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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

DEPARTMENT OF FASHION AND TEXTILES

EMBROIDERY

AN ANALYSIS OF VICTORIAN DRESS AND ITS INFLUENCES .

HOW THE VICTORIAN ERA, HAS INSPIRED DESIGNERS IN THE 1980'S
AND 1990'S

"BY"

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" SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN AND
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INTRODUCTION

In our everyday life, there is great evidence of the Victorian era. Many Irish and British cities are a testimony of a stolid yet extremely impressive era. Throughout Dublin and Belfast its architecture unfolds creating a vivid comparison between old and what is considered new. Each building exists, maintaining an adequate adduction of a somewhat Georgian and Victorian present. In Belfast the Raven Hill Road and the City Hall serve as a constant reminder of this past. While Dublins O'Connell Street possesses many significant examples of the Georgian - Victorian elegance, as well as North Great Georges Street. The past is constantly being repeated and updated with structural elements commanding a similarity with the existing styles of the eighteen hundreds.

Its Literature, History and Politics each serve as a connection to the Victorian period. They give us an appreciation of what social life was like. With pictorial and written composition still intact, they enable us to perceive the continuous changes of styles within fashion. Photography retains records of various scenes and occasions reflecting the various styles and fashions of that time (Joseph - Nicephore Niepce and Louis - Jacques - Mande Daguerre 1820 France)¹ in our own galleries, particularly the National Gallery of Ireland.

Many paintings encapsulate the qualities of Victorian life.

Many painters were inspired by actual people, the clothes they wore or their surrounds.

Throughout the Victorian age clothing became an ever present method of reflecting the status of who a person was. Dress for ladies was a way of showing a family's attitudes, aspirations and their social positions.² At any given period, the dress worn in a locality told many things about the economic well-being of that district as well as its attitudes to morality and exactly how much it was influenced by foreign ideas.

"Many claimed that throughout Ireland the Irish people were inclined to dress above their station and wealth". (Dunlevy , 1989)³

However, that is not necessarily true or accurate, particularly of the nineteenth century. Naturally, throughout the country there was a differentiation between classes. After 1869, the influence of landlords decreased.

With the emergence of a larger more influential middle class. The Big House was associated with the elite or prosperous in Victorian Society, and these can still be found particularly in the North of Ireland. Around East Belfast industries flourished, resulting from the expansion of the linen industry. While simultaneously the growing demand for silk in

Dublin attributed to a similitude wealth. Of course, there was still a significant number of poor, with their attire being hard-wearing and practical. Yet, tradition appears to have been more important than attitudes; and styles were altered at a less frequent pace, which is emphasized strongly on each of the gowns I examined from the Ulster Museum.

It was not only in Ireland, that there was an emergence of a wealthy middle class, but throughout the rest of the world, possibly resulting from the Industrial Revolution (1760-1850). With the existence and increasing influence of these prosperous business people "Castle" events surpassed any other in Ireland. Court circles increased greatly at the command of the new found prosperous. Events such as these were overcrowded displays of extravagance and wealth. These events were quite symbolic, particularly concerning matchmaking, although this area of social accolade was concealed and disguised.⁴ Thus, upholding the options that surrounded Victorian women.

Victorian women contrived through dissimilar court dress to appear distinguished and to avoid being uniform. Special costumes for court appearance were worn with great elegance and great attention given to extreme detail. It is important to appreciate that such dress was more formal then evening. Nevertheless, great emphasis was placed through differences in shape, style of finish, decoration and the expensive fabrics used. The gowns I examined illustrate each of these qualities

as do photographs of the time fabrics of the most expensive were used in a spontaneous and unfolding flow.(pl. no.1)

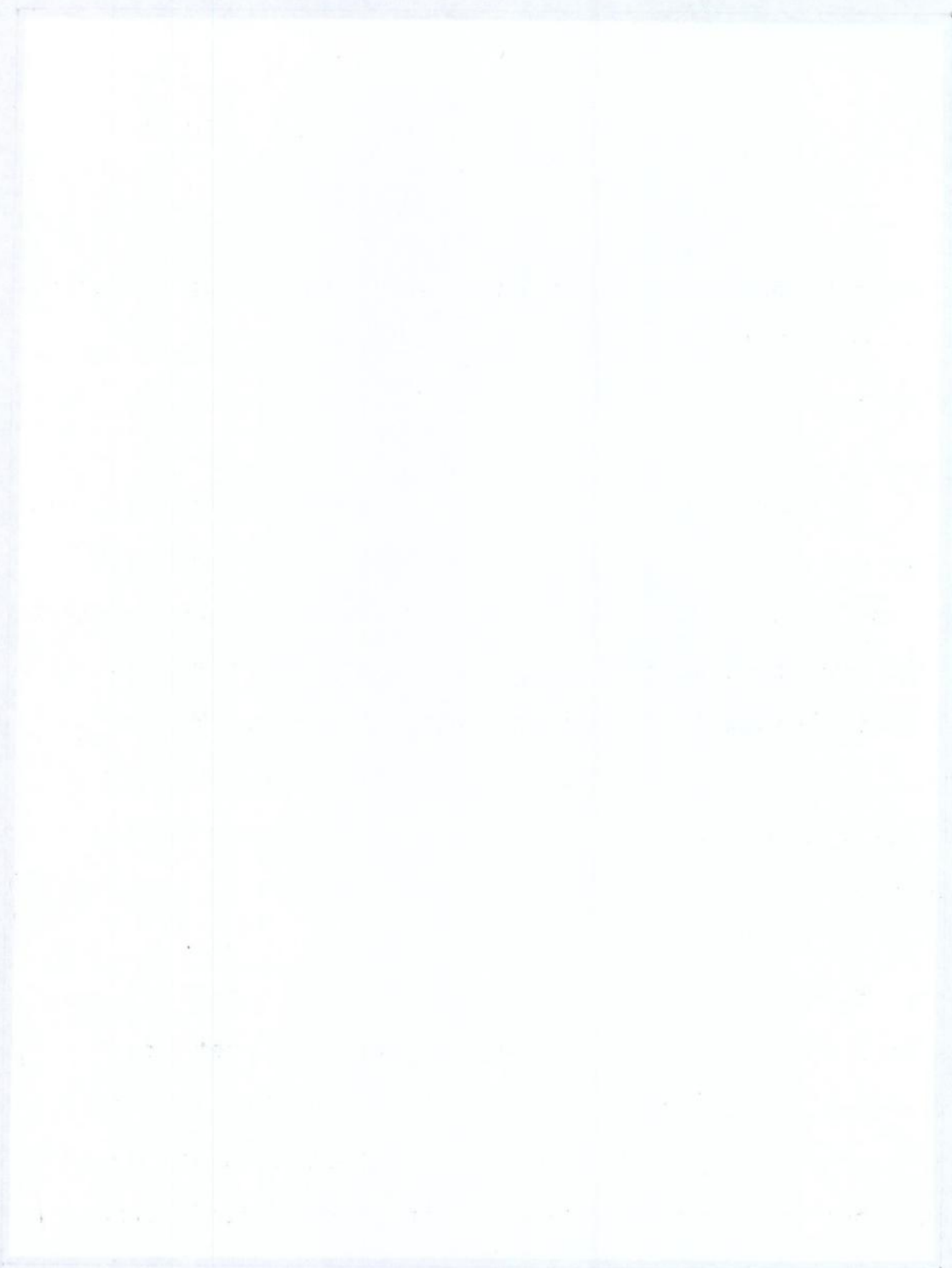
Dress in the nineteenth hundreds was a sequence of many various different styles, with each unfolding from the one before in a definite fashion.

As businesses developed Victorian women were required to present and signify wealth and social status of their husbands or fathers by withdrawing from salaried occupations and often from domestic duties.⁵ Servants became a necessity, in the midst of the splendour that created a definite division between their class and wealth. Modesty became a necessary requirement and marriage was thought of as being the natural, ideal and respectable duty. Many women had a quite sequestered and private life, resulting in clothing as a means of enjoyment and party-time. As the lock stitch sewing machine was invented, the out-put of garments increased. (1833, Walter Hunt, New York).⁶ Clothing became a language, which created the advantage of symbolizing richness, thus placing great emphasis on women and the manner that they wore clothes. While continually and purposely serving as symbols of ornamentation, women were looked upon as peculiar items of useless decoration themselves, and could be described as pathetic.

Many Victorian women became obsessed with vanity, and I believe lacked self-esteem, although concealing this, notably



1. Mrs. Jackson at Their Majesties Drawing Room,
Dublin Castle, 23 July 1903



through clothing, both inner and outer. Expectations of serene and demure ladies were evoked by husbands and fathers.

There was a continual belief among women in the upper-classes that it was their obligation to decorate the world while simultaneously their homes.⁷

There were many continual and various fashion changes within the Victorian era. Many women reflected aspects of their homes, such as curtains and upholstery through draped, pleated and flounced fabric.⁸ This provided a link between both, with women being generally associated with the home. This association lasted for quite a number of years, and even presently, in our society of today, attitudes are slowly changing.

By way of media, newspapers throughout Ireland and Britain held considerable interest in women's attire, whether challenging it or supporting it. The London Illustrated News is one such newspaper which held a constant interest in fashion and its changing styles. Many contributed articles regarding the varying and increasing dress reforms, and revised recommendations, styles and mannerisms concerning fashion. Throughout Victorian fashion there was a continual 're-vamping' of designs.

By the 1850's attitudes were considerably changing with the emergence of essential and notable suggestions about clothing

and its wearer. It was the general idea that colour and style should correspond with the complexion and figure of the wearer, suit the climate and simultaneously be lighter in weight. While allowing the body to move freely and gracefully.

As the 1870's approached, there was a division of styles, one bearing a separate bodice and skirt. This style is common to one of the gowns I examined in the Ulster Museum, both consequently being evening attire.⁹ While the wealthy were the main instruments of fashion changes, many women changed their clothes frequently throughout the day, and possessed various costumes for various occasions. Day wear, informal and formal, including a variety of leisure outfits were designed to compliment a particular occasion or past-time.(pl.no.2)

Sometimes, where possible, older styles could be changed and altered to suit and accommodate the varying modes expected of the fashion conscious. These alterations and changes were manageable where hand-stitching had been utilized. Gowns and dresses from old, could be transformed, without appearing conspicuous. Older fashion lines were efficiently concealed with the use of ornament.

With the changing economic situations having an adverse effect on many businesses, throughout Ireland, many Victorian women were forced to work. With the exception of the extremely rich. Women were being trained and various skills being

(2.08.19)



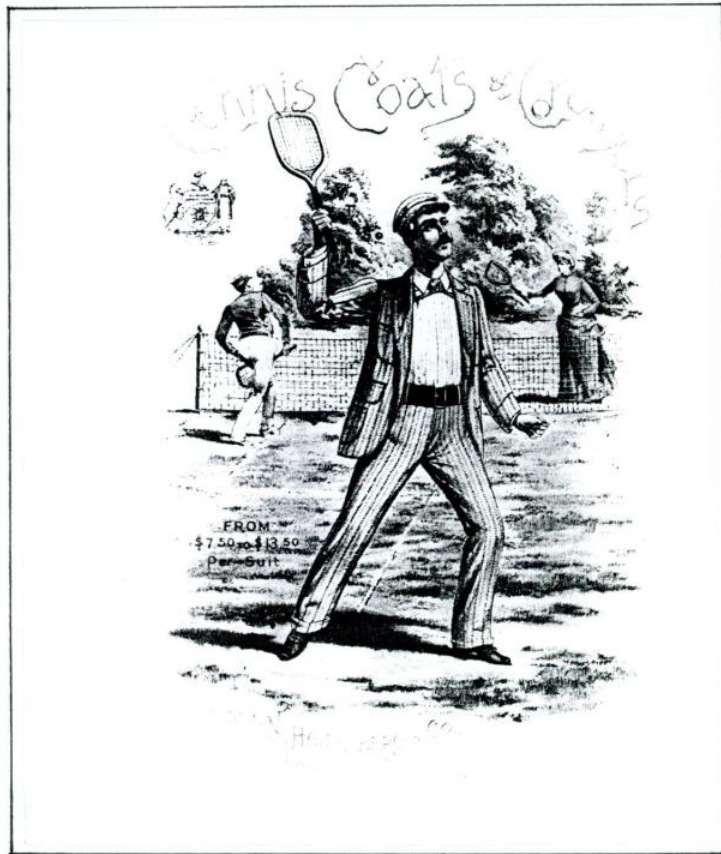
2. Day Dress, 1882



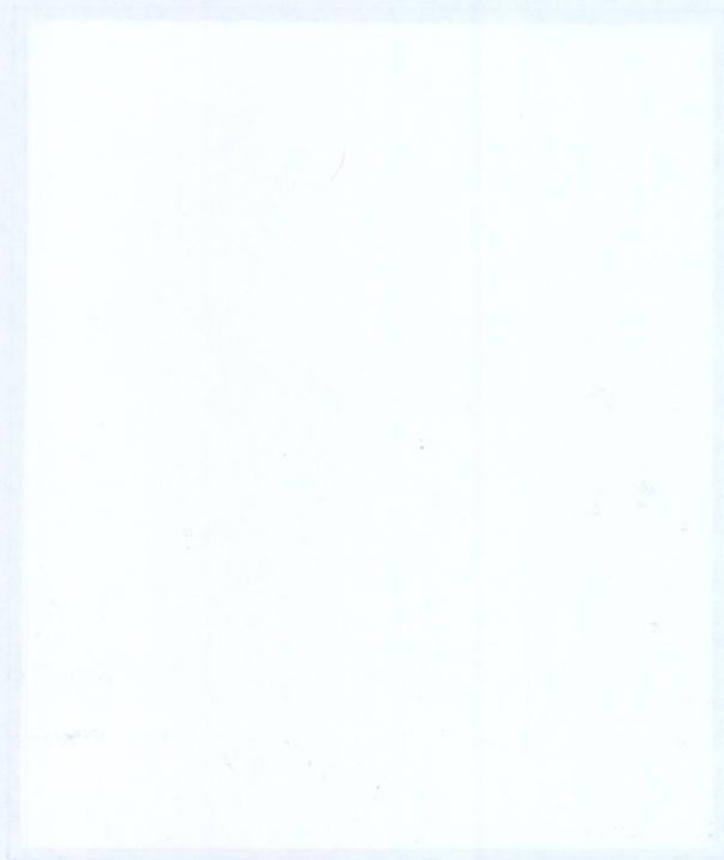
introduced to them. This reform broke to a certain degree the unwieldy barriers prohibiting them in various other aspects of Victorian life. Pending these events, I think a small yet evident equality was reached between both sexes. Women were seen as being subject to the will of their husbands. Between 1880 and 1900 a number of developments helped to improve the position of women, particularly in Britain. Many restrictions seemed to be disappearing with a relaxation toward women and what exactly was expected of them. Both gentlemen and women played tennis together, while travelling by train was allowable without a partner , Cycling also became a past-time, women attended university and attained a knowledge previously intended for men only. (pls. nos. 3,4,5)

Women now, attributed their own worth and knowledge to a society which previously banned and restricted them from doing so.¹⁰ They became audible within a society that somehow reflected them at being dainty and delicate yet extremely dull. Resulting from these factors, there was an increasing upsurge in career prospects for women. Consequently there was a need for more 'every day' style dresses, and suits. The suit emerged with a jacket which was feminine in its lines, accompanied by a skirt which flared at the back, giving allowance for movement and walking. Following this style, the dress remained ever-popular.

With the increasing demand for clothes, a great interest and influence was taken from Charles Frederich Worth (1856 Paris).



3. Illustration, showing tennis being played by both women and men from an advertisement
1892



no. 13



4. Travelling Companions by Augustus Egg. C
1860
The Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham



5. An advertisement from the 1890's, illustrating cycling as a past-time



Shops around Dublin became very competitive having a profuse amount of 'custom' and 'ready-made' clothes. Brown Thomas and Switzers of Grafton Street held an impressive collection of international gowns while Switzers exhibited a collection of 'Worths' French creations.¹¹

Home made clothes, however, were still being made with international influences in evidence throughout Ireland. These in particular possessed intangible qualities regarding sewing skills and use of fabric and decoration.

While discussing briefly the society which surrounded women of the Victorian period and their outer-clothing, it is vitally important to realize and recognize that corsetry played a principal role in conjunction with the outer garments. The corset attributed to the architectural lines from which the Victorian gowns were designed. Thus, the body was shaped to accommodate the various gowns and dresses.¹²

Women bore the utmost tolerance in this respect of dress, and again it is probable that there was great concern appearing as feminine as possible, as well as the sexual attraction held by these items of underclothing.

Examining areas of Victorian fashion, creates an evident link between then and now, and also through the social background. For instance the many various occasions gave rise to the many garments required by women. Social events such as parties,

and balls and the introduction of sport, such as tennis, cycling and horse-riding increased the necessity for dress that appeared flattering yet functional as the Victorian era progressed. Now, in the 1980's and 1990's our need for a wide and varied collection of clothing has greatly increased resulting from an age that has developed transport for example the car and numerous other technological advances. Dress in the 1990's does not have the strict disciplines that are associated with the Victorian styles, and one particular style is really non-existent. Although a differentiation between occasional wear and day wear is quite clearly defined.

Many, still regard women as 'home-makers', however attitudes are slowly altering. Within the homes of the upper-class Victorians, servants were an inevitable requirement. We now consider the upper-classes in our society as 'Yuppies', employing au pairs and maids. Socially, there is quite a comparison, although presently women are respected in an increased knowledgeable light.

In regard to fashion, the restrictiveness affiliated with the corset had been expelled, although there appears to be a constant attraction towards the emphasis it places on sexuality. It is no longer concealed, but purposely 'shown off' on our catwalks. In retrospect, its symbolic of the shape it created, but also of the hidden significance towards sexuality. The associations placed on Victorian fashion have influenced and inspired many contemporary designs.

The eighteen hundreds has attributed to freedom and femininity, and its restrictions are now a recollection.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (Micropaedia 2 - 1988)
2. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989 Page 154
3. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989
4. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989 Page 145
5. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989 Page 159
6. The Encyclopedia Britannica (Micropaedia 2 - 1988)
7. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989 Page 159
8. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989 Page 156
9. The Ulster Museum, Belfast 1993-1994
10. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989 Page 158
11. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989 Page 159
12. Dunlevy Mairead, Dress in Ireland 1989 Page 159

CHAPTER 1

An analysis of 2 Victorian evening dresses

within the Ulster Museum in Belfast.

Evening dress # 1 1870

The Ulster Museum in Belfast, houses many costumes, dating from many periods. Within the museum there is a collection of precious Victorian costumes. Precious, owing to their present condition and the elements attributing to their own particular worth. The dresses possess the characteristics found within the varied and many Victorian styles. Costume from the 1870's onward, reveals the skill and signifies the constant development of styles which will be discussed within the next chapter.

The evening costume, originates from Donegal dating from around the 1870's (PL no 6).¹ The garment was principally intended as an evening costume, although it conveys a versatility reminiscent of the Victorian consideration towards prevailing fashions. However, the actual garment possesses features similar to that of the late 1860's. This is greatly revealed through the shape, which allows an indication as to the specific date of the garment.²



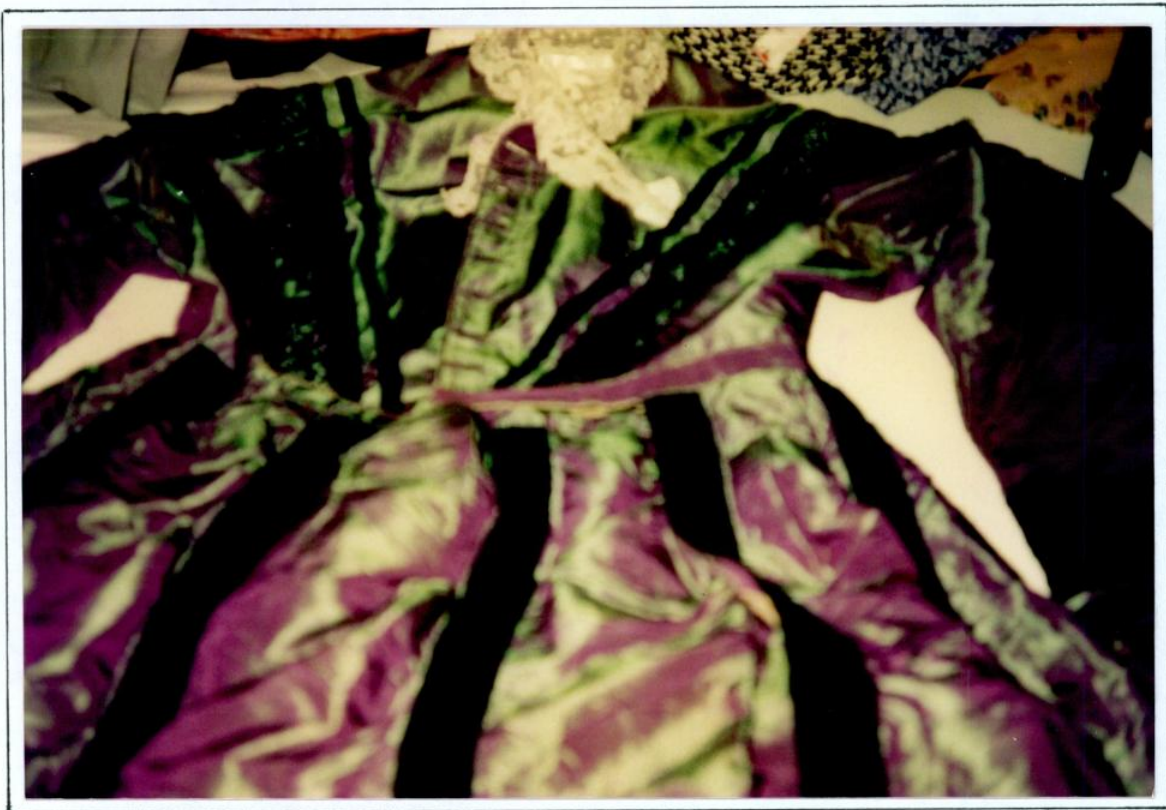
6. An illustration of the over-all dress
Cira 1870

As the 1860's drew to a close, evidence of higher waistlines emerged and this style prevailed through to the 1870's to a certain degree. The bodice of the costume is relatively short which adds to the distinctive, spontaneous flow of the skirt. The neckline of the dress is of simplistic nature, having a refined round collar, with a detachable lace trimming. (Pl No. 7). This particular evening dress is 'all-in-one', although it could be perceived as being a separate bodice and skirt.

The interior of the bodice has three rows of boning on each side, which are reinforced with clever machine stitching. This concludes where the waistband commences. The back of the bodice presents one centre and two side portions which are seamed appropriately again combining machine stitching with hand stitching. The sleeves of the costume are inserted with utmost skill and attention given to the hand-stitching required.

Where construction is concerned emphasis was placed greatly upon durability, especially concerning sewing, as areas of hand-stitching are strengthened with machine stitching. Each section of the bodice is in complete correspondence with each other with the various seams and joins maintain accuracy of shape.

As the bodice ends at the waistline, the skirt of the evening dress begins. (pl no 8) The top of the skirt is intensively



7. Bodice area, and section of skirt
Evening Dress circa 1870





8. Inside view of bodice meeting the skirt. It is possible to see the gathering of fabric at the waistband, and the boning inserted in the bodice

Evening Dress Circa 1870



gathered at the back, and the gathers decrease slightly as they reach the side seams. The gathers continue towards the front of the garment, although becoming less intense. The drapery on the inside of the skirt appears to pleat, thus creating the requisite appearance on the outside. The expanse of fabric is hand-sewn and set on to a waistband, which again appears to be machine-stitched. However, as bodice and skirt are 'all-in-one' the central fastening lends itself to a wider opening as the skirt fastens at the side, creating an illusion of a separate bodice and skirt. Diagonal fastening was a familiar characteristic of dresses, particularly of the 1860's.³

It is quite apparent, while examining this garment, that it reflects the prosperity of the women who wore it, principally because of the amount of fabric, used in the expanse width of the skirt.

This garment is lined throughout, both bodice area and skirt, while edges and openings are trimmed with the fabric used on the outside. The lining is cream cambric, which was widely used for the purpose of lining garments.

The interior of this Victorian costume creates the fundamental foundation for an exterior which combines richness, lavishness and a degree of spontaneity. These signify and strengthen the characteristics common of many evening dresses that were worn by Victorian women. While remaining slightly more modest in comparison to Ball or Court dress, these hold an equally

distinctive appeal and radiance. The fabric, in itself expresses a great desire and love of decoration, and simultaneously retains a degree of practicality.

The fabric used is 'shot-silk', which possesses a variable fluorescent colour change between mauve and light green. As lighting tended to be dimmed at many social occasions, this fabric and other fabrics possessing a similar quality may have been used profusely. As it unfolds with movement, it captures varying degrees of sumptuous hues and shades, while camouflaging less conspicuous marks and stains. However, areas underneath the arms reveal perspiration stains, although these have become noticeable due to oxidation.

Lavish fabrics, such as this, were quite easily obtainable. This is certainly due to Ireland's position and the fact that it possessed numerous ports along its coastline. Import was a necessary means of acquiring new and fresh patterns, fabrics and the various trimmings which embellished and decorated many garments.

This particular 'shot-silk' is used throughout the external part of the costume, on the bodice and the skirt. The construction of the bodice on the outside appears less complex than the inside. The back is cut in three sections, again resembling other garments of the late 1860's. These sections are in accordance with the inside lining, and these emphasize the shape required. Where the waistline begins, these three

sections end, somewhat abruptly.

The front section of the bodice, lacks complexity of construction, with button fastening extending toward the waist-line. (pl no 9) The sleeves reach a point at the top of the shoulders, with the fullness of fabric tapering slightly inward towards the wrist.

Epaulettes were a rare feature on costumes after the 1870's, however, they are apparent on the garment I examined.⁴ These are attached on the inside seam where the sleeve is connected to the shoulder. This suggests how styles in certain areas were sometimes slow to alter, although combinations of varied styles, add an interest to the garment. This evening dress however, bears some resemblance to those of the early 1870's, notably through the existence of ornament and decoration.

The skirt, combines proficient excellence with an elaborate unfolding of fabric. The expanse of drapery is set on the inside to a waistband. The front fastening is initially concealed as it fastens on the left, creating an 'overlapping' of fabric. Two small 'hooks and eyes' secure its closure. The method of gathering and the combination of pleating the fabric are emphasised strongly both at the front and back of the skirt.



9. Photograph, revealing the bodice area, and the sash which were characteristic of dress around the later 1860's. Here the decorative qualities of trimmings are evident,

Evening Dress circa 1870

First of June 1899

By [unclear]

The front section of the skirt is flounced in alternate rows. (pl. no. 10) Within each row the fabric is intricately runched. These gathers are held in place by narrow bands of black velvet, that commence at the top of the skirt and end at the bottom. The positioning of the trimming increases the width of fabric as it progresses downward, towards the hemline of the skirt. While attributing as an impressive element of decoration, resulting from the richness of a fabric and the intermingling of velvet. Across the front section of the skirt, this trimming has again been used, edging the bottom and completing the appearance of the garment.

The back of the skirt, is quite intensively gathered also, although it differs greatly from the front of the garment. The gathering at the back intensifies, as the fabric drapes in a freer flow. (pl no. 11) The intense gathering attains a general fullness and creates a graceful effect as the drapery falls in quite sporadic folds. Nearing the bottom of the skirt the use of velvet trimming is once again revealed.

Five, evenly spaced bands of velvet extend horizontally, creating a distinct connection between front and back draperies. Each band of black velvet is tacked in place, in a precarious fashion. This was a distinct feature of early 1870's garments.⁵ While both front and back skirt differ, they compliment one another admirably and convey the striking features, associated with Victorian dress.



10. Expanse of Drapery, at the front of the skirt. The trimming, holds in position the ruched fabric, which creates a flamboyant quality throughout the expanse of fabric on the skirt.

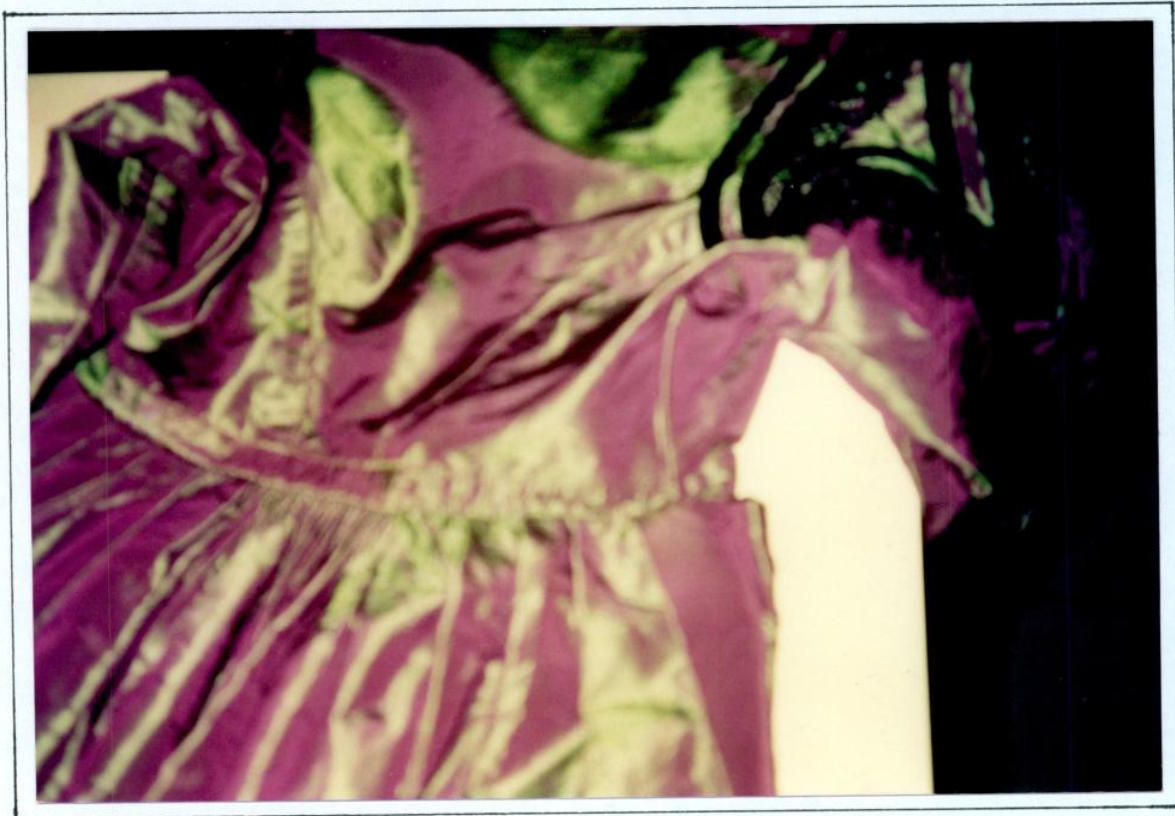
Evening Dress circa 1870

FRONT SECTION OF

WATER, 1900

Fig. 10

10



11. View of dress, at the back, showing the gathering and folding of drapery, which created a fullness. Also apparent are the epaulettes, which were particularly common features upon dresses of the late 1860's and early 1870's

Evening Dress, circa 1870

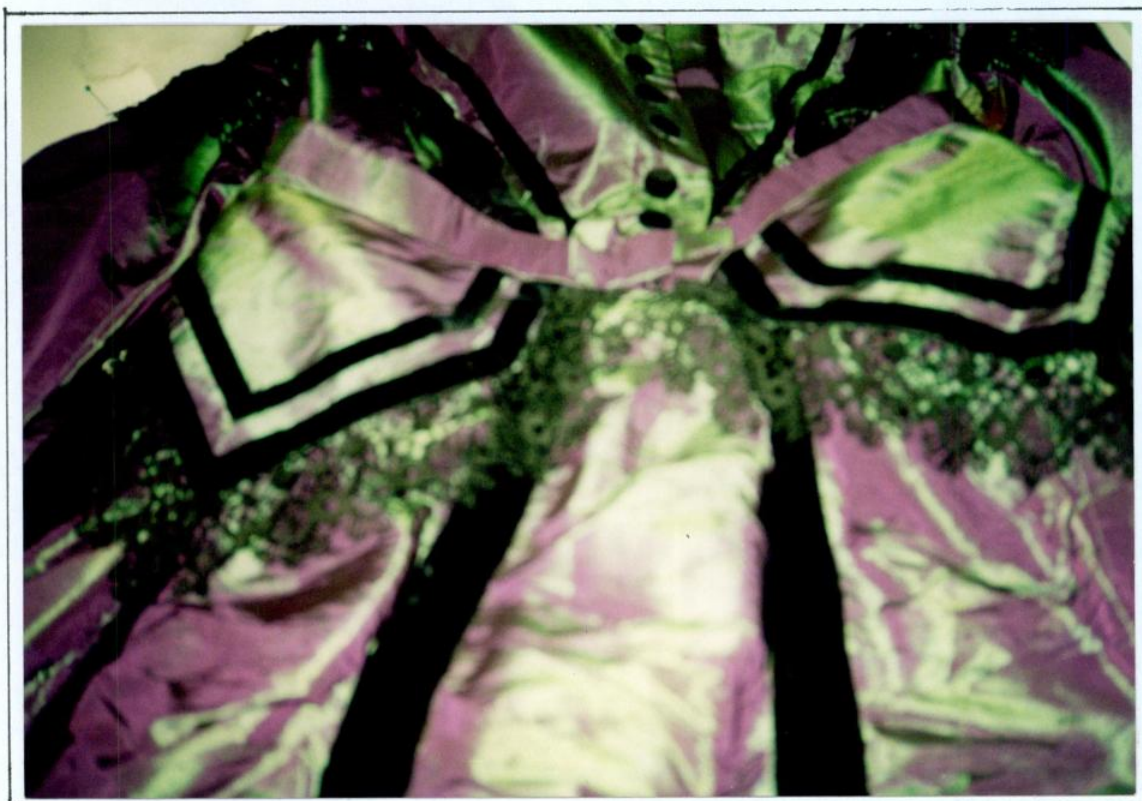
FACE VIEW OF BUSHING

FIG. 10

Fig. 10-11

This evening garment conceals the waistband, using a long 'sash-like' belt. These in particular were worn with dresses from 1865 and were regarded as a fashion accessory up until the early 1870's.⁶ However, they add a great deal of ornamentation and purposely create a division between bodice and skirt. This particular sash has a narrow band of the fabric used throughout the dress. It fastens in the centre, at the front, with two small 'hooks- and-eyes', attached to the band (pl no. 12).

At the front, two wide triangular tabs, fall over the skirt, which resemble a long basque. The band of the sash at the back, holds in position two large 'box-pleats' which fall in accordance with the drapery of the skirt, and its many gathers. While remaining narrow at the front, the sash expands at the back, resembling a very short over-skirt.⁷



12. ^{Photograph} Photograph showing the exaggerated belt, common on dresses of the late 1860's

It possesses front fastening which is concealed by the bow in the centre.

Evening Dress, circa 1870

BUCKLE AND SASH 1840

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 15

Fig. 16

Fig. 17

Fig. 18

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

Fig. 24

Fig. 25

Fig. 26

Fig. 27

Fig. 28

Fig. 29

Fig. 30

Fig. 31

Fig. 32

Fig. 33

EVENING DRESS # 2

1880

While examining each of these evening gowns, I think the latter from the 1880's, has developed greatly, possessing a distinctive shape and design which is in correspondence with the 1880's.

The construction symbolizes a more proficient and successful method of sewing techniques, possibly gained from the increased use of the sewing machine. This results in an intricate, yet elaborate garment. In comparison to the dress of the 1870's, the tailoring reveals a great deal more complication, however each garment holds many successful, contrasting elements of 'workmanship'. (pl no. 13)

This garment was originally created as a 'going away' outfit, however it was worn continually afterwards as evening attire.⁸ Again, this signifies the variable uses Victorian dress had. It was created around the early 1880's, as many elements within the garment suggest styles of the late 1870's.

It has a separate bodice and skirt, both being constructed using a 'coffee' coloured corded silk. This fabric appears quite weighty, although it manages to maintain and hold the position of the varied layers and pleats that support the



13. An illustration of the over-all Evening Dress, circa 1880

skirt of the garment. The bodice has lengthened, and is deeply and fashionably pointed at the centre, front and back. (pl. no. 14) At the sides it curves upwards lying closely over the line of the skirt, It fastens at the front with a row of buttons, which are supported on the inside with a concealed row of 'hooks and eyes'.⁹ Thus, decreasing the risk of revealing undergarments. The right side is hemmed and the left is underfaced. Also on the right side there is two rows of boning, which are reinforced and covered with a stiff cotton. However, on the left there is no evidence of this. In each side there are two bust darts which enables the fabric to hug the figure closely. Throughout the bodice each seam is machine stitched, again evidently showing the growing development and reliance from hand-stitching to a practical, professional and quicker method of tailoring. Along the bottom the bodice is edged with the corded silk, featured on the outside.

The side seams are additionally machine-stitched, and where the line of the bodice gradually becomes neater, there is a slight sash, allowing for a degree of fullness, as the expanse of fabric extends down over the skirt.

The back of the bodice was cut in four sections, having two side back seams and a centre seam. Additionally, these attribute to the shape of the bodice, while remaining in accordance with the front, as the centre seam curves and terminates in a point. Attached to the central back seam, the



14. View of bodice and skirt. Here, the complete shape of both are apparent, manifesting the two rows of kilt pleated drapery on the skirt

Evening Dress, circa 1880

People and Places

1914

1914

waistband is apparent. (pl. no. 15) The entire bodice is lined in a cream and white striped cotton, which attributes to an improved and a more professional completion of the garment. The shoulder seams are placed far back on the shoulders, and the insertion of the sleeves is apparent at this point.

The outside of the bodice, on the front has a square neckline, which is quite low cut, but remains high at the back. This particular neck-line variation was fashionable for evening dress towards the end of the 1870's, and became less fashionable by the mid 1880's.¹⁰ This demonstrates the intrusion and intermingling of the many styles within one garment, and shows quite a timid progression towards change. However, while saying this, the over-all garment is characteristic of many styles within the early 1880's, revealing components of previous styles.

The sleeves are elbow length, remaining the same width from the shoulder to the elbow. Similarly, as with the dress from the 1870's, the underarm area is stained with oxidized perspiration marks, which according to the curator of the costume, cannot be removed, for reasons concerning the authenticity of the actual garment. Where the neckline meets, at the top of the button and 'hook-and-eye' fastening, there is also another fastener, securing the closing of the bodice. Along the edge of the buttons, a row of straight machining presents a well-skilled finish to the bodice, as does the



15. This reveals how the actual bodice is constructed, and the waistband that is attached to the central back seam. It is cut in 4 sections and the lining is striped cotton

Evening Dress circa 1880

INSIDE BODICE 1840

Fig. 15

machining around the actual buttonholes. On each side of the bodice two seams are apparent, attributing to its shape.

The bodice at the back, reveals the four panels of fabric which are apparent on the inside lining, and also two side gores. There is one central seam and four others, each in accordance with shape and size. The shoulder seams run from the neckline as far as where the sleeves are inserted. Along the bottom of the bodice, the fabric is revered, creating a neat edge.

While examining the skirt it immediately becomes clear of the confusion and complexity involved in the construction of this garment. There are immediate and distinctive differences between each of the two evening dresses existing as a result of the skirts.¹¹ The other garment reveals impressive qualities, but the latter clearly shows a more favourable and complicated structure with the construction of the skirt.

(pl. no. 16)¹⁷ The skirt resembles a 'bell-shape'. It does not have extensive fullness at the front, which creates quite a narrower line. The many different styles within the 1880's are characterized by the differential fullness, construction and drapery of the skirt.¹² The skirt combines styles of the late 1870's as well as the mid 1880's. However, while discussing the elements involved within the construction, it could be said with a degree of conjecture that there is no one genuine style of skirt.¹³



16 & 17. Front of skirt, showing the two tunics, on the right and left sides. The immensity of pleating creates additional expanse.

Evening Dress circa 1880

FRONT SECTION OF
SURT
1830

Fig no.

16 4/19

As the lining creates a foundation and generally adds to the shape, it is true to suggest that the trimmings and the drapery all form the style of a particular skirt. A stiff, light brown muslin is the basis of the intricate and lavish pleating on the outside. At the ^{top} of the skirt, there is a narrow band of stiffened cotton resolving as a waistband and simultaneously holding the folded muslin in place. On the right side, the skirt is fastened with two 'hooks and eyes' of flattened ^{brass} wire. Attached to the waistband, are the folds of drapery that accentuate the fullness at the back. These folds exist only at the back, adding the volume essential of the skirt and its bustle. Horizontally, two bands of cream cotton are machine-stitched to each side seam. There is an opening at each side, allowing the hooped steels of the bustle to be inserted. There are tapes across the back, which keep the fullness of the skirt in the correct position over the bustle. On the left side, a small pocket is inserted into the side-seam, therefore concealing its presence. The folds at the back continue to fall towards the hem, which is hand-stitched, completely around the full expanse of the skirt.

At the front, the skirt remains quite narrow. Along each side there is a seam. Downwards, along the front there are two insertions of fabric, creating additional width and attributing to the 'bell-shape' of the outer skirt.

The skirt of this evening garment, hasn't one principal style, but a combination of styles, possibly from the late 1870's up until the mid 1880's. At first glance, the skirt lacks constraint, having an elaborate array of organized pleats, throughout the front. The narrow foundation of the skirt, is automatically concealed at the front. There is two layers of pleated drapery, the first a kilt-pleated flounce which is hemmed into the waistband and machine stitched providing an additional coherent. The middle panel of this flounce remains 'un-pleated', while each side has an even number of pleats, who expand and join at the side seams. This particular flounce 'free-falls', therefore it is responsible in creating a gradual fullness. Two inches above on the inside, attached to the lining, another emerges and extends to the bottom of the skirt. The pleating on this flounce, maintains its folds using narrow tapes, which are then stitched to the lining. I think this method of tailoring, creates a refinement and elegance associated with the Victorian period, and the way in which the fabric is used ornaments the garment (pl. no. 17) Each pleat from the top flounce is in exact accordance with those on the second.

Costume between 1875 and 1880 usually combined flat, draped folds of material, falling in curves. This resembles the 'Panier Style Skirt', and possibly a re-introduction of eighteen century fashion styles.¹⁴ It is apparent that these have become an influence on this particular garment, owing to the 'handkerchief style' tunic

featured on this garment.

The tunic on this evening gown is quite long, extending a little below the first flounce. These two sections of fabric, commence at the waistline, extending downward to a point. They resemble a somewhat 'triangular' shape rising up towards the side seam. These appear on other garments within the 1880's and on garments of the later 1870's.

The rear of the skirt, has a huge expanse of drapery, which would result from the bustle, within the lining. At the side seams the fabric is gathered, creating quite a ruffled effect. (pl. no 18). This fabric is cut in an oval shape, which collaborates with the pleated underskirt, again within the same manner as the front. The under-skirt of pleating is quite long, again giving allowance for a slight 'up-lighting' of fabric from the bustle. The lining is the basis for the application of this layer of fabric.

Each of the evening garments indicates the complexity and combination of many different styles within one dress. Through their designs, they reveal the somewhat slow movement towards change within fashion. However, the evening dress from the 1880's shows an advancement of design, particularly as a result of the skirt, and the elements that help to define its style. Both garments, express lavish and elaborate qualities especially with the fabric used on each. This might suggest that Ireland and its many ports did play a vital role,



18. The expanse of fabric at the back of the skirt, allowing for the insertion of the bustle. Underneath the overskirt exists a row of kilt pleats, similar to the front.

Evening Dresses circa 1880

REAR OF EVENING DRESS

1910

figs.
18

throughout the eighteen hundreds particularly where women fashions were concerned.

The fabrics initially establish a recognition with the wearer, demonstrating her, or her family's wealth. The expanse of cloth and manner in which it is draped, alone suggest that the dresses originate from a middle to upper class background.

Nevertheless, the differences in each of the garments constrictions, tends to create a vivid contrast between each. The garment from the 1870's inclines to lack to a professional and skilled finish of the latter dress, possible resulting from the increased use of the sewing machine on the dress from the 1880's. However, both achieve and encapsulate the qualities perpetuated of Victorian dress. Each combine and express spontaneity and arouse an inquisition of the occasions that were graced with women attired in garments such as these.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. The Ulster Museum, Belfast, Evening Dress Circa 1870
1993 - 1994
2. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 42
3. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 50
4. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 42
5. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 49
6. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 42
7. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 42
8. The Ulster Museum, Belfast, Evening Dress, Circa 1880
1993 - 1994
9. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 54
10. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 64
11. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 59

12. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 59

13. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 63

14. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume 1984, page 61

CHAPTER 2

The Decorative Elements Within Both Evening Dresses

Evening Dress C. 1870

The evening dresses I examined, hold a great deal of ornament and possess qualities both decorative and distinctive, which excel in detail. Each in their own right signify a desire of lavish, intricacies, existing as a result of the various embellishments used in achieving the apparent conclusive result of each dress.¹

Throughout, both garments, there is an intermingling of trimmings, velvet, ribbon, lace, decolléte and the vivid fabric used on both, capturing an essence of refinement and elegance. This aspect of dress again reflects upon the wealth of the wearer, or her family. Each of the gowns reveal an association with society, that was surrounded with importance. The decorative qualities are expressed in an exorbitant manner, becoming predominant throughout the actual garments.

On the evening dress from the 1870's, the fabric is used with great versatility, and the awareness of its spontaneity is received in an array of gathers and folds. Its manipulation becomes as equally decorative as the various other elements

used. The skirt is gathered, and these are arranged in conjunction with the trimming, both front and back. However, similarly to the evening costumes of the late 1880's asymmetrical drapery is apparent, again attributing to considerable areas of embellishment.² The drapery is transformed, encapsulating a rich, splendid expanse of cloth, both decorative and characteristic of the period which the dress originates from.

Trimmings became an ongoing characteristic, and they appear to be used quite profusely on this garment.³ Velvet trimming, in particular appears to have been of considerable benefit.⁴ Throughout the garment two different widths have been applied, using small tacking stitches.

On the bodice area, two narrow bands of black velvet have been added, ending at the waistband (pl. no. 8). In particular, velvet trimming was used as it tended to enhance the qualities of the fabric, attributing to an exuberant and flamboyant appearance. Wider bands of velvet are applied on the skirt, co-existing with the ruched gathers, and the flow of the fabric.

However, the trimming is applied in a varied manner on the back of the skirt, thus creating a different class of decoration, and drawing attention and distinction from the front (pl no. 19). Five wide bands of black velvet are arranged in a horizontal manner, ending at each side seam.



19. Photograph showing the decorative black velvet trimming used on the back of the skirt

Evening Dress circa 1870

BACK OF SCOT

1920

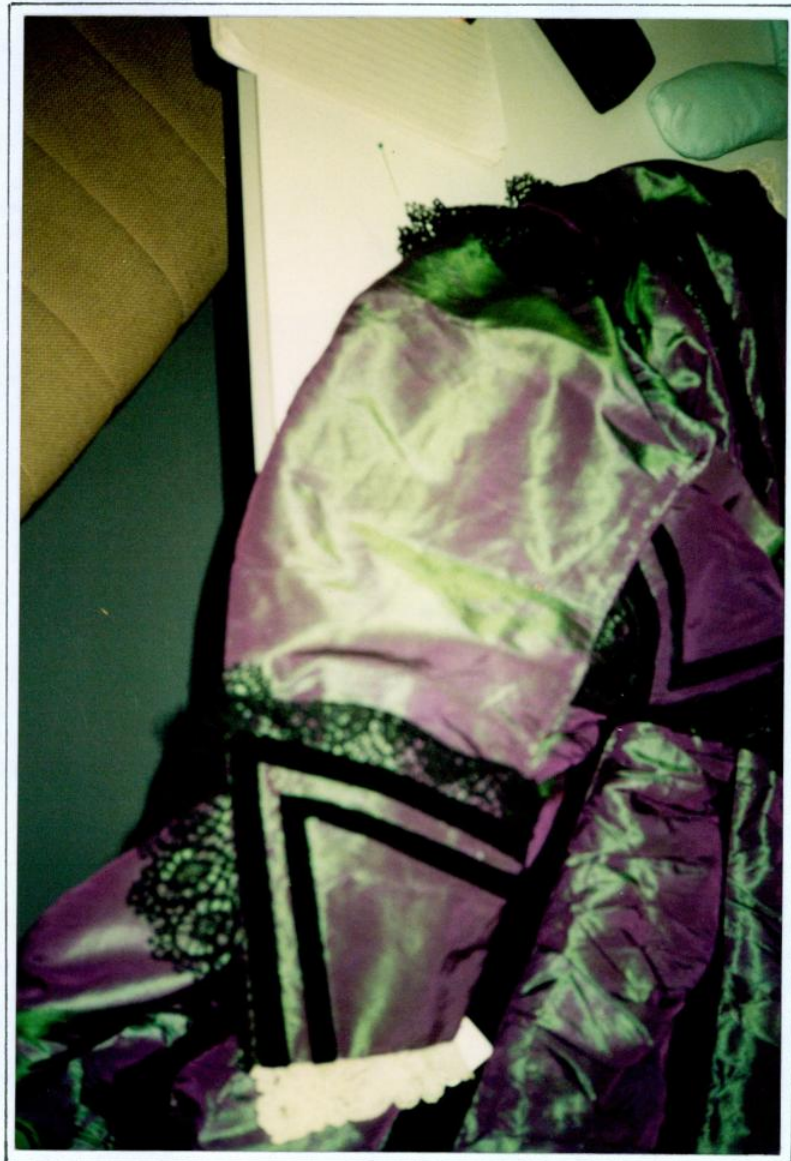
Fig. 1

Although the back of the skirt is comparatively plain in relation to the front, the trimming creates a link between both sections of the skirt.

The front button fastening, which featured on many dresses during the late 1860's, also adds a decorative notion, as each button is covered in black velvet, complimenting the trimming used extensively on the garment. (pl. no. 9)

The sleeves correspond, again, with the trimming on other areas of the dress. The cuff area is edged with a detachable cream lace, which co-ordinates with the lace used around the neckline. These are an accessory trimming, therefore enabling the wearer to remove them if they become stained or marked. This particular type of lace is quite rough, and in comparison to many other varieties of lace housed in the Ulster Museum, it appears to exist, merely as a functional and versatile element on the garment. A recognition of the many varied and assorted laces is important, a fine, delicate lace expressed, and signified wealth within a family and justified a desire of intricate detail. However, while certain types of lace were rougher and possessed an open work pattern, they equally performed as lavish, excellent ornamentation.

This particular, lace trimming, could be applied on other garments, therefore creating small interesting variations.
(pl. no. 20)



20. Sleeve area, showing the decoration edging the cuff, and the v-shape, created by the trimming

Evening Dress, circa 1870

SECTION OF BLENDED

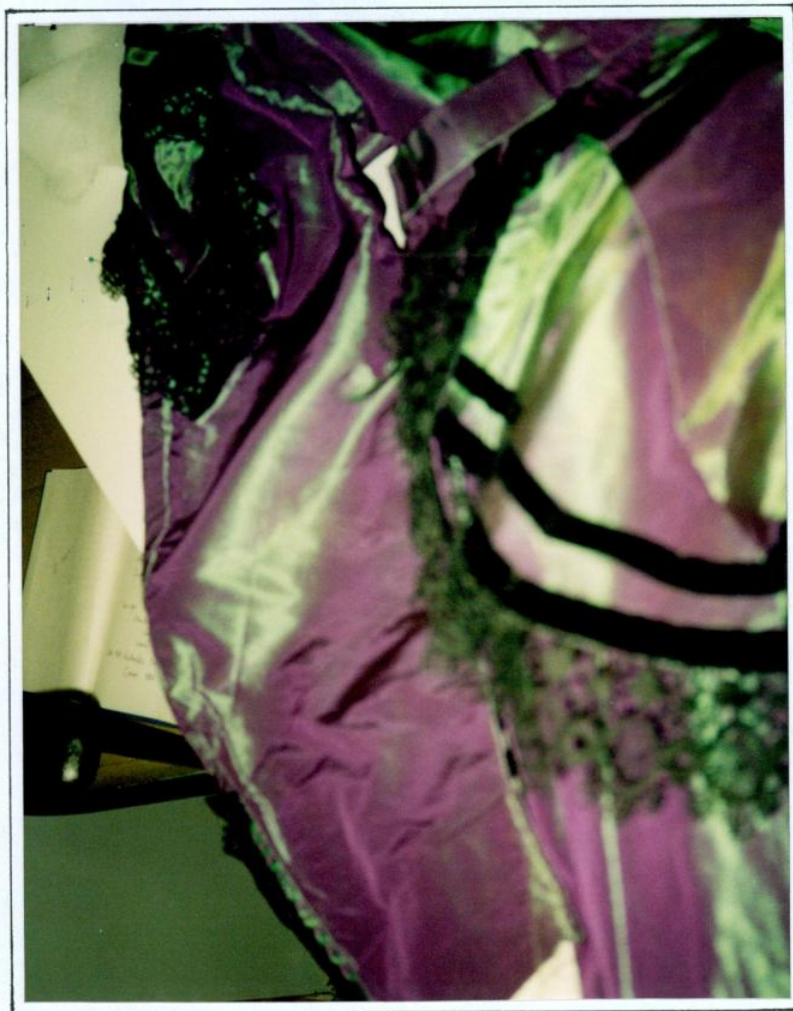
1850

Fig. 1. 2.

Emerging upwards from the cuff edge, along the sleeve seam and across the width of the sleeve, two narrower bands of velvet trimming create a v-shape, which becomes a reiterated feature within the garment. These are tacked, quite firmly in place. The decoration on the sleeve area, collaborates and resolves in ignoring a simplistic sleeve design.

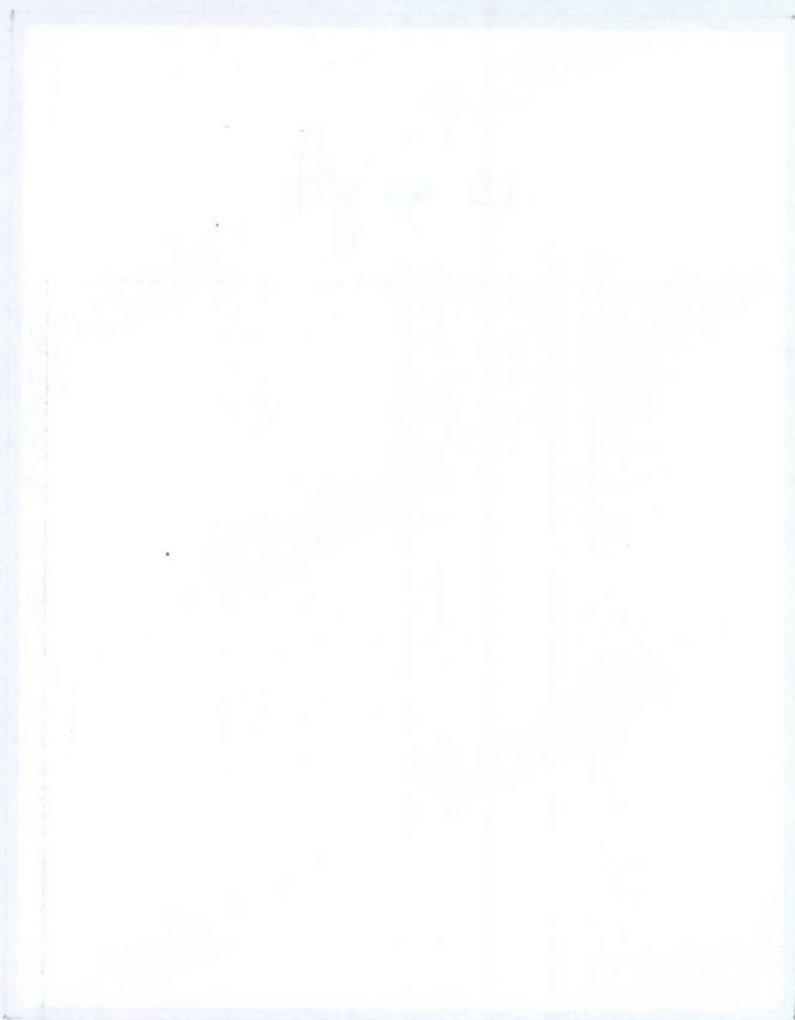
Epaulettes were a common feature of dresses of the late 1850's and 1860's.⁶ Even with disregard to ornamentation, they hold an ornamental purpose in themselves. Nevertheless, on the garment I examined the decoration which is clearly manifested on the epaulettes adds a greater awareness of the trimming used over all. The epaulettes are a v-shape, with two additional velvet bands creating smaller shapes within the initial outline. (pl. no. 21) These, further acknowledge the notion and suggest the combination of styles within one dress, while certain other elements convey the clear advancement of styles.

The concealment of the waistline is cleverly accomplished with a large exaggerated belt. (pl. no. 22)⁷ Despite the fact that it disguises the joining of the skirt to the bodice, it bears the notable purpose of increasing a decorative quality to the garment. The front of the sash, emphasizes the 'v-shape', a prominent feature, which appears to commence at the shoulder, and continue down from the bodice. These two bands of trimming unite with the sash, which is cut in two 'v-shapes'. A bow at the centre of the band (belt) hides the central



21. The epaulette is apparent at the top left-hand corner
It holds an ornamental purpose, bearing similar elements
to other areas of the dress

Evening dress, circa 1870





22. A back view of the dress, and the basque that surrounds the waistline, fastening at the front. Its drapery is held in two large box pleats, which fall gracefully with the drapery of the skirt

Evening Dress circa 1870



fastening.

This sash extends towards the back, revealing a greater amount of fabric, which cascades in two large 'box-pleats', co-existing with the drapery of the skirt underneath. The two bands of trimming, which are applied on the front, continue right around, and edge the fabric of the sash. Central, at the back of the band, a large bow, reiterates the lavish use of fabric, and the powerful use of imagination in applying ornamentation.

On areas, adjacent to the velvet trimming used, another variation of trimming is introduced. This is particularly evident on the bodice, epaulettes, sleeves and sash. It is especially 'lace-like' in appearance and is applied quite extensively, principally as an edging. It is a black, open-work pattern which allows a variable amount of the fluorescent colour to be revealed, through its openness. Therefore adding a dramatic quality, which is continually manifested upon the garment.

Decorative Elements on Evening Dress 1880

This evening dress, is suggestive of the elegance associated with the Victorian era. It manages to combine strong decorative qualities with attentive constructual techniques. The improved methods of stitching are emphasized, especially through the decorative use of the fabric and various other aspects of ornamentation. This garment justifies the attraction many hold with Victorian fashion and its wearers. It processes qualities of embellishment and it bears extensive decoration.

The bodice reveals a square neckline, resembling the Pompadour style of eighteenth-century dress.⁸ The 'squareness' of the neckline is greatly reduced with two layers of clear lace trimming. This increases a softness, femininity and delicacy to the over-all bodice. In achieving a certain delicacy, the lace adds a romantic feel to the garment. Around the decolléte, on the inside, the lace is applied with small, irregular hand-stitches, which enables it to be removed, and another applied if wished. It falls out, over the neckline, in soft cascading gathers. (pl. no. 14) The use of lace, particularly around the neckline area, decreases the scanty appearance, thus being important as an accessory trimming.

The bodice is generally the stringent, corset-like form, similar of other garments of the 1880's.⁹

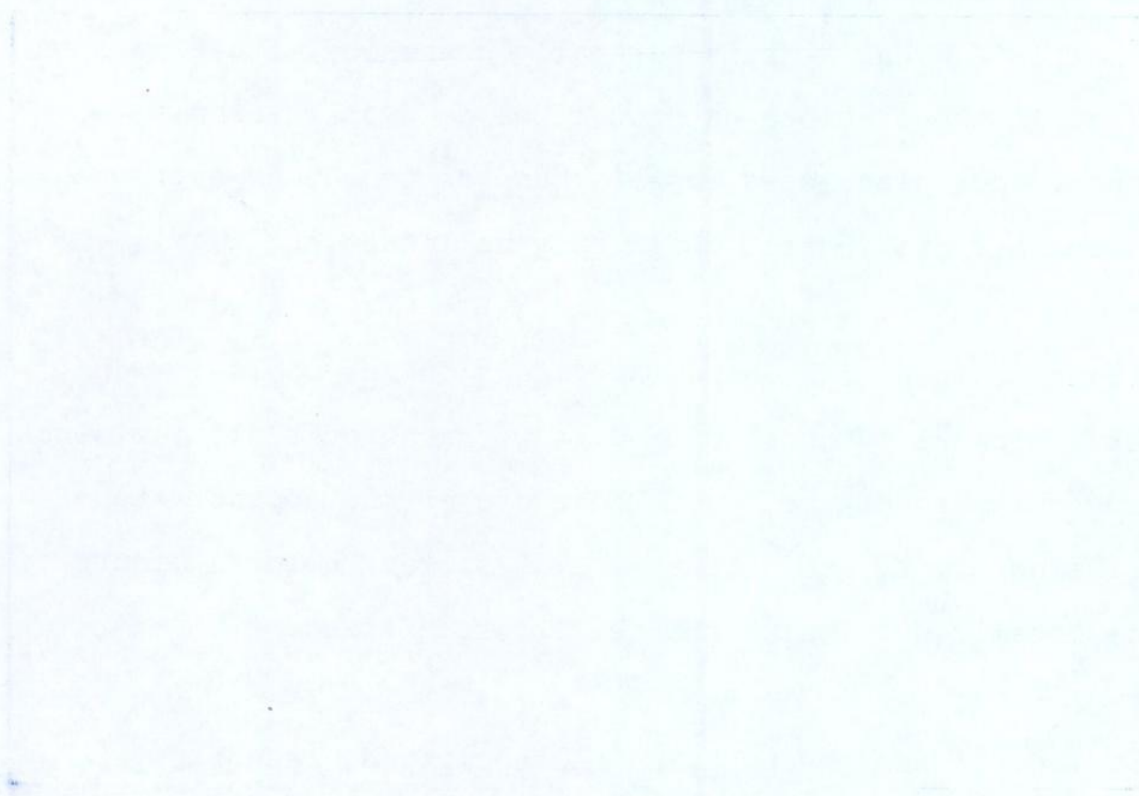
Applique beading is manifested excessively both on bodice and skirt. The beading creates an array of various colours. As they are glass, a bizarre metamorphosis of colour occurs. A row of this trimming is adhered to directly underneath the frill of lace. While it is partially concealed, it arouses an interest in the precious nature of the beadwork. From a distance, each glass bead appears hand-stitched, however when examined they are in fact definitely appliqued.

The trend of front fastening is evident on the bodice. Ten silver and pearl buttons, harmonize with the over-all feminine feeling the garment incites. These are of the appropriate size, being dainty and delicate. The silver, holds a minute floral detail, upon which the pearls are affixed.

Continuing, around the neckline the appliqued beadwork, yet again emerges (pl. no. 23) It appears in a somewhat irregular shape, ending in a point on the upper section of the back bodice. It is adhered, using small, in-conspicuous tacking stitches, which are visible on the lining of the bodice, as it is arranged, in line with the v-shape bottom of the bodice.

The demi sleeves, which were characteristic of the late 1870's, possess a similar band of appliqued trimming around the cuff area. 10

An examination of the trimmings, indicates variable alterations of motifs, and beading. Throughout the bodice,





23. Back view of the bodice, revealing the applique beadwork, which is continued from the neckline at the front. Also, shown here, are the cuffs and the lace trimming, which creates a frill around the edge of the bodice

Evening Dress circa 1880

with the exception of the trimming that edges it, the beaded motifs are small, bearing flower-buds and leaf patterns. The beads used, emphasize hues of pink and green, which tends to purposely create a flamboyance on the bodice.

A varied trimming is used to edge and create a frill around the bottom of the bodice. This is a fine, delicate black lace trimming, yet its colour yields to a distinctive and bizarre choice of accessory, especially existing with the coffee coloured fabric use on the entire evening dress. However, as it falls over the fabric used, its colour immediately becomes less lavish. (pl. no. 14) This trimming is again appliqued, although revealing a different motif. A less intense floral motif is applied on the lace, possibly as a consequence of its delicacy.

However, much the appliqued beadwork is reiterated, it resolves in attaining and signifying a desire of exuberance and excellence within the garment.

The skirt as mentioned in the previous chapter, is an array of complicated layers of decorative pleating.|| The method of pleating creates an excessive, yet graceful structure. The drapery, lends itself to the intrusion of trimmings, collaborating with the decoration on the bodice.

The tunics, on either side of the skirt, at the front, possess a large band of beading, which manifests the different motif.

This is quite larger than the motif on the bodice, which results in the increased and more noticeable pattern. The motif bears a 'leaf' design, complimenting the 'flower bud' design on the bodice. The use of various motifs signifies the importance decoration placed on a garment. While appearing to vary slightly, the use of trimmings created a distinction on and within the Victorian styles of dress.

Extending from underneath the tunic on the right side of the skirt, emerges a large ribbon, similar in colour to the garment. (pl. no. 24) This is tacked on to the drapery on the skirt. It rests, adjacent to the line of the tunic on the left side. Nearing, the point where the tunic ends, the ribbon is inserted through a decorative buckle. The ornamental feature, creates additional decoration and defines a vivid use of imagination, particularly on the dressmakers part.

The buckle bears small pink, beads, adding an element of spontaneity to the garment. From the buckle, there emerges three ribbons, which incline to fall with the drapery of the skirt.

The back of the skirt, is concerned mainly with the structure, given by the insertion of the bustle. However, the folds and gathers of drapery, create an interesting decorative quality. (pl. no. 25) There is a reduction in the amount of trimming used on the skirt at the back, possibly resulting from the



24. Here, the decorative ribbon extends down along the edge of the tunic of the left side of the skirt. The decorative buckle is apparent, with the three ribbons cascading from it.

Also, the variation of motif is quite clearly visible on the tunic.

FRONT SECTION OF TANK

SHOWING THE INTERNALS

1918

1. The front section of the tank is shown in the above view.

2. The internal parts are shown in the above view.

3. The front section of the tank is shown in the above view.



25. Back of skirt, showing the two varieties of trimmings, while one edges the other falls down in a frill, over the kilt pleating of the under skirt.

Evening Dress circa 1880

Fig. 13

indulgence on the front. On the fabric, which the insertion of the bustle expands, the trimmings used on the tunics exists. Its presence creates the coherent amount of ornamentation. Underneath this drapery, the black lace trimming is applied, again reiterated from the bodice.

Both bands of trimmings, extend to each side-seam, signifying the apparent necessity, trimming revealed. Also, this might suggest that cost was no object as the garment is an exuberant example of an early 1880's evening dress.

The decoration upon each of the evening dresses I examined manifests strongly the impressive, intricate qualities both possess.¹² While the fabrics used is of the utmost importance, it is time to suggest that without ornamentation they would lack the appeal and exuberance we expect and associate with Victorian evening dress.

Each dress emphasises a unique distinctiveness through the varied uses, trimmings allow. These, accessories and the excessive manner, in which they are used accentuate the value placed on them by women in the eighteen hundreds. Upon the dresses, they symbolize and assert a lavishness and wealth, which in turn is reflected upon the wearer. The greater the amount of trimmings, the more expensive the dress. Upon each garment, they are applied in appropriate areas, creating an ornamental edge, or merely adding a finishing touch.

On the dress from the early 1870's the black velvet trimming creates a flamboyance, harmonizing with the fabric. As the two different widths of trimming are applied, they essentially correspond with the varied amounts of drapery. While thinner bands are placed on the bodice area, wider bands are applied on the skirt, as the expanse of fabric requires an increase in size of trimming. The neckline and cuff areas also hold ornamental properties, resulting from the detachable lace trimming. Upon the dresses, the features which become characteristic of the late 1860's to early 1870's, such as the epaulettes and the sash-like belt create additional interest using decoration to areas which were partially intended as having a function.

The dresses from the early 1880's, has accomplished sheer excellence, and possesses a refinement which is stated strongly throughout its style. Again, trimming helps obtain this elegance. The beaded applique trimming is suggestive of richness, while the use of lace around the neckline attributes to a more feminine feeling. The variation in beaded motifs enhances and arouses an interest in the finer detailing, evident throughout the garment. Small items, such as the buttons, once more symbolize an already apparent design of intricacy, through the small detail and the pearls.

The bodice and rear of the skirt is completed, using an edging of lace to frill and finish.

NOTES

CHAPTER 2

1. Evening Dress Cira 1870 The Ulster Museum in
Belfast
1993 - 1994
2. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 49
3. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 49
3. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 54
4. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 47
5. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 37
6. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 42
7. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 50
8. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 50
9. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 64
10. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 65
11. Buck Anne Victorian Costume 1984 Page 63
12. Evening Dress Cira 1870 Evening Dress Cira 1880
The Ulster Museum in Belfast, 1993 - 1994

CHAPTER 3

THE INSIDE STORY;

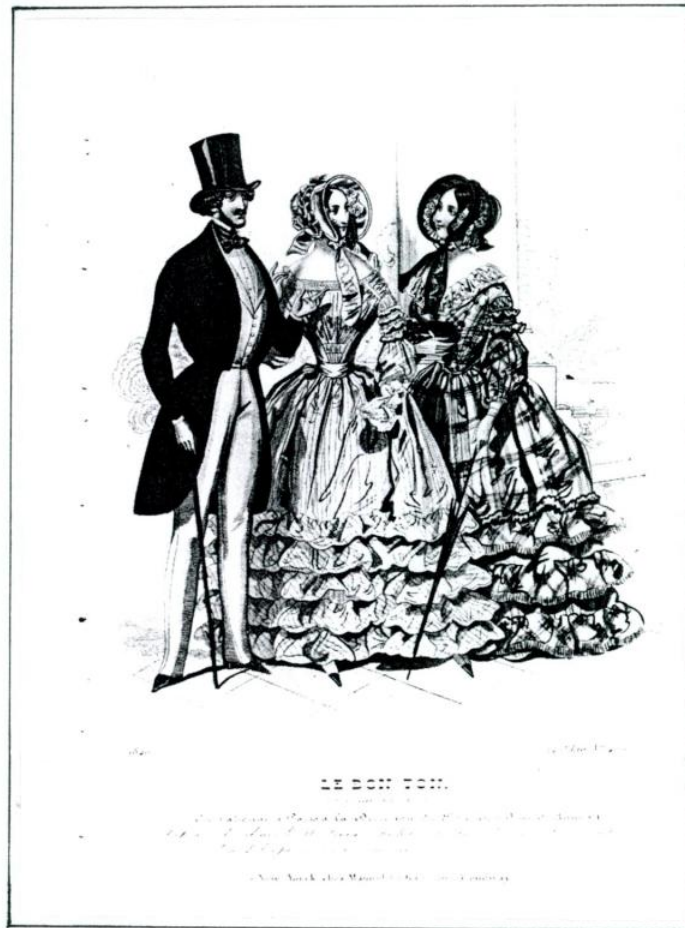
INFLUENCES ON VICTORIAN FASHION

THE CORSET AND THE MALE INFLUENCE

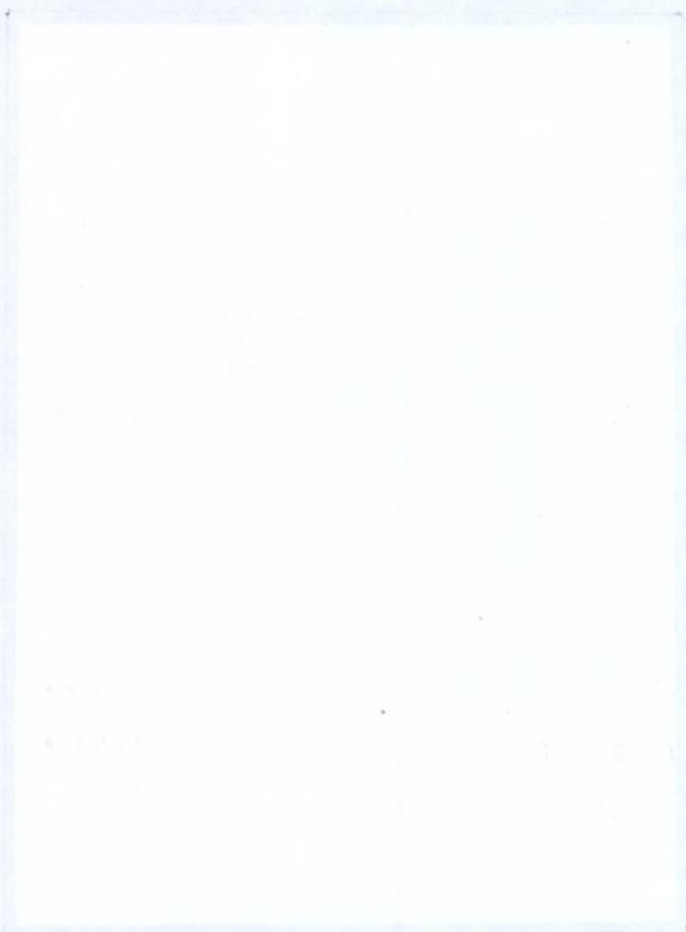
Throughout the nineteenth century, the fashionable image was one of femininity, delicacy, and daintiness. Women, of the Victorian period were required to present the "Hourglass Shape".¹ As a woman, this particular shape became requisite, and society, to a degree pushed this trend upon fashion on the inside and outside.

Great emphasis was placed upon the female form, which generally existed with small, nipped-in waists and wide rounded hips.² While mans' silhouette may have been compared to womens, a somewhat large differentiation between each is obvious.

As I examined various evening garments, belonging to women of the Victorian period, quite a similar and continual shape emerges through each. Although, styles alter slightly, the vast number of garments retain a similar appearance, especially along the lines of the bodice. The 'Hour-glass Shape', seemed to present relentless appeal to the Victorians. Thus creating a mould or cast, from which their fashions were modelled. (pl. no. 26)³.



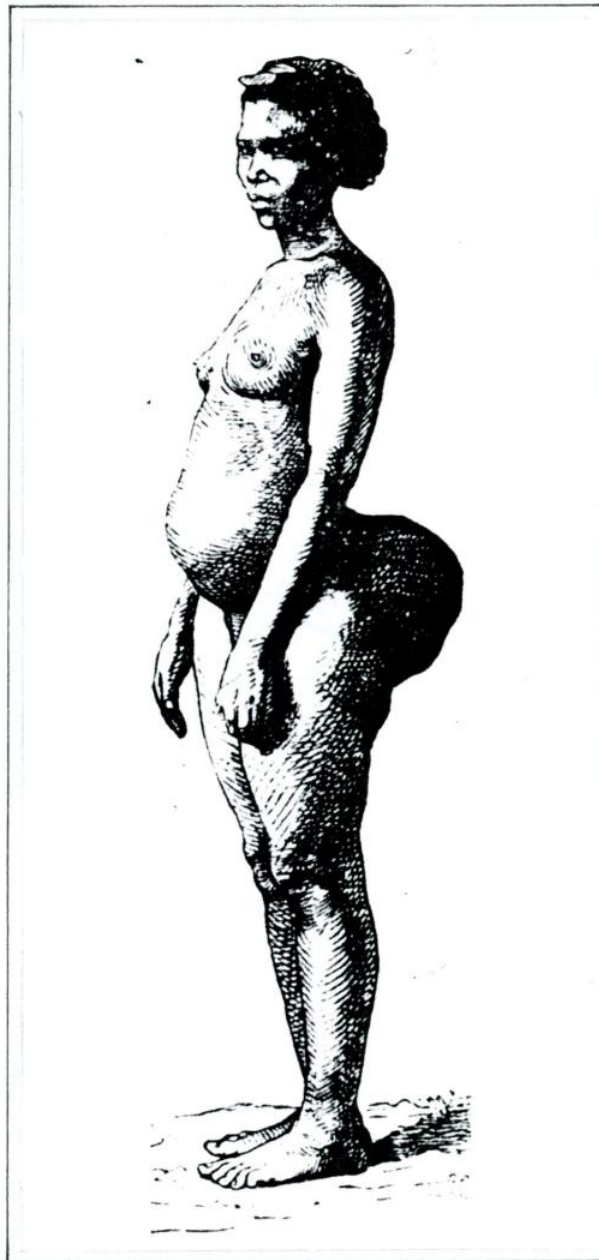
26. A fashion plate of the 1840's showing the 'Hour-Glass Shape' that men and more evidently women possessed.



The general importance of a distorted shape may have progressed from the eighteenth century, where stomachers featured on the bodice front, and gradually narrowed to a point over the stomach. 4 However, over the centuries, particularly within tribes in Africa, the distortion of bodies has constantly occurred, even presently today. With the use of many various devices, shape has been changed, signifying outrageous beauty which we fail to comprehend. (pl. no. 27). Nevertheless, the Victorians introduced a trend in fashion, which they believed to express a womans' elegance, while simultaneously manipulating her shape. As a direct result, it is possible to recognize images of the Victorian period, automatically because of the women and their shape, resulting from clothing, within.

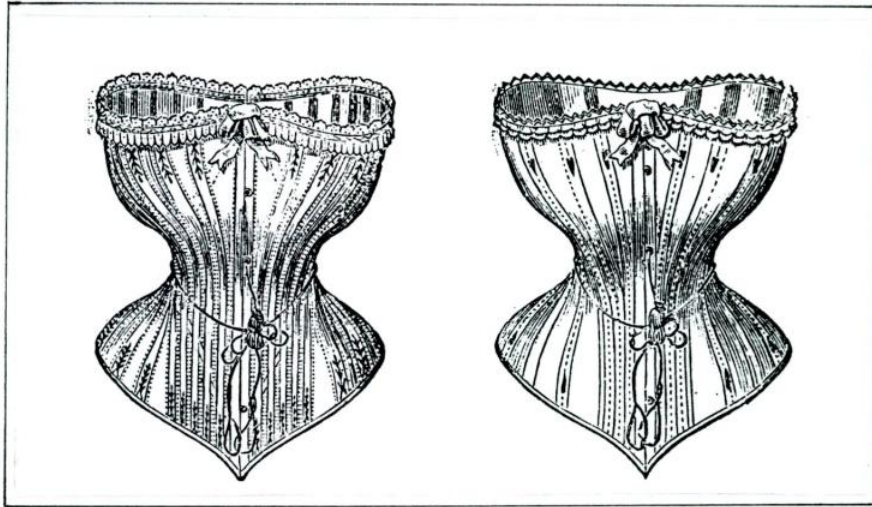
As with many contemporary designers, they acquire a style and method of design, which becomes associated with them.

The clothing on the 'inside' determined the look on the 'outside', and each became equally important in revealing the conclusive appearance of the ensemble.5 In agreeing with this it is also correct to indicate that the outer layer of drapery was responsible for enhancing the form and shape that the corset and bustle created.6 Victorian women, could not be described as possessing a natural appearance, but one which expressed ~~artificialness~~ *artificance*, existing from the corset, bustle and crinoline. (pl. no. 28)



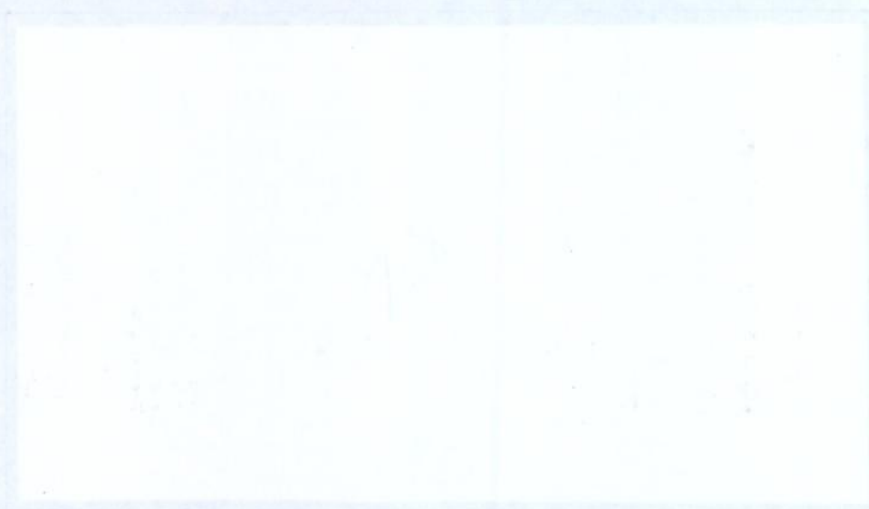
27. A Hottentot woman, a sartorial illusion. Her silhouette and a woman from the 1800's are identical.

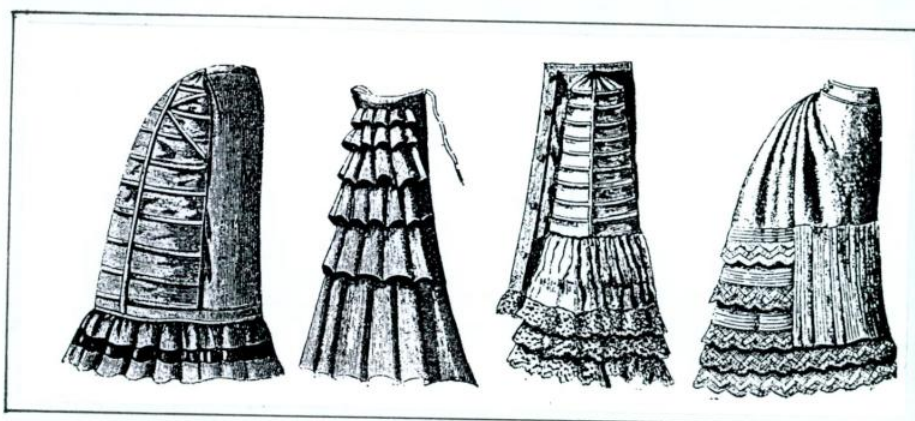




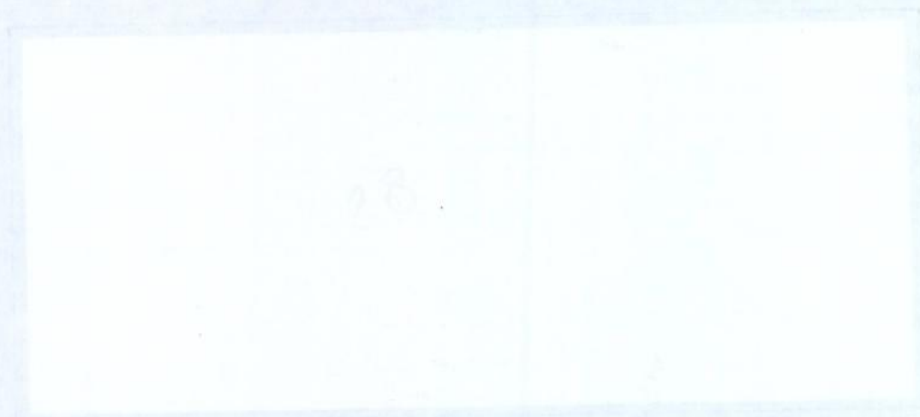
28. Corsets (Milliner and Dressmaker, 1874)

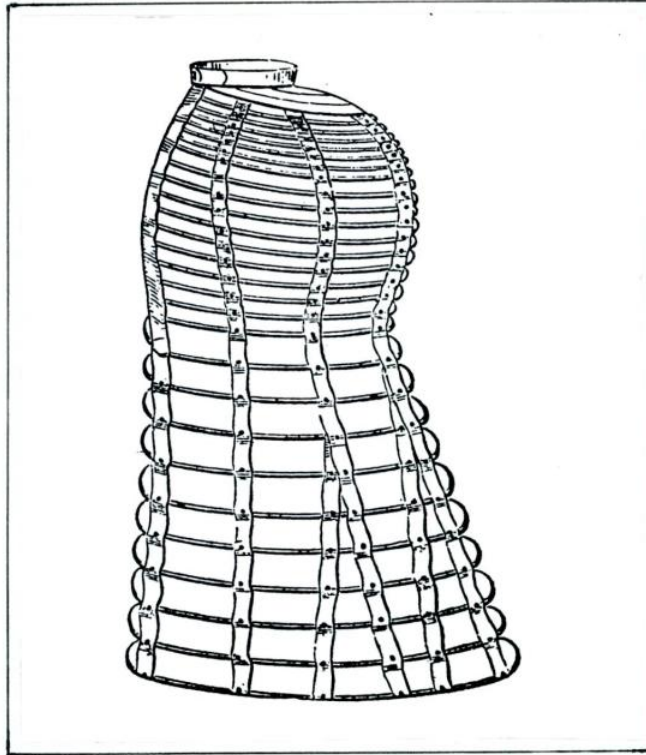
Two examples of Izod's patent corsets from the 1870's.





28. Bustles and Petticoats (Hune's Journal, 1884)





28. A crinoline of the 1870's. Another example of the structural underwear which created the necessary shape (Queen, 1870).

Each became an essential and crucial part of their dress, playing an equally important role as the clothing on the outside. Women and the way they dressed in the 19th century were given a lot of attention, which possibly resulted in a pre-occupation with corsetry and the shape it achieved.

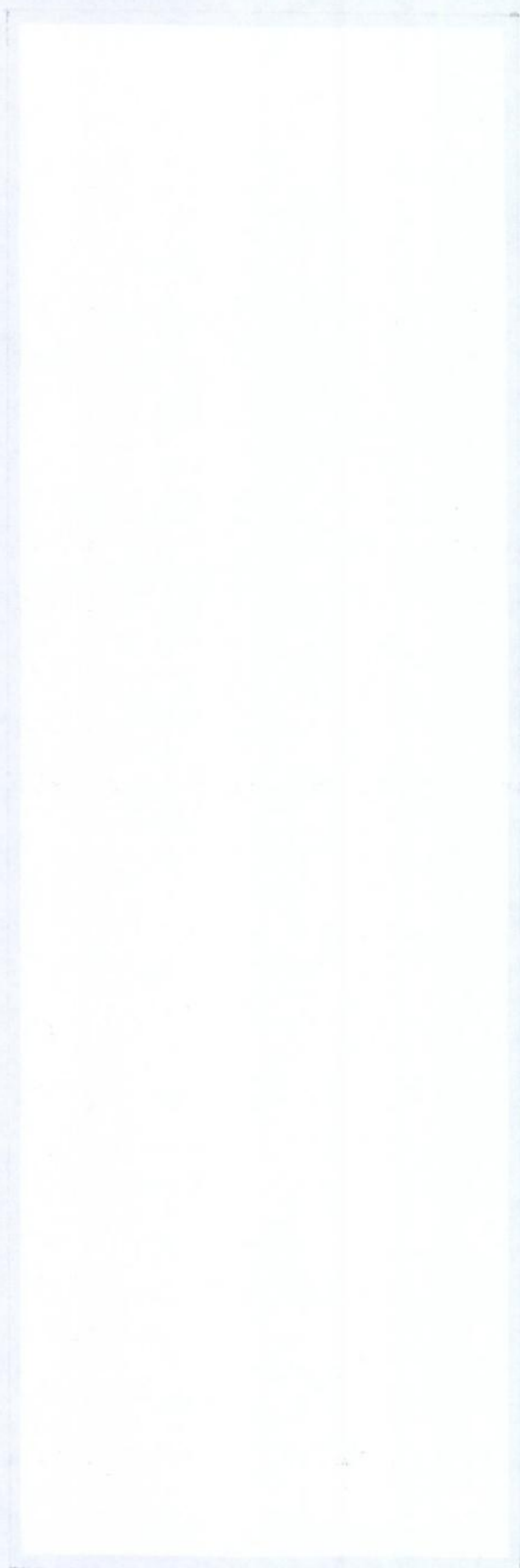
The corset was initially intended to represent a second skin, especially as the bodice area of dress was purposely the most taut . The word itself is of French origin and translates meaning 'to squeeze', which is exactly what it did. It became a resolute item of underclothing throughout the eighteenth hundreds right through into the 20th century. Originally, corsets were known as stays, which played the part of the structural engineer, fooling the world about the real build of the body.

Similar to the continual alterations of styles in outerwear, many different varieties were introduced to women. However, each existed, altering the shape of the woman on the outside. As the lines of fashion and styles changed, quite regularly, so to did the corset.

Around the 1850's corsets were long, graduating toward the hip. Gussets were inserted over the hip and at the breasts, allowing slightly for the cleavage and the added fullness at the hips. (pl. no. 29) The fullness above and below the waist accentuated the strict silhouette achieved by the corset.



29. A contemporary photograph of a corset from the 1840's

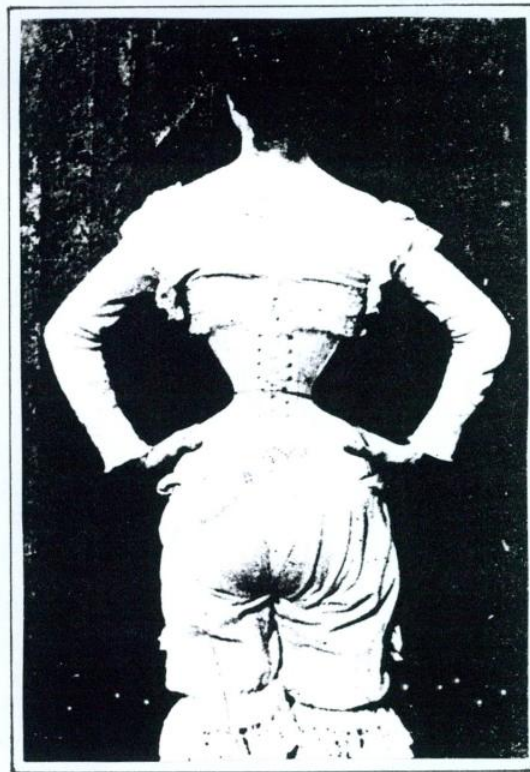
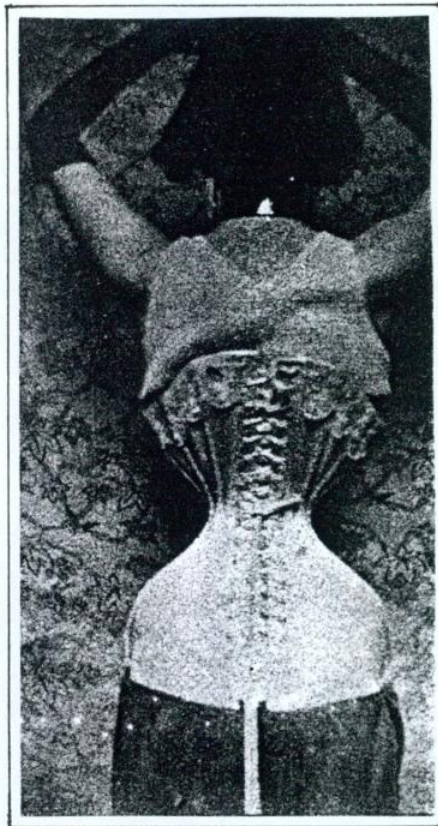


The whaling industry increased, consequently as a result of the corset. These were commonly boned using whalebone, which was slightly flexible, yet reinforced the shape greatly. Caleb Hill, a stay-maker in England, introduced front fastening in 1853. This new accomplishment received an auspicious and accepted welcome. This diminished the awkwardness of lacing and unlacing at the back. However, depending on a particular costume, back-lacing corsets were sometimes more appropriate. Naturally, depending on the fabric and the style of the dress. While the bodice was usually close-fitting, front fastening could sometimes be observed, thus proving that back-fastening still was a worthy style of corsetry, however diminutive.

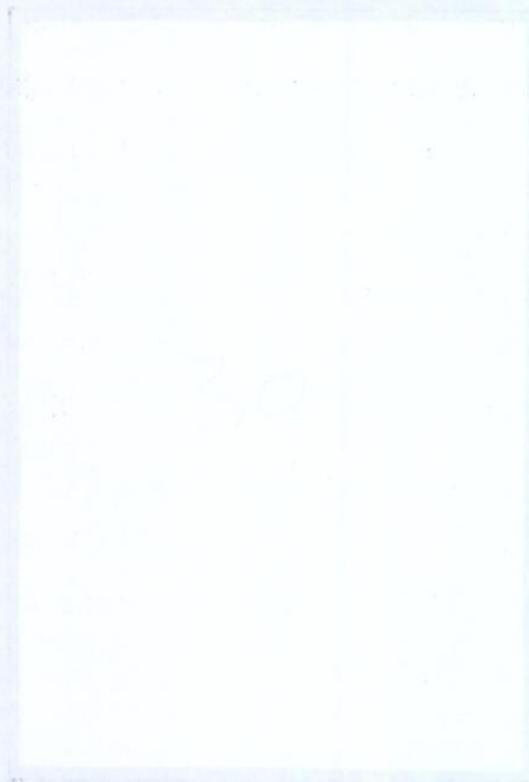
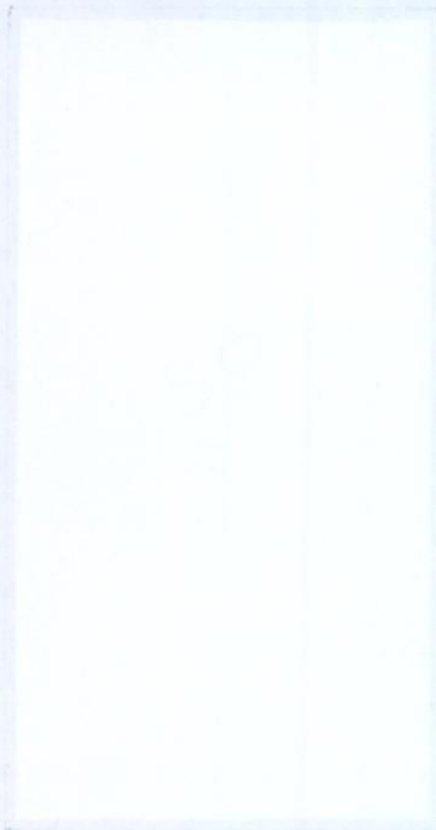
Front fastening soon proved preferable among women as the constant ceremony of lacing decreased. However, it was deemed a favourable benefit as corsets could be laced even tighter, producing an even greater exaggerated figure. (pl. no. 30)

Therefore, , waists were fantastically constricted. The small metal eyelets that were attached to the front of these corsets held great strength and allowed the fabric to be stained and twisted smaller still without it being torn or ripped.

The 1860's arrived with waistlines at a new, higher level, pointing slightly at the front. While the corset remained essential, it became more lightly boned, and colour was introduced. A recognition towards colour and fabric were



30. A back view of extreme distortion



revealed upon the corset. Scarlet became a popular colour recommendation.

While discussing the influences of underwear on outerwear, it is important to realise that many attributed to the corsets' development and its many changes, concerning women and their sufferance. The invention of the sewing machine (1846, Elias Howe) undoubtedly resulted in the improved and increased number of corsets available.⁷ However, the inventor, Isaac Merritt Singer perfected a sewing machine which worked unfaillingly. The corset manufacturer Robert Symington & Co. Ltd, in Market Harborough (1856-1956) purchased three Singer sewing machines which immediately led to a growth in the number of corsets being made throughout Britain.

From the 1870's onward, machine-sewing techniques developed immensely. The utilisation of criss-cross stitching allowed corsets to be strengthened and became viable while simultaneously decorating them with the use of embroidery. The changes and developments in corsetry manufacture were manifested greatly with many manufacturers striving towards the ideal.

By 1875, a longer style corset became preferable, as the fashion lines altered on the outside. A close-fitting shape became fashionable as a consequence of the cuiness bodice.⁸ This led to great extremities in waist measurements and a preoccupation with improving the perceived feminine shape,

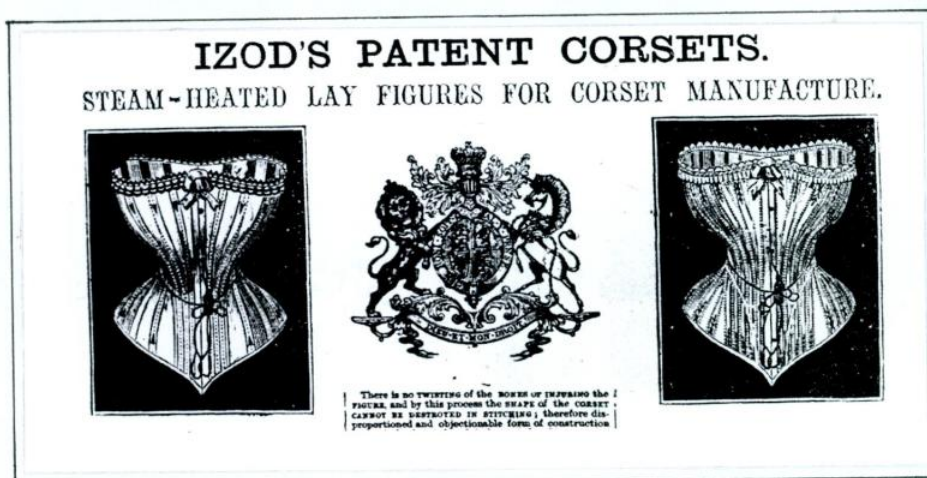
seen and thought of by Victorian women. (pl. no. 31) The busK became longer and widened at the base, curving outwards, with the fullness of outer garments being pushed over the hips. This 'spoon-like' characteristic became similar in appearance to corsets of the 1880's, (pl. no. 32) and 1890's, suggesting the similarity of fashion and its shape on the outside.

While the role of the corset, principally remained the same, the 'spoon-shape' given to women greatly distorted this shape, emphasizing the breasts and hips.

As well as altering a womans shape, the corset acted as a symbol of sexuality, as it did restriction.

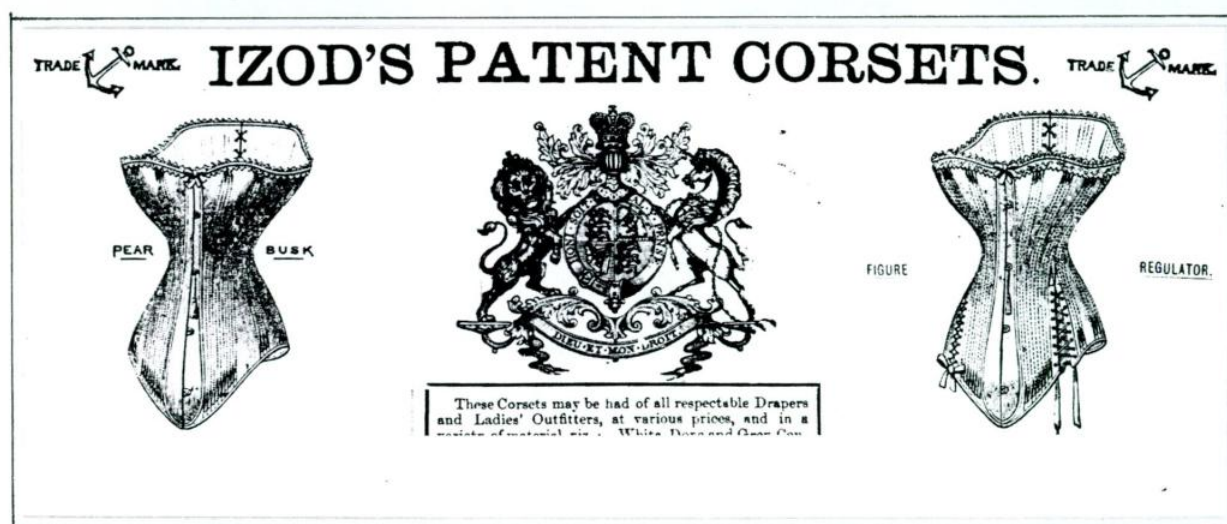
As the 1880's emerged, so too did change, which became quite apparent where women's undergarments were concerned. During this period the corset combined efficiency with great beauty.

Corsets became more luxurious and erotically expressive, as decoration and colours such as black sateen, blue and pink were introduced.⁹ To a certain extent, this enabled the corset to compliment the decoration on the outer garments. Trimmings, once again, were now used on the inside, increasing their unrivalled appeal among Victorian women. Lace, silk and insertions of ribbon, created a distinction from earlier, dreary styles of corsetry.¹⁰ Embroidery now became an additional feature, resulting from the improved sewing machines. (Isaac Meritt Singer.C.1860). Intricacy and



31. Izod's Patent Corset from 1875





32. Izod's Patent Corset from 1880



delicate small areas of embellishment resulted in many corsets becoming almost as decorative as the clothing on the outside.

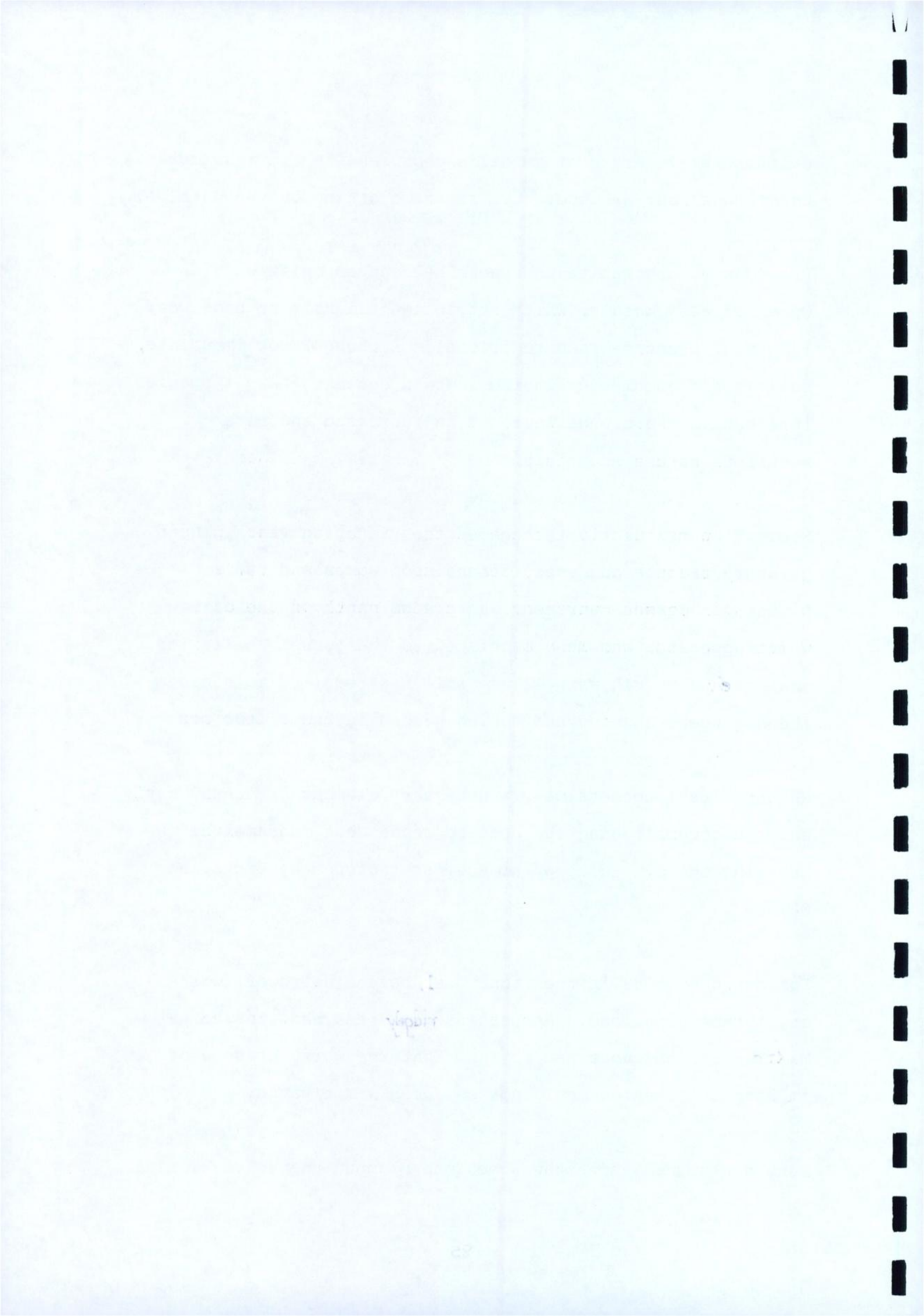
Previously, decorative underwear held an association with women of easy morals, which attributed slightly to underwear remaining practical and functional. Although, not immediate, beliefs and judgments altered. Women began to take a special interest in their underwear, of an increased and more luxurious nature and finish.

Society, particularly throughout the Victorian years placed great restraints and associations upon women and their clothing. It was many men, who predominantly spoke of how women appeared, and many manufactured the corset, believing that ~~their~~ strength as well as skill was required to achieve the stringent shaping and boning needed in and on the corset.

Nevertheless, corsets were a necessary element of dress, not only in accomplishing the desired shape, but fundamental in creating the over-all appearance, stereotyped by Victorian women.

Following the 1880's the front busk became narrower, while still remaining long. As corsets ~~ridgely~~ remained, the corset makers art, had advanced so far, that the worst effects of impractical fashion could not be somehow mitigated.

Many now argued about the women who clamped themselves inside

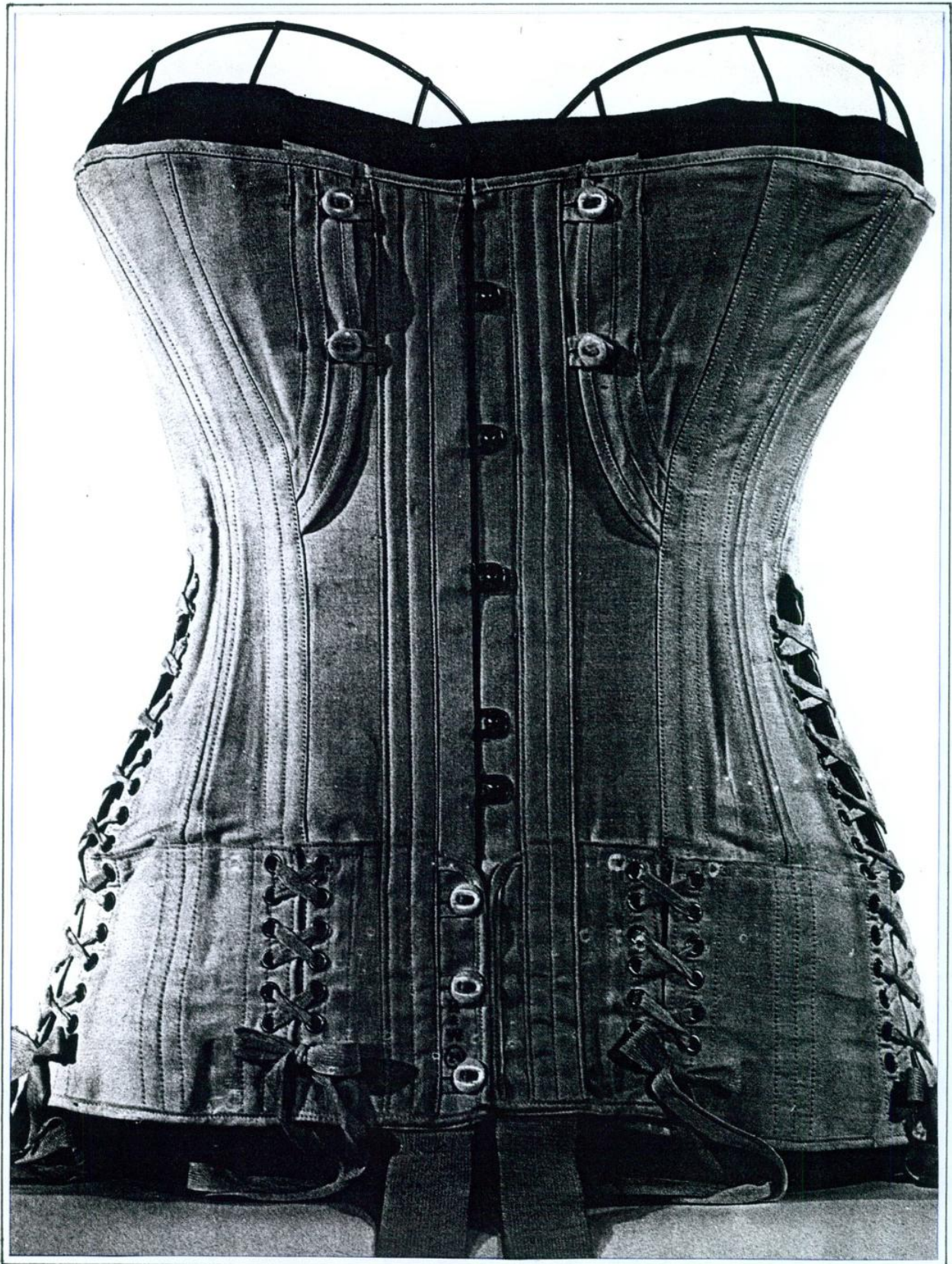


a mere half stone of underwear. Conclusively it was agreed that underclothes should not exceed seven pounds.

The corset was soon to emerge as a precarious item of underclothing, particularly resulting from dress reformers and newspaper attention. One such reformer was Madame Roxy Anne Caplin. On her corset designs, she used elastic, instead of whalebone or wood. While her designs, diminished some of the restrictions corsetry held, they were still considered necessary, even through pregnancy. (pl. no. 33) These were moulded in conjunction to the changing shape of the figure. Corsetry aided greatly the concealment of pregnancy, and these particular corsets were used after the birth of the baby to regain the fashionable shape.

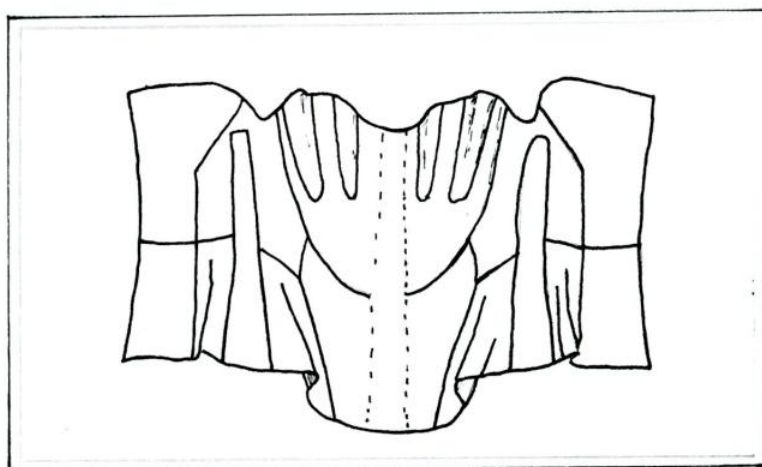
It is true to suggest that there were many mixed feelings regarding the corset, however in a society that placed great emphasis on womens shape, it resolved to a degree feelings of shame and discontentment. Many yearned for a so-called physical ideal, and the corset enabled many to possess this valued attribute.

The strict disciplines of corsetry, were giving way to a progression towards a more refined and less restrictive design, suitable for every woman. Manufacturers energetically published various examples of corsets, which according to them "possessed hygienic merit". R. & W.H. Symington, of Market Harborough (1856-1956) was one such advertiser; (pl. no. 34).



33. An American example of a Maternity Corset, C. 1880





33. The Caplins 'Hygean or corporiform corset', 1849

THE GREATEST NOVELTIES IN CORSETS FOR THIS SEASON ARE
SYMINGTON'S EYELETTED SEAM * AND * SYMINGTON'S DIVIDED BUSK,

Eyeletted from top to bottom of each seam, making the strongest seam ever known, and providing the necessary ventilation, without which no article of clothing is perfect. The makers undertake to replace, gratis, every pair giving way at the seams.




FIG. 1.

Drab, Fawn, White, 47s. 6d. per doz.

Black, Cardinal, 63s. per doz.

NOW EXHIBITING
AT THE
**INTERNATIONAL
 CRYSTAL PALACE**
AND
**HEALTH
 EXHIBITIONS,**
LONDON,
 And for which a Silver Medal
 has been awarded.
FROM WHOLESALE HOUSES.



FIG. 2.

Remove the gravest objection to the ordinary Corset, namely, the usual injurious pressure upon the delicate and vital organs of the chest, and meet the present demand for hygienic dress reform. The upper portions of the busk are curved outwards, leaving the organs of respiration entirely free, and, being ground down to the finest consistency, form beautifully yielding supports to the bosom part of the corset. This invention has been elaborated from the suggestions of an eminent medical man, who writes the Patentee as follows: "I am more than pleased with your invention, which I consider perfect. It will, I feel safe, entirely remove the distressing conditions which I have described. You may rely upon my influence in recommending the article to my numerous patients, and I trust your meritorious efforts will be fully appreciated by a grateful public." Manufactured of the best material only. In a variety of colours, 63s. to 95s. per doz.

SYMINGTON'S NEW CORSETS. (From *Inventors' Record* of May, 1884.)

We are amongst those who think that there is room for much good work in the direction followed by the Rational Dress Association, and that the pernicious fashions in vogue of recent years which entail tight lacing and severe abdominal pressure, and consequent injury to the system, should be severely deprecated. We have no wish to force our standard of beauty of form upon our readers, but we are ourselves unable to see, even from an artistic point of view, that the unnatural waspish look imparted to the human form divine by this fashion of tight lacing is at all as pleasing as the outlines immortalized by the Grecian sculpture, and cannot but think that even those fashionable ladies who endure so much inconvenience for the sake of being the observed of all observers, would themselves smile if in an art gallery they saw a modernized edition squeezed by tight lacing of the Venus of Milo. Much good work has been done by Messrs. Symington and Company, of Market Harborough, by the production of various patent corsets, which are both hygienic and artistic at the same time.

In Fig. 1 we are enabled to illustrate their new patent eyeletted seam corset, which, while unfortunately allowing of as much tight lacing as the wearer might desire, has a means of ventilation through the seams which should make it very acceptable to all devotees of fashion. These seams are eyeletted in such a way as to strengthen the seams considerably thereby, and materially increasing the comfort of the wearer. It is well and strongly made, daintily finished, and moderate in price.

Fig. 2, however, illustrates a corset with which we are much more pleased, possessing as it does hygienic merit of a high order. Its shape and size is quite conformable to our standard of perfection, but its chief advantage in our eyes is the divided busk, which, curving outwards at the top, leaves the organs of respiration entirely free, and on account of the steel being ground to the finest consistency these curves of the busk form yielding supports to the bosom part of the corset. Any one knowing the first rudiments of anatomy will know that while men breathe with the muscles of the abdomen, women breathe with the muscles of the chest, consequently pressure on these delicate organs, or insufficient room in which they may healthfully expand at each inhalation of the breath, must in process of time induce most distressing pulmonary conditions. These are entirely obviated by this divided busk corset, which is so constructed as to relieve all such detrimental pressure. We are glad to find that the medical profession have largely patronized this invention, and in recommending it to their patients they will largely alleviate much of the suffering caused by prevailing injurious fashions, which seem to us to be founded upon total ignorance of hygienic laws, and consequently upon opposition to nature.

34. A Symington's advertisement from the 1880's.

Illustrating a corset which possesses "hygienic merit" of a high order.

Each corset, reveals the divided busk, which was invented to relieve pressure of the wearer.

'Inventors Record of May, 1884'.



111

This advertisement boasts of the corsets "standard of perfection", with its chief advantage being its divided busk, thus leaving the organs of respiration entirely free. They further explain that "pressure of these delicate organs, must in process of time induce most distressing pulmonary conditions".

Consequently, pressure became obviated to a certain extent, and the days when boned and laced corsetry refused to admit that the bosom came in two pieces were arriving at an end. Nevertheless, many in their efforts to appear fashionable were achieving "veritable miracles of compression".

Developments in corsetry manufacture, were of great benefit to both the manufacturer and women. Around the 1890's R. & W. H. Symington (1856-1956) developed the first "flossing machine", in conjunction with Singers. This resulted in profuse demands for corsets among every class of Victorian woman, as they were less expensive than other types.

This machine supported and prevented the boning from moving in its position, and simultaneously provided a decorative trimming on the corset.

Meanwhile, many in the medical profession were lamenting about the "wasp-waisted fashions" the era evoked. Towards, the end of the century, there were many changes and relentless developments in the cause of practicality and the combination

of comfort. Styles on the outside varied frequently, constantly adhering to the stringent existence of underwear.

In 1902, a French corsetière, Mme. Gache-Sanante, invented corset, which possessed a front busk which did not curve inward at the waist, thus relieving the stomach area of much pressure. However, the opposite reaction occurred as the straight front made it possible to apply an increased pull behind. As a direct consequence, the fashionable shape was straight in front and "S" shaped at the back. This particular shape resembles the shape desired by many African tribal women. (pl. no. 35)

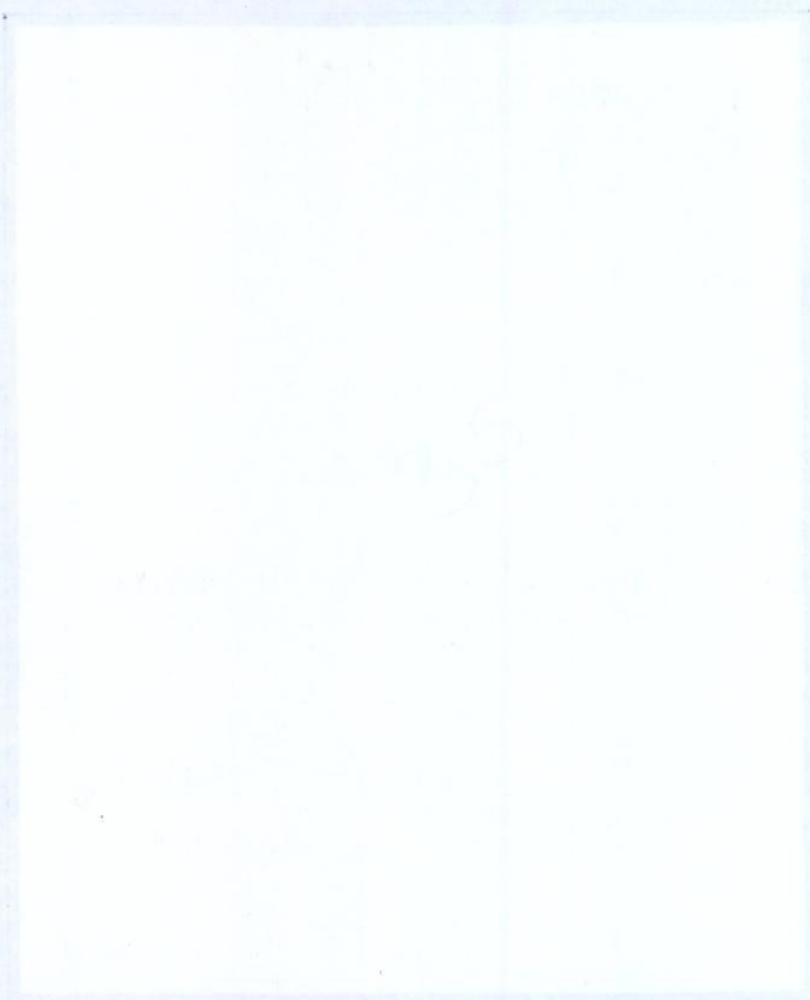
However, the changing lines of fashion meant that corsets were sometimes so high that they incorporated shoulder straps and sometimes so low, that modesty required another garment. The bust bodice emerged, and by 1910 Symington's were manufacturing increased numbers of the garments, soon to be universally distinguished and known as the brassiere. (pl. no. 36) (pl. no. 37)

By 1914, shapes were now so distorted, that women were finding it increasingly difficult to sit down, however the advent of the war increased feelings of comfort and practicality. As the war progressed, clothes became looser and corsets less constrictive.

Up until the 1930's, corsetry was still an unwieldy aspect of



35. A Victorian woman, revealing the 18 inch by the surgical removal of the lowest ribs, 1900





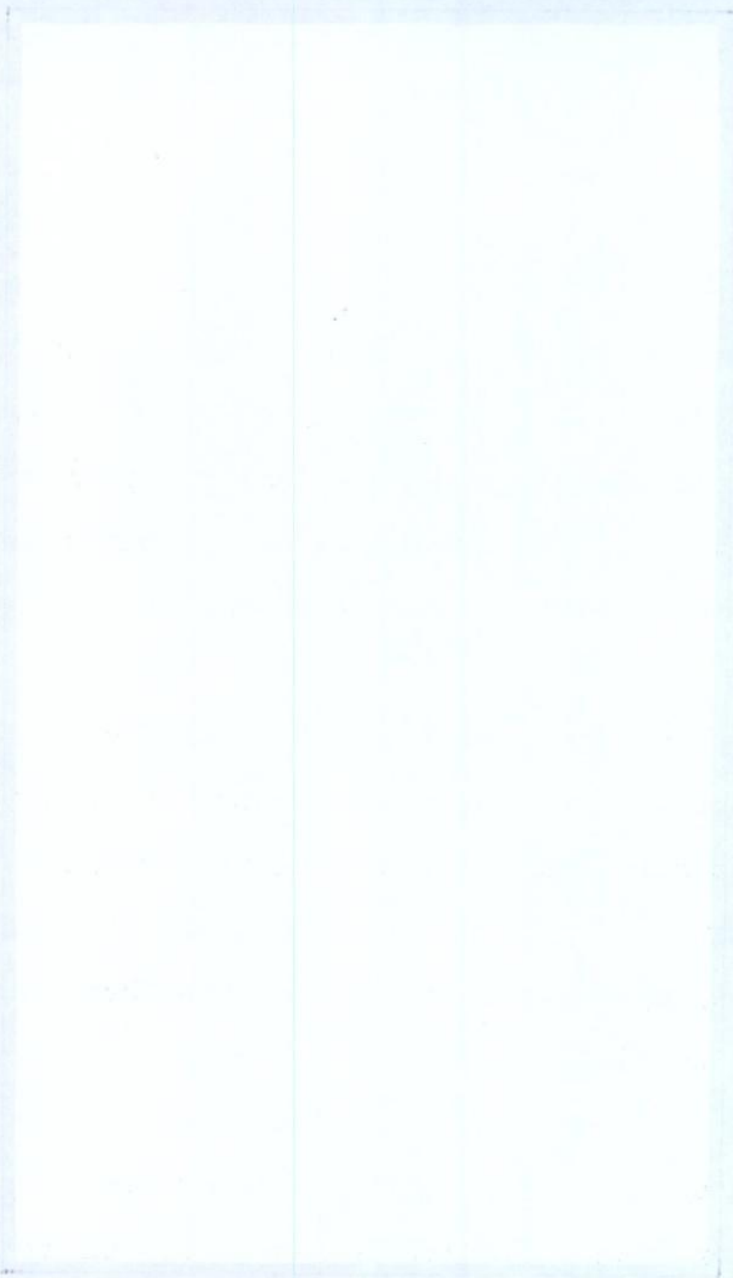
36. Various examples of corsetry, manufactured by R. & W.H. Symington & Co. Ltd, between 1858-1917. Each demonstrates the numerous variations and styles which were manufactured in accordance with changing fashions on the outside.





37. The changed appearance of underwear is apparent, in the 1950's. Here, the corset is used to slim the hips, as the brassiere supports and up-lifts the breasts.

R. & W.H. Symington & Co. Ltd.



women attire, however trends varied and the state of fashion changed quite dramatically. The waist, the bust and the hips were restored. Society was no longer fooled about the shape and silhouette of women. Corset makers had by now, so much improved their techniques that the female figure could be coaxed to conform to the desired lines fashion required. Corsets, were now regarded as foundation garments.

The fashions throughout the Victorian period evidently, became responsible for the extensive and valued use of the corset. However it was principally the corset that created the conclusive shape and appearance on the outside. It created the foundation, upon which the "Hour-Glass Shape" commands an association with Victorian women.

While it is true to suggest that the outer-clothing attributed to lavish decoration and embellishment. The under-garments, particularly the corset and the bustle were equally as important and were recognized as such throughout the eighteenth-hundreds. Today, these stringent and somewhat restrictive under-garments may appear un-necessary, however many older-generations of women still wear undergarments resembling the corset, and indeed re-collect its use.

Our fashions today, don't dictate a style of dress, that concerns a distortion of shape, therefore it may appear difficult to comprehend why such items of underwear acquired such reverence and importance. Equally, the corset made it

possible to possess an ideal silhouette, although many women appeared un-natural and bore a look of artificialness as a result of extremely tight-lacing.

The corset symbolized sexuality. As it altered the shape of a woman, it simultaneously manifested the breasts and hips. Although the actual corset remained concealed underneath, it emphasized these zones of erotic significance, in a manner which was inconspicuous and lacked suggestiveness. It clearly defined an expression of restriction upon women, particularly as a result of its own restrictive qualities. It refused to admit or allow much physical freedom or movement. However, it was regarded as an item requiring tolerance, and one which was depended on greatly.

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's our fashions have varied greatly in styles and shapes. As a consequence of the corset, supportive underwear such as the bra(cira, 1910) have today reiterated its role for women. Great availability of these items enable women to avail of their function if they so wish. However, in the 1990's there exists no stringent ruling on the association placed on women who disincline to wear it, particularly associations of easy virtue. Instead, women in the 1960's were regarded as staunch feminists as they burned their bras in protest of their femininity and equality.

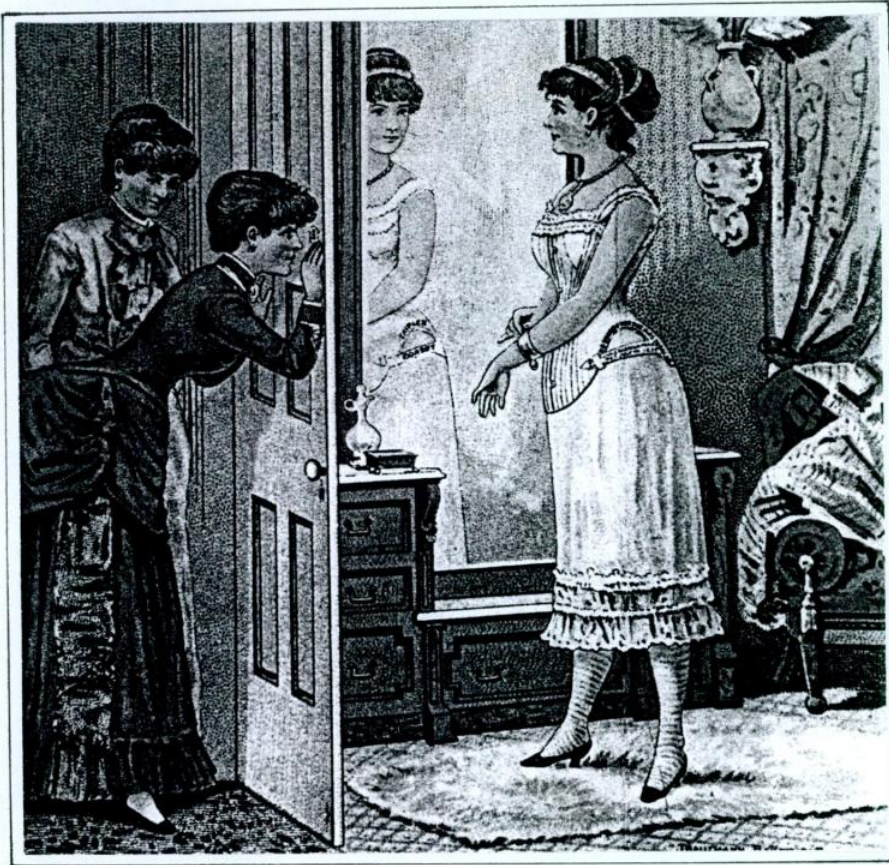
CHAPTER 3 :

THE MALE INFLUENCE ON VICTORIAN FASHION

The Victorian era, developed and became greatly concerned with stipulating the strict rules associated with dress, both for men and more evidently for women. Nevertheless, within the many enforced restraints upon dress, society seemed to pay a stronger and more relentless attention upon women.

Many women, within the upper classes of Victorian society became symbolic of their families stance within a community, expressing and emphasizing an imagery and air of wealth and authority.¹² Dress, and the women that wore them became the ultimate means of doing so, accepting this role out of honour and loyalty, whilst simultaneously believing it to be the preferable role of a lady. Many looked upon their male 'counterparts' with respect and a degree of dignity.

Nevertheless, women tended to be looked upon in an artificial light possibly resulting from their demure, secluded position in Victorian society before the 1860's. ¹³ While society was male dominated, with men attaining careers, women's positions remained in the home, which automatically resulted in an obsession with clothing and their appearance (pl. no. 38)



38. An American Trade Card (C. 1882) for the Adjustable Duplex Corset

This illustrates the pre-occupation women had with their appearances and especially their shapes. The erotic appeal of the corset is evident, as it emphasises the curves of the woman.



The association of women and home, which presently still survives to an extent in the 90's signified the true Victorian woman. This association strongly became apparent in fashions, with draperies of skirts, utilised in a similar fashion of curtains and upholstery.¹⁴ As attitudes remained resolute for quite a number of years, boredom increased, as subdued, quiet lifestyles lacked challenge or excitement.

The 'male gaze' sustained the desires and emphasis placed on women. (pl. no. 39) "Irish newspapers noted the interest in, and ridicule of, reformed dress movements in the United States and Britain. They were not antagonistic to it and indeed some thrifty men saw merit in having to pay for less fabric" (Dunlevy , 1989, p. 156). Therefore, this suggests, that while expectations of beauty and serenity were regarded as necessary, men held constraints and power over how women dressed. "Neatness and cleanliness were considered so important that the Meath Herald and Cavan Advertiser advised men to 'hang themselves' rather than marry a woman who dressed carelessly, or who had shoes that were loose, or worn down at the heel". (Dunlevy , 1989, p. 154) Practicability within dress was eliminated with the increasing and constant wish to appear feminine.

Dainty slippers weren't unusual, as they attributed to possessing petite feet. As Queen Victorian was so short, heels which created a great degree of height were bordering on treason.

While the corset, could be described as an 'ingenious' method of re-shaping the female figure, it evokes the restrictions held by fashion, while it was simultaneously influenced by men. It symbolised the barriers imposed on women. While many women deemed it awkward, they still relied on it to create the required shape. Shape, could not be thought of, as an 'over-important' aspect, occurring from the feminine ideal.

Many men expressed repulsion and disappointment, as many women were simply not perfect. The corset reduced the waistline considerably, although any women were often quite obese. It was not unusual for husbands to specially commission a corset-maker to create an impractical and torturous model. Often women 'poured' themselves into these items of underclothing, in the cause of elegance and honour. The corset bears the strong association of restriction, however it symbolised and emphasized noticeably a womans body and her sexuality.¹⁵ While it was not apparent or seen from the outside, it suggested and signified a womans curves, particularly her breast and hips. Its concealment created a certain barrier, which in turn aroused an interest as to what exactly a woman's body looked like underneath the outside layers.

In Manets' Nana of 1877, it becomes clear of the alluring and seductive nature corsetry upheld. While the woman standing in her boudoir isn't completely naked, Her undergarments are, particularly her corset, sexually suggestive. Also in the painting a man sits, fully clothed gazing at her, possibly



39. Monet's Nana (1877)

It symbolizes the eroticism of the corset



resulting from the attractiveness her silhouette imposes upon him (pl. no. 39) (Kidwell and Steele, 1989 p. 47). This painting arouses the eroticism, of concealed undergarments of the 19th century.

Many were perceived as sexual ornaments. A latter, contemporary portrait by Horst for Vogue in 1939 creates an open awareness of womens sexuality. (pl. no. 40) This photograph emphasises and signifies the curves that are associated with the female body, and the attractiveness it holds for men.¹⁶ In it, the corset symbolises beauty, and at the same time lacks a presentation of restriction or oppression. "It shows the appeal of twentieth century corsetry, its very shape an icon for the sexually dimorphic curves of the female body". (Kidwell and Steele, 1989, p.54)

However, within the 19th century, attitudes towards the corsets and women were varied. Embellished corsetry was connected to women of easy virtue. Nevertheless, the tendency to grade and force opinions upon women was part of Victorian society. They were generally characterized in a hollow, pseudo nature. With the increase of decoration on corsetry, associations gradually diminished, as it became to excite and was secretly held with great fervour by males.

The Victorian era could be characterized by prudery and also hypocrisy, consequently as a result of male intrusive opinions upon womens dress.



40. Horst's famous 1939 Photograph for Vogue. This, creates an openness of female sexuality, signifying the beauty of the female "dimorphic curves"



NOTES

CHAPTER 3

1. Kidwell, Brush Claudia, Steele Valeri, Men and Women Dressing the Part, 1989 pp. 126-127.
2. Kidwell, Bush Claudia, Steele Valerie, Men and Women Dressing the Part, 1989, p. 126.
3. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume, 1984, p. 85.
4. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume, 1984, p. 65.
5. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume, 1984, P. 85.
6. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume, 1984, p. 85.
7. Encyclopedia Britannica, Micropaedia 2, 1988.
8. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume, 1984, p. 85.
9. In our own fashion: The story of R. & W.H. Symington & Co. Ltd., Market Harborough from 1856 - 1956 London p.62.
10. Buck Anne, Victorian Costume, 1984, p. 86.

11. In our own fashion: The story of R. & W.H. Symington & Co. Ltd, Market Harborough from 1856 - 1956, London, p.65.
12. Dunlevy, Mairead, Dress in Ireland, 1989, p. 154.
13. Dunlevy, Mairead, Dress in Ireland, 1989, p. 158.
14. Dunlevy, Mairead, Dress in Ireland, 1989, p. 157.
15. Kidwell, Brush Claudia, Steele Valerie, Men and Women Dressing the Part, 1989 pp. 47-49.
16. Kidwell, Brush Claudia, Steele Valerie, Men and Women Dressing the Part, 1989, p. 54.

CHAPTER 4:

INSIDE OUT

The Victorian Past, still in evidence today.

The Victorian era, and each of its constraints concerned with dress has vanished from our society of today.

The dress of the eighteen hundreds managed to simultaneously intermingle beauty with restrictive qualities regarding women and their fashions. Through fashion, history has a precarious way of repeating itself, with styles varied and changed, suiting our more contemporary ideas and tastes. Historically, associations have been placed strongly and definitely upon the sufferance felt by Victorian women resulting from their undergarments, particularly the corset. Although it was an intrinsic element and part of dress then, it has followed on and influenced many fashion designers of today.

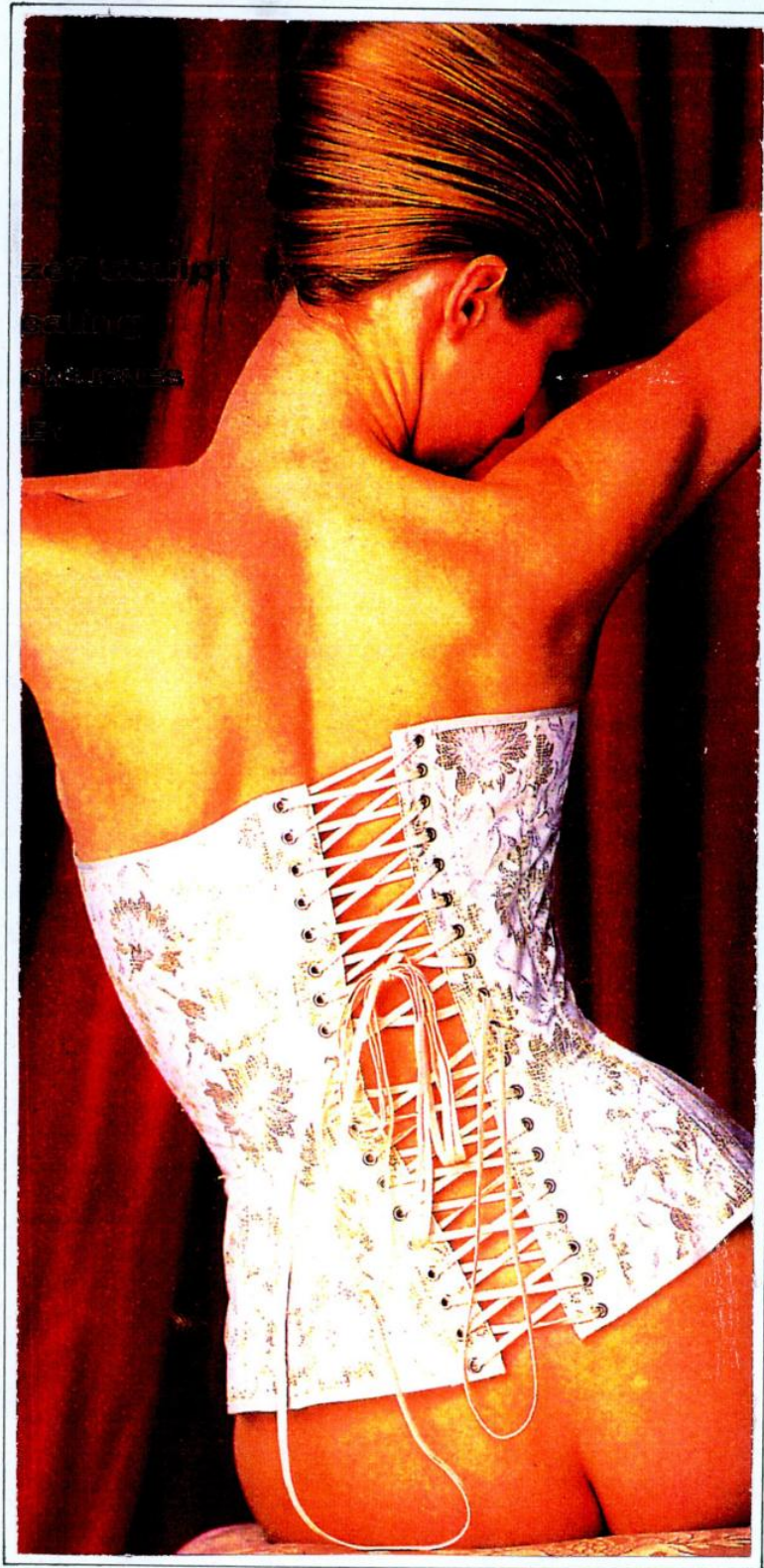
It holds and arouses an awareness of femininity and somehow conjures up ideas of sexuality, through the shape attributed by it and also the crinoline. However, as its restraints have disappeared, it has emerged and is revealed in our fashion

world in a revolutionary metamorphosis. The shape of the corset now, remains similar to that of the 1800's and it is seen as an appropriate item of outerwear. (pl. no. 41) This photograph holds a definite similarity to Horst's famous photograph for Vogue in 1939. This particular corset is designed to sculpt the bust, and hips into a streamlined, flattering, silhouette, suitable for under clothing which is fitted to the hip.

Attitudes in the 1980's and 1990's have changed quite drastically, and its now quite acceptable to let your bra straps, even the entire garment show. Basques, bustiers, and bodices are widely worn with floaty chiffon shirts and a well worn pair of 501's. This style of dress is an established part of the under-wear as outerwear revolution.

The crinoline and the corset which was concealed under layers of clothing has now become top layers of clothing themselves. A greater awareness and acceptance of the feminine shape has led to designers breaking the barriers and creating a new trend in underwear as outerwear.

The Victorian period has influenced designers such as Dolce & Gabbana, John Galliano, Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier. Their creations immediately announce the Victorian influence, and it is that inspiration that is so evident in contemporary designs. Underwear is now intended to be seen rather than hidden and it plays a predominant facade in the



41. A Contemporary Corset of 1993, resembling Horsts photograph 1939, for Vogue

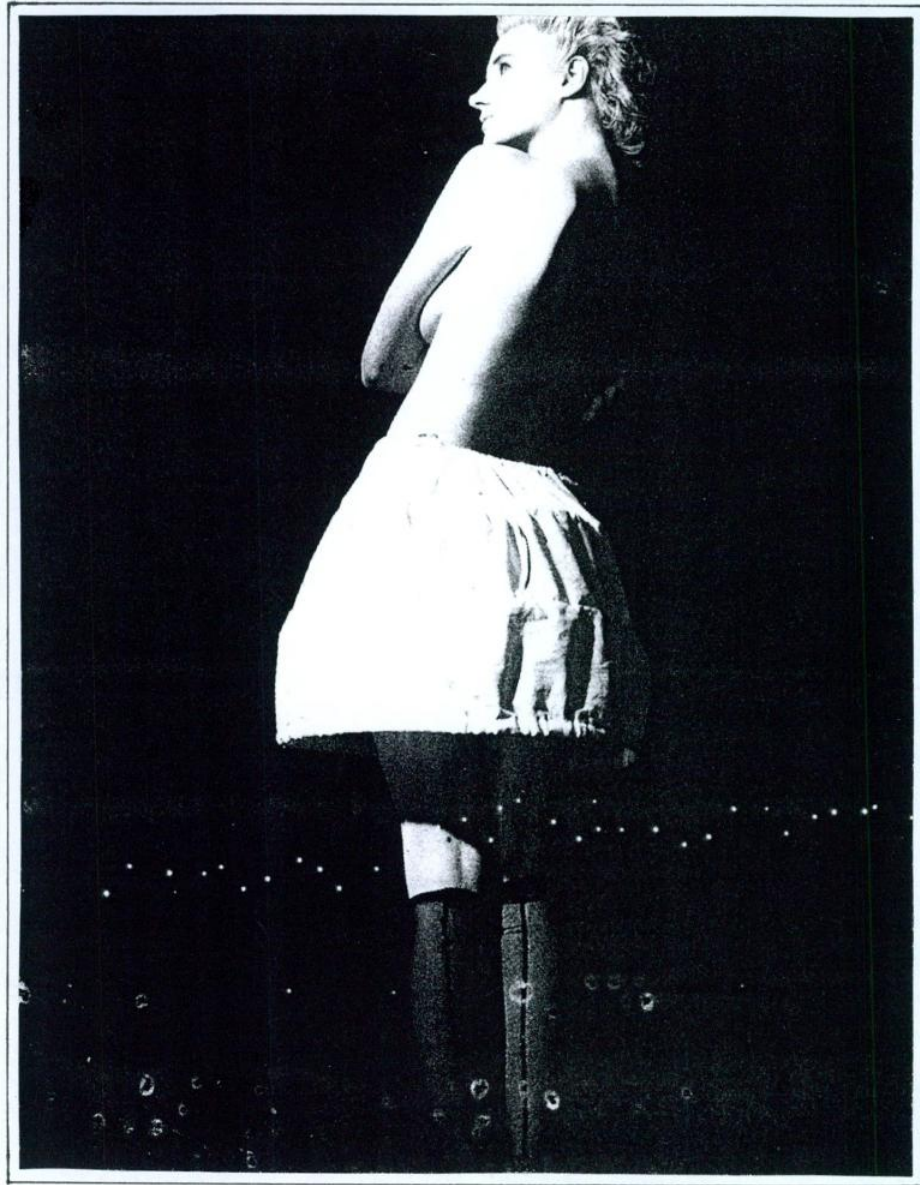


role of 90's fashion. In the early 80's Madonna in particular expressed her sexuality through this mode of dress, signifying an exorbitant desire to shock. An apparent intrusion of black lace corseted tops, became clearly evident, and many followed and copied this fashion trend, which greatly expanded.

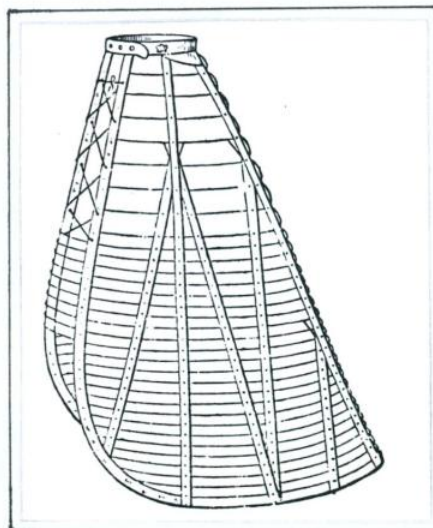
Nevertheless, this removed the obstructions associated with underwear, and many designers acknowledged this fact and acted on it.

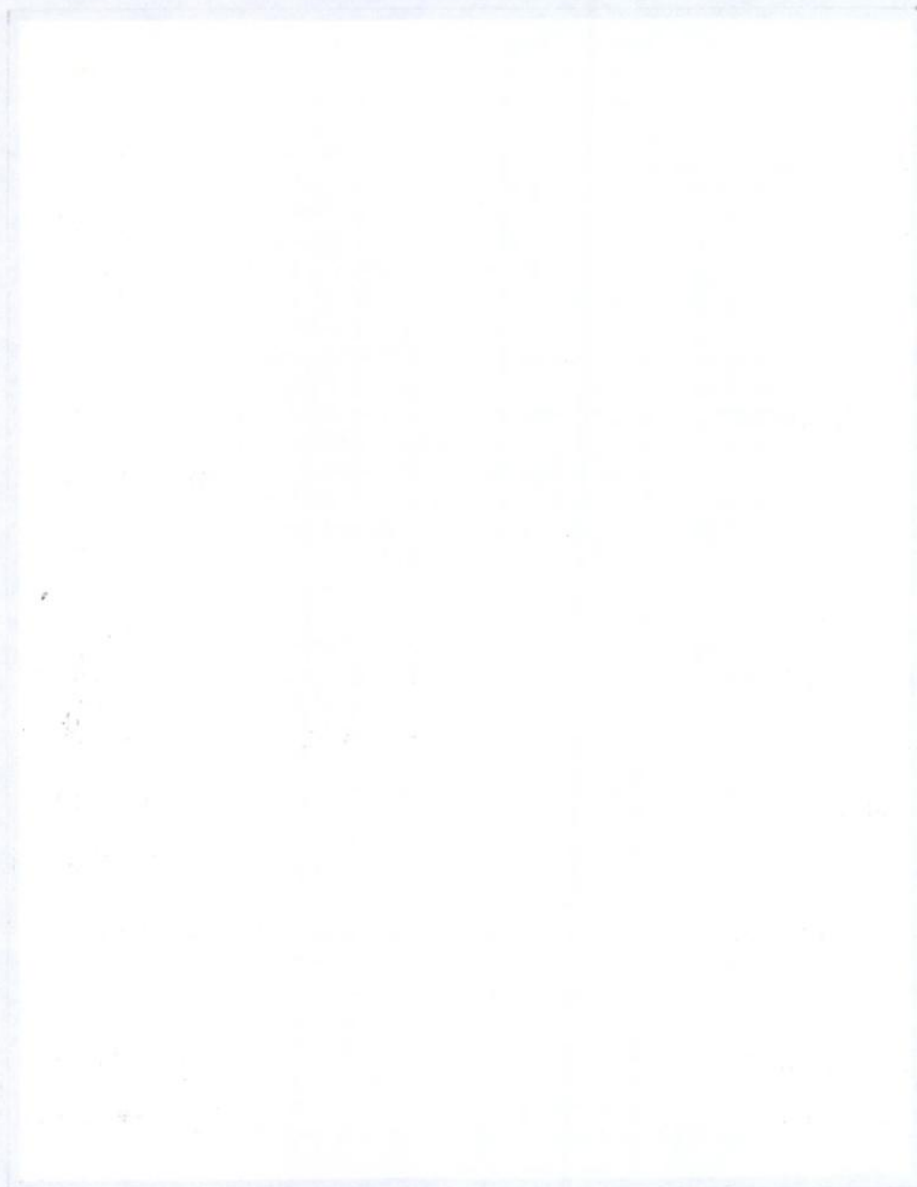
In particular Vivienne Westwood can be principally associated with conforming Victorian underwear in a vivacious, yet somewhat variable manner. Yet, she manages to encapsulate and develop the distinct notion of 'Victorian-ness' perpetuated through her designs and ideas. Her designs are a circumstance of history and culture, and these are combined in creating a fashion which symbolises unleashed femininity, disregarding to a certain degree the effects of restriction. For many of her designs she drew inspiration from the woman of the 1800's, although she manages to retain the possession of the era. She is concerned with re-creating underwear, with the intention of it becoming intrinsic on the outside. Although, primarily her general feelings were expressed through anarchism, these charged with a gradual recognition of women and their bodies. In 1986 she introduced the 'Mini Crini', which bordered along the lines of the Victorian crinolines. (pl. no. 42)

While maintaining an accord with Victorian fashion, Westwood's



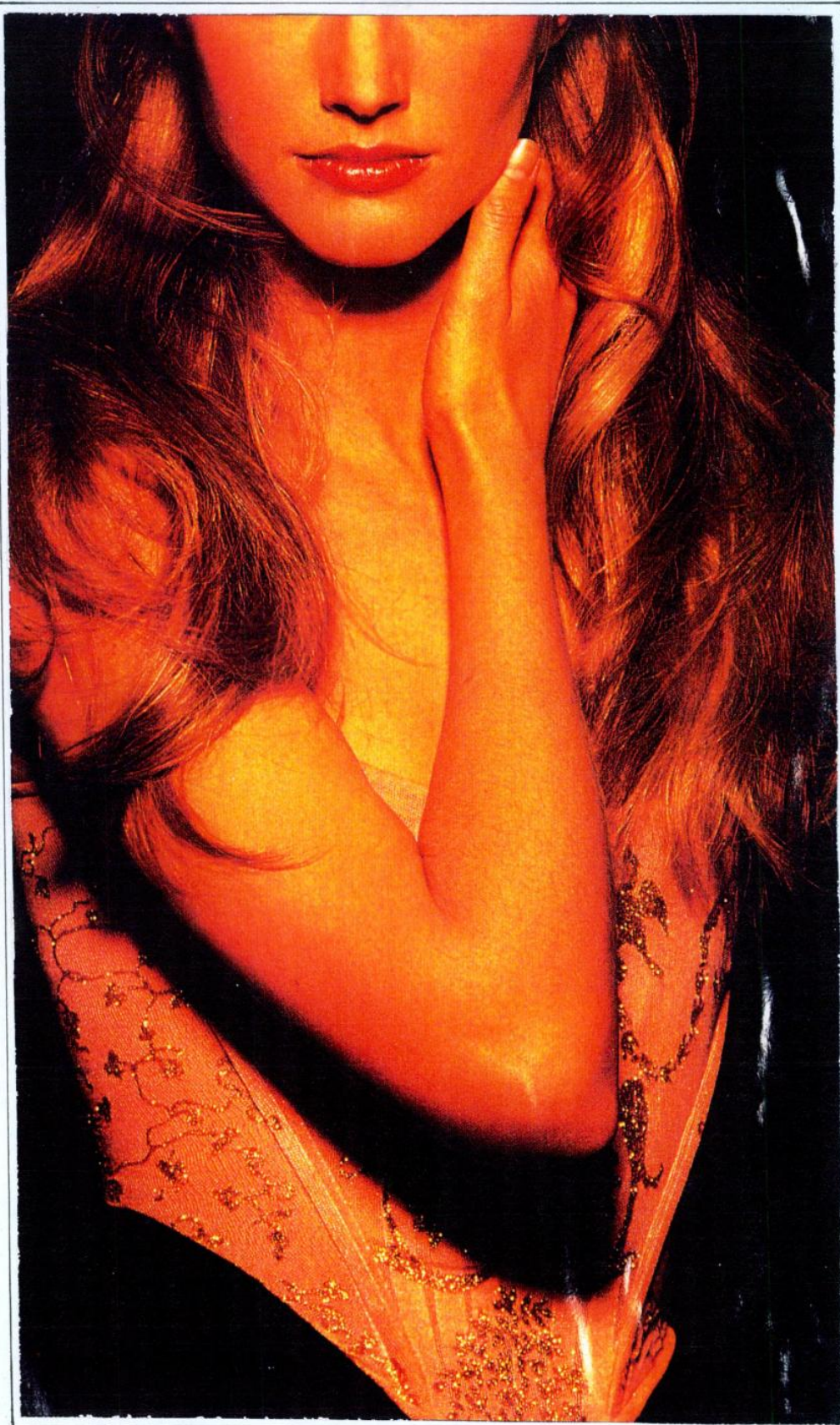
42. A Crinoline of 1868, similar to Vivienne Westwoods of 1986





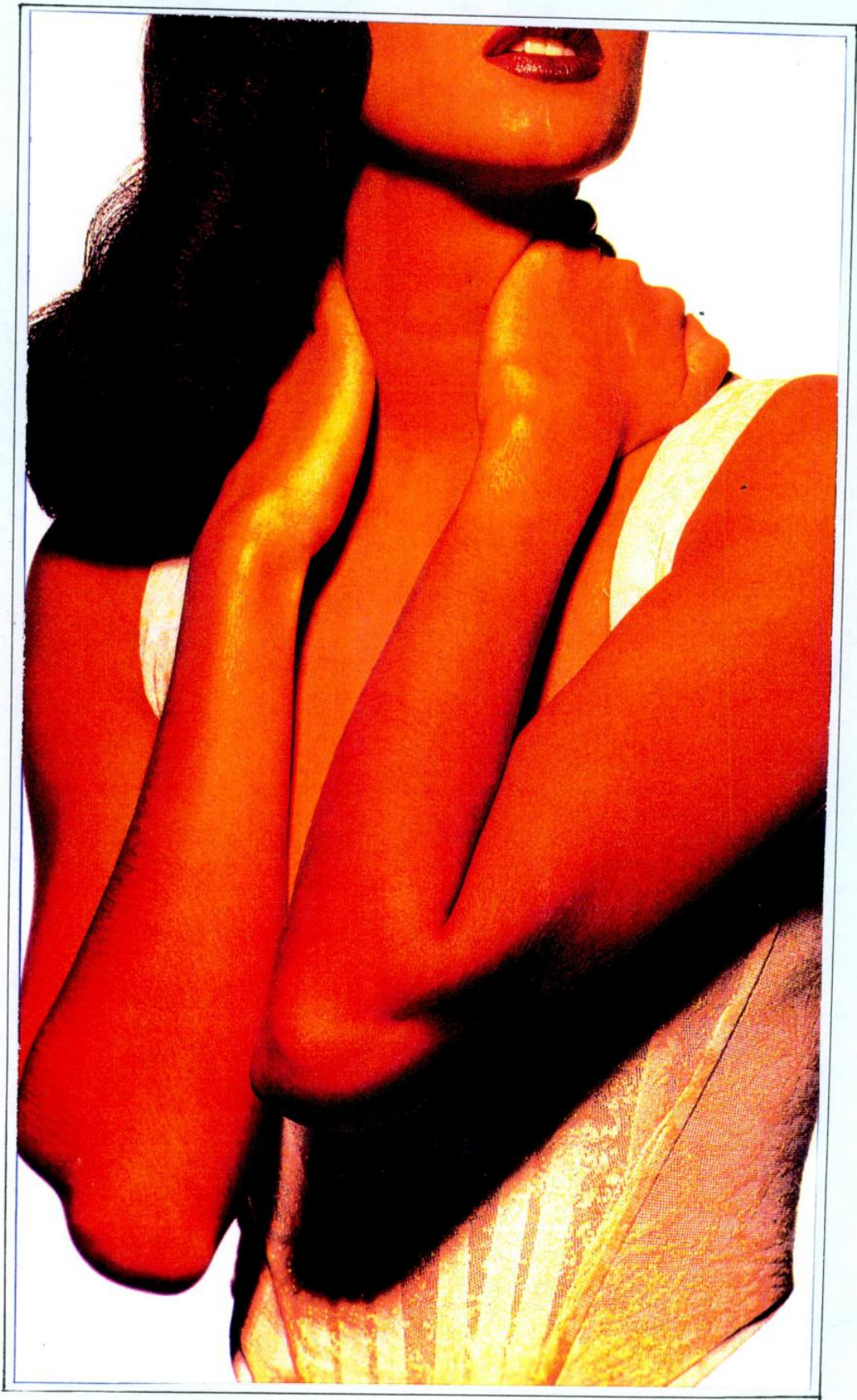
version reveals explicit freeness and clearly defies the regulations set by Victorian fashion. The restrictions that the crinoline conveyed, is contrasted in the 'Mini Crini', which represents an incumbrance deflated, and a sense of freedom. It simultaneously is intended to screen yet it attributes to a varied amount of conscious exposure of the female body. This coincides with the Victorian style of dress which I believe to be quite suggestive, although it remained hidden and concealed. Her designs reflect the unreflected in the sense that they relinquish the 'mask' of secrecy behind the fashions of the Victorian period. With the corset and crinoline as a basis for contemporary designs, Westwood gains retaliation at restrictive and oppressive opinions.

The Victorian period creates an allowance for enquiry and also a challenge, in recreating her own meaning from these garments. The crinoline justified her thoughts and ideas about harmonizing the suggestive with the restrictive. However, in deliberate contrast 'her crinoline' is not perceived with restraint. While resurrecting these ideas, she focuses on the erotic and the explicit, regarding the Victorian period as one of concealed eroticism through dress. Her corsets and bustiers convey an awareness of this, each reflecting a certain romantic distinction and quality. To glorify the female shape placing strong emphasis upon the breasts, while the crinoline emphasises the waist. (pls. no. 43,44,45) Each bustier reveals a direct openness towards sexuality, without any hidden significance or secrecy. The body is revealed



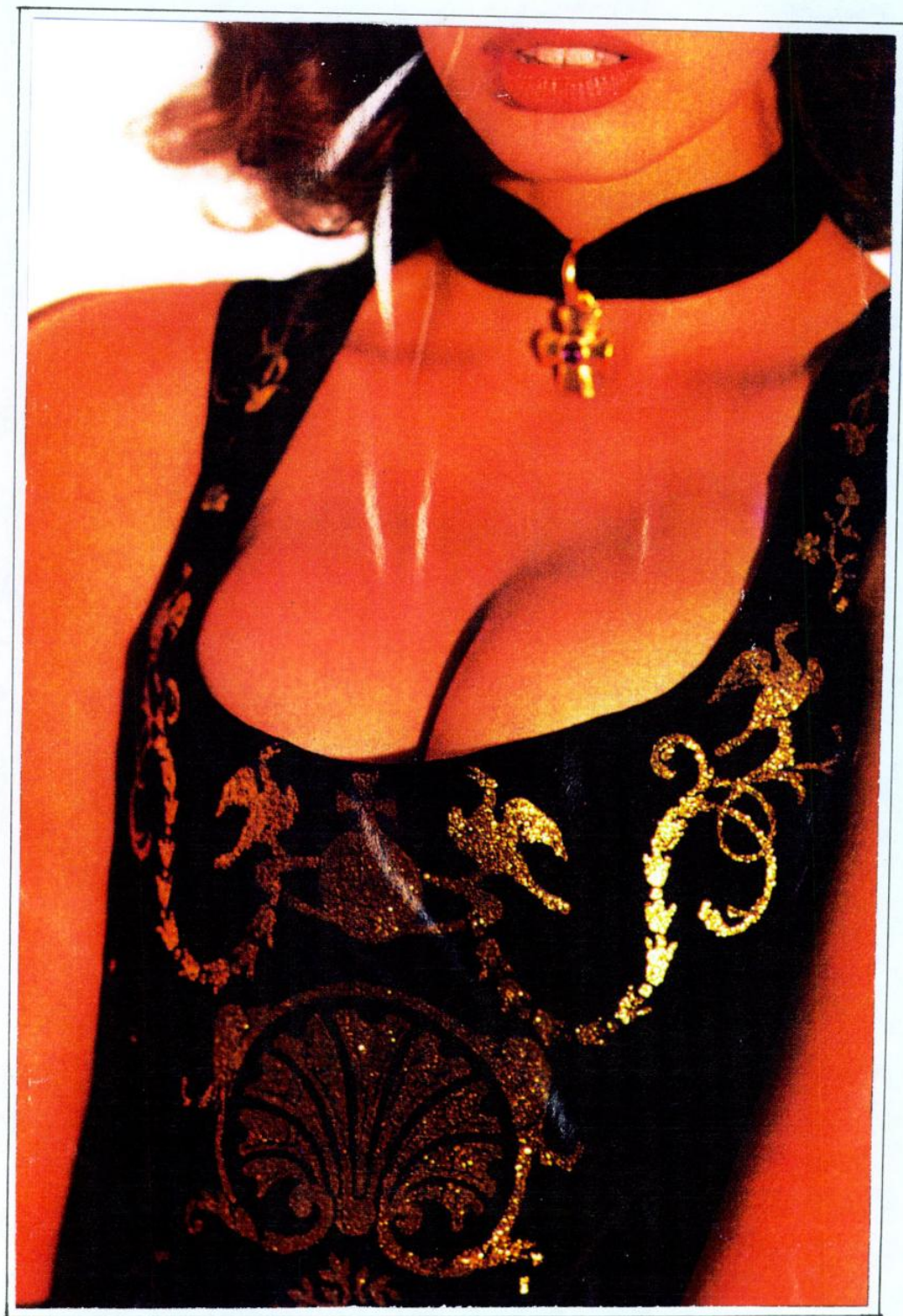
43. An example of Vivienne Westwood's bustier





44. Vivienne Westwood's 'Stature of Liberty bustier'





45. A corset top, designed by Vivienne Westwood



without any anomalous comprehension and the corset and the crinoline appear to exist justifiably as outerwear.

Westwood creates a question regarding the actual function and meaning of dress, particularly that of the 1800's. She has transformed the implications of dress, combining past with present. Through her 're-vamped' images concerning the corset and the crinoline she has banished the ideas concerning respectability in retaliation towards liberation and a freedom in the 80's and 90's. The corset and crinoline designed by Westwood exploit and revoke the Victorian ideals, giving way to revealing flesh and clearly stating and emphasising open sexuality through clothing. In some respects she re-enacts the role of a contemporary dress reformer, purposely ignoring barriers.

While she is concerned with the portrayal of underwear as outerwear in the 1980's, she has evoked an awareness of such fashion which in turn has influenced many other designers. Her ideals existing with fashion are an intangible characteristic which are usually declared strongly as a result of events historical and cultural. Nevertheless, in the 1990's her dynamic presence is felt, inspired by Dior and the hour-glass shape. While appearing slightly subdued, her designs are nevertheless impassioned with sexuality and a degree of femininity.

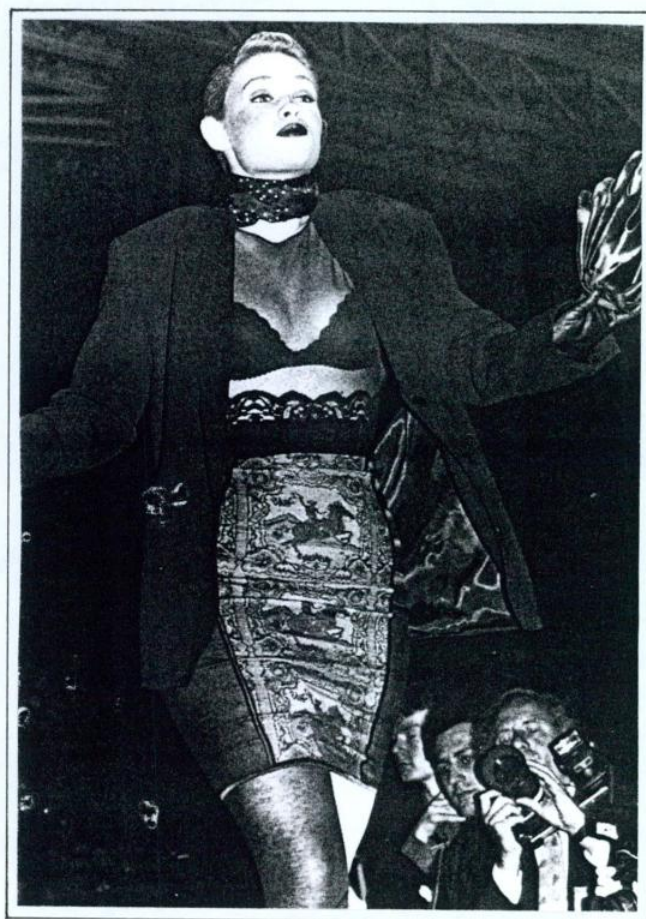
As her designs are very much inspired by the Victorian period,

it is also important to recognise that she is an innovator, believing it preferable and simultaneously necessary to change the restraints corsetry and the crinoline hold in regard to women of the 90's.

Avant-Garde French fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier, in a somewhat similar way to Westwood expels the inhibitions existing from underwear as outerwear. His designs are centered along the female body, representing feelings of exaggeration and a certain element of toughness and hardness. He evokes aspects of restraint, juxta-positioning contemporary assertiveness along side historical circumstance in dress. Many of his designs are inspired by the perpetuated symbolism of the Hourglass Shape. A symbolism that subconsciously incites femininity, sexuality, oppression and restriction, and each of these create an awareness and co-exist with the female body. As with Westwood, his designs signify an openness and a revelation of the body. However, as the corset and crinoline of the 1800's reshaped the female form, attributing to an increase in the curves associated with it, Gaultier dares to excel in exaggeration. His designs combine, to create a sense of ridicule and mockery at the wearisome restrictions, distinctive of corsetry and the crinoline, in the Victorian period.

His 'underwear' look is primarily involved with being seen on the outside, contradictory to previous beliefs, and it is this opposition that has managed to expose the force and emphasize the feeling from his work.

Primarily he was concerned with 1950's style brassieres and corsetry placed on top of other items of clothing. (pl. no. 46) In his 1988 Spring Collection, he reveals an erotic



46. Jean Paul Gaultier 1988 Spring Suit, with sheath skirt and jacket opened on underwear, revealing the bra

example of underwear-as-outerwear, with the use of bras, slips and petticoats. This indicates strongly the sheat-like form of the female body.!

There was a crucial element in acquiring a connection between both believing that everyday items of clothing exist in accordance with the questionable items of underwear.

However, his ideas are held with high regard and his infamous bustier top has been imitated worldwide. His signature fragrance, is bond with an unmistakable Gaultier essence, which is inspired by history. (pl. no. 47) The bottle is shaped into an hour-glass image, which bears the corset, unmistakably connected in a 'contemporary' manner to Gaultier.

This particular area of dressing the 1990's created and incited feelings of suggestiveness while simultaneously a greater awareness of femininity.

How better to reveal these feelings than Madonna. Her distinct provocativeness and her willingness to exceed the limits of provocativeness exist from her attire. Principally she revived underwear, from concealment through the use of her own statements about dress. In the early 1980's she erupted into fame, in an exorbitant sexual, feminine way, resurrecting the black bra, suspenders and fishnet. She clearly sounded out the spontaneity underwear held, expressing a high definition of sexuality.



47. Jean Paul Gaultier's Signature Scent, featuring an 'Hourglass Shape' bottle with corset

Nevertheless, she has played continual host to a number of designs created by Jean Paul Gaultier. (pl. no. 48,49, 50). These are created, encapsulating the reminiscence of the corset and the hourglass shape. In many of his designs, he strongly emphasizes the breasts, exaggerating the conical bra of the 40's and 50's. (pl. no. 51) Provocativeness in the 1990's is characterised greatly in the freedom expressed by womens' fashions. Women, now dare to break the imaginary limits fashion upheld. Underwear as outerwear promotes a freedom and tends to justify and exult womanhood. Gaultier creates an explicit, erotic mannification, characterising the body within his designs. His bras and bustier tops exaggerate greatly the female shape, with conical shapes representing the breasts. (pl. no. 52)

It is Madonna in the 1990's that, manifests his designs, without deliberation. Similarly to Westwood, he uses lycra to somewhat conceal, yet manages to retain the notion or idea of an openness and suggestiveness. Yet, it is Madonna who actually remains resolute in 'showing off' her own femininity originating from the underwear that shaped Victorian women. (pl. no. 53,54,55)

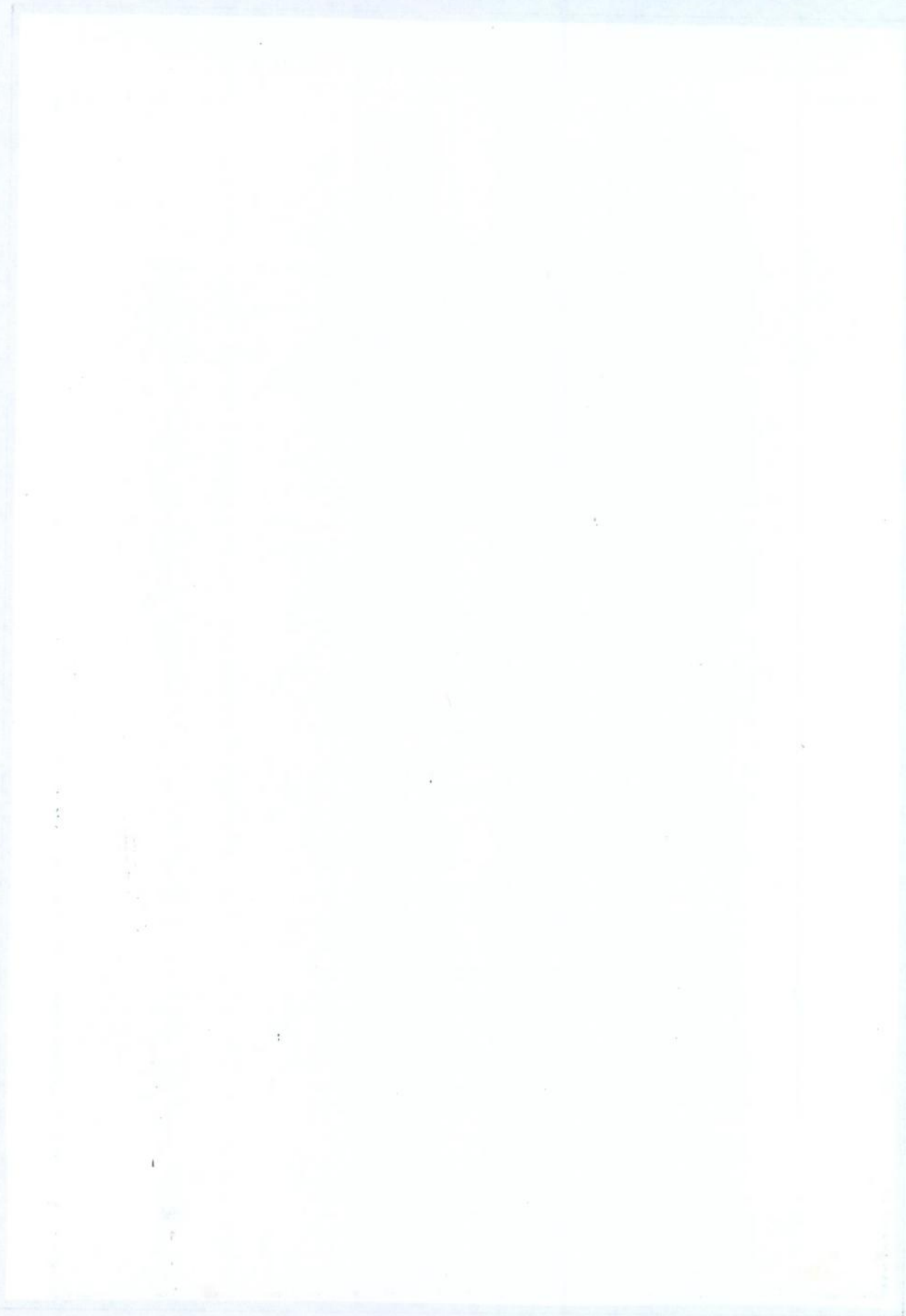
Many other contemporary designers follow along Westwoods and Gaultiers ideas. In 1991, Dolce & Gabbana introduced a bustier and girdle look, for outerwear. (pl. no. 56) This increased and revealed a shape which broke relations with modesty and at the same time managed to conceal the bust and

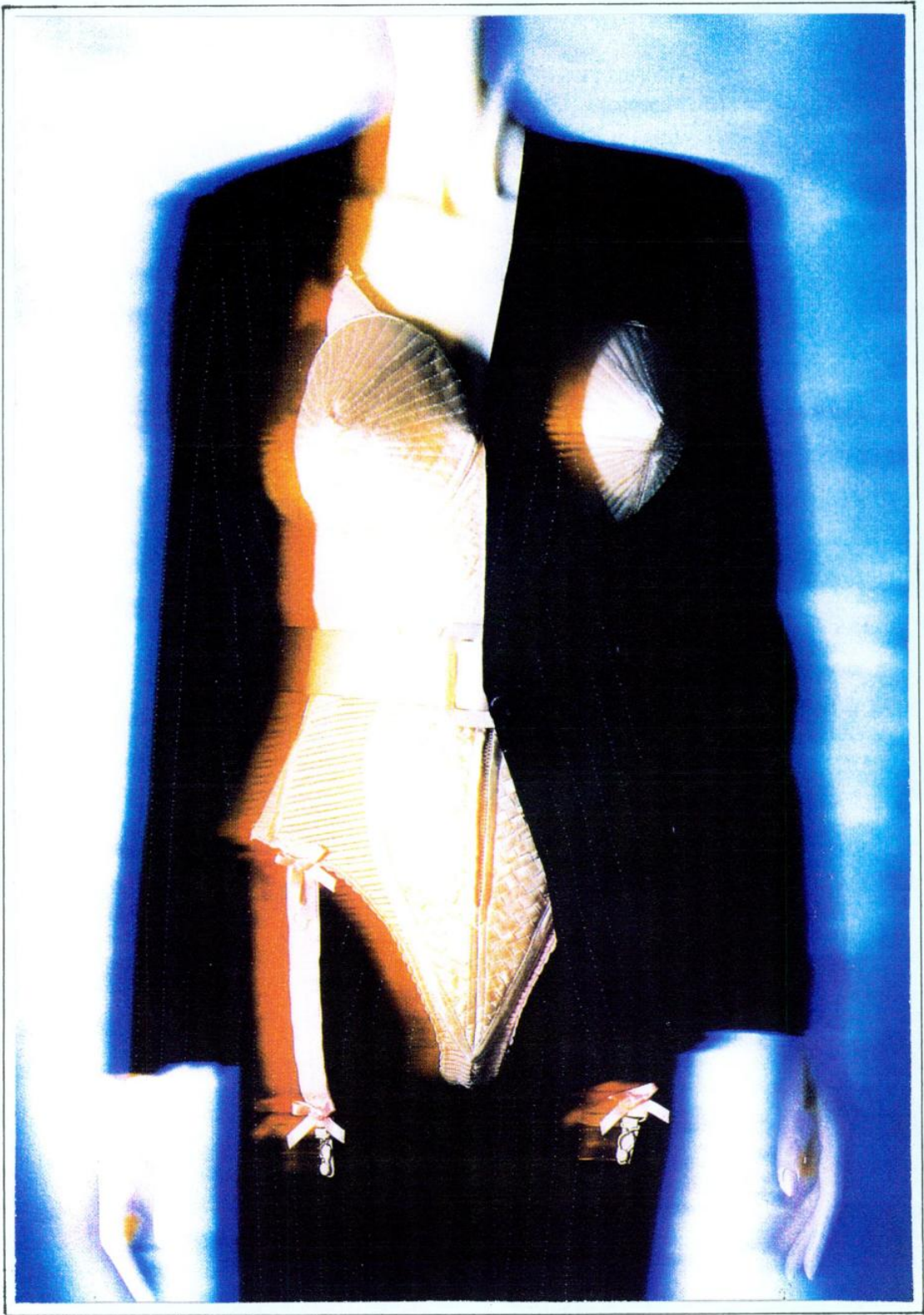
hips, yet emphasized them greatly. Their corset design remains natural and un-exaggerated unlike Jean-Paul Gaultiers. It hugs the hips and breasts yet allows movement of some degree, using elastic throughout the design. Now in '94 the corset has yet again been presented on the catwalks of Paris. (pl. no. 57) It is incorporated with the idea of ruching, frills and ruffles, creating quite a romantic theme. (pl. no. 58)

In 1994, the corset is portrayed as an extremely feminine item of outer-clothing. It exists along the lines of softness, yet manages to encapsulate the feelings of the Victorian era. While it retains the appeal of woman and her shape, it lacks restrictiveness, therefore immediately breaking the barriers of the 1800's and setting woman and her shape free



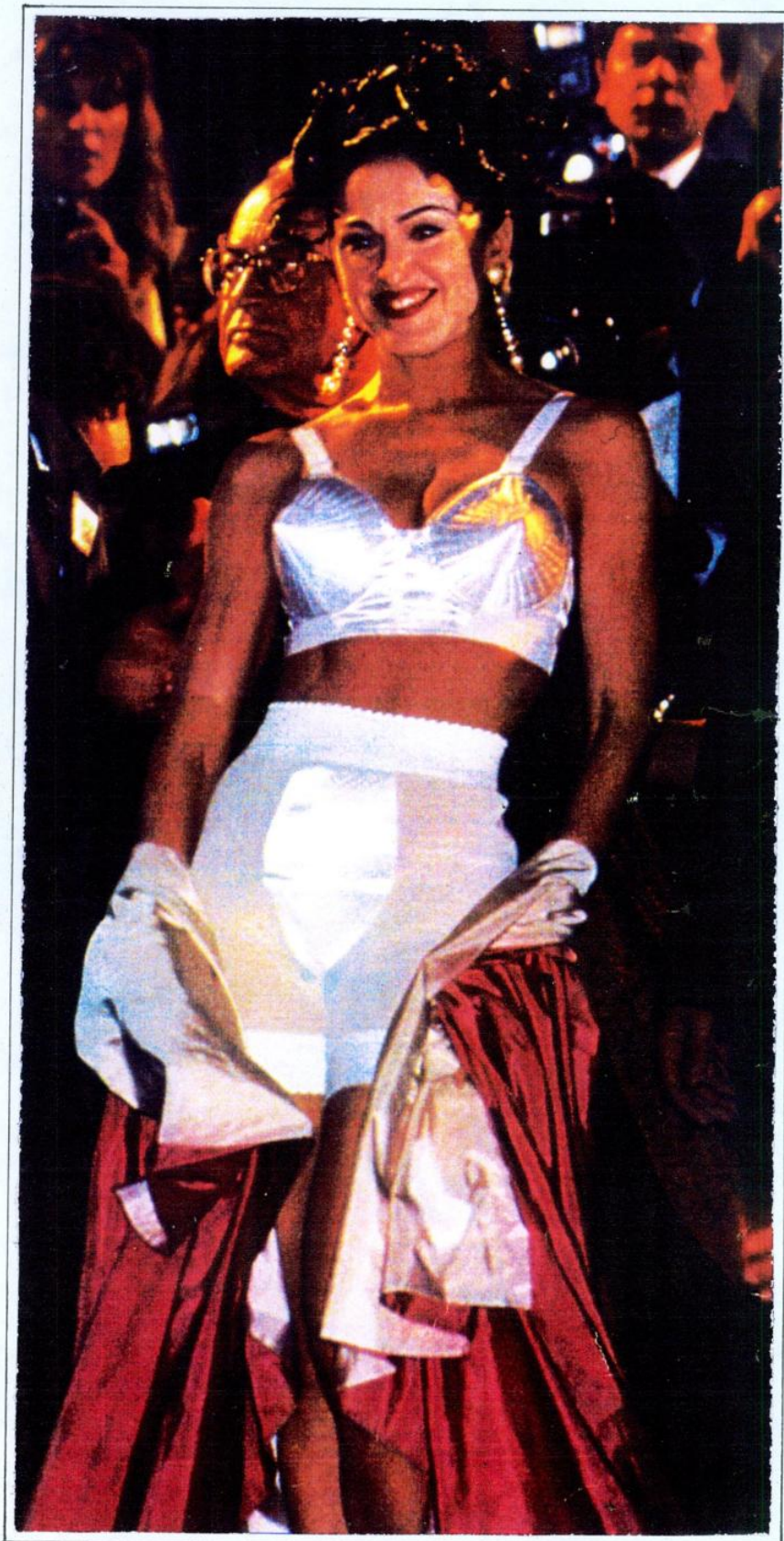
48. Madonna, in Gaultier's "Like a Virgin" Corset 1990





49. Madonna's "Express Yourself" ensemble designed by
Gaultier 1990



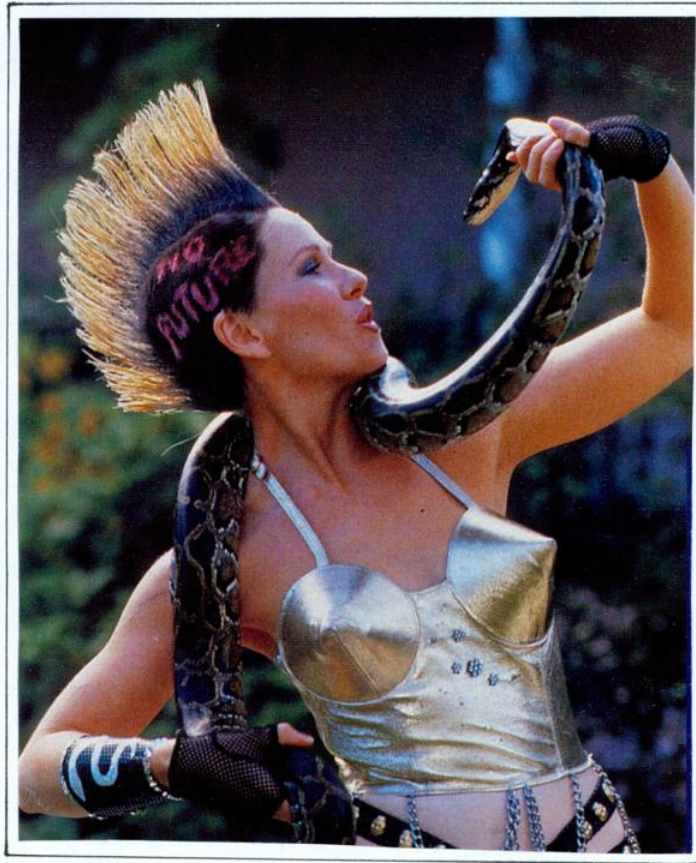


50. Madonna, showing the conical shaped bra, exaggerated by Gaultier, and a 'roll-on' type bottom 1992

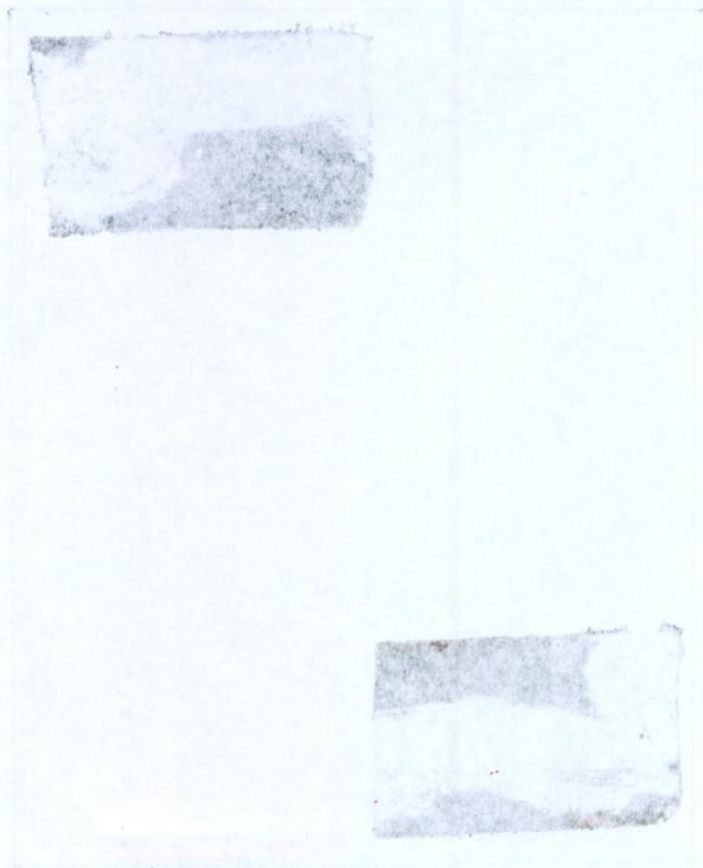


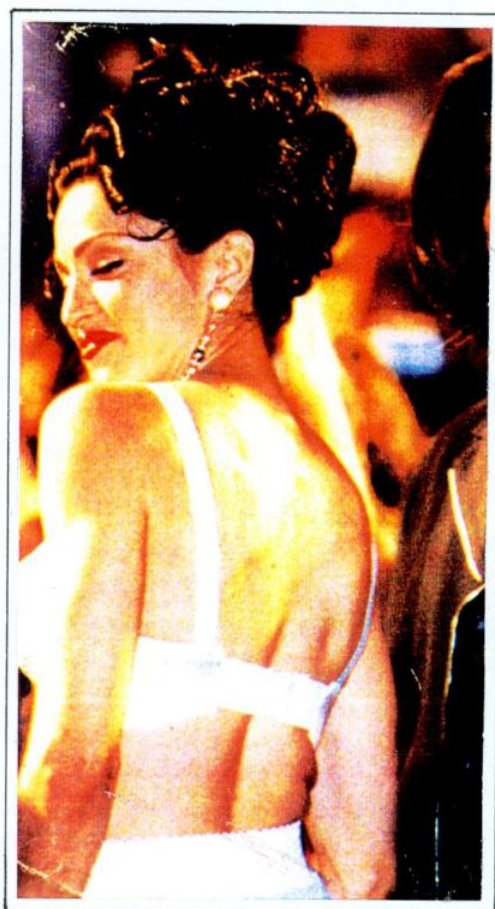


51. An exquisite form bra of the 1950's, similar to Gaultier's designs.



52. Pamela Stephenson, wearing a bustier top, similar to Jean Paul Gaultier's Designs, 1992





53. A side view of Madonna, wearing the conical, shaped bra, exaggerated by Gaultier, 1992





54. A Gaultier outfit for Spring 1994

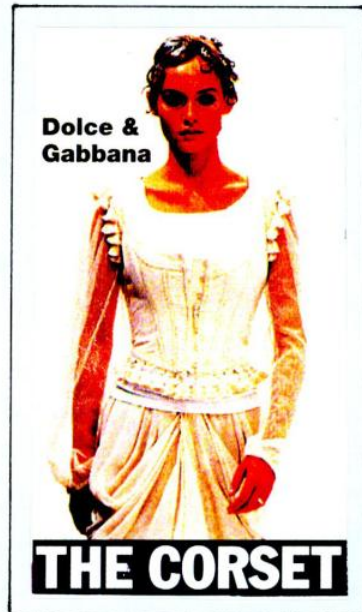


55. A Gaultier Denim Corset 1994



56. Dolce & Gabbana's Corset Look for 1991
Black-figure hugging corset dress





57. Dolce & Gabbana's Corset for Spring 1994

The Corset is worn in conjunction with layers of muslin,
inspired by the 1800's





58. The Corset, incorporated with frills and ruffles (Spring 1994)



NOTES

CHAPTER 4

1. Men and Women, Dressing the Part, 1989, page 58.

CONCLUSION

Although now in the 1990's we can only read about and look at photographs of the Victorian era, its many buildings and its architecture remains strongly in evidence throughout towns and cities in Ireland, especially Dublin and Belfast. They create a link between past and present, enabling us to imagine what exactly life was like in the 1800's.

Books and literature are a permanent record of events both social and historical. Many in the nineteenth century invented and developed techniques and it was a period when industries thrived, and great wealth was acquired and earned, particularly of the upper classes in society.

Nevertheless, there still remained the distinct division between classes, and this still remains the case even now. However, it was the upper and middle classes when that flaunted and represented their familys' stance in society, principally through the clothing they wore. However, women in the Victorian period, particularly from the upper and middle classes were looked upon as mere decorative ornaments, concerned with themselves and their homes. It wasn't until the 1870's that it became permissable for women to play tennis, cycle or get involved in other leisure activities.

As a consequence, many various other outfits and ensembles were required. This corresponds with our fashions of the 80's

and 90's. We require many various outfits and clothes to suit what we are doing. As with many garments now, the emphasis upon practicality and simultaneously the appearance is important. Similarly to women in the 1800's we rely on clothing to accommodate specific occasions and events.

Clothing symbolized a certain wealth and was proof of a family's stance in Victorian Society. It asserted a reflection of wealth and flamboyance. Therefore, dress and the manner in which we wear clothes are symbolic, and sometimes we also create a pretext for wearing them. Many people collaborate with fashion to appear elegant and refined, yet they sometimes manage to appear artificial and incoherent.

For example an item of clothing acceptable to all is jeans, particularly Levi's. These manage to be appropriate for everybody and lack a pretext, associated with various other items of clothing. Levi's are not worn by one particular class, but appeal to everybody, and are easily obtainable.

While discussing dress, both of the Evening dresses i examined in the Ulster Museum, in Belfast hold an excellence of construction and strongly emphasize intricate detail and admirable decoration. Each accentuates and bears the qualities associated with Victorian costume. The are a testimony to an era which constantly collaborated in sewing skills and techniques. Each dress manifests a combination of hand and machine sewing, yet the evening dress from C. 1880

shows a premier and more professional completion, resulting from the increased use of the sewing machine. The construction inside and out conforms to an improved knowledge and skill of sewing. Each dress holds unique elements of decoration and both appear supreme and exuberant. On each, there is extensive areas of embellishment and it is these qualities that resolve in creating the conclusive result and appearance of the garments.

However, the dependency upon trimmings, particularly velvet, lace applique bead work and ribbon is apparent on each. These were of considerable benefit to the dressmaker, in expressing and attributing an essence to each of the garments.

The word corset, automatically becomes connected with women of the Victorian years. It created a style and shape, which unfolded resulting from their fashions, on the outside. It immediately presents an image of restrictiveness, which it did, however it resolved in attributing to the 'hourglass shape'. This, became the shape required and yearned for by many women of the 1800's yet it again creates a link between then and now. Although, women of the 90's don't go to the extremes of wearing tight-lacing corsets as undergarments, they do try to acknowledge the changing trends of fashion and follow it to a certain degree. In the 1800's the 'hourglass-shape' was considered fashionable, therefore women followed the trend, believing it necessary to appear as distorted as possible.

Not only did the corset attribute to a metamorphosis of the female form, it symbolized hidden and concealed sexuality. Although it remained under layers of clothing it emphasised the female curves particularly the breasts and hips.

Many men, expressed their interest in the corset, believing it requisite in creating the required shape, outside fashion projected. Nevertheless, the corset and other items by underwear, including the bustle and crinoline have inspired many contemporary designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Dolce & Gabbana in the 1990's. It holds a profuse attraction as outerwear, which has led to role reversal.

The corset as outwear, openly allows the revelation of the female body and its curves, and Madonna in particular takes full advantage of this fact, she openly expresses her 'eroticness' and sexuality, through Jean Paul Gaultier's flattering creations. Therefore, in the 90's why should we hide under a veil of secrecy and concealment. The era of restrictions, taboos against women and inequality is gone and is but historical in our many galleries and libraries. The 1990's are present and our fashions reflect this, as we express ourselves - liberated, equal and openly aware of femininity consequence of the Victorian era.....

APPENDIX

Epaulettes:	A shoulder ornament
Hooks and Eyes:	Small metal fasteners
Flounce:	Deep gathered or pleater ruffles
Ruching:	Bands of fabric set in pleats or gathers
Basque:	A short skirt or peplum
Cambric:	Fine white linen or cotton cloth
Decolléte:	A low cut neckline
Asymmetrical Drapery:	A variation upon drapery front and back.
Corset:	Close-fitting undergarment stiffened to give support or shape to the body.

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