds together with such share or part of my Cloaths or Wearing Apparel as my Neighbour and good friend Mrs Ann Everingham above named [£20] shall think proper to give her.”¹⁵⁷ Perhaps Everingham was more familiar with Platt’s possessions than Gannum.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.
¹⁵² Will of Martha Hemsted 26 June 1786, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1143/337.
¹⁵³ Will of Elizabeth Miller, Widow of Little George St near the Blue Coat School Westminster, Middlesex 2 October 1797, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1297/109.
¹⁵⁴ Will of Elizabeth LeGay, Milliner & Spinster of St Christopher Le Stock, City of London 13 May 1760, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/856/95 Kew.
¹⁵⁵ Will of Elizabeth Avery, Goldsmith & Hoop Petticoat Maker of St Botolph without Aldgate, Middlesex 31 December 1745, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/743/510.
¹⁵⁶ Will of Alice Platt, Widow of New Street Square near Shoe Lane, City of London 30 April 1772, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/977/6.
¹⁵⁷ Ibid.
In her will of 1784, Isabella Wrightson instructed “I likewise Give and Bequeath unto the Daughters of the said George Cooke (of Streetthorpe) living at the time of my Decease as aforesaid all my Cloaths and wearing Apparel of the what Nature or kind soever to be equally divided amongst them,” along with £100 each.\(^{158}\) Again, as no familial relationship between them is given, it may be supposed that Cooke and his family were personal and/or family friends of Wrightson. With no daughters of her own, Isabella Wrightson may have chosen Cooke’s daughters instead with the hope of both being remembered by them and being of use to them.

The 1733 will of Hannah Wainwright reveals and describes in detail an intricate set of female relations and daughters of friends:

I give unto Mary Scarborough my Niece Daughter of my Late Brother Stephen Gray my hood and Cloak two Shifts my Old Calamanco Gown and brown Damask petticoat and my Striped Quilted Petticoat my Old Sattin Gown and a pair of my Coarse Sheets and a Coarse pillow beir a white apron and three blue Earthen plates

I give unto my late Sister Lydia Marlowe three Daughters Elizabeth Mary and Sarah Each of them a pillow beir and each of them a white apron and each of them a white laced handkerchief and each of them a pair of white hollan Sleeves (?)

I give more unto the said Elizabeth Marlow One of the Said three Sisters a Great Trunk and my Gown with Green Ribbands and my Watered petticoat

I give more unto the Said Mary Marlow One of the Said three Sisters my best Calamanco Gown lined with Silk and my Silk petticoat belonging to it and my Redd Tammy petticoat

I Give more unto the Said Sarah Marlow one of the said three Sisters my Black and White Gown and petticoat a Black Silk apron and a Wainscott Box with a Lock on it

I Give unto Hannah the Daughter of the Said Mary Marlow [...] my biggest Silver thimble and a White Apron

I Give unto Sarah Hookes Wife of John Hookes of Houghton Conquest (?) my hand irons [...] a white apron [...]
I Give unto Mary Hookes my God daughter Daughter of the Said John Hookes [...] my flowered Muslin Apron [...] my little Silver thimble my purse wrought with Silver

I Give unto Susanna Hull Daughter of Thomas Hull late of Ampthill Deceased [...] a pair of hand irons [...] 

I Give unto Judith Taylor my Niece [...] a white Striped Musling Apron and a fan

The gifting of aprons to, presumably, girls or young women (Wainwright’s goddaughter and her sisters) could also be read as an intention to impart particular gender-specific instruction to the next generation. Aprons were a mainstay of the daily feminine appearance up and down the social ladder and imbued with virtues of useful employment and responsibility. This remained so even with “flowered Muslin” aprons that were, in actuality, for show rather than domestic industry. With the individual bequests so specifically laid out it seems most likely the items were intended to be used by their recipients. In bequeathing the aprons Wainwright may have passed on and encouraged feminine performativity, more or less consciously.

Indeed, women tended to pass on the more domestic articles among their possessions to other women, of which their clothing formed a part. Amanda Vickery’s findings support this observation as she stated, “women’s records consistently reveal a more self-conscious, emotional investment in household goods, apparel and personal effects,” and “most women had only movable goods to bestow.” Sometimes these divisions appear simply practical, such as the case of Elizabeth Gibson’s 1757 will wherein she left all monies to be divided equally between her sister, Sarah Abbot and brother George, but “unto my said Sister Sarah [Abbott] All my

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159 Will of Hannah Wainwright, 7 March 1733, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, APB/W 1734/36.
Cloathes and Wearing Apparel” and her other goods and chattel to her brother.\textsuperscript{162} And in her 1773 will Mary Clark left items of silver to her son and the remainder of her goods and chattels to her daughter, Ann Tichbourne.\textsuperscript{163} In 1799 Ann Crook of London left “unto my daughter Sarah Crook all my wearing apparel of every sort and kind” and the remainder of household goods to her son.\textsuperscript{164} Anne Edwyn was very particular in her 1706 will when she left all her goods and chattel to her “beloved” nephew William Bond, apart from “one suit of black and white Norwich Crape and Black Cloath Mantua and Petty Coate and a plain Muslin head-dress and a black Silk Fourbelloe [...] I hereby Give unto my beloved Neece Mrs Mary Vaughan.”\textsuperscript{165}

Interestingly, Sarah Taylor’s 1785 will neatly illustrates the expected life paths of her son and daughter.\textsuperscript{166} She divided her property between the two, left the mahogany and other large/major furniture to her son, and her wearing apparel and other household goods to her daughter. Clearly, the intention was that her son would set up his own household (thus the substantial gift of furniture) and her daughter would supplement a household she moved into once married (thus the clothing and likely more portable “other household goods”).

Clothing bequests to servants appeared periodically in the wills I examined. In addition to bestowing her presumably best clothes upon her nieces, Elizabeth Chandler also made provision for a pair of servants as follows: “to Elizabeth Tabor and Mary Tabor Spinsters my present Servants if they Shall be living with me at the time of my Decease the sum of five pounds a peice

\textsuperscript{162} Will of Elizabeth Gibson, Milliner of Saint Martin in the Fields, Middlesex 1 June 175, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/831/18.
\textsuperscript{163} Will of Mary Clark (or Clarke), Milliner of Market Harborough, Leicestershire 4 September 1773, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/991/37.
\textsuperscript{164} Will of Ann Crook, Widow of Baldwins Court Cloak Lane, City of London 29 January 1799, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1317/109.
\textsuperscript{165} Will of Mrs Anne Edwyn 3 December 1706, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
\textsuperscript{166} Will of Sarah Taylor, Silk and Scarlet Dyer, Widow of St James Westminster, Middlesex 19 August 1784, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1121/75.
of lawfull Money of Great Britain And all my Linnen Woollen and other Wearing Apparel not herein before Disposed of.  

Servants might also receive their mistress’s clothing as part of more general bequests, as in the case of Mary Bottin, servant to Sarah White a London widow. Bottin received the remainder of White’s estate after funeral expenses and debts were discharged. Similarly, Ann Crook’s will consisted chiefly of monetary bequests but also included the provision that “all my wearing apparel Books household Linen and household furniture” be given to her servant Susannah Lander. Susanna Hopton’s 1709 will attests to the close relationships that some women developed with their servants. In it, Hopton leaves “To my Faithful servant Hester White” £100, a bed, bedding, furniture, and all “wearing Cloaths”, linnen, etc. Hopton’s wardrobe was valued at a considerable twenty pounds. It seems likely that a dual motive of both providing for Hester White and wishing to be remembered and commemorated by the use of her things attended the bequest, and that while some portion of the goods were likely liquidated, some might also have been kept. Anne Buck wrote of this practice:

It had become so general for a maid to receive her mistress’ clothing that it was being regarded almost as a right. When Lady Bristol died her husband wrote to his son, “I am glad to find you have delivered to Williams all the things which were your poor mother’s and which by a customary sort of right are now due to every common servant in her place; but as her merit and services for near 18 years have been of the most uncommon kind, that consideration alone would have entitled her to any favour out of the ordinary course of proceedings between executors and residuary legatees.

Jane Wrightson’s 1740 will demonstrates an example of clothing bequeathed as a form of payment to a servant. After the best of her wardrobe was divided between her Sisters Anne and

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167 Will of Elizabeth Chandler, Widow of Shoe Lane, City of London 17 June 1762, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/876/448.
168 Will of Sarah White, Widow of Great New Street Shoe Lane, City of London 21 May 1806, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1444/64.
169 Will of Ann Crook, Spinster of Twickenham, Middlesex 18 November 1801, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/1365/194.
170 Will of Susanna Hopton 3 August 1709, Hereford Diocesan Deanery & Peculiar Wills 1660-1858 AA 20 1708 to 1723.
Jane Barrett, she left “the resdue thereof to such Maid Servant as shall live with me at the time of my decease. And I order my Exec’r to divide my said apparell in such shares and Proportions as he shall please”. Wrightson apparently viewed a portion of her wardrobe not as a personal gift or legacy to a favoured servant, but as a form of payment for whoever should happen to fill that role at the time. Similarly, the will of Sophia, the Duchess of Kent included the bequest “to woman Eliz Crofts £100 & clothes”. As Crofts is the only person who received clothing she may have received the entirety and with an expectation it be sold. Surely the quantity and quality of a duchess’s wardrobe were mostly both impractical and inappropriate for any maidservant’s use. Crofts may have kept a few less ostentatious pieces for herself, but likely “made money” of the rest.

The 1771 will of “child’s coat maker” Mary Todd shows potential fluidity in the boundaries between servant and friend for some people. Todd left to “Mrs Mary Melthew [...] my best blue Damask Gown and one Guinea for a Ring,” suggesting a close friendship. She left “to Ann Fleming [...] Two Guineas and also (?) things of a sort of my Wearing Apparel such as shall be judged proper for her wear” suggesting either recognition of service(s) performed and/or some form of dependency on Ann Fleming’s part. Finally, she left “to Elizabeth Banks my Journeywoman five pounds as also my light brown Silk Gown and Linnen Gown two Laced Caps two fine Aprons, and two fine Handkerchiefs.” A generous bequest to an employee, suggesting some level of intimacy existed between the two women.

172 Will of Mrs Jane Wrightson of Canterbury, widow (copy) 14 Mar, 1740, Doncaster Archives DD/BW/W/1/7.
173 Will of Sophia, Duchess of Kent, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, L32/14.
174 Mary Todd, Childs Coat Maker of All Hallows London Wall, City of London 7 June 1771, National Archives, Kew, PROB 11/968/341.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
Of course, several of the themes in this section may appear in a single will, such as that of Jane Youngs, examined by Silvia Druitt. The extensive clothing-related bequests read as follows:

I give unto Mary Drudge Wife of Thomas Drudg (sic) a Gol Ring and a Box and a Whit Coat with Three Borders at Tail

I give unto Rebeccah Ayls Daughter of Stephen Ayls A Last Apron and a Sute of Linnen of the same

I give unto fflower Ethridge her Daughter a Musland Apron with a Broad him and a paor of Waishleather Mittens

I give unto Jane Burten a Light Collored gowne robed with Gray Silk and a quilted Coat covered with Linnen and a Sute of Head Close

I give unto hir Sister Mary Brownen a Gown robeed (sic) with Green Silk and a Sute of Head Close and a pair of Green Wosterd (sic) Gloves

I Give unto James Stride Elder Three pounds and Three shillings and to his Wife a Blue Quilted Cote and to his Son John a small Bible

I Give unto Stephen pounce half a Guinea and the Midell Kitell of Three and to his Wife a White Silk hancerchief (sic)

I Give unto Anna Brumfield a Hollon Apron with to (two?) Breadths in him

I give unto John Wakfords Daughter Ann a Silk Quilt and all the pack Work that belong to it and the best Short Rokett and to his Daughter Sarah a dark collored Dammas Gown and a large Gold Ring and to his Daughter Matha (sic) the nex (sic) Largest Gold Ring and a White Quilted Coat and a Stra (sic) Hat

I Give unto his (John Wakford’s) Wife my Best Site of Close and a Sute of Linnen belongs to it and my Sute of Morning Close and a Black Hat [...] 

I Give unto Mary Heppen all my Old Close every thing I do wear every Day

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178 Ibid. 113-14.
The will was written in 1756 and probate was granted in March 1763, meaning several years passed before recipients received their gifts. Druitt identified the recipients as members of the well-to-do farmer class of prominent families in their region. The breadth of Jane Youngs’s wardrobe indicates she too was part of this social stratum; and provides an insight into possessions of a well-off woman below the gentry. The level of detail to the bequests indicates both the possessions and their disposal held significant meaning for Youngs. Druitt found no trace of Mary Heppen, and concludes that this combined with her legacy of old worn clothes indicates she was either a maidservant or a poor dependant. Furthermore, a full range of clothing qualities are represented here. The daughter and wife of John Wakford receive items described as “best.” Most of the clothing bequests have no such qualification attached to them and, therefore, seem likely to be used items still in good repair. Then, of course, are the aforementioned “Old Close” left to Mary Heppen.

Whether bequeathed clothing was kept and used by the beneficiary or sold off into the second-hand market, this was a significant documented means by which it changed owners. Many of the size-related alterations I observed made to clothing and described in the preceding chapter could just as easily have been executed for a new owner as for the same one. Additionally, this is likely the case for many of the stylistic alterations I also discerned (see the following chapter). Perhaps this is particularly so with garments whose stylistic alterations bridge decades, and thus generations, in the same vein as Nancy Woodeforde’s treatment of Aunt Parr’s dresses. As if to illustrate this instance exactly, Platt Hall houses a dark green damask dress whose fabric dates from the 1740s, but was altered sometime in the 1780s to update the

\[^{179}\text{Ibid., 116-117.}\]
\[^{180}\text{Ibid., 117.}\]
style. While not conclusive, the time difference of up to forty years suggests re-modelling for a new owner rather than the same one (fig. 4.5).

4.4 Perquisite System

Bequests and the second-hand trade were not the only means by which clothing passed between people. A passage in Tobias Smollett’s *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771) suggests multiple modes of transference may come together to form an ensemble for a new owner.

Maidservant Winn Jenkins writes in one of her letters to housekeeper Molly Jones,

> Miss Liddy […] has gi’en me her yallow trollopea; which Mrs Drab, the mantymaker, says will look very well when it is scowred and smoaked with silfur – You knows as how, yallow fits my fizzogmony. God he knows what havock I shall make among the mail sex, when I make my first appearance in this killing collar, with a full soot of gaze, as good as new, that I bought last Friday of madam Firponeau, the French mullanet

Winn plans to combine an item given her by her mistress’s niece, Miss Liddy, with a piece of second-hand finery she purchased from a local milliner while the family was at Bath. Just as consumers might blend these multiple methods of procurement, so too are they all intertwined and connected with each other.

Passing clothing (or other items) on to servants, called perquisites, was an established practice throughout the eighteenth century. At times this took the form of new garments or the materials to make them. In his diary Parson Woodeforde noted at least two instances of this. In 1793 he gave his maid Betty, “a new gown bought in London,” and in 1801 he purchased “Two cotton gowns for my maids, pink and white, 17 yards at 2/6;” giving “gowns” did not suggest he

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181 Manchester City Galleries, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall 1947.1597.
fig. 4.5 Dress, 1780-1790, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester 1947.1597 (author’s photograph). The fabric (and likely the dress also) dates from the 1740s, but it was remodelled around the 1780s, probably much like the dress of his aunt Parr’s that Parson Woodeforde gifted to his niece Nancy.
gave them finished dresses but rather referred to the cloth for making them. At various times Martha Dodson recorded purchasing cloth and clothing items for servants and their children. In March 1748 she “gave Margret Joyce [a servant] an apron 0.1.6;” in June 1751 she bought “7 yards brown yd wide stuff for gown at 16-per-yard given to Eliz Reed;” in June 1752 she gave another maid, Peggy “a pair of gloves 0.2.0;” and a few months later gave to Elizabeth Aldridge “to buy her [girl] a pair of shoes and stockins 0.2.6.” It is unclear if these items were all considered due perquisites or whether they may also have been gifts of esteem or even affection. It appears too that the money for Elizabeth Aldridge’s daughter may have been out of some sense of social responsibility.

The more commonly known form of clothing perquisites were castings from masters’ and mistresses’ own wardrobes. In 1757 Martha Dodson recorded in her account book, “gave Mrs Wall 5s and a pair of my Stays.” Perhaps the most notable literary example of perquisites can be found in Samuel Richardson’s novel, Pamela, or Virture Rewarded (1740). The eponymous heroine, lady’s maid to highly affluent matron Mrs B-, had received enough clothing gifts from her mistress by the time the story begins that she is dressed virtually entirely in the venerable woman’s cast-off clothes – right down to her dainty shoes. The book opens immediately following Mrs B-‘s death and Pamela is soon invited by the son and heir to choose additional items from his mother’s wardrobe for her own. In her article interrogating the meanings behind Pamela’s clothing and clothing changes, Patricia Bruckman makes several points regarding Mr B-‘s generosity towards Pamela following his mother’s death. Bruckman notes that Mr B- gave

184 Ibid., 10.
185 18 March 1748, 10 June 1751, 20 June 1752, 13 November 1752; Martha Dodson’s Account Book, Museum of London 80.71.
186 Ibid., 2 March, 1757.
her not only “Ribbands and Topknots of all colours,” but also “Four Pair of fine white Cotton Stockens, and Three Pair of fine Silk ones” – that belonged to his mother.\textsuperscript{188} Indeed, by the time Mr B- begins his advances towards her, Pamela has a substantial wardrobe from Mrs. B-’s stock.\textsuperscript{189} Bruckman makes sure to also point out that “no one at the Hall remarks on B’s gifts. They are part of an established system.”\textsuperscript{190} But also that Pamela declares “she will not, as many did, ‘make Money’ of her mistresses’ secondhand clothes,” conveying the message that to Pamela’s exceptional character doing so would dishonour Mrs B-’s memory and be a mercenary way to repay her kindness.\textsuperscript{191}

However, many other servants did “make money” from cast-offs, intimately connecting the perquisite system and the second-hand clothing trade. As Anne Buck stated,

There was a flourishing trade in second-hand clothing in the eighteenth century, particularly in London and other large towns. Much of the clothing which was passed to servants in “castings” or bequests went into this market for it was recognised that it was an asset to be turned into money.\textsuperscript{192}

Beverly Lemire further confirmed this interchange between cast-off clothing received by servants and the second-hand clothing market: “clothing purchases represented a quarter of total national expenditure in 1688. These garments, many ready-made, combined with the cast-offs flowing between mistresses and servants to swell the tide of second-hand wares.”\textsuperscript{193} The unsuitability of finery received from employers for the use of their servants further argues for perquisite clothing being treated as a form of \textit{de facto} currency. Even though Pamela maintains her resolution not to sell Mrs B-’s clothing gifts, her preparations for running away from B- Hall

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 204.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 205.
\textsuperscript{192} Buck, “Mantuamakers and Milliners,” 150.
\textsuperscript{193} Lemire, \textit{The Business of Everyday Life}, 89.
\end{flushleft}
demonstrate the unfeasibility of such clothing for a common girl outside of her working environment of lady’s maid: “Pamela’s mistress gives her cast-off clothing, but when she plans to return to her village home she sees this as quite unsuitable and buys homespun material to make herself a gown and camlet petticoat and, from a pedlar, a straw hat, leaving behind the finer clothes given to her by her mistress.”  

Yet, times and places to wear the mistress’s cast-offs were found. In her article on the dress of eighteenth-century domestic servants Anne Buck recounts a passage in the manual Professed Cookery (1760) by “Mrs Ann Cook” wherein a mistress speaks with her cook/housekeeper, expressing an ideal(istic) use of perquisite clothing,

Observing the Maids all very neat at the Chapel, I perceived them all dressed in the Gowns, Handkerchiefs, Aprons, Ruffles and Head Suits I had given you, and asking the Chambermaid what she had paid you for the Gown and Linen that you (she) had on last Sunday: ‘Nothing at all’, answered she, ‘The Housekeeper said you lent them to her to give to us: But whatever she gives us of yours, she bids us look on as sacred; nor do we wear any Thing that was yours in any other Place but the Church, and as soon as Divine Service is over, we all undress ourselves, and put on our Homespun Gowns, and so folds up our Clothes, which she very diligently observes; for no Maid in the Family she allows above one Gown washed in a Quarter of the Year. So every one of us endeavours which she keep their Gown cleanest.’ All this I told your Master, which pleased him so well, that the first Chapman that came with a Horse-pack he bought me three Webs of the best Chintz Cottons; and said, ‘Make plenty of these Gowns, wear them a while in the Mornings, and cast them to your Maid, who very well deserves to have the Distribution of them.’ But this injunction I lay you under that you shall not distribute any of my Castings that I give you at this Juncture; for altho’ you have a great Soul, your intended Husband has not your Master’s Fortune to support it.  

Another ideal example was another housekeeper, “Mrs Becky”, who was paid “No more than usual eight guineas a year, her tea and few cast-off cloaths, which she deserves for the ingenuity she shows in trimming them to the best advantage.” Not only did the worthy Mrs Becky wear the cast-off clothes given her, but she apparently took care to alter them in a manner her

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196 Ibid., 15.
employer considered appropriate. However, not all depictions of servants are as flattering. In *Humphrey Clinker*, Win Jenkins is described in one scene as “all of a flutter with faded lutestring, washed gauze and ribbons three times refreshed.” In Henry Fielding’s *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), the gamekeeper’s daughter, Molly Seagrim, flaunted a sack dress before her peers at church given her by squire’s daughter Sophia Western. The tone in both books is mocking and the implication is that these two common women unsuccessfully attempted aping their social superiors; Anne Buck stated they both “probably had their counterparts in real life.”

Perquisites were also a source of tension between domestic servants and employers. Masters and mistresses feared being taken advantage of and encouraging feelings of entitlement among their staff so that “‘anything [...] convertible or transferable’ might be claimed by servants, including ‘torn-up damask clothes and broken silver, to rugs [...] and metal of every description’.” In a grotesque subversion of the perquisite practice, on the right hand side of Plate 4 of Hogarth’s *The Harlot’s Progress: Moll in Bridewell* (1732) Moll’s maid tries on her mistress’s clocked stockings and shoes (fig.4.6). Presumably she is helping herself to what is left of Moll’s possessions as her “due.” Lady Mary Coke expressed her displeasure at the perceived ingratitude and underhandedness of one of her servants in 1774 to whom she had given clothes:

> I’ve just received your letter. Is it possible you can put an ‘if’ when you speak of the guilt of that French Woman? In some respects She is more vile & perfidious then the Man. I was very near paying for a present he pretended to make her of a new hat for the riding habit I gave her just before I left England. Surprised that She had not contented herself with the old ones I had given her, I ask’d her what She had given for that hat, & She said it was a present. Not many days ago, when I had given money to pay many of the Bills that wretched Man had left me, among others there was one from the hatter. Mr Taylor

fig. 4.6 William Hogarth (1697-1764), *A Harlot’s Progress Pl 4: Moll in Bridewell*, print, 1732
the British Museum.
Another short passage in *Humphrey Clinker* hints at social tensions and ambiguity attendant upon the perquisite practice and concerns over social order erosion. Young Jery Melford described a scene at a ball in Bath in a letter to a friend:

> I was extremely diverted last ball-night to see the Master of the Ceremonies leading, with great solemnity, to the upper end of the room, an antiquated Abigail, dressed in her lady’s cast-clothes; whom he (I suppose) mistook for some countess just arrived at the Bath.\[202\]

This anxiety is further expressed in the book when an unworthy servant is rewarded upon her mistress’s passing – to the detriment of the master who was nearly bankrupted by his wife’s extravagance:

> she did not leave the house, however, without giving Mr Baynard to understand, that the wardrobe of her niece was the perquisite of her woman; accordingly that worthless drab received all the clothes, laces, and linen of her deceased mistress, to the value of five hundred pounds, at a moderate computation.\[203\]

According to famous social commentator and moralist Daniel Defoe, servant girls who dressed like their mistresses heralded chaos and an entire collapse of the social order because of it.\[204\]

> This was an informal system with no written or legal rules, which left it open to a wide variety of interpretation and practice, on both the parts of employers and servants. And of course, the censure all comes from the perspective of the employing class, not the servants themselves. How did they approach and feel about the perquisite system? And for every servant who tried to take unfair advantage how many employers were unduly miserly?

\[203\] Ibid., 401.
4.5 Theft

Clothing theft was a common hazard of everyday life in eighteenth-century England. Clothes had known value, were highly moveable and also easily turned into money by the myriad pawnbrokers and old clothes sellers dotting both urban and rural landscapes. Much stolen merchandise passed through to new owners via these channels. In October 1755 Gertrude Savile rewarded an inn landlord seven shillings and sixpence for assisting in the retrieval of some her linen which a washer woman had pawned.\(^{205}\)

Not all stolen clothing was liquidated; some purported thieves kept it for their own use. In 1787 Elizabeth Parry went on trial for stealing some of her mistress’s clothes.\(^{206}\) A witness at the trial deposed:

In consequence of an advertisement, I found this gown and petticoat, and black silk handkerchief, and the shoes on the prisoner’s feet, and the stockings on her legs; she said she had the things off the drawers, to the best of my recollection, belonging to her mistress.\(^{207}\)

In 1812 Mary Jeudwine went on trial for stealing several items of clothing and also some small pieces of silver cutlery from the house of her former employers, the Mitchells, where she had been a servant.\(^{208}\) One witness, William Goodwin, first apprehended Jeudwine after the theft was reported. He testified that “When I saw her [...] she had got my mistress’s gown on I knew the gown by the description they had given me.”\(^{209}\) Goodwin further reported that upon being

\(^{206}\) Old Bailey Proceedings t17871024-20.
\(^{207}\) Ibid.
\(^{208}\) Old Bailey Proceedings t18120701-2.
\(^{209}\) Ibid.
searched eleven “duplicates” were found in her pocket.\textsuperscript{210} Thus, Jeudwine appears to have evaluated the items she took, desiring to wear the gown and get money for the rest.

Sometimes these new “owners” altered the clothes for themselves. In February 1762 Jane Henning was brought to trial for the theft of “one Holland shirt, one crape and two cotton gowns, the property of Elizabeth Best.”\textsuperscript{211} Best was a mantuamaker and the garments belonged to her customers. One such was witness Dorothy Rogers who deposed to seeing one of the gowns (which she claimed as her own) “on the prisoner’s back, altered to fit her.”\textsuperscript{212} In her (unsuccessful) defense, Henning asserted she had bought the gowns “of an old cloaths woman” and altered one to fit her.\textsuperscript{213} In July 1781 Mary and Elizabeth Tenant were found guilty of stealing a long list of clothes, fabric yardages and trimmings, the legal property of Henry Howard, belonging to him and his wife, Martha.\textsuperscript{214} Martha Howard explained she had lodged at Mr Tenant’s house (husband of defendant Mary Tenant) and all the items in the indictment were from her lock box, which she kept in her room. After going to town one day for the advice of a doctor and staying eleven weeks she returned to the Tenants and found the lock on her box broken and all its contents gone. Bit by bit the stolen items were found about the Tenant house and among their acquaintance. Adding insult to injury Howard found “many of my things were altered, and made up for their children.”\textsuperscript{215} Perhaps the Tenants thought Howard was gone permanently and decided not to let the lock box contents go to waste. In July 1776 Charlotte MacKay was on trial for stealing a number of textile goods including children’s caps, a sizable length of lace, neck cloths, a laced tucker, and several remnants of muslin, the legal property of

\textsuperscript{210} Duplicates were receipts given by pawnshops for pawned items.
\textsuperscript{211} Old Bailey Proceedings t17620224-2.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{214} Old Bailey Proceedings t17810711-46.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
Hayes Robert Bristow. Bristow’s wife, Eleanor, deposed “My husband belongs to the custom-house; the prisoner was my servant; I observed my laced tucker about her neck,” a brazen move to be sure. Eleanor Bristow further claimed MacKay had manipulated her own clothing to conceal what she took: “I found some muslin inside the lining of her stays, and two parcels sewed up in her petticoats.” So not only might thieves alter for themselves what they stole, but also modify their own clothing to secrete away pilfered items until such time they could be disposed of.

The trial of Dorothy Wilkie and Catherine Knock in June 1785 reveals potential porosity in the boundary between borrowing and theft. Among other items claimed stolen, the prosecutor, John Wilkie (no declared relation), deposed that he came upon Knock wearing a gown of his wife’s with the implication that this was without permission. In her own defense speech Wilkie stated “Mrs. Knock put on a gown of Mrs. Wilkie’s, which she said Mrs. Wilkie had lent her.” Knock herself claimed “she let me wear her own clothes, and when she gets drunk she cares nothing about it.” In January 1783 Sarah Jewson was on trial for stealing her mistress’ clothes, including wearing her petticoat and stays. As part of her unsuccessful defense, Jewson stated her own clothes needed mending and she thought it no harm to borrow some items of her mistress’s, whom she claimed “always left the things about.” In the 1783 trial of Mary Brown a witness, Sarah Miller, deposed that upon questioning Brown as to “how came you to have Mrs Smith’s petticoat on, and her shoes?” she was given the reply that they

216 Old Bailey Proceedings t17760710-62.
217 Ibid.
218 Ibid.
219 Old Bailey Proceedings t17850629-104.
220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
222 Old Bailey Proceedings t17830115-60.
223 Ibid.
had been lent to her.\textsuperscript{224} That either of these might be considered credible enough defenses to be used insinuates potential fluidity of women’s clothing within households. It suggests articles might pass, temporarily, between mistress and servant outside of more permanent perquisite arrangements.

The trial of William and Jane Brisbane in October 1783 presents an illuminating example of the interplay of making and re-making within a harrowing experience of property loss.\textsuperscript{225} Prosecutor David Richardson testified that his house had recently burned down and that while his and his wife’s clothes had been saved from the blaze, a significant portion of them were stolen in the process. Richardson’s words were concise, but still manage to convey a sense of the inevitable confusion of such an occasion:

\begin{quote}
My house was burnt down on the 24\textsuperscript{th} of September, and my wife lost her cloaths at the fire; they were stolen; we cannot tell from where; they were carried down by some of our servants.\textsuperscript{226}
\end{quote}

Five gowns, two petticoats and a pair of stays of Mrs Richardson’s were taken, doubtless representing the most valuable portion of her wardrobe. However, her mantuamaker subsequently informed Mr Richardson that some of his wife’s “things” had been brought to her to alter. The mantuamaker, Hannah Walker, deposed:

\begin{quote}
I never saw the prisoner William till he came to the house where I was, and asked me if I would alter his wife some gowns; that was on the second of this month. I went with him to his house to speak to his wife about them, and he desired his wife to get me those gowns; she brought me one, and desired me to make it less; I told her I would do it: she wanted two done against Sunday, but I could not do them, and then she took one away. The gown that she shewed me was a blossom-coloured silk. I promised them to go the next day. I well knew they were not their own property, by reason I made the gowns for Mrs. Richardson, and nobody knew them better, excepting the owner. She shewed me one gown which I made, and a petticoat which I knew perfectly well: it was lined in the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{224} Old Bailey Proceedings t17830226-67.
\textsuperscript{225} Old Bailey Proceedings t17831029-36.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
inside with the remains of two gowns that I had made. Mrs. Richardson made the petticoat herself. I went to Mr. Richardson, and gave information.\textsuperscript{227}

In addition to the theft and attempted altering of gowns this deposition introduces an intriguing tidbit about the use and reuse of textiles in the making of clothing. Walker claimed to have lined one of the stolen gowns with the remains of two other gowns she had made. It would be fascinating to know whether the remnants came from gowns Walker had made for Mrs Richardson, or others she had to-hand. Regardless, this presents an example of the lengths to which people went to get as much use out of textiles as possible.

In early June 1786 Mary Kidd returned home after a few days absence with her husband to find their house had suffered a break-in.\textsuperscript{228} The perpetrators had made very free with their house, having sat around the fireplace, burned their candles and rifled through their possessions stealing many of them, even the bed. Numerous clothing items were missing, some of which Mary Kidd espied on Lucy Sherberd at a local fair a few days later. The next day Mary Kidd and her friend Hannah Welch tracked down the Sherberds’ lodgings and deposed to finding more of her clothing, apparently much cut-up including a gown that had been cut shorter.

One plaintiff’s indignation at her clothes being altered to fit the thief comes across clearly in her court deposition.\textsuperscript{229} In November 1794 Mrs Steward testified to giving the accused, Elizabeth Butler, employment with board and lodging but found several items of her apparel missing within a week of commencing their arrangement. In addition to handkerchiefs, stockings and a black silk cloak, two gowns were taken. Upon being produced in court, Mrs Steward said of one gown, “I know the gown, it is mine, it was not in that shape when she took it from me, because it was altered to cut it to her shape; I can never wear the gown any more,” and responded

\textsuperscript{227} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{228} Old Bailey Proceedings t17861025-21.
\textsuperscript{229} Old Bailey t17941111-4.
to Butler’s assertion the gowns were lent to her (and the other items given to pawn) that “It is as false as God is true, the gown is cut, I never could wear it any more.”\textsuperscript{230} Not only must Mrs Steward have felt betrayed by Elizabeth Butler but particularly indignant that her gowns were rendered unwearable from then on and thus ultimately un-recoverable except for the money they might fetch in the second-hand trade.

\textbf{4.6 Gifting}

Clothing and accessory items also passed between women as gifts. Like bequests in wills, gifts between women were often markers of affection and intimacy. They took the form of items either purchased for the purpose or giving of one’s own possessions. I found an example of the former in Gertrude Savile’s account book. In January 1754 she recorded “A pr of Green damask Shoose trim’d with Gold – gave Miss Dowling 1-9-0.”\textsuperscript{231} One pound nine shillings was an exorbitant price for a pair of shoes; Savile must have been very fond of Miss Dowling. Savile’s account books also contain an example of giving away one of her belongings. In 1750 Gertrude Savile wrote the following entry in her account book: “Another Muff – haveing given mine to Mrs Savile 0-5-0.”\textsuperscript{232} Mrs Savile was probably her brother’s wife, and apparently the gift of the muff left Gertrude Savile in need of a replacement. In 1767 Lady Mary Coke recorded being given an “excessive ugly purse” by an acquaintance, Lady Lucy.\textsuperscript{233} During an evening of cards in which Lady Mary complained of her “constant ill luck” the obliging Lady Lucy produced the purse from her own pocket suggesting it might prove lucky for Lady Mary, who accepted it.\textsuperscript{234} In this instance there appears a certain element of humour or a joke involved,

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{231} 26 January 1754, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid. 8 January 1751.
\textsuperscript{234} Ibid.
though it is unclear whether Lady Mary shared in it or it was played upon her. A more genuine example occurred in 1769 when Lady Mary Coke wrote to her friend, Lady Strafford, “Having found in a drawer two pair of french leather shoes & knowing you admire them I’ve this day given them to Your Porter to send to Yorkshire.”

During a 1786 trial over a contested will one witness, Mrs Wallis, deposed that the testator, Thomas Sawtell, gave Mrs Goodridge (wife of one of the prisoners) “all his wife’s clothes and one hundred pounds.” Mrs Goodridge was purportedly a niece of Sawtell’s wife who he had financially assisted for many years prior to his death. The will in question was transcribed at the beginning of the trial transcript and does not include any disposition of Sawtell’s wife’s clothes. Therefore, it appears the gift of this clothing was made by Sawtell directly to Mrs Goodridge as a gift rather than a bequest.

Something in between hand-me-downs and perquisites was a practice of passing on clothing to the poor in the form of charity to assist someone in need. In February 1721 Lady Fermanagh wrote to her husband, Lord Fermanagh “I have just sent the poor their clothing, so intended not to send them any Wheat till Easter, but if you would have me I will.” In 1769 Lady Mary Coke listed “gave Cloaths to two poor women” among her activities one day. Among the prosperous it was a societal obligation to mitigate the sufferings of those less fortunate and in addition to parish relief, clothing was a common means of doing so. Handing out used but decent clothing addressed immediate want, either of the body or the pocket if pawned.

236 *Old Bailey Proceedings t17860111*.
238 *Lady Mary Coke: Vol. 3*, 19.
4.7 Lending

In 1805 Jane Wilson was brought to trial for stealing a shift and two shawls belonging to a woman who kept an old clothes shop. Wilson unsuccessfully used the defense of being given the shift and one shawl to pawn as payment for housework performed and that she was lent the other shawl for her own use. Although her claim of being lent clothes rather than stealing them may be ambiguous at best, a few anecdotes from women’s letters show the practice did occur legitimately as well. Thus, sometimes clothes passed temporarily onto new bodies.

Like bequests and gifting these incidents often denoted intimacy between the involved parties, but also hospitality and helpfulness between women. For example, in a 1774 letter between two women of the Orlebar family the writer recounted “I think my Sister gave you an account of the Monday Night’s Ball & likewise of her borrowing Mrs Mellmoth’s Gown, her own cloaths arrived here on Wednesday Eve, to her no small joy.” It appears the sister’s clothes were delayed and that, as an attentive hostess, Mrs Mellmoth came to her rescue for the ball. Somewhat similarly, one day in 1772 Lady Mary Coke was called on to assist her young friend Lady Frances Scott. Lady Frances had ridden to visit Lady Mary but got caught in the rain and according to Lady Mary was “half drown’d”. Lady Mary reported she was “obliged to lend her a petticoat, a hat, & a pair of shoes to go home in.” A few years earlier in May 1768 Lady Mary lent Lady Frances Scott some of her diamonds to wear at a ball later that evening, evincing a strong bond of trust between them.

In November 1774 Mrs A. Polwarth wrote her mother, Lady Grey, a lively account of an adventure she had while out for a walk, which is worth reproducing in full:

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239 Old Bailey Proceedings t18050220-51.
240 Mrs Orlebar to Mrs Constantia Orlebar March 25, 1774, Cirencester, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, OR 2071/293.
241 Lady Mary Coke: Vol. 4, 92.
on Saturday I went to visit the intended walk, - but now prepare yourself for as sad a story, as ever the Apothecary could tell about his curl. I went from the gate of the thicket along the path cut through the bushes, & scrambled into the field, where finding it very wet, & no regular path made; I was foolishly tempted to go out at the wooden gate just close to the end of the thicket, instead of going round by the Hedge to the new entrance. To the gate I advanced, but Alas! the gateway was the compleatest bog I ever stept into, so that before I was aware I suck quite in, & pull’d out, first one foot without a shoe, & then the other. I jump’d to a piece of firmer ground, & to compleat my distress, found I could not open the gate. One shoe was founder’d and out of sight, & besides I did not care to chill myself with stepping into the water again. So there I stood calling out (& for aught I know, I howl’d a little like Trap, when shut up by himself), but finding nobody within hearing, I manfully pull’d out some sticks & scrambled over the hedge. Finding myself at liberty, I pluck’d up my heart, & walk’d somewhat in the stile of Jane Shore doing penance [she was barefoot & legged] to the Gamekeeper’s, where the hospitable Mrs Burleigh gave me a pair of dry woollen stockings & an old pair of Shoes with peaked toes, that I suppose belong’d to her Grandmother.  

From this tale we derive both a glimpse of young Mrs Polwarth’s sprightly character, and the inferred history of a pair of women’s shoes in a non-elite home. Polwarth’s description of them is scant at best, but enough to suggest a style from the 1740s or earlier (fig.4.7 fig. 4.8). Of the images below, fig. 4.6 shows an everyday woman’s leather shoe from the 1770s and may be similar to that worn by Mrs Polwarth during her adventure. The other, fig. 4.7 is a glazed wool (calamanco) shoe from 1731-40 with the “peaked” toe style supposed to indicate its age and lineage. The gamekeeper’s wife possessing such a pair of shoes makes it reasonable to suppose they had passed to her through family bequests, probably informally. Tantalizingly, Mrs Polwarth does not say whether Mrs Gamekeeper’s shoes were returned to her or expected to be so. Nor does she impart the final fate of her shoes, whether they were left in the muck forever, or were fished out at some point.

Lady Newdigate recorded lending clothing in letter-journals written to her husband. In 1788 a friend supplied her with a cap to wear in church on discovering hats and bonnets were

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243 A. Polwarth to her Mother Lady Grey, Wrest Park, 22 November 1774, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services, L30/9/60/47.
fig. 4.7 Everyday Shoe, 1770s, Icon Shoe Publishing. Possibly the type and style of shoe Mrs Polwarth wore for her adventure-laden walk.

fig. 4.8 Shoe, 1731-40, Museum of London 4774 (author’s photograph). A serviceable, glazed wool shoe that may have been of a similar type to the one the gamekeeper’s wife provided to Mrs Polwarth.
discouraged. Sometime in 1790 Lady Newdigate was in London and began sitting for George Romney, famed society portraitist of late eighteenth-century London. Romney was apparently very particular regarding what she wore, as she wrote:

_Saturday morning_. . . A note from Romney to desire me to dress myself in white Sattin before I come to him to-day; I have no such thing in town, must get my head dress’d in haste & drive to Pic & borrow a Gown which I shall not be able to get into....Time to do to Romney

Later that same day:

4 o’Clock. . . . The Borrow’d Gown won’t satisfy him, he insists upon my having a rich white Sattin with a long train made by Tuesday & to have it left with him all summer. It is ye oddest thing I ever knew, but I dare not disobey him as you are not here to support me.

In the event, Lady Newdigate somehow procured an acceptable dress by Monday.

One of Mary Clarke’s letters to her husband demonstrates both how clothing can signify intimacy within a happy marriage and that sometimes women borrowed clothing from men. In December 1695 Mary Clarke wrote to her husband, Edward,

I would pray you to desire Mrs Smithsby to by me a small mans Gound to put over all my Cloths when I Goe out in the Cotch; of what Silk you and She Shall think fitt for that purpose for I have now none to use butt your Great Stuff one and that Growes scandalouss in a sun shining day as is thought by others, otherways it is all one to me.

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244 Anne Emily Garnier, _The Cheverels of Cheverel Manor: Letters of and about Lady Newdigate-Newdegate, c.1719-c1800_, (London: Longmans Green, 1898): 76.
245 Ibid., 101.
246 Ibid.
247 Ibid., 102.
248 Mary Clarke (Taunton) to Edward Clarke (London), 29 December 1695, Somerset Heritage Centre, DD/SF 7/1/31.
A wife’s borrowing of her husband’s old wool greatcoat seems to signal both easy intimacy between the pair and a pragmatic approach to travelling on Mary Clarke’s part making use of what was at hand to protect her clothes from dirt and dust while on the road.

Examples of men lending women articles of clothing also surface occasionally as a chivalrous act. In February 1710 Margaret Adams wrote to Lord Fermanagh thanking him for the loan of his “Old Hatt” for a journey in rainy weather. And Lady Mary Coke recounted an instance in 1767 when the King “told Lord Cornwallis he shou’d lend me his great Coat” during an evening of cold and rainy weather, which Lady Mary apparently declined yet “assured his Majesty he had offer’d it.”

Clothes borrowing by mischievous persons can reveal the lighter side of eighteenth-century life. In 1770 Lady Mary Coke recorded in her journal one such incident perpetrated by the Princess Amelia during a visit she made Lady Mary at her house in Notting Hill:

Princess Amelia did me the honour to make me a visit, & brought Ly Lothian with her, and staid till it was dark. She wou’d go into every room; I cou’d not even save Jane’s from her inspection, tho’ I assured H.R.H. it was a room unworthy of her Notice; she wou’d go in and examined everything in it. Unluckily Jane’s cap lay upon the table, which the Princess put on over her hat and came out to us so attired: ‘twas so rediculous that we all laugh’d excessively; Jane was at that time at the bottom of my grounds, little thinking of the preferment of her cap, which had certainly been exalted above its fellows, but it was with some difficulty that I cou’d persuade her how highly it had been placed.

Jane was Lady Mary’s maid, and Princess Amelia was capitalizing on the obvious disparity of her wearing an article of servant’s attire. While class-oriented humour seems odious over two

249 Verney Letters, 279: Margaret Adams, at Stanford, to Lord Femanagh, at Claydon 26 February 1710.
250 Lady Mary Coke Vol. 2, 17.
251 Lady Mary Coke Vol. 3, 290.
hundred years later, at the time it would have read as good-natured playfulness, something for which Princess Amelia had a reputation.  

4.8 Adult Clothes Altered for Children

Sometimes, the new owners or wearers of women’s (as well as men’s) clothes were children. All seamstresses, past and present, learn early on that making something smaller is much easier than making it larger. Thus, cutting down an adult’s garment when they “could no longer wear it for one reason or another” was a prudent and economical method of conserving materials, practiced at nearly all socio-economic levels.

The voluminous skirts of women’s dresses particularly provided ample cloth for remaking into girls’ dresses. Two dresses in the collection housed at Platt Hall may be examples of this approach. The first is a brocaded silk dress in the style of 1770-1780, though altered again at some point in the nineteenth century. The dress is in an adult woman’s style, but the length and proportions seem just smaller than that of even a diminutive woman. The second example is a more convincing and charming dress in the later, high-waisted style of 1795-1800 (fig. 4.9). However, the fabric is silk brocade dating from the third quarter of the eighteenth century, at which time it would have been used to make an adult woman’s dress, not a young girl’s. The garment’s current incarnation is an almost complete re-make, but with tell-tale signs of re-purposing. Although carefully executed, there is substantial fabric piecing throughout the small bodice as well as numerous older crease marks from former bodice pleating (although whether

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252 Lady Mary Coke Vol 1, 53.
253 Baumgarten, What Clothes Reveal, 189.
255 Ibid. 1947.1614, girl’s dress c. 1800.
256 See Anne Buck, Clothes and the Child: A Handbook of Children’s Dress in England 1500-1900, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996): 102 for discussion on the change in children’s dress during the 2nd half of the eighteenth century that would have made this textile unsuitable for children’s wear at the time of its manufacture.
fig. 4.9 Child’s Dress, fabric 1760s, construction c. 1800, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester (author’s photograph). This dress was cut down and remodelled c.1800 from a 1760s adult woman’s dress.
from a sack or English gown is indeterminable). Additionally, the skirt hem is finished with a narrow silk tape facing in a manner identical to that on many women’s gowns from the third quarter of the century, and the placement of the skirt for the fall-front appears to utilize what were previously pocket slits, also typical of women’s gowns throughout most of the eighteenth century. Natalie Rothstein is recorded in the Museum of London’s object database as believing a child’s dress there was made from a cut-down adult’s, however, my own examination of the dress left me unconvinced (fig. 3.25). The only element suggestive of alteration is the fabric piecing of the skirt. However, on its own this is insufficient evidence of remodelling from an adult’s dress. Nothing else about the cut or construction implies re-making. The only other clue might be the textile design itself and whether it is of a style that was used more for adult women’s clothes than girls’.

Occasional references to making children’s clothes from adults’ also appear in archival sources. For example, in October 1757 Christian Williamson wrote to her brother Edmond Williamson, rector of Millbrook in Bedfordshire about his daughter’s clothing:

I am vastly glad to hear the little girl is so well [...] And as to the Shifts you had better cut some of her Mama’s which are in the great trunk, for Linnen that has been wore will only grow yellow & rotten by lying by however your will be done, therefore if I hear nothing by next Monday to Contradict your present Orders shall proceed on to buy them & the Other things.

Both Buck and Styles referenced Reverend David Davies’ 1787 collection of expenditures among labouring families in his Berkshire Parish in their works on eighteenth-century dress, including his estimation that “the annual expenditure per child [...] should average 7s for that part of their clothing that was bought (usually second-hand). The rest was made up from the parents’

old clothes.” At St Sepulchre’s workhouse the clothing stock books show that garments for the inmates, women and girls, were “made of old things.” For example, an entry from 4 October 1739 recorded that six infants’ caps and shirts were made “of women’s shirts.” And it must have particularly irked Martha Howard to see several of her clothing items cut down and re-made for the Tenant children, as recounted in the Old Bailey trial discussed above.

4.9 Conclusion

The multiple avenues here discussed along which clothing travelled between people whether permanently, temporarily, illicitly, as a form of commercial transaction or token of affection highlight the dynamic nature of the lives of garments. In an age of limited individual wardrobes apparel items were constantly on the move either on bodies or between them. These processes also showcase how garments could inhabit multiple contexts, either in sequence or simultaneously revealing another facet of just what complicated objects they were and are.
Chapter Five: Changing Fashions: Stylistic Alterations over the Long Eighteenth Century

5.1 Introduction

Stylistic alterations are among the most visible that women’s eighteenth-century clothing underwent. Examples abound in museum collections of dresses, jackets, petticoats, even stays that were altered for modes later than their original construction. Several of these were altered more than once, making multiple stops along the timeline of fashion history. Novice observers of eighteenth-century fashion may be excused for deriving an overall homogenous impression from the period as a whole, as most styles included fitted bodice with sleeves and natural waistline, and full, floor-length skirts. Of course, there was actually much diversity in women’s dress styles, both in terms of change throughout the century and various options within each stylistic phase. These are equally reflected in alteration practices as styles were updated over time or clothing was remodelled for changing contexts and uses. Surviving garments and archival manuscripts form the chief source material for this chapter, which chronologically charts stylistic alterations augmented by use changes.

Examining stylistic alterations of clothing illuminates where and how fashion ideals and actual practice intersect within a culture that increasingly enjoyed novelty and improved communication lines but wherein conserving resources was a matter of both necessity and morality. The evidence presented by surviving garments correlated with archival material suggests there may have been levels of fashionability that were probably more or less acceptable depending on context and situation. Garments made in fashionable styles from fabric two or more decades old indicate that many people took a pragmatic and prudent approach to fashion participation. That garment style appears to have been more important to acceptable appearances
than textile design further implies this frugality was socially acknowledged and sanctioned. The various means by which articles of apparel both on the whole and in detail were altered for fashion also highlights areas of uniformity versus individuality of practice. Women picked and chose which elements they desired to incorporate, avoid, or could not be bothered with. There are even occasional instances of experimentation on the part of the (probably) home seamstress. These activities combine to bring a very “human” element to the past and its survivors (the clothing). Rather than formulaic exercises the altered objects bear witness to diverse thought processes and decision making by individual women and how they interpreted fashionability for themselves.

5.2 Altered Early to Mid-Century

I encountered comparatively few garments altered prior to 1770. My insights for this period were gained more from archival material cross-referenced with the chronology of fashion evolution rather than object-based research. At the start of the eighteenth century the dominant woman’s dress style was the *mantua*, which had evolved from late seventeenth-century undress (or what we might call loungewear) and became increasingly formal (fig. 5.1).¹ The style consisted of a one-piece gown with few seams that was draped and pleated on the body. It was usually worn with a petticoat or underskirt in matching fabric. So universal was this style that by the dawn of

fig. 5.1 Mantua, c. 1708, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1991.6.1a,b.
the eighteenth-century women’s dressmakers were already commonly known as *mantuamakers.*

Although worn into the 1740s, by that time mantuas were almost exclusively for court wear.

From the 1730s they were increasingly replaced by sack dresses for formal wear outside of court, and from the mantua itself evolved the fitted-back gown off-shoot frequently referred to as the Nightgown (fig. 5.2a-b, fig 5.3a-b). Around 1710 hoop petticoats were introduced and eventually became a defining feature of the eighteenth-century feminine silhouette, persisting into the 1770s and at the English court into the 1820s.

The account books of Anne Brockman, Gertrude Savile and Martha Dobson provide examples of stylistic alterations to dresses during the first half of the eighteenth century. In March 1710 Brockman recorded paying “for new makeing a black mantua 0.3.0.” The terms “making” and “new making” both appear in several of the account books I examined, including Anne Brockman’s. While references to “making” a garment are frequently close in date to large textile and notions purchases, “new making” generally is not. Furthermore, both terms are occasionally found in the same entry or otherwise used in a context suggesting the two terms were not synonymous. Nor were they interchangeable with “alter”, which was also used distinctly. Thus, “new making” a dress must refer to extensive re-modelling, possibly involving entirely un-picking the garment and making it up new again in an altered state. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that Anne Brockman’s black mantua received some form of stylistic

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4 Ibid., 27.


6 8 March 1710 Anne Brockman, her Account Booke, British Library MS 45208.
fig. 5.2a-b  *Robe à la Francaise*, 1740s Metropolitan Museum of Art. This style is characterized by the pleats that fall from the back neckline.

fig. 5.3a-b Fitted back dress, c. 1725, Metropolitan Museum of Art. This style of dress was often referred to as a “Nightgown” within England, and an “English” gown outside it.
update. However, the overall stability of women’s fashions during the century’s first two decades makes it difficult to speculate what the change entailed, unless it was to accommodate the newly introduced hoop petticoat. Two years after Anne Brockman’s account book closed in 1725, Gertrude Savile remarked off-handedly in a diary entry from 24 July 1727 “Pulling Gown to pieces before din’d alone,” presumably to have it made up new again according to an alternate configuration. The phrase “new making” continues at least through mid-century: in May 1755 Gertrude Savile paid for “New Makeing a green Damask Nightgown 5s,” and in September 1756 “New Makeing red & white Nightgown 4s.” And in January 1759 Martha Dodson recorded “Mrs Titrekuff new makeing brown Lutstring gown in full 0.7.0.” The amounts paid for “new making,” ranged from three shillings early in the century to seven shillings more than halfway through and are commensurate with rates paid for initial construction of women’s dresses. Presumably, a comparable amount of work was paid for, further evincing extensive remodelling. Linda Baumgarten noted this strategy in her article on altered historical clothing:

Martha Washington had a four-year old ensemble remade in 1763, and hoped to obtain additional fabric to match the old. [...] On September 28, 1760, Martha sent a gown to England to be cleaned or redyed. This involved taking the gown apart and remodeling it in the process. George wrote to Robert Cary and Company, ‘Mrs Washington sends home a Green Sack to get cleaned, or fresh dyed of the same colour; made up into a handsome Sack again woud be her choice, but if the Cloth wont afford that, then to be thrown into a genteel Night Gown.”

Additionally, Gertrude Savile recorded having gowns remade into articles of undress. In January 1757 she paid for “Makeing green Damask into a Wraping Gown,” and later the same year in October, “Makeing Burdet Nightgown into a Wraper 3d, Body Lineing 1s, 0-4-0,” and “Makeing

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7 Diaries of Gertrude Savile, Nottinghamshire Archives DDSR 212/10/1.
Scarlet Satten Sack into a Neglige (an informal dress) 8s.” A logical progression for women’s dresses was from highly fashionable, even formal evening attire to more casual “daywear” as the cloth aged and started to show wear, and then onto an at-home garment when the fabric was no longer deemed suitable for public view.

Taking Savile’s “green Damask” as a case study perfectly illustrates this process as she recorded its “life” passage in her account books for over a decade. On 16 February 1744/5 she purchased seventeen yards of green damask fabric (probably silk) “for a Sack” at fourteen shillings per yard, totalling eleven pounds and eighteen shillings – an enormous expense at the time. Two days later she bought gold Trimming for it totalling over twelve pounds adding to the extravagance. On 18 March she recorded paying Mrs Bonnell “the Sack-Maker” sixteen shillings for making the sack dress and applying the gold trim.

Two and a half years later, on 14 October 1747 Savile bought “Roabings and Faceing for Green Damask Sack 1-0-1,” and on 22 October recorded having them set onto the gown. Robings were folded strips of fabric running down bodice front edges from the shoulder to the waist; sometimes they were cut in one with the bodice fronts, other times they were entirely separate pieces; most dresses featured matching robings, but contrasting ones also existed. Most likely Savile chose to replace the robings for aesthetic reasons, while the new facings may have been a maintenance-related replacement. A year later on 30 September 1748 she recorded

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11 21 January 1757, 18 October 1757, 5 October 1757, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
12 Ibid. 14 October 1747.
13 See, for example, C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington and Charles Beard, Dictionary of English Costume, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), 182.
“Makeing Sleeves to Green Sack 1s.” If this was the green damask sack, she may have had the sleeves replaced.14

On 27 October 1749 Savile paid over one pound for a pair of green damask shoes trimmed with gold begging the questions: were these made using leftover material from the sack dress, and/or were they made to go with it? On 31 December of that year she recorded “For a green Damask Sack made into a Nightgown 5-0,” representing the first major re-vamping of the garment.15 Such a step may also have involved a change in the gown’s status from formal wear to slightly more casual or day wear. On 21 December 1753 she paid for having two more pairs of green damask Shoes made, “The [missing] was my own 0-14-0.”16 The missing word of the entry was probably cloth. Most likely, Savile kept the leftover material from changing the damask sack into a nightgown and used this for the shoes. Another year later on 26 January 1754 she recorded buying a fourth pair of green damask shoes also trimmed with gold for one pound nine shillings, which she gave to a Miss Dowling. This was probably more of the leftover material and also gold trimming from the garment’s first incarnation. That the shoes were a gift invokes additional tantalizing questions such as how a new pair of shoes made from old, used materials were perceived by the recipient? Did this denote particular intimacy or merely expedience?

Nearly six years after turning the sack into a nightgown Savile recorded “New Makeing a green Damask Nightgown 5s, Sleeve Lining 1s, Gimp 1-2, Hartshorn & bread to clean it 4d = 7-6,” indicating a full refurbishment to update and refresh the dress, still within the context of a

14 30 September 1748, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
15 Ibid. 31 December 1749.
16 Ibid. 21 December 1753.
nightgown. The gown’s final appearance in the account books is 21 January 1757 when Savile recorded “Makeing green Damask into a Wrapping Gown 4s,” bespeaking the garment’s removal from public “life” entirely and the accounts end just over a year later. Undoubtedly, the initial extravagant cost of the green damask cloth was integral to Savile’s recurrent refurbishments and re-workings of the gown. She may also have developed a personal attachment and fondness for the gown that carried through its multiple incarnations. Perhaps it acquired cherished associations over time and/or became increasingly associated with familiarity, comfort and stability through the years.

Edwina Ehrman identified a sentimental attachment within Martha Dodson’s account book regarding a particular gown:

In April 1749 Mrs Dodson bought 9 yards of blue printed linen for a gown at 3s 6d a yard for a total of £1 11s 6d. There is no record of the garment being made, but presumably it was included in her mantua-maker’s annual bill. Almost three years later in January 1752 a Mrs Poule was paid 3s for “new making” the blue linen gown, and given a yard of linen to match it - this still cost 3s 6d. The following January Mrs Dodson bought a further “1/4 and nail of blew and white linen for gown” for 1s 3d, and paid a Mrs Middleton 1s to alter the gown’s cuffs. The trouble taken to extend the usefulness of some garments over others must have an explanation. The cost of the fabric for the two gowns cited above was not particularly expensive compared to other gowns, but they were clearly valued by Mrs Dodson. They may have had sentimental meanings attached to them, or perhaps the pattern of the fabric or texture of the garments struck a particular chord with their wearer.

Ehrman also uses the biography of this dress as an example of the longevity of certain textile prints. This may well be the case. However, liberty was sometimes taken with remakes and alterations and different fabrics were occasionally used to supplement missing cloth. I encountered a few gowns that were altered using slightly different fabrics, cleverly placed and

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17 Ibid. 28 October 1755.
18 Ibid. 21 January 1757.
pieced so as to minimize their conspicuousness (fig. 5.4). The additional fabric Dodson purchased may have matched, or perhaps was considered close enough.

Several suggestive entries in Martha Dodson’s account book may track the significant change in women’s sleeve fashions around the middle of the century. Sometime after 1745 the folded and winged cuffs on women’s sleeves, the norm since the rise of the mantua, began giving way to cuffs of gathered flounces, usually with scallop-pinked edges and often of double or treble layers called *falling cuffs* (fig. 5.5, fig. 5.6). In March 1747 Dodson recorded “new make pair of sleves and cuffs to gown, 0.1.0,” quite possibly referring to a change from wing to falling cuffs. In January 1753 she “paid Mrs Middleton alter cuff of gown, 0.1.0”, in December 1756 she “paid Hannah Emblin altering gown Sleve, 0.0.6” and in July 1758 she again paid Hannah Emblin for “altering cuf of short Sack, 0.1.0.” Some or all of these instances may refer to updating the gowns by changing to the new cuff style. This may seem a small, even insignificant fashion change; however, it was part of the greater aesthetic shift from the heavier and more angular Baroque to the comparatively light and frothy Rococo form of embellishment. An additional suggestive entry from June 1759 reads “altering Tobine gown & pinking in full, 0.3.0,” possibly referring to having fabric edges of the dress treated with the same scallop-shaped pinking so common for finishing the edges of falling cuffs. Linda Baumgarten identified an especially useful example of this tactic in the collections of Colonial Williamsburg:

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20 For example, the green damask gown at Platt Hall, 1947.1597, with a centre back length of slightly different cloth to the rest; and a gown at Hereford Museum, 3336 (c. 1775), has a shoulder band of a slightly differently patterned silk jacquard cloth.
22 10 March 1747, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
23 Ibid. 13 January 1753, 9 December 1756, 20 July 1758.
24 Ibid. 18 June 1759.
fig. 5.4 Dress (proper left front shoulder detail), c.1755, Hereford Museum 3336 (author’s photograph). The shoulder piece of this dress was replaced with a similar, but not identical, fabric. The most notable difference are the black pinstripe bands on the replacement piece.
fig. 5.5 Jacket (proper left sleeve cuff detail), 1740-44, Museum of London 39.106 (author’s photograph). An example of the wing style of cuff popular during much of the first half of the eighteenth century.

fig. 5.6 Dress (proper right sleeve cuff detail), 1750-70, Museum of London 35.35/1 (author’s photograph). An example of the flounced “falling” cuff that was introduced c. 1745 and became the standard from the 1750s to c.1775.
Rarely do any unused fragments survive after alteration, but a green silk gown brocaded with a lacy pattern of the 1730s still retains the original bodice that was laid aside when it was updated around the middle of the eighteenth century. The older bodice has full cuffed sleeves of the 1730s and 1740s. The new sleeves fit more closely than those on the older bodice and end in ruffles typical of the mid-eighteenth century. The remodeled gown has a closed skirt with front drop panel, eliminating the need for a separate gown petticoat. In all likelihood, the original petticoat was cut up to create the new bodice. In addition to sleeves, account book entries indicate other garments and components also received the same treatment. In December 1706 Anne Brockman had her riding hood altered and seven years later in December 1713 “pd Goody Foster for [new] making my old Riding Hood, 0.1.6,” it was probably the same one. In July 1749 Gertrude Savile paid for “New Quilting and makeing an old Pettycoat 10s,” and in July 1753 for “Mantua Makers Bill – for new makeing ye Body of an old Linnen Gown 4s.” Martha Dodson’s account book contains several such entries. In February 1750 she paid nearly five shillings for “Mrs Web altering capuchine,” in May 1752 two shillings and sixpence for “altering sable Tipet,” in January 1753 she again paid Mrs Web for “lineing capuchine and lace” (possibly the same one from 1750). However, these alterations were probably made as much for maintenance as stylistic purposes to keep the articles functional.

Updating or refreshing a garment was also achieved by adding new trimmings. Late seventeenth-century letters between Mary Clarke in Somerset and her MP husband, Edward, in London, along with his account book, include instances of re-trimming as a means of updating and maintaining their grown daughters’ apparel. For example, in October 1696 Mary wrote “the black [p]ettycote for betty is to have a triming on it such as Mrs Smithby and you shall think fitt according to the ffashion Of trimings be worn for it is to weare for Change with her best

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26 23 December 1713, Anne Brockman her Account Book.
28 20 February 1750, 26 May 1752, 31 January 1753, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
mantua;” this passage also suggests Betty was to have multiple petticoats to wear under her mantua, providing further means of varying the gown’s appearance at comparatively limited expense.29 A 1697 letter to Edward from his daughter Anne includes a request for “some ribbon for to put behind my muslin head for I had none in it when I came and now they are out of mourning I cannot wear it without.”30 The account book includes entries such as “adding ribbons to a petticoat 6d,” a simple and inexpensive adornment to renew garments.31

Similarly, in May 1715 Anne Brockman paid for “Seting on lace etc of my gown, 0.0.2.”32 Numerous entries in Gertrude Savile’s account books reveal she regularly had articles retrimmed. In April 1738 she had ribbon and buttons added to a velvet cap and in June 1742 an Alamode hood trimmed with lace. In October 1747 Savile recorded paying for two and a half dozen silver tassels and four yards of silver edging, and the same day paid for them being set on a brown satin nightgown. Later the same month she had the robings and facings of her green damask sack and brown satin nightgown trimmed. Possibly these represent instances of either maintaining or even increasing a garment’s formality. In 1754 she specified refreshing a couple of “old” items: in January she paid for “Silk Lace & putting it on old Shoose of my own” and in October for “Fringe, Lace & Setting them on old Capucine.”33 In 1757 she recorded two instances of refreshing a black cloak: in January she had a new lining and edging added and in October paid “For new Wadding & near a Yd of black Edging & new Making black Cloak.”34 Whether or not this was the same garment is unclear. On the one hand it seems unlikely Savile

29 Letters of Mary Clarke to her Husband Edward Clarke, M.P., Somerset Heritage Centre DD/SF 7/1/31 (part 1 of 3).
31 Ibid, 42.
32 4 May 1715 Anne Brockman her Account Book.
33 26 January 1754, 29 October 1754, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
34 Ibid. 28 January 1757, 26 October 1757.
would have need of two black cloaks, on the other it seems equally odd that she should overhaul the same cloak twice in under one year.

In a 1753 letter to Marchioness Grey on the topic of Birthday Clothes (a special outfit for wearing to the monarch’s annual Birthday celebrations), Lady Anson included the thought that if the Marchioness might like to trim her gown with gold blonde (a type of lace), it could afterwards be used to trim a Sack. This tidbit is particularly interesting for indicating not only re-use at the highest echelons of society, but that it was pre-mediated and provides further proof that virtually all of eighteenth-century English society was concerned with practicing sartorial economy.

Refreshing and retrimming smaller garments or parts of larger ones were also common. Anne Brockman made three entries for “new roleing a mantua Sleve,” in her account book; first in May 1708, then August 1714 and finally in July 1715. In February 1755 Martha paid for having a black satin hat altered, which may indicate updating an article of mourning wear. Additionally, she had shoes refreshed or altered on three occasions. In June 1752 she “paid Barrett laceing green breed shoes 0.0.6,” in August 1756 she “paid Plater altering Slopers into Shoes,” and in April 1759 she paid Barrett the shoemaker three shillings for “new doing clogs.” Maintenance probably mingled with fashion in these instances as well.

Gertrude Savile used new stomachers as a further method of updating or changing part of an ensemble’s appearance. In August 1756 she paid three shillings and sixpence for “Another Stomacher for strip’d Negligee.” A new stomacher could be made from matching leftover

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35 Lady Anson to Marchioness Grey, 1753, Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Services L30/9/3/41.
36 Anne Brockman her Account Book.
37 13 June 1752, 13 August 1756, 7 April 1759, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
38 14 August 1756, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
fabric or contrasting cloth, and would inexpensively add variety to pre-existing gowns in a similar manner to changing petticoats as Betty Clarke did. A nightgown in the Snowshill Collection housed at Berrington Hall (SNO 7) provides a surviving example of this approach. The mustard yellow silk/wool mix gown is furnished with two stomachers, both made from the dress fabric but trimmed differently. One features box-pleated self-fabric strips (fig. 5.7a) and the other has narrower ruched strips of the fabric in a serpentine configuration accented with matching rosettes. (fig. 5.7b) The precise reason for the two stomachers is unknowable, and neither appears particularly more or less formal than the other, suggesting that switching between the two may simply have been a matter of the wearer’s inclination on any given day.

Emphasized skirt width supported by hoop petticoats was a defining, if contentious, feature of fashionable women’s dress throughout much of the eighteenth century. In their handbook on eighteenth-century English dress the Cunningtons noted “Already by 1722 a lady was complaining that her maidservant from the country, ‘had not liv’d with me three weeks before she sew’d three penny canes round the bottom of her shift instead of a hoop-petticoat.’” Elizabeth Dodson wrote two entries in her short account book recording payments for altering her hoop, first in May 1729, then in January 1730. While these may have been to address issues of body size, they were just as likely for the purpose of altering for fashion as skirt widths continued increasing until reaching prodigious proportions in the 1740s. Payments for altering hoops were made by other account keepers as well. Gertrude Savile had a hoop petticoat altered in December 1736 and April 1737, while hoop width continued waxing. She also recorded

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40 Cunnington, Handbook of English Costume, 27.
41 Elizabeth Dodson’s Account Book, Museum of London 80.71.
fig. 5.7a Stomacher, 1750-60, Berrington Hall SNO7 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.7b Stomacher, 1750-60, Berrington Hall SNO7 (author’s photograph).
having two quilted petticoats widened with additional breadths of fabric, first in March 1743/4 and then June 1744, possibly to accommodate wider hoops. The final entry for altering hoops is in December 1754, after widths began steadily waning in the late 1740s.\textsuperscript{43} In February 1749 Martha Dodson “paid makeing short hoop & altering an other,”\textsuperscript{44} and Diana Eyre had her hoops altered in July 1750. If these alterations were style-related, they too were likely for reducing hoop widths.

5.3 Altered Post-1770

By far the most common eighteenth-century stylistic alterations I encountered were for post-1770 fashions. Over seventy-five of the garments I examined were remodelled to lesser or greater extents sometime between 1770 and the early 1790s.\textsuperscript{45} The changes in women’s fashions after 1770 may initially appear subtle; however, they precipitated significant construction changes that influenced dressmaking for several decades thereafter.

Between 1770 and 1775 women’s fashions began transitioning from the elaborate and frothy rococo aesthetic towards “a new informality”\textsuperscript{46} in dress, which in turn led to the Classical-inspired fashions at the end of the century.\textsuperscript{47} The popularity of heavy and ornately patterned textiles gave way to lighter weight cottons and silks in either solid colours or small-scale patterns.\textsuperscript{48} This was, at least in part, a consequence of cotton’s meteoric rise in popularity during the final few decades of the century.\textsuperscript{49} While its use had been increasing since the late

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} 26 February 1749, Martha Dodson’s Account Book.
\textsuperscript{45} I found numerous examples at every collection I visited.
\textsuperscript{48} Norah Waugh, \textit{The Cut of Women’s Clothes}, 74. I observed this among clothing I examined as well.
seventeenth century, most printed and coloured cottons were banned from England in a 1721 parliamentary bill that was only lifted in 1774. Although the ban was far less effective than its proponents wished, its lifting opened a floodgate, particularly as it also roughly corresponded to the rise of domestic production. Although silk remained a popular luxury choice manufacturers made them lighter weight and paler coloured seemingly in sympathy with cottons and the nascent neo-classical aesthetic. Self-fabric flounces and furbelows on petticoats and complex, multilayered trimmings on dresses were reduced or left off entirely; petticoats were left untrimmed and dress bodices accented with understated bands of self-fabric or ribbon. Double and triple layered falling cuffs, so popular from mid-century, were also left off in favour of plain, fitted cuffs cupping the elbows, or nothing at all.

The primary structural change in women’s dress was to bodice fronts of both dresses and jackets. The stomacher-fronted style was replaced with meeting front edges, usually fastened by pins. This development posed a new alteration challenge. Previously, fashion updates were often achieved by changing trimmings, sleeve cuffs, hem lengths and stomachers; work that was primarily cosmetic in scope. Now, the very anatomy of the bodice fronts needed reworking to fill in the gap left by stomachers. And, as every seamstress learns early on: it is far easier to take fabric away than to add it.

The methods employed for achieving this are remarkably similar among the relevant dresses I examined despite being spread across collections from London to Manchester to

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50 Ibid., 41.
53 Waugh, The Cut of Women’s Clothes, 74.
54 Ibid. But based primarily on my own observation.
55 C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, Handbook of English Dress in the Eighteenth Century, (Boston: Plays, Inc, 1972): 267. As for fastening with pins, most of the bodices are constructed with no other discernible form of fastening and many exhibit markings from pins, especially visible on silk dresses.
Hereford suggesting technical knowledge travelled throughout the country along with the fashions. Two main approaches were followed. The cleaner and more subtle was to create an entirely new bodice front with fabric probably harvested from the matching petticoat, which was no longer fashionably necessary (contrasting petticoats in white or light colours increasingly replaced them). The original bodice front was cut off and the new bodice front with corresponding lining piece was sewn into the dress in its place. To finish it, the robing was cut short and sewn to the new front at the neckline, becoming the shoulder strap. The resulting seam across the front shoulder is a key indicator of such activity. However, gowns altered this way are difficult to identify, particularly if the workmanship is of high quality. While the front shoulder strap seam is found on nearly all dresses altered post-1770 this is inconclusive evidence on its own. Museum of London dress 35.76/3 is a good example. The bodice front was seamed in the manner consistent with being replaced and the elbow-length sleeves are cut and constructed like earlier ones on which cuffs were mounted; however, it lacks other indicators such as stitch marks testifying to removed cuffs (fig. 5.8). While I think it likely this dress was updated, it remains ambiguous.

The other, more identifiable practice had fabric pieced onto the bodice front edges to extend them. Former robings were either cut off or unfolded to gain extra fabric. The leftover empty space was filled by stitching-in fabric scraps, sometimes creating an almost crazy-quilt effect. Presumably, the piecing was expected to be covered by the voluminous handkerchiefs or fichus then worn about the neck and décolletage. A particularly obvious example of this approach is Museum of London dress 53.101/15 (fig. 5.9). The bold pattern of the textile emphasizes the seams at the bodice side fronts along with the fabric piecing on the new centre front sections. A dress in the Snowshill Collection at Berrington Hall (SNO11) presents a
fig. 5.8 Dress (bodice front detail), 1775-85, Museum of London 35.76/3 (author’s photograph). This dress has front shoulder strap seams (black arrows) consistent with post-1770 remodelling, but the sleeves lack stitch marks from any previous falling cuffs.

fig. 5.9 Dress (bodice front detail), fabric 1743-50, construction 1770-80, Museum of London 53.101/15 (author’s photograph). The pieced bodice fronts are clear indications of remodelling.
variation on this approach. While the bodice front was altered as described the robings were left intact and replaced in approximately their original positions. By partially contravening the new prevailing fashion this dress clearly delineates an individual woman’s personal taste.

Many dress sleeves bear evidence of once having a different appearance. Several dresses altered after 1770 now have no cuffs at all, but that they once did is evidenced by remaining stitch marks near the lower sleeve edges. Museum of London dress 48.46/1 shows this particularly clearly with a consistent line of stitching running all round near the lower sleeve edge (fig. 5.10). The circular scrap of linen sewn inside the sleeve end used to hold a weight to ensure the sleeve, with its double or treble flounces, hung properly. The new fashionable sleeve was also slightly longer and cupped the elbow. Some seamstresses achieved this by adding material to the end, resulting in a joining seam. This became increasingly common practice in the 1780s. Sometimes these alterations were carried out carefully and are unobtrusive to the point of near-invisibility, as in the case of Museum of London dress 49.50/1 (fig.5.11). Here, new sleeve ends were sewn on at an inconspicuous part of the textile pattern so that the seam is only apparent upon very close inspection. On an example at Platt Hall the seamstress took advantage of the fabric’s striped pattern to conceal the sleeve extension seam.\textsuperscript{56} However, others were less subtly worked, as with Museum of London dress 53.146/1 whose sleeve extensions were applied and topstitched over the original lower edge (fig. 5.12). These two examples may represent the difference between professional and home sewing.

Another clever method involved applying a new style of cuff at the lower edge, creating the effect of a longer sleeve. These look like narrower, more fitted versions of the wing cuff popular earlier in the century. They were added to several of the dresses I examined including

\textsuperscript{56} Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall 1980.209, dress 1770-80.
fig. 5.10 Dress (proper left sleeve detail) 1776-80, Museum of London 48.46/1 (author’s photograph). The small dots are stitch marks left from removing trimming or falling cuffs.

fig. 5.11 Dress (sleeve detail) 1753-80, Museum of London 49.50/1 (author’s photograph). Showing the subtle fabric joining seam for lengthening the sleeve.
fig. 5.12 Dress (proper left sleeve cuff detail), 1776-85, Museum of London 53.146/1 (author’s photograph). The black arrow indicates the topstitched joining seam on this sleeve.

fig. 5.13 Dress (proper right sleeve cuff detail), 1776-80, Museum of London 55.47/1 (author’s photograph). This ruched cuff demonstrates a decorative method for lengthening sleeves.
Museum of London dress 55.47/1 which sports an especially elaborate set where the outer fabric of the cuff was tightly ruched in an all-over random pattern (fig. 5.13). Some sleeves received both treatments, such as Berrington Hall dress SNO6. The sleeves of this dress have seams where they were extended and self-fabric cuffs attached to the ends of those extensions.

Along with the overall streamlining of women’s fashionable dress sleeve heads also changed from a roomy fit with the fabric pleated into the shoulder strap to fitted and smoothly set-into the armhole. Some seamstresses chose to mimic the overall effect of this development without actually re-cutting the sleeve by tacking the pleats down along their length with small running stitches.\textsuperscript{57} Janet Arnold noticed this too:

Each woman placed her own individual mark on the dresses she made - and altered. Two dresses in the collection at Bolling Hall are good examples. One is in lemon silk with a woven design of stripes of flowers in ivory. [...] The pleats over the sleeveheads had been stitched down very neatly. The second is a robe a l’anglaise in pale pink lustring dating from c.1785. This too had pleats stitched down over the sleeveheads in the same hand. Both dresses had come from the Rawson family. Just as a dentist’s work is identifiable - so is that of a dressmaker. The running stitches are set at a particular angle; the precision with which they are put in is very obvious, after one has studied them closely for a long time.\textsuperscript{58}

That dresses residing and probably altered in different parts of the country should exhibit the same type of small alteration detail is highly evocative and suggestive of the level of skill transmission across distances. This stitching detail having also led to identifying that the same hand worked both Bolling Hall dresses calls to mind the idea that women wrote their signatures with their needles.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} Museum of London 53.101/15, dress 1743-80, and 48.46/3, 1770-1800.
Turning to the lower half of the body, hoops, a defining feature of women’s fashionable silhouettes for several decades began shrinking significantly during the 1760s until they were mostly left off entirely by around 1775 except for the most formal of occasions. From that time skirt fullness gradually gravitated towards the rear and skirt front edges migrated towards the sides. The style and direction of pleats also changed. When side hoops were in fashion skirt pleats faced towards the side seams and were roughly one inch wide. When skirt emphasis moved towards the back the pleats also started changing direction (although not universally). The size of pleats narrowed to about half an inch and they were overlapped so that only approximately a quarter of an inch showed, thus concentrating fullness into a compact space. In order to keep the resulting masses of tight, narrow pleats orderly, they were often catch-stitched on the underside in one or two rows. Museum of London dress 48.46/1 demonstrates all three of these changes: the pleats all face towards centre back, they are narrow and densely packed, and there is a row of catch-stitching on the inside approximately one inch below the waist seam (fig. 5.14a-b). Altering a dress skirt in this manner would be time consuming and fussy work even for a mantuamaker and examples of careful execution connote that owners expected to be thought fashionable in their made-over gown.

Pocket slits, originally at the sides, were re-situated to the side back. In fact, finding pocket slits towards the back of the skirt is a principal marker of alteration. At this location they are useless, being too far back to access without strangely contorting the body. Museum of London dress 64.120/1 demonstrates this amply with its pocket slits currently located halfway between the sides and centre back (fig. 5.15). Curiously, I encountered very few examples where pocket slits were added to the new skirt sides, suggesting that either these dresses were no longer

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fig. 5.14a Dress (waist area interior detail), 1776-80, Museum of London 48.46/1 (author’s photograph). Showing the dense skirt pleats and catch stitching at the dress back from the inside.

fig. 5.14b Dress (waist area exterior detail), 1776-80, Museum of London 48.46/1 (author’s photograph). Showing the skirt pleats at the dress back from the outside.
fig. 5.15 Dress (back detail) 1778-85, Museum of London 64.120/1 (author’s photograph).
worn with pockets, or, more likely, the skirt front edges had moved close enough to the sides that women simply pushed them aside to access their pockets through slits in the petticoats. An interesting exception to this is Berrington Hall dress SNO11. Here, the original pockets slits, now located at the side back, were sewn shut and new ones made at the new dress sides. This example shows quite a determination on the wearer’s part to have pocket slits. The original ones were located at a join in fabric panels and took advantage of the selvedges to eliminate both cutting the cloth and having edges to finish. The later pocket slits were necessarily cut into the cloth, with the edges turned under towards the lining and carefully sewn together to finish the raw edges.

Another very common feature among dresses altered at this time was the addition of cords or ties to create the puffed up skirt effect commonly associated with the polonaise style. (fig 5.16) This was achieved one of two ways. Sometimes cord loops were stitched inside the waist at side back with corresponding buttons sewn on the outside whereupon the skirt was bunched up below these points and the cord loops brought around to the outside and hooked onto their corresponding buttons. The other method was to sew narrow linen tapes inside the dress at waist level and several inches below. Each corresponding set of tapes were tied together, creating a slightly different puffed effect. This practice became so common that many dress historians and museums today consider this skirt treatment the defining characteristic of a polonaise, possibly incorrectly. Originally, the polonaise was defined by the lack of waist seam and overall relaxed fit seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art example. The bunched up skirt was simply another element of the style, not the dominant one. However, because so many other

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fig. 5.16 *Robe à la Polonnaise* (back view), c. 1787, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1983.32.
dresses, sacks and nightgowns alike, were modified to imitate the *polonaise* skirt accurate identification became blurred in later periods.

Individual types of alteration seldom occurred in isolation; rather, dresses were often picked entirely apart, had pieces re-cut and the whole re-assembled to both update the style and reduce the obviousness of being recycled. Because the workmanship on these is almost as clean as entirely unaltered garments they are difficult to recognize. Combinations of clues such as fabric piecing and old stitch and crease marks in the shell fabric with an entirely cleanly and consistently sewn lining point to this activity. For example, Manchester Art Galleries dress 1947.826 at Platt Hall exhibits fabric piecing and crease marks on the bodice fronts and back that confirm significant stylistic alteration. However, the bodice lining is uniform in appearance and of clean construction (fig.5.17a-b).

Degrees of remaking also existed, probably in accordance with available materials, sewing skills of the alterer and personal preferences. One Museum of London dress may be a partial re-make.\(^{62}\) The linen bodice lining is a chief indicator in this case as well. It comprises linen fabrics of two different shades. Most of the bodice back is lined with darker linen than the fronts and the bottom portion of the back. This probably dates to either the original dress construction or at least an earlier incarnation (in the museum’s in-house database the dress textile is dated to 1718-25 by Natalie Rothstein). The lighter linen pieces correspond to the main areas of change in order to update the dress from an early or mid-century style to post-1770: the fronts are in one piece, contrary to the outer silk layer; and the back lining piece has been extended to help form the deeper point, then fashionable. The extensive piecing of the bodice is obvious and

\(^{62}\) Museum of London A13038, dress c.1718-80.
fig. 5.17a Dress (bodice front detail) 1770-80, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester 1947.826 (author’s photograph). There are vertical crease marks (red arrows) and fabric piecing (black arrows) indicating alteration.

fig. 5.17b Dress (bodice interior detail), 1770-80, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester 1947.826 (author’s photograph). The bodice lining fronts are not pieced correspondingly, indicating they are replacements.

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would have required concealment by a handkerchief or fichu to present a decent public appearance.

5.4 Altered Post-1780

Through most of the eighteenth century fitted back dresses (mantua and nightgown) featured *en fourreau* cut and construction. This referred to the centre back dress panel being cut in one, bodice and skirt with a double set of knife pleats spanning part of the bodice back (see fig. 5.3b) Until c. 1780 the upper back these pleats spanned the entire neckline and were at least four inches wide at the waist; after this date the back panels narrowed considerably. I found this development on some of the altered dresses I examined including Museum of London dress 49.50/1. The pleats span approximately four inches at the top of bodice and less than two inches at the waist. Parallel fabric creases on either side of the pleats show the original fold lines of a wider *en fourreau* back. This narrowing continued until the cut-in-one centre back panel disappeared entirely from many dresses in the 1780s and the waist seam ran all around with centre back points to varying depths. Museum of London dress 64.120/1 was altered to have a deep and narrow point at centre back, while 55.47/1 was given a wider and shallower one (fig. 5.18, fig. 5.19). Most likely both of these dresses were initially made with *en fourreau* backs.

At some point in the early 1780s bodice construction of dresses and jackets underwent significant structural change. Formerly, back pleats and seams were sewn to linings with spaced back stitches, while lining seams were lapped and fell-stitched. This method was replaced with fully seamed backs (no more pleats). Furthermore, the technique used was very particular and distinctive. Each bodice back panel was individually lined with the edges of fabric and lining turned in and finished together; then the pieces were whip-stitched from the inside right at the
fig. 5.18 Dress (back waist detail), 1778-85, Museum of London 64.120/1 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.19 Dress (back waist detail), 1776-80, Museum of London 55.47/1 (author’s photograph).
fig. 5.20 Dress (bodice back interior detail), 1775-85, Museum of London 33.110 (author’s photograph).
finished edges to form the seam (fig. 5.20). This is a curious development in women’s
dressmaking. Although the finish was very clean it would have been a more time consuming
method than formerly and eliminated any extra seam allowance and for later altering. Coupled
with the meeting bodice front edges little to no flexibility of fit remained on women’s dresses.
Nor was this inspired by men’s tailoring, which typically employed the “bagged out” method of
lining and other techniques bearing greater resemblance to modern sewing. Clothing was not yet
so inexpensive that many more people than formerly could afford to discard dresses if they
ceased to fit, and stylistic alterations certainly continued apace past this time. I could find no
information on the origins or rationale for this development, but it certainly warrants further
investigation.

Altered dresses with bodice backs seamed in this manner likely indicate the dress was
totally re-made. In order to take older dresses and create both the centre front closing bodice
and the new type of bodice back seams, the original dress had to be completely unpicked, re-cut
and re-assembled according to the new configurations. Museum of London dress A10002 is a
good example of this. According to the museum’s records the donor family believed the piece
had been a wedding dress in the mid-eighteenth century. While the current style and construction
is 1780s, the types of alterations are certainly consistent with the dress having started out as a
mid-century style. The bodice fronts have clearly been pieced to fill it in and make the edges
meet. While the lining fronts are also pieced, the seams follow a different line and do not
correspond with the piecing of the silk. The bodice lining fabric is also consistent throughout and
shows no signs of alteration. Thus, it most likely dates from when the bodice back was re-made
according to the new bodice seaming style and method. That women were willing to lose so
much of the adaptability afforded by previous construction methods and go to all the trouble of
remaking their dresses according to the new one suggests they believed the new method superior to the old for some reason. Was it the cleaner appearance? Are there, in fact, larger seam allowances inside the panels than meets the eye?

Around 1780 fitted back dresses began sporting trains. This addition forms another potential marker of earlier dresses altered specifically after c.1780. This was usually achieved one of two ways. The most obvious was to piece additional fabric onto the skirt as seen on Museum of London dress 49.23/1. Extra dress fabric was grafted onto the original hem starting from around the side fronts and lengthening around the back. Taking an opposite approach, on Museum of London dress 53.101/15 fabric was pieced along the upper edge of the skirt back in order to lengthen it. Some skirt hems were cut shorter and/or turned up at the fronts to emphasize the effect.

The other method was made possible when altering a sack dress into a fitted-back style (see below); sack dresses typically had at least a small train, and the back pleats falling from the shoulders provided a great deal of fabric for manipulating into a new style. The actual width of a sack’s upper back would have been enough for a new skirt back with train, and probably a new bodice back as well. If the amount for a bodice back was a little short lengthwise this may account for dresses with fabric piecing across the new upper bodice back, as on one Museum of London dress.63 This dress shows other clear signs of being altered from an open, stomacher-front bodice with falling cuffs on the sleeves. Crease marks, seaming and fabric piecing on the bodice fronts indicate unfolded robings, and evidence of small, round weights having been sewn into the sleeve ends as typical of dresses with falling cuffs. The pronounced train dates the remake/alteration to c.1780, along with the very narrow en fourreau back, yet there is no

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63 Museum of London 48.46/1, dress c.1780-85.
fig. 5.21 Fashion Plate, *Etude pour les Demoiselles*, c.1782-87, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
corresponding fabric piecing to create it. This suggests the skirt back fabric came from a sack dress.

As trains lengthened, the concentration of fullness towards the back continued increasing as did the overall impression of fullness. At this time a sort of proto-bustle aesthetic developed along with apparatus to create it involving altering either the gowns themselves or the way they were worn (fig. 5.21). One method was to wear a false rump under one’s dress, such as an example at Platt Hall, 1954.1010 (fig. 5.22). Another was to add padding inside the rear of the dress itself. Hereford Museum dress 3337 sports two pleated ovoid shapes of stiff linen tacked to the lining waist edge. Berrington Hall dress SNO29 is furnished with two stuffed crescent-shaped pads, also sewn to the lining waist edge (fig. 5.23). Each of these options would have puffed up the very back of the skirt, especially the Hereford Museum dress, which is also furnished with tapes to arrange the skirt à la polonaise.

“Zone” Fronts

Another stylistic development of the 1780s that lasted into the early 1790s was the fashion currently termed a “zone” front bodice.\textsuperscript{64} This took the form of a cutaway bodice front filled in with a false waistcoat or front “zone,” in something of a reverse-stomacher-front idea. I encountered two Museum of London dresses altered to create this visual effect. The first, 85.553, probably originated in the 1750s and appears to utilize an original button-up compère stomacher to fill in the front (fig. 5.24). The original robings were also maintained, but stitched down and pieced with additional material to form the meeting upper edges. Interestingly, the deep falling cuffs, unfashionable for almost ten years by this time, were also retained. The other example,

\textsuperscript{64} This appear to be a modern term, the earliest reference I found is in Cunnington, \textit{Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century}. 260
fig. 5.22 False rump, 1778-90, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester 1954.1010 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.23 Dress (waist area interior detail), 1770s-80s, Berrington Hall SNO29 (author’s photograph). Showing the stuffed crescent-shaped linen pads sewn to the back lining at the waist to help create the fashionable bustle-like silhouette.
fig. 5.24 Dress (bodice front detail), fabric 1755-63, construction 1756-90, Museum of London 85.553 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.25 Dress (bodice front detail), 1778-80, Museum of London 54.78/1 (author’s photograph).
54.78/1, buttons up too, but its construction differs significantly from the first gown (fig. 5.25). The bodice fronts comprise two layers: the cutaway fronts that meet in points at the neckline, and a full under-piece like a false waistcoat front. The lavish trimmings of self-fabric edged with lace combined with the overall light feel of the textile place the original making during the 1760s, while the fully separate bodice and trained skirt are hallmarks of 1780s cut and construction, in addition to the “zone” front. The lack of piecing on the skirt to achieve the back length also suggests this dress may have started as a sack. Both dresses display ingenuity in the alterations, but curiously neither conform to the sparer trimming aesthetic of the post-1770 period.

5.5 Sack to Nightgown

As mentioned above, the volume of material that went into sack dresses made them prime candidates for altering later on, either to make the most of the cloth or transition into new styles as fashion changed. Between 1749 and 1757 Gertrude Savile recorded in her account books at least three instances of paying for altering a sack dress into a nightgown – the fitted back style so popular in England that the French eventually referred to it as the robe a l’anglaise. In December 1749 she paid for “Turning french Silk Sack into a Nightgown 6s”, at the end of 1751 her bill from “Mrs Cutt Mantua Maker” included “a green Damask Sack made into a Nightgown 5-0” and in July 1752 she recorded “Turning brown and gold sack into a Nightgown 6s.” As the sack-back style remained consistently popular throughout the period of Savile’s account books, it seems most likely her dresses were altered to fitted-back styles purely as a form of maintenance and prudent economy. An unpicked sack dress at Worthing Museum, 1974-168 evinces both the quantity of material (particularly in the back panel) and the practice of unmaking a gown to have it remade (fig. 5.26).

65 18 December 1749, 31 December 1751, 4 July 1752, Account Books of Gertrude Savile.
fig. 5.26 Sack dress piece, 1760-70, Worthing Museum 1974-168 (author’s photograph).
After 1770 the sack dress gradually fell from favour, and nearly disappeared entirely by 1780. Thus, later century transformations were performed for fashion’s sake as much as for economy. Linda Baumgarten cited such a dress in the collection of Colonial Williamsburg: “The gown back was once a sack, but was altered in the 1780s into a fitted style with very deep point at the waist.”\(^{66}\) The same may also have been true for Mrs Gery, a Bedfordshire gentlewoman who, in 1790 had a black silk negligee turned into a nightgown.\(^{67}\) The *negligee* is a garment whose specific definition is difficult to pin down; however, Anne Buck’s logic that it was a type of informal sack is plausible.\(^{68}\)

I encountered several possible examples of remodelled sacks. In addition to the skirt trains described above, a primary means of detection is surviving crease marks in the fabric consistent in size and configuration with the stacked pairs of box pleats arranged below the back neckline that characterized the style. These later appear as straight parallel crease marks running the length of the bodice and spaced farther apart than either *en fourreau* back creases or folds from former robings; additionally, *en fourreau* bodice pleating is slightly curved and diagonal, rather than perfectly straight and parallel. This may be the case with Worthing Museum dress 2007/80. Both the bodice fronts and back are punctuated by crease marks running the length. However, later crease marks partially obscure these, rendering definite identification impossible. Another case may be Platt Hall dress 1980.209. However, instead of old creases this dress exhibits stitch marks in the characteristic layout.

Because sack dress backs contained far more material than a fitted back style required, there was ample left-over to add onto upper edges of new bodice backs, thus pushing the whole

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length of material down to create the train. Both this technique and the ghosts of box pleats past are in evidence on Worthing Museum dress 1976/474. That the very costly silk brocade cloth itself dates to the 1730s or 1740s, when sack dresses were gaining popularity, corresponds with this theory. Another such dress at Platt Hall, 1947.1604, features definite crease marks from past pleating, with enough of them remaining to form complete box-pleats (fig. 5.27).

Additionally, the upper portions of the bodice centre back pieces – that continue into the skirt en fourreau - are pieced, thus allowing for a slight train in the skirt back. A further dress at Platt Hall, 53.70, displays similar evidence of both fabric creases and upper bodice back piecing; although in this case the piecing extends across the entire back. This dress in particular imparts something concerning potential social acceptance of altered garments. Although the prior crease marks and fabric piecing on the bodice back are fully evident, the current quality of construction (dating to the late 1770s or early 1780s) is very high. This was not a shoddily re-made dress, but worked with great care and skill. It seems most likely that even in its altered state this dress was for a fashionable woman who could afford to pay for extensive and highly time-consuming remodelling. It is impossible to know the exact environment(s) or context(s) in which this dress was worn; however, it is highly suggestive that visible evidence of the garment’s past life might not hinder its continued fashionability. Thus, remaking did not necessarily severely diminish a garment’s status. Berrington Hall dress SNO 29 supports this theory. Remade in the 1780s, this dress also evinces the bodice fabric crease marks (on fronts and back) and upper back fabric piecing consistent with sack dresses transformed into fitted-back dresses (at this point commonly referred to the robe a l’anglaise). More importantly, this is the dress, mentioned above, with crescent-shaped linen pads sewn inside the back waist, a highly fashionable, even trendy,

69 Ibid., 26.
fig. 5.27 Dress (proper right bodice back detail), fabric 1740s-50s, construction c.1780, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester 1947.1604 (author’s photograph). Showing the crease marks that suggest former sack dress pleats.
attribute. The workmanship is less impeccable than the Platt Hall dress; however, as it also bears
evidence of post-eighteenth-century alterations, that may well account for it.

5.6 Altered Post-1790

The final years of the eighteenth century brought a marked change to women’s fashion as the
rococo or ancien regime aesthetic fully gave way to classically inspired modes. The key
characteristics of the new fashions were high waistlines located directly beneath the bust and
long, columnar silhouettes. A “cult of simplicity” emerged wherein “the soft folds of muslin
allow[ed] the shape of the often uncorseted body to be partially revealed.” ⁷⁰ While this evolution
occurred over a decade the degree of change compared with that over the prior century creates an
impression of sudden fashion revolution, seeming to mirror the socio-political upheaval then
experienced by revolutionary France as society at large moved to distance itself from anything
associated with the old order and turned to a new government inspired by the “Ideals of the
Ancients”. ⁷¹

The roots of this metamorphosis began earlier in the century when discoveries of ancient
Herculaneum and Pompeii influenced mid-century neo-classical designs in furniture and
architecture. ⁷² However, 1790 to 1800 was the pivotal period. And while, as Janet Arnold
pointed out, “these styles of dress seem to develop in a perfectly logical way from the
construction lines of the 1780s,” by the mid-1790s perceived differences between the new and

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ancien fashion orders were already food for caricaturists’ satire. An anonymous English print from 1795 reads: “A fashionable information to Ladies in the Country. The present fashion is the most easy and graceful imaginable. It is simply this. The petticoat is tied round the neck and the arms put through the pocket holes (fig. 5.28).” Of course, this was pure lampooning and no woman actually effected the new style this way. However, the print illustrates how sudden and strange some felt the columnar silhouette to be. Nor was this sentiment isolated. Alexis Chataignier’s 1797 print “Ah! Quelle antiquité!!! Oh! Quelle folie que la nouveauté...” depicts an ancien regime couple confronting a more “modern” late century Incroyable and Merveilleuse (fig.5.29). Each couple derides the apparel of the other, thereby exposing the fundamental ambiguity and arbitrariness of fashion, especially regarding the particular animosity towards modes most recently left-off. However, direct evidence from the period, both manuscript and object, show that this break was neither as decisive nor clear-cut as representations might have us believe. For example, 1790 to 1800 was the time span covered by Mrs Larpent’s surviving diary. In her study of it, Mary Anne Garry stated: “Mrs Larpent does not tell us what she wore herself, except that in common with many other women in the eighteenth century she often unpicked her gowns and cloaks, to have them re-made or dyed.” Mrs Larpent likely picked apart her dresses to re-make them according to evolving fashions rather than discarding them and buying a whole new wardrobe, especially considering her ever worsening financial state. Although the classical influence affected materials as much as style, intensifying the vogue for light, diaphanous cotton muslins and thin silks in white and pale colours, a surprising number of heavier silk and cotton eighteenth-century dresses were altered at this time. Clearly, even the sea change in textile

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73 The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University 795.12.09.01.
74 Mary Anne Garry “‘After They Went I Worked: Mrs Larpent and her Needlework, 1790-1800,” Costume 39 no. 1 (2005): 95.
fig. 5.28 *A Fashionable Information for the Ladies*, hand coloured print, 1795, Lewis Walpole Library.

fig. 5.29 Alexis Chataignier (1772-1817), “Ah! Quelle antiquité!!! Oh! Quelle folie que la nouveauté...” hand-coloured etching, 1797, Museum of Fine Arts Boston.
aesthetics could not override at least some people’s “waste not, want not” attitude towards clothing, regardless of the apparent incongruity.

Most of the eighteenth-century dresses altered for this period that I examined originally dated from the 1770s-1780s. I theorize two main reasons for this. First, the trains of 1780s dresses had built-in length to accommodate rising waistlines; and second, overall lighter weight silks and cottons from the 1770s-80s were less incongruent with the neo-classical aesthetic than most heavier early or mid-century silks and woollens.

Janet Arnold traced the beginning of the waistline’s rise to 1785, when wide sashes were worn creating the illusion of higher waistlines. 75 Over the following decade the actual seamline gradually rose until it settled directly beneath the bust. Thus, surviving eighteenth-century dresses altered for this either represent varying degrees of success or potentially correspond to different stages of the upwards migration.

Several dresses in the Museum of London’s collection follow a possible timeline of this progression. One dress mostly conforms to typical 1780s robes à l’anglaise, however the skirt back has been re-positioned to run straight across, eliminating the point (although it remains on the dress interior). 76 Dress 63.130/1 may represent the next step in the waistline’s rise. In this case the entire skirt was removed and moved up the bodice one to two inches (fig. 5.30a-b). Arnold logically posited that bodices were left intact inside the dresses “in case waists should return to their natural level.” 77 Dress 76.144/1 represents the final stage of this process with a waistline that sits just underneath the bust and features greater commitment as at least some of the original bodice was cut away.

76 Museum of London 48.46/3, dress 1780-95.
77 Ibid., 20.
fig. 5.30a Dress (back detail), 1792-1800, Museum of London 63.130/1a (author’s photograph). The waistline runs straight across the back.

fig. 5.30b Dress (bodice interior detail), 1792-1800, Museum of London 63.130/1a (author’s photograph). The original, lower waistline survives on the dress interior.
Typically, bodice backs went largely untouched when dresses were updated to turn-of-the-century styles, and most bodice fronts were left with their meeting front edges from the 1770s to early 1790s. However, bodice front re-fashioning did occur. I encountered changes to create a cross-over/surplice bodice, a bib-front and a curiously gathered front. All of which display the exercise of personal preference and individual taste among their alterers/wearers.

Museum of London dress Z665a is a particularly successful example of the cross-over bodice alteration. At first glance the dress looks indistinguishable from one actually made in the c. 1800 period; however, opening the dress up reveals the original natural waistline. The 1780s dress was re-made into a round gown with a drop-front skirt, with pieces of dress fabric applied over the original bodice fronts (fig. 5.31a-b). These original fronts still meet at centre front and the applied pieces overlap overtop of them. The skirt front covers the lower edges of all these pieces and ties around the back, making everything neat and tidy looking. While the dress looks something of a jumble when open and undone, when worn on the body none of this is apparent, resulting in a skillfully executed re-fashioning.

Museum of London dress 39.94/1 was the only dress altered to a bib-front I examined (fig. 5.32). Despite being a popular style, the additional fabric required may have been difficult to obtain. Even this example is an atypical case. Usually, a bib-front pins at the front of both shoulders, the bodice is attached to the skirt at the raised waistline and there are slits in the skirt on either side to facilitate dressing and undressing. The bib-front on this dress is sewn down along one side of the bodice so that it opens only on the other side. Furthermore, the original, 1780s bodice remains beneath.
fig. 5.31a Dress (front detail), 1787-94, Museum of London Z665a (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.31b Dress (interior detail) 1787-94, Museum of London Z665a (author’s photograph).
fig. 5.32 Dress, 1780 (fabric)-1805 (current style), Museum of London 39.94/1 (author’s photograph).
Open robes remained fashionable until around 1800-1805, and several surviving examples reflect this. However, closed robes or round gowns became increasingly popular and some dresses were altered to suit. On Museum of London dress 39.94/1 the skirt was removed and the pleating undone, the whole closed up in the round, re-pleated (with fullness still concentrated at the back) and re-attached to the bodice higher up. The bodice itself was left uncut and the original waistline simply hidden inside.

Achieving the necessary skirt length was a main challenge inherent to altering pre-1795 dresses to the new styles. Several dresses I examined had 1780s style trains on which to draw or, as Arnold theorized, utilized fabric previously folded over at the waist edge. A few were originally cut with very deep hems that were let down. Other seamstresses utilized various forms of piecing around hems. For example, on one dress the skirt fronts and sides were pieced to add length; however the skirt back is composed of unbroken panels of cloth. Since the dress is still longer at the back than the front and sides and there is also no fold line indicative of a let-down hem it seems unlikely a 1780s skirt train was re-purposed for its length. Alternatively, this may be another example of a made-over sack dress.

Worthing Museum houses a dress made directly from a sack in a unique way. Contrary to typical styles there is no separate bodice and skirt. The full lengths of the original back panels were preserved and a waistline created by the addition of a self-fabric belt. The back pleats were un-picked, re-configured to spread out across the entire back and re-stitched similarly (though not identically) to what their original construction must have looked like. The dress front is also made of continuous fabric panels with no waist seam, but significant amounts of fabric piecing.

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78 Ibid.
Presumably, excess material from the original dress back was added to the fronts, or possibly from a former matching petticoat (which may also have supplied fabric for the long sleeves).

Museum of London dress 39.94/1 is a further curious example that suggests possible experimentation by a home seamstress. The 1760s-70s silk brocade dress, remade in the 1780s, was altered post-1795 primarily by the usual method of raising the skirt on the bodice described above. Most of the skirt was lengthened by letting down an apparently very deep hem, exposing a dirtied fold line running all around. However, the front skirt panel was removed, pieced with additional material and made to form a centre front dress panel that is both bodice and skirt front. The lower portion of the skirt was not pieced with any further fabric, nor was there any grading made to the resultant hemline to create any kind of smoother curve. Instead, there is now what looks like a square cut-out at the front hem of the dress. Consequently, this created an angular high-low hem that appears awkward to wear considering fashion dictates of the time. Either the centre front would be too short or the sides too long (see fig. 5.32).

This period of fashion also brought with it longer sleeves, sometimes reaching below the wrist to cover part of the hand. Museum of London dress 64.130 was altered to create such sleeves (in addition to several other modifications). This was another garment stylistically altered more than once. It bears evidence of having been refashioned first in the 1770s/80s and then again around 1800. In this case there was insufficient original fabric for widening the bodice fronts and lengthening the sleeves (perhaps no matching petticoat to take from), so a similar, though not identical, fabric was used to supplement. The dress is now a patchwork of not-quite matching materials. To lengthen the sleeves, the last seamstress who worked on the dress employed the clever, if clumsy, method of lowering a set of sleeve cuffs that would initially have
fig. 5.33 Dress (proper left sleeve detail), construction 1770-80, altered c. 1799, Museum of London 64.130 (author’s photograph). The darker yellow portion below the upper band of trimming is the added extension, made from fabric slightly different from the original. Above the upper line of trimming the elbow curve of the sleeve can be seen on the left side of the image.
ended at the same length as the sleeves themselves. They retain the shaping for around the elbow from this prior placement (fig. 5.33).

A case from the Old Bailey also suggests a similar type of alteration. Dated 12 September 1798, in Mary Barber’s theft trial, prosecutrix Mary Sheath identified a stolen gown thus: “this gown I had altered and made long sleeved; I altered it myself in the body.” We do not know how long ago the sleeves were lengthened, but as the style for longer sleeves began about ten years previous, it seems reasonable to suppose the alteration fell within that time period and was performed to update the style of the dress. The reference to altering the body/bodice of the gown may refer either to a size change or additional stylistic change, possibly to a higher waistline.

5.7 One Garment into Another

Strategies for making the best and most economical use of materials also included converting one garment into another beyond altering one style of dress into another, such as a sack into a nightgown. Of course, many of the examples I examined mark the passage of time not only in terms of use, but also fashion and were concurrently altered from their original forms to ally with later styles.

Dresses/gowns remade into jackets represent the majority of such objects I encountered. The simplest means of doing this was shortening the skirt, a logical tactic when only the fabric at or near the hem had deteriorated through use and/or accident. A mid-century former dress at the Museum of London may be an example of this approach. As much as the garment looks like a typical gown, the proportions are decidedly off: the skirt is much too short for the bodice to be

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81 Old Bailey Proceedings t17980912-38.
82 Museum of London 33.303/1, dress/jacket 1760-70.
worn as a floor-length dress by any average person. Of course, the possibility exists the dress was for an atypically proportioned person; however, the simpler explanation is that it was shortened for continued use as a caraco-like jacket. 83

As with gowns, the bulk of examples I examined were altered stylistically post-1770, in addition to their transformation from one garment to another. Museum of London pet en l’air A12414 was directly altered from a mid-century sack dress, with further remodelling to update the style post-1770 (fig. 5.34a-b). 84 The back shoulder pleats were maintained but slightly repositioned and the back neckline yoke to which they would have originally been secured was removed. The sleeves were lengthened and given the decoratively ruched cuffs from 1775-80. Also, the front was re-worked to make the edges meet, possibly utilizing a former stomacher to fill the space in addition to unfolded robings and fabric piecing. The joining seam was covered by trimming taken from somewhere on the original dress.

Museum of London jacket A7941 presents a unique manifestation of this practice. It was made from 1740s fabric but at least partially constructed using late-century techniques, particularly the bodice back seaming. However, the jacket front exhibits an unusual style comprising pleats stitched down from the neckline to a slightly raised waist level (fig. 5.35a-b). This atypical piece appears to represent a jacket style outside the mainstream of fashionable eighteenth-century dress, mid-century or late, and may testify to one individual’s originality and willingness to experiment. As such it provides a tantalizing glimpse into some eighteenth-century women’s thought processes and ingenuity. One can imagine a woman or girl “playing”

fig. 3.34a *Pet en l’air* jacket (front), original construction c. 1750, altered 1775-85, Museum of London A12414 (author’s photograph).

fig. 3.34b *Pet en l’air* jacket (back), original construction c. 1750, altered 1775-85, Museum of London A12414 (author’s photograph).
fig. 5.35a Jacket (front), fabric 1740-45, construction 1780-90, Museum of London A7941 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.35b Jacket (back), fabric 1740-45, construction 1780-90, Museum of London A7941 (author’s photograph).
with the fabric, practicing draping and trying out different manipulations – to differing degrees of success.

Another mid-century dress-turned-late-century-jacket at the Museum of London, A15130, resembles more typical fashions from the 1780s to early 1790s. The textile dates to the early 1760s, at which time it was probably made into a sack or night gown, the richness of the silk brocade suggesting formalwear. However, the bodice back seaming and scooped-front neckline are indicative of late-century construction, alluding to an extensive re-make later on (fig. 5.36). The final transformation into a jacket must have occurred only a few years after, according to its style. The pieced sleeves along with their length suggest they date to this final stage, as do the centre front panels which may have been added to replace fabric damaged from pinning and/or to accommodate a larger body; they may even be the remains of an original stomacher from its earliest incarnation. A Berrington Hall jacket displays a very similar style and is made from comparably aged fabric, demonstrates this particular mode of re-making was not an isolated incident.85

Gowns-turned-jackets went through the fashion changes at the century’s end as well. For example, a short gown at Berrington Hall, SNO 40, was once upon a time a 1770s/80s dress as indicated by the style and construction of the bodice back; the length and make of the sleeves is also consistent with this. However, with its crossover fronts and high waistline the current style dates from the last few years of the eighteenth century or the first few of the nineteenth (fig. 5.37a-b). The pattern and weight of the silk textile looks older than 1770s, so this may not have been its first remodelling. By the time of this final alteration, there was apparently insufficient

85 Berrington Hall SNO42, jacket late eighteenth-century.
fig. 5.36 Jacket (front), fabric 1760s, construction 1775-90, Museum of London A15130 (author’s photograph).
fig. 5.37a Jacket or short robe (front), fabric 1760-70, construction c. 1800, Berrington Hall SNO 40 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.37b Jacket or short robe (interior), fabric 1760-70, construction c. 1800, Berrington Hall SNO 40 (author’s photograph). Showing the mismatched fabric added to make the lower proper left front panel.
original cloth to finish, requiring supplementation with a very different one to form the lower front underlay.

An even more popular style from this period was the spencer jacket. These were cropped to the same length as dress bodices and had long sleeves. As they required relatively little material and were typically made from heavier, sturdier textiles than most fashionable gowns of the time, spencers were an ideal way to recycle older garments, particularly ones that had experienced significant wear and tear. A few such jackets at the Museum of London demonstrate not only this approach but also the progression of the rising waistline through the 1790s. One example was clearly made almost directly from a dress bodice; and while it features a shorter than natural waistline it is more in keeping with the early 1790s. 86 Interestingly, this bodice/jacket conceivably could have been worn again in the 1820s to 1830s when waistlines lowered again. Museum of London spencer 47.12/1 may represent the next step in the rising waistlines (fig. 5.38). While shorter than the previous jacket/bodice it still reaches lower than just under the bust where waistlines settled by the late 1790s. The brocaded silk textile of the spencer dates to mid-century, meaning it was probably harvested from an older garment. The sleeves had fabric added to lengthen them suggesting this cloth went through more than one re-making process. Un-pieced, the sleeves extend to just below the elbow, consistent with 1770s-1780s styles; and although the body and collar of the spencer appear to be entirely purpose-cut, the piecing of the sleeves suggests they may have been taken and re-used from the previous make. That the piecing extended the sleeves only to ¾-length rather than wrist-length, as was the fashion, further suggests there was little usable cloth left over from re-cutting it for the spencer body and collar.

86 Museum of London, 50.41/3, jacket 1791-1820?
fig. 5.38 Spencer jacket, fabric mid-eighteenth century, construction 1795-1805, Museum of London 47.12/1 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.39 Stays, mid-eighteenth century to c.1790, Museum of London 47.44/5. The black arrow indicates the remaining stuffed linen ball that would have been part of a pair or more and would have helped puff out dress backs.
Museum of London stays, 47.44/5, combine stylistic updating with re-purposing. In general appearance they conform to the 1790s transitional period (fig. 5.39). The back waist is cut very high and a small stuffed linen ball sewn to the left-hand side back lower edge represents one of a pair or four that would have puffed out the backs of skirts/petticoats worn over top, as was part of the fashionable 1790s silhouette.\(^8^7\) However, looking at the interior shows the stays are fully boned, more common of mid-century. Next, the expensive silk brocade covering is quite possibly a former dress bodice. The curved seams on the fronts bear strong resemblance to side back bodice seams of mid-century gowns. These factors, combined, along with the lack of bound edges (the near universal method for finishing edges of stays) imply that a set of roughly mid-century stays were re-cut and slightly altered for the 1790s, at which time they were also recovered with a dress bodice cut to fit the stays but retaining some of the original seaming.

A much earlier example of a similar practice demonstrates the longevity of refurbishing stays using dress bodice pieces. A set of stays from the third quarter of the seventeenth century at the Museum of London is covered with embroidered silk probably taken from a slightly earlier bodice.\(^8^8\) Not only does the ornate richness of the silk and metallic embroidery seem too sumptuous to hide on an undergarment at the time of original manufacture, but the embroidered fabric is pieced in several places and does not exactly match the foundation layer either in shape or size. Consequently, they convey an impression of someone determined to” make it work,” despite mismatched layers. If the covering were original to the stays it would have been cut and constructed to fit precisely the layer beneath.

\(^8^8\) Museum of London A12525, stays c.1660s-80s.
fig. 5.40 Stomacher, 1701-30, Museum of London A14678 (author’s photograph). The scalloped edges on either side of the stomacher are edges of ribbon incorporated in order to help form the whole.
With their small size plus basic shape and construction, stomachers provided an ideal vehicle for prolonging the useful life of small dress fabric pieces, evinced by four Museum of London examples. One is made from cobbled together bits of polychrome embroidery on a cream silk taffeta ground. The stomacher front comprises three fragments from the same embroidery work, suggesting it was assembled from small surviving remnants of a larger whole. Another shows similar activity. The embroidered silk was not pieced in this case but the slightly off-centre placement of the motif suggests it was taken from something else and made to fit as best as possible. Stomacher A14678 is an amalgam of several materials (fig. 5.40).

Foremost is an ornate and dense piece of metallic lace from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. This was mounted to a layer of pink silk composed of taffeta fabric and closely matching ribbon with scalloped edges. The backing is printed linen. The final, approximately mid-century example incorporates leftover bits the maker had at-hand. Despite the stomacher’s narrowness, the main fabric is pieced to create the necessary size and shape, which a strip of passementarie-edged self-fabric dress trimming largely obscures.

5.8 Altered for Reuse, 1830s-1950s

Stylistic alteration of eighteenth-century apparel, particularly dresses, continued after the classically-influenced period in dress gave way to the Romantic era of the 1830s and 1840s. Waists returned to their natural level and skirts filled out once more. As Baumgarten noted, “although the bold, heavy textiles of the eighteenth century were not readily compatible with the soft lines of the neoclassical style around 1800, by the 1830s and 1840s they were once again

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90 Museum of London A12411, stomacher 1731-70.
91 Museum of London 47.43/1b, stomacher 1751-60.
viable for gowns with full skirts that stood crisply away from the body.” Of course, as seen in the previous section, textile incompatibility did not stop enterprising seamstresses using them in the years just before and after 1800; indeed, I found more examples of garments altered to Neo Classical styles than later fashions. However, I did encounter examples of dresses altered at various points during the Romantic and Victorian eras.

Hereford Museum dress 6371 began life in the 1760s (or possibly early 1770s), but was later remade into full-blown 1830s glory (fig. 5.41). Very little, if any of its original construction remains and it appears this was first altered around the turn of the nineteenth century according to the separate bodice front lining and fall-front skirt. The bodice fronts are pieced to an unsightly degree, possibly necessitating wearing a large pelerine over the shoulders and bosom. Presumably insufficient fabric was scavangeable for the sleeves by the 1830s so a co-ordinating plain silk fabric (possibly sarcenet) was used instead to create the full “leg-of-mutton” sleeves, characteristic of the period.

Dress fragments also tell stories of remodelling and reuse. A rare pair of bodices at the Museum of London, 54.76/3 and 54.76/4 even document the chronology of metamorphoses. The first is an evening bodice dated 1840-1850; the second comprises the remnants of the eighteenth-century bodice from which some of its fabric was sourced (fig. 5.42a-b). A bundle of fabric scraps accompany the later bodice, which, combined together add up to more material than was taken from the older bodice, indicating that an entire dress was, indeed, involved in the process. The fabric is dated to the late 1760s/early 1770s (according to the museum’s in-house database),

94 Leg of mutton or gigot sleeves: “A day sleeve, very full at the shoulder, diminishing in size towards the elbow and gradually becoming tight at the wrist,” Cunnington, Dictionary of Costume, 93.
fig. 5.41 Dress, original construction 1750-70, altered 1830s, Hereford Museum 6371 (author’s photograph).
fig. 5.42a Dress bodice (back), fabric 1760-70, construction 1850s, Museum of London 54.76/3 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.42b Dress bodice (front), fabric 1760-70, construction c. 1780, Museum of London 54.76/4 (author’s photograph).
yet the bodice back is seamed in that particular manner emergent in the 1780s. The textile was likely made into a full ensemble (gown with matching petticoat, as was standard) close to the date of manufacture (further evinced by fuller, pleated sleeve heads, passementarie-edged self-fabric trimming and the remnants of robings over the shoulders), the dress was remodelled in the 1780s and then plundered in the mid-nineteenth century to make an entirely new dress, the skirt of which is now, unfortunately, lost. The new bodice differs significantly from the older in both shape/style and construction. It was cut at the natural waist or just above it and given short, fringe and ribbon-edged sleeves. The outer silk fabric was flatlined with the lining, a typical Victorian-era dressmaking convention, a sort of Bertha collar was added around the neckline, and three darts were sewn into each bodice front, where it also fastens with buttons. The skirt was likely removed at another later date and used for something else again.

Museum of London dress 37.91 also depicts two stages of nineteenth-century alteration. The first and more extensive remake was performed in the 1830s (fig. 5.43). At this time the entire form of the dress was made over; apparently the original, eighteenth-century dress was entirely picked apart, re-cut and sewn according to an 1830s pattern with piped bodice seams and neckline, back hook and eye closure, and gathered – rather than pleated – full skirt. The full velvet sleeves and matching waist sash with bow may also date from this time or the 1890s when the deep lace flounce was added around the neckline. While the dress may originally have been an article of fashionable day dress, its later two incarnations appear to have been specifically for evening or at least semi-formal wear.
fig. 5.43 Dress (front), fabric 1770s, construction 1830s, altered 1890s, Museum of London 37.91 (author’s photograph).
Reuse did not always mean direct alteration of the original garment. A Museum of London riding jacket remains intact and unaltered despite its likely re-wearing during the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{95} The evidence for this lies with the accompanying petticoat. At first glance they appear to be a matched set. However, closer inspection of the skirt revealed it was largely machine sewn and incorporated post-eighteenth-century materials and construction that did not look like alterations. It was made in the mid-nineteenth century (according to the skirt’s fullness) from fabric intended to match the riding habit. The fashionable silhouette change at that time was analogous to the riding jacket’s shape, making it a viable sartorial option again approximately one hundred years after its initial construction.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter maps out the various types of stylistic alterations made to eighteenth-century garments over the course of the century and beyond to shed light on women’s real-life engagement with fashion and its evolution. Each period and type of alteration has been described and interpreted in turn; however, many garments altered for style underwent multiple transformations over the years and decades. For example, Museum of London dress 48.46/3 probably began “life” as a typical 1760s sack dress or night gown with a matching petticoat. This petticoat would have been harvested for material to fill-in the bodice front, extend the sleeves and lengthen the skirt to create the train during a 1780s update (fig. 5.44a-b). The later alteration at the back waist, then pushed it forwards another ten to fifteen years towards the empire style. Thus, this dress experienced at least three stylistic alterations. It also exhibits multiple instances of patching and mending pointing to extensive use. The colour and overall style are quite lovely; perhaps this dress was particularly favoured by at least one woman. The effects of multiple

\textsuperscript{95} Museum of London A12984, riding jacket 1730-60.
fig. 5.44a Dress, 1760s-95, Museum of London 48.46/3 (author’s photograph).

fig. 5.44b Dress (bodice back detail) 1760s-95, Museum of London 48.46/3 (author’s photograph).
incarnations were doubtlessly heightened by the different supplementary garments and
accessories that were also worn in each period. Through these devices the same garment could
affect multiple distinct appearances throughout its useful life.
Chapter Six: Changing Contexts: Clothing Becomes Costume Then Historical Artefact

6.1 Introduction

From the mid-nineteenth century to today surviving eighteenth-century apparel underwent two significant changes in use and perception. Apart from isolated instances such as those given at the end of the previous chapter, eighteenth-century clothing ceased being used as such and became something else. First, it transitioned from “clothing” to “costume” and was worn for entertainment in either fancy dress or theatrical settings. The second shift was to historical artefact within a museum environment wherein it is no longer worn at all, except on occasion by mannequins.

Fancy dress parties and balls were a wildly popular entertainment among Victorians in Britain and North America into the early twentieth century. Descended from eighteenth-century masquerades, they were characterized by dizzying arrays of costumes from the mundane to the fanciful and from direct representations to theoretical imaginings. Historical themes were a common trope, and antique clothing found within house attics provided thrifty and authentic specimens with which to join in the fun. It could also find its way into theatre wardrobes as stage costumes. Subsequent modifications to garments and the different care (or lack thereof) taken with once valuable wardrobe investments starkly demonstrate their altered usage and their new users’ different attitudes towards them. Identifying the various modifications enacted on clothing by later wearers is also important to modern museum and instructional practices. Some of the changes are subtle and easily missed; if taken as part of the original work this leads to misinformation about craft practices during the original period of construction.
The second and (thus far) more permanent conversion started in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century as museums began building historic dress collections. With this movement clothes metamorphosed into historical artefacts, things to view and study, no longer wear or embody. Like the change to costume, museum residence also included physical alteration in addition to contextual as keepers and conservators sought to repair and stabilize objects, sometimes even restoring them – more and less accurately - to former incarnations or earlier versions of themselves.

6. 2 Becoming Fancy Dress

During the eighteenth century travelling Englishmen on the Grand Tour were exposed to and enamoured of the masquerades and “Roman” carnivals of Italy; so much so that they transplanted the gaiety back on home soil. From at least the 1740s, London pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall played host to arguably “politer and more confined” versions of these festivities. A main attraction was the temporary license given to contravene rigid social strictures. Towards the end of the century social attitudes turned against the amusement as too wild and licentious, facilitated by the anonymity wearing masks afforded. However, from at least the 1830s, the idea morphed into the respectable Fancy Dress party, held at private homes and without masked faces. As moral strictures seemed to tighten during the later Victorian era, so

98 Cynthia Cooper, Magnificent Entertainments: Fancy Dress Balls of Canada’s Governors General 1876-1898, (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 1997), 21. See also Anthea Jarvis, “‘There was a Young Man of Bengal...’: The Vogue for Fancy Dress,” Costume, 16 no. 1 (1982): 92-99.
did the popularity of Fancy Dress parties and balls increase, particularly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{99}

The themes for outfits worn as Fancy Dress ranged from technological developments (such as electricity and photography) to interpretations of unlikely objects (such as a salad or a hallway)\textsuperscript{100} to historical figures (Mary Queen of Scots was a perennial favourite during both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).\textsuperscript{101} Themes were also “topical, emblematical, humorous, or inspired by works of art or the contemporary theatre.”\textsuperscript{102} Costumes were available ready-made, could be commissioned from specialist or regular dressmakers,\textsuperscript{103} or were assembled at home from pieces available to-hand.\textsuperscript{104} Eighteenth-century ancestors’ clothing discovered in garrets and attics was pressed into service according to the latter category for general or specific historical themes. \textit{Bals Poudré}, characterized by “the costume and white-powdered hair of the mid-eighteenth century,” emerged during the mid-nineteenth century; possibly beginning with an event Queen Victoria and Prince Albert threw in June 1845,\textsuperscript{105} and remained popular throughout the century (fig. 6.1).\textsuperscript{106} Indeed, the Queen and Prince dressed in eighteenth-century styles once again for her 1850 birthday ball.\textsuperscript{107} Along similar lines, pastoralism was another popular theme.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{99} Ibid.
\bibitem{100} Stevenson and Bennet, \textit{Vandyke}, 3, 79.
\bibitem{101} Ibid., 5-8. These were also consumed by the wider public through lengthy and descriptive accounts in women’s magazines such as \textit{Queen} and \textit{Lady’s Pictorial}.
\bibitem{102} Ibid., 83.
\bibitem{103} One of the most famous of these balls was The Duchess of Devonshire’s Jubilee Costume Ball in 1897 which garnered extensive press coverage and also censure for the extravagant expense. See Sophia Murphy, \textit{The Duchess of Devonshire’s Ball}, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985).
\bibitem{104} Ibid., 85-87.
\bibitem{105} Cooper, \textit{Magnificent Entertainments}, 22; Stevenson and Bennett, \textit{Vandyke}, 85.
\bibitem{106} The Countess of Warwick threw a particularly memorable one at Warwick Castle in 1895 that was attended by nearly 400 guests, all in attire and/or wigs representing costume from the reigns of Louis XV and XVI. “A Gay Spectacle at Warwick Castle,” \textit{Press}, Vol LII no. 9063 (27 March 1895), 4.
\end{thebibliography}
fig. 6.1 Lady Henry Grosvenor at the Countess of Warwick’s *Bal Poudré*, photograph, 1895, Warwick Castle.
through both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During the latter, heirloom garments were once again a thrifty and “authentic” source for assembling Bo-Peep-like shepherdess costumes. Linda Baumgarten noted this as well: “Besides the usual alterations for daily wear, the nineteenth century found new uses for old-fashioned clothing in response to the great popularity of revivals, fancy dress parties and historical commemorations.”

Nineteenth-century (or early twentieth) alterations for fancy dress or theatrical purposes were, by far, the single most common type of work I found on garments I examined, although especially on dresses. The degrees of intervention ranged from minute to complete remodelling. Three main types of work were performed within this context: altering for size and the Victorian silhouette; altering to create an imagined idea of what eighteenth-century dress did or should look like; and altering/repairing garments according to uniquely nineteenth-century dressmaking methods and ways of wearing clothing. Many garments simultaneously exhibit work from two or more of these categories.

The typical eighteenth-century women’s torso silhouette was conical. Wider at the bust and tapering smoothly to the waist it was rigid, angular and flat-surfaced (fig. 6.2). This softened only slightly during the 1770s-1790s before the columnar neo-classical profile emerged and rose to prominence. Fashions for nipped-in waists and full skirts returned in the 1830s; however the silhouette was irrevocably changed. The new fashionable body was rounder with a delineated bust. Over the course of the Victorian period natural feminine curves were accentuated, then

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110 Ibid., 40-45.
fig. 6.2 Stays, 1780-89, Victoria & Albert Museum T.172-1914. These stays demonstrate the typical conical eighteenth-century torso silhouette.

fig. 6.3 Wedding Corset, 1874, Metropolitan Museum of Art 2009.300.7485a,b. In contrast to the above stays, this corset demonstrates the Victorian silhouette during the second half of the nineteenth century.
exaggerated.\textsuperscript{111} And from the 1870s to the turn of the twentieth century bust, waist \textit{and} hips were all carefully and deliberately outlined (fig. 6.3). Accordingly, the cut and construction of women’s clothing likewise permanently changed as two-dimensional cloth was manipulated to smoothly cover ever-curvier bodies (created with corsetry and bustle petticoats). Antique garments were altered according to the fashionable silhouette and foundation garments of the period during which they were worn as costumes. As Linda Baumgarten observed:

Even if the size were about right [...] nineteenth century bodies did not usually fit eighteenth-century clothing. Corseting and new aesthetics had changed the shape of the body and posture, necessitating another round of alterations. While wearers may have thought they looked exactly like their ancestors, the dresses they wore were fitted with darts and seams to conform to the stays and body underneath.\textsuperscript{112} For, “however much the styles of the past are admired it is difficult, consciously or unconsciously, to escape the influence of current standards of beauty;” and “whichever period was represented, the methods of cut, construction and underpinning were those of the nineteenth century.”\textsuperscript{113} This was a form of amusement and entertainment, not experimental archaeology;\textsuperscript{114} nineteenth-century participants wished to evoke the past, but still look attractive according to their own times.

Darting and seaming were a principle means for achieving the Victorian hourglass silhouette and provide some of the clearest evidence of costume usage to modern examiners. Eighteenth-century dressmakers did not employ darts as the smooth, conical silhouette during most of the century required no such shaping. Darts were employed in forms. Most often one was added to each side of the bodice fronts, either by hand or by machine, occasionally I

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 77-85.
\textsuperscript{112} Baumgarten, “Altered Historical Clothing,” 51.
\textsuperscript{113} Stevenson and Bennett, \textit{Vandyke}, 85.
\textsuperscript{114} Experimental archaeology is an unconventional methodology whereby past material culture and/or experiences are recreated in order to gain a deeper, closer to first-hand experience of historical life and processes. See Peter Stone and Phillipe Planel, \textit{The Constructed Past: Experimental Archaeology, Education, and the Public}, (London: Routledge, 1999).
encountered double sets. However, I also found them at the sides and backs of bodices, as on one Hereford Museum dress where they had been machine sewn from the armhole to the waist; one was later unpicked, but the other remains (fig. 6.4). The bodice of Worthing Museum dress 1980/234/182 was treated in a particularly late nineteenth-century manner. Not only were darts taken in the bodice front but the dart allowance was cut up the centre, pressed open, clipped, the raw edges overcast, and boned – precisely in accordance with later Victorian dressmaking techniques and in complete disregard for the object’s historical integrity (fig. 6.5). The matching petticoat was also structurally altered with a yoke added to the waist so it would lie smoothly over the hips. These interventions, while injurious to the original state of the garment, provide clues to the date of their reuse, possibly late 1870s to early 1900s when fashionable skirts fit closely and smoothly over a greater or lesser portion of the hips. The bodice front shaping with double darts of Museum of London dress A12411 is especially obvious (fig. 6.6). Even laid flat on a table the garment exhibits a curved shape. This was achieved through the combination of a seam taken in the fabric close to the centre front and a dart placed a little more towards the side. From one perspective nineteenth-century alterations are disfigurements. From another, they can be viewed as simply another chapter in the garment’s social biography and are evidence of continued dynamic use.

Museum of London dress 38.199 was altered more than once during its later use as costume. Although now unpicked, the bodice fronts show evidence of two layers of darts located in the same position. One set was shorter and narrower than the other. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to tell which ones came first; however, they clearly indicate modification to fit two different bodies. This multiple later usage suggests the dress may have ended up in a

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115 Hereford Museum 4455/1, sack dress 1760-75; 2669, dress 1730-50 (fig. 6.4).
fig. 6.4 Dress (bodice interior detail), 1730-50, Hereford Museum 2669 (author’s photograph). The black arrows point to machine sewn darts taken in at the sides of the bodice of this dress.

fig. 6.5 Dress (proper left bodice interior detail), fabric mid-eighteenth century, construction c.1780, Worthing Museum 1980/234/182 (author’s photograph). The clipped dart with a piece of boning stitched along its length are typical elements of Victorian dressmaking.
fig. 6.6 Dress (detail), fabric c. 1740, construction 1750-60, Museum of London (author’s photograph). The black arrows point to darts which create a more curved, Victorian silhouette than the original, more angular eighteenth-century silhouette.
theatrical environment where costumes were likely used repeatedly. Museum of London dress 49.23/1 is a valuable reminder of the variety in women’s shapes and sizes throughout history. While a common assumption amongst people today is that women of a hundred years ago or more universally possessed diminutive frames and small waists this dress proves otherwise, having been made for a very full-figured woman. However, at some later point during the following century, it was altered to fit a much smaller person (fig. 6.7a-b). Very large darts were taken up in the bodice fronts, and additional, smaller ones around the rest of the torso; the sleeves were also taken in along the seamline. All of this later stitching was subsequently removed, but the marks and some threads remain. The coarse cotton fabric now partially facing the skirt hem likely also dates from the time of later use. This consideration for the silk fabric at the hem and the decision to not cut any of the substantial excess cloth inside the bodice after alteration demonstrates an unusual level of care taken by the alterer. Perhaps this work was executed with further and varied wearing in mind, which never occurred.

The neckline shape of Berrington Hall sack dress SNO2 gives the impression of having been altered to suit mid-nineteenth century fashion conventions, whether consciously or not (fig. 6.8). While eighteenth-century necklines were low in front and opened up further at the end of the century, they were not as wide as on this dress. Shoulder straps were still at least two inches wide, whereas this gown’s shoulders are one inch wide or less. The current neckline aligns more with 1850s evening wear than eighteenth-century fashions.

Apart from alterations made to re-shape eighteenth-century clothing to fit Victorian silhouettes other certain dressmaking techniques, materials and conventions provide evidence of later hands at work. Cotton sewing thread anywhere on a garment provides a telltale sign of
fig. 6.7a Dress (bodice front detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 49.23/1 (author’s photograph). This dress was altered through the bodice during the nineteenth century to fit a much smaller wearer.

fig. 6.7b Dress (proper left bodice interior detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 49.23/1 (author’s photograph). The black arrows indicate the impression left by one of the large darts taken in the bodice to decrease its girth.
fig. 6.8 Dress (front detail), fabric 1740-42, construction c. 1780, Berrington Hall SNO 2 (author’s photograph).
mid-nineteenth-century or later activity. Although early forms of cotton sewing thread were developed between 1809 and 1815 its wide use did not begin until at least the 1850s.\textsuperscript{116} Another sure sign is replaced elements such as waistbands on petticoats, facings on skirts or patches of cotton textiles rather than linen or silk used for repair. Despite exponentially increased cotton textile consumption and use throughout the eighteenth century, linen, and to a lesser extent silk, were still the primary materials for linings and patches into the nineteenth century, even when the outer fabric was cotton.\textsuperscript{117} Added fasteners such as hooks and eyes and buttons on bodice fronts are other clues on dresses and many jackets which were originally pinned closed. Using pins to fasten clothing virtually disappeared sometime in the first decade or two of the nineteenth century so that it may well have been forgotten by the time these garments were worn again as costume. Finally, openings and ways of wearing clothing also evolved. No longer were underskirts slit and tied at the sides, nor bodice fronts filled in with separate pieces (stomachers). Skirts opened at the centre or side back, and all clothing was fastened by hooks, snaps or buttons. Not only did Victorians reinterpret the shapes of apparel according to their own sensibilities, but also the ways they functioned as garments as per what made sense to them.

Level of workmanship varies widely among later alterations but is often of indifferent quality. For example, crudely worked buttonholes and matching buttons were added to Museum of London dress 53.130/21 (fig. 6.9a). Interestingly, whether by accident or design the buttons are the “deathshead” variety, common on eighteenth-century men’s coats, women’s riding habits, and occasionally seen on the backs of dresses for looping up skirts \textit{a la polonaise}, but not on...
fig. 6.9a Dress (bodice front detail), fabric early 1770s, construction 1775-85, Museum of London 53.130/2 (author’s photograph).

fig. 6.9b Dress (detail), fabric early 1770s, construction 1775-85, Museum of London (author’s photograph).
dress bodices. An ‘authentic’ eighteenth-century component found on an incongruous location further belies its actual authenticity. Numerous tears in the skirt were mended roughly with cotton thread, and one in particular was backed with fabric patches including a synthetic textile, placing the work and latest use somewhere in the twentieth century (fig. 6.9b).

Flatlining was a highly typical Victorian-era dressmaking method. Usually employed on bodices but occasionally also skirts it involved treating the outer and lining pieces as one when stitching the seams. Seam allowance raw edges were finished by pinking, binding, or hand overcasting. Applying this to an eighteenth-century garment required extensive remodelling. The result is a hybrid object with materials and overall impression from its earlier incarnation retained, but which primarily communicates information on nineteenth-century dressmaking conventions. Museum of London dress 32.181 exhibits this defining late nineteenth-century process along with several other characteristics. The original bodice seams were unpicked, possibly cut, probably taken in, and re-worked (fig. 6.10). Darts were taken in on the bodice fronts for further shaping (now unpicked) and hooks and thread bars were sewn along the front edges for fastening. The waistline facing cobbled from purple silk fabric and original dress material was inserted at the same time, as was a cotton print pocket bag to one of the original pocket slits.

Another tell-tale sign of eighteenth-century clothes worn later in the nineteenth or twentieth is severe perspiration stains at underarms. Shifts were an essential foundation garment in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and always had sleeves. These protected the garments worn over top from natural bodily excretions.118 Chemises of the mid-nineteenth to

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118 Baumgarten, What Clothes Reveal, 40.
fig. 6.10 Dress (bodice back interior detail), fabric 1767-71, construction 1775-80, Museum of London 32.181 (author’s photograph).
early twentieth century performed many of the same functions as shifts but were without sleeves, exposing the already antique textiles to perspiration, which is mildly acidic and thus corrosive over time. Decades of oxidation have left affected textiles discoloured and weakened to the point of breakage. Eighteenth-century garments that escaped much, if any, later wearing exhibit comparatively little staining.

Apparently, some Victorians noticed at least the short term effects of perspiration – unsightly stains – and took mitigating measures by sewing fabric pads to the underarm area of dress bodice linings. Patches and/or pads of material were sometimes added to either replace or cover damaged cloth, such as on Museum of London dress 35.46 which has them added to both lining and outer layers (figs 6.11a-b). Others, such as Worthing Museum dress 1957/222 appear to have had the pads/patches added before much (if any) such damage occurred. The pads/patches in this dress are a cotton textile that nearly matches the colour of the linen lining. They were sewn to the lining with overcast stitches using cotton thread – further proof this was a nineteenth to twentieth-century addition.

Petticoats often exhibit as much nineteenth-century construction evidence as the dresses with which they were worn. Waistbands were commonly replaced, openings were changed from the sides to centre back and metal hooks and eyes added for fastening. Additional modifications also included re-configuring pleats around the waist, as on Worthing Museum quilted petticoat 2006/850 where the upper portion of the petticoat back was replaced with a different fabric and the fullness taken up by cartridge pleating instead of the original knife pleats (fig.6.12). Worthing Museum petticoat 1981/417-2 illustrates a small but intriguing facet of late Victorian

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fig. 6.11a Dress (proper right front underarm detail), fabric 1755-60, construction c.1775, Museum of London 35.46 (author’s photograph). Showing a self-fabric patch applied sometime after the eighteenth century to the underarm.

fig. 6.11b Dress (bodice interior detail), fabric 1755-60, construction c.1775, Museum of London 35.46 (author’s photograph). The black arrows point out pads applied to the interior underarm areas of the same dress.
fig. 6.12 Quilted petticoat (upper back detail), 1750-60, Worthing Museum 2006/850 (author’s photograph).

fig. 6.13 Petticoat (pocket detail), fabric 1730s, construction 1760s, Worthing Museum 1981/417-2 (author’s photograph).
dress. Although the opening was moved to centre one of the side slits was left open while to the other was attached a pocket bag essentially creating an inseam pocket. The later user either lacked or was ignorant of the use of tie pockets in the eighteenth century, but desirous of a small storage place on her person all the same (fig. 6.13). Petticoat X/1986/603 also at Worthing Museum had its hem let down and left raw (fig. 6.14). This latter is not specifically a nineteenth-century practice, but indicates the garment was no longer equally valued as when part of an eighteenth-century woman’s wardrobe. A raw fabric edge is vulnerable to damage and prone to fraying; whoever let the hem down was apparently unconcerned by this. Conversely, the matching petticoat for Museum of London dress 28.53/3 had a deep facing of nineteenth-century thin silk jacquard added to finish the hem (fig. 6.15).

Museum of London stays Z687a-c are a curious example whose costume use may span a longer period than most of the objects I examined (fig. 6.16). The foundation or base of the stays are fully boned and made from course linen, as was typical of late seventeenth to mid eighteenth-century production. Yet, the fabric covering them, and of which the sleeves are made, dates to at least 1760. Thus, the stays were recovered and the sleeves made from old or leftover dress material sometime after 1760, probably in the 1770s according to the style of pleated ribbon trimming the sleeves. However, stays with tie-on sleeves had been unfashionable by then for the better part of a century suggesting eighteenth-century costume use. Several areas of repair stitching are worked in cotton thread indicating later nineteenth-century costume use. This piece implies that the contextual shift from clothing to costume may have occurred in the eighteenth

fig. 6.14 Petticoat (bottom edge detail), 1750-60 Worthing Museum X/1986/603 (author’s photograph). The black arrow points to the crease mark of the original hem; this was let down and the fabric edge left raw and unfinished.

fig. 6.15 Dress (lower skirt interior detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 28.53/2 (author’s photograph). The green fabric used to face the hem of this dress is later than eighteenth-century.
fig. 6.16 Bodice, early to mid-eighteenth century, altered post-1770, Museum of London Z687a-c (author’s photograph).
century as well and the practice of harvesting ancestors’ clothing for masquerade/fancy dress or theatrical use did not originate with the Victorians.

Not all apparel was dramatically altered. Sometimes changes made were minute and subtle. Platt Hall dresses 1947.1602 and 1947/1597, and Worthing Museum dress 1976/474-1 were all left relatively untouched. The only evidence of their later use as costumes are metal hooks and eyes added to bodice front edges as fasteners and a few small repairs to the Platt Hall dresses, all worked with cotton thread. Similarly, Museum of London stomacher A12411 was probably later used in conjunction with a gown as a costume. Metal eyes were added along one edge that likely corresponded to hooks on a dress (fig. 6.17).

Adapting antique clothing for size and silhouette, and incorporating contemporary dressmaking practices influenced the aesthetic appearance of eighteenth-century dress used as costume. However, this happened more directly and intentionally as well. Photographs from fancy dress balls and surviving garments reveal that Victorians had their own ideas about eighteenth-century aesthetics, even when in possession of original specimens. For example, Lady Ampthill was photographed in “rococo” costume for the famous Devonshire House Ball of 1897. The trimmings and accessories are all decidedly late Victorian in style, but beneath them and barely discernible may be an original, albeit greatly altered, mid-eighteenth-century dress (judging by the textile design) (fig. 6.18). Adding decorative features such as ribbon trimming, lace ruffles, and ribbon lacing to ancestors’ apparel was a common scheme. Occasionally, garments were even reworked from their initial mode in order to evoke a different silhouette or decade within the eighteenth-century. Alternatively, perhaps Victorians, whose fashionable dress was at times replete with ornamentation, felt the garments were too plain in their original conditions, especially for the gaiety of balls. Additionally, measures such as sewing lace or
The hooks sewn to the stomacher on the right side of the image are not original to its making, but date from its use as costume sometime during the nineteenth century.
fig. 6.18 Lady Ampthill, photograph taken for the Devonshire House Ball, 1897, Lafayette Negative Archive.
muslin flounces into sleeves may have been motivated by practicality; attaching pieces and layers for ease of dressing and wearing.

Several examples exhibit added trim to increase the garment’s decorative appearance. Pleated half inch wide green silk ribbon was sewn onto the bodices of three dresses I examined: the robings of one; the falling sleeve cuffs of another; and on both areas of the third example (fig. 6.19). The serpentine configuration of the ribbon on the last dress may simply be an attempt at rococo adornment, but it also vaguely evokes the criss-cross lacing seen on portrayals of eighteenth-century shepherdess costumes and later mimicked for fancy dress (fig. 6.20, fig. 6.21). The bodice front lacing holes in Hereford Museum dress 1981-1/15 are probably a more direct allusion to this pastoral theme with machine-made lace sleeve flounces and machine-sewn hem providing definitive corroboration this dress was used as a costume. The layers of artifice in a shepherdess fancy dress costume are deep and entwined: an elite Victorian woman dressing up as an eighteenth-century agrarian labourer in a costume that has been influenced by late Victorian modes of thought as well as dress, the initial idea of which was taken from a form of eighteenth-century artifice. Eighteenth-century elite women concocted a fantasy of agrarian life and Victorian women dressed up as if to commune with a past that never actually existed.

Museum of London shawl Z1033COS is a curious example of later embellishment. The late eighteenth-century triangular shawl’s main feature is the vine motif metal embroidery around the edges and small dots scattered across the whole. However, some glass beads and buttons were sewn along a portion of the longest edge in rough cross-shaped configurations.

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121 Worthing Museum dress 4340; Platt Hall dress 2008.21; Hereford Museum 7467.
122 Platt Hall dress 1980.209, dress 1770-80 also features later made lacing eyelets down the centre fronts with machine sewn boning casings. It also has a recorded provenance of being worn for fancy dress.
fig. 6.19 Dress (front detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 7467 (author’s photograph).

fig. 6.20 Enoch Seeman the Younger (1694-1744), Lady Rachel Cavendish, Lady Morgan, as a Shepherdess, oil on canvas, 1725, Tredagur House.

fig. 6.21 The Ladies Churchill as Shepherdesses, photograph for the Devonshire House Ball, 1797, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Library.
fig. 6.22 Shawl or Handkerchief (edge detail), 1791-1800, Museum of London Z1033COS (author’s photograph).
These are certainly not original, and strongly convey a theatrical impression, possibly intending to represent an entirely different time period or even culture. (fig. 6.22) This may also be true of Museum of London bodice A7590. Its construction is decidedly late eighteenth-century but the style does not conform to any type of regular clothing of the time strongly suggesting it was initially made as a costume piece. The spangle and embroidery embellishment on the back (not to mention the cotton lace trim) was applied with cotton thread indicating it dates to at least the 1850s with the overall “exotic” style implying its later use was to represent a foreign, probably eastern, locale (fig. 6.23a-b).¹²³

Decorative modifications also included replacing component pieces, such as stomachers, with made-up versions. For example, the current stomacher of Museum of London dress A12981 is made from a composite of eighteenth-century silk (the pleated trim) and an unnaturally bright blue silk fabric that looks to have come from an aniline dye (fig. 6.24).¹²⁴ The addition of pearls strung across the bodice front is another distinctly “costumey” feature. The trimming strangely applied around the pocket slits was probably also added at this time as I have observed no other eighteenth-century gown with this feature. A similar tactic was employed on Museum of London dress A12398. It appears unaltered at first glance, but closer inspection reveals that the compère-front fabric differs from the rest of the gown and is a replacement. This was stitched into the gown with cotton thread, indicating the work was performed in the nineteenth to twentieth


¹²⁴ Aniline dyes were the first synthetic dyes and known for vivid shades not found in nature; Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, “Fashioning (and Refashioning) European Fashion,” Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700-1915, (Munich: Delmonico Books-Prestel, 2010), 22-24.
fig. 6.23a Bodice (front), c. 1780, Museum of London 7590 (author’s photograph)

fig. 6.23b Bodice (back), c. 1780, Museum of London 7590 (author’s photograph).
fig. 6.24 Dress (bodice front detail with stomacher), 1765-70, Museum of London A12981 (author’s photograph). The bright blue fabric is likely from an aniline dye of the mid nineteenth century or later, the surrounding off-white pleated trim appears original to the dress. Pleated trimming around the pocket slits is discernible at the lower left side of the image.
century, the most likely reason being to make it wearable, but in a setting where the disparity would either not matter or go unnoticed.

Both ornamental and structural modifications were made to Museum of London dress A15044X1. While lacing in the centre back bodice lining was a common feature of sack dresses, side bodice lining lacing, as on this gown, was not (fig. 6.25a). The dress was altered to make the compère-front lace up to the bodice lining fronts (or sides). The skirt sides were also reconfigured: the original pleats were undone, the fabric edges folded down to form a casing and a harmoniously coloured ribbon threaded through for drawstrings. More of this same ribbon was made into bows and onto the sleeves above the falling cuffs, adding extra decorative touches (fig. 6.25b). The bodice re-structuring was conceivably for size flexibility; however the purpose of the drawstring skirt sides is even less clear. Perhaps it was meant to widen the silhouette for a more stereotypical eighteenth-century impression.

This was likely the case with Berrington Hall dress SNO1; an early eighteenth-century example altered in the nineteenth to look more like a 1740s dress. The textile dates from 1718-1720, and the deep sleeve cuffs (seen on mantuas from the late seventeenth century to about the 1730s) suggest the gown may originate from that time. However, it has been greatly altered since. Certain modifications are distinctly anachronistic, such as the triangular wedges added to the skirt at the waist. These create a wider than original, vaguely 1740s profile (fig. 6.26a-b). Platt Hall dress 1955/94 was altered with a similar purpose in mind, but different execution. Dating from the 1750s it had a skirt pleated at the sides to fit over a hoop petticoat. These pleats were later undone, laid out flat and seamed to create the exaggeratedly wide silhouette of the 1740s. The crease and stitch marks of the original pleating are still plainly visible, and the skirt hem dips at the sides, indicating the length was cut to reach the floor from the waist and over
fig. 6.25a Dress (bodice interior detail), 1765-75, Museum of London A15044X1 (author’s photograph). The centre back laced opening is original to the dress, those on either side are later alterations.

fig. 6.25b Dress (front detail), 1765-75, Museum of London A15044X1 (author’s photograph). The bows trimming the sleeves and the ties at the skirt sides, all of the same ribbon, are nineteenth century additions and alterations.
fig. 6.26a Dress (proper right waist area detail), 1718-20? Berrington Hall SNO 1 (author’s photograph). A close-up of the fabric wedge inserted in the skirt to add width at the sides.

fig. 6.26b Dress (back detail), 1718-20? Berrington Hall SNO 1 (author’s photograph). The black arrows point out the location of the wedges in the skirt.
fig. 6.27 Dress, 1760-70, Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall (author’s photograph). Crease marks from the original pleating of the skirt are still faintly discernible (the black arrow points out one of them).
hoops (fig. 6.27). It seems less likely that the later alterers specifically aimed for the 1740s period; rather they probably wished to create an exaggerated and thus very obvious but general eighteenth-century aesthetic, as they understood it.

Museum of London dress 35.163/2X1 was entirely made over into a costume and likely intended to create the impression of an even earlier style than the original dress of 1730s-50s. The broad metallic lace trim applied all around the perimeter edges along with the colour and style of embroidery on the centre front panel/stomacher are extreme for an eighteenth-century look, and was possibly intended to convey a seventeenth-century or even Renaissance effect (fig. 6.28). The wide neckline, short sleeves, and style of pointed back waistline suggest a remodel date of 1830s-50s. The original gown appears to have been picked apart and re-assembled according to early Victorian cut and dressmaking methods.

Historical dress can be viewed as a stand-in for the historical human body that if properly mounted and padded-out recreates a “person” from the past. Later use of these objects for fancy dress interrupts the integrity of this communication and distorts or even obliterates the physical and organic evidence of its makers and earlier wearers. However, its later use is part of a cultural phenomenon that spanned both the earlier (eighteenth-century) and later (nineteenth-century) periods, and represents another kind of “life” experienced by historical clothing. The evidence left behind by Victorian fancy dress participants on the objects themselves acts as a marker, a stamp claiming “we were here.” How they altered and treated antique clothing helps illuminate how they viewed, consumed and (re-)interpreted history. So, while some messages were lost in the process others were recorded. For now, the earlier content is valued over the later, but will that always be the case? Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of eighteenth-century dresses,
fig. 6.28 Dress, 1760-80, altered 1830s? Museum of London 35.163/2X1 (author’s photograph).
jackets and petticoats I examined exhibit evidence of nineteenth to early twentieth-century intervention. Is this really just coincidence? I cannot help but wonder about a possible connection between this later costume context and the continued survival of the objects. Did this further usefulness, however frivolous, safeguard clothing against being discarded; and do we owe meddlesome Victorians a debt for unwittingly preserving these survivors of history for the future?

6.3 Moving to the Museum

The second main post-eighteenth-century transformation for this apparel was from clothing (or costume) to museum artefact. Elizabeth Wilson criticized fashion museums in her classic book Adorned in Dreams as having a deadening effect:

> There is something eerie about a museum of costume. A dusty silence holds still the old gowns in glass cabinets. In the aquatic half light (to preserve the fragile stuffs) the deserted gallery seems haunted. The living observer moves, with a sense of mounting panic, through a world of the dead.  

However, while the contextual change precipitated by moving antique garments from homes and bodies unavoidably deprives them of much of their liveliness, it is more a re-contextualization than de-contextualizing process, yet another chapter in the object’s social biography. The article continues to work and function within society, just in a different way, intentionally positioned instead to act as a tangible link with the past. Mounted and displayed on mannequins, clothing allows us to convene with our historical counterparts, imagine their lives, and imagine ourselves in their place.

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Serious collection of historic dress by museums began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A recent article by Julia Petrov for *The Journal of the History of Collections* charts a particularly concentrated period of acquisition between 1910 and 1914 by the London Museum (now the Museum of London) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A).\(^\text{126}\) The donors were a small group of four historical genre painters who had amassed personal collections of historical arms, armour and clothing from the eighteenth to early nineteenth century, which they used as props in their art, for engaging in an early form of historical re-enactment, and accumulated out of antiquarian interest. In 1910 Talbot Hughes began a long relationship with the V&A by selling them a small collection of bags and purses for £100. The first large scale acquisition was by the London Museum in 1911 when Seymour Lucas sold them a sizable grouping for £1000. This was further augmented by individual pieces from 1912-1917, 1922, and 1933 until the 1935 collection catalogue tallied his contribution at thirty-three items of dress dating to 1780 and earlier. Similarly, Talbot Hughes followed up his initial sale with several gifts in the years until 1913, when his collection of antique dress, shoes and purses was purchased for the V&A by Harrods. Hughes’s collection numbered in the several thousands, easily dwarfing anything the V&A had in the way of fashionable dress before that date, precipitating profound change.\(^\text{127}\) Lucas’s colleague and neighbour in the small Suffolk village of Blythburgh had similar collection interests, and when he died in 1911 the London Museum purchased costumes from his collection at his Christie’s estate sale.\(^\text{128}\) The collection of Seymour Lucas’s fellow painter and friend, E.A. Abbey, was donated to the London Museum by his widow in 1913. Apparently, “Abbey’s studio at his country estate was famous for having contained a separate


\(^{127}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 3.
room, used as a wardrobe for historical costumes.”129 Besides the museum’s documentary records for the gift, pieces from Abbey’s collection are distinguishable by his name stamped inside each one. (see fig. 6.25a) These acquisitions formed the nuclei of two major British historical dress collections and marked a shift in museum attitudes towards the subject matter. Petrov argues this shift was largely generated through the high degree of respect these men’s knowledge of arms, armour and antique dress garnered as extensions of their educated, antiquarian tastes.130 Additionally, the particular timing of Hughes’s and Lucas’s collection purchases was influenced by competition both between the London Museum and the V&A, and also the Americans as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York demonstrated considerable interest in the Lucas collection and offered him a much greater sum of money for it, while the Hughes collection was eyed by an American department store owner.131 Thus, as Petrov stated, “it was less individual philanthropy, than a spirit of competition – individual and nationalistic – that spurred the museums to take on these large collections of dress.”132

This history is significant to an examination of eighteenth-century women’s dress within the museum context because, as Petrov concluded,

The association of the dress collections with male (men formed all four [early] dress collections and were encouraged in this by other men), professional, highly skilled, artistic practice is hypothesized here to have been key to the transformation of the connotations of dress from frivolous and feminine to worthy of intellectual study.133

129 Ibid., 4.
130 Ibid., 10.
131 Ibid., 5.
133 Ibid., 10.
It is equally important to recognize and remember that the individual collections amassed by these and other private collectors reflect their individual tastes and agendas. Being historical genre painters, these Victorian/Edwardian men had specific interests and intentions in mind while accumulating their hoards of antique clothing and were likely selective about what they acquired.

In the mid-twentieth century, holdings of private collectors formed the basis for three additional major British collections: Doris Langley Moore’s provided the foundation of the Fashion Museum at Bath which opened in 1963;\textsuperscript{134} C.Willett and Phillis Cunnington’s collection was purchased for the city of Manchester in 1947 and was the impetus for creating the Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall;\textsuperscript{135} and the Wade Costume Collection was acquired by the National Trust in 1951 from Charles Paget Wade and is now housed at Berrington Hall.\textsuperscript{136}

Once an object enters the museum it must be cared for and active preservation measures are taken in the form of conservation. V&A textile conservator Titika Malkogerogou said of her profession: “Conservation is driven by [...] treating objects with a view to transmitting them into the future”\textsuperscript{137} and is “a practical concept that takes place as soon as objects are critically judged to be significant and worth preserving,”\textsuperscript{138} According to her, conservation involves moral and ethical considerations as much as practical application since treatment decisions impact both the

\textsuperscript{135} Jane Tozer and Sarah Levitt, \textit{Fabric of Society: A Century of People and their Clothes 1770-1870}, (Laura Ashley Publications, 2010), frontispiece.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
cultural knowledge held by the object and how that knowledge is maintained, passed on and interpreted to the future.\textsuperscript{139}

Modern textile conservation as a scientific, technical discipline is fairly young. Serious study and innovations in caring for historical textiles and clothing began around the 1960s/70s.\textsuperscript{140} Until then, costume collection caretakers utilized common sewing techniques and sometimes experimented with adhesives to repair garments or try to prevent further damage. Ironically, these sometimes caused more damage than the original problem. This section looks at conservation efforts, past and present, as a form of alteration. Modern work particularly highlights the change in context from wearable garment to historical artefact with a very specific repertoire of techniques employed for the purpose not found on clothing still in use.

Early conservation stitching treatments can be difficult to distinguish from potential mending for fancy dress or theatrical wearing. For example, Museum of London pockets A21980X1a-b were significantly repaired around the edges and throughout using cotton thread, indicating the work was performed post-eighteenth-century (fig. 6.29a-b). Furthermore, the style of mending is more consistent with regular handsewing techniques rather than modern conservation methods. These pockets appear to occupy a fluid space between casual mending of an old item at home and museum preservation tactics. Similarly, the perimeter edges of the lining layer of a Museum of London stomacher were mended and re-sewn to the outer layer with white

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 443.
fig. 6.29a Pocket (detail), 1720-70, Museum of London A21980X1a (author’s photograph). The torn edges of the silk have been stitched down to the linen base layer with cotton thread, indicating post-eighteenth-century work.

fig. 6.29b Pocket (detail), 1720-70, Museum of London A21980X1b (author’s photograph). The fabric edges around the perimeter of this pocket have been overcast with cotton thread, again indicating post-eighteenth-century work.
cotton thread.\textsuperscript{141} It seems most likely this work was performed as a preservative activity, again either privately or within the museum.

Also unclear was the treatment of Museum of London shawl 51.20/1c. It was backed with an open weave cotton fabric and some of the embroidered border motifs were also been patched and repaired (fig. 6.30a-b). This stitching goes through the backing, showing this was done at the time the backing was added or afterwards. Some of the stitching holding the shawl and backing together was by machine, dating the work to the mid-nineteenth century or later. Adding a backing and making the repairs were obviously for the purpose of preservation, but they are techniques not likely employed within a museum, even prior to modern conservation approaches.

One of the most common modern conservation repair stitching techniques is couching. A common technique, couching is employed to fill and stabilize tears or holes in all kinds of textiles providing a sturdy support while adding minimal stress (fig. 6.31a-b). This method is similar, but not identical to, darning, which was a widespread traditional mending method used to fill holes and apply patches, such as on Museum of London apron 39.5/65 (fig. 6.32). A sizable patch was added to this apron at some point during its used life and darned in place. The darning stitching here resembles the couching stitch and probably fulfills a similar function. The thread is fairly loosely woven between the apron fabric and the patch but over large areas to make it secure.

An attempted repair to Berrington Hall jacket SNO41 looks more like actual early conservation. Portions of the silk fabric around the underarms and upwards to the right-hand back shoulder were adhered to the lining layers. This was likely an attempt to stabilize the fragile

\textsuperscript{141} Museum of London A6361, stomacher 1715-20.
6.30a Shawl or handkerchief (hem edge detail), 1790, Museum of London 51.20/1c (author’s photograph).

6.30b Shawl or handkerchief (detail), 1790, Museum of London 51.20/1c (author’s photograph). The machine sewing that helps hold the handkerchief layer to the later added backing is visible just inside the garment’s edge near the bottom of the image.
fig. 6.31a Apron (underside detail), 1718, Museum of London 34.142 (author’s photograph).

fig. 6.31b Apron (upper side detail), 1718, Museum of London 34.142 (author’s photograph).

The black arrows indicate a large patch of darning on the underside of this apron.

fig. 6.32 Apron (underside detail), 1771-1800, Museum of London 39.5/65 (author’s photograph). The black arrows indicate a large patch of darning on the underside of this apron.
and tearing silk, but has permanently disfigured the textile (fig.6.33). While intentions were surely genuine, the results of some early conservation attempts, particularly regarding solvents and adhesives, show a certain cavalier and experimental attitude.

Museum of London dress Z657X1 has a few small areas of conservation work. Wool underarm pads sewn to the bodice lining were encased in conservation-grade mesh or netting and a tear in one pocket slit was mended with couching stitching. Berrington Hall jacket SNO49 had a rectangular cotton patch very neatly applied to the bodice lining (fig. 6.34). It probably covers a hole or other damage and stabilizes the surrounding cloth. These various types of modern treatments both show the development of formal textile conservation practice and act as visual markers of the objects’ transition from dynamic use as clothing to comparatively sedentary historical artefact in a museum collection.

Museum of London embroidered silk apron 34.142 exemplifies the interpretation versus conservation judgment calls with which curators and conservators are sometimes faced when performing treatment. At some point the apron’s waist edge was undone and it was transformed into a flat textile to display better its fine embroidery and as an example of decorative arts techniques. The silk fabric is split or cut vertically from the upper edge for about four inches. Fanning out diagonally from the end of the split towards the upper edge are crease marks indicating the fabric was once folded down along these lines to create a slightly v-shaped front waistline. This was likely a decision and activity executed during initial construction, and one made deliberately. On the other hand, the raw edges and the particularly vulnerable point at the apex of the split made some form of stabilization highly desirable. Thus, a patch of sheer conservation textile was applied to the apron’s underside as a patch and couching-stitched across
fig. 6.33 Jacket (proper left underarm detail), Berrington Hall SNO 41 (author’s photograph). The dark marks around the underarm area in this image are residue from an attempted adhesive conservation treatment.

fig. 6.34 Jacket or half-robe (bodice interior detail), 1790s, Berrington Hall SNO 49 (author’s photograph).
the split from the upper side, instead of re-folding the fabric along the lines or restoring it to an apron.

The more invasive process of restoration usually involves undoing later alterations on a garment and attempting to return it to its “original” appearance. In an article for *Costume*, Janet Arnold discussed the restoration of a 1740s court mantua that had been altered in the nineteenth century:

though there had been a certain amount of stitching to shape the bodice and catch up the petticoat and train in the late nineteenth century (probably for fancy dress) and some parts of the damask in the train had been cut away, it was possible to remove the later stitching and return both mantua and petticoat to their original shape.\(^{142}\)

She described in detail the process used to achieve the desired end result:

In the late nineteenth century navy blue stitching had been put into the left back taffeta skirt yoke, cobbling it up, and also over the stitches holding the gathering in position for a few inches, presumably because the eighteenth century stitching had come undone. When the later stitching had been removed there appeared to be some marks of fading and creasing below the ones caused by the present pleating. The 2ins. which were undone allowed the area to be examined very closely, but there were no traces of any different arrangement or stitching lines so the gathering and pleating were replaced immediately to match the right side, in exactly the same position, using Perivale silk and the original eighteenth century stitching holes, which were still visible.\(^{143}\)

However, this is a highly contentious practice today that must be decided on a case by case basis and even then only very carefully. Linda Baumgarten identified the problematic issues with restoration in her article on altered historical clothing. Citing the example of a seventeenth-century gown altered in the nineteenth century and “restored” at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art she considers:

Should we, for example, take them apart (again) to restore them to their original time period, in the process risking the loss of subsequent historical evidence? In some cases,


\(^{143}\) Ibid., 52.
the importance of the original garment warrants such action, but it should not be done without full consideration of what might be lost.\textsuperscript{144}

The case study of a 1740s mantua at the V&A restored in 1971, 1983, and finally in 2001 demonstrates potential complications with each intervention decision.\textsuperscript{145} Judith Doré was the first conservator to work on the dress in 1971, and in 1978 explained the approach to that early treatment:

In the Victoria and Albert Museum the rule is that, if at all possible, the garment will be returned to its earliest condition – providing there is sufficient left to make a reasonably complete whole, and the alterations are not in themselves of historical importance.\textsuperscript{146}

Of course, historical importance is subjectively determined based on the assessor’s or institution’s perspective. In this case, “The approach that guided treatment in 1971 was based on the idea of the authentic object as represented by the original thread and stitching and ‘ignoring any subsequent threads used,’” because of its rarity as a 1740s mantua complete with its matching petticoat.\textsuperscript{147} The overall shape of the dress was changed from round to oval “based on the relationship between pocket slits and back opening, the various horizontal waist lines, stitch marks, rub marks and pleat marks.”\textsuperscript{148} The dress had been significantly altered, particularly the skirt shape, during the nineteenth century when it was worn for fancy dress. This was the round shape “restored” to oval, and considered of little historical importance. Although little information about the 1983 restoration was documented or kept, a photograph of that interpretation remains showing an even wider and more angular silhouette (fig. 6.35). By 2001 this was deemed “too stretched and the proportions [not] logical for a piece of costume of that

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{144} Baumgarten, “Altered Historical Clothing,” 43–44. \\
\textsuperscript{145} Malko Georgou, “Folding, Stitching, Turning,” 445-451. \\
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 446. \\
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 448. \\
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 448.
\end{flushright}

Additionally, a plain panel of fabric in the skirt back had long been misinterpreted as a later addition and thus disregarded during the 1971 and 1983 restorations wherein it appears they reconstructed and mounted the dress as if without the panel, even though it was left in place. The 2001 restoration included the panel, considerably widening the skirt overall (fig. 6.36). Despite no removal of material from the ensemble’s state upon entering the museum its later instance of use (fancy dress) was virtually erased and three attempts were needed to restore the piece to its original aspect as accurately as current knowledge allows. Titkia admitted:

Conservation is a physical relationship that connects us with the material world – it requires critical thinking about the future and judging what is important to us today through caring for objects, even if it means constantly reconstructing and recreating truth.\(^{150}\)

I would add to this: and in some cases creating a new truth due to the high potential for erroneous restoration.

My own examinations revealed more limited but frequent intervention. I encountered many unpicked darts on dresses I examined to restore their original and “authentic” aspects. The database entry for Museum of London dress 32.160 includes the statement “Restored to its original shape in the Museum, after extensive but not irreversible alterations in the C19.”\(^ {151}\)

However, if all of the nineteenth century alterations on this dress were undone, then the restoration work itself highlights potential problems with the approach. The skirt is neither pleated, nor sewn to the waistline in a manner consistent with eighteenth-century dressmaking practices. The skirt back fullness was taken up with wide pleats tacked to the waistline leaving them largely free on the dress interior (fig. 6.37). Late eighteenth-century dress skirts were pleated with small, tight knife pleats fully sewn to the waistline. Either the “restorers”

\(^{149}\) Ibid.
\(^{150}\) Ibid., 454.
\(^{151}\) Museum of London in-house database, Accession number 32.160.
fig. 6.37 Dress (waist area interior detail), 1776-80, Museum of London 32.160 (author’s photograph).
misidentified part of the nineteenth century alterations or were unaware themselves of what the original construction would have been. This practice of undoing nineteenth-century alterations speaks to attitudes towards early museum dress collecting which viewed apparel objects as specimens of fashion or production techniques at a particular date rather than dynamic objects with multi-faceted biographies. Pristine and elite examples were (and often still are) prioritized over the well-used and mundane. And gaps in knowledge about historical dressmaking practices and trend details (such as the typical form of pleating on late eighteenth-century gowns) potentially lead to inaccurate restoration activity conveying misinformation to the public, contrary to the fundamental mandate of museums, which is to disseminate knowledge as accurately and truthfully as possible.

Alternatively, Worthing Museum dress 1970/788 is a remarkable and intriguing example of non-professional restoration, making the biography difficult but fascinating to chart. The two-toned silk damask dates from the first half of the eighteenth century, possibly the 1730s. This dress was probably made from it around that time. It was significantly altered during the post-1770 period and then again probably about a century or more afterwards for costume use (the ribbon trimming the sleeves is synthetic and darts were sewn into the bodice fronts and subsequently un-picked) (fig. 6.38a-b). Silk threads of at least three different colours were used for stitching, possibly marking three different phases of work. The particularly notable aspect of this dress is that much of the current construction is not original but was extremely carefully worked according to period stitching techniques. Whoever performed this work paid scrupulous attention to detail in order to replicate the original sewing. I encountered no other garment treated this way; garments altered later for fancy dress often display haphazard stitching, and repairs within the museum either conform to needlework techniques of that time or modern
fig. 6.38a Dress (front detail) fabric early eighteenth century, construction post-1770, Worthing Museum 1970/788 (author’s photograph).

conservation. This looks to me like one person’s labour of love to restore a much modified gown to something of its original state, despite the highly anachronistic synthetic ribbon trimming.

Whether conducted privately or at Worthing Museum is unknown, as is the restorer’s motivation for taking such a singularly meticulous and painstaking approach. And ironically, the most interesting feature of this gown becomes the later restoration rather than whatever the original configuration.

Dress objects on exhibit are perennially popular with museum visitors. Viewing mounted items of apparel allows people to envision themselves in them and imagine what life in those clothes would be like, and by extension the time and/or place represented. Mounting and display techniques have often involved alteration or additions to the original piece. Some of these became permanent appendages, adding their own chapters to objects’ biographies. However, they are not without disadvantages. One issue with adding permanent display enablers, especially when using regular dressmaking materials and/or lack of documentation in the object’s record, is that the untrained eye may interpret them as original features. However unintentionally, this potentially encourages further misinformation about historical practices. Furthermore, carelessly chosen locations for tapes, fasteners or other supports increase the risk of damage. Earlier activities (late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century) tend to be more problematic, but led to more conscientious museum practices afterwards.

I encountered ambiguous display supports on a few objects I examined in the form of ties sewn to bodice linings. Museum of London dress 28.53/3 had three sets of black tape or ribbon ties sewn down the bodice front linings to facilitate fastening over a mannequin without stressing the bodice front edges (fig. 6.39). While their appearance is incongruous with the rest of the gown and as compared with most other contemporaneous examples, the exact nature and purpose
fig. 6.39 Dress (bodice interior detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 28.53/3 (author’s photograph). The black ties sewn to the bodice lining fronts were probably added to aid display.
of the ties may not be immediately apparent to all observers. Similarly, Museum of London
dresses 57.106 and 39.61 both have narrow cotton/linen tapes sewn to the centre back point of
the bodice lining at waist height. These act as waist stays either on a person or a mannequin and
were conceivably added for either purpose. The latter dress was additionally furnished with
metal eyes sewn to the sides and fronts of the bodice lining through which the tie ends are
threaded to control their positioning (fig. 6.40). Their appearance is much subtler than the black
ties, and therefore easier to mistake for original elements, particularly as they were added many
years, even decades ago and have acquired the patina of age.

Similarly, another example, Museum of London dress 46.8/1X1 had cotton lacing strips
sewn along the bodice front edges with cotton thread stitching. The materials bespeak post-
eighteenth-century additions; whether they were to facilitate wearing or display is less certain but
the latter is a plausible idea (fig. 6.41). Conversely, Museum of London ensemble 35.55/2a-b had
modern, conservation-friendly display aids added. Strips of white cotton twill tape were hand
basted to the bodice lining front edges to enable pinning it closed on a mannequin. Additionally,
the deteriorating silk hem facing had an encasing layer of conservation grade mesh applied
overtop to stabilize and protect it – both for storage and display purposes. The original waist
dge of the matching petticoat was also encased, with cotton twill tape that was loosely hand-
basted to the original silk. This was probably for display purposes, providing a modern, stable
material for pinning onto a mannequin. The twill tape loops added to this support the petticoat in
hanging storage.

Display modifications were sometimes highly invasive prior to the advent of modern
conservation. Several pairs of eighteenth-century shoes in the Museum of London’s collection
were damaged early in the twentieth century as part of the display process. Holes were punched
fig. 6.40 Dress (bodice interior detail), 1760-70, Museum of London 39.61 (author’s photograph).

fig. 6.41 Dress (bodice detail), 1777-78, Museum of London 48.6/1X1 (author’s photograph).
or drilled through the soles so they could be affixed to a display surface, probably at an angle so as to show the pieces to their best aesthetic advantage. Late eighteenth-century Museum of London black leather shoes A6937 and A6938 were significantly damaged in this way. In each shoe three holes were bored through the heel and then one more through the sole at the ball of the foot (fig. 6.42). A 1720s pair, A10351a-b, has single small holes through the heels and shadows of adhered labels on the soles. The database entry cryptically notes: “Was good quality, over displayed.” Museum of London shoe Z874 experienced a different misfortune. There are patches of white paint on the sole. The museum’s database attributes this to transfer from a display mannequin (fig. 6.43).

Similarly, another object, Museum of London apron A21975 was both washed and the waistband removed in order to make it a flat textile example of eighteenth-century embroidery. Whether these significant alterations were made privately for display or storage in a family home or within the museum for public display in the early twentieth century is unclear. A further example, Museum of London apron A7123 had a thin silk backing attached to it in addition to being flattened. This backing may be interpreted as facilitating the piece’s use, for example, as a table covering of some type, or for display mounting.

On the other hand, Museum of London dress 39.94/1 appears unaltered and unused since it was remodelled near the turn of the nineteenth century. The only later work was a length of rayon seam binding applied to part of the dress hem as a narrow facing, presumably as a repair (fig. 6.44). The rayon indicates the work was done during the twentieth century, the neatly executed hand basting reveals care and attention, and its pristine condition that it remained unworn since and thus was likely mended in a museum/collection environment. Museum of

152 Museum of London in-house database, Accession number A10351a-b.
In addition to cotton thread (thus post-eighteenth-century) mending of the outer silk textile to the underlying linen, there are two whitish smudges of paint on the sole of the shoe.
fig. 6.44, Dress (hem detail), 1780-1805, Museum of London 39.94/1 (author’s photograph).
London dress 35.44/8a is nearly as pristine as possible. The early 1790s gown looks like it may never even have been worn. The only change/addition made was supplementing missing sleeve buttons with silk-covered card circles for display.

Within the museum or collection environment dress objects continue their social lives. They are altered, both physically and in terms of the ways they are used to convey knowledge and meaning about themselves, their makers and their owners. Some items have also become testaments to the development of modern conservation methods over the twentieth century as they continue to wear the evidence of early attempts. They were and are repaired, modified and added to in hopes of preserving the past for the future; and are participants as well as loci for ever changing historical interpretations as knowledge and understanding of their own histories increases.

6.4 Alternative Destinies

Most eighteenth-century garments have not survived either at all or in anything akin to their original state to become part of modern museum collections. Instead, they were disassembled and/or recycled into unrecognizable forms. Some were harvested for their valuable component parts such as metal findings and threads that could be removed, collected and melted down.153 Bits of still usable cloth were cut from what remained of a whole garment and subsumed into quilts. Many linen textiles and garments were worn and used literally to rags, which were then collected by Ragmen and sold to the paper industry which mulched them up to feed the increasing demand for paper by an ever more literate society.154 Thus, England’s textile

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154 Ibid., 125.
recycling industry was connected to papermaking (and by extension print culture and literacy), wider consumption and the development of industrial Britain.\textsuperscript{155}

Other textile scraps met different fates. Creative and thrifty women devised other, sometimes very sentimental uses for the fabric scraps ever-present in their lives. For instance, at some point during her later life Elizabeth Shackleton fashioned a pincushion from the brown cloth of one of her son’s jackets and wore it pinned to her breast on his birthday in remembrance of him.\textsuperscript{156} He was living, but they were separated and wearing a scrap of textile that once covered his body appears to have acted as some sort of stand in for the absent loved one and/or helped lessen the distance between them. More pragmatically she made over her own dresses into household textile objects including a work bag and a cover for her dresser from an “old, favourite, pritty, red & white Linnen gown.”\textsuperscript{157}

An even more poignant destiny for fabric scraps from former garments is surviving tokens from the Foundling Hospital. Founded by royal charter in 1739 this institution took in infants, selected by lottery during the mid-eighteenth century, whose mothers were unable to care for them.\textsuperscript{158} As part of the documentation process mothers left tokens as a means of matching their child with the identification number given the baby as no names were taken. During research for his book \textit{Dress of the People} John Styles discovered that the majority of tokens were textile scraps, providing him an archive of the fabrics of everyday and working people’s lives. His intimate study of the Hospital’s textile tokens in the book \textit{Threads of Feeling: The London Foundling Hospital’s Textile Tokens, 1740-1770} also provides a glimpse of some

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 184.
garment pieces’ final heart-rending application. For of all the tokens collected with hearts hopeful for reunion only the smallest percentage of children were ever reclaimed (152 out of 16,282 admitted between 1741 and 1760), either because the parent never returned or the child perished under the Hospital’s care (during frequent periods of overcrowding, infant and child mortality rates were devastatingly high).159

6.5 Conclusion

Although most garments passed from everyday use as clothing after the eighteenth century their stories and life passages did not end there. Later generations found new purposes for them as costumes for the fancy dress parties they so enjoyed. The alterations Victorians made to their ancestors’ apparel not only bear evidence of this later employment, marking another event in the object’s cultural biography, but also testify to how these people viewed and interpreted the past and wished to portray it within an entertainment setting.

Afterwards, these garments found their way into museum collections where they became representatives of a historical and stylistic past for curators, researchers and the public. Although removed from “active duty” as worn clothing, their use continues as conduits to former ways of life. Along with this changed purpose, the garments were and are materially altered in ways particular to their museum setting: conservation work to preserve the physical object and restoration to (re)create the interpretative message of the clothing.

On the other hand untold multitudes of clothes that started crisp and new, full of the promise of use, gratification and pleasure passed away into nothingness or were subsumed into

159 Ibid., 13.
other crafts or processes with only scraps sometimes remaining as tiny ghosts of their former selves.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

With this thesis I have explored the multiple lives of women’s eighteenth-century apparel and performed in-depth, object-based and archival research on clothing alterations and post-acquisition consumption as a move toward illuminating a largely untapped area of historical human experience.

The material culture methodology of object-based research – direct object study and interaction, usually within museum collection settings – constituted one of the chief primary resources for this project. This involved close, direct examination of surviving garments following a process of description, deduction, and speculation. Accumulating extensive knowledge and experience of garment construction, including both historical and modern practices, enabled me to bring an ‘expert’s eye’ to this type of investigation. Through prior experience with this form of object-based research I have learned that multiple layers of history may be present on any given garment from this period. By intimately examining the multiple types and styles of needlework performed I was able to identify and separate individual layers of alteration and place them in chronological sequence and thematic categories. Direct assessment of garments revealed not only types but also frequency of modifications, evidence of professional versus domestic work, attitudes of owners towards cloth and clothing, as well as the functional working of fashion.

I also engaged with archival sources, particularly household and personal account books, wills, and Old Bailey proceedings. Clothing, its production, purchase and maintenance,

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routinely features within these and additional resources such as letters and diaries. While many of these sources relate primarily to ‘polite’ or elite society, Old Bailey trials provided clues to daily living among the labouring classes of London. This resource was used to locate instances of clothing alteration practices among this large demographic and to extend understanding of these processes as far down the social ladder as possible. This group also included many individuals who performed the work of making and altering clothing both for their peers and for those higher up the social scale. Thus trial records along with labourers’ explicit and implicit appearances in account books contributed to greater insights into the performance of this type of work.

7.2 Overview and Insights

Consumption is not only about acquiring and having things; it is as much or more about using things and the full lifecycle of the object. At the heart of this thesis lie types of clothing alterations, what they look like, how they were performed, and the various motivations and reasons for undertaking them. Concomitantly, I investigated the ways in which clothing moved within women’s lives and how it was treated by them. Altered historical clothes have a lot to tell us – about how they moved through the world, how they were used and valued, and according to what criteria. Because of the near-universality of alteration, maintenance, and reuse of clothing investigating these processes sheds light on lived life in pre-industrial England. It highlights that towards clothing, different attitudes from our own prevailed. We easily and often dispose of clothing that doesn’t fit, requires repair, or no longer appeals to our fashionable sensibilities; not so in pre-industrial England. And despite rhetoric around a ‘consumer revolution’ and an increasing obsession with novelty over the course of the eighteenth century, in actual practice prudence and economy appear to have reigned on nearly every rung of the social ladder.
However, strategies were far from universal. Among the populace of eighteenth-century England different approaches to the care, maintenance and alteration of clothing proliferated demonstrating the individuality of people in their relationships with their attire. These were real people who made clothing decisions based on personal preferences, needs and what worked best for them.

The introductory chapter began with a review of pertinent literature and scholarship surrounding the intersections of consumption, dress history and material culture studies. Particular attention was paid to the dual concepts of the social lives or biographies of objects and emergent scholarly investigations extending consumption studies beyond initial acquisition to use, reuse and recycling. This provided the contextual theoretical framework for my thesis, which I applied in a practical manner to the alteration practices, both physical and contextual, of women’s eighteenth-century dress, which I then viewed as transitions between “lives” or incarnations of garments along the course of their life cycles.

Chapter Two examined the various facets of clothing maintenance within the two broad categories of sewing and solvents. The first enumerated and explained the various types of mending and sewing maintenance activities performed on clothing on a daily-use basis. These ranged from minor mending of tears and weakened areas of textiles to more involved procedures constituting replacement of linings or other component parts to turning, the practice whereby garments were entirely disassembled, the pieces flipped around and the whole reconstructed with the fabric underside as the new outside. The daily hazards textiles and clothing faced were elaborated upon to provide motivations and causes for various types of mending. Additionally, examination of household accounts revealed the significant time, thought and money that frequently went into maintenance supply provisioning. Small quantities of thread, cloth and tapes
accounted for the majority of clothing and textile related expenditures in several of the consulted account books rather than those for new clothing.

This chapter also detailed the place of laundry in women’s and their households daily lives and how it impacted upon them. Here too account books and other manuscript sources such as letters revealed the various systems individual women developed to manage the never ending cycle of clothes laundering and cleaning. Specialty forms of cleansing and refreshing textiles were also brought forth and described including scouring, re-finishing and re-dyeing.

Clothing maintenance and laundry were time consuming and complex processes approached differently in each household and they represented a significant portion of women’s time. These practices and the apparel involved also bridged the separate spheres of domestic and professional work environments, illuminating their permeable boundaries. The same dress may at one time be mended at home and at another sent out for repair; in one household all laundry and cleaning may have been performed domestically while in another the workload may have been divided amongst servants at home, outside washerwomen, and professional stain removers and scourers. Furthermore, I discovered myriad subsidiary industries that supported maintenance and refurbishment of clothing; this could be so important to an individual that they would engage in trans-oceanic dealings such as Martha Washington sending gowns from Colonial America to England for cleaning, dyeing and remodelling.

Chapters Three and Four both involved size alterations but for different reasons and with different foci. Chapter Three looked at the impact on clothing of changing bodies over the life cycle of women. Particular attention was paid to how women adapted clothing for pregnancy that enabled them to pursue activities and responsibilities much as usual in an age before maternity
wear. I offered and described various levels and instances of resourcefulness and was even able to speculate on that possibility of pregnancy needs influencing the popularity of the “zone” front bodice style. The nature and evidence of other size related clothing alterations were herein also described and demonstrated as encountered on surviving objects with supplementary manuscript evidence from account books. I also introduced discussion about the impact of sickness on one’s wardrobe. Although this area of research particularly warrants further exploration it is clear that garments could experience varied lives with a single person and could intimately share in the changes life brought.

Chapter Four dealt with new owners and how clothing travelled between people, ending one phase of life with one owner and beginning another with someone else. New owners also made size adjustments necessary but my interest here lay primarily in the actual movement of used clothing, primarily between women, and the processes of transference. To this end I examined how clothing entered, traversed and exited the second-hand market and the physical changes that might occur along the way. I performed a detailed assessment of clothing in eighteenth-century wills unpacking the various factors that influenced its inclusion and identified patterns in who made the bequests, what was passed on, who received it, which recipients received which type of clothing, testators’ possible intended uses for their gifts, and what all this tells us about how testators and recipients viewed and valued these clothing possessions. The third main category I treated was the perquisite system whereby clothing was cast-off from mistress (or master) to servant. The intentions of both giver and receiver and the different types of treatment the clothing experienced as part of this process (whether sold into the second-hand market or altered for the servant’s own use) were also defined. I further touched on other systems of transference including theft, gifting and lending and how women’s relationships with each
other were mediated by clothing in such situations. Multiple ownership was an integral aspect of the dynamic social biographies of clothing. It moved through states of currency and commodity, utilitarian item and sentimental memento, and also often existed as more than one of these simultaneously.

Chapter Five focused on stylistic alterations made throughout the eighteenth-century and beyond. For clarity I chose an overall chronological timeline dividing the types of alterations into notable fashion periods and points of transition. I mapped out which ones were performed at what points during the century and their stylistic purpose(s). Of particular note were the structural changes in dress construction after 1770, the new seaming technique that emerged in the 1780s and the propensity to alter eighteenth-century dresses according to the late century neo-classical aesthetic despite the seeming textile incompatibility.

I also looked at stylistic alterations performed for maintenance purposes beyond fashion changes, including sack dresses remade into fitted back nightgowns and one garment made over into another such as dresses into jackets. The detailed biography of Gertrude Savile’s green damask sack gown epitomized this preservative attitude and the garment’s transitions from formal sack gown trimmed with gold to less formal nightgown to house-bound wrapper demonstrate other ways besides size alterations in which one garment might embody numerous incarnations with a single owner.

This chapter showed that women’s real-life engagement with fashion was complex. The large number of surviving stylistically altered garments indicates socially acknowledged and accepted flexibility in “on the ground” practice. Neither was the relationship between textile and dress design in creating fashionability always straightforward. Old textiles were made into highly
fashionable later styles meaning both continuity and novelty was often simultaneously pursued. Among the most intriguing of these discoveries was that eighteenth-century garments did not automatically become obsolete during the neo-classical period.

Chapter Six followed what happened to clothing that survived the eighteenth century through to today, and the shifts in use and purpose. The first section detailed how certain women’s garments, primarily dresses and petticoats, were used for fancy dress and altered to accommodate later wearers in terms of fit and taste. I also discussed how the perception and valuing of this apparel changed along with its transition from clothing to costume. No longer investment pieces in a woman’s wardrobe the garments were often subject to various levels of mistreatment. However, while post-eighteenth-century alterations and use for fancy dress interrupts and indelibly modifies the communication between these survivors of history and modern observers it adds another layer to the social life of the garment that imparts insights about Victorian understanding, consumption and interpretation of a history to which they were chronologically closer than us (these were their grandmother’s and great-grandmother’s dresses).

In the second section I engaged with historical dress entering the museum; how it was treated, used and altered early on within this environment with some comparisons between early preservation work and modern conservation. I also touched on the contentious issue of restoration work, why it is performed but also the potential pitfalls wherein incorrect interpretations can skew the information disseminated to the public. Overall, I view moving to the museum as another stop along the object’s biographical trajectory. Rather than an end of use or “life” this is simply a different incarnation as the clothes become ambassadors for their period of origin.
7.3 Contribution to Research

This thesis is important to dress history studies because despite the acknowledged ubiquity of clothing alterations these processes have been little examined. However, the phenomenon itself is so pervasive that unaltered garments are a distinct rarity within museum holdings. The clothing within museum collections overwhelmingly tends to be of higher status. This led me to theorize that if this form of economy was widely practiced on elite clothing, it strongly suggests this was also common throughout lower levels of society wherein clothing represented an even greater percentage of household expenditure. The significance of these patterns demanded further explanation with respect to material use and actual practice. To that end this study illuminated important interpersonal relationships between people and their material world in early consumer society and contributed to growing scholarly awareness and attention to use of objects after initial acquisition, following on to reuse and recycling, pushing consumption studies past production and the first instance of purchase.

The results of this research have implications for both the academic and museum spheres. By combining object and text-based research methods (comprising both primary and secondary written sources) the realities of how people of various classes negotiated the material culture of their day-to-day lives is more fully revealed, enriching social histories of the period. This work also contributes significantly and specifically to fuller understanding of how women in the past spent their time and their money, and how they participated in the beginnings of modern consumerism. Furthermore, concrete, physical evidence was introduced pointing to individuality
and ingenuity regarding women’s willingness to reuse clothing, make the unfashionable fashionable again, and even engage in experimentation.

This thesis provides both a framework and model for deciphering the current condition and appearance of women’s eighteenth-century clothing in museums. By separating the different types of alterations into their constituent temporal and motivational categories more accurate impressions and interpretations of objects and their individual histories can be determined. This, in turn, furthers understanding of historical clothing processes, activities and trends.

Furthermore, the specific extensive use of physical objects as research material presents an example of their application as much more than illustrative examples. I approached the physical material as a form of historical document or record that can be “read.” The result was that much of the evidence and insights gained during the research phase of this project derive directly from the objects themselves. Thus, a subsidiary result of this project is the incorporation of practical object study in an academic project. It is hoped that this foretells further and increased cross pollination between museum and academic spheres.

7.4 Future Directions

This project was never intended to offer the definitive word on clothing alteration practices and their place in eighteenth-century English society. Instead, with my thesis I offer a descriptive and narrative foundation on which to build even deeper understanding of how clothing functioned within people’s day to day lives in early consumer society.

Certain limitations of this thesis relate to scope and others to lack of surviving material. A primary example is the objects themselves. While considerable numbers of eighteenth-century women’s clothing items are held within museum collections several caveats attend their use.
Although the elite nature of surviving apparel may be less of a disadvantage in this instance, that view remains uncorroborated due to a lack of surviving non-elite clothing. The overall elusiveness of lower class experiences is also a perennial challenge. Unlocking the secrets these objects hold and filling in the inevitable gaps remains an ongoing process. Also, as seen in the final chapter, discussion on how museum clothing holdings were initially founded on private collections amassed by men with particular interests may call into question their representativeness.

The scope of this thesis is largely limited to description and narrative. The sheer volume of data amassed from my object and archival engagement led me to restrict the focus to that of elucidating a combination of physical and textual evidence for clothing alteration and post-acquisition use practices and introduce avenues of social commentary.

However this just means there is still considerable scope for continued scholarly enquiry into this topic. There are multiple potential possibilities and additions yet to explore. For example, this thesis begins after initial construction and first acquisition. The whole story – from production through use, reuse to disintegration and absorption by other processes or continued reincarnation as later fashion, costume or historical artefact – tracing the life stories of clothing items from beginning to end (or current state) has yet to be amalgamated.

Importantly, inclusion and synthesis of additional research methodologies would also provide a more truly holistic portrait of this topic. Incorporating more theoretical discourse on the functions of clothing in society and individuals’ lives, analysis of period literature both fictional and non-fictional, and visual culture, a broader social history scope including more
political and economic context and wider investigation into surrounding material culture would greatly enrich the narrative.

Some specific tangents that could yield fascinating and impactful revelations include further investigation into how apparel items were altered, modified and adapted over an individual’s lifecycle and the relationship between clothing and illness/infirmity. Women, clothing and pregnancy would be another important area to further interrogate since it defined large periods of most women’s lives. Plumbing the rhyme and reason behind the new seaming development of the 1780s that ostensibly limited future alteration and remodelling capabilities could provide valuable insight into potential changes in how women viewed clothing as investment. Was the meteoric increase in the cotton trade and incipient industrialization beginning to lessen the perceived necessary longevity of garments? And locating more information for types of stylistic alterations performed during the first half of the century, such as mantuas altered into other designs or garments, would help to fill in some of the chronological gaps. Finally, as stated in the introduction, a comparable story of men’s clothing, its reuse, alteration and redistribution is more than deserving of its own dedicated study.

7.5 Final Thoughts

While this thesis has taken the multiples varieties of lives and experiences of clothing in turn, dividing them into thematic categories, they are most often present together in various combinations on surviving garments and in the lives of real women. The alteration history of Gertrude Savile’s green damask sack gown that went through multiple transformations was far from an isolated case. Numerous surviving dresses originated in the mid-eighteenth-century, were altered post-1770, some of them again post-1790 or during the later nineteenth century.
Many garments examined underwent at least three incarnations. And the modifications, techniques and approaches I encountered to achieve these transformations have continually surprised me with the ingenuity and individuality demonstrated by real eighteenth-century women in the management of their wardrobes and by extension their public selves.
1. Manuscript Collections

British Library, London: Manuscripts

Add. 28249, Caryll Family Bills & Accounts
Add. 44935, Diary of Richard Viney, Staymaker, 1744
Add. 45204-10, Household accompts of Anne, wife of Sir William Brockman, 1700-24
Add. 830121-24, Account by Mary Taylor
Add. 61665-5, Blenheim Papers
Add. 62092, Account-book for personal expenses of Margaret Spencer, with her father's notes throughout as auditor
Add. 70970, Pocket Book of Anna Eliza Chan
Add. 78436, Evelyn Papers
Add. 78527, Evelyn Papers Household Accounts of 1719-1725
Add. 78528, Evelyn Papers 1740-1763

Victoria and Albert Museum, London: National Art Library

86.ss.77, Account book of Elizabeth Dodson, 1728-1732

Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Office, Bedford

L 30, Wrest Park papers
M 10/4 Williamson letters, 1750-95
OR, Orlebar collection
OR 2071/125, Goods & Chattels of Hannah French, Mr Orlebar’s Housekeeper, 1719
OR 2071/130, Hanna French’s dress bills, 1714-1719
OR 2071/142, Elizabeth French bills
OR 2071/150, Mary French Bills
R.O. 32/16, Bills & Receipts for Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick, 1763-1770
X800/26, Mrs Ann Antonies Accounts

Doncaster Archives

DD/BW/A/4-15, Account-book of Isabella Wrightson, 1743-83
DD.DC.H6/1, Account-book of Mrs Diana Eyre of Ripin, 1749-77
DD.DC.H6/2, Account-book of Mrs Mary Cooke of Owston, 1763-83
DD/DC/H7/1/3, Mary Cooke’s Will, March 22, 1784 (to her son in letter form)

Museum of London

Account-book of Mrs Martha Dodson, 1746-65
Nottinghamshire Archives, Nottingham

DD/SR 212/10-11, Diaries of Gertrude Savile, 1721-2, 1737-57
DD/SR A4/45-46, Account books of Gertrude Savile, 1736-58

Somerset Record Office, Taunton

DD/FS 5/2, Accounts of Mrs Frances Hamilton, 1797-1800
DD/SF/4515, Correspondence of Mary Clarke to her husband Edward, 1675-1704

Southwark Local Studies Library, London

A296, Account-books of Ann, Lady Rose of Walworth, 1797-1807


2. Printed Primary Sources


Encyclopaedia Britannica: or, A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and Miscellaneous Literature Volume 6 Part 1, Edinburgh: A. Bell and C. MacFarquhar, 1797.


Glasse, Hannah, The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy: Which Far Exceeds Any Thing of the Kind Yet Published ... To which are Added, One Hundred and Fifty New and Useful Receipts. And Also Fifty Receipts for Different Articles of Perfumery, London: W. Strahan et. al., 1784.

Johnson, Mary, *Madame Johnson’s Present, or Every Young Woman’s Companion*, Dublin: James Williams, 1765.


*Verney Letters of the Eighteenth Century From the MSs at Claydon House*, London:Benn, 1930.

3. *Secondary Sources*


Jarvis, Anthea, “'There was a Young Man of Bengal...': The Vogue for Fancy Dress,” *Costume*, 16 no. 1 (1982): 92-99.


White, Sophie, “’Wearing Three or Four Handkerchiefs Around his Collar and Elsewhere About Him:’ Slaves’ Constructions of Masculinity and Ethnicity in French Colonial New Orleans,” *Gender & History*, 15 no.3 (2003): 528-549.


Appendix: List of Objects

*Images are the author’s unless otherwise stated*

Museum of London – Dresses/Ensembles

1. **Accession # 27.7/1** (examined 2008)
   **Object**: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
   **Date**: fabric late 1750s, construction 1775-85, altered 19th century
   **Alteration Notes**:
   - sleeve ruffles have been re-sewn on, and the purple ribbon trim is a later addition – likely 19th century at least
   - neckline trimming also appears to be a later alteration to close up the neckline slightly: it is backed with a bias band of cotton twill on the inside that appears to be attached to the original edge of the neckline
   - centre front eyelets are also a later alteration, again 19th century at least
   - tapes have been added to skirt inside approx ½ - 2/3 of the way down and a linen tape loop has been added to the centre back inside point of the lining to make polonaise style

2. **Accession #28.53/3** (examined 2008)
   **Object**: Sack dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade
   **Date**: fabric 1760-63; construction style 1765-70, altered 19th century
   **Alteration Notes**:
   - greatly altered over time
   - hooks and eyes on bodice front are not original
   - waistline seams are not original
   - pieces of terracotta coloured cotton have been inserted into the sleeve seams
   - linen lining has been cut out of sleeves; there are also remnants of same silk that lines falling cuffs at armpole seams
   - black ties stitched inside bodice are not original
   - petticoat waistline has been altered, including pocket slits
   - it is unclear whether silk taffeta panel in petticoat back is original or not
   - dress and petticoat have overall appearance of having been made-over in 19th century either for fancy dress or theatre, and none too carefully
3. Accession #29.164/1 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1745-46; construction style c. 1770-80
Alteration Notes:
- hem at the front skirt edges have been let down
- there are stitch marks on the front bodice sections
- the bottom edges of the blunt point at the centre front are not even – suggestive of alteration
- a seam has been made in the centre back skirt which is not original
- sleeve seams have been taken in
- crease marks in the side back bodice lining pieces indicate alteration of letting out
- old stitch marks on the centre back bodice pleats also suggest alteration, but evidence is inconclusive
- fabric appears to have been (dry?) cleaned, thus evidence of old pleats and creases may have been lost
- construction is generally neat and clean; uncommon when a garment has been altered – unless it was completely taken apart and made up new again

4. Accession #32.15 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk jacquard
Date: fabric 1760s; construction style c. 1775-80
Alteration Notes:
- there is little evidence of alteration or remodelling

5. Accession #32.160 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, embroidered silk
Date: c. 1776-80, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- database notes the dress was significantly altered in the 19th century and subsequently “restored”. Skirt pleating at waist remains in the 19th century configuration
6. Accession #32.181 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade
Date: fabric c.1767-71, construction style c.1775-80
Alteration Notes:
-both dress and petticoat have been massively altered, it is not entirely clear what of the original ensemble remains
-dress certainly had open bodice originally; may have been cut ‘en fourreau’ at the back
-bodice armhole seams have been cut into (presumable to enlarge them) and badly re-sewn
-sleeve cuff flounces are almost the same length, this is very unusual and suggests they too were altered
-pocket slit in left hand side of dress skirt has been sewn shut, the pocket back in the right side is not original
-a purple silk ribbon or fabric strip has been sewn into the waistline, indicating the skirt and this seam were also altered/re-made
-purple silk ribbons sewn to dress and petticoat are not original
-fabric of dress skirt and petticoat have been cut up and re-pieced
-sections of petticoat back at waist have been cut out and replaced with white linen fabric
-petticoat waistline has been reworked and mangled out of recognition
-petticoat hem facings are not original

7. Accession # 33.40 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress with separate forepart, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1730-40; current garment style: c. 1780-1790
Alteration Notes:
-significant alterations for both size and styles have been made, possibly more than once
-gown originally had an open bodice; remnants of robings remain over shoulders, and creases on bodice fronts indicate they were once folded into robings that were then cut and then seamed across
-creases, stitch marks and thread remnants indicate the centre back bodice seam was let out other back seams/pleats appear to have been altered as well from evidence of older lines of stitch marks
-heavy thread bar tacks that are later additions remain on left hand side as do 3 metal hooks on the lower end of the bodice
-stitch marks indicate that waist has been both let out and lengthened
-pocket slits now sit towards the back, not at sides
-skirt appears to have been originally a fuller open skirt: the edges of the forepart were surely attached to the current skirt front edges; the thread used for the centre seam does not match that used on the other skirt panel seams; he skirt now sits mostly at the back of the gown as a whole, coming only slightly towards the front
-some old creases in the skirt indicate the pleating was changed
-how the current forepart was used is unclear: as an apron? A false underskirt? A 19th century mis-interpretation of style for fancy dress?
-the sleeves have been lengthened using the undyed linen and watered silk pieces, which are covered up by the cuff
-it is possible the cuff itself has been remodelled from a wider wing cuff to a more fitted one
-the combination of the longer sleeves, the narrower skirt that sits towards the back of the gown, and the closed front bodice suggest a remodelling date of c. 1780-90 as the most recent; it also appears that much of the gown may have been unpicked to effect this significant change

8. Accession #33.109 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1762-65, construction style c. 1765-70
Alteration Notes:
-stomacher has been significantly altered; it was certainly originally in 2 pieces that have been roughly sewn together, eyelets also remain on the underside of the left hand piece; was perhaps a compere front?
-However, the linen plackets with eyelets are confusing, there are no corresponding eyelets on the gown bodice front edges; these plackets look like they were likely later additions
-There were round weights, approx 3cm in diameter sewn into the bottom of the sleeves – one/sleeve; these have since been removed
-There is very little other evidence of alteration/remodelling

9. Accession #33.91
Object: dress ensemble (gown, petticoat, stomacher), silk brocade
Date: 1766-1770
Alteration Notes:
-there are no signs of alteration; the only possible indication is an overlap of the sleeve seam visible from the underside – however, this seems more likely to have been an alteration made during original construction/fitting as there are no corresponding alterations to the sleeve end trimming or bodice, nor any old stitch marks

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10. Accession #33.92
Object: Sack dress with matching petticoat
Date: 1761-1770, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- extensive alterations, probably in the 19th century
- the bodice lining has been removed and not replaced, leaving the pleats of the sack back free and the bodice unfitted
- the back pleats have been undone at some point and then re-folded and stitched, but not in quite the original positions
- the compere front has been removed and re-attached
- the side seams of the dress have been re-sewn with the pocket slits and pleats in the sides of the skirt altered to be slightly less full
- the sleeves are set-in, whether this was the original method is unclear, but it is clear that at least part of the stitching around the armholes is not original
- most seams are now just running stitched as opposed to the combination of that, lapped seams, back-stitched and whip-stitched seams
- the sleeves themselves are in two pieces, which is unusual, and there are pieced section at the lower ends which do not look like contemporary piecing
- the fullness of the petticoat has certainly be reduced by the removal of material
- the pleats at the petticoat waist now have a haphazard appearance and it is impossible to distinguish what is front, sides, or back
- the waistband of the petticoat is a replacement, as is the hem facing; the ensemble has the overall appearance of having been largely taken apart and put back together again – not quite right; the compere front is likely either original or a well-executed 18th century alteration

11. Accession #33.100a
Object: Sack dress, silk brocade
Date: 1771-1790, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- there has been alteration, likely in 19th century
- there is an overall cobbled appearance to the bodice front suggesting change of some kind, though it is unclear what
- bodice seams have been at least partially re-sewn with cotton thread
- front waist seam also roughly sewn with cotton thread and indeterminate technique
- a strip of stiff linen/jute has been sewn into each bodice front with eyelets worked into them, these are later additions
12. Accession #33.110  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress with matching petticoat, printed cotton  
**Date:** 1775-1785  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-the skirt may have been re-sewn with fullness concentrated at the back and the front edges moved almost to the dress sides  
-no obvious signs of alteration on the petticoat

13. Accession #33.303/1  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, silk  
**Date:** fabric 1731-1760, construction 1771-1775, altered 19th century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-skirt fronts appear to have been re-done, chopped and pieced and the original right-hand pocket slit eliminated in the process  
- the waist seam at the dress fronts has been (roughly) re-sewn  
- seams/tucks were taken at the bodice sides and subsequently unpicked – they were sewn with cotton thread, suggesting 19th/20th century work  
-skirt piecing, current hem stitching, stitching of compere stomacher pieces to dress fronts, seaming of white stripes between green ones in skirt all worked with cotton thread – thus 19th/20th century work
14. Accession #34.167/1  
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk woven with metal thread  
Date: 1786-1790  
Alteration Notes:  
-there are no conclusive signs of alteration; there are remnants of cotton thread in various places around the bodice suggesting 19th century intervention of some kind; the outer line of stitching tacking the neckline trim to the bodice may also be cotton – possibly a 19th century repair job then?

15. Accession #34.173/1a  
Object: Mantua, silk (“lutstring”)  
Date: 1721-1750  
Alteration Notes:  
-there are tucks in the bodice front that have been un-picked  
-the sleeves appear to have been let out at the seam and around the armhole- overall appearance of enlargement  
-there is a cotton/linen tape waist stay sewn inside the bodice, looks like modern, museum addition for display  
Additional Notes:  
-there are pin marks in skirt fronts towards the bottom, possible indication or alteration, or possible indication of how the skirt was draped, perhaps these marks are from pinning the fronts to the dress back to create mantua draping? Pin marks on the dress back below the waist may correspond to these

16. Accession # 35.35/1 (examined 2008)  
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask  
Date: fabric c 1750-70, construction style 1770-80(?)  
Alteration Notes:  
-gown shows alteration at back of shoulders – as if bodice was lengthened at this point
-There are stitch marks left behind the shoulders, and small extra pieces were inserted into both robing and corresponding area of linen lining – added-in linen is of a lighter colour, and slightly coarser weave than original
-added in bits on robing are same fabric as gown

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17. Accession #35.44/8a
Object: Fitted-back dress, patterned silk
Date: 1790-1796
Alteration Notes:
-museum replacement buttons have been sewn to the back edges of the sleeve slits at the wrist
-no other signs of alteration, or perhaps even wearing

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18. Accession #35.44/8b
Object: Petticoat, silk satin
Date: 1791-1795
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

19. Accession #35.46 (examined 2008)
Object: Sack dress with matching petticoat, figured silk satin
Date: fabric c.1755-60, construction style c.1775, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-a dart on each side of the bodice (19th century work) front has been let out to make it bigger or restore after 19th century alteration
-there are stitched repairs and patching on the bodice in the area of the underarms
-sleeve seams have been let out
- Armhole seams have been altered – let out?
- Alterations over the shoulders inside the bodice have been made
- Pieces of cotton fabric have been inserted into the bodice lining suggesting both that the linen lining is original and that bodice was let out in that area
- Underarm guards have been added inside bodice
- Because so much sewing was executed using cotton threads, this suggests that many seams were re-sewn, possibly in the 19\textsuperscript{th} C (most contemporary sewing uses silk thread)
- It is unclear whether dress hem facing is original
- Petticoat waistband has been replaced with twill tape
- Because there are pocket slits in the dress but not the petticoat this suggests further alteration to the petticoat
- Back section of petticoat has been replaced with lengths of silk ribbon pieced with thin silk fabric to blend in with original fabric

20. Accession #35.55/1a
Object: Mantua, silk damask
Date: 1741-1743
Alteration Notes:
- There are various areas where the stitching is done with yellow cotton thread, indicating later work; however, this appears to just be later (19\textsuperscript{th}/20\textsuperscript{th} century) repair work rather than alterations

21. Accession #35.55/1b
Object: Petticoat, silk damask
Date: 1741-1743
Alteration Notes:
- Waist binding ribbon is modern (perhaps museum/conservation work)
- A panel of the upper back petticoat is a thin yellow silk twill, looks to be 19\textsuperscript{th}/early 20\textsuperscript{th} century?
Likely meant as a repair rather than an alteration
22. **Accession #35.55/2a**  
**Object:** Sack dress, figured and striped silk  
**Date:** 1771-1775  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-dress has been enlarged at bodice side seams and through sleeve underarms, wedges of fabric have been inserted to add more width – these alterations appear to have been made in the 18\(^{th}\) century  
-part of the skirt front edge trimming on the right-hand side is missing – intentionally removed or lost?  
-There is a small area of mending in the right-hand bodice side seam near the waist

![Image](image_url)  
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23. **Accession #35.55/2b**  
**Object:** Petticoat  
**Date:** 1760-1770  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-1966 conservation work  
-hem, pocket slit edges, back opening edges are all just turned up narrowly and pressed, no stitching though there are some thread remnants

![Image](image_url)

24. **Accession #35.55/3** (examined 2008)  
**Object:** Sack dress with matching petticoat and stomacher, silk jacquard  
**Date:** fabric c. 1750-55; construction style c. 1765-70  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-little to no evidence of alteration

![Image](image_url)
25. Accession # 35.59 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, striped raw silk
Date: 1785-95, altered 19\textsuperscript{th} century, later “restored”
Alteration Notes:
- approx 7cm on either side of centre back seam inside gown cotton or linen tape ties are stitched; ties are roughly stitched on top of lining lower edge, may not be original
- Bodice front appears to have been altered
- Bodice fronts appear to have been darted at some point where bodice meets skirt, darts were approx 2.5-3cm wide and 8cm long
- Bodice is fully lined in cream coloured plainweave linen; a different grade is pieced and used for sections on either side of centre front – there is no corresponding piecing on bodice right side

26. Accession #35.76/3
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: 1775-1785
Alteration Notes:
- there are possible indications of alteration - the nature of the seam at the front of the shoulders on the bodice
- part of the bodice lining is not the same as the rest; the significant amount of piecing in the skirt – however, these are far from conclusive and the dress may be unaltered
Additional Notes: it appears the bodice fronts were not pinned edge to edge, but overlapped a little

27. Accession #35.163/2X1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1762-1765, original construction 1760s, altered 1780s, altered again 1838-1842
Alteration Notes:
- little original construction remains
story may be: dress was originally a 1760s sack altered in late 18\textsuperscript{th} century (c. 1780s) and the sack back became the skirt back with the excess fabric kept on and folded to the inside of the dress, the current bodice lining appears to date from this period; dress then altered for fancy dress or theatrical use in late 1830s
Additional Notes: may have passed through family of donor – Fitzwygram, who are an old aristocratic family and director of the bank of England in the 18th century

28. Accession #37.91
Object: Fitted-back dress, embroidered silk
Date: 1785-1790, altered 1831-1840, altered again 1890-1899
Alteration Notes:
this is a case of 18th century dress/fabric being re-used for actual wear, not fancy dress - interesting that it was re-made for ‘regular’ use in 1830s, then again, also for ‘regular’ use in 1890s

29. Accession #38.199X1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk sprigged with silver
Date: 1776-1785
Alteration Notes:
the bodice front plackets look rather untidily sewn with appearance of being later additions
-right-hand sleeve seam has been let out and re-sewn
-darts had been taken in the bodice front, possibly by machine (probably in 19th century), and have since been unpicked
-right-hand sleeve has been patched at the underarm; there are corresponding silk patches sewn into both side of the lining

30. Accession # 38.275/1 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1736-39; current garment style 1770-75
Alteration Notes:
-gown has obviously been significantly altered, there is not as much evidence of reworking on lining as might be expected – was bodice lining mostly or completely replaced?
- The very small, tight knife pleats in the skirt are consistent with a later style, but do not look like they were changed from previous pleating – could dress have been made originally from an older fabric, and then remodelled shortly after it was made? Ie – because there is remaining evidence of robings, falling cuffs, and back is constructed en ferreau, perhaps original dress dates from c. 1760-70, then remade 1770-75?
- Majority of construction stitching is quite neat, suggesting that even the remodelling was professionally done rather than at home, unless by a particularly skilled person; some small areas have rough stitching that look like repairs
- Back of skirt is turned up into a 3.5-4.5 cm; only very narrow hems remain on skirt fronts – material was cut away at some point
- Bodice is mostly lined in a plain weave linen; a finer linen or cotton lines the sleeves and appears to have been used to replace a few small lining pieces under robings
- Buttonhole stitch loops have been worked in pink silk thread on the ride side of the garment at the side backs, presumably to create polonaise look; there is no evidence left of corresponding buttons or ties for this

31. Accession #39.5/34
Object: Fitted-back dress; child’s, printed linen
Date: 1771-1780
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alterations; Natalie Rothstein thinks piecing on skirt suggests re-making from an adult’s dress and added sleeve cuffs may also be an indication, and/or would accommodate growth; this may be so, but is not certain
-there is mending throughout, some is contemporary, much is conservation work

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32. Accession #39.29/1X1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: 1777-1785, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-most of the alteration stitching was done by machine (see photos), thus probably mid-late 19th century
-lower sleeve edges have been re-sewn with slip stitching
-skirt has been re-done from pleats to gathering that is hand stitched to the waist with fell/whip stitching
-the silk twill tapes sewn inside the skirt are replacements for original linen ones – the stitch marks from the prior tapes is still visible with remnants of thread

33. Accession #39.61X2 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1755-65, construction 1775-85, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- pocket slits have been sewn shut
-linen shoulder straps have been cut to enlarge armhole (possibly 19th century)
-it seems unlikely the silk ribbon at the hem is original
-strips of silk have been inserted into the sleeve seams to enlarge sleeves
-areas of 19th century mending on bodice interior

34. Accession #39.94/1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: original construction 1778-1780, altered c. 1800
Alteration Notes:
-appears dress was originally made late 1770s-80s and altered c. 1800
-the under bodice fronts are the original bodice fronts now covered up; the skirt has been raised at the back and sewn straight across, the original pointed bodice back remains inside
-the shoulder bands look like they were originally robings; the dress front looks like it may have originally been a panel from an underskirt due to its length (it is skirt length, not dress length)
-the front parts of the original skirt hem are faced with modern (rayon?) green seam binding
-dress may actually have been altered twice – possibly first made in 1770s? Altered in 1780s, then c. 1800 – there is a pocket slit in the skirt at side back (the other has been stitched up), which looks too far back for original placement, but 1780s back waistline remains suggesting the skirt was re-pleated in the 1780s
**Additional Notes:** the unusualness of the square opening at the front dress hem suggests possible experimentation on the part of the alterer

![Image of a dress](image1.png)

35. **Accession #39.115**  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, silk jacquard  
**Date:** original construction 1780s, current construction 1795-1800  
**Alteration Notes:**  
it is unclear is anything remains of the earlier construction apart from the separate pieces (39.115a) and the bodice back; this is an entire remake of a dress

**Additional Notes:**  
I’m not sure how they got the necessary length for the skirt back panel that is not pieced; it is also unclear whether the re-make was ever actually finished – does not seem wearable in its current state

![Image of a dress](image2.png)

36. **Accession #42.17/7**  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, figured silk  
**Date:** 1781-1790  
**Alteration Notes:**  
no obvious signs of alteration; bodice seams may once have been boned or were intended to be

![Image of a dress](image3.png)

37. **Accession #46.8/1X1**  
**Object:** Sack dress, silk brocade  
**Date:** 1777-1778, altered 19th century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
has not been stylistically altered
bodice has been let out at side seams, sleeves have also been let out at seams as has the skirt at the side seam—these areas have all been re-sewn with what appears to be cotton thread (or a thin silk thread) which strongly suggests this occurred in the 19th century, likely for fancy dress use. The alterations were fairly neatly done, and do not much distort the original style of the dress—the only possible area of this is at the skirt side seam where there are roughly stitched pleats for side hoops, which may or may not be the original configuration; the waist seam may also have been re-sewn at the time of the alterations. 

There are several areas of mending/darning in the silk—it is unclear whether this is contemporaneous with the dress, it may have been executed in the 19th century as many of the darned areas are back by with patches of the dress fabric—perhaps it was a family heirloom and scraps were kept from the original making? At least one area of darning appears to post-date the metal rings and hooks inside the skirt. The cotton boned plackets with lacing eyelets were likely added in the 19th century—would probably have been pinned originally. The metal eyelets, rings and for drawing the skirt up polonaise style were also most likely added in the 19th century. There had been some sort of cuff or sleeve end trimming that has been removed.

**38. Accession #46.8/2 - ? (in database seems to be a set of side hoops)**

**Object:** Petticoat, silk brocade

**Date:** 1777-1778, altered 19th century

**Alteration Notes:**
- the waist looks like it may have been altered and the drawstring at the sides added later (19th century); there are several areas of mending/darning executed in the same manner as that on the dress.

**39. Accession #47.43/1 (examined 2008)**

**Object:** Fitted-back dress, silk brocade

**Date:** fabric c.1743-47; trimmings c. 1760s; dress construction post 1775

**Alteration Notes:**
- front pieces of bodice, including eyelets, are not original
- crease marks at bottom edges of sleeves suggest they were let down to be longer
- presence of cotton shoulder strap lining pieces suggest alteration of some kind

Fabric piecing
rough quality of stitching at waistline seam indicates it was re-sewn at some point
sleeve and armhole seams were also re-sewn

40. Accession #48.46/1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: original construction 1768-1773? altered 1776-1780?
Alteration Notes:
- there are numerous creases and stitch marks all over both the bodice and skirt indicating this
dress was either significantly altered or made with fabric from another garment
- this was possibly originally a late 1760s/early 1770 dress with an open-front bodice, wider en
fourreau back or sack back, falling sleeve cuffs (suggested by the sleeve weight pockets that
remain inside the lower sleeve edges), skirt fullness more evenly distributed around waist
(suggested by how far back the pocket slits currently sit)
- sleeves have been taken in along seam; bodice lining fronts are a different linen from the backs
and correspond with what appear not-original silk bodice fronts
- dress may have been altered late 1770s/early 1780s

41. Accession #48.46/3
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: original construction c.1770, altered 1775-1785, altered again 1795-1800
Alteration Notes:
- original construction appears to be c. 1770 and an open robe – bodice fronts show crease and
stitch marks, fabric piecing and seaming suggesting bodice was originally open-fronted with
robeings
- the shoulder bands also look like robing remnants; the bodice back shows crease and stitch
marks along with fabric piecing indicating it has been re-sewn
- it appears likely the dress was altered c. 1775-1785 to close the bodice front and change the
seams of the bodice back – possibly separating bodice and skirt at centre back at this time
- there is piecing towards the lower end of the sleeves suggesting lengthening and a tuck taken in
at the inner elbow to help make the sleeve curve over the elbow, it is unclear whether the linen
sleeve cuffs were added at this time or later
- the dress appears to have been altered again towards the end of the 18th-century by raising the
back waistline to run straight across and unpicking the hem; the skirt was likely entirely removed
at this time and re-pleated with a series of double box pleats and moving the front edges of the skirt to the sides of the bodice from side front; the sleeves have also been let out at some point, it is unclear just when -the skirt hem has been unpicked and left unstitched; there is some conservation mending on the left-hand skirt front near the hem


42. Accession #49.23/1
Object: Fitted-back dress, striped silk (“lutstring”)
Date: original construction 1770s altered post-1780? altered again 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-appears to be a dress made in 1770s, altered c 1780: stitch marks on bodice back indicate it was modified, along with added strip in back of bodice lining, sleeve cuffs are made and attached separately, train is added on, possible stitch marks on sleeves suggests possible sleeve enlargement
-dress was later altered in late 19th/early 20th century: darts were taken in bodice fronts, tucks taken at bodice side, side back and at sleeve seam all with machine stitching, these have all been subsequently unpicked, sleeves are sewn into armhole with machine stitching, sleeve cuffs are currently sewn to sleeve ends with cotton thread, drawstring and casing were likely added at this time, neckline trim is partially stitched to dress with cotton threads, metal hook and cotton thread loop were certainly added around this time as well, patching on bodice at underarms appears to have been done at this time as well (cotton thread)
Additional Notes:
-example of a dress altered within a few years (+/-5) of original making, possibly for both style and size reasons (killing 2 birds with one stone?); then meddled with in the 19th/early 20th century for fancy dress/theatre
43. Accession #49.43/1b
Object: Quilted petticoat, silk satin
Date: 1771-1780
Alteration Notes: no obvious signs of alteration
Additional Notes: this petticoat and dress 49.43/1X1 may or may not be an original pairing

44. Accession #49.43/1X1
Object: Fitted-back dress, striped silk brocade
Date: 1773-1775
Alteration Notes:
in nearly pristine condition
-It looks like the centre back bodice seam has been partially re-sewn with herringbone stitch in cotton thread – perhaps a 19th century repair

45. Accession #49.50/1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk jacquard
Date: 1753-1780
Alteration Notes:
sleeves have been crudely re-seamed
-stitch and crease marks on bodice back indicate it has been altered – likely from wider back pleats to narrower
-the position of the pocket slit towards the back suggests the skirt was re-pleated and reattached
-the sleeves have been lengthened
46. **Accession #50.6/1a**
**Object:** Mantua, silk damask  
**Date:** 1741-1743  
**Alteration Notes:**
-no obvious signs of alteration apart from the modern (museum) addition of tapes for hanging and mounting

47. **Accession #50.6/1b**
**Object:** Petticoat, silk damask  
**Date:** 1741-1743  
**Alteration Notes:**
-disintegrating waist binding has been covered at front with cotton (?) twill tape; otherwise appears unaltered

48. **Accession # 51.20/1 (examined 2008)**
**Object:** Fitted-back dress and petticoat, embroidered cotton muslin  
**Date:** 1790  
**Alteration Notes:**
-sleeves were originally open for approx 11cm from wrist, and there are two sets of worked eyelets on each sleeve for fitting – these opening have since been stitched closed  
-at the centre back of the petticoat the skirt and waistband are not attached: the skirt has drawstring casings sewn into it with strings inside to gather the fabric up as needed  
-the waistband tails are free to be pinned together to fit the wearer – whether this is original or a later alteration is unclear as yet

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49. Accession #53.101/9X1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk satin brocade
Date: fabric c. 1743 (also date of original construction?), post-1775 construction altered 1830s
Alteration Notes:
-almost totally remade possibly 1830s; fabric dates to 1740s – dress may originally date to that
time, but there is no evidence of it left; dress was made into 1770s/80s style at that time - sleeve
decoration, cut of en fourreau back and skirt pleating appear original to this time, although waist
and back bodice seams were clearly re-sewn later
-fancy dress or made for actual wear c. 1830s? All sewing is still by hand
-pocket slits still intact, but moved from the sides towards the back

50. Accession # 53.101/14 (examined 2008)
Object: Sack dress, silk ("lutstring")
Date: c. 1760-70, remodelled c. 1770-80
Alteration Notes:
-the skirts of the gown have been altered to a polonaise style, and to be worn without side hoops
for which it was originally designed: the pleats which would have accommodated the hoops have
been tucked up inside the dress and stitched to the lining at the waistline; this has pulled the
pocket slits towards the back of the gown
-matching silk thread covered buttons and cords have been added to loop up the skirt; the buttons
are sewn to the outside, the loops to the inside of the skirt
-the bodice appears to have been altered somewhat, perhaps to fit a different sized body
-the v-fronted waist has been disguised by repositioning the front edge trimmings, though it was
not done very neatly; the original angle of the waistline may still be seen on the interior of the
bodice
-the centre back pleats falling from the shoulders are no longer tacked down as stitch marks
indicate they were, but this may be due to time more than deliberate alteration
-the combination of the polonaise alterations and the replacement of the original petticoat with a
contrasting one indicate this gown’s current incarnation dates from the 1770s when both of the
above trends were fashionable
51. Accession #53.101/15
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1743-50 (and original construction?), current construction 1775-1780
Alteration Notes:
-this dress may originally have been made in the mid-18th century and then re-made in the 4th quarter of the century
-the piecing of the bodice along with numerous crease and stitch marks indicate alteration
-the bodice lining is cleanly made, suggesting it is new for the re-making
-sleeves are not pieced, indicating they were new-cut for the re-make
-crease marks on skirt suggest it may have been re-worked for the current style, the skirt lining would date to the re-make
-the metal hooks & eye are certainly not original, may be 19th century?

52. Accession #53.101/20
Object: Fitted-back dress, printed cotton
Date: original construction mid-18th century? altered/re-made 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
-this dress appears to have possibly originally been made mis-18th century but was largely re-made possibly for 19th century fancy dress
-the skirt has been re-sewn at the waist seam
-the sleeves have been removed and re-attached
-the sleeve ruffles are either later fabrications using left over cloth or have been re-made
-the bodice seams have been re-sewn in a more modern manner, albeit still hand sewn
-there is mending on the skirt fronts that uses self fabric as patches – so either contemporaneous with the original dress or part of the later re-make
-there is modern conservation mending along a tear in the left-hand skirt front
53. Accession #53.130/21
Object: Fitted-back dress, striped silk brocade
Date: fabric early 1770s, construction/alteration 1775-1785, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- this appears to have possibly been an early 1770s dress altered in the 1780s and/or in the 19th century – or the 1780s alterations were repaired in the 19th century
- the lower portion of the sleeves is a separate construction added on, sleeves were originally elbow length
- narrow fringe trim seems like a later addition; the waistline seam has been re-sewn, probably to move the skirt more towards the back (current placement of pocket slits also suggests this)
- dress back appears to have possibly originally been en fourreau – the seam at the centre back waist is roughly done
- stitch marks around the sleeve armhole indicate the sleeves have been let out/re-sewn
- the buttonholes are worked with the same thread as the trim is sewn to the bodice with, since it seems likely the trim is a later addition, so too would the buttons & buttonholes would be
- the sleeves and at least part of the waist seam are sewn with white cotton thread, suggesting 19th century interference
- there is a sizeable horizontal tear in the left-hand skirt front that is patched with cotton and synthetic (?) fabrics with cotton thread
- the bodice lining has been pieced and patched in a way that does not look original – rough sewing

54. Accession #53.146/1
Object: Fitted-back dress, embroidered cotton muslin
Date: 1776-1785
Alteration Notes:
- some stitching in bodice lining centre back seam appears to not be original, possibly a repair
- some thread/stitching along waist seam also appears not original, possibly also repair
- it is unclear when these repairs may have been made, thread looks bright & shiny
- may be otherwise unaltered
55. Accession #54.78/1 a&b
Object: Fitted-back dress with matching petticoat, figured silk
Date: 1778-1780
Alteration Notes:
-this dress appears to have been first made in the 1760s as an open fronted dress (bodice & skirt) possibly with robings and a stomacher – indicated by the falling sleeve cuffs, the cut of the sleeves, indications that the dress was once en fourreau, the matching and be-flounced petticoat and the trimming of the dress skirt fronts
-the dress was then re-made in the 1780s or early 1790s to the ‘zone’ front style at which time the skirt and bodice were cut apart from the back and the bodice back pleats undone, the entire bodice was likely re-lined at this point as well and the buttons & buttonholes added
-probably in the 19th century the dress was let out and possibly had some repairs (roughly) done
-the bodice was let out at the side back seams, the sleeves were let out along the seam and at the armhole
-the bodice centre back seam has stitching contemporary with this, but looks to be more of a repair than anything
-the petticoat does not seem to have been altered much, if at all – there is a repair at the back opening

56. Accession #55.47/1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk
Date: 1776-1780
Alteration Notes:
-darts were taken in the bodice fronts (by machine?) which have since been unpicked
-the armhole seams have been re-sewn – there are stitch marks and a different thread has been used
-there is mending/darning at the right hand underarm area of the bodice
-there were once hooks and eyes attached to the bodice front edges that have since been removed – it is unclear whether these would have been original or later additions
-some of the silk fringe trim is a different colour from the main, the style is the same however, so may have been different dye lot using different dye that faded more quickly than the rest?
-The dress originally had two pocket slits, the left hand one has been overcast stitched closed
-while the darts were certainly added in the 19th century, the dating of the rest of the slight alterations is unclear and uses silk thread that could be 18th century
Additional Notes:
-the original construction of the dress is late 18th century, not an earlier dress altered at that time

57. Accession #56.73/1 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask
Date: fabric c. 1738-43, construction style 1745-50
Alteration Notes:
-old stitch and crease marks on the back bodice indicate the gown was altered to make it larger at some point; there is no corresponding evidence on the bodice lining – was it perhaps entirely replaced at some point?
-stitch and crease marks on the sleeves suggest there was some manner of alteration or that the sleeves were made from fabric salvaged from elsewhere
-centre back skirt lining panel may or may not be original to the construction of the gown
-entire skirt lining may or may not be original to the construction of the gown

58. Accession #56.183/1 (examined 2008)
Object: Sack dress with petticoat, silk satin
Date: 1753, altered c. 1775? altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-significant alterations have been made to both the bodice front of the gown and the petticoat
-the front waistline of the gown has been raised
-the fronts of the robings have been unfolded and partially cut off, with separate pieces laid over top; one robing has been lost altogether and replaced with a silk satin ribbon, with the trimming re-applied overtop
-the centre back of the bodice lining has been taken in by adding a dart
-are the current lower sleeve cuff layers original? They are of a different, slightly darker silk satin
-the cords and buttons are likely later additions since the polonaise style is later than 1753
-the petticoat has become a hodge-podge of different types and shades of cream silk satin
-several of the seams have been re-sewn by machine
-the waist-binding is machine sewn
-machine sewn piecing of the upper part of the petticoat suggests fabric was added to lengthen the garment
-different tapes have been used to finish the petticoat hem on the same panels that are machine sewn
-it is unclear whether the piece of wool fabric in the upper back of the petticoat is original or not, it is machine sewn with the rest of the back panels, but shows evidence of having once been hand sewn
-an inseam pocket has been added to the right hand side of the petticoat made of silk satin and a cream coloured figured silk fabric

59. Accession #57.106 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, striped silk (“lutstring”)
Date: fabric c. 1770-77, construction style c. 1775-80
Alteration Notes:
- stitch and pin marks along with creases on the bodice indicate there was some form of alteration, perhaps the bodice was originally open with a folded robing?
- The cotton thread used on the hem suggests it was altered and taken up
- Stitch marks in one side of the underarm seam allowances suggests further alteration
- There are numerous stitch and pin marks in the bodice lining suggesting either alteration or that the bodice lining fabric was taken from another garment/source
- Dress is otherwise a good example of a late 18th C fashionable style

60. Accession # 57.106/8 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress with matching stomacher, figured silk
Date: fabric c. 1752-55, current construction 1770-75, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- darts in bodice front have been unpicked, stitch marks and creases remain – altered for a different wearer? Darts were approx 30cm long and 2.5-3.5cm wide at their widest parts
- cream coloured linen like lining have been appliquéd to bodice inside underneath armholes – to cover up staining, or support weakened fabric due to perspiration?
- Underams of gown are stained and fabric is weakened
- remnants of a cream coloured thin silk lining remain at front skirt edges and around the waist seam
-the lining appears to have been rather roughly cut out

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61. Accession #57.106/9 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, figured silk
Date: fabric c. 1760-65, construction style c. 1770-75
Alteration Notes:
-it is unclear whether the forepart was originally constructed in this form: this is a very atypical construction method, however there are no obvious signs of this piece having been part of a petticoat
-the stomacher has been stitched to one side of the bodice front
-forepart has been over pleated in one spot on either side
-the hems have been left raw edged, which is also unusual suggestion further possible alteration

62. Accession #62.7/1 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1762-69, construction style c. 1770-75
Alteration Notes:
-piecing of the bodice front sections and sleeves, the nature of the bodice back construction, and numerous crease and stitch marks suggest this dress was made from an earlier, different style – perhaps a sack dress
-apart from dart markings in the fronts the bodice lining appears unaltered and may have been newly constructed for the current style, which appears to have been let out at these darts for size change
-waistline of petticoat does not appear original, especially drawstring across back
-petticoat waistline appears to have originally been all pleated and perhaps tied at pocket slits, back was turned into drawstring and pocket slits were tacked closed at the waist
63. Accession # 62.163/1 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask
Date: fabric 1728-32, current construction 1740-50
Alteration Notes:
-skirt was originally faced or lined with wool fabric, this has been cut away
-would have originally been worn with a matching petticoat
-robing at shoulders and back neck have been partially folded to the inside – looks like an alteration
-otherwise unaltered

64. Accession #63.130/1a
Object: Fitted-back dress, printed cotton
Date: 1792-1800
Alteration Notes:
-it is possible this dress was altered to create a higher waist as the bodice extends below the sewn waistline and dips down at both centre front and centre back, however there are no left over stitch marks to prove this
-is it possible this dress was made right at the transition to the higher waistline and the customer changed their mind about the waist height during the process of making?
-Piecing on bodice fronts is in outer and lining fabrics – indication of alteration?

65. Accession #63.130/1b
Object: Petticoat, printed cotton
Date: 1792-1800
Alteration Notes:
-none, apart from loss of back waistband
66. Accession #63.135
Object: Fitted-back dress, figured silk brocade
Date: fabric 1751-1760 (and original construction?), current construction 1780-1790, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-it is possible this is a re-make of an older dress (especially if fabric is mid-century), however this is uncertain, it could be new-made from old fabric
-doesn’t appear to be a direct alteration
-lots of later (19th century?) repairs made at different times as various areas of original stitching gave out so that much of the current stitching, particularly at any stress points, has been re-done, possibly for later theatrical of fancy dress use
-the metal eye dates from at least this period

67. Accession #64.120/1
Object: Fitted-back dress with matching petticoat, figured silk brocade
Date: original construction 1760s? altered 1778-1785?
Alteration Notes:
-appears to be a 1760s dress altered post-1770
-the bodice front is pieced to make the front edges meet
-the shoulder bands appear to be remnants of robings and the armhole stitching is consistent with this
-the pocket slits would not have originally been at the side back
-the sleeves show evidence of alteration with uncleanly sewn hem edges and possibly altered seams
-most of the alterations, however, are carefully and cleanly executed, as was the re-cutting and sewing of the bodice back

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68. Accession #64.130

Object: Fitted-back dress and dress pieces, silk (“lutstring”)

Date: original construction c. 1776? altered c. 1799? altered 19th century

Alteration Notes:
- extensively altered
- not only are fabric pieces used in different directions, it is not all the same fabric – similar yellow silk has been substituted in areas
- extensive piecing of bodice fronts and sleeves clearly indicate significant alteration
- skirt has been both raised and re-pleated; the lower portions of sleeves are later additions and very bell-like curious shape (do not seem consistent with c.1800 styles any more than with c.1780-90 styles)
- stitch marks on dress skirt back show v-shape of original back waistline
- pleats in sleeve head have been unpicked
- sleeves are sewn into dress with machine stitching
- lining of shoulder straps is a loose weave cotton fabric, not 18th century, shoulder straps are pieced with fabric different from original – this combined with some of the piecing of the sleeve may indicate a much later alteration for size, possibly for theatre (?)

Additional Notes:
- presence of a falling cuff layer, ruched sleeve cuffs (c. 1780) and fabric pieces/scrap is very interesting, possibly suggesting multiple instances of alteration/modification
- story may be: falling cuff suggests first construction may have been 1760s-70s, then remodeled c. 1780, remodelled again c. 1800, altered for size (if not also stylistically) late 19th/early 20th century
69. Accession #65.80/1
Object: Fitted-back dress (polonaise?), cotton muslin sprigged with silver
Date: 1781-1785
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration, dress has unfinished appearance instead
-there has been some mending, however, at the back of the dress around the waist

70. Accession # 69.137 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: c. 1750-55
Alteration Notes:
-gown has been significantly altered at some point and made much larger: a darker coloured piece of linen has been inserted into the centre back of the lining, the silk of the bodice back has been re-worked to fit – there are a lot of stitch marks in this area
-small triangular gussets have been inserted into the bodice side back seam at the armhole in the lining, and wedges in the fabric that extend to the waistline
-wedges of silk have been inserted into the sleeve seam, the linen lining has been left with a corresponding gap
-there is a small contemporary repair on the right hand bodice front near the top where a piece of the silk fabric has been laid under a hole to hide it
-seams in the bodice front have also been altered with wedges of the silk fabric possible inserted into the side front; the outside edges of the robing have been sewn down
-the pocket slits have been left, and now sit towards the back of the skirt rather than directly at the sides
-gown has been considerably sweated in – altered/repaired for fancy dress use?
-There is no accompanying Petticoat or stomacher, which would have been the original outfit
-Crease marks in the skirt near the waistline indicate the pleating has been changed to accommodate an altered bodice

71. Accession #70.44 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1756, construction style c. 1760-70
Alteration Notes:
-dress appears to have been a 1750s-60s style that was remodelled c. 1770s
-sleeves would originally have had cuffs, which have been removed
-back neck yoke piece has been replaced with a different though harmonious fabric
-passementarie trimming appears to be part of the c. 1770s remodelling
-stitchmarks and creases at the side back seams indicate the bodice was let out
-it is unclear whether the front bodice sections that meet at centre front are original

72. Accession #73.45/1 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1721-1730, current garment style 1770s-80s, altered 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
-gown has been significantly altered – more than once
-evidence of robings shoulders and on bodice front in the form of crease lines and stitch marks remain indicating the gown was originally open front worn with a stomacher
-front bodice edges have been pieced in order to make them meet at the centre front
-bodice back is covered with old stitch marks and creases suggesting it was originally pleated, or perhaps even a sack back (stitch mark lines are very straight)
-skirt has pocket slits which have since been sewn shut
-tapes have been attached inside the skirt near the waistband and approx halfway down to allow a polonaise look to be formed
-outer fabric of underarm join between sleeve and bodice has been extensively repaired with a plain silk and the brocaded motifs appliqué on
-bodice also appears to have been let out considerably
-stitch marks at the bottoms of the sleeves suggest they were once finished with self fabric cuffs or ruffles, consistent with the (likely) original style; the current sheer and lace ruffles are later additions

73. Accession #76.144/1
Object: Fitted-back dress, printed cotton
Date: original construction 1781-1790 ? current construction 1795-1805
Alteration Notes:
-this dress may have originally been made in the late 1780s/early 1790s and altered around the turn of the 19th century – the bodice is longer than appears on the outside, the skirt may have been raised
-the sleeves are pieced at the lower edges – either to lengthen them slightly or straighten the line?
-there is some conservation mending on various areas of the skirt; the metal hook and eye seems unlikely to be original
-there is also a soiled crease line several inches above the current hemline that strongly suggests the original hem was let down; the possible alterations that were done have been generally worked quite carefully and neatly

74. Accession #85.553
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric and original construction 1755-1763, altered c. 1778-85, altered again 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-bodice front appears to be in ‘zone’ style of early 1790s
-the ribbon trim is not the original robing, the original robing still exists in situ but is sewn down
-position of pocket slits towards back indicates the skirt was re-pleated and re-sewn
-sleeve seams have been re-sewn
-bodice side seams have been let out
-bodice centre fronts appear to have originally been a compère stomacher front
-crudeness of buttons on bodice back suggests they are later additions; this dress appears to have been first made in 1750s, remade in 1780s-early 90s, then altered for fit in the 19th century – some of which was subsequently undone

75. Accession #89.56a
Object: Sack dress, quilted silk satin
Date: 1751-1755
Alteration Notes:
-may be unaltered
-there is a small wedge pieced into bodice side seams at underarm, but it is unclear whether this is original or an alteration for size (possibly an alteration performed during initial construction?)

**Additional Notes:**
- unsure of the date given, I thought compere fronts didn’t come about until the 1760s; see article in *Costume* 24, 1990, “An Eighteenth-Century Quilted Dress” by Kay Staniland

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### 76. Accession #89.56b
**Object:** Petticoat, quilted silk satin  
**Date:** 1751-1755  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-no obvious sign of alteration

### 77. Accession #89.56c
**Object:** Stomacher, quilted silk satin  
**Date:** 1751-1755  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-no signs of alteration

### 78. Accession #A2291
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, printed cotton  
**Date:** 1771-1780  
**Alteration Notes:**
-appears to be altered late 18th century from 1770s
-dress was originally en fourreau which has been cut across the back and seamed to appear a straight, high line
-front waist line shows signs of re-stitching as well
-black silk taffeta pieces have been applied to the lower corners inside the skirt side slits
-it appears hooks and eyes/loops were once sewn to bodice fronts, it is unclear whether those would have been original or a 19th century addition
-it is also unclear whether the bodice front edge under lap and facing are original

79. Accession #A6853 (examined 2008)
Object: Court mantua, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1752-55, construction style c. 1750-60
Alteration Notes:
-crease marks in the centre back bodice pleats indicate alteration, perhaps for size
-sleeves have been significantly altered to make them larger, and several areas are pieced and patched
-roblings also show crease marks, further indicating alteration
-pieces of silk and linen lining have been inserted into the back shoulder areas of the robing – it is unclear whether this is original or part of an alteration

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80. Accession #A6853b
Object: Petticoat, silk brocade
Date: 1752-1760
Alteration Notes:
-petticoat was originally pleated at sides and thus not as wide as it now it, the sides have been comparatively roughly re-stitched; waist band/binding has been repaired/altered with added modern cloth (conservation?)
-it is a little unclear whether the drawstring back waistline is original or part of the repair/alteration
-the original right-hand pocket slit has been partially sewn up at the waist; the silk lining shows previous stitching lines independent of the alterations to the petticoat
-a repair has been made to an area of silk lining at the bottom left-hand side at the back using loose herringbone stitch – possibly contemporaneous?
(see above image)
81. **Accession** #A7560  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, silk brocade  
**Date:** fabric and original construction 1745-1750, altered 1801-1806, altered 19th century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
- this is a dress made from an older one, not just old fabric, indicated by the extensive piecing  
- the bodice extends below the sewn waistline with some stitch marks at the lower edges indicating the skirt was raised  
- Natalie Rothstein thinks this is made for theatre, I think if this is so it was contemporary to the early 19th century because the construction is all completely consistent with late 18th/early 19th century and hardly anyone bothered with that in the later 19th century; apart from lace at neckline (sewn with cotton thread and probably from later 19th century) all the materials are consistent with late 18th/early 19th century

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82. **Accession** #A7562  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)  
**Date:** 1775-1780, altered 19th century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
- while the bodice front is in 1770s-80s style with meeting front edges, the en fourreau back is in the wide style of early-mid 18th century, suggesting possible alteration  
- there are creases and stitch marks on the bodice front indicating alteration, but it is unclear if any of this is from unfolded robings  
- there is none of the seaming/piecing at the front shoulders that is typical of turning an open front into a closed front  
- elbow-length sleeves are more pre-1770s, stitch marks indicate something used to be sewn to the bottom sleeve edges  
- there are several 19th century alterations including the cotton tape inside the neckline, possibly the white ribbon around the outside of the neckline, the white satin ribbon down the remaining left-hand front of the skirt, cotton thread stitching of the lining waist seam, metal boning and casings in bodice front, metal hooks and thread eyes at bodice front edges  
- the sleeves are sewn into the armhole with silk thread, but of a thin type, not the thick silk thread seen on 18th century construction
Additional Notes:
-possibly a pre-1770s dress altered post-1770, but very uncertain; definitely altered in 19th century

83. Accession #A7564 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: c. 1768-80, probably altered/mended 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- sleeve seams have been taken in slightly, not very well sewn
- there are some loose threads still in the fabric of the bodice back, it is unclear what these might indicate
- it is also unclear whether skirt facings are original – they were certainly sewn onto the hem together as the same thread is used throughout, and the stitching is continuous
- there is evidence of what may be stitch marks on the bodice front and near the front waistline seam

84. Accession #A7566
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: 1776-1785, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- piecing of bodice fronts and extensive piecing of bodice lining suggests the dress may have been the product of re-making, but this is far from certain
- what is certain is 19th/20th century alterations: skirt lining, blue ribbon binding, patching of bodice at underarms, darning/mending, current hem
85. **Accession # A7567 (examined 2008)**
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
**Date:** c. 1745-55

**Alteration Notes:**
- Crease lines and stitching holes at underarm seam indicate sleeves were altered (let out) at some point
- Skirt of gown is closed with a seam at centre front has “bib” front effect: skirt front is separate from bodice, top edge is pleated and finished with a folded over matching yellow silk tape/ribbon, these have long tails that would presumably have tied around the waist the only place the skirt front is attached to the rest of the gown is to the main skirt at seams 6cm from bodice front edges; the seam itself begins 25 cm below the waist seam; the slit edges (which are selvedges) are turned under
- Stitch marks close to the selvedge edges of skirt opening slits suggests these may have originally been seamed closed
- What appear to be old stitch marks are on every skirt piecing seam, and there are several areas where they are found on the bodice – robings, side back seams. This would suggest that the gown almost as a whole was altered in some way, perhaps to fit another wearer; is it possible also that the skirt could have originally been open?
- At the back, the top edge of the fabric itself has also been folded over (5cm at centre front which tapers to nothing at side edges) and the edge left raw; stitch marks in this suggest the current form is some manner of alteration

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86. **Accession # A7940 (examined 2008)**
**Object:** Sack dress with matching petticoat, silk jacquard
**Date:** 1775-80

**Alteration Notes:**
- There are some thread remnants attached to the right hand bodice lining
- Otherwise there is little evidence of alteration or remodelling
87. Accession #A10002  
Object: Fitted-back dress, shantung silk brocade  
Date: original construction mid-18th century? altered 1775-1785?  
Alteration Notes:  
-the piecing of the bodice fronts and at the front underarm areas of the bodice along with piecing of the sleeves to lengthen them suggest alteration and re-making, as does the turning of the fabric - there is some mending/darning of the silk that may modern conservation  
-dress may have been originally made early-mid-18th century then fully re-made in 1770s-80s re-using some parts  
-the skirt and front waist appear to have been subsequently altered with the skirt front edges moved farther towards the side of the dress – possibly the dress was made en fourreau in the 1770s, then altered in the late 1770s/80s?  
-The waist seam and some other areas are sewn with a bright yellow silk thread that does not appear to be original to the likely re-making/turning  
Additional Notes:  
-it may be possible that the family story of this being a mid-18th century wedding dress is true, and that the dress was kept and re-made later on

88. Accession #A12398  
Object: Sack dress, silk satin jacquard  
Date: 1761-1775, altered 19th century  
Alteration Notes:  
-dress appears to have been altered/mended in the 19th century  
-compère front does not match and is stitched into dress with cotton thread – suggests 19th century work  
-the grey cotton portion of the skirt hem facing is at least 19th century  
-sleeve seams and part of the side seams have been re-sewn in odd configuration and with cotton thread  
-several areas throughout the dress show stitching in cotton thread – possibly 19th century repairs
-there are thread remnants on the lower edges of the sleeves underneath the fall cuff, suggesting either that the cuff was originally sewn there or that there was something else (another flounce of the cuff?) once sewn there

89. Accession #A12407
Object: Dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1762-65, remade c. 1775? Altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-gathering in skirt is likely 19th century, pleats in skirt are likely original to either 18th century dress or 18th century re-make
-while the construction of the dress is primarily 18th century, some threads are cotton (thus, possibly 19th century) suggesting some re-stitching
Additional Notes:
-an 18th century dress possibly used for theatre/fancy dress in the 18th century – a very interesting and almost unique example if so
-appears to be attempting a 16th/17th century-inspired style

90. Accession #A12409a
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: 1769-1770, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
dress is much altered, it is not entirely clear when all of the alterations occurred
-some are clearly 19th century – metal hook and eye at top of bodice lining front edges with crease and stitch marks indicating the front edges of the silk were pleated back to allow the hook and eye to meet, alteration of skirt at waistline, darts/tucks in bodice sides, tucks at front shoulders at neckline
-some may be 18th century: piecing and patching of sleeves, turn down of back neckline edge (?)
-there has also been much mending throughout the dress, probably over time in the 19th century to wear for theatre or fancy dress

91. **Accession #A12409b**
**Object:** Petticoat
**Date:** 1769-1770, altered 19th century

**Alteration Notes:**
- the gathering of the waist and the ribbon waistband are certainly 19th century alterations
- piecing of cotton and silk blend fabric also likely date from this time, the silk blend is further used to back darning/mending of the dress skirt and

92. **Accession #A12410a**
**Object:** Sack dress, silk brocade
**Date:** c. 1765 (and/or post-1770?)

**Alteration Notes:**
- dress has been widened across back shoulders approx 1” – the back pleats have been rearranged and a piece of silk ribbon tape interrupts the back neckline self fabric binding

**Additional Notes:**
- the construction techniques of seams with edges finished before joining, hem facing, and clean finished armhole seam allowances are more consistent with post-1770 than 1760s
93. Accession #A12410b
Object: Stomacher, silk brocade
Date: c. 1765 (and/or post-1770?)
Alteration Notes:
o no signs of alteration

94. Accession #A12410c
Object: Petticoat, silk brocade
Date: c. 1765 (and/or post 1770?)
Alteration Notes:
o no signs of alteration

95. Accession # A12411/1 (examined 2008)
Object: Sack dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1740, construction style c. 1750-60, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
gown appears to have originally had robings down the front bodice edges: there are remains of this over the shoulders, and a seam near the front edges looks like it could be converted robing -there are additional seams in the bodice front that suggest it was significantly altered, as such seams are atypical of this period -hem facing is modern – conservation?
-Bodice lining construction and finishing is generally rough, suggesting that significant alterations were made at some point, perhaps not long after the dress was originally made – style remains consistent with 1750-60s
-There are remnants of pink cotton twill tape near the inner front edges of the bodice, along with fragments of a white coloured gauze fabric near the shoulders
-The inner front bodice has been darted near the front edges at the waistline seam
-The metal hooks sewn into the bodice are likely later additions
96. **Accession #** A12413 (examined 2008)
**Object:** Sack dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade
**Date:** 1762-67, probably altered 19th century
**Alteration Notes:**
- Pocket openings in skirt side seams have been sewn shut with backstitching
- There are stitch marks in sleeve lining approx. 1-2” above sleeve ruffle join, which may have been left from stitched in lace sleeve ruffles
- Left-hand sleeve seam appears to have been taken in; right-hand sleeve seam is not taken in, but shows evidence of having been with stitch marks and thread fragments remaining
- Brass hooks inside left bodice front are not original

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97. **Accession #** A12521 (examined 2008)
**Object:** Sack dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade
**Date:** fabric 1747-50, construction 1760-70, altered 19th century
**Alteration Notes:**
- Although the gown likely originates from mid-century, there is little of its construction left
- It is unclear whether the current construction style was a contemporary 1760s-70s remodelling, or a 19th remake
- Bodice lining has been removed
- Was originally an open-fronted gown: the stomacher has been bisected and altered to create compère front (a 1760s-70s fashion)
- Appearance of falling cuffs is inconsistent with 18th C styles – suggestive of 19th C re-interpretation
- Nearly all seams appear to have been taken apart and re-sewn
- Facings in gown skirt are likely 19th C
- Petticoat was taken apart and cut up, then re-mounted onto a linen base

98. **Accession #** A12629a
**Object:** Bodice/jacket with matching skirt, embroidered silk
**Date:** 1750-1799
**Alteration Notes:**
- Some repair stitching at sleeve seams and possibly centre back seam in lining near neck edge
-hook and loop may or may not be original/contemporary

Additional Notes:
-appears made-to-purpose for a child, largely indicated by embroidery design
-repairs and small alterations (see A12629b) suggest the ensemble was used by more than one child
-skirt waistband fastenings have been altered, unclear which are original, seems likely that they were changed to accommodate growing

99. Accession # A12978 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1743-44, construction 1750-55
Alteration Notes:
-the gown appears to have been let out for a larger body, by the looks of creases and stitch mark lines on the bodice back, robings, sleeves, bodice front
-bodice lining has no centre back seam as is usual, therefore to accommodate the letting out of the outer layer, a triangular wedge of matching linen fabric has been inserted into the top of the centre back and sewn in with slip stitch
-it is not readily apparent that the style has been changed in any significant way
-the weights in the sleeves have been removed

100. Accession #A12981 (examined 2008)
Object: Sack dress with matching petticoat piece, striped silk
Date: c. 1765-70, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-dress has been significantly altered
-at least parts of bodice lining are replacements – appears that back lining was originally open and either laced or tied for fitting
-is pocket slit trimming original? Very unusual for the time
-sleeve and underarm seams have been altered and pieces of fabric inserted
-only a portion of the petticoat remains in the shape of a forepart or apron
-stomacher is not original
-has overall appearance of a dress altered in 19th C for fancy dress or theatre and not treated very well

101. Accession #A13038 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1718-20, construction c. 1770-80
Alteration Notes:
- there are a lot of stitch marks in the fabric all over the bodice, however the construction is neat and clean
- this suggests that an earlier dress may have been completely unpicked and used to make an entirely new dress with a new lining in the bodice
- the dress does not appear to have been altered since it was made up c. 1770-80
- therefore it is a good example for that period, and interesting for having been made from older fabric that was something else once upon a time

102. Accession #A15044X1
Object: Sack dress, silk brocade
Date: 1781-1785, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- much altered
- not sure if lacing eyelets in stomacher and front-most plackets are original – would have been handy for pregnancy (?)
- bodice side seams are re-done; sleeve seams have been taken in and falling cuffs and sleeve edge finishing appears to be later work, pretty rough execution; cotton plackets are certainly later additions
- hem facing may or may not be original
- drawstring configuration at sides of skirt at waist are later additions, along with the ribbons used for ties and bows on sleeves
- all alterations appear to be 19th century

103. Accession #A20194
Object: Fitted-back dress, embroidered cotton muslin
Date: 1770-1785 (original construction); 1793-1800 (current style)
Alteration Notes:
- sleeves appear to have been altered – possibly taken in a little along the vertical seam, or re-sewn
- the shoulder bands look like robing remnants, the manner of armhole stitching is consistent with this
- the bodice back appears to have originally been a form of en fourreau
- it seems possible this was originally an early 1770s dress; there is quite a bit of darning around the pocket slits

104. Accession #A20195 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, striped silk (“lutstring”)
Date: c. 1770-80, altered/cleaned 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
- stitch marks on the bodice back suggest significant alteration, although what it was is unclear
- raw edges of bodice side back lining pieces is very unusual, suggesting this is not an original seam
- sleeves and sleeve linings have been altered, possibly for size, with a triangular piece inserted into the seam near the armhole
- lower edges of sleeves and sleeve linings are raw and there are stitch marks on the silk indicating that some manner of original finishing is missing or has been undone
- stitching down of robings is not original
- the silver coloured metal eyes used for polonaise cords may be original, the black ones are likely not
-hand of silk fabric suggests it may have been cleaned

105. Accession #NN8192
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: 1746 (textile?) - 1775
Alteration Notes:
-hem of skirt front edges appears to have been let down, with the bottom edge left raw (probably not a contemporary action)
-the amount of piecing at the top of the skirt suggests this dress may have been new-made from and older garment, the fabric is certainly much older than 1770s
-the side back seams of the bodice lining appear to have been let out, however there are no corresponding indications on the silk – could the bodice lining have been re-used from another garment?
-No other obvious signs of alteration

106. Accession #Z656a
Object: Stomacher,
Date: 1766-1775
Alteration Notes:
-see Z656X1

107. Accession #Z656X1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk jacquard
Date: 1771-1780
Alteration Notes:
-dress has been turned
- bodice front is pieced to fill it
- crease and stitch marks in bodice back indicates alternate former pleating arrangement, or piece was taken from elsewhere on the original dress
- grosgrain part of hem facing is replacement
- bodice lining dates to re-make; survival of stomacher, made with dress fabric elements, also proves dress style was altered in addition to turning

108. Accession # Z657X1
Object: Fitted-back dress, printed cotton, silk
Date: 1785-1792
Alteration Notes:
- no signs of alteration, not even the piecing at the bodice neckline
- there is conservation darning on the right-hand bodice front near the waist

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109. Accession # Z661 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk jacquard
Date: fabric 1760s, garment style originally 1760s-70s? re-modelled early 20th century?
Alteration Notes:
- extensive alterations have been performed: the entire gown appears to have been taken apart and re-sewn together in the 20th century
- self bias strips have been harvested from somewhere and used as trimming bands
- cream coloured silk satin fabric has been used to face both bottom sleeve edges and skirt front edges
- white silk ribbon with blue plaid design have been roughly stitched onto the bodice fronts near the neckline; they look like they were originally longer and possibly used to tie in a bow at the centre front
- bodice seam have all been redone: by hand, with silk and lining layers worked together, but rougher than original construction methods

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-original bodice lining has been replaced with modern cotton canvas or drill-like fabric sleeves lined in lightweight linen – original?

110. Accession #Z662 (examined 2008)
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric c. 1718-1720, construction c. 1750s
Alteration Notes:
- there are stitch marks and creases on the robings, and part of the bodice back indicating some manner of alteration was undertaken
- skirt hem has been let down at the front
- stitch marks and creases in the bodice front suggest it may have been let out at some point
- edges of robings over the shoulders and back neck yoke piece have been left raw on the inside of the bodice – this is a little unusual, further evidence of alteration/remodelling?
- There are 2 sets of pocket slits on either side of the skirt, on is very near the front skirt edges, the other is a the side; although the set closest to the skirt edges have been left open, both sets are not likely original

111. Accession #Z665a
Object: Fitted-back dress, striped cotton muslin
Date: 1787-1794
Alteration Notes:
- the extension of the bodice below the waist line suggests the skirt may have been raised, however there are few or no remaining stitch marks from a previous waist seam
- if this was altered, there was likely significant alteration to the skirt from an open front to a closed, bib front, however the workmanship is very clean and neat
- the sleeves may have been shortened slightly, approx ½”
- the presence of a matching petticoat is also suggestive, this is not needed with a closed dress
Additional Notes:
-I wonder if it is possible that the style of dress was changed during the process of original construction, being at a turbulent period when much change was occurring in a short time.

112. Accession #Z1083aCOS
Object: Sack dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1760s, construction c.1780-1800
Alteration Notes:
-fabric appears to be 1760s-ish, perhaps this was originally a 1760s-ish dress re-made (rather than just altered) c. 1780, much of the construction is late 18th century (whipped and non-lapped seams, fully set-in sleeves, waistline extends towards back rather than stopping at side and dips towards a deep point)
-construction, however, is not pristine, the pocket slits sit towards the back
-the waistline extends towards the back awkwardly with the waistline appearing to have been raised somewhat at the sides; the bodice front has a hacked about appearance
-falling cuffs were out of fashion before 1780
-centre back piece of bodice lining is not original; bodice piecing is not original
-dress was further modified later with the addition of darts in the bodice fronts, which required re-sewing of the skirt at the fronts, it appears the trim was sewn/re-sewn with the darts in place
-the left-hand dart was later unpicked and the skirt re-sewn again
-the hooks and thread loops may have been added at this time as letting out the one dart allows for the underlap created by the hooks attaching to the loops
Additional Notes:
-with the waist line cut higher at the sides my fantasy story is that perhaps this dress was re-made to wear at court in the late 18th century

113. Accession #Z1083bCOS
Object: Petticoat fragment, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1760s, construction c.1780-1800
**Alteration Notes:**
-back of petticoat has been removed
-waist edge binding is likely not original; metal hooks are later additions

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**Museum of London - Bodices/Jackets**

**114. Accession #28.53/2**
**Object:** Bodice, silk brocade  
**Date:** 1701-1730? altered 19th century  
**Alteration Notes:**
-very heavily altered, seems most likely for fancy dress  
-probably originally an early 18th century mantua cut down and pieced into this bodice  
-centre front panel was the stomacher which has been cut lengthways down the middle to make it separable and sewn onto the original bodice front edges with hooks and eyes added  
-bodice ‘skirt’ has been added straight across natural waistline, possible using some original pleating of the old dress skirt; extensive piecing and patching all over the bodice  
-a piece of cotton has been added to the underside of the right-hand shoulder strap  
-a large number ‘1’ has been inked onto underside of the right hand front edge  
-very little remains of the original construction

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**115. Accession #33.325**
**Object:** Jacket, silk brocade  
**Date:** 1770-1780  
**Alteration Notes:**
-a horizontal tuck has been taken along the waistline from the side back to the front edges of the skirt, this has been sewn carefully with prick stitches
-there are stitch marks on either side of the side back bodice seams that show the bodice was let out through the upper back, there is some piecing in the sleeves that may be part of this alteration, although the work was carried out very carefully and neatly so it is difficult to tell with certainty

116. Accession# 33.326  
Object: Jacket  
Date: 1775-1785  
Alteration Notes:  
-possibly remade from a slightly older dress, there are stitch marks from former seams  
-some self-fabric patching at the bodice sides  
-metal hooks and eyes may actually be original to the jacket

117. Accession #34.229/2  
Object: Bodice, silk brocade  
Date: 1775-1778  
Alteration Notes:  
-one centre front waist tab is covered with carefully pieced silk while the other is covered with linen – suggesting the latter is not original  
-the shoulder straps are overlapping at the front neckline of the bodice and are roughly tacked down  
-there appears to be two levels of quality in the work – one quite high & likely original, the other rather rough suggesting modification of a not entirely clear kind  
-Natalie Rothstein suggests this is ‘rich peasant’ clothing but I’m skeptical – just how many rich peasants were there? I think this is something else, but am not sure what

118. Accession # 35.44/9 (examined 2008)  
Object: Jacket, silk (“lutstring”)

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119. Accession #37.91/2
Object: Bodice/dress part, embroidered silk
Date: 1785-1790
Alteration Notes:
-the front seam in the bodice is certainly not original
-there are fold lines in the bodice fronts suggesting alteration
-there are additional sets of eyelets worked in the linen lining close to the front edges of the bodice
-the shoulder bands have the appearance of being remnants of robes – the mode of armhole sewing is consistent with that type of configuration
-the sleeves have been taken in or let out at the seam, both the silk and lining together and the edges have been left raw
-this has also resulted in an unfinished portion of the sleeve hem; stitching on the back shoulders appears re-worked

120. Accession #39.106
Object: Bodice/jacket, silk brocade
Date: 1740-1744
Alteration Notes:
-appears to be mostly unaltered
-there is a piece of cotton fabric tacked roughly into the left-hand underarm on the inside, seems like a later addition but this is not certain
-the lowest set of fabric pieces holding in the back of the bodice is a different colour and textile from the rest suggesting it may be a replacement, but also far from certain
121. Accession #39.182/5
Object: Jacket (spencer), silk (“lutstring”)
Date: 1791-1805, probably altered/cleaned 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- there appears to have been some alteration to the centre front edges – beside the pieced sections are prior stitch and crease marks
- the lining is also pieced in the same places suggesting an addition, perhaps indicating enlargement for a different wearer from the original or change in size of the owner; “E.A. Abbey” is stamped inside the right-hand front of the bodice
- bodice has a slightly unexpected texture: very soft and floppy – could this indicate having been dry-cleaned?

122. Accession #39.182/6
Object: Jacket (spencer), silk sating
Date: 1800-1825
Alteration Notes:
- there are no obvious signs of alteration

123. Accession #47.12/1
Object: Jacket, silk brocade
Date: fabric mid-18th century, construction 1795-1800
Alteration Notes:
- this garment appears to be the result of using fabric from an older garment to make a completely new one
- it is very difficult to tell if there is anything of an older garment left in the current construction – perhaps the bodice lining?
- there may have been an alteration to the jacket itself with the lengthening of the sleeves
- the current style is similar to that of very late 18th century riding jackets
124. Accession #47.44/3
Object: Jumps, embroidered linen
Date: 1776?-1785?
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration whatsoever

125. Accession# 47.44/4
Object: Jumps,
Date: 1766?-1775?
Alteration Notes:
-the lining has been pieced from different fabrics and applied overtop a pre-existing wool lining
-garment appears in otherwise original condition

126. Accession #47.53/5
Object: Jacket (spencer), figured silk
Date: 1795-1815
Alteration Notes:
-it appears there used to be a drawstring sewn to the underside of the spencer front approx 2” up from the hem
-the spencer appears to have been let out or enlarged at seams of the back shoulder yoke and centre back pieces, there are strips of less faded fabric here and old stitch marks

127. Accession #50.41/3
Object: Bodice/jacket, figured silk
Date: 1791-1820?
Alteration Notes:
-this bodice appears to have been cut down from a slightly earlier dress (perhaps 1780s-90s)
-the bodice fronts have been pieced so as to close at centre front and allow for the fuller bosom at the turn of the 19th c
-there are also old fold marks on bodice fronts possibly suggesting they were once folded into robings

-bodice is not quite so high-waisted as directoire/regency styles suggesting a transitional stage (ie 1790s)
-lower edge of bodice back is very rough, indicating it has been re-worked
-the shoulder pieces are later additions and however they would have been originally covered by the silk has been lost in the alteration
-there are old stitch lines and marks in the bodice back pieces suggesting significant alteration – possible both for style and size
-there is a horizontal line of stitch marks across the bodice back and to the side/side fronts above the current lower edge suggesting there may have been a skirt once attached in the manner of 1790s open gowns
-there are old stitch marks in the lining as well
-there is a piece of wool cloth tacked to the left-hand underarm seam on the inside

128. Accession #53.101/3a
Object: Bodice, theatrical bodice with sleeves, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1700-1770, bodice 1870-1900
Alteration Notes:
-18th century fabric used for sleeves of theatrical bodice of a vaguely renaissance style

129. Accession #53.101/3b
Object: Bodice, theatrical bodice with sleeves, silk satin brocade
Date: 1700-1760(fabric); 1870-1900 (bodice)
Alteration Notes
-18th century fabric used for sleeves of theatrical bodice of a vaguely renaissance style
130. Accession #54.76/3 & 54.76/4
Object: Bodice and bodice lining, silk jacquard
Date: fabric & bodice lining 1768-1772, bodice 1840-1850
Alteration Notes:
- a small triangular gusset has been inserted into the lower bodice edge below each underarm
- the edges are raw but the herringbone stitching is neat and clean
- there are faint indications of old fold marks and possible stitch lines throughout the bodice lining, but it is uncertain what they may indicate – if anything; the appearance of possible remnants of robings on the shoulders would suggest alteration from an open fronted bodice to a closed one, but there are no other obvious indications of this
- there is a bunch of fabric scraps with bits of original stitching evident, but may be impossible to tell where any of them were on the original garment

131. Accession #58.45a-c
Object: Jacket, silk velvet
Date: 1751?-1800?
Description:
red velvet bolero/short jacket with long sleeves and ‘wings’ at the shoulders; heavily embroidered with narrow gold braid/soutache; either Turkish or Turkish/Oriental-inspired
Construction Details: general construction is in keeping with typical 18th century European garment construction, leading one to suspect it is inspired and not actually Turkish in origin
Alteration Notes:
- no discernible alterations apart from one missing sleeve ‘wing’

132. Accession #71.100
Object: Bedgown, quilted linen
Date: 1741-1760
Alteration Notes:
- the cotton piece around the neck may not be original
- inside the neck edge are pieces of cotton and linen – the cotton stitched over the linen – this is also suggestive of later work, possibly repair?
- there are small patch-like gussets under the arms in a cotton with a narrow woven stripe
133. Accession #2003.59
Object: Bedgown, quilted silk
Date: 1731-1740
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration – or even wearing

134. Accession #A7590
Object: Bodice, silk satin
Date: 1666-1675? 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
-the shoulder seams have been altered, they are at the top of the shoulder and have been sewn right sides together (silk and lining as one) with seam allowances left raw on the inside
-overall, while there are not a lot of signs of alteration there is something ‘off’ about this piece: the lace appears 19th century trying to look van Dyke-ish; the eyelets are metal not sewn; only the front area is boned and the decoration runs around the back of the piece rather than at centre front as is usual for the 17th century; the style of the waist tabs looks wrong; a ribbon waist stay has been sewn to the inside of the centre back – this is a 19th century convention; however, most of the stitching techniques employed are consistent with late 17th through 18th century construction, and the lining is the right kind of linen
-perhaps some kind of older bodice was used to create this one

135. Accession #A7591
Object: Jumps, wool and printed linen
Date: 1741-1750
Alteration Notes:
-the tape shoulder straps do not appear original, rather the original ones appear to have come from the back and tied or pinned to the front, these have been cut off and roughly neatened on the outside
-there is some patching on both the inside and outside of the jumps
-it is unclear whether the boned centre front pieces are original, they are attached crudely to the front edges of the garment
-there has been significant mending of the wool on the back of the jumps

136. Accession #A7941  
**Object:** Bodice/ jacket, silk brocade  
**Date:** fabric 1740-45, construction 1780-90?  
**Alteration Notes:**
- there are many signs of significant alteration to this garment
- it appears likely it started out as a dress made close to the time the fabric was produced, later in the century it was altered into a jacket, which shows some evidence of having been altered still later
- the bottom portion of the sleeves have been pieced symmetrically on both sides to form wrist-length sleeves from originally elbow-length ones
- the sleeve linings are not pieced the same way, indicating that the current lining is not the original one
- the back pieces show old crease and stitch marks indicating the pieces were cut from a differently constructed bodice – the lower sleeve pieces also shows these suggesting they were taken from leftover excess of the original construction
- stitch marks at the sleeve heads indicate they were removed/modified at the time of the jacket’s making
- the trimming is certainly a later addition which hold in some of the fullness of the basque
- there are seams at the front and back shoulders that do not appear original
- a further alteration is the unpicking of stitched down pleats at the sides of the jacket to enlarge it although no alteration was made to the trimming at the hem and the pleats are kept closed there

137. Accession #A12393  
**Object:** Bodice, silk brocade  
**Date:** 1750-52  
**Alteration Notes:**
- this piece is the result of extensive alteration and modification
- the brocade side of the bodice to the waist was certainly the back of a dress bodice
- the original back neckline of this older dress is clearly visible, along with armholes, and has been filled in with pieces of the brocade fabric; the sleeves are made up of extensive fabric piecing – some of it matching, most of it not; the silk lining of the brocade side has been pieced
similarly to the outer fabric, there are also older crease and stitch marks indicating the form has been changed
-all of the sewing is consistent with the appearance of 18th century stitching/construction, this is not the product of 19th century fiddling, but has been altered in the 18th century for some purpose

138. Accession #A12399
Object: Bodice/jacket, silk brocade
Date: 1766-1870 (fabric: c.1765)
Alteration Notes:
-crease and stitch marks in bodice and sleeves, along with fabric piecing in sleeves, indicates this was altered to be significantly let out – this appears to be contemporary alterations
-the bodice fronts have been hacked about and re-pieced into a strange shape
-there is some rough stitching along the underarm seams indicating hasty repair work
-there are remnants of two different worsted fabrics along the waist edge and the seams of the ‘skirts’ – they are deep pink and red-brown
-the neckline drawstrings may or may not be original
-the sleeve ruffles appear roughly tacked on, although they were carefully hemmed
-this was likely a large dress to begin with, made even larger at some point
-it may also have been a mid-century dress altered c.1780, then altered again at a much later date

139. Accession #A12406
Object: Bodice, silk brocade
Date: 1761? – 1780? altered 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
-the checked silk fabric of the eyelet plackets looks more 19th century than 18th century, and the overall construction and style is somewhat unusual or unconventional
-however, the piece is very cleanly and carefully made with no obvious signs of alteration or modification; it is, therefore, unclear whether this is a later product or belonged to a ‘rich peasant’ as Natalie Rothstein believes
140. Accession # A12414 (examined 2008)
Object: Pet en l’air jacket, embroidered silk
Date: original construction mid-18th century, altered 1775-80
Alteration Notes:
- late 1770s style ruched cuffs added to sleeve ends to lengthen them
- possible stomacher or compère front altered to make bodice close at centre front
- possible also altered for size at bodice sides

141. Accession #A12524
Object: Bodice, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1741-60, remade 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- this is most likely a 19th century fancy dress or theatrical piece that has been made from 18th century fabric, possibly and older dress bodice
- the centre back and side back seams of the lining may be original, other than that it is unclear whether any more of the construction is original

142. Accession # A.12984 (examined 2008)
Object: Riding habit (jacket and skirt), wool and silk satin
Date jacket c. 1730-40, skirt 1840s-50s
Alteration Notes:
- there is little to no direct evidence of alteration/remodelling of the jacket

143. Accession #A13111
Object: Bodice/ jacket, silk brocade
Date: 1776-1770
Alteration Notes:
- this may be a 1770s dress altered into a jacket within a few years of initial construction
-the ribbon trimming and hooks & eyes are stitched on with the same brown thread, which is used nowhere else on the jacket; the back 'skirt' pleats have been rather roughly tacked to the inside of the jacket, and there is fabric missing from the centre back pleat. 
-there are crease and stitching marks along with un-faded fabric showing at the sides of the jacket, indicating it was let-out at some point either during the re-making or later (thus, there may two layers of alteration present) 
-the green buttons on the lower parts of the sleeves are inconsistent, indicating replacement
-there are some slight crease and soil marks on the sleeves at the back upper arm also indicating altering/letting out

**144. Accession #A13112**
**Object:** Bodice/ jacket, silk brocade 
**Date:** 1766-1770
**Alteration Notes:**
-back waist tabs are not original 
bodice back show evidence of significant alteration through creases and stitch marks  
some stitching and fabric of centre front lacing placket appears to be repair and replacement
-only a fragment of boning remains at centre front
-upper half of centre back seam of bodice has been re-sewn – both silk and lining layers
-looks like it was originally a 1770s dress cut down and altered for later fancy dress or theatre use

![Image of a jacket](image)

**145. Accession #A15124**
**Object:** Bodice, silk brocade and linen 
**Date:** 1751-1760
**Alteration Notes:**
-the red ties at the sleeve hems are certainly not original
-one waist tab is covered with a figured silk fabric unlike any other used on the bodice – possible replacement?
- The right-hand centre back section has a piece of linen applied on top of this section – possible contemporary repair?
Possible in-process modification with an overlap of boned sections at either side of the bodice back at the lower edges and waist tabs – there is no indication of modification to the silk cover.

146. Accession #A15125
Object: Bodice, bodice part, silk brocades and linen
Date: 1736-1745
Alteration Notes:
-this appears to have been cobbled together from various bits of fabric with a stomacher as the centrepiece
-fancy dress? Theatre use? Or for an Image as Natalie Rothstein suggests?

147. Accession #A15127
Object: Bodice, silk brocade
Date: 1761-1770
Alteration Notes:
-there are no obvious signs of alteration

148. Accession #A15130
Object: Jacket, silk brocade
Date: original construction c. 1761, altered c. 1775
Alteration Notes:
-extensive piecing of the sleeves to take them from elbow length (or just above) to wrist length
-the centre front section has the appearance of a stomacher that has been re-worked
-there is extensive and roughly executed mending around the armholes, on the sleeves, and along back seams
-it looks like a jacket from the 1750s or 1760s was altered for post-1770, then possibly mended later on

149. Accession #A16144
Object: Bodice, silk brocade
Date: 1738-1742
Alteration Notes:
- there are no obvious signs of alteration
- it seems unlikely the dark green silk(?) tape ties at the shoulders are original
- the roughness of the armhole finishing and the coarseness of the interior suggest a possibility there was once a lining inside the bodice, but that is pure speculation

150. Accession #A20187
Object: Bodice, striped silk jacquard
Date: fabric 1750-55, construction 1775-90
Alteration Notes:
- this started out as a mid-century dress
- whether it was a sack or mantua is unclear
- the current silk shoulder pieces are remnants of robings
- the front of the bodice has been pieced along the old robing line so the front edges can meet at centre
- the sleeves have been lengthened from slightly above the elbow to slightly below and cupping it, both lining and fabric have been pieced on both sleeves at the same point
- there is significant piecing across the bodice back and on the sleeves at the underarm
- the skirt is missing
- what was once a dress back cut in one (bodice and skirt) has been cut into a completely separate bodice with stitch marks showing where the later incarnation of the skirt was once sewn
151. Accession #A21020
Object: Bodice, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1731-1760, 19th century construction (?)
Alteration Notes:
-fancy dress bodice made from 18th century fabric which has been significantly pieced
- there is likely nothing of the original garment left here

152. Accession #A21980
Object: Bodice fragment, embroidered silk
Date: 1731? – 1760?
Alteration Notes:
-bodice back piece with remains of shoulder pieces of yellow silk satin embroidered with polychrome silk and metallic threads; unlined

153. Accession #Z658
Object: Caraco jacket, silk brocade
Date: 1770-1780
Alteration Notes:
- the sleeves are very much pieced and in a haphazard way
- the sleeve linings are also inconsistently pieced of different fabrics; the gores inserted into the skirt are unusual in shape and practice – evidence of alteration?
- the contrasting ‘compere’ front is suspicious
- there is a printed cloth label tacked into the left-hand bottom corner of the skirt front – dry cleaning label?
- There is significant piecing of the skirt at the back pleats;
- there appears to be mending of the right-hand sleeve at the back of the elbow
154. Accession #Z688a-b
Object: Bodice, silk brocade
Date: 1783-1787
Alteration Notes:
-the shoulder ‘straps’ are pieced at the front and the two ends overlap by approx 3”
-that the sleeves have been applied to finished armhole edges also suggests alteration/modification
-as does the use of a different silk fabric to cover some of the waist tabs

155. Accession #Z692
Object: Jacket/bodice, striped and figured silk satin
Date: 1786-1795
Alteration Notes:
-Natalie Rothstein wrote that this was 19th century fancy dress, I disagree. Apart from the boning having been removed I believe it is in original condition and not even cut down from a dress

156. Accession #39.61 (examined 2008)
Object: Quilted petticoat, silk satin
Date: c.1770-85?
Alteration Notes:
- there is some evidence of either alteration or repair at the waist

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157. Accession #45.37/7 (examined 2008)
Object: Quilted petticoat, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: c. 1770-80
Alteration Notes:
- waist binding does not appear to be original
- garment has been shortened at the hem

158. Accession #47.44/11 (examined 2008)
Object: Quilted petticoat, silk satin
Date: 1771-76
Alteration Notes:
- waist has been taken in, or waist pleats have been changed

159. Accession #Z657 (examined 2008)
Object: Quilted petticoat, silk satin
Alteration Notes:
- little to no evidence of alteration

Museum of London - Stays

160. Accession #31.54/3
Object: Stays, linen
Date: 1740-1760?
Alteration Notes:
- No obvious signs of alteration.
- If the lining has been replaced/changed at some point it is also not obvious.
- The degraded state of the wool underarm strips seems to suggest that they have never been changed

Additional Notes:
- Silhouette as it appears seems to suggest a little later date of perhaps 1750s-60s, but I am by no means certain.

161. Accession #33.22
Object: Stays, linen
Date: 1780-1795
Alteration Notes:
- the cotton twill tape binding the upper edge is a replacement – the stitching is not as fine as that on the tab binding, the right-hand centre back tab is also bound with the cotton twill tape and differently from the left-hand one
- the thread used in these areas is very white, may be modern
- there is an area of repair on a tab near the one with replacement binding done in the same white thread; the cotton twill shows wear and discolouration, so it presumably not an early conservation attempt
- additionally, the upper edge binding is wrapped over lining as well as outer layer – this would not have been the case originally

162. Accession # 46.38/1
Object: Stays, linen
Date: 1770-1790? altered 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
- the shape of the neck/upper edge of the stays are such as would have likely needed shoulder straps; however the rough and haphazard-looking stitching and configuration of the ones currently sewn to the stays strikes one as not being original.
- Particularly the use of metal hooks at the side fronts seems more like a 19th century application than 18th century one.
163. Accession #47.44/5
Object: Stays, silk brocade and linen
Date: fabric mid-18th century, current construction 1790-1800
Alteration Notes:
- These stays were likely made by recycling an old dress bodice, perhaps directly
- the lapped seam technique used on the silk indicates either an old bodice was cut down, but with the seams left intact, or that the maker of these stays may have been a woman
- the bulky and rough stitching of the shoulder straps to the stays body indicate alteration of some kind.

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164. Accession #49.91/1
Object: Stays, linen
Date: 1781-1795
Alteration Notes:
- the linen lining has the appearance of having been let out at the side seams
- there are no corresponding alterations evident on the outer layer of the stays, could this lining have been taken from another, smaller set of stays?

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165. Accession #56.73/4
Object: Stays, wool satin
Date: 1750-1770?
Alteration Notes:
- strips of wide twill tape have been applied inconsistently to the upper edge of both sides of the centre back – their uneven appearance suggests these may be later additions or repairs
- the leather guards on the front underarm area are in pieces and layers, suggesting replacement or repair over time
-the linen lining has been patched in several places

166. Accession #88.423
Object: Stays, cotton
Date: c. 1780
Alteration Notes:
database suggests the lining in recent, but the leather armhole binding is stitched over it – so are they both recent? I am inclined to think not, but am not sure.
-Leather looks fairly contemporary, as does the stitching and piecing and pinking of lower edge of leather.

167. Accession #2012.51/2a-c (also 49.77/7a-c)
Object: Stays, silk brocade
Date: 1732-1745
Alteration Notes:
-there are thread remnants on the shoulder strap ends and the corresponding corners of the stays front, suggesting they were once sewn together, or that another piece was sewn to them that is now gone
-there is otherwise no real sign of alteration

168. Accession #A6855
Object: Stays, silk brocade and wool
Date: 1671-1680
Alteration Notes:
-very little signs of meddling
- some rough stitching inside right-hand underarm appear to be some repair
- a few loose white threads at right-hand underarm may indicate there was once something attached there

169. Accession #A12412a-c
Object: Bodice/stays, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1740, construction/alteration 1770, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- the level of crudeness in the stitching and piecing of the silk suggests this may have been done for fancy dress, not actual wear
- the left-hand back edge stitching has come partly undone and shows there is a darker blue silk brocade underneath the current one – it appears that an older, original bodice/stays has been recovered with scraps or pieces of the lighter blue brocade
- the linings are also replacements; the shoulder straps are pieced at the front and the ends overlap underneath the silk brocade – a bit of the darker blue brocade is visible at this point inside the right-hand half of the stays; the stomacher covering is crudely pieced and bound top and bottom with bias strips of the silk brocade (not an 18th c technique), there are lumps of some manner of stuffing in the stomacher – one at the top/bust, another in the middle (appears to have slipped down) and at the very bottom – these suggest to be for bust enhancement
- there is what looks to be a little bit of machine sewing in the lining of the right-hand half

170. Accession #A12525
Object: Stays, embroidered silk
Date: 1661-1670
Alteration Notes:
- several tab linings appear to have been patched up or replaced in a rather haphazard way
- the lining has been patched around the left-hand front upper edge and along the undersides of the shoulder straps
-there is an overall appearance of these stays possibly having been either altered or the embroidered silk having been lifted from another garment and applied onto this foundation.

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171. Accession #A14679
Object: Stays, linen
Date: 1780-1800
Alteration Notes:
no signs of alterations although the wool twill tape loops at the upper backs of the stays strongly suggest there used to be shoulder straps

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172. Accession #A15128
Object: Stays, silk brocade and printed cotton
Date: 1771-1778
Alteration Notes:
-no real signs of alteration

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173. Accession #Z687a-c
Object: Bodice/stays with sleeves, silk brocade
Date: 1760-1775, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-there are stitch/pin marks along the centre front edges of the stays suggesting either the pinning of a stomacher or stitching of such or something else
-the stitching attaching the shoulder straps to the backs is very rough, indicating this is either a repair or modification
-there is some rough stitching along the lower edge of the silk on the body of the stays which suggests rough repair/mending
-there are a few more areas of this type of stitching on seam lines in the body of the silk
-the fabric of the sleeves demonstrate something of the texture of having been dry-cleaned
-it is my hypothesis this garment may have been used in theatre at some point in the 19th and/or 20th centuries

174. Accession #Z690
Object: Stays, linen
Date: 1775-1785, altered 19th/20th century?
Alteration Notes:
-the shoulder straps are made from a different fabric, possibly cotton, and are roughly stitched to the fronts, they also have metal eyelets at the ends suggesting they are not original; the ribbon across the centre front lower point appears to be a later addition – style of ribbon and rough stitching do not match the whole; stamped logo on the front inside pocket looks modern/20th century

175. Accession #Z693
Object: Stays, silk brocade
Date: 1735-1745
Alteration Notes:
-the centre back edges have been sewn up and the front cut open
-the lining fragments remaining are stitched over these new opening edges, indicating it was not the original lining; the brown binding is an addition/repair, the cream silk tape was the original binding
-the lining and most bones have been cut out; only short pieces remain
-there is a cloth label stitched to the underside of the left-hand front lower edge, it is unclear from when this dates or what it means, but certainly not original – if 20th century, it could indicate the stays have been dry-cleaned
-the shoulder straps appear to have been re-stitched to the back upper edge after the brown binding was applied
-seems unlikely the metal hook is original either
-all of these may well indicate alteration/modification in the 19th century for fancy dress purposes

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Museum of London - Aprons

176. Accession #34.142
Object: Apron, embroidered silk
Date: 1718, possible 19th century alteration
Alteration Notes:
- upper edge stitching is with cotton thread, suggesting 19th century; some conservation mending

177. Accession #37.178/2
Object: Apron, embroidered silk
Date: 1735-1737
Alteration Notes:
- gathering/pleating at waist is undone and waistband & ties lost

178. Accession #38.293/4
Object: Apron, embroidered cotton
Date: c. 1770
Alteration Notes:
- no signs of alteration
179. Accession #39.5/65
Object: Apron, embroidered striped cotton
Date: 1771-1800
Alteration Notes:
-areas of mending, darning (contemporary?), and patching (modern/conservation?)

180. Accession #39.133/8
Object: Apron, embroidered silk
Date: 1731-1750
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration

181. Accession #92.111/2
Object: Apron, embroidered cotton
Date: 1770-1800
Alteration Notes:
-there are several areas of mending that look like they could be contemporary, or during 19th century – continual use?

182. Accession #A6441
Object: Apron, embroidered silk
Date: 1731-1750
Alteration Notes:
-drawstring casing on upper edge has been re-sewn in the centre to accommodate seaming in centre of apron
-there are stitch marks on the lower edge of the apron indicating something was once sewn there, a ruffle?

183. Accession #A7123  
Object: Apron, embroidered silk  
Date: 1731-1750, possible 19th century alteration  
Alteration Notes:  
-there is no evidence of drawstring or casing to wear this as an apron, seems most likely that these were removed at some point, the apron pressed flat, the silk backing applied and used as a flat embroidered textile in some way, most likely in the 19th century

184. Accession #A12394  
Object: Apron, silk (“lutstring”)  
Date: 1766-1775  
Alteration Notes:  
-pleating of upper edge is not entirely neat/clean and some bits of blue thread sticking out from under pink waist binding, may indicate replacement of original/earlier waist binding – may also suggest pink ribbon pocket drawstrings are later additions – but certainly not conclusive

185. Accession #A12535  
Object: Apron, silk and metallic lace  
Date: 1700-1725
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration, however the apron has no ties, there are some crease marks on the silk backing that may indicate the upper edge was once pleated, but this is uncertain

186. Accession #A20196
Object: Apron, embroidered cotton
Date: 1751-1800
Alteration Notes:
-there is some mending/darning at the lower left-hand corner in the ruffle, some is conservation

187. Accession #A21975
Object: Apron, embroidered silk
Date: 1731-1750
Alteration Notes:
-some areas of darning, either contemporary or later
-the waistband has been removed and all pleats or gathering undone

188. Accession #A21978a
Object: Apron, embroidered silk
Date: 1731-1750
Alteration Notes:
-removal/loss of waistband
-darning

189. Accession #A21978b
Object: Apron, embroidered silk
Date: 1731-1750
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration, waist ties are lost

190. Accession #NN8173
Object: Apron, linen
Date: 1700-1799
Alteration Notes:
-some darning

191. Accession #NN8174
Object: Apron, linen
Date: late 18th century?
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

192. Accession #NN8175
Object: Apron
Date: late 18th century?
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration
   no image

193. Accession #NN8176
Object: Apron, embroidered cotton
Date: late 18th century?
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

194. Accession #Z804
Object: Apron, embroidered cotton
Date: late 18th century?
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

195. Accession #Z805
Object: Apron, embroidered cotton
Date: 1751-1800
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration
Additional Notes:
the yellow mark in the middle of the apron on the overall photo is on the tyvek underneath, not the apron

196. Accession #Z806
Object: Apron, embroidered cotton
Date: 1751-1800
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration
197. Accession #Z1084COS  
**Object:** Apron, embroidered cotton  
**Date:** 1750-1770  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-areas of darning, unclear whether contemporary, later or modern/conservation

198. Accession #Z1085COS  
**Object:** Apron, cotton  
**Date:** 1771-1790  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-no signs of alteration

**Museum of London - Handkerchiefs/Scarves**

199. Accession #38.288/5  
**Object:** Scarf (tippet), silk shag  
**Date:** 1781? altered 19th century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-pink lining is a 20th century addition; originally lined with fine linen or cotton and possibly bound around the edges with silk ribbon

200. Accession #51.20/1c  
**Object:** Handkerchief (part of ensemble), embroidered cotton  
**Date:** 1790  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-mending of some embroidery around the edges  
-backing appears to be modern, it’s partially machine stitched
-since the mending around the flowers is worked through the backing, this must be contemporaneous to it (thus modern)

201. Accession #57.106/4  
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered linen  
Date: 1771-1780  
Alteration Notes:  
- there is an area of darning on the right-hand (?) side

202. Accession #64.16/9  
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered cotton  
Date: 1790  
Alteration Notes:  
- no sign of alteration/mending

203. Accession #64.63/1  
Object: Handkerchief fragment, embroidered cotton  
Date: 1776-1800  
Alteration Notes:  
- is the fragmentary status of the object the result of degradation over time or deliberate cutting?

204. Accession #64.126/4a  
Object: Collar, embroidered silk  
Date: 1716? – 1725?
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alterations/mending

205. Accession #64.126/4b
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered silk
Date: 1716? – 1725?
Alteration Notes:
-there is substantial darning at the centre back lower pointed edge

206. Accession #74.62/5
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered linen
Date: 1776-1800
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration/mending

207. Accession #92.111/1
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered cotton
Date: 1740-1759
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration/mending

208. Accession #A16466
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered cotton
Date: c. 1790-1819
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration/mending

209. Accession #Z1015? (or A16664)
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered cotton
Date: c 1780-1810
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration/mending

210. Accession #NN8151
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered silk
Date: c 1790-1810
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration/mending

211. Accession #NN8152
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered cotton
Date: 1776? – 1800?
Alteration Notes:
- there is one small spot of darning in a cross-shape near the upper edge

212. Accession #NN8154? (labelled 63.130/2, but that’s a dress)
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered cotton
Date: late 18th century
Alteration Notes:
- there is extensive darning all over the object in both silk and cotton threads, some is certainly contemporaneous, is some modern conservation?
-the embroidered initials are cut off by the hem – later alteration or poor judgement replacement?

213. Accession #NN8155
Object: Handkerchief, embroidered cotton
Date: 1776? – 1800/
Alteration Notes:
-there are a few spots of darning

214. Accession #NN8377
Object: Scarf, embroidered cotton
Date: 1776-1800
Alteration Notes:
- darning

215. Accession #Z1033COS
Object: Handkerchief, cotton sprigged with silver
Date: 1791-1800
Alteration Notes:
- there is darning in various places
- it is unclear whether the glass beads/buttons are original but I’m inclined to think not
Museum of London - Mittens

216. Accession #39.5/29
   Object: Mittens, kid leather and silk
   Date: 1701-1776
   Alteration Notes:
   - no sign of alteration

217. Accession #39.61a-b
   Object: Mittens, silk
   Date: 1769-1775
   Alteration Notes:
   - no signs of alteration

218. Accession #57.106/5a-b
   Object: Mittens, silk
   Date: 1776-1800
   Alteration Notes:
   - one mitten has a mended tear near the wrist/hand end, but may be conservation

219. Accession #62.163/4a-b
   Object: Mittens, silk
   Date: 1776-1800
   Alteration Notes:
   - no signs of alteration

220. Accession #63.77/11a-b
   Object: Mittens, linen
   Date: 1749-1800
Alteration Notes:
-there appears to be some contemporary/19th century mending of the thumb set in seam on the palm side of the right-hand mitten

221. Accession #63.77/12a-b
Object: Mittens, linen
Date: 1749-1800
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

222. Accession #63.77/13a-b
Object: Mittens, linen
Date: 1749-1800
Alteration Notes:
-a tuck has been taken in each mitten in a dart/wedge shape with the wide end at the hand opening edge on the palm side, appears to be sewn with contemporary silk thread

223. Accession #A6038
Object: Mittens, kid leather
Date: 1701? – 1776?
Alteration Notes:
-there appears to be a small area of contemporary mending on the right-hand mitten at the outside edge at the juncture of the hand opening and finger shield
-there are additional areas of mending around the thumb piece seams, but look like modern conservation
224. Accession #A15097a-b
Object: Mittens, embroidered silk
Date: 1776-1800
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

225. Accession #A15098
Object: Mitten, embroidered silk
Date: 1776-1800
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

226. Accession #A25660a-b
Object: Mittens, kid leather
Date: 1751-1770
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

227. Accession #A25660c-d
Object: Mittens, kid leather
Date: 1751-1770
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration
Museum of London - Hood and Cloak

228. Accession #34.173/3
Object: Hood, silk
Date: 1700-1799
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

229. Accession #81.90
Object: Cloak, wool
Date: 1781-1820
Alteration Notes:
-some of silk facing at fronts is conservation replacements
-a pieced patch of fabric on left-hand front edge may not be original
-there is an area of mending on the back of the cloak and at the hem
Additional Notes:
-the dirt at the hem is a nice indicator of wearing

Museum of London - Pockets

230. Accession #35.35/2
Object: Pockets, embroidered linen
Date: 1771-1780
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

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231. Accession #46.8/3  
Object: Pocket, embroidered linen  
Date: 1736-1745  
Alteration Notes:  
-no signs of alteration/mending

232. Accession #49.23/2  
Object: Pockets, embroidered linen  
Date: 1701-1725  
Alteration Notes:  
-some darning

233. Accession #49.91/2  
Object: Pocket, embroidered linen  
Date: 1740-1760  
Alteration Notes:  
-the back of one pocket has been mended – there was a tear and a piece of linen was patched onto the back and the tear darned  
-on the other pocket a repair has been made to the binding of the opening with a piece of linen cloth  
-there is some modern conservation work

234. Accession #A21980X1a-b  
Object: Pockets, embroidered silk  
Date: 1720-1770
Alteration Notes:
-the pocket is made of re-purposed and pieced dress fabric
-the opening has been stitched down at some point when the silk began to shatter (contemporaneous or modern conservation?)

Museum of London - Stomachers

235. Accession #27.125/3
Object: Stomacher, embroidered linen
Date: 1701-1730
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration

236. Accession #47.43/1b
Object: Stomacher, silk
Date: 1751-1760
Alteration Notes:
-silk fabric is crudely pieced
-stomacher appears to be made from salvaged dress fabric

237. Accession #49.82/1
Object: Stomacher, silk and metal
Date: 1731-1770
Alteration Notes:
-the folded under upper edge of the stomacher fabric may be a later development, but this is entirely uncertain
-the ribbon running along the upper edge of the stomacher extends beyond the stomacher, it is unclear what this indicates

238. Accession #69.105
Object: Stomacher, embroidered silk
Date: 1701-1750
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration

239. Accession #77.96/1
Object: Stomacher, embroidered silk
Date: 1731-1740
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration

240. Accession #77.96/2
Object: Stomacher, embroidered silk
Date: 1741-1760
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration
241. Accession #77.102  
Object: Stomacher, embroidered linen  
Date: 1726-1735  
Alteration Notes: 
-the piecing of the lower portion of the stomacher is less than perfectly neatly executed, this may suggest some form of contemporaneous alteration/modification

![Image of Stomacher](image1.png)

242. Accession #80.270/1  
Object: Stomacher, silk and metal  
Date: 1729-1740  
Alteration Notes: 
-There are no obvious signs of alteration – I do not believe the tabs at the bottom were added later: the embroidery technique and amount of wear are identical to the rest of the stomacher; the threads used are identical to the rest of the stomacher; the lining fabric is entirely uniform and appears original

![Image of Stomacher](image2.png)

243. Accession #A6361  
Object: Stomacher, silk and metal  
Date: 1715-1720  
Alteration Notes: 
-There are some signs of later repair on the lining layer with crude stitches in possibly cotton thread

![Image of Stomacher](image3.png)
244. Accession #A7940
Object: Stomacher, figured silk
Date: 1771-1780
Alteration Notes:
-original construction had a horizontal slit running across the stomacher near the upper edge from about 3” in at either side, this has been sewn shut, although those stitches have come out on the right-hand side
-from the ends of the slit to the edges of the stomacher a small tuck has been made along the same line as the slit, this has taken up about ½” total and is stitched with running stitches that are very small on the right side and long on the underside; there are remnants of thread along the sides of the stomacher suggesting it may have once been stitched to the front edges of the dress bodice
-two of the buttons are a brighter, less dirty yellow and are slightly larger and covered in a simpler pattern than the rest of the buttons, suggesting these are later (but still contemporaneous?) replacements

245. Accession #A12411
Object: Stomacher, embroidered silk
Date: 1731-1770, altered 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
-metal eyes may not be original
-there is a tuft of thread in the linen lining at the centre of the upper edge, there is also the remnant of linen tape caught up in this – something used to be sewn here, whether it was intentionally removed or has deteriorated is unclear

246. Accession #A12526 (?)
Object: Stomacher, embroidered silk
Date: 1661-1680
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration
247. Accession #A14678  
Object: Stomacher, silk and metal, printed linen  
Date: 1701-1730  
Alteration Notes:  
-the stitching of the appliqué through all layers towards the upper portion of the stomacher suggests a repair after the stomacher was made  
-the unevenness of the application of silk ribbon to the edges of the stomacher also suggests this was cobbled together from something(s) else

248. Accession #A15126  
Object: Stomacher, embroidered silk  
Date: 1730-1750  
Alteration Notes:  
-original embroidery from something else cobbled to make a stomacher

249. Accession #A15136  
Object: Stomacher, silk and metal  
Date: 1731-1750  
Alteration Notes:  
-no signs of alteration
250. Accession # NN8179
Object: Stomacher, silk and metal
Date: 1701-1750
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration

Museum of London – Shoes

251. Accession # 28.7/2a-b
Object: Shoes, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1725-50, shoes 1820-30
Alteration Notes:
-possible reuse of older fabric
-there are areas of crease and stitch marks on each shoe, indicating alteration/modification of some sort

252. Accession # 28.7/3a-b
Object: Shoes, silk and beads
Date: 1773-1778
Alteration Notes:
-the silks on the heels and straps are not now all the same colour, nor the same as the binding – suggests they are slightly different fabrics or dye lots that have faded/discoloured differently over time; thus, perhaps not all part of the same stage of making

253. Accession # 33.176a-b
Object: Shoes, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1720-30, shoes 1738-42

254. Accession# 33.303/2  
Object: Shoe, silk damask  
Date: 1705-15  
Alteration Notes:  
-stitching inside back/heel seam is not the same on both shoes suggesting alteration/repair; work looks contemporary to shoes

255. Accession# 33.311a  
Object: Shoe, silk brocade  
Date: 1731-40  
Alteration Notes:  
-identical construction, different fabric: from two pairs made together with mates lost? A pair made from scraps on hand?

256. Accession#: 33.314a-b  
Object: Shoes, silk and metal  
Date: 1711-30  
Alteration Notes:  
-back/heel seam looks like it may have been altered/re-made
257. Accession# 34.112/3a-b  
**Object:** Shoes, silk damask  
**Date:** fabric 1742-43, shoes 1765-70

![Shoes](image1)

258. Accession# 37.206/2  
**Object:** Shoes, silk velvet  
**Date:** 1785  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-possible enlargement of shoe base

![Shoes](image2)

259. Accession# 38.293/2a-b  
**Object:** Shoes, silk brocade  
**Date:** fabric c. 1750, shoes 1770-80

![Shoes](image3)

260. Accession# 38.293/3a-b  
**Object:** Pattens/clogs, silk velvet  
**Date:** 1725-50, altered 1760-80

![Pattens/Clogs](image4)

261. Accession# 39.133/6a-b  
**Object:** Shoes, silk brocade  
**Date:** fabric 1743-46, shoes 1750-60  
**Alteration Notes:**  
binding on the side seam has a cobbled repair, possible 18th century work

![Shoes](image5)
262. Accession# 50.6/2a-b
Object: Shoes, silk brocade
Date: 1719
Alteration Notes:
-one latchet has an additional hole which may be a later modification

263. Accession# 52.27a-b
Object: Shoes, silk satin
Date: 1785-1800
Alteration Notes:
-contemporary darning

264. Accession# 4774
Object: Shoe, wool
Date: 1731-40
Alteration Notes:
-heel has been lowered

265. Accession# A3800
Object: Shoe, leather
Date: 1760-85

266. Accession# A5999
Object: Shoe, embroidered linen
Date: fabric 1625, shoe 1720-50
Alteration Notes:
-straps are pieced with reused material of a different embroidery pattern
--quarters were cut lower and rebound with ivory silk, as is the tongue
-vamp appears to have had an additional relining of yellow linen

267. Accession# A6933 & A6934
Object: Shoe, painted leather
Date: c. 1741-50

268. Accession# A6935
Object: Pattens/clogs, silk brocade
Date: 1751-70

269. Accession# A6937 & A6938
Object: Shoes, leather
Date: 1785-1800

270. Accession# A7001
Object: Shoe, embroidered silk
Date: 1721-40
Alteration Notes:
-fabric may be reused from something else
-18th century mending of silk near heel at the sides
-quarters cut down, binding now lost
271. Accession# A7437  
Object: Shoe, silk brocade and silk satin  
Date: 1730-35, c. 1740

272. Accession# A10352a-b  
Object: Shoes, silk brocade  
Date: 1731-50  
Alteration Notes:  
- upper has been slit to enlarge at joint  
- centre front and silver braid re-stitched through upper and lining  
- is fabric on uppers turned or merely very degraded?

273. Accession# A12776a-b  
Object: Shoe and Patten/clog, silk brocade  
Date: 1721-40

274. Accession#  
Object: Shoes, silk damask  
Date: 1780-1795  
Alteration Notes:  
-shoes are identical except for different coloured ribbon trimmings – why?
275. Accession# A13172  
Object: Patterns/clog, leather  
Date: 1761-80

276. Accession# A13178  
Object: Shoe, silk brocade  
Date: fabric 1720-30, shoe 1740-42  
Alteration Notes:  
-shoes made from leftover/scrap fabric?

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277. Accession# A13202 & A13203  
Object: Shoes, silk damask  
Date: fabric 1730-50, shoe 1740-65  
Alteration Notes:  
-shoes were originally made for buckles only, tongue was split to add lacing

278. Accession# A15011a-b  
Object: Shoes, figured silk  
Date: fabric 1770-90, shoes 1785-90  
Alteration Notes:  
-back/heel seams look possibly altered/repai red
279. Accession# A15012a-b
Object: Shoes, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1760-70, shoes c. 1770

280. Accession# A15015a-b
Object: Shoes, silk brocade with metal
Date: fabric 1755-65, shoes 1770-80

281. Accession# A15078a-b
Object: Shoes, embroidered silk
Date: 1790-1800
Alteration Notes:
-shoes probably originally had a Louis heel that has been lowered

282. Accession#: A15082a-b
Object: Shoes, embroidered silk
Date: c. 1770
Alteration Notes:
-embroidered upper is pieced on each side to widen, so reused uppers
283. Accession# A15085a-b
Object: Shoes, embroidered silk
Date: c. 1771-80

284. Accession# Z865a-b
Object: Shoes, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1740-50, shoes 1841-50
Alteration Notes:
-reused 18th century silk

285. Accession# Z871a-b
Object: Shoes
Date: fabric 1725-30, shoes 1740-70

286. Accession # Z919b
Object: Shoe, leather
Date: 1793-95

Fashion Museum at Bath

287. Accession #BATMC I.09.14
Object: Dress
Date: original construction 1760-70, altered c.1780, altered 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
-3rd quarter century dress has been altered in the 4th quarter
-bodice fronts show crease marks from having been unfolded from robings
-shoulder bands are remnants of robings
-skirt front has been (awkwardly) un-pleated at front and sewn along waistline to meet up with the front bodice edges
-the pocket slits have been sewn shut, and are moved towards the back of the dress with the re-pleating of the skirt concentrating fullness towards the back of the dress
-the sleeves have been lengthened by piecing, the join is covered by the applied trimming
-the yoke at the back neckline remains, but now appears applied on top rather than being an integral component
-the sleeve heads are still pleated in the manner of pre-1770 dresses
-there is mending on various places on the dress skirt and bodice
-there are later tucks in the bodice fronts from the neckline edge, and at the centre back of the bodice around the waist, showing on the lining
-the metal hooks are not original

*image currently unavailable*

288. Accession #BATMC I.09.21
Object: Dress
Date: original construction 1760-1763, altered 1775-1785, altered 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
-this appears to be a pre-1770s dress altered c. 1780
-the sleeves have been pieced at the bottom to lengthen them, the wide trimming used both for fashion and to conceal the join
-the compere front was originally a separate stomacher that has been hacked about and stitched into the bodice, there are buttonholes worked into the left-hand half, but no corresponding buttons on the other; piecing on the sleeves may or may not be original
-each of two halves of a metal snap at sewn to the upper edges of the compere front – obviously these are modern, their purpose is unclear because of what they do to the bodice front when snapped together
*image currently unavailable*

289. Accession #BATMC I.09.40
Object: Dress
Date: 1770-1773
Alteration Notes:
-this may have been a sack dress altered to a polonaise (?) or a purpose-made polonaise that has been enlarged – or both?
-there are crease and stitch marks on the back of the dress around the shoulders, armholes and neckline
-the sleeves have been let out along the main vertical seam and there is what appears to be a well-matched patch at the underarm of each sleeve (may or may not be original?)
-the shoulder bands appear to be remnants of robings
-the method of sewing the sleeves into the armholes is consistent with open-fronted + robings style bodice construction; narrow wedges of linen have been added to the side back bodice lining to widen the dress across the upper back
-there are lines of stitch marks on the bodice side fronts
290. Accession #BATMC VII.04.28
Object: Dress
Date: original construction 1747-1750, altered post-1770? altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- the lower portions of the sleeves have buttonholes in them – it appears they were originally detachable and have been sewn onto the original lower sleeve edges
- the centre front bodice panels may have originally been a stomacher that has been split and sewn into the bodice, or possibly a compere front?
- there are stitch marks and remnants of thread on the robing, indicating there used to be trimming that has been removed
- the buttonholes in the bodice fronts are surrounded by closely spaced stitch marks suggesting they were originally worked with buttonhole stitch – this is the same with those on the lower sleeve portions
- the waist stay is certainly 19th century
- there is darning on right-hand sleeve near underarm; sleeve underarm seams are mostly undone, but there are multiple stitch mark lines suggesting they were altered at some point
- the stitching of the bodice centre back seam in the silk layer is not original, nor is quite a bit of stitching around the back neckline and on some of the buttonholes

Snowshill Collection at Berrington Hall

291. Accession #SNO 1
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1718-20, altered/construction 1740s, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- triangular pieces at waist sides are later additions to create wide silhouette of 1740s
- current hemming appears to have been done in 19th/20th century, as is some other sewing which is done with possibly cotton thread
- crease marks in sleeve cuffs suggest they were originally pleated with 2 horizontal tucks
- alterations are generally worked roughly with mismatched threads
Additional Notes:
- was any of this alteration work actually performed in the 1740s, or is it all 19th century?

292. Accession #SNO 2
Object: Sack dress, silk damask
Date: fabric 1740-42, altered 1770s, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- side seams in bodice are not original
- bodice fronts may not be original, piecing and pleats in skirt fronts which look to have extended from robings suggest this
- much rough sewing with various threads
- hem appears to have been altered multiple times: originally faced with silk ribbon tape all round, then piece of brown linen added to back portion of dress train, then brown skirt lining added and skirt shortened from front edges to sides, then thin silk facings added

Additional Notes:
- appears to be a 1740s sack dress altered post-1770 to have meeting front bodice edges, ribbon trimming, skirt lining (and facing?), probably narrower sleeves and possibly hook and eye closure
- altered again in 19th century to make it larger through the body, seems likely that lining under bodice back opening was added at this time

293. Accession #SNO 6
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask
Date: original construction 1755-60, altered c. 1780
Alteration Notes:
- has been washed
- it is unclear if skirt piecing is original or part of a later alteration, I lean towards the former; robings have been unfolded to bring bodice front edges closer
- skirt has surely been re-configured to concentrate fullness towards the back, although the earlier style of pleating has been maintained
- hem facing appears original; method of finishing back neckline is consistent with later date
- bodice lining appears original, altered at back neckline and waist later? I think bodice lining lacing eyelets are original, and would have enabled lacing over a stomacher; all construction appears to be 18th century
- method of skirt shortening is horizontal tucks taken in skirt near waist from front to side

Additional Notes: appears to be a mid-century dress modestly altered c. 1780
294. **Accession #SNO 11**

**Object:** Fitted-back dress, figured silk  
**Date:** c. 1775-85  
**Alteration Notes:**
- dress may have originated as 1760s open-fronted bodice dress and was much re-made post-1770  
- sleeves are pieced at the bottom in addition to added cuffs, there are stitch marks above the cuffs which may indicate falling cuffs were once sewn there  
- towards the back of the skirt are what appear to be sewn up pocket slits, and new ones made at the current side of the dress, suggesting the skirt was re-configured and fullness moved towards the back  
- yoke piece at back neck is more consistent with pre-1770s, and current robing-like trim may be actual left-over robings  
- bodice also appears to have been let out through the bust area of the dress, as evidenced by crease and stitch marks at bodice side back seams, backs of sleeves/armholes, centre back bodice seam and just outside bodice back pleats  
- stitch marks on robing pieces suggest there was once different trimming sewn to them  
- all construction is very clean and looks 18th century; lace sleeve ruffles are 19th century additions  
**Additional Notes:**  
- it is unclear whether the size alterations date from the time of re-making, or later

295. **Accession #SNO 29**

**Object:** Fitted-back dress, figured silk  
**Date:** 1770s-80s, altered/mended 19th century?  
**Alteration Notes:**
- dress may be altered from a sack back, indicated by the piecing at the top of the bodice back, and the straight, parallel and symmetrical vertical crease marks on the bodice backs that create a deep pleat on each side  
- dress likely originally had open-fronted bodice: bodice fronts are pieced, there are creases which create a pleat that matches with shoulder band/robing remnant, although the current bodice fronts could also possibly be from the sack back, there is piecing at the underarm and at the front shoulder to fill in a little gap caused by the shoulder band  
- sleeves are carefully pieced to add length below upper elbow, there are stitch marks above the piecing seam indicating something was once sewn there (falling cuffs?)  
- piecing of bodice lining (with wool/linen blend fabric?) and stitch marks on outside of bodice (at side back and armhole seams) suggest it may have been enlarged sometime after being re-made
- the hip pads would date to the re-make
- seams have been taken in at the sides of the bodice like vertical tucks, sewn with running stitch, seem likely to be 19th century, though not conclusive
- there are some areas that appear to be re-stitched, which may have been 19th century repairs – less clean than usual 18th century work, but not overly messy

296. Accession #SNO 40
Object: Jacket/half-robe, silk jacquard
Date: fabric and original construction c. 1760s, altered 1780s? remade 1790s
Alteration Notes:
- this was originally part of a dress, made into a jacket
- the jacket skirt is attached high up on the waist of the bodice, with the original length still inside
- there are small triangular pieces, like gussets, sewn into the sleeves at the underarm, has possible appearance of being a later addition
- the sleeve seams have a look of having been re-done
- there are possible pin/stitch marks across the back of the bodice
- the lining is significantly pieced and sewn with a variety of stitches
- this looks as though it may have been a late eighteenth century dress (c1780s) re-made into a 1790s/1800s half gown jacket re-using the bodice and some of the skirt

297. Accession #SNO 41
Object: Jacket, embroidered silk
Date: mid 18th century, altered late 18th century
Alteration Notes:
- significantly altered, possibly from an earlier dress
- jacket skirt is not original
- it seems unlikely the blue silk sleeve linings are original
- there are stitch and crease marks in the bodice front suggesting a former dart and robing fold;
- here appears to be some early conservation work in the form of gluing tears at the underarms to the lining below
-there are obvious small patches at the back waist and the left-hand back shoulder/neckline

298. Accession #SNO 42  
Object: Jacket, silk brocade  
Date: late 18th century  
Alteration Notes:  
- there are a number of areas of piecing – since this fabric is older than the date of the jacket, could it have been made (well) from an older garment?

299. Accession #SNO 44  
Object: Jacket, silk brocade  
Date: c. 1760-70  
Alteration Notes:  
- appears unaltered

300. Accession #SNO 49  
Object: Jacket/half-robe, printed cotton  
Date: 1790s  
Alteration Notes:  
- it is unclear whether the skirt vs bodice placement at back is evidence of raising the waist  
- the buttons at the back don’t match the rest of the textile pattern  
Additional Notes:  
- there is a patch of modern conservation mending on the bodice back at the left-hand side  
- very neat and careful construction overall
301. Accession #SNO 56  
**Object:** Jacket, silk brocade  
**Date:** 1750-1800, altered 19\textsuperscript{th} century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-the amount of piecing suggests this jacket was made up from older fabric/an older garment, according to the cut of the sleeves, the construction of the side back seams, the meeting front edges that are achieved through piecing (perhaps the original stomacher?), and the style of neckline I believe this remake was late 18\textsuperscript{th} century (c. 1775-1790)  
-I think the basque/tabs may have been a later alteration for 19\textsuperscript{th} century fancy dress  
-it seems possible the underarm mending was done at this time as well, and the metal hooks & eyes added (?)  
-there are old buttonholes in the left-hand front edge – from a compère front?  
-Darts were at one time sewn into the fronts, seems likely for 19\textsuperscript{th} century fancy dress, to give the jacket and hourglass figure, these have since been unpicked but (white cotton) threads remain

302. Accession #SNO 57  
**Object:** Jacket, silk brocade  
**Date:** 1736-40  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-could the larger ‘seam allowance’ at the side back edge of the front body piece be to facilitate anticipated future alterations or could this be a during-production alteration?

303. Accession #SO 58  
**Object:** Bodice/ jacket, silk brocade  
**Date:** 18\textsuperscript{th}/19\textsuperscript{th} century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-the original garment and construction date are difficult to identify  
-it is possible this was a jacket/bodice made around the time of the fabric (late 1760-70) due to the possible stomacher front  
-it seems likely this was a bodice/jacket in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century based on the cut of the sleeves – which have not been lengthened and the lines of the bodice back; the ribbon, waist tabs, and much of the sewing appears to be for 19\textsuperscript{th} century fancy dress
304. Accession #1876
Object: Fitted-back dress, figured silk
Date: fabric c. 1760s-70s, construction c. 1780-90
Alteration Notes:
-piecing of bodice fronts in conjunction with seam at shoulder fronts, shoulder band that looks like robing remnant, and back neckline yoke binding strongly suggest the bodice was originally open fronted and has been altered
-if this is so, it means the dress as a whole would have been re-made from an earlier one to have longer sleeves (which are not pieced), a fully separate bodice and skirt, and skirt pleated with densely packed narrow pleats and fullness concentrated at the skirt back
-there are a few 19th century alterations made, namely the facings in the skirt front edges and the skirt hem all worked with white cotton thread

305. Accession #1887
Object: Fitted-back dress and quilted petticoat, silk brocade and silk “lutstring”
Date: c. 1760, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-bodice is much altered, appears to have been done mid-late 19th century to make it fit the silhouette of that time with darts taken in on the bodice fronts
-the bodice robings have been unstitched and unfolded to bring the front edges close together, the ruched trimming was originally sewn down the centre of the robing and has been moved to the front edges to enable them to meet, eyelets have been worked into the ruched trimming for lacing
-hooks and eyes have been added to the interior of the bodice fronts so the lacing was presumably purely decorative
-there is significant piecing and stitching across the shoulders to accommodate the alteration to the robings
-cotton patches have been applied on top of the original lining at the underarms, there are corresponding silk patches on the outside of the dress – for re-enforcement, mending?
-the side back bodice seams have been taken in and re-sewn in the manner of darts, with part of the original fabrics cut away, there are corresponding bulky tucks in the skirt at the waistline
-there appears to be re-sewing of the sleeve seams and the join between the sleeve edge and the flounces, the silk sleeve linings may not be original or were altered at the same time
-petticoat appears unaltered

306. Accession #1981-1/15
Object: Fitted-back dress, figured striped silk
Date: original construction 1760s? altered c. 1783, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-piecing of bodice at front and at front shoulders is consistent with turning an open front bodice to a closed one, creases on the bodice fronts also support this; shoulder bands look like robing remnants
-pockets are far towards the skirt back suggesting skirt was re-worked, sleeves are a little short for 1780s
-cotton twill tape stitched inside back neckline corners is certainly a 19th century addition as a repair/support attempt
Additional Notes:
appears to have originally been a 1760s dress with open bodice front to be filled in with a stomacher and robings, altered/re-made post-1780, this work was well and carefully executed
dress was then altered again in the later 19th century for fancy dress or theatre, with less care taken
-I don’t think ties inside dress back were so much for attaching a bum pad/false rump as for tying the skirt up in polonaise style

307. Accession #2669
Object: Fitted-back dress and quilted petticoat, silk brocade and silk satin
Date: c. 1750, altered/cleaned 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-left-hand pocket slits in dress and petticoat have been sewn shut (left open in both on right hand side)
-it appears there was a possibly machine stitched dart in either side of the bodice fronts that has been unpicked
-dress has been cleaned/dry cleaned and has lost its original hand/body
-machine stitched darts were sewn on either side of the underarm, one remains while the other is mostly unpicked although the tuck remains at the underarm seam
-there are several areas of the bodice where the sewing is done with cotton thread (= 19th century stitching)
-the metal hooks are certainly not original
-the bodice fronts look as though the lower portion of original robings may have been unfolded to allow the front edges to meet towards the bottom of the bodice
-the bottom edges of the fronts have also been turned up and roughly stitched in place
-this dress has been largely re-sewn, largely retaining original construction but less tidily executed
-it seems likely that the petticoat was matched up with the dress at this time and that they are not an original pairing
-the waistband on the petticoat may be either a replacement or have been re-sewn at the same time as the dress – both have the same dark green cotton thread used on them
-used for 19th century fancy dress or theatre
-there is some mending on the petticoat in spots where moths have got at it

308. Accession #3336
Object: Fitted-back dress, figured silk satin
Date: original construction 1760? altered c.1775? altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-much altered; this may have originally been a 1760s dress altered post- 1775, it was certainly altered in the 19th century
-the bodice fronts are pieced, the shoulder pieces are significantly and roughly pieced, the sleeves are pieced at the lower parts suggesting they may have been lengthened, the pocket slits sit at the side back suggesting the skirt was re-pleated and possibly at that time cut separately from the bodice
-unfortunately, cleaning/dry cleaning may have obscured surviving stitch and fold marks that would have been strong indicators of a change from open-fronted bodice with stomacher to one with front edges that meet (pre-1770 style to post-1770)
-there are darts in the bodice fronts and at the upper bodice backs running into the sleeves that are 19th century alterations, the skirt hem facing is also a 19th century addition and covers up the original silk tape facing, the skirt front edges appear to be sewn with cotton thread, thus indicating 19th century sewing, but possibly in the same manner as the original
it is unclear whether the hooks and thread loops are late 18th century or 19th century – there are two rows of thread loops worked with different threads suggesting they were added at different times (the outer set match the colouring of the dress, the inner set do not, so perhaps the outer set were done first and left because they were not obvious if exposed)
-the sleeve ruffles may be 18th century, but were stitched to the dress in the 19th century with cotton thread
-the sleeves are patched at the inner elbow, perhaps adding room there in the manner of a gusset or godet, but square in shape

309. Accession #3337
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk satin brocade
Date: fabric (and original construction?) 2nd quarter of 18th century, altered/remade c. 1770-1780, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-much altered
-sleeves have been lengthened
-shoulder bands appear to be robing remnants
-darts have been added and unpicked (see photos); pocket slits sit towards front, suggesting alteration of skirt
-there is a fair amount of sewing with cotton thread (= 19th century)
-fabric seems to date from 1st half of century (1730s-1750s?) and may have been made up as an open-fronted gown with a stomacher and elbow-length sleeves at that time; current style is mostly 1775-1785
-bodice back looks to have been re-cut/re-seamed
-skirt centre back looks to have originally been part of an en fourreau back
-sleeve head pleats have been sewn down
-some skirt ties are linen, some cotton suggesting linen ones are original while cotton ones are 19th century additions
-sleeves have appearance of having been re-sewn
-the back of the left-hand sleeve has a mended tear
310. Accession #3772
Object: Fitted-back dress and false petticoat, figured silk
Date: original construction 1760s? altered c. 1775
Alteration Notes:
-the false petticoat is very unusual and seamed up the centre front, seems likely to be a modification – that there was originally a full petticoat that has been cut down, possibly to provide fabric for new bodice fronts?
-The bodice fronts are very carefully pieced individually, but the direction of the fabric pattern has not been so carefully considered and the two sides are not symmetrical in that way
-shoulder bands *could* be remnants of robings
-the bodice and sleeves have been widened at the back through piecing of fabric to enlarge it through the waist and chest
-there are stitch marks and remnants of thread in the front of the false petticoat indicating the fabric had been sewn into something else previously
-there are crease and stitch marks on the bodice back suggesting it was re-pleated/seamed
-seems likely this was a mid or 1760s dress that was altered post 1770, the original petticoat was cut up to make new bodice fronts and help enlarge the bodice at the side back/underarm area, the leftover fabric from the petticoat was pieced to create the faux petticoat front panel
-the tapes at the waist may have originally been to polonaise the skirt, but may have been repurposed for tying on the petticoat panel

311. Accession #4455/1-2
Object: Sack dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade
Date: c.1770-1775, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-missing lining, brass hooks & eyes
-the bodice front has been let out at the side seams; the petticoat waistband has been re-done, possible in conjunction with the letting out of the dress at the side seams?
-the sleeves have been re-sewn into the armholes to accommodate the enlargement of the bodice
-the darts in the bodice fronts appear to have been sewn with cotton thread – thus not original
-the neckline edges of the bodice are raw and ragged and have been roughly overcast stitched in some places
-pleats have been top stitched down in the area of the side back bodice; another victim of 19th century fancy dress or theatre?
- front waistline seam has been re-sewn to accommodate bodice alteration
-sleeve seams have been roughly re-sewn

312. Accession #4984
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask
Date: fabric c. 1730-40, current construction c. 1775-1785, altered/cleaned 19th century
Alteration Notes:
dress has been cleaned/dry cleaned so that fabric has lost its original hand/body
there are marks on the bodice front and back that may indicate alteration, but these are too faint to be sure, could just be imperfections in the weave
the shoulder bands are less tidily sewn to the dress than the rest of the stitching, which is curious, but inconclusive
pocket slits are positioned towards the back of the dress, which could suggest re-pleating of the skirt
fabric is much older than style of dress, probably a full re-make
there are pleats down the front edges of the skirt which look like they could have been extensions from robings?

313. Accession #6371
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade and silk satin
Date: fabric and original construction c.1760s, altered 1830s
Alteration Notes:
c. 1760s fabric/dress re-made in 1830s
sleeves are later additions; original dress may have been closed with fall front, current skirt front appears to retain original pleating and fall front/pocket slits, although skirt back is now gathered
linings and hem facing appear to date from re-make
Additional Notes:
-with the extensive piecing on the bodice, would this have been worn as normal clothing?
Would something have gone over the front to hide the very visible piecing?

314. Accession #7467
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: 1760-1770, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-bodice robings have been unfolded at fronts to enable them to meet at the hem and fasten with hook and thread loop/eye – certainly 19th century alteration
-it seems likely the green ribbon trim was also added in the 19th century
-stitch marks around the bodice centre back seam and on the skirt back shortly below the waist suggest some form of alteration took place
-sleeves appear to have been let out at armholes
-stitch marks around sleeve ends just above current cuff placement suggest alteration here as well, as does the cut and possibly shortened upper edge of the cuffs
Additional Notes:
-could this dress have been re-made mid-century from earlier garment/fabric? then somewhat altered in 19th century?

315. Accession #9138
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: c. 1775, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-bodice is pieced at side fronts and middle fronts, underneath trimming, the lining is not pieced in these areas suggesting that either the original construction was pieced, or the dress was re-made in the 1770s/1780s
-dress has been let out through the bodice and sleeves with relatively rough re-sewing, often in cotton thread – certainly altered for size in the 19th century; the style of these sleeve cuffs is
unusual for 18th century, possibly re-modelled from earlier falling cuffs to sort-of be in line with longer 1780s sleeves or done in the 19th century?
stitch marks on bodice back indicate it was modified at some point, possible a re-working of the back bodice pleats from earlier, wider configuration

Additional Notes:
-may have been a 1760s dress altered/re-made post-1770
-most, if not all, of the re-sizing was likely done in the 19th century

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316. Accession #1922.1885
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask
Date: 1735-45
Alteration Notes:
-no obvious signs of alteration – there are symmetrical sharp creases down the length of the side fronts of the bodice and skirt, but it is unclear what these mean

317. Accession #1922.1886
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: c. 1770, altered 19th century and later “restored”
Alteration Notes:
-at some point the bodice front was darted, but these have been unpicked and only slight creases and stitch marks remain
-the sleeves have been let out, the current stitching looks rather rough, the sleeve lining has been left unpicked and the pieced lower portion of the sleeve that cups the elbow has been slit at front and the trimming used to cover this up; the polonaise ties are not all the same, some may be replacements/additions
-are the sleeve ends later additions?
-there is the remnant of a robbing acting as a shoulder band; there are numerous stitch marks and faint creases on the bodice back
-there is evidence of re-stitching around the waist, particularly at the front where there is also evidence of un-folded pleats
-there are additional faint crease/fold lines running the length of the bodice front
-this dress appears to have likely been first made in the 1760s with an open fronted bodice and stomacher with a pleat/dart underneath the original robbing which has all been unfolded to provide the width needed to make the fronts match, the sleeves were likely lengthened at that time and the back bodice pleats possibly rearranged
-the sleeve enlargement appears to have been done at a later date than the stylistic alterations

318. Accession #1935/286
Object: Fitted back dress, silk brocade
Date: c. 1760-70? altered post-1775?
Alteration Notes:
-shows signs of an earlier dress with open-fronted bodice and robings being altered to close-fronted – there is piecing on the bodice fronts that is comparatively roughly done, there are faint fold marks along the length of the bodice front, there is the remnant of robings across the shoulders and the sleeve heads are pleated, the bodice back has been clearly cut and seamed
-this dress has also been enlarged, as seen at the sleeves
-there is some rather rough piecing on the skirt at the waist fronts
-the waist seam also appears to have been re-sewn

319. Accession #1947.503
Object: Sack dress with matching petticoat, silk satin brocade
Date: 1760-70
Alteration Notes:
sleeves have been let-out at seams, which are now machine sewn
dress skirt and petticoat lining has been added
-a pocket has been made in the right-hand side front piecing seam of the silk and the added lining
-there are stitch marks on the bodice back lining, but it is unclear what these may mean
-there is some mending in the lining at the back shoulders
-the pleats at the petticoat waist have been repositioned to move the fullness to the back
-there are stitch marks on the back pleats of the dress near waist level, but it is uncertain what these mean
-one button on the compère front appears to be a replacement – it is more dome-shaped than the rest which are flat

320. Accession #1947.825
Object: Fitted-back dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade
Date: 1770-80, altered/cleaned 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
- bodice front and sleeves show signs of alteration from open-fronted bodice – remnant of robings over shoulders, faint fold lines on bodice front and stitch marks, stitch marks on lower sleeve edges suggest some form of cuff or trimming was once attached there, the manner of the sleeve insertion and easing is consistent with pre-1770 construction, not post
- the sleeve seams appear to have been re-sewn – silk and lining have been worked as one with edges left raw
- documentation suggests the ensemble may have been dry cleaned

321. Accession #1947.826
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: 1770-80
Alteration Notes:
- dress has been altered from open-fronted bodice with robings to closed – there are remnants of robings over the shoulders, the bodice fronts have been pieced and show old fold lines and stitch marks, the bodice lining at back shoulders also show evidence of this alteration
- the skirt pleats have been re-worked into small, tight knife pleats facing the back, but resulting in the pocket slits now sitting towards the back rather than at the sides
-there are stitch marks on the bodice back indicating change; the current sleeves, while not lengthened, appear to have been pieced together from leftover bits from the alteration process
-there are crease/fold marks on the side backs of the bodice

322. Accession #1947.827
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: original construction 1750-70, altered post-1775
Alteration Notes: mid-century dress altered post-1770
-there are remnants of robings across the shoulders
-the bodice fronts are seamed across these at the front of the arm
-sleeve insertion into bodice is more consistent with mid-century construction rather than post-1770
-sleeves have been lengthened and the cuffs added, the shape of crease marks on the lower pieces suggest these might have come from winged/pleated cuffs
-pocket slits now sit towards the back, indicating the skirt has been re-pleated
-although neatly done, the nature of the seaming on the bodice back, and left over stitch marks along with the seam at centre back waist indicate this was modified
-the insides of the sleeves are now unlined and are a mess
-in addition to piecing, there are crease and stitch marks running across the bottom of the skirt a few inches up from the hem, it is unclear what these indicate

323. Accession #1947.828
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask
Date: original construction 1750-70, altered post-1775
Alteration Notes:
-mid-century dress altered post-1770
-remnants of robings across shoulders, where these end at the front the bodice front is seamed across
-bodice fronts are pieced at upper edges
-sleeves have been lengthened and enlarged – the lining is split and catch-stitched down inside the elbow to accommodate this
-the front bodice lining is significantly pieced
-although neatly executed, the style of the bodice back is certainly not original
-the drawstring front of the skirt
-there is significant cutting and re-seaming inside the skirt
-the pocket slits are now at the side front instead of the side, it is unclear whether the atypical facings on the pockets slits are original or not

324. Accession #1947.1597
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask
Date: 1755-65, altered 1775-1785, altered 19th century?
Alteration Notes:
-centre back/en fourreau panel of dress is made of different fabric from the rest of the dress, it is very close, but still a different fabric, surely this cannot be original
-bodice lining is much pieced, somewhat haphazardly looking
-sleeve cuffs are certainly not original
-there is piecing at the bottom of the bodice fronts
-there are many areas of re-stitching, looks like contemporary thread, but not all of it is neat or matches dress in colour
-hooks and loops are certainly later (19th century?) additions
Additional Notes:
-mid-century dress altered post-1770?

325. Accession #1947.1602
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: original construction 1750-70? altered c. 1780
Alteration Notes:
appears to be a 1750s/60s dress altered c. 1780
-bodice fronts are pieced
-shoulder bands may be robings remnants
- bodice back has crease and stitch marks indicating alteration of some sort, small chance it may be from a sack back
- sleeves are pieced at the right spot for an alteration of this time
- pocket slits sit towards the back, in keeping with the skirt fullness having been moved towards the back of the dress as part of the alteration
- there is also 19th century work, mostly appearing to be repairs of the bodice front piecing, the bodice side back seams in the silk layer, areas of the waist seam
- metal hooks and eyes were also added at this later date

326. Accession #1947.1604
Object: Fitted-back dress with quilted petticoat, silk satin jacquard and silk “lutstring”
Date: original construction 1750-70, altered c. 1780
Alteration Notes:
- bodice fronts have been pieced to fill in the front and make the edges meet – in both silk and lining layers, though differently – it appears the metal eyes were added at this time, along with matching hooks that have since been removed
- bodice back shows stitch and crease marks that suggest possibly alteration from a sack – the creases create partial box pleats
- sleeves have been let out at underarm seam, or removed and re-sewn in slightly different position
- shoulder bands are robing remnants
- bodice back is pieced across the breadth near the neck edge
- sleeve cuffs are certainly later additions
Additional Notes:
- accompanying petticoat is likely not an original pairing with the dress
- looks mid-century, typical thin silk (sarcenet?) outer with wool batting and callemanco wool lining, appears unaltered

327. Accession #1947.1614
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: fabric and original construction c. 1760s-1770s, altered/remade 1795-1800
**Alteration Notes:**
- Clearly a 3rd-4th quarter 18th century dress altered at the very end of the century/beginning of 19th century.
- The bodice appears to have been entirely re-made at this time as there is no centre back seam, the bodice fronts are pieced with old crease marks but these do not indicate any direct alteration rather re-use of other parts, the sleeves are set in all the way round, and the sleeve linings are separate from the silk layer.
- It is unclear how much the skirt has been altered – joining seams appear to be original, but no obvious indication of where an open skirt was sewn closed with no break in the hem facing tape – possibly the original dress was a bib front or the skirt hem facing was sewn new at the time of the re-make.
- Skirt has no been lengthened to compensate for the raised waist, so was this re-made for a child, a short woman, or worn with a longer petticoat underneath?

328. Accession #1947.1622  
**Object:** Stays, wool damask  
**Date:** Mid-18th century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-no signs of alteration

329. Accession #1947.1623  
**Object:** Stays, linen  
**Date:** 1775-1800  
**Alteration Notes:**  
-no obvious signs of alteration
330. Accession #1947.1624  
Object: Stays, silk satin  
Date: 1775-1800  
Alteration Notes:  
-no obvious signs of alteration

331. Accession #1947.1625  
Object: Stays, silk satin  
Date: c. 1800  
Alteration Notes:  
-linen binding is roughly done, certainly not original  
-shoulder straps have been hacked about, possibly mended  
-lower edge has no tabs – is this original or were they cut off and the current binding added at that time?

332. Accession #1949.76  
Object: Stays, silk brocade and leather  
Date: 1770-1790, altered 19th century?  
Alteration Notes:  
-these may have been altered from an earlier set of stays, and possibly altered again in the 19th century  
-stays have a cobbled together appearance  
-boning has been removed from stays fronts  
-front eyelets and boning at front edges appear to be later additions (19th century?)

333. Accession #1951.231  
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: original construction 1760-75, remade c. 1800
Alteration Notes:
-clearly a 1760s or 1770s dress altered at the end of the century, probably nearly fully remade as it is unclear what of the original construction remains

334. Accession #1951.283/2
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: fabric and original construction 1735? altered/remade c. 1775-1790
Alteration Notes:
-bodice fronts have been pieced, slightly let out at piecing seams, and there are crease marks down their length indicating alteration to a robing front (onto which the separate robing pieces that remain were presumably sewn)
-bodice back is pieced and has crease and stitch marks over it, somewhat haphazardly
-sleeves appear to have been let out at armhole, or removed and re-sewn
-bodice back is pieced near neck edge
-skirt is much pieced and skirt panels look to have been re-sewn
-pocket slits have been sewn up
-sleeves are pieced at ends, and cuffs are certainly later additions
-bodice lining is pieced, but not in ways that fully correspond with outer layer piecing
-all this suggests that an earlier dress was partially altered, partially fully re-made later on
-alterations/re-make have a slightly rough appearance, but this may be as much due to later rough handling as to poor workmanship
-there is a patch of darning on the left-hand bodice lining front
-there are scattered areas of patching holes in the skirt from the inside using self-fabric – looks later, possibly synthetic thread was used – meaning the fabric patches must have been harvested from the dress itself, possibly from armhole seam allowances
Additional Notes:
-I’m really not sure this was originally a 1735 dress, its current incarnation is definitely 4th quarter of the 18th century
335. Accession #53.70
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: original construction 1760-70? altered/remade c. 1775-1785
Alteration Notes:
-appears to be an earlier dress re-made c. 1780
-there are numerous stitch and crease marks on the bodice back which suggest the dress may have originally been a sack (crease marks are perfectly straight and parallel and form deep pleats)
-the original sleeves appear to have been kept and just lengthened by the addition of the cuffs
-the curve at the hem of the skirt fronts is created by folding up the fabric, not cutting it (not certain evidence either way, but potentially suggestive)
-bodice back is also pieced near the neckline, which may be suggestive of transition from sack to fitted back
Additional Notes:
-construction is very neat and clean, suggesting this was a total makeover of an earlier (sack?) dress

336. Accession #1954.1149
Object: Stays, linen
Date: mid-18th century
Alteration Notes:
-no signs of alteration

337. Accession #1955.94
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: 1760-1770? altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-it is unclear how much actual original construction remains, robings and back pleats/seaming appear original, sleeves themselves appear original, but have been re-sewn and falling cuffs appear to be backwards
-silk lining in skirt and sleeves is certainly not original, much sewing done with cotton and thin silk thread – 19th century or later
-silhouette of skirt has been almost entirely changed
Additional Notes:
appears to be a dress of 1760-1770 that was altered in the 19th century to resemble the earlier, wider skirt styles of c. 1740-1750

338. Accession #1970.202
Object: Stays, linen
Date: 1760-1780
Alteration Notes:
- there is patching of the lining with white linen, unbleached linen on tabs may or may not be original
- leather binding appears to be largely, if not all, later addition as it covers some areas of linen
tape binding fragments
- there are a few patches of leather on the outside of the stays

339. Accession #1972.33
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: original construction 1770 or earlier, altered 1775-1780
Alteration Notes:
- triangular pieces in skirt are not original and waist seam has been re-sewn – looks as if triangular pieces are cut from upper skirt portion, reducing fullness at the waist and increasing it at the hem
- dress originally had en fourreau back, indicated by awkwardness of back skirt pleating at waist seam
- vertical tucks/darts in bodice fronts are surely not original, nor are there corresponding ones in the lining, suggesting it was replaced at the time of this alteration
- shoulder pieces appear to have possibly been robings originally’ bodice and sleeves have been pieced/patched, probably repair work since this is a problematic area
-sleeve seams have been re-sewn, may have been lapped originally
-lower sleeve edges show stitch marks in serpentine pattern, indicating there was once trim sewn here

340. Accession #1974.27
Object: Fitted-back dress, printed cotton
Date: original construction 1780s, altered 1795-1800
Alteration Notes:
-this is a 1780s dress that was altered at the end of the century to conform to higher waistlines and changing styles of bodice fronts
-skirt may have been moved a little farther towards the back as well, but this is not certain
-upper part of bodice back was also added at this time

341. Accession #1980.209
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: original construction 1760-70, altered 1775-1780
Alteration Notes:
-dress appears to have been originally made late 1760s and remade/altered post-1770
-the piecing on the lower sleeves is so clean inside and out that it looks like original construction, however the back of the right hand sleeve bottom shows the scalloped pink edge – so are the pieces made from falling cuffs/pinked trimming?
-There are stitch marks above the piecing seam suggesting ruffles or trim may have once been stitched there, but the sleeve seam looks clean and like original construction too
Additional Notes:
-I believe the sleeve width is original, there are no stitch marks in the seam allowance and it is not deeper than was typical throughout the 18th century

342. Accession #1983.633
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: 1740-1750, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- pocket slits have been partially stitched up
- the bodice and sleeve linings are different fabrics, if the bodice lining is cotton that could suggest replacement, although the stitching in the silk does appear original (or at least 18th century)
- some small areas of repair inside the bodice
- the linen tape sewn to the back bodice lining at the waist appears to be a waist stay – linen tape suggests 18th century, waist stay suggests 19th century, which is it?
- at least part of the waist seam overcasting does not look original – sewn with cotton thread
- the slip stitching of the side back bodice lining seam seems unlikely to be original either
Additional Notes:
- were the now unpicked tucks in the bodice front original or later additions? Was this really meant to be a slight wrap-over style? I’m not fully convinced

343. Accession #1989.220
Object: Mantua with matching petticoat, silk damask
Date: 1740-1742, altered/cleaned 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- some of the skirt tacking appears to be done with cotton thread – thus 19th or 20th century
- the back buttons for the skirt front draping loops do not quite match, once is not original
-dress textile has lost its original body/hand as if it has been washed

344. Accession #2003.14
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: 1745-1747
Alteration Notes:
- skirt hem at front edges has been shortened a little
- otherwise little sign of alterations
- the bodice lining is pieced from different linen fabrics, suggesting possible partial replacement, but this is by no means certain
- linen tapes inside bodice front edges may or may not be original (if not original, probably still 18th century)
Additional Notes:
- this is an example of a more roughly made dress from this period

345. Accession #2008.21
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk damask
Date: 1740s, altered post-1775, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- ruched sleeve cuffs are later, c. 1780s (where did the fabric for them come from?)
- the sleeve ruffle & ribbon trim around the neckline and robings appear to be 19th or early 20th century – fancy dress or theatre?
- there is later stitching on the waist seam at the front left-hand side with cotton thread, as it is only one this side it seems most likely to be repair work
- there is some slightly different coloured thread used on the centre back bodice lining seam, possibly a contemporaneous repair?
- the raggedly cut edges of the skirt waist edge and pocket slit facings suggest the entire skirt may once have been lined
Additional Notes:
-it is interesting that the only later 18\textsuperscript{th} century stylistic alteration was the sleeve cuffs with the rest of the dress left intact including robings

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346. Accession #1946.168  
Date: 1780-85  
Notes:  
- altered – contemporary – possibly sack remade into anglaise  
- later – darning  
\textit{no image}

347. Accession#1947.1594  
Date: 1750-65  
Notes:  
- altered/repaired  
- later – repairs, fabric feels like it’s been washed  
\textit{no image}

348. Accession #1947.1595  
Date: 1750-60 (to 1780?)  
Notes:  
- altered  
- contemporary – bodice let out at side back seam, sleeves let out at seam, at which time it appears skirt (apart from \textit{en fourreau}) was unpicked & re-pleated & re-sewn  
- later – silver metal hooks  
\textit{no image}

349. Accession #1947.1596  
Date: 1750-60 (1770-80)  
Notes:  
- altered  
- contemporary:  
  - mid-century remade at bodice front (& sleeves?) to post-1770  
\textit{no image}

350. Accession #1947.1597  
Date: 1755-1765 (1770-80)  
Notes:
- altered/re-made
- mid-century dress re-made 1770-80, fabric of slightly different shade & pattern pieced onto
dress back for en fourreau

no image

351. Accession #1947.1598
Date: 1755-65 (c. 1780)
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary:
  - mid-century/1760s dress to 1770s
  - bodice fronts/roblings un-pleated to make edges meet or possibly entire bodice is a re-
make (except sleeves)
- later:
  - machine sewn darts (now un-picked) in bodice front and back, possible hooks & eyes
    (now removed)

no image

352. Accession #1947.1599
Date: 1770-80 (girl’s dress?)
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary:
  - possible re-make from older dress (adult’s cut down to chil’s?)
- later:
  - addition of trim, hooks & eyes, re-sewing with cotton thread
  - fabric feels like it’s been washed

no image

353. Accession #1947.1600
Date: 1770-80
Notes:
- no very obvious signs of alteration
- amount of piecing on bodice may indicate re-making from older garment

no image

354. Accession #1947.1601
Date: 1770-80
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary:
  - mid-century to late 1770s/80s, patching & piecing
- later:
  - machine sewn darts in fronts (now unpicked), hook, punched/cut lacing holes

no image
355. Accession #1947.1602
Date: 1770-8
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary:
  - possibly a 1760s (?) sack to 1770s anglaise
  - possibly also let out across back
- later:
  - metal hooks & eyes

no image

356. Accession #1947.1603
Date: 1770-80
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary:
  - 1760s (?) dress to 1770s/80s
  - bodice front filled in to make edges meet, bodice back re-pleated and sewn, re-stitching of
    - of skirt and panel join seams

no image

357. Accession #1947.1604
Date: 1770-75
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary:
  - mid-century/1760s to 1770s?
    - creases in bodice back suggest possible alteration from a sack

no image

358. Accession #1947.1605
Date: c. 1780
Notes:
- no obvious signs of alteration

no image

359. Accession #1947.1607
Date: c. 1780 (to 1790?)
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – waist seam straightened all round and piped (1790s? 1830s?)

no image

360. Accession #1947.1608
Date: 1780-95
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – waistline raised, skirt fullness moved far back (pocket slits almost at cd), 1770s/80s to 1790s?
*no image*

361. Accession #1947.1609
Date: 1780-90
Notes:
- altered
- probably later? – right-hand sleeve is a replacement
*no image*

362. Accession #1947.1611
Date: 1780-90 (zone front-ish)
Notes:
- unaltered
*no image*

363. Accession #1947.1612
Date: 1780-90
Notes:
- unaltered
*no image*

364. Accession #1947.1615
Date: 1795-1800
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – late 1780s/90s altered to 1795-1800
*no image*

365. Accession #1947.1616
Date: 1795-1800
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – 1780s dress to 1790s/18001950.172
- 1770-80
- altered
- some contemporary – mid-century to 1770s? bodice fronts unpleated & pieced to meet, bodice lining replaced, skirt re-sewn
- some 19th century – darts in fronts (now unpicked), sleeves let out, pocket slits machine sewn closed (now unpicked)
*no image*
366. Accession #1950.172
Date: 1770-80
Notes:
- altered
- some contemporary – mid-century to 1770s? bodice fronts unpleated & pieced to meet, bodice lining replaced, skirt re-sewn
- some 19th century – darts in fronts (now un-picked), sleeves let out, pockets machine sewn closed (now unpicked)

no image

367. Accession #1950.173
Date: c. 1770
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary for style, mid-century to 1770-80 (fronts made to meet, sleeves lengthened)

no image

368. Accession #1950.236
Date: 1780-85
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – from 1760s (?) open gown with en fourreau to 1780 closed bodice & levite (?) back with longer sleeves

no image

369. Accession #1951.231
Date: c. 1800
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – 1760s/70s remade to c 1800

no image

370. Accession #1951.283/2
Date: 1735 (? – check this out, really this old?)
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – for later (1770s) style

no image

371. Accession #1951.327
Date: 1770-80
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – 1760s to later?
- dress skirt is gone, matching underskirt only remains (which appears unaltered)

no image
372. Accession #1951.459  
Date: 1770-80  
Notes:  
- altered  
- some is contemporary for size  
- more is 19th century, has been unpicked since  
   *no image*  

373. Accession #1952.365  
Date: 1795 – 1800 (1790-1800?)  
Notes:  
- possible alteration to bodice fronts  
   *no image*  

374. Accession #1953.70  
Date: c. 1770 (to 1780?)  
Notes:  
- altered, contemporary:  
  - bodice and skirt back much altered, front and sleeves not – re-make from slightly earlier?  
   *no image*  

375. Accession #1953.71  
Date: c. 1770 (1775-1780)  
Notes:  
- much altered  
- probably 1760s dress to late 1770s – mid-1780s style  
   *no image*  

376. Accession #1953.238  
Date: c. 1770 (or 1780?)  
Notes:  
- altered 19th/20th century  
- bodice and skirt cut apart  
- much repaired  
   *no image*  

377. Accession #1953.239  
Date: c. 1760  
Notes:  
- altered – probably 19th century:  
  - bodice front altered (to meet at cf?)  
  - much repaired  
   *no image*
378. **Accession #**1954.1050  
**Date:** 1770-75 (or 1780)  
**Notes:**  
- slight alteration possibly to cuffs  
- sleeves appear lengthened with ruched cuffs applied (one of which is now gone)  
*no image*

379. **Accession #**1955.94  
**Date:** 1760-70  
**Notes:**  
- altered  
- contemporary:  
  - from sack to anglaise, sleeves let out at underarms  
- 19th century:  
  - repairs  
*no image*

380. **Accession #**1960.219/2  
**Date:** 1780-90  
**Notes:**  
- altered/repaired  
- contemporary – sleeve & underarm seam piecing suggest possible alteration, repair at bodice fronts is with self fabric  
- later – dress has been washed  
*no image*

381. **Accession #**1960.302  
**Date:** 1760-80  
**Notes:**  
- petticoat reduced to false front only  
- otherwise unaltered  
*no image*

382. **Accession #**1960.303  
**Date:** 1780-85  
**Notes:**  
- possible re-make  
- lots of crease & stitch marks all over skirt, possible stitch marks on bodice back, possible re-make from older garment  
- sleeve seams have been let out, probably at time of re-make (?)  
- is lace edging at neck contemporary or later?  
*no image*

383. **Accession #**1961.116  
**Date:** 1760-70  
**Notes:**
- altered
- front hooks & eyes probably 19th century
- side back seams unusual (exposed seam allowances)
- cotton thread in various places – some is likely repair work

no image

384. Accession #1961.260
Date: 1750-60
Notes:
- much altered for size in 19th/20th century

no image

385. Accession #1963.23
Date: 1760-75
Notes: a couple of pleats/tucks in dress front are unpicked, otherwise unaltered (apart from conservation)

no image

386. Accession #1963.197
Date: 1760-75
Notes:
- altered
- probably in 19th/20th century, there was machine stitching
- later ‘restored’ by unpicking machine stitching

no image

387. Accession #1964.160 (adolescent girl’s dress?)
Date: 1770-80
Notes:
not obviously altered

no image

388. Accession #1964.161
Date: 1770-80 (girl’s dress)
Notes:
- altered
- for size at back shoulders, let out
- for style – waistline raised & straightened at back

no image

389. Accession #1965.306
Date: 1765-75
Notes:
- altered for size (let out at sb seam)
- possible (partial?) lining replacement
- trim on robings altered
bodice front possibly altered with lining front edges meeting
390. Accession #1968. 2&3
Date: 1785-95
Notes:
- altered
- contemporary – (& later?) looks like 1780s dress altered c 1800 (stitching high & straight across back), bodice & skirt then separated
- sleeve & bodice side back seams let out

391. Accession #1970.198
Date: 1770-80
Notes:
- not obviously altered
  - there are 1780s sleeve cuffs & trim with the dress, but these may never have gotten sewn
  - on, however this indicates an intention to alter

392. Accession #1976.68
Date: 1774-1775
Notes:
- not obviously altered

393. Accession #M. 3730(?)
Date: 1780-85
Notes:
- unaltered

Worthing Museum

394. Accession #70788
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk satin brocade
Date: fabric first half of 18th century, construction post-1770, altered 19th century, later “restored”
Alteration Notes:
- dress has certainly been altered multiple times, though always cleanly and with care (or at least the last time was done with great care) the multiplicity of thread types and colours used on the dress suggests it has probably been entirely re-made over time
- the seaming on the bodice fronts suggest it was originally open at the front with a stomacher and possibly robings
- the fabric also appears to be from such a date that makes it unlikely it would have been made up new just from old fabric
-the skirt hem is pieced to add a little length
-the ribbon trim on the sleeves is synthetic, so at least late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, probably 20\textsuperscript{th}
-the care taken with the alterations, keeping the construction both clean and continuing to use 18\textsuperscript{th} century stitching techniques makes it very difficult to chart the course of this dress, 19\textsuperscript{th} century or later stitching is very difficult to distinguish from 18\textsuperscript{th} century, let alone which phase of construction in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century
-darts were once taken in at the fronts, and the sides of the bodice also taken in, possibly by machine, these have since been unpicked
-my hypothesized story: this was a dress originally dating to early-mid 18\textsuperscript{th} century, not worn much (fabric is in excellent condition)
-it was made-over c. 1780 (give or take) to have bodice fronts that meet and a new bodice lining put in (there are no seams in the bodice lining to correspond with those on the bodice fronts), the tapes and loops to polonaise the dress would also have been added at this time and the skirt re-pleated with fullness being concentrated more towards the back resulting in the pocket slits being moved that way also, the eyelets and boning may or may not have been added at this time
-the dress was altered in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century for fancy dress/theatre, and that is when the darts and sides were taken in – the skirt was also probably partially removed at this time and reattached so the bodice alterations could be made
-someone in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century then decided to ‘restore’ the dress by unpicking the darts, this would probably also have involved partially removing and reattaching the skirt due to the placements of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century alterations
-I am as yet unsure where the hem piecing, the eyelets + boning, and the synthetic ribbon fit into all of this
-late 18\textsuperscript{th} century sewing appears to have been worked largely (if not entirely) with gold coloured silk thread, most recent sewing appears to have been worked with a thinner light blue silk thread, don’t know yet where green thread(s) fit in

395. Accession #1957/222
Object: Fitted-back dress, printed cotton
Date: 1775-85, altered 1790-95, altered 19\textsuperscript{th} century?
Alteration Notes:
-skirt has been raised on bodice, hem has been let down at fronts
-stitch marks approx 5-6” above hem suggest it was once faced by a band of some other fabric, or something else was going on (there are two double rows of stitch marks actually, and a crease mark in between them)
-crudeness of sewing suggest bodice front underlap piece is not original
-there is significant patching of bodice and sleeves at underarms on both inside and outside of dress
-sleeves are pieced at bottom, but carefully enough to possibly be original construction
-there are linen tape loops inside the dress, indicating the skirt was once able to be drawn up in the polonaise style

**Additional Notes:**
-seems likely this was originally a late 1770s/80s dress cut with bodice and skirt fully separate, altered in 1790s with rising waistlines
-patches on lining underarm areas may be later (19th century?) cotton additions, sewn with cotton thread

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**396. Accession #1970/389**

**Object:** Unpicked dress and matching petticoat, embroidered silk satin  
**Date:** mid-18th century (or late?), altered 19th century?  

**Alteration Notes:**  
in addition to being unpicked and cut apart, the dress skirt hem was let down at some point, the soiling along this crease and the current hem indicate wear at both stages  
-the underskirt hem has also been let down  
-there is a sharp and puckered crease several inches below the top edge of the dress skirt and a slit in the back of it – looks as if it was gathered along the fold and possibly attached to something else to be a skirt with a back opening sometime later (19th century?)  

**Additional Notes:**  
-it seems obvious the embroidery on this ensemble was too good and costly to not keep  
-was it intended for a new dress, or was this just an easier way to store the fabric until a use could be devised? It is unclear whether the unpicking would date from the 18th century or later (19th/20th century)  
-the petticoat appears to have received the same treatment

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**397. Accession #1972/59**

**Object:** Dress (polonaise) and matching petticoat, silk brocade  
**Date:** c. 1780  

**Alteration Notes:**  
dress has overall ‘feel’/’look’ of having been re-worked
I want to think this was a 1770s dress re-worked into a new style in the 1780s, but it is unclear if this is really so apart from how far back the pocket slits are currently set
- the fabric of the trim around the neckline is in 10 pieces, stitched together, not entirely neatly, there are also indications of pleats that have been undone
- the trim around the skirt edges is in similar condition, but a little tidier; there are pin/stitch marks on the middle back pieces of the bodice lining, some of which indicate prior boning channels
- there used to be weights sewn into the sleeve ends (not the cuffs), there are also areas of pin/stitch marks on the lower portions of the sleeves (above the cuffs); from the inside can be seen that at least the centre back of the skirt may have been cut for a different pleating configuration
- there is an overall re-worked feel to the waist edge of the petticoat, as though it has been re-done to be more flexible (?), there are old crease and pin/stitch marks all over the petticoat near the waist

Additional Notes:
- according to the curator this is believed to be a maternity dress/ensemble, when mounted it only looked ‘right’ when padding was placed under the centre front of the bodice

398. Accession #1974/167
Object: Dress, silk ("lutstring")
Date: 1795-1805
Alteration Notes:
- greatly altered
- amount of fullness to dress and use of box pleats around dress back suggests this might have originally been a sack back, nor has it been pieced to add length
- dress front has been pieced to add length, indicating, along with crease lines, that it was originally part of a skirt
- surviving pocket slits and their position also indicate this
- sleeves are made to purpose, suggesting either that extra fabric was used or the dress was previously a 1780s – though long-sleeved sacks are not something you hear much of
- fabric certainly seems later 18th century
- dress back with stitched down pleats releasing into skirt is consistent with late 1790s/turn of century transition period
- the waistband strip has crease and pin hole marks indicating it was originally a piece of pleated trim
- the bodice lining is hacked about and roughly pieced
**Additional Notes:**
-this dress has the appearance of possibly being in a mid-alteration state due to the possibly unfinished front, it is difficult to tell whether there ever was a drawstring inserted into the lower casing inside the dress front and whether it was ever actually worn in its current incarnation, it appears both ends of the waistband were stitched to the dress back, and pinned together across the front, the marks left over from its time as pleated trim make it impossible to tell if any marks are from this later use
-there is little to no creasing of the linen casing inside the dress, which you would expect to have when gathering up so much fullness as is in the dress front
-perhaps it was done, tried on and declared unsuccessful/unflattering?

399. **Accession #1974/168**  
**Object:** Unpicked sack dress, silk brocade  
**Date:** 1760-70  
**Alteration Notes:**
-dress has been carefully picked apart  
**Additional Notes:**
-were the now-missing pieces used for something else? Is what is left indication of intent to remake the dress? an example of in-process alteration/modification, or a means of facilitating packing away?

400. **Accession #1976-459**  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, printed cotton  
**Date:** 1775-1785, altered 19th century  
**Alteration Notes:**
-bodice has been altered with machine sewing to create 19th century silhouette  
-waistline has been roughly re-sewn at fronts
- extensive area of mending/darning in skirt back near hem; seems likely the metal hooks and worked eyelets are not original

401. Accession #1976/474
Object: Fitted-back dress with matching partial petticoat, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1730s-40s, construction 1775-1785
Alteration Notes:
- has been altered/re-made from an earlier dress
- crease and stitch marks on the bodice front indicate unfolded robings
- crease marks and piecing on the bodice back may suggest the dress was originally sack backed
- piecing on the sleeves and bodice at the underarms also suggests modification, as does piecing in the skirt near the fronts
- edge of skirt trimming that is seamed to the skirt is cut in scallop pinking, indicating it was once used differently
- shaped cuffs appear to be later additions, there are stitch marks on the lower sleeve portions suggesting there was once trimming or perhaps wing cuffs sewn on originally
- bodice lining does not look altered, indicating it dates from the remake of the dress
- metal hooks and eyes on bodice front suggest later wearing in 19th/20th century for fancy dress, etc
- the story of the petticoat is unclear
- fabric from it may have been harvested at the time of the later 18th century re-making
- it appears to have once been lined, or faced at the bottom with thin white silk like the dress hem
- the red glazed wool is certainly not original as it is pieced to areas where original rust tape waist binding fragments remain
- what remains of petticoat is off-centre
402. Accession #1980/234/182  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade  
**Date:** fabric mid-18th century, construction c.1780, altered 19th century  
**Alteration Notes:**  
- this appears to be a dress that was first made in the mid-18th century  
- it was then re-modelled in the 1780s, and finally altered for fit in the mid to late 19th century  
- dress would have originally had an open fronted bodice, the current centre front sections may be the original stomacher  
- sleeves are not pieced, suggesting the fabric for them was harvested from the original petticoat  
- the bodice was cut from the skirt at the back at this time and the back bodice pleats undone and converted into seams  
- it is unclear, but seems unlikely that the eyelets and boning in the front edges date to this period of transformation  
- darts were machine sewn in the fronts in the 19th century and boned  
- this is also when the petticoat was heavily altered to have a yoke pieced from original silk and cotton sateen  
- the rest of the petticoat is pieced to the extent it looks like a patchwork quilt  
- the dress skirt is also much pieced, but not as excessively as the petticoat

403. Accession #1981/417/1  
**Object:** Fitted-back dress, silk brocade  
**Date:** fabric 1730s, construction 1760s  
**Alteration Notes:**  
- there are symmetrical crease marks running down the bodice back that may suggest some form of alteration, unclear what; there are several places of mending and darning that look to be from various dates, some of this has taken the form of self-fabric patching such as under the arms (where did the fabric for this come from?)  
- parts of the waist seam stitching does not appear original, seems likely to be repair work

404. Accession #1981-417-2  
**Object:** Petticoat, silk brocade
Date: fabric 1730s, construction 1760s, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-the pocket bag sewn into the left-hand side is certainly 19th century
-the linen tape waistband may or may not be original
-the metal hook and eye are likely 18th century additions
-there are several areas of mending/darning on the glazed wool portion
-there appear to be stitch and crease marks scattered over the whole of the petticoat, suggesting it may have been a re-make from another garment (would this be the same for the dress as well then?)

405. Accession #2006/850
Object: Quilted petticoat, silk satin
Date: 1750-60, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-top edge of petticoat has been re-pleated- would not originally have had knife pleats facing towards centre front, nor cartridge pleating at all; left-hand pocket bag not original, corresponding right-hand pocket/opening slit has been stitched up
-metal hooks & eyes not original
-these changes most likely date from the 19th century for either fancy dress or theatre use

406. Accession #2006/852
Object: Quilted petticoat, silk satin
Date: 1750-60
Alteration Notes:
-appears unaltered
407. Accession #2007/80
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk (“lutstring”)
Date: c.1770-1780
Alteration Notes:
- numerous alterations, both contemporary and later (19th century)
- crease and stitch marks on the bodice suggest the dress was re-made from a sack back dress
- stitch marks and piecing on the sleeve back indicate the sleeves were enlarged, possibly during this re-making
- this may also explain the amount of piecing of the skirt at the waist
- sleeve ends have been lengthened by piecing with stitch marks above this seam suggesting there may once have been trimming sewn along these edges
- the hem facing appears to have been added at this time as well with the original hem left in situ
- the presence of decorative fabric strips that were clearly once used as trimming also indicates change, whether these were taken from the dress or a matching petticoat is unclear
- the dress is for a large woman, and appears to have been heavily altered for size by machine in the 19th/20th century
- numerous darts were taken in the bodice fronts and back, which have subsequently been unpicked
- the bodice front edges were turned under and the hooks and thread loops added, all of which remain
- the pocket slits were likely stitched up at this time as well, being sewn with cotton thread
- the lace ruffles would also have been added at this time

408. Accession #2709
Object: Fitted-back dress, painted silk and metal
Date: 1760-1770, remade 19th century
Alteration Notes:
- very much altered; this dress appears to have been entirely remade in the 19th or 20th centuries and is now primarily machine sewn
- almost nothing of the original construction remains
- there is some fabric piecing in the skirt that looks original by being closely whip stitched
- it appears likely that there were multiple layers to the falling cuffs as other skirt fabric piecing incorporates sections with scallop pinked edges
-the stomacher front is not original to the dress and has also been altered with the addition of buttonholes and buttons and being sewn into the fronts of the dress
-the self fabric trim on the skirt is original, but has been re-sewn with cotton thread

409. Accession #4263/1&2
Object: Sack dress with matching petticoat, silk brocade
Date: c. 1770, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-heavily altered, probably in the 19th/early 20th century
-current bodice lining is a replacement, much of the original sack back stitching is re-done – poorly, same with dress side seams, which appear to be simply basted together
-pleats in side skirt have been re-done, are likely more angular than originally and pleating arrangement is incorrect
-it is unclear whether the front waist seam has been re-done, or whether it just looks like that because of the rest of the alterations to the dress
-there appears to have been some machine stitching on the bodice that has since been removed
-sleeves have been let out at seams and re-sewn into armholes
-dress fronts have been altered (robings re-folded?) to make edges meet at front waist level
-silver colour metal snaps may indicate 20th century alteration period (?)
-petticoat waistband is a later replacement
-skirt fullness has been reworked to concentrate it at centre back with cartridge pleats
-darts were added at the front
-metal hooks and eyes certainly not original
410. Accession #4340
Object: Fitted-back dress, silk brocade
Date: c 1745-1750, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-the green ribbon on the sleeve cuffs is not original, likely 19th century
- there are several areas of mending on the bodice and skirt
-the rough and oddly shaped piecing on the skirt fronts suggest this was later work, perhaps to repair damage?
-The pieced in fabric is also slightly cleaner/brighter in appearance
-the waist seam has been re-sewn in part, if not in full; there is an eyelet worked into each skirt front a little less than halfway down – these are unlikely to be original
-fabric has lost its crisp hand- has it been washed/dry-cleaned?
-Appears to have been used for 19th century fancy dress/theatre
-it seems the pairing of the dress and quilted petticoat was done in the 19th century as well, dress likely had a matching petticoat originally
-stitch marks in sleeve underarms indicate they were re-sewn, at least in these areas – looks to be contemporaneous

411. Accession #4340/2
Object: Quilted petticoat, silk satin
Date: mid-18th century ?
Alteration Notes:
-there is a significant amount of what appears to be darning all along the hem of the petticoat – it is unclear whether this is contemporaneous, in-use mending or later

412. Accession #X/1986/603
Object: Petticoat, silk brocade
Date: 1750-1760, altered 19th century
Alteration Notes:
-significantly altered, probably in 19th century
- skirt has been roughly re-pleated and sewn into waistband
-hem has been cut and let down

**Additional Notes:**
-this would originally have been the matching underskirt to a dress, appears the dress is no longer extant (or at least with the underskirt)