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“All my money is spent in buying white gloves and pink persian”: Women’s Fashion in Regency England

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Hats

"Next week I shall begin my operations on my hat, on which you know my principal hopes of happiness depend." - Letter to Cassandra from Jane, 1798

The bonnet is undoubtedly the crown of the Regency period. It should be emphasized how much work actually went into making a bonnet. Bare straw hats of various styles would be sold in a haberdashery, and, unless the buyer had the skill to decorate it, someone else would be employed to decorate it.



In Jane's letters she herself is preoccupied with the successful adornment of her bonnet: "Flowers are very much worn, and fruit is still more the thing. ... Elizabeth has given me a hat, and it is not only a pretty hat, but a pretty style of hat too. It is something like Eliza's, only, instead of being all straw, half of it is narrow purple ribbon."¹ The evolution of her hats continue as her communication with others continue throughout the years.

¹Austen, Jane. "13, Queen's Square, Sunday (June 2)." Letters of Jane Austen - Brabourne Edition. Republic of Pemberley. Last modified 2011. Accessed September 26, 2013.



"All my money is spent in buying white gloves and pink persian":

Women's Fashion in Regency England

By Lindsey Puterbaugh

"Pride and Prejudice: The Bicentennial." CELIA, Wright State University, 2013

Dresses

By the late 1790's hooped skirts and long trains were swiftly going out of fashion. When Jane came of age, waistlines had gotten higher and thinner, the train of a skirt was almost gone, and sleeves on dresses had shortened considerably. The most common material was muslin, which Jane asks Cassandra to buy for her several times in her letters. During the day, fashionable women wore "promenade dresses," or dresses for walking.

"...Your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking..." Mr. Darcy, Pride and Prejudice

For evening, trains were optional and richer materials, like satin and velvet, were seen more often. Silhouettes of dresses hugged the figure tighter, and necklines remained low and wide.



Chemisette

Though low necklines were appropriate for evening wear, day wear called for considerable more modesty. A chemisette was a half blouse tied from the side that women could wear under the dress, giving a more substantial collar and covering more skin.

Underthings

The first piece of clothing a woman would wear was a shift, or rather a sleeveless gown that would be at least as long as their knees. The corset would be on top of that to restrain stomachs, straighten posture, and lift the bosom.



Above the corset would be the chemise, a short-sleeved shirt which could be seen as an underlayer to the dress; often these would be embroidered for decoration.

Gloves and Shoes



Gloves were worn for all occasions, though the length depended on how formal of an event one was attending. By 1800, pointed-toe and high-heeled shoes were out of favor, and slippers similar to modern ballet flats were in. Undoubtedly more comfortable, ballet shoes also provided quieter, more delicate steps into a room.

Boyle, Laura. "Women's Fashion." *The World of Jane Austen*. Last modified 2013. Accessed September 26, 2013.