MILLINERY AND THE MILLINER
HEADWEAR AND MILLINERY IN 1830s ENGLAND

LAUREN ELIZABETH MARTIN

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Research

The University of Huddersfield

September 2020

Abstract

This dissertation examines the bonnet in fashion, and the milliner in society. It uses a wide variety of sources, including extant bonnets, but also online sources such as the Old Bailey, the British Newspaper Archives and census data. The first chapter considers the bonnet in fashion and includes a history of the bonnet that examines and defines its stylistic origins. The chapter also examines the idea of the bonnet being the most accessible means of interpreting and following fashions, and investigates the methods employed by women to stay fashionable whatever their income or class. Finally, it examines semiotics in bonnet fashions, and the messages and signals sent out, consciously or unconsciously, by bonnet wearers. The second chapter, The Milliner, argues for a fresh analysis of the makers of bonnets, whose reputation in nineteenth-century dress history is somewhat chequered. This chapter uses a study of the life and career of Nottingham milliner Alice Butler, to argue that the millinery profession was in fact a powerful one within society, not just for the women who took it up and made it their career, but for the consumers who frequented their shops and made these spaces their own. This chapter establishes a definition of the term in an 1830s context, and examines the specifics of running a millinery business in a regional town in the nineteenth century. The final substantial chapter, The Model, examines the role of the consumer with regards to the bonnet in fashion, but also the milliner and her shop. It looks at how and when a woman bought a bonnet, and presents new evidence relating to millinery consumption that demonstrates how women valued the bonnet in this period. It concludes with an examination of the relationship the consumer had with the milliner, both personally and with her shop.

Contents

List of Figures

	Costume Institute Fashion Plates Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	
Fig. 7	Timeline of Capote Styles and Shapes *1766-1798* [Top row left] *'A view in St Pauls Churchyard on a windy day'* (satirical print) 1766-74 Published by Paul Sayer British Museum, London 1999.0926.6 [Top row centre] 'The Encampment at Blackheath' (watercolour) 1780 Paul Sandby British Museum, London 1850.0810.524 [Top row right] 'January' (engraving) Unknown artist C1780s Victoria and Albert Museum, London E.3520-1953 [Bottom row left] 'An Edinburgh Lacemaker with a Distaff' (watercolour) 1784 David Allan National Galleries Scotland D403 [Bottom row centre] 'Reapers' (painting) 1785 George Stubbs Tate Britain, London T02257 [Bottom row right] *Capote rayèe* (fashion plate) 1798 Unknown artist Costume Institute Fashion Plates Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Women 1790-99 Plate 061	27
Fig. 8	[left] *Military Shako* 1813 The Mode in Hats and Headdresses R. Turner Wilcox [right] *Fashion Plate*	28

	c1830-35 Leicestershire Collections Museum Number 319.1964	
Fig. 17	*Papier maché millinery head* French c1840, Victoria and Albert Museum, London Museum Number T.383-1984	40
Fig. 18	[left] *Pink silk drawn bonnet* *English* c1830 Victoria and Albert Museum, London Museum Number T.201-1960 [right] *Detail from Pink silk drawn bonnet*	41
Fig. 19	*Quaker bonnet* c1830 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Museum Number 1976.209	42
Fig. 20	*Silk Bonnet* c1820s Victoria and Albert Museum, London Museum Number T.202-1960	43
Fig. 21	*Bonnet* c1830-1840, Victoria and Albert Museum, London Museum Number T32.1967	44
Fig. 22	*Fashion plate* 1829 Costumes Parisiens Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	45
Fig. 23	*Green, mauve, ivory silk bonnet* c1830-35, Leicestershire Collections Museum Number 319.1964	45
Fig. 24	*Fashion plate* 1832 World of Fashion Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	46
Fig. 25	[left] *Straw Bonnet* c1830 Augusta Auctions, New York	46

	[right] *Bonnet from La Mode* 1836 Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	
Fig. 26	[left, centre] *Fashion Plate* 1835 Costume Institute Fashion Plates Metropolitan Museum of Art [right] *Black velvet bonnet* c1835 Victoria and Albert Museum, London Museum Number T.202.1958	47
Fig. 27	*Milliner* Richard Phillips (publisher) 1805 The Wallach Division Picture Collection The New York Public Library.	48
Fig. 28	*Illustration from 'Les Trois Amoureux de la Marquise'* Revue Pittoresque Musée Littéraire 1849 https://archive.org/stream/revuepittoresque1849pari/	50
Fig. 29	Detail from '*Characteristics or England, Ireland and Scotland'* George Hunt after M. Egerton (artist) Pyall and Hunt (publisher) 1825 © British Museum Museum Number Heal,Topography.374	54
Fig. 30	*L'Atelier De Modiste* 1898 Pierre Outin (1840-1899) Wallach Division Picture Collection The New York Public Library	54
Fig. 31	[left] *All Saints Church, Gedling* 2019 Image © Lauren Martin [right] *Nottingham Map* Bartholomew's Half Inch Series 1959 Accessed at: http://www.oldemaps.co.uk/nottingham-map.htm	57
Fig. 32	*Nottingham Map*	58

	Modiste 1827-1829 Print by S. Paul, Paris, © The British Museum, Museum Number 1990,1109.120 [right] *Ex-modiste* 1826 Print by Charles Philipon, Paris. © The British Museum, Museum Number Museum Number 1861,1012.757	
Fig. 43	Nottingham Review 11 October 1839 British Newspaper Archives	80
Fig. 44	*Death notice* Nottinghamshire Guardian 5 January 1895 British Newspaper Archives	82
Fig. 45	*Advertisement for Bryant's Millinery, Drapery and Haberdashery* Canterbury c1810 © British Museum Museum Number 1024680001	84
Fig. 46	*Mary Richardson, aged 15 years, York* Mary Ellen Best (artist) 1836 Taken from *The World of Mary Ellen Best* Davidson, C., 1985. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd.	87
Fig. 47	*Black velvet bonnet* c1835 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Museum Number 11.60.236	92
Fig. 48	*Child's straw bonnet* c1830 Victoria and Albert Museum, London Museum Number T.78-1963	93
Fig. 49	*Fashion Plate* La Mode 1836 Costume Institute Fashion Plates Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	93
Fig. 50	*Bonnet* Modes de Paris, 15 May 1834 Costume Institute Fashion Plates Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	94

Fig. 51	[left] *Leghorn bonnet* c1830s Philadelphia Museum of Art Museum Number 1952-59-18 [right] *Detail of Leghorn bonnet* c1830s Nottingham City Museums and Galleries Museum Number NCM 1976-220 Image © Lauren Martin	96
Fig. 52	*Straw bonnet* c1820-30 Victoria and Albert Museum, London Museum Number T.1041-1913	97
Fig. 53	[right, centre] *Fashion Plate* World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons 1834 Costume Institute Fashion Plates Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York [left] *Bonnet* 1820-1830 Snowshill Manor © National Trust Museum Number NT 1349786	98
Fig. 54	[top left] *Mrs Captain James Jones* W. Brown 1830 Leicester Museums and Galleries Museum Number L.F6.1945.2.0 [top right] *Euphemia White van Rensselaer* George P A Healy 1842 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Museum Number 23.102 [bottom] *Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton* George Frederic Watts 1841 Tate Britain, London Museum Number N06084	100

	From 'Tegg's Caricatures' Thomas Rowlandson (artist) Thomas Tegg (publisher) May 1810 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Museum Number 59.533.1347	
Fig. 65	*Before the Window* Georg Friedrich Kersting 1827 Kunsthalle Kiel, Germany http://www.museen-sh.de/Object/DE-MUS-076017/lido/8 Die Sammlung, Kiel 2007, S. 98	117

Introduction

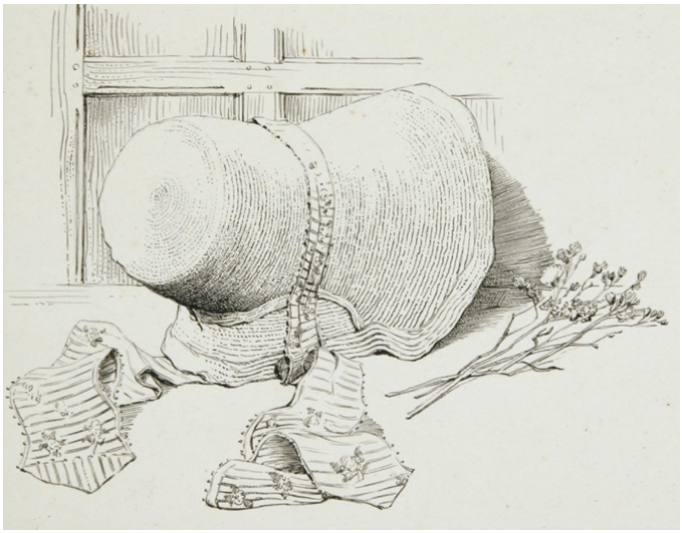


Figure 1 Ink drawing of bonnet and flowers by Charles Paget Wade (1883-1956). Mounted in grey card. Snowshill Manor © National Trust, NT 1330096

In the early hours of 7th May 1831, a young woman named Sarah Hooker was involved in the theft of an amount of silk thread from inside a house in Finsbury, central London. It was four o'clock in the morning, and she was in the yard of the house of William Kent, with one other woman and two men (one of whom was her husband). She received the goods from her husband, and put them in her basket. While the two women were handling the parcels, Sarah Hooker's bonnet fell to the ground. One of the men told her to leave it, but Sarah was heard to have said 'I must have it'. The other woman picked it up and put it on Sarah's head. The silk warp within the parcels was worth about £24. The foursome made their getaway, but they were followed and found, and Sarah stood trial at the Old Bailey a few months later. For her involvement in the crime she was sentenced to 14 years transportation and a year later, she arrived in New South Wales. As far as life events go, this one was serious.[1] And yet, in the midst of the event that irrevocably changed her life, *she had to have her bonnet*.

Although the bonnet can be considered as auxiliary to the main garments of dress, it was worn almost universally by women in the early nineteenth century, indeed, as the example of Sarah Hooker demonstrates, it was an essential accessory. Society today engages far less with headwear fashions, and it could be argued that bonnets and accessories in general are overlooked in favour of more

[1] Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 18 June 2020), September 1831, trial of SARAH HOOKER (t18310908-240).

spectacular examples of dress.[2] The bonnet has a recognisable and distinctive shape, and has become somewhat representative of Victorian women's fashions and Victorian women more generally, almost a caricature – not quite taken seriously, and certainly not worn today in any serious capacity. And though it was so universally worn in the early to mid-nineteenth century, by all classes and across all age groups, the bonnet is underrepresented in dress history studies, and there is evidence to support the idea that women of the early-nineteenth century thought as much of their headwear as the rest of their dress, and likely much more. This dissertation presents a range of evidence suggesting that the social significance of the bonnet is underexplored.

Milliners, the makers of bonnets, have been discussed more frequently than bonnets themselves, but mostly in conjunction with their dressmaker counterparts and rarely as the sole topic of focus.[3] Milliners have been stereotyped as overworked and as having a reputation linking them with prostitution. Therefore, this dissertation intends to present the milliner not as the oppressed needlewoman, or 'the fallen woman', but instead as a modest but highly-skilled entrepreneur. Although there is considerable recent scholarship with particular regard to women makers and women who sewed, the focus of these studies has leaned towards the domestic sphere rather than the professional.[4] The variety of skills, knowledge and expertise required to be a professional milliner in the 1830s has yet to be comprehensively disseminated in any published academic study. This dissertation argues that the milliner was one of the more multi-skilled and multi-talented needle-workers of the early-nineteenth century.

This dissertation consists of three sections, each distinct in their focus but related in topic. The dissertation will first examine the bonnet (the object), then the milliner (the object's maker), and finally the consumer (the object's wearer). The period of time this dissertation concerns is chiefly between 1830 to 1840, though this is frequently broadened to encompass a 'long decade' of 1825 to 1845. The geographic focus of this dissertation is within Britain, although much of Chapter Two (The Milliner) uses the English city of Nottingham as a focal point. Nottingham was chosen not because it has any special significance concerning the history of fashion, but more because it was a large town

---

[2] For more on the importance of the accessory in the context of eighteenth-century dress see Elisabeth Gernerd, 'Têtes to Tails: Eighteenth-Century Underwear and Accessories in Britain and Colonial America'. PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015.

[3] Both Amy Louise Erickson and Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell have published articles specifically concerning the milliner in the late eighteenth-century. See Erickson, A. L. (2011). *Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies* 1700–1750. History Workshop Journal, (71), 147., and Chrisman Campbell, K. (2002). The Face of Fashion: Milliners in Eighteenth-Century Visual Culture. *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 25*, p157-172.

[4] For more on women makers see Serena Dyer, 2021. *Material Lives: Women Makers and Consumer Culture in the 18th Century*. Bloomsbury. For more on makers and material literacy in the eighteenth century see Serena Dyer and Chloe Wigston Smith, 2020. *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Nation of Makers*. Bloomsbury.

and one of manageable size for data collection purposes.[5] The influence of London on British and global fashions of the period cannot be ignored, however, and some archives, such as the records of the Old Bailey, necessitated the use of London as a focus. The research contained within this dissertation is not intended to be class-specific, although it does focus on the middle- to upper-classes regarding visual representation and surviving material culture. Regarding consumption, it encompasses the lower classes, specifically in London, as they are represented within the data taken from the Old Bailey records.

Literature Review

Each chapter contains its own literature review discussing scholarship particular to the chapter theme. However, there are some texts that cover the dissertation subject matter more broadly, and these are mentioned here. Much of what has been written or published about hats and headwear tends to form part of dress history chronologies, or else concerns cultural themes and social context, such as in Clair Hughes' *Hats* (2017) and Madeleine Ginsburg's *The Hat: Trends and Traditions* (1990). The article 'Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles - 1830-1860' (1969) by dress historian Daphne Bullard, published in the dress history journal *Costume,* is possibly the only one to specifically mention the bonnet of the 1830s period, although this is sadly limited to a few short paragraphs.[6] Many of the chronologies that feature bonnets are little more than perfunctory, and some, such as those written by C. Willett Cunnington, are now considered to be very outdated.[7] The recent publication *Headwear: Hats, Bonnets and Caps from the Hopkins Collection* (2020) by The School of Historical Dress stops short of being a comprehensive text suitable for both maker and historian in that it does not provide patterns or diagrams in the same manner that Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion* series does.[8] However, the text is one of only a few to examine surviving material culture accompanied by clear photographs.[9] Nancy Bradfield is the only widely-published dress historian to have published detailed drawings of bonnets, such as those that feature in her article 'Studies of an 1814 Pelisse and Bonnet' and in her

[5] Nottingham was classified as a town throughout the nineteenth-century until it was granted city status in 1897 by Queen Victoria.
[6] Bullard, Daphne (1969): *Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles 1830-60*, Costume, Volume 3, pp. 24-25
[7] For more on the work and reputation of dress historian C. Willett Cunnington see Jane Tozer, 1986, Cunnington's Interpretation of Dress. *Costume, 20*(1), pp1-17.
[8] Hopkins, A., & Hopkins, V. (2020). *Headwear: Hats, Bonnets and Caps from the Hopkins Collection*. The School of Historical Dress; Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion 1* was first published in 1966 and contains hand-drawn illustrations of extant garments, accompanied by diagrams of the garment patterns. Volumes 2-4 followed between 1972 to 2008, with the most recent volume (*Patterns of Fashion 5*) being published by The School of Historical Dress in 2018.
[9] See also Althea Mackenzie, 2004. *Hats and Bonnets*, London: National Trust.

book *Costume in Detail* (1997).[10] Ruth Turner Wilcox featured many illustrations of bonnets in her book *The Mode in Hats and Headdress* (1945) but they are somewhat stylised and not as natural as those depicted by Bradfield.[11]

Recent scholarship on women makers of the eighteenth century, particularly in publications by historians Serena Dyer and Chloe Wigston Smith, is evidence that research concerning the activity of making is still an emerging discipline.[12] Neither Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell nor Amy Louise Erickson extend their research to consider the early nineteenth-century milliner, however several other scholars address different elements of the trade in various articles and publications.[13] Jade Halbert's 2014 article 'Liberating the Slaves of the Needle: The Association for the Aid and Benefit of Dressmakers and Milliners 1843-1863' examines the welfare of the needlewomen of the early Victorian period.[14] Madeleine Ginsburg and Janet Arnold both examine the dressmaking occupation in their respective articles 'The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades' and 'The Dressmaker's Craft', but each author covers a broad time period within their publications; Ginsburg examining the period 1700-1850, and Arnold approximately 1500-1900.[15] Pam Inder investigates clothing production in her publications *The Rag Trade: The People Who Made Our Clothes* (2017) and *Dresses and Dressmaking* (2018), but once again has a mid- to late-Victorian focus, and covers many trades besides millinery.[16]

Sources and Methods

Objects

Regarding the analysis of objects (bonnets), this dissertation follows the three key elements described by Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim in *The Dress Detective* (2015).[17] Their methodology of analysing

---

[10] Costume, Volume 7, 1972, pp60-61, and Bradfield, N. (1997). *Costume in Detail: Women's Dress 1730-1930* (New ed.). Orpington: Eric Dobby.
[11] Turner Wilcox, R. (2008). *The Mode in Hats and Headdresses* (3rd ed.). New York: Dover.
[12] See Chloe Wigston Smith, 2018, The Haberdasher's Plot: The Romance of Small Trade in Frances Burney's Fiction. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, pp. 271-293.
[13] See Chrisman Campbell, K. (2002) and Erickson, A. L. (2011).
[14] Halbert, J. (2014). Liberating the Slaves of the Needle: The Association for the Aid and Benefit of Dressmakers and Milliners 1843-1863. *Retrospectives: A Postgraduate History Journal. 3*, 1, p44-58
[15] Ginsburg, M. (1972). The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades, 1700-1850. *Costume, 6*(1), 64-71, and Arnold, J. (1973). The Dressmaker's Craft. *Costume, 7*(1), pp29-40.
[16] Inder, P., 2017. *The Rag Trade: The People Who Made Our Clothes,* Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Amberley Publishing, and Inder, P., 2018. *Dresses and Dressmaking: From the Late Georgians to the Edwardians*. Amberley Publishing.
[17] Mida, I., & Kim, Alexandra. (2015). *The Dress Detective: A practical guide to object-based research in fashion*. London, England: Bloomsbury.

artefacts (observation, reflection, interpretation) takes its lead from those set out by Jules David Prown (description, deduction and speculation), as described his article 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method' (1982).[18] Bonnets in three collections were accessed during the research period for this dissertation before Covid-19 lockdowns meant they closed by necessity.[19] The number of bonnets studied was not judged sufficient to draw any significant conclusions about bonnet styles or bonnet making, but photographic evidence from these visits has been used throughout the dissertation to support textual and literary references, and to support evidence suggested by visual representation such as paintings and illustrations. The number of bonnets in museum collections can informally be calculated to be in the hundreds, with many institutions possessing at least one bonnet from the period 1820-1840, and some as many as a dozen. This total does not include bonnets in the possession of private collectors and millinery enthusiasts, suggesting a lot more scope beyond this dissertation for systematic analysis of extant bonnets using the methods described by Mida and Kim.

Online databases

Taking a lead from John Styles's *The Dress of the People* (2007), much of the research for the final chapter used court records from the Old Bailey to gather new data relating to bonnet consumption. Search terms such as 'bonnet' and 'milliner', along with many other phrases relating to materials and makers were used as the basis to find appropriate records. The period spanning the years 1820 to 1840 was used, and every reference to a bonnet or a milliner was extracted and recorded in a spreadsheet database.[20] This process revealed new information relating to bonnet and millinery consumption, and the results are presented in Chapter Three – The Model.

Newspapers, trade directories and census data inform much of this dissertation, particularly in Chapter Two – The Milliner. Advertisements in newspapers contain names and addresses that correlate with those in trade directories and census records, that also give glimpses into the nature of the business being advertised. Specific services and processes particular to the millinery trade are evidenced in these resources, and they can be compared with other businesses to see if they are atypical. Online databases such as Ancestry, though initially intended for users to trace their families, also provide a very useful resource for the social historian. Census data has been used in Chapter Two to build a framework of the life of a regional milliner, the gaps of which are filled in with information from other resources, such as trade directories, newspapers and burial records.

---

[18] Prown, J. D. (1982). Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method. *Winterthur Portfolio, 17*(1), pp1-19.
[19] Leicestershire Collections – one bonnet, Newstead Abbey Collection – three bonnets, all straw, Victoria and Albert Museum, London – eight bonnets.
[20] This database forms Appendix A, included at the end of this dissertation.

Letters and diaries have been widely used throughout this dissertation, but these are more open to conjecture than official documents such as the census, and items intended for publication such as newspapers. Each reference taken from a letter or diary has to be judged for its individual merit. The references included within this dissertation are therefore intended as supporting evidence.

Fictional works

Dress historian Clair Hughes suggests in *Dressed in Fiction* (2006) that descriptions of dress in novels are valuable from a sociological and historical perspective, because 'dress is a visible aspect of history, a material index of social, moral and historical change which helps us understand and imagine historical difference'.[21] Fiction as a source is less reliable when assessing what was fashionable, as all of the references are influenced by the author's taste and are sometimes used as a tool for crafting characters. However, as dress historian Anne Buck maintains in her 1983 article 'Clothes in Fact and Fiction', when 'used together with the factual evidence the novelists' evidence may reveal the influences and ways of life which are expressed through dress'.[22] Dress historian Lou Taylor supports Buck's views, stating in *The Study of Dress History* (2002) that one of Buck's strengths as a dress historian was 'using literary sources to pinpoint socio-cultural issues rather than simply as aids to description'.[23] The majority of literary references in this dissertation are from the works of Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-1865), and aligns with the fact that she often referenced clothing and garments in all her works.[24] The references included in this dissertation were selected because they are examples of what Anne Buck termed 'dress in action', rather than as straightforward historical evidence.[25] This dissertation acknowledges the problematic nature of lifting quotes directly from fiction, for as Clair Hughes states, 'many books tend to cover upper- and middle-class characters and their clothes', therefore suggesting a degree of class bias.[26]

The 1830s decade comes directly after the much-researched and written about period concerning author Jane Austen (1775-1817). The most prominent author to publish in the 1830s period was Charles Dickens (1812-1870), and though Elizabeth Gaskell began to publish her work later than Dickens (from 1848 onwards) she was his contemporary.[27] Gaskell set several of her works of fiction

---

[21] Hughes, C. (2006). *Dressed in Fiction*. Berg, p1
[22] Buck, A. (1983). Clothes in Fact and Fiction. *Costume, 17*(1), pp89-104.
[23] Taylor, L., 2002. *The Study of Dress History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press. p91
[24] For more on dress in the works of Elizabeth Gaskell see Rachel Worth, 1998, Elizabeth Gaskell, Clothes and Class Identity. *Costume, 32*(1), pp52-59.
[25] Buck, A. (1983). Clothes in Fact and Fiction. *Costume, 17*(1), p89
[26] Hughes, C. (2006). *Dressed in Fiction*. Berg, p3
[27] Other key authors of the period include William Makepeace Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, and the Brontë sisters.

in periods earlier than when she wrote them, (as did author George Eliot) the most notable examples of Gaskell being *Wives and Daughters* (written in 1864 but set in the 1830s), and *Cranford* (written 1851-3 but set in the early 1840s). Rachel Worth argued in 1998 that Gaskell's works are important to dress historians because she 'provides information about the clothes worn by the working classes and their attitudes towards dress in the nineteenth-century', which she maintains is a neglected area concerning the history of dress.[28]

Visual Representations

Visual representations, such as paintings, are used to evaluate the choices women made in their purchases. Portraiture features only briefly, due to a lack of representation of the bonnet in contemporary artworks.[29] Fashion plates have been used cautiously in this study, supporting Lou Taylor's assertion in *The Study of Dress History* that they are 'idealised images' and not a true reflection of social reality, however they have been used chiefly to demonstrate the evolution of fashionable styles, and usually in conjunction with extant bonnets or literary references.

Chapter Structures

The first chapter, The Mode, considers the bonnet in fashion and begins with a history of the bonnet that attempts to clearly define its stylistic origins. The chapter then moves on to establish the idea of the bonnet being the most accessible means of interpreting and following fashions, and examines the methods employed by women to stay fashionable whatever their income or class. Finally, it goes on to explore the role of semiotics in bonnet fashions, and the messages and signals sent out, consciously or unconsciously by bonnet wearers.

The second chapter, The Milliner, argues for a fresh analysis of the makers of bonnets, whose reputation in nineteenth-century dress history is somewhat chequered. In their research concerning eighteenth-century milliners, dress historians Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell and Amy Louise Erickson, have both addressed the origins of the suggestion in 1747 by R. Campbell that the term milliner was 'a more polite name for a bawd'.[30] This reputation suggesting strong links between

---

[28] Worth, R. (1998). Elizabeth Gaskell, Clothes and Class Identity. *Costume, 32*(1), pp52-59.

[29] Evidence suggests that women in early nineteenth-century portraits elected to be painted either bare-headed or wearing evening headdress, such as a turban. Bonnets do appear in paintings (see Fig. 7, bottom row centre, George Stubbs' 'Reapers' 1785) but rarely with named models.

[30] See Chrisman Campbell, K. (2002). The Face of Fashion: Milliners in Eighteenth-Century Visual Culture. *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 25*, p157-172, and Erickson, A. L. (2011). *Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies* 1700–1750. History Workshop Journal, (71), 147.; Campbell, R. 1747. *The London Tradesman: Being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts, Both Liberal and Mechanic, Now Practised in the Cities of London and Westminster. Calculated for the Information of Parents, and Instruction of Youth in Their Choice of Business*. London: T. Gardner.

prostitution and the millinery profession persisted into the nineteenth-century, as evidenced by journalist Henry Mayhew in his research concerning working-class people in London.[31]

This chapter uses a case study to investigate the life and career of a regional milliner, to support the argument that the millinery profession was in fact a powerful one within society, not just for the women who took it up and made it their career, but for the consumers who frequented their shops and made these spaces their own. Using a blend of archival texts and sources, such as census data and newspapers, to present the life of the early nineteenth-century professional milliner, this chapter also uses a selection of visual representations and literary sources to build fuller picture of them. Wendy Gamber asserts in *The Female Economy* (1997) that 'the voices of dressmakers and milliners are more difficult to hear because they lacked meaningful forums. No newspaper recorded their collective opinions, and few of their diaries have been preserved.'[32] Taking a lead from that assertion, this chapter aims to tell the story of the life and career of Nottingham milliner Alice Butler (1806-1891). This dissertation does not intend to be a comprehensive account of the nineteenth-century milliner, rather an initial or exploratory body of research. Another aim of this chapter is to establish a definition of the term 'milliner' in an 1830s context, and examine the specifics of running a millinery business in a regional town in the nineteenth century.

The final chapter, The Model, examines the role of the consumer with regards to the bonnet in fashion, but also the milliner and her shop. Dress historian Lou Taylor suggested in 2002 that there are two periods (the eighteenth century and the late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century) that have excited the most research amongst historians regarding dress history consumption.[33] The 1830s period therefore falls neatly within this identified gap in research. This chapter looks at how and when a woman bought a bonnet, and presents new evidence relating to millinery consumption that demonstrates how women valued the bonnet in this period. It concludes with an examination of the relationship the consumer had with the milliner, both personally and with her shop.

---

[31] Mayhew, H., 1967. *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of those that will work, those that cannot work, and those that will not work / Vol.4* Enlarged., London: Cass.,
[32] Gamber, W. (1997). *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
[33] Taylor, L., 2002. *The Study of Dress History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Chapter One - The Mode

The Bonnet in Fashion

> 'Mode' (noun)
> The fashion in dress, manners, etiquette, etc., prevailing in society at a particular time.
> Origin C14: from Latin *modus* meaning measure, or manner.[34]

Figure 2 Bonnet, England, c1830
Victoria and Albert Museum, London T.130-1962

This chapter is concerned with the bonnet in 1830s fashion. It argues that in this decade, the bonnet was one of the key items that women used to stay fashionable when new clothes may have been beyond their purse. It begins with a brief history of the bonnet, and moves on to examine its evolution and the forms it took in the 1830s. It then examines the ways in which fashions were communicated to women, going on to consider evidence suggesting that the bonnet was a more important vehicle for sartorial self-expression than other garments, an accessory free from the practical constraints of many other wardrobe essentials. It argues for a re-consideration of the bonnet in fashion as a primary means of engaging with fashions because it was an accessory that was so easy to update, and concludes with a brief examination of the main methods a woman could use to personalise her bonnet according to her taste. In offering new evidence and a fresh analysis of the bonnet in fashion in the 1830s, this chapter enriches our knowledge and understanding of what the bonnet meant, and why women chose to wear it for so many decades.

[34] "mode, n." *OED Online. Oxford University Press*, September 2020. Web. 21 September 2020.

The History and Evolution of the Bonnet since 1790

The Oxford English Dictionary describes a bonnet as 'an item of headwear worn by women; a structured headdress, typically featuring a projecting brim framing the top and sides of the face, and tied with cords under the chin'.[35] The etymology suggests the word came from the Anglo-Norman 'bonet, bonnet or benet' and the Old French/Middle French 'bonet, bonnet or bounet'. It appears to have always referred to a covering for the head, specifically for women. The type of bonnet this dissertation focuses on is that which has a structured crown and projecting brim, and has ties of ribbons or strings beneath the chin. The terminology used throughout this dissertation is consistent with that used in the publication closest in date to the period of study, which is Mrs J Howell's *Handbook of Millinery* (1847).[36]

Figure 3 Selection of bonnets from La Mode, 1836.
Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The bonnet of this period is made up of three main sections. The crown is the shape that covers the head and is generally made up of two parts: the tip (top of the crown, or the end) and the sideband (the piece that goes around). The second main piece is the brim, and the third piece is the bavolet (French for flap) to cover the neck. The bonnet was a headwear accessory intended to be worn out of doors, as distinct from a cap (worn indoors) or a more elaborate headdress for evening wear. The three main types of bonnets that were worn in the 1830s and that are covered in this dissertation are the straw bonnet, the fabric covered bonnet and the drawn bonnet (see Fig. 3). The straw bonnet was made from either local or imported materials, and the most expensive and prized of these were the Leghorn bonnets imported from Italy.[37] Fabric covered bonnets were made of a rigid material such as willow, buckram or pasteboard (card), and covered with a variety of fabrics. Drawn bonnets could have a

[35] "bonnet, n." *OED Online. Oxford University Press,* June 2020. Web. 30 August 2020.
[36] Howell, M. J., 1847. *The Handbook of Millinery*. Simpkin, Marshall and Co. London.
[37] For more on straw work see Veronica Main, 2003. *Swiss Straw Work: Techniques of a Fashion Industry*, Great Britain: Mains Collins Publishing

structured crown the same as the fabric covered bonnets, but the brim was a gathered piece of fabric that was given shape and structure with wire and cane.

Figure 4 *October 1828, Petit Courrier des Dames*,
Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The shape, size and style of the bonnet evolved and changed slowly from the late eighteenth-century, finally reaching its most extreme form in the late 1820s, after which its size decreased again before finally falling out of fashion in the 1860s, replaced on all fashionable heads by smaller hats, still named bonnets, but without the distinctive separate brim. According to dress historian Daphne Bullard, by the 1830s, the bonnet was the most fashionable type of headwear for the daytime.[38] Fashion plates of the period would appear to indicate that in terms of shape and decoration, bonnets in the late 1820s and early 1830s had the widest brims, and the most extreme silhouettes (see Fig. 5).

[38] Bullard, Daphne (1969): *Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles 1830-60*, Costume, Vol 3, pp.24-25

Figure 5 *Timeline of Bonnet Styles and Shapes* 1798-1840
Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

As Fig. 3 demonstrates, by the 1830s there were three distinct types of bonnet construction, though by this point in time they all shared a similar silhouette and shape. However, this dissertation asserts that though they evolved to this point, they each had slightly different paths. There does not appear to be complete agreement amongst dress historians on how the 1830s bonnet shape came to be, however the evolution can be conjectured by examining several different types of hats and headwear from the preceding century.

Looking at the straw bonnet first, and to a degree the fabric-covered buckram bonnet, there is evidence in the form of fashion plates to suggest it evolved from the simple wide-brimmed straw hats worn by women in the eighteenth-century, and demonstrated visually in Fig. 6. In her 1969 article

'Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles', dress historian Daphne Bullard suggests that it is 'obvious' that the bonnet evolved from the large brimmed hat.[39] She hypothesises that as the large brims tilted further and further backwards towards the neck, that a curved piece had to be removed in order to allow free movement of the wearer's head. The bavolet was then added to protect the wearer's neck from exposure to the sun. The views of dress historian Hilary Davidson would appear to align with those of Bullard, as she suggests that it evolved from the eighteenth-century tendency of pulling down a flat hat brim to hold it about the face.[40] She hypothesises that the back of the brim was gradually lost, and that the deep front had a practical purpose: protection from the weather.

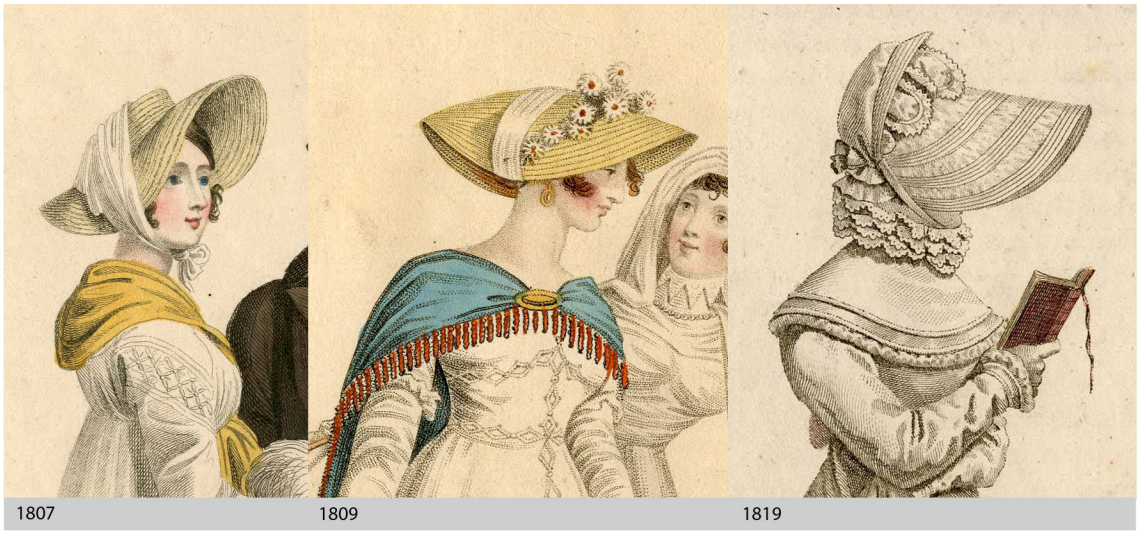


Figure 6 *Straw Bonnet Styles and Shapes* 1807-1819
[Left to right] *Fashion Plates* from Le Beau Monde 1807, La Belle Assemblée 1809, Costume Parisien 1819, Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The fabric-covered buckram bonnet could also claim to have evolved from a different style of headwear: the *capote* of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Dress historian Fiona Clark describes the *capote* as 'combining a soft unstructured fabric crown with a stiffened brim' (see Fig. 7).[41] There is evidence in the form of engravings and illustrations to suggest this form of bonnet was worn from c1760. These early types of bonnets are frequently depicted as being black, Fiona Clark asserting that surviving material culture supports the visual representations, and suggesting that the most commonly used fabric was silk taffeta.[42] These types of bonnets feature in George Stubbs' 1785 painting 'Reapers', in the Tate Collection in London (see Fig. 7). Fiona Clark describes 'chip or willow straw hats' that were covered in silk taffeta that date from this period.[43]

[39] Bullard, Daphne (1969): Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles 1830-60, Costume, vo. 3, No. sup1: pp. 24-25
[40] Davidson, H., 2019. *Dress in the Age of Jane Austen*, London; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p.115.
[41] Clark, F. (1982). *Hats (The costume accessories series).* Batsford, p21.
[42] Clark, F. (1982). Hats (*The costume accessories series*). Batsford, p17
[43] Clark, F. (1982). Hats (*The costume accessories series*). Batsford, p17.

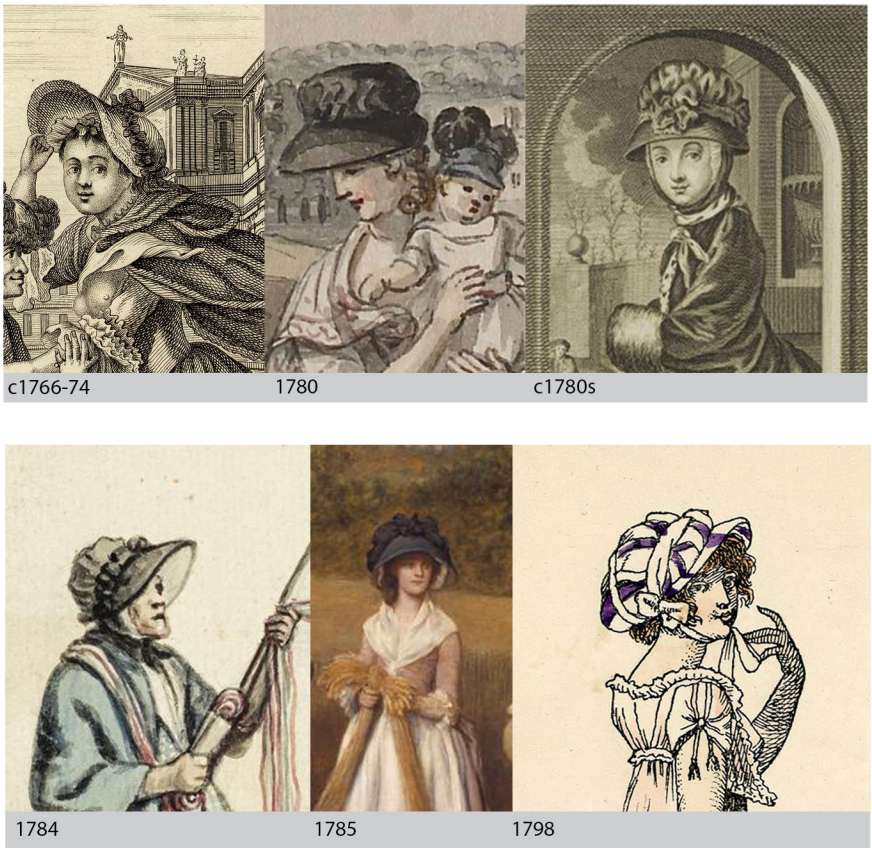


Figure 7 Timeline of Capote Styles and Shapes 1766-1798

[Top row left] '*A view in St Pauls Churchyard on a windy day'*, 1766-74, British Museum, London, 1999.0926.6
[Top row centre] '*The Encampment at Blackheath'*, 1780, Paul Sandby, British Museum, London, 1850.0810.524
[Top row right] *'January'*, Unknown artist, C1780s, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.3520-1953

[Bottom row left] '*An Edinburgh Lacemaker with a Distaff'*, 1784, David Allan, National Galleries Scotland, D403
[Bottom row centre] '*Reapers*', 1785, George Stubbs, Tate Britain, London, T02257
[Bottom row right] *Capote rayèe* , 1798, Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Museum curator and dress historian Madeleine Ginsburg offers up another theory on the evolution of the bonnet shape: that the helmet-like caps of the Regency period with brims evolved from the Hungarian shako, a style of military cap that appeared around 1790, which was worn by armies on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1820s and 30s.[44] She suggests that these hats, which were initially worn upright on the head, began to tilt further and further back, and the brims began to widen and curve around the face, until they reached the shape that is recognised as the bonnet. The bonnet dated 1816 in Fig. 8 is an example of the evolution of this shape. However, dress historian Hilary Davidson suggests that this shape has more to do with Regency styles reflecting passing fancies, such as celebrities of the moment, visiting aristocracy, or in this case, celebrating military achievements.[45]

[44] Ginsburg, M., 1990. The Hat: Trends and Traditions, London: Studio Edition, p72.
[45] Davidson, H., 2019. Dress in the Age of Jane Austen, London; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p.115

Figure 8 [left] *Military Shako 1813*, The Mode in Hats and Headdresses, R. Turner Wilcox
[right] *Fashion Plate 1814* 'Walking Dress', Ackermann's Repository of Arts, Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

As mentioned previously, the drawn bonnet has a different method of construction to the straw and buckram bonnets. The term 'drawn' comes from the fact that the fabric channels are gathered up and drawn over the material within the channel, variously cane, whalebone (baleen) or wire.[46] Some extant drawn bonnets have a plain crown, others have a construction that emulates the brim, or else is covered with drawn fabric over a structured brim. The benefit of the drawn fabric method means that the brim is very light and consists of one layer of fabric. There is no evidence to suggest from any surviving material culture that the brims of drawn bonnets were lined.[47] The structured 'ribs' created by the channels in the fabric of drawn bonnets share a lot with the construction of undergarments of the eighteenth-century, namely panniers and pocket hoops, as seen in Fig. 9.

[46] For more on drawn bonnet construction see Mrs J Howell, 1847, *The Handbook of Millinery*. Simpkin, Marshall and Co. London, and Dannielle Perry, 2016, *Drawn Bonnets – Examination and Construction*, Timely Tresses, USA (self-published).
[47] Visits to three collections were possible before Covid-19 lockdown restrictions came into place. Of the bonnets examined at the three collections (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Leicestershire Collections and Nottingham City Museums Collection at Newstead Abbey) plus an example in the collection of the author, none of the drawn bonnet examples showed any signs of previously attached linings.

Figure 9 *Woman's Hoop Petticoat (Panier*), England, 1750-1780
Los Angeles County Museum of Art M.2007.211.981

The other significant garment from the late eighteenth-century that has much in common with both the drawn bonnet and panniers/pocket hoops, is the calash (see Fig. 10). The calash is a structured hood-type accessory designed to protect the hairstyle whilst travelling or out-of-doors.[48] The main point of difference between a calash and a bonnet is function: the calash was purposely designed to preserve a hairstyle. The drawn bonnet, although also offering a level of protection for the head and hair, instead dictated a hairstyle.[49] Millinery and hat historian Clair Hughes argues that the bonnet derived from the calash, suggesting that 'brims expanded forwards from the front edge' and that they were tied beneath the chin with ribbons.[50] Hughes does not support her argument with illustrations, and extensive research of museum collection databases has yet to uncover a calash with the type of brim she mentions. Her theory is plausible, but without visual representations to support her claim, there is not sufficient evidence to support the evolution of the drawn bonnet solely from the calash.

[48] For more on the calash and its significance as an accessory see Elisabeth Gernerd, 'Têtes to Tails: Eighteenth-Century Underwear and Accessories in Britain and Colonial America'. PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015.
[49] For more on women's hairstyles of the period see Georgine de Courtais, 1973, *Women's Hats, Headdresses and Hairstyles*. Batsford, pp96-111.
[50] Hughes, C., 2017. *Hats*, London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, p216

Figure 10 [Top row left] *Silk calash* c1790, 67.110.276 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
[Top row centre] *Drawn bonnet* c1840, 44.205, MFA Boston
[Top row right] *Drawn bonnet* c1840, CI53.72.23 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 11 [left] *Brown silk taffeta drawn bonnet*, c1825-1835, in collection of the author.
[right] *Detail of brown silk taffeta drawn bonnet.*

Having several equally plausible theories to consider supports the idea that bonnet shapes and styles evolved so dramatically because they were an accessory that women utilised to engage with changing fashions. All popular fashions evolve as consumers engage with them, and evidence of the rapidity of changes during this period could demonstrate a high level of engagement, and evidence that women did use the bonnet as a method of self and sartorial expression.

The Bonnet as an Accessible Means of Interpreting and Following Fashions

Having established that the bonnet was indeed used as a method of engagement with changing fashions, this chapter now moves on to examine exactly why it was possible and practical to do so. In her 1957 television programme *Men, Women and Clothes*, dress historian Doris Langley Moore claimed that 'man in his social life shows very little desire for utilitarian dress and women even less.'[51] Her point emphasises the constant desire for novelty and variety in fashion, applicable to all eras of dress history, not just the 1830s. For most 1830s consumers, garments were purchases given a lot of consideration; they were investments. Unlike the throwaway concept sometimes applied to fashion today, most items needed to last a number of years.[52] A consumer was unlikely to experiment with colour, shape or decoration on a garment that was intended to be worn for such a long time. Novelty in fashion therefore required either a deep purse or creative ingenuity. How then, to remain fashionable when garments could not be constantly replaced to keep pace with the mode?

The answer was in restyling and remodelling, and the bonnet was the ideal accessory to experiment with trends, for three key reasons. Firstly, a bonnet generally required less investment than larger items such as a gown or pelisse. The cost of garments in this period is covered in detail in Chapter Three, but a gown or pelisse was a more significant investment than a bonnet and required more work to alter. Bonnets, though they could also be as expensive as a gown or pelisse, could be updated with new trims. Having less surface area, and a greater proximity to the wearer's face, they could create more impact with less time and money invested than any other wardrobe item.

The second reason that the bonnet was ideal, is that practicality was less of a priority. Headwear does not have to be as practical as shoes, for instance, for as Doris Langley Moore suggested 'we have to put our feet to a good deal of use which isn't always the case with our heads'.[53] The third reason is that the physical nature of the bonnet made it an accessible means of engaging with fashions. The bonnet shape was a blank canvas upon which the changing decorations could be arranged. The rigid structure of the bonnet crown supported decorations more easily than a soft cap one. The 1830s gown styles lent themselves well to hairstyles and headwear that went up rather than sideways.

Women could, of course, experiment with self-expression using other accessories, but items such as shoes were a less obvious choice as a means of making a bold fashion statement, as voluminous 1830s

---

[51] Langley Moore, D. (Writer/Presenter), (1957). Facing the Elements [Television series episode]. In Rogers, C. R. (Producer). *Men, Women and Clothes*. United Kingdom: BBC.
[52] This topic is covered in more depth in Chapter Three – The Model.
[53] Langley Moore, D. (Writer) (1957). Sense and Nonsense in Fashion [Television series episode]. In Rogers, C. R. (Producer). *Men, Women and Clothes*. United Kingdom: BBC.

skirts meant they were less visible, and they were also liable to wear out or suffer damage whilst being worn. However, the bonnet had immediate proximity to the face, and was therefore a more logical place to exert one's efforts. A bonnet was likely to fit a wearer longer too, and the fit was not subject to fluctuations in the wearer's weight. This also meant it could fit other women without dramatic alterations, and thus could be easily loaned out or borrowed, as well as pawned or sold to second-hand dealers, and as will be discussed in Chapter Three, this versatility also made it a target for thieves.

To be in fashion women had to have knowledge about fashions. Even if adapting a bonnet to align with the prevailing styles was practical and possible, finding out what was fashionable was a different matter. Dress historian Clair Hughes maintains that it was the country gentry who 'set the tone' regarding fashions in Britain, and these women would have learned about the latest fashions either through dedicated fashion magazines (discussed in more depth further on in this chapter) or in the shop window displays of establishments that sold garments and accessories.[54] The primary shops that sold attire for women were milliners and dressmakers. The milliners' shop is discussed in detail in the next chapter, but in essence, women would visit a dressmaker to have a larger garment made, such as a gown or pelisse, and would visit a milliner to purchase smaller items and accessories. The milliners who ran the shops would also likely be consulting fashion magazines to find the latest trends and either source or make items reflecting the fashions.[55] Although magazines were published monthly, newspaper advertisements of the period suggest that establishments put together collections twice a year, in May and November, and some would advertise the arrival of all the new stock available for perusal.[56]

Just because the shops contained items intended for sale, did not mean that women always visited with the intention of purchasing. Dress historian Madeleine Ginsburg suggests that not all women either wanted or could afford to buy their bonnets. She maintains that shops were a place to get styling ideas, which might be discreetly sketched and subsequently tried out at home.[57] A woman would not even need to go into the shop, as she could easily consult the window display.

Fashion illustrations might have been occasionally been included in the pocket books published in the eighteenth century, however, Alison Adburgham asserts it was not until the *Gallery of Fashion*

[54] Hughes, C., 2017. *Hats*, London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, p212
[55] Milliners had other means of obtaining the latest fashion ideas, these are discussed in the next chapter.
[56] Consumption is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.
[57] Ginsburg, M., 1990. *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*, London: Studio Editions, p78

appeared in 1794 that there was any English magazine devoted entirely to fashion.[58] It was up to the reader to carefully study and interpret the words, and use the fashion plates as a guide for styling. Magazines were published monthly, and the fashion section was generally a month behind; for example, this piece from January 1830 and its accompanying illustration describes fashions for December 1829:

Figure 12 *English Costume for January 1830*, Ladies' Museum, Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

> The black velvet hats are trimmed with satin and velvet, intermingled: all the black bonnets, however, that we have yet remarked, in carriages, whether of satin or velvet, are trimmed with ribands of some gay and striking colour, and often with coloured feather-fringe; scarlet and yellow are the most favourite associations.[59]

Those aspiring to be fashionable may not have had the exact bonnet in the image, but an existing bonnet might suffice if still a fashionable shape. A woman could assess the ribbons in her collection and choose an appropriate one to retrim with, or else pay a visit to a haberdasher or millinery shop where she lived, and purchase a new one.

However, it is important to realise that magazine readership was limited by two key factors: literacy and affordability. Regarding literacy, women had to have sufficient leisure to devote to intellectual pursuits, or to a lesser degree, women might have aspired to these things. Estimates as to precise

---

[58] Adburgham, A., 1972. *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women's Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria*. London: Allen and Unwin.p204; Earlier publications such as the *Mercure Galant* were published in France from 1672.
[59] (1830, January). The Mirror of Fashion. *The Ladies' Museum, 1*, 59. Retrieved from http://archive.org/

literacy rates in the period vary, but historian George Young quotes E. E. Kellett in estimating that in the United Kingdom in 1845, 33% of males and 45% of females could not read or write.[60] One does not need to be literate to interpret a fashion illustration, but as Alison Adburgham asserted, the magazine *La Belle Assemblée* was said to be more successful than its rivals because of 'the combination of fashion with literary content.'[61]

Readership was even further limited by the fact that magazine publishers made their money via a subscription system. Publishers recruited subscribers, and print runs were ordered to accommodate these numbers.[62] Subscribers could be private persons, or booksellers, and some volumes gave lists of subscribers at the back. Copies of the magazines would have been available at lending libraries, such as those that were set up in the late eighteenth century.[63] A milliner or dressmaker might set up their own lending library if they were willing to 'give over a few shelves', as publisher and bookseller William Lane persuaded shopkeepers of all kinds to do.[64] Fanny Burney describes visiting such a milliner in 1779.[65]

Affordability, therefore, was key. The magazines were not at all affordable for the average working-class family. *La Belle Assemblée*, (full title *La Belle Assemblée, or Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine, Addressed Particularly to the Ladies*) published by John Bell, cost 3s 6d in 1831, and 2s 6d in 1837.[66] *World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons* cost 2s upon its launch in 1824.[67] The income of a working-class man in London in the 1820s was around twenty-one shillings per week, an amount which had to cover rent, food and all necessary purchases for his family, such as clothing.[68] Approximate rent for this level of income was 2s 3d a week, and a suggested clothing and haberdashery allowance for the whole family was 3s 6d a week. A female domestic servant's income of this period ranged from £10 to £16 per annum, which meant a weekly wage of between 16s and 26s a week. *La Belle Assemblée* was published in royal octavo size, which was larger than *Lady's Magazine*, and much larger than pocket-sized *Ladies' Monthly Museum*, so it might have at least represented more value for money.[69] However at this level of income, a magazine costing three

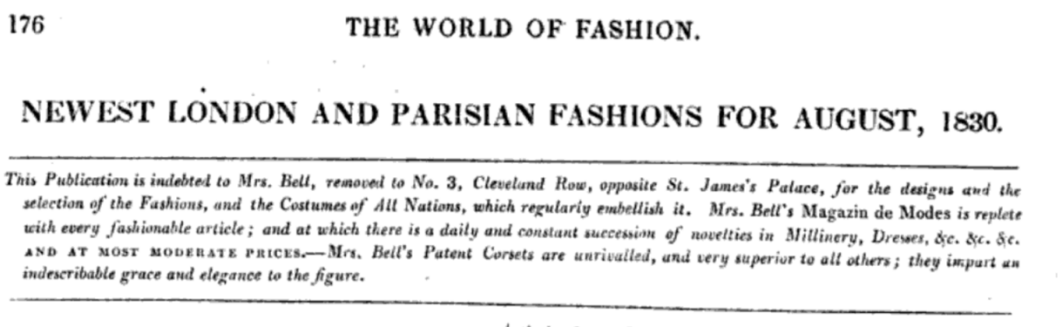
---

[60] Young, G. (1934). *Early Victorian England: 1830-1865* / vol.2. Oxford U.P, p187
[61] Adburgham, A. 1972. p218
[62] Adburgham, A. (1972). *Women in Print: Writing women and women's magazines from the Restoration to the accession of Victoria*. London: Allen and Unwin, p218.
[63] Alison Adburgham gives a detailed account of lending libraries in *Women in Print* (1972)
[64] Adburgham, 1972, p167. William Lane (1738-1814) was a London printer, publisher, bookseller and librarian, as well as the owner of a circulating library (source: British Museum).
[65] Burney, F., & Sabor, P. (Ed.). 2001. *Journals and Letters*. Penguin Classics. Burney relates details of a visit to Mme. Widget, the milliner-librarian on the Steyne.
[66] (1831, Jan 8) Berkshire Chronicle, (1837, February 4) *Saint James Chronicle*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
[67] (1834, May 1) *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*
[68] (1828) *A New System of Practical Domestic Economy*. London: Henry Colburn, p397
[69] Adburgham, A. 1972. p218.

shillings was an extravagance, especially when the guide suggests households at this level should not be purchasing tea or sugar. It makes sense that working-class women relied on people who could afford the magazines, such as milliners and dressmakers, to interpret the contents instead.

Direct sources for fashionable ideas are less clear. In the early days of *La Belle Assemblée* the fashion plates were attributed, all fashions being credited as 'the sole invention of Mrs M. A. [Mary Ann] Bell'.[70] For a decade she dominated the fashion pages, and readers were directed to her dress shop, the *Magazin de Modes*, where they could purchase the items featured in the fashion plates. This shop was first located in Bloomsbury, and later in St James's, where she enjoyed the patronage of the Duchess of Kent. It is difficult to make a judgement on Mrs Bell's qualifications to 'invent' the fashions, as there is little information known about her, and her actual identity is unclear.[71] In 1830, the *World of Fashion* published this:

> This publication is indebted to Mrs Bell, removed to No. 3 Cleveland Row, opposite St James's Palace, for the designs and the selection of Fashions, and the Costumes of All Nations which regularly embellish it. Mrs Bell's *Magazin de Modes* is replete with every fashionable article; and there is a daily and constant succession of novelties in Millinery, Dresses, etc., and at most moderate prices.



176 THE WORLD OF FASHION.

NEWEST LONDON AND PARISIAN FASHIONS FOR AUGUST, 1830.

This Publication is indebted to Mrs. Bell, removed to No. 3, Cleveland Row, opposite St. James's Palace, for the designs and the selection of the Fashions, and the Costumes of All Nations, which regularly embellish it. Mrs. Bell's Magazin de Modes *is replete with every fashionable article; and at which there is a daily and constant succession of novelties in Millinery, Dresses, &c. &c. &c.* AND AT MOST MODERATE PRICES.—*Mrs. Bell's Patent Corsets are unrivalled, and very superior to all others; they impart an indescribable grace and elegance to the figure.*

Figure 13 The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons 1830, Google Books [online]

After the 1840s there is no mention of Mrs Bell's shop. She may have ceased her involvement with the magazine, or possibly died.[72]

[70] Adburgham, A. 1972. p226.
[71] She may have been John Bell's wife, or she may have been married to his son, John Browne Bell, who was also in the magazine trade. Her name disappeared from *La Belle Assemblée* in 1821, when John Bell was 76 years old, and that magazine was sold. Her name subsequently reappeared in association with another publication in 1824 – *World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons.*
[72] (1830, August). Newest London and Parisian Fashions for August, 1830. *The World of Fashion*. Retrieved from http://archive.org/

The French Influence

Fashions from Paris are frequently mentioned, in both fashion magazines (see Fig. 13) and in contemporary fiction. Parisian headwear styles were sought after, as the author of *The Guide to Trade: The Dress-Maker and the Milliner* (1843) boldly asserts that 'Paris is the place from whence all fashions in dress proceed,' but does not explain why this is the case.[73] Mrs J Howell mentions the subject in *The Handbook of Millinery* (1847), stating that modern Frenchwomen are 'the most perfect adepts in the mysteries of the toilet', but again, does not specify what it is that Frenchwomen do differently that makes their tastes infinitely preferable to those of Englishwomen.[74] Novelist Elizabeth Gaskell references French millinery in her novels on more than one occasion. *Wives and Daughters* was written in 1864-1866 but set in the 1830s, when Gaskell herself was the same age as the young female characters who are central to the novel's plot. One of the characters, Cynthia Kirkpatrick, is a keen follower of popular fashions, and this is continually referenced throughout the novel. Cynthia's shallow and narrowminded mother, Mrs Gibson, is portrayed by Gaskell as also having a keen interest in fashions. She laments '…and I meant to have asked her to bring me a French bonnet; and then you could have had one made after mine.'[75] She sounds disgruntled when she says to her stepdaughter Molly Gibson that Cynthia's letter to herself merely contained an account of her crossing, whilst to Molly she can 'write about fashions, and how the bonnets are worn in Paris, and all sorts of interesting things'.[76] The only two characters in the book so concerned with fashions are Cynthia and her mother, and they are portrayed throughout the book as superficial and overly-concerned with their appearance. Mrs Gibson, as the village doctor's wife, is firmly middle-class, and it could be considered significant that Gaskell made fashions one of her fixations. Conversely, the characters in the book who belong to the aristocracy or gentry (Lady Harriet and her mother, Lady Cumnor) are always described as fashionably dressed, and yet their dialogue rarely addresses the subject. Gaskell again mentions French fashions in another similarly set novel, *Cranford*. In this instance, the proprietor of the universal shop changes his marketing tactics and proclaims his fashions are directly from London not Paris, when he discovers his customers to be 'too patriotic and John Bullish to wear what the Mounseers wore'.[77] Gaskell demonstrates here that French fashions were possibly not to everyone's taste.

Many of Gaskell's novels are concerned with class, and class definition, and *Wives and Daughters* particularly so. There is substantial scholarship on Gaskell and each of her novels, and this

---

[73] (1843). *The Guide to Trade – The Dress-Maker and The Milliner*. Charles Knight and Co, p96
[74] Howell, M. J., 1847. *The Handbook of Millinery*. Simpkin, Marshall and Co. London., p3
[75] Gaskell, E. C. (1975). *Wives and Daughters*. London: Dent (etc.). Chapter 19
[76] Gaskell, E. C. (1975). *Wives and Daughters.* London: Dent (etc.). Chapter 60
[77] Gaskell, E. C. (2017). *Cranford.* Newburyport: Open Road Media. Chapter 7

dissertation draws on the 1972 article by Marilyn Butler titled 'The Uniqueness of Cynthia Kirkpatrick', and in particular her assertion that the character of Cynthia Kirkpatrick is not only one of Gaskell's best, but one of the most uniquely crafted characters from all Victorian fiction.[78] Butler maintains that in *Wives and Daughters* Gaskell managed a very convincing representation of 'the middle-class social life of a small English town', and Cynthia certainly makes herself known in Hollingford shortly after she arrives. Cynthia frequently mentions fashion and dress, more so than any other character in any of Gaskell's novels. Her step-sister Molly Gibson, by contrast, is not disinterested in dress, but does not share Cynthia's preoccupation. The book is set between 1827-1830, when Gaskell herself was aged 17-20, and she was perhaps drawing directly from her own experiences with her depiction of Cynthia and Molly. Cynthia's vanity and frivolity could be seen to indicate Gaskell's own views on the subject. However, her detailed descriptions of garments and headwear reveal her as someone not entirely disinterested in fashion either, therefore implying that she had a keen interest in the subject, but knew it was a bit silly.

Updating Your Bonnet

Exchanging one set of decorations for another was apparently easy, especially for capable young ladies who had little else to do but follow fashions. Madeleine Ginsburg points out that most ladies (or their maids) could sew, and if their skills were not quite up to the job, then flowers and trimmings could be used creatively to hide their unprofessional hand.[79] For Cynthia Kirkpatrick in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Wives and Daughters* changing a bonnet trim sounds like a pleasant pastime and not a chore. In one chapter, she is 'making up a bonnet for her mother, and chattering to Molly as she worked'. In another scene, Cynthia removes a set of artificial flowers from her own 'best' bonnet and as a kind and thoughtful gesture stitches them into her step-sister Molly's, claiming 'a knot of ribbons would do well enough' for herself.[80] This act not only shows how keeping up with fashions was not necessarily a competitive pastime (in Cynthia's case it is one that consistently keeps her attention), but also how the trims and ribbons were valued and re-used.

[78] Butler, Marilyn. (1972). The Uniqueness of Cynthia Kirkpatrick: Elizabeth Gaskell's Wives and Daughters and Maria Edgeworth's Helen. *The Review of English Studies, 23*(91), new series, 278-290.
[79] Ginsburg, M., 1990. *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*, London: Studio Edition, p78.
[80] Gaskell, E. C. (1966). *Wives and Daughters*. London: Everyman. Ch 19.

Figure 14 *Two young women writing and sewing in an interior at Hatton, Warwickshire.* 1820-1830, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Extant bonnets provide evidence to validate the idea that ribbons and decorations were intended to be temporary or interchangeable, and will be discussed in this section. Many extant bonnets have their trims stitched on, but there are also examples where the trim has been pinned, such as on bonnet T.130.1962 at the V&A Museum. Another bonnet, a green and mauve example (see Fig. 16 & 23, 319.1964) in the Leicestershire Collections, shows very clearly the large and hasty tacking stitches used to attach the lace ruffle that sits inside the brim. This might have been because the ruffle sits next to the head, and is more liable to get dirty from oils on the skin and hair, but the lace piece was probably something that could be stitched on other bonnets as needed. Home milliners could use papier mâché millinery heads (Fig. 17) to assist in the retrimming process. Madeleine Ginsburg describes them as 'busts with the head extended with a conical leather cap and prissy painted features'.[81] The obvious impermanence of bonnet trimmings could go some way to explaining why so many surviving bonnets are without their original decorations. Ginsburg suggests many bonnets were altered over time, not only because of the disintegration of the fabrics and lace but also because the decorations were 'rearranged or replaced for fancy dress or amateur dramatics'.[82]

Study of material culture is important, because as Jules David Prown asserts, they can 'tell us about the beliefs - the values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a

[81] Ginsburg, M., 1990. *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*, London: Studio Editions, p78.
[82] Ginsburg, M., 1990. *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*, London: Studio Editions, p78.

given time'.[83] Bonnets are an important part of material culture to examine because they were such an accessible garment, and because they were worn by all classes of women, both literate and illiterate. This idea is supported by Prown's assertion that objects 'offer the possibility of a way to understand the mind of the great majority of nonliterate people, past and present, who remain otherwise inaccessible except through impersonal records and the distorting view of a contemporary literary elite.'[84] It is not always possible to know who owned a particular garment in a museum collection, nor even to ascertain the social class its owner identified with. Items such as bonnets may have had more than one owner, (as opposed to garments that needed to be more fitted), making it even more difficult to ascribe particular ideas about taste and style as they could be changed so often, and so easily.

One obstacle confronted by dress historians when examining surviving material culture, particularly using the methodologies prescribed by Prown, or Mida & Kim, is that antique textiles are fragile and less able to be handled. Bonnets and hats (especially straw ones), therefore, are even less accessible, as they began their life in a more fragile state than say, a cotton or linen gown. This was experienced first-hand whilst conducting research for this dissertation, in that most bonnets in collections could not be held or touched. At the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, where eight examples of bonnets from their collection were studied, all of the bonnets had to remain on their specially constructed supports (see Fig. 21), and were not to be touched or lifted by either researcher or curator. Whilst understandable given their age and condition, it is also frustrating for the researcher, who, in this situation, can only ever see half of the bonnet. Prown's first suggested step (description), therefore, is substantially limited with regards to discovering the finer details of construction.[85] Regarding bonnets, a researcher (especially one with a background in making) might want to know the weight of the material, judge the aerodynamics and balance, feel the strength of the wire. It also limits sensory engagement, suggested by Prown in the second phase (deduction) of examining an object.[86] Prown suggests that where an object is not accessible, that sensory perceptions must be imagined instead. However, these limitations could possibly be navigated via a different method, one that aligns with dress historian Hilary Davidson's campaigning for reconstructions of dress to be taken more seriously as academic practice. In her 2019 article 'The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as Academic Practice', Davidson asserts that 'reconstruction creates new garments that tell us about past ones in unique ways, and reiterates how sewing and construction are essential to fashion systems fundamentally enmeshed with material culture'.[87]

---

[83] Prown, J. D. (1982). Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method. *Winterthur Portfolio, 17*(1), p1.
[84] Prown, 1982, p3.
[85] Prown, 1982, p7.
[86] Prown, 1982, p9.
[87] Hilary Davidson, 2019, The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as an Academic Practice, *Fashion Theory*.

Figure 15 Detail of T.130-1962, *Pale yellow silk bonnet* c1830, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Figure 16 Detail of 319.1964, *Green, mauve, ivory silk bonnet* c1830-35, Leicestershire Collections

Figure 17 *Papier maché millinery head,* French c1840,
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Museum Number T.383-1984

Renewal by necessity was another reason a woman might change either her bonnet or trim, and this is evidenced by both surviving material culture and referenced in fiction. Novelist George Eliot refers to a 'faded pink ribbon' in relation to a bonnet trim in *Adam Bede* (1859).[88] This subtle reference to material culture of the period is supported by evidence such as the pink silk bonnet in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Fig. 18). Bonnet T.201-1960 could be considered as an example of how garment fabrics could fade. The detail image in Fig. 18 clearly shows a darker thread which could indicate the silk fabric was originally a different shade.

Figure 18 [left] *Pink silk drawn bonnet,* English c1830,
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Museum Number T.201-1960
[right] *Detail from Pink silk drawn bonnet* showing a darker thread colour used for stitching, which could indicate a shade closer to the original colour of the silk.

How the Bonnet Could Be Personalised

Having explored the reasons why a woman might restyle her bonnet and the methods used to do so, this chapter moves on to discuss semiotics. Every attribute of a bonnet's construction and decoration could be utilised to send a message, intended or not. Particular instances of women expressing their

[88] Eliot, G., & Waldron, M. (2005). *Adam Bede* [New ed.] / edited by Mary Waldron.). Broadview.

personality, character and wealth are covered in Chapter Three, but this section of this chapter will expressly examine the methods they used.

Consumers could use shape, scale, colour and material to project their personality and character – or hide it, depending on their motives. As with today, the extent to which people engage with fashion depends a lot on personality and cultural background. The surviving material culture supports the idea that the variety and caprice seen in the fashion plates was somewhat representative of what was actually worn, perhaps not by the majority of society, but certainly by a few fashionable personages.

Millinery and dress historian Clair Hughes points out that plain hats tell as much about a person as fancy ones, and one of the clearest examples of this in relation to bonnets is seen in Quaker fashions.[89] Within the context of 1830s fashions, they provide a useful reference point in determining what a 'plain' style was, to then compare with more extreme styles, and analysing everything else that fell in between. Fig.19 shows a Quaker bonnet, the styles of which were meant to 'avoid ornament and extravagance in dress.'[90] In its constituent elements, ordinary Quakers' dress in the eighteenth century broadly shadowed changes in the everyday dress of non-Quakers, though often with a time lag. Quakers were not unaware of new and developing fashions, it was probably the opposite; advice given to women about how to dress was informed by new styles.

Figure 19 *Quaker bonnet c1830*,
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1976.209

[89] Hughes, C., 2017. *Hats,* London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.p51-53
[90] Styles, J., 2007. *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press. p204-5

Figure 20 *Silk bonnet* c1820s
Victoria and Albert Museum, London T.202-1960

T.202.1960 from the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 20) has been deliberately shown alongside the Quaker bonnet to demonstrate the two extremes. T.202.1960 is a drawn bonnet made of light-coloured silk and decorated extensively with ruffles. Dress historian Oriole Cullen features this bonnet in a video for the online platform SHOWStudio and explains it would have been worn by 'a very fashionable woman'.[91]

The ruffles adorning the brim edge and the crown give volume and texture, but along with the method of make, it illustrates well a suggestion by dress historian C. Willett Cunnington that the drawn bonnet was a 'perpetual dust-trap' and that it was a garment kept for special occasions.[92] The size of this elaborate bonnet also adds to the impracticalities of both wearing and storage, not to mention upkeep and maintenance. These particular elements further add to the bonnet's exclusivity and position as a status symbol. When compared with the Quaker bonnet, it is immediately clear to see that their styles were practical, easy to take care of, easy to store and easy to wear.

Colour was another element a bonnet-wearer might utilise to express their character and personality, and there is certainly evidence of colour in surviving material culture. The frilly drawn bonnet T.202.1960 shows the extent a wearer might go to in terms of scale and decoration, but the colour is still very neutral. Two examples of bonnets showing a bold use of colour are described and compared here. Although made with different methods, both would have created a lot of impact. The first example is at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Fig. 21) and is a drawn bonnet made of

[91] SHOWStudio. (2014, November 13). *Bonnets: A History - Oriole Cullen / Lou Stoppard* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8dwAyRGI1k
[92] Cunnington, C. W. (1936). *Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: The Macmillan Company, p67.

bright yellow, green and purple plaid silk. The second bonnet belongs to Leicestershire Collections (Fig. 23) and is a fabric covered bonnet, featuring a white, lilac and green glacé silk, matching ostrich plumes and gauze ribbon. Neither bonnet can be considered neutral, and each shows a considerable amount of daring. The fashion plates accompanying each bonnet illustrate the types of styles these represent. Although the first plate is a different type of bonnet and has a different fabric pattern, it shows that giant and obvious directional prints and weaves were used, the extant shows how. The second plate has two examples that illustrate the popularity of the colour combination, as well as being indicative of the styling of the feathers and ribbons.

Figure 21 *Yellow, mauve, green plaid bonnet* c1830-1840, T32.1967
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 22 *Fashion plate* 1829,
Costumes Parisiens, Costume Plates Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 23 *Green, mauve, ivory silk bonnet* c1830-35, 319.1964
Leicestershire Collections

Figure 24 *Fashion plate,* 1832 World of Fashion
Costume Plates Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Other extant bonnets are less exuberant in their commitment to being fashionable, but still create impact. Straw bonnets were a useful neutral, and could be trimmed with any colour. Patterned or fancy straw braids were sometimes used to create texture and interest, as illustrated in Fig.25.[93] Plain coloured bonnets in a luxurious fabric could also create impact, as seen by the fashion plate and extant example from the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 26).

Figure 25 [left] *Straw Bonnet* c1830, Augusta Auctions, New York

[93] For more on patterned and fancy straw see Veronica Main, 2003. *Swiss Straw Work: Techniques of a Fashion Industry*, Great Britain: Mains Collins Publishing pp9-21.

[right] *Bonnet from La Mode*, 1836.
Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 26 [left, centre] *Fashion Plate*, 1835, Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art
[right] *Black velvet bonnet*, c1835, Victoria and Albert Museum, London T.202.1958

This chapter set out to examine what the bonnet meant within the context of 1830s fashions. It has shown that like all fashions, it was an item that constantly evolved to meet the tastes and desires of the consumer. It has demonstrated that the bonnet was a versatile accessory, updatable and adaptable when funds were not available to buy new, and emphasised that it was a quick method to interpret rapidly changing trends and to engage with sartorial novelties. It has also shown that unlike other garments that needed to be practical, the bonnet could be a place for self-expression and frivolity.

Chapter Two - The Milliner

Defining the Milliner

> *'In a word, they furnish everything to the Ladies, that can contribute to set off their Beauty, increase their Vanity, or render them ridiculous…' R. Campbell, The London Tradesman, 1747.*[94]

Figure 27 *Milliner*, 1805
The Wallach Division Picture Collection,
The New York Public Library.

The millinery profession has had more than one definition and several reputations since its origin in the sixteenth century. Even today the term milliner means something different to what it did initially, and there are conflicting views held by dress historians as to the nature of the reputation that milliners

[94] Campbell, R. (1747). *The London Tradesman: Being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts, Both Liberal and Mechanic, Now Practised in the Cities of London and Westminster. Calculated for the Information of Parents, and Instruction of Youth in Their Choice of Business*. London: T. Gardner. Retrieved from http://archive.org/

and millinery held.[95] Chapter One argued for a fresh analysis of the bonnet in fashion, and this chapter argues for a revised interpretation of the millinery occupation in the early nineteenth century. This chapter sets out to define the milliner, by first examining the literature surrounding her reputation. The remainder of the chapter will then use the life and career of Nottingham milliner Alice Butler (1806-1891) as a framework for understanding more about the intricacies and variations of the occupation. By analysing the millinery occupation and milliner's shop and what both represented to nineteenth century society, this chapter aims to establish a more accurate and detailed definition than what already exists, and presents new evidence to demonstrate the idea that the milliner was not just the nineteenth century stylist, but the quiet entrepreneur.

What is a Milliner?

The word 'milliner' is challenging to define as the meaning has evolved since it was first used in the sixteenth century.[96] Today the word is associated exclusively with hat makers and hat making, but originally milliners were sellers of fancy wares, apparel and accessories for women. Many of these items came from Milan; hence the term 'Milaner' (meaning a native or inhabitant of Milan). These fancy wares included, significantly, straw hats and bonnets. A milliner in 1830s England had more in common with the original term than what it means today. A woman could purchase a hat or bonnet from a milliner, but she could also purchase many other things besides. Journalist Henry Mayhew stated in 1851 that dressmakers attended to ladies' dresses and any outwardly worn gowns or robes, and that milliners were concerned with 'caps, bonnets, scarves, outward attire…anything other than gowns'.[97] An idea of the range of items sold by a milliner can be seen in an advertisement placed in the *Nottingham Review* in April 1830 by Mrs Eyre, 'Fancy Milliner', in which she lists some of the items available for purchase in her shop on Bridlesmith Gate:

> Fancy Millinery, Leghorn, Luton and Dunstable Straw Bonnets; Ladies' and Children's Fancy Drawn Calico and rich Lutestring Bonnets, of the most prevailing shapes and colours; Infants braided coloured and white Satin Hats; Ladies' and Children's coloured and white Stays; Net and Muslin Caps and Collars, Fancy Braided Holland Aprons, Rich Ribbons, Cotton and Worsted Hose, Haberdashery, Plat, Wire, and Thread for the Trade.[98]

---

[95] For recent scholarship on milliners see Amy Louise Erickson, Erickson, A. L. (2011). *Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies* 1700–1750. History Workshop Journal, (71), 147, Chrisman Campbell, K. (2002). The Face of Fashion: Milliners in Eighteenth-Century Visual Culture. *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 25*, p157-172.
[96] "milliner, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2020. Web. 21 July 2020.
[97] Mayhew, H., Thompson, E. P & Yeo, Eileen, 1971. *The Unknown Mayhew: Selections from the 'Morning Chronicle', 1849-1850*, London: Merlin Press, p421
[98] (1830, April 2). Advertisement. *Nottingham Review*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

Very gradually the term came to refer only to hats and headwear, but researcher Amy Louise Erickson suggests that this was not until the late-nineteenth century.[99]

Another obstacle to articulating a clear definition of a milliner is the fact that the trade overlapped with a number of others, specifically the haberdasher. The term haberdasher derives from the word 'haberdash', (now obsolete) which meant 'petty merchandise, or small wares' or 'a dealer in small articles appertaining to dress, as thread, tape, ribbons, etc.', both descriptions not dissimilar to the milliners selling 'fancy wares'.[100] Haberdashers and milliners originally formed one of the ancient merchant guilds of London: The Worshipful Company of Haberdashers. By the 1830s, however, the two occupations were considered distinct and were listed separately in trade directories and census records. Their shared heritage was still apparent in the 1830s, demonstrated not only by Mrs Eyre selling haberdashery, but evidenced in an Old Bailey court record that describes a haberdasher selling a bonnet.[101]

Figure 28 *Illustration from 'Les Trois Amoureux de la Marquise'*
Revue Pittoresque, Musée Littéraire, 1849

Interestingly, the only language in which the word milliner is used is English. Other countries in Europe use a word derived from the French *modiste.* All derived from 'modist', meaning a follower of

[99] Erickson, A. L. (2011). Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies 1700–1750. History Workshop Journal, (71), 147.
[100] "haberdash, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2020. Web. 26 July 2020.
[101] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 05 August 2020), November 1835, trial of ANN WILKES (t18351123-184).

the prevailing fashion or style.[102] The word modist is not dissimilar from the modern term 'stylist', and just as a stylist today does more than just supply a client with clothing, it can also be argued that the nineteenth century milliner was also someone you consulted in order to dress fashionably.

'Milliner, a more polite name for a bawd…'

> And though, from race to race, and from time immemorial, the young female shop-keeper had been warned of the danger, the folly, and the fate of her predecessors; in listening to the itinerant admirer, who, here to-day and gone to-morrow, marches his adorations, from town to town with as much facility, and as little regret, as his regiment; still every new votary to the counter and the modes, was ready to go over the same ground that had been trodden before; with the fond persuasion of proving an exception to those who had ended in misery and disgrace, by finishing, herself, with marriage and promotion.[103]
>
> Fanny Burney, *The Wanderer,* 1779

An important aspect of the millinery trade to address is a reputation that concerned both milliners and dressmakers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; that the word 'milliner' was a euphemism for a prostitute, and that many milliners' shops were simply a front for brothels. There was some validity in the accusations, as is evidenced by Henry Mayhew in *London Labour and the London Poor*.[104] This dissertation does not seek to dispute the accusations, but what this section of the chapter will instead examine is what aspects of this reputation still persisted into the 1830s and slightly beyond.

The reputation appears to have its beginnings in the eighteenth century but there is no evidence to suggest it did not persist before 1749, which is the year the first of three references from the period concerning the reputation were published. John Cleland's *Fanny Hill or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* was an erotic novel published that year. The titular character ends up working in a pleasure house disguised as a millinery establishment, run by a lady named Mrs Cole.

> In the outer parlour, or rather shop, sat three young women, rather demurely employed on millinery work, which was the cover of a traffic in more precious commodities…[105]

---

[102] "modist, n." *OED Online.* Oxford University Press, June 2020. Web. 26 July 2020; French/Dutch: modiste, Spanish: modista de sombreros, German: die modistin, Italian/Portuguese/Spanish: modista, Swedish/Norwegian: modist, Finnish = modisti

[103] Burney, F., Doody, M., Mack, R. L., & Sabor, P. (1991). *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties*. Book 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[104] Mayhew, H., 1967. *London Labour and the London Poor: Vol.4* Enlarged., London: Cass., p224.

[105] Cleland, J., 1747. *Fanny Hill or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. Penguin Books Limited.

What this text does not make clear, however, is how widespread the decoy millinery shop was. If R. Campbell's opinion is anything to go by, it was incredibly common. In his guide *The London Tradesman* (1768), he has little positive to say about the trade of millinery, and offers a stern recommendation to avoid it:

> Therefore, out of Regard to the Fair Sex, I must caution Parents, not to bind their daughters to this Business: The last Resort of young Beaus and Rakes to Milliner's Shops, exposes young Creatures to many Temptations, and insensibly debauches their Morals before they are capable of Vice.[106]

Campbell goes on to claim that of all the prostitutes in London, at least half began their working lives as milliners, and have subsequently been 'debauched in their houses'. He does permit the idea that the trade is not universally corrupted, but gives no indication as to what proportion of establishments are tainted. Campbell suggests the establishments to avoid are the ones who claim to be exclusive, who will only deal with 'select customers', and who do not have premises open to the public but instead are tucked away out of view. These shops, he guarantees, are the ones who will be the 'ruin of private families, enemies to conjugal affection, promote nothing but vice, and live by Lust'. Charles Horne published similar views in *Serious Thoughts on The Miseries of Seduction and Prostitution (1787)*. Horne is relentless in his denunciation of sex-workers, and goes into some detail on the subject of milliners and mantua-makers. Like Campbell, he cautions parents against these trades, along with haberdashers and 'all dealers of vanity'.[107]

If these three texts alone were the only means by which to judge the eighteenth-century milliner they would be guilty indeed, but Amy Louise Erickson staunchly defends their reputation in her article *Milliners in Eighteenth-Century London*. She points out that the author of *General Descriptions of All Trades* (1747), 'made no reference whatever to moral peril in this trade, only gentility'.[108] She goes on to argue that young milliners were no more at risk of seduction and corruption than any other trade, and claims the expensive premium their parents had paid, along with the shop proprietors who had their own reputation to maintain, meant there was too much invested interest from these parties to be so careless as to let their young workforce be corrupted. She finishes by suggesting that prostitutes and brothel owners falsely claimed to be milliners in courts *because* the reputation was one of gentility and not otherwise. Erickson's points are not without validity, but more evidence is needed to

---

[106] Campbell, R. (1747). The London Tradesman: Being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts, Both Liberal and Mechanic, Now Practised in the Cities of London and Westminster. Calculated for the Information of Parents, and Instruction of Youth in Their Choice of Business. London: T. Gardner.
[107] Horne, C. (1787). Serious Thoughts on the Miseries of Seduction and Prostitution, etc. https://books.google.co.uk/
[108] Erickson, A. L. (2011). Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies 1700–1750. History Workshop Journal, (71), 147.

support the idea that the reverse reputation was as widespread as she suggests, because there is evidence the negative reputation did persist into the nineteenth-century.

Two references from the nineteenth-century suggest that milliners were still suspected of a lack of moral fibre. *The Guide to Trade: The Dress-Maker and The Milliner* (1843) makes no mention of milliners' reputations, but includes an section titled 'A Warning' which is a very specific caution against vice and how to recognise it, with the emphatic assurance that it leads to nothing but ruin and an early death.[109] However, an earlier trade guide, *The Book of Trades*, published several times between 1804 and 1842, gives very little information about milliners reputations, and does not mention anything that Campbell so passionately proclaimed.[110] In 1864 Henry Mayhew wrote of 'a friendly bonnet shop' in the Burlington Arcade, the context of which was a mention of men visiting the premises in the early hours of the morning.[111] There are no further specifics, but his mention of it confirms something of the reputation was still present in the mid-nineteenth century. He goes on to add that milliners were amongst the trades who were 'more or less prostitutes and patronesses of the numerous brothels London can boast of possessing'. He suggests their path to prostitution was hastened by the drudgery of long working days, where the temptation of 'the gaiety of the dancing-saloons' must have caught out tired apprentices and improvers.

[109] *The Guide to Trade – The Dress-Maker and The Milliner*. (1843). Charles Knight and Co.
[110] (1818). *The Book of English Trades and Library of the Useful Arts*. J. Souter, London. https://books.google.co.uk/
[111] Mayhew, H., 1967. *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of those that will work, those that cannot work, and those that will not work / Vol.4* Enlarged., London: Cass.,

Figure 29 *Detail from 'Characteristics or England, Ireland and Scotland'*, 1825
George Hunt after M. Egerton. Published by Pyall and Hunt
© British Museum Heal, Topography.374

Figure 30 '*L'Atelier De Modiste'* 1898, by Pierre Outin (1840-1899)
Wallach Division Picture Collection, The New York Public Library
Men are clearly seen peering in the windows in this image that dates to 1898, but has women dressed in garments from a much earlier period of the nineteenth-century

Wendy Gamber presents an alternative view in her study of American milliners and dressmakers, addressing the idea that ambition in business was not a virtue, and suggesting there was a belief that any woman who stepped out of the sanctuary and feminine domain of the home and voluntarily put themselves in a public-facing role, could not also be virtuous.[112] Gamber also draws parallels with the idea that the milliners decorated and styled their salons to be soft and comfortable and welcoming.[113] It is not surprising that this could be misconstrued by many people as 'welcoming to men', when in fact the reality could have been more along the lines of making it a lovely and welcoming place for women.

Gamber's second suggestion is that it was the way milliners dressed that contributed (but, she emphasises, not necessarily consciously) to a less than favourable reputation, stemming from an idea that prostitutes of this period would overdress and take their fashions to the extreme, and therefore a fashionably dressed woman was not very distinct from a prostitute.[114] It is a continuation of the idea that a woman cannot be both virtuous and interested in fashions. Milliners and dressmakers, she argues, had access to fabric scraps and remnants and could use their skills to adapt their wardrobes, and thus always present themselves in what they believed was fashionable dress. The notion is controversial, as it appears to place some of the blame on women, but it seems Gamber's suggestion does have some valid foundations. *The Guide to Trade: The Dress-Maker and The Milliner* (1843) contains some very specific advice to young women on exactly this subject, asserting that 'young dressmakers have commonly a bad style of dress – more showy and tawdry than warm, neat and comfortable' and that tawdry dressers cannot expect to go about the streets without facing insult.[115] The author adds that the tendency for vulgar dress stemmed from the temptation of trims and scraps going cheaply from the worktable, and that the young workwomen saw only the low price without considering if the attire was appropriate. It is yet another text indirectly placing the blame for the negative reputation solely on women. None of the texts referenced here attempt to discredit men in any way, taking a 'men will be men' tone and excusing them unanimously.

---

[112] Gamber, W. (1997). *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, Ch 1.
[113] Gamber, 1997, p18
[114] Gamber, W. (1997). *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, Ch 1
[115] (1843). *The Guide to Trade – The Dress-Maker and The Milliner*. Charles Knight and Co. p38

Alice Butler - Milliner

Dress historian Hilary Davidson argues there was 'fine social line' regarding female paid labour in the early nineteenth century.[116] In views that align with those of Wendy Gamber, Davidson asserts employing a needle to make items for one's family or close friends, or for charity, was acceptable, but when the activity became mercantile, and potentially involved selling to male customers, a woman's respectability began to be questioned.[117] Conversely, dress and millinery historian Clair Hughes argues that the millinery occupation in the Georgian and Victorian periods was a necessity (albeit a desperately unattractive one) for many young women of a certain class, due to 'horrific working conditions' and long, unhealthy and unsociable working hours.[118] Amy Louise Erickson maintains a different view again, arguing that it was a respectable and practical option for young women in the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth, and that not enough convincing evidence has been presented to argue it was not.[119] Erickson's views align well with historian Henry Mayhew's suggestion that women who became milliners and dressmakers tended to be 'daughters of clergy, military/naval officers, surgeons, farmers, tradesmen'.[120] If Davidson and Hughes' assertions were universally true, then surely the daughters of men in these respected professions would not consider a millinery career at all.

To better understand these incongruities, the remainder of this chapter will examine the life and career of a professional milliner, Alice Butler, who had a shop on Carlton Street in Nottingham for over sixty years in the nineteenth century.[121] In considering the evidence surrounding her career, this chapter aims to present a view that a millinery career was entrepreneurial; that it was not so much a necessity, it was more an opportunity.

Alice Butler was born in 1806 in Gedling, a village four miles from Nottingham.[122] She was the sixth of eight children, and one of five daughters born to Robert and Elizabeth Butler. The Butler family do not appear to have been very wealthy, but neither were they paupers. Alice's father was a tenant

---

[116] Davidson, H., 2019. *Dress in the Age of Jane Austen,* London; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p126.
[117] For more on women makers and material literacy see Dyer, S. (2021). *Material Lives: Women Makers and Consumer Culture in the 18th Century*. Bloomsbury, and Dyer, S., & Wigston Smith, C. (2020). *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Nation of Makers*. Bloomsbury.
[118] Hughes, C., 2017. *Hats,* London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, p27
[119] Erickson, A. L. (2011). *Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies* 1700–1750. History Workshop Journal, (71), 147.
[120] Mayhew, H., Thompson, E. P & Yeo, Eileen, 1971. *The Unknown Mayhew: Selections from the 'Morning Chronicle', 1849-1850*, London: Merlin Press, p428.
[121] Census records and trade directories suggest that she worked or traded there from the late 1820s until the early 1890s.
[122] Ancestry.com. England & Wales, Christening Index, 1530-1980 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2008.

farmer, and his wife continued to run the farm after his death in 1836.[123] Records show that Robert and Elizabeth's sons became farmers and a farmer's bailiff. However, as the Butlers' had five daughters, the burden on the family was significant if none of them married, and if the income from the farm was insufficient to keep them. It was likely necessity that prompted young Alice Butler to seek a profession.

Figure 31 [left] All Saints Church, Gedling.
[right] Map showing location of the villages of Gedling and Carlton in relation to the centre of Nottingham.

Alice would not have had the same choices afforded to her regarding career as her brothers. Gedling village had a school, which Alice may have attended, but there is no record of the level of education she reached. The employment options for a young woman in this period were largely restricted to teaching (as a schoolmistress or governess), domestic service, factory work, or the needlework professions such as millinery and dressmaking.[124] Milliners entered the profession by way of apprenticeship, and there were no shortage of opportunities in the early-nineteenth century.[125] Apprentices to the trade were in constant demand, as newspaper advertisements attest.[126] No information has come to light regarding Alice Butler's apprenticeship, but there are some clues as to how she began a career that she would eventually continue well into her seventies.

Alice Butler's name first appears in connection with a millinery business in 1828, when she was twenty-two. A trade directory lists 'Whittle and Butler' under the category Milliners and

[123] The Butler family were connected with two large farms in Carlton throughout the nineteenth century.
[124] For more on women and work see Batchelor, J. (2010). *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750-1830*. Manchester University Press.
[125] For in-depth consideration of the apprenticeship system in this period see Joan Lane, 1996. *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914,* London: U.C.L. Press
[126] Fig. 35 is just one example of thousands to be found in newspapers of the period.

Dressmakers, and gives their address as Carlton Street.[127] There is no other information to be found regarding Miss Whittle, other than a newspaper notice from December 1833 indicating that she was leasing a property on the south side of Carlton Street. The last mention of Whittle and Butler together is in a trade directory of 1835. By 1840, though still on Carlton Street, the millinery business is listed as 'Alice Butler'.[128]

Figure 32 Detail from Staveley's Map of Nottingham showing Carlton Street, and location of Alice Butler's shop, Nottingham Map 1831 by Staveley and Wood, Wikimedia Commons [online]

Partnerships in millinery and dressmaking businesses appear to be fairly common in this period, but certainly not the majority. These are discussed further on in this chapter, but concerning Whittle and Butler a lot is open to conjecture. The fact that it is only Miss Whittle's name mentioned as a tenant on Carlton Street and not Alice Butler's suggests that Miss Whittle had more of an interest in the business, at least initially. However, the fact that Alice's father Robert passed away on Carlton Street in 1836 suggests the Butler family did have connections with the address.[129]

[127] (1828-9). *Pigot's National Commercial Directory*. Manchester: J. Pigot and Co.
[128] (1840). *The Nottingham Annual Register containing A New and Corrected Directory*. London: Hamilton, Adams and Co.
[129] Robert Butler passed away at Carlton Street, but was buried at All Hallows Church in Gedling.

Whatever the circumstances, the fact that Alice's surname is listed with Miss Whittle when Alice was aged just twenty-two suggests Alice had either ambition, talent, or both. The usual age of beginning an apprenticeship in this period was fourteen.[130] However, historian Joan Lane suggests that milliners, along with mantua-makers and hairdressers, were trades that required a more sophisticated apprentice.[131] The work was considered to be more highly-skilled, and could also involve interaction with customers. A more youthful candidate might not have possessed the maturity to deal with the highly interpersonal relationships that could develop between milliner and consumer, a topic discussed in the next chapter. Lane also asserts that whilst apprentices to other trades in this period had terms of seven years, milliners and dressmakers more commonly had five-year terms. Henry Mayhew suggests that the term could be two to five years.[132] Apprentices were indentured after the payment of a premium to the employer, the amount of which could vary depending on the milliner, the location of the business, and situation of the apprentice. Apprentices beginning in such a situation would live on the premises and meals and board would be provided. A premium could be waived if the apprentice was to 'live out' and provide their own meals. There is no record of the premium paid for Alice Butler's apprenticeship nor the length of it, but Mayhew records London milliners and dressmakers of this period as requiring between £10-£50.[133] Whether she was in official partnership with Miss Whittle or not, if Alice began her apprenticeship in her teens she must have progressed steadily and soundly in order to have her name in the trade directory by the age of twenty-two.

Alice Butler would have had no choice but to consider Nottingham as the location for her apprenticeship. In the early nineteenth century Gedling village was an easy distance from Nottingham, but had never developed a significant commercial presence. Nearby Carlton had taken up the Nottingham trades of framework knitting (for hosiery) and lace production, but Gedling had largely ignored the industrialisation of the surrounding villages and its inhabitants continued to farm. Demonstrating this lack of development are the population figures. As with other manufacturing towns and cities in England, Nottingham's population grew rapidly over the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1750 the population stood at 11,000, by 1800 it was 29,000 and by 1830 it was 50,000. Carlton had similarly proportioned increases. However, Gedling's population declined over this period. The lure of Nottingham must have been strong for many of its younger inhabitants. Alice's circumstances do align with Henry Mayhew's claim that during the mid-Victorian period (in London at least) three quarters of all dressmakers and milliners came from the countryside.[134]

---

[130] (1843). *Second Report of the Commissioners: Trades and Manufactures*. London: Printed by William Clowes, H.M.S.O. p114
[131] Lane, J., 1996. *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914,* London: U.C.L. Press, p13.
[132] Mayhew, H., Thompson, E. P & Yeo, Eileen, 1971. p429.
[133] Mayhew, H., Thompson, E. P & Yeo, Eileen, 1971. p429.
[134] Mayhew, H., Thompson, E. P & Yeo, Eileen, 1971. p428.

Elizabeth Gaskell describes how a young woman became a dressmakers' apprentice in *Mary Barton*.[135] Mary's father is against her going to work in the factories, which leaves only two options: service, or the dressmaking business. She rejects service wholeheartedly, as in her mind at least, dressmaking is the far superior option. Her father attempts to get her apprenticed, and visits all of the first- and second-rate establishments in the town, but is disheartened when he discovers how high the premiums are. Mary goes out herself the next day, and finds a position with 'a certain Miss Simmonds, milliner and dressmaker', on terms stating that Mary has to work for two years without pay whilst she learns the business. After this term, she is able to dine and have tea there, she would then be paid a small quarterly salary. Her working hours in summer would begin at six, in winter after breakfast, and she must supply her daytime meals for the first two years. Her finishing time each night was at the discretion of Miss Simmonds. Elizabeth Gaskell does not divulge any sources for this detailed information among her letters or diaries, but she may have known some milliners and dressmakers, or put together the circumstances from acquired knowledge. Describing becoming an apprentice in *Mary Barton* certainly hints and alludes to what Gaskell describes more fully in her novel *Ruth*, particularly regarding the fact that her finishing hours each night were at the discretion of the business owner.[136]

Once a young woman had served the term of her apprenticeship, she became what was known in the industry as an 'improver'. These girls and women were very numerous in the trade, and according to Henry Mayhew still paid a premium to their employer as if they were an apprentice.[137] The main difference between an apprentice and an improver were the terms and motives for their employment. Mayhew suggests improvers were engaged for a period of around two years, and were likely to have arrived from elsewhere in order to obtain what was titled 'prestige'. Many improvers ventured to London to obtain prestige, and regional newspaper advertisements regularly advertise the return of young women as 'recently returned from London'.[138] Mayhew suggests that once prestige had been obtained, it was maintained by annual visits to London 'for the fashions'.[139] Accounts from the 1843 Children's Employment Commission suggest London milliners and dressmakers welcomed the continual stream of fresh millinery improvers from the country gladly, as the strenuous workloads in the metropolis wore out their supply of city girls.[140] There is no record of Alice's employment as an improver, nor if she travelled to London to continue her education.

---

[135] Gaskell, E. C., & Munro, R. (2006). *Mary Barton*. London: Nick Hern Books. Ch 2.
[136] See Starr, E. (2002). A Great Engine for Good': The Industry of Fiction in Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Mary Barton' And 'North and South'. *Studies in the Novel, 34*(4), pp385-402.
[137] Mayhew, H., Thompson, E. P & Yeo, Eileen, 1971. p429.
[138] (1828, May 2) *Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*, Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
[139] Mayhew, H., Thompson, E. P & Yeo, Eileen, 1971. p429.
[140] *Second Report of the Commissioners: Trades and Manufactures.* (1843). London: Printed by William Clowes, H.M.S.O., p229

Nottingham in the 1830s

Alice may have been working in Nottingham for a decade by the time Pigot and Co's 1835 Directory of Nottingham described Gedling as 'strikingly picturesque and beautiful' and records the population of the parish of Gedling (which included several nearby village and hamlets) according to the 1831 census was 2,343.[141] There was, by this time, a stark contrast between the two places Alice Butler knew and inhabited. The same census estimated the population of Nottingham to be 50,680. Historian Emrys Bryson related a quote from the period in his *Portrait of Nottingham*, stating that 'Some parts of Nottingham are so very bad as hardly to be surpassed in misery by anything to be found within the entire range of our manufacturing cities'.[142]

Whilst the residents of Gedling village continued to farm, Alice Butler was living her twenties during a tumultuous political period in Nottingham. As she began her career, the employment market in Nottingham was in turmoil. In 1830, half of Nottingham's population of 50,000 people were in receipt of poor relief. In 1831, when she was twenty-five, she may have witnessed the burning of Nottingham Castle, set alight by an angry mob to punish the Duke of Newcastle for his opposition to the Reform Bill. The day before it was set alight, chaos reigned in the town, where windows were smashed and shops were looted. Whittle and Butler's millinery shop might have been amongst them.[143] 1832 brought cholera to Nottingham, and 330 deaths resulted.[144] In some wards of Nottingham, the average age at death was just 22. Emrys Bryson mentions the year 1823, when Alice was aged seventeen and possibly an apprentice, as a brief period of prosperity for Nottingham. She may have been in the right place at the right time.

---

[141] (1835). *Pigot and Co's National Commercial Directory.* Manchester: J. Pigot and Co.
[142] Bryson, E., 1978. *Portrait of Nottingham* (2nd ed., [Portrait books]). London: Hale. p98
[143] If the shop was at all damaged, it did not deter the pair from shop keeping, as they were listed the next year in White's 1832 Trade Directory.
[144] Bryson, E., 1978. p99.

Figure 33 *The Burning of Nottingham Castle, October 1831*
Print by Henry Dawe, after Henry Perlee Parker. Published by G. Simons

In 1832, when she was twenty-six, the Reform Act was passed, and Nottingham marked the occasion with fireworks and a parade of 20,000 people (nearly half the population). And yet, Nottingham had a significant retail presence, despite the poverty and the riots. By 1838, around 30,000 hosiery and lace workers were unemployed across the county.[145] Joan Lane maintains that lacemaking was an overstocked trade, and there is evidence that there had not been any wage rise in lacemaking since 1833.[146]

Robert and Elizabeth Butler might have purposely steered their offspring away from working in the lace trade, and an overcrowded employment market is just one reason why. The other concerns issues mentioned in the Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission (1843). The report gives a negative account of the moral condition of young lace factory workers in Nottingham, and describes conditions in which 'there can be but few states more immediately leading to vice and profligacy' and suggests they 'contribute in no slight degree to the immorality which, according to the opinion universally expressed, prevails to a most awful extent in Nottingham'.[147] Historian Roy Church explains that those who took up framework knitting or went to work in factories did so because they could not afford the premiums attached to an apprenticeship. Robert Butler was likely in a better position to afford a premium, and thus enable his daughter to embark on a millinery career.[148]

---

[145] Engels, F., 1892. *The condition of the working-class in England in 1844.*, London: Allen & Unwin, p97
[146] Lane, J., 1996. *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*, London: U.C.L. Press. p89; Engels, F., 1892. *The condition of the working-class in England in 1844.*, London: Allen & Unwin. p199.
[147] (1843). *Second Report of the Commissioners: Trades and Manufactures.* London: Printed by William Clowes, H.M.S.O. p181
[148] Church, R.A., 1966. *Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town: Victorian Nottingham,1815-1900.*, Cass, p37.

In 1830s Nottingham there were plenty of milliners and dressmakers, suggesting Alice had joined a trade that was in demand. In studying names from trade directories of the period, there appears to be a high turnover of traders, and it is the exception rather than the norm to find any millinery or dressmaking enterprises still trading from one trade directory to the next.[149] There appear to be very few long-term businesses in operation. This high turnover suggests a number of things. It could suggest that some milliners were not very good and their enterprise failed, or it is evidence that they exited the trade to do something else, such as marry. The market was competitive and only the most tenacious or fortunate made it through.

The map of Nottingham from 1831 below, has dots indicating approximate locations of millinery and dressmaking businesses as listed in two trade directories from the 1830s. The green dots represent 1832, the red dots represent 1835. Some businesses are listed in both directories, and these are indicated by a red and green dot in the same place. Alice Butler's shop is indicated by the blue dot.

[149] In four Nottingham trade directories from 1825 to 1840, there are 312 unique names or business listed as milliners and dressmakers. However, 272 of these only appear once, and forty appear twice, eleven appear three times, and only one name appears in all four directories. It should be noted that trade directories are not wholly reliable sources for tracking the number of businesses due to a number of factors, namely inconsistencies in businesses 'opting in'. When compiling the data, it became clear that in some years some businesses were not included (or opted out) as they are listed one year, not the next, and then reappear at the same address in a later directory. However, they are useful to a degree, as it is reasonable to assume that if a business was listed then they were actively trading.

Figure 34 Detail from Staveley's Map of Nottingham showing approximate locations of millinery and dressmaking business as listed in 1832 and 1835 Trade Directories
Map 1831 by Staveley and Wood, Wikimedia Commons [online]

What can be seen by examining the map, is just how many businesses there were in the town, and where they tended to be situated. Alice's premises are located at the top of the Lace Market district. The more salubrious addresses are at Hounds Gate, Castle Gate and Park Street, towards the castle. What can be seen, is that not all businesses are located on a main thoroughfare, and it should be remembered that these dots represent listings in the trade directory. Many more names can be found in the census, and these women are at addresses that appear to be in courts, suggesting they are in the 'back to backs', the style of housing prevalent in many manufacturing cities of the era. Engels asserts that in Nottingham during this period there were 11,000 houses, and 7000-8000 of these were back to backs.[150] It supports the idea that the term 'milliner' did not necessarily mean you had a shop of your own, and that the term was both used for someone who owned a business, and someone who worked for one.

The Millinery Business

Though there is no clear picture of the beginning of Alice Butler's career, it is certain that by her thirties (and probably earlier) she was running a business. Her name appears in trade directories consistently from the 1820s onwards, and census data aligns with these records. However, not every

[150] Engels, F., 1892. *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844.*, London: Allen & Unwin, p49.

woman who trained as a milliner had the option of starting their own shop, nor the inclination. This chapter now examines the circumstances concerning starting a business of one's own, and then the intricacies of running one. It also discusses the other key option in a young woman's life: marriage.

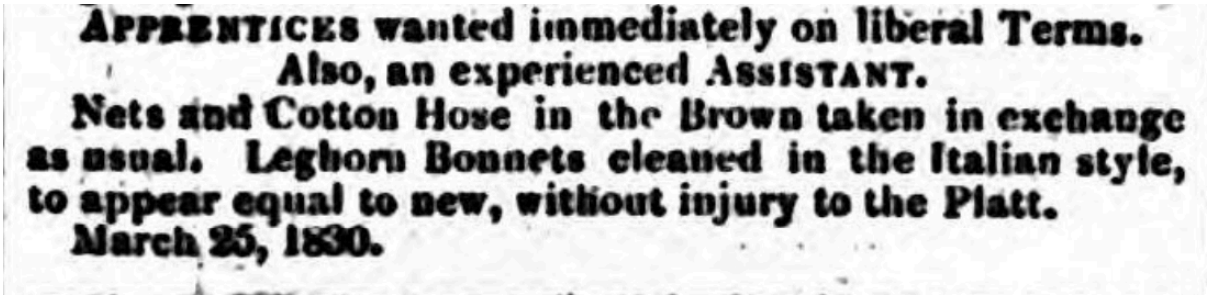

APPRENTICES wanted immediately on liberal Terms.
Also, an experienced ASSISTANT.
Nets and Cotton Hose in the Brown taken in exchange as usual. Leghorn Bonnets cleaned in the Italian style, to appear equal to new, without injury to the Platt.
March 25, 1830.

Figure 35 Nottingham Journal, 27 March 1830
© British Newspaper Archive

There were three distinct ways a woman might come to run a millinery business in the early nineteenth century. To start a business from scratch was a move which required capital and investment. The second option was to join someone already in business and create a partnership, as was probably the case with Alice Butler and Miss Whittle. The third option was to take over a business, from someone who was retiring. Examples of all three situations are frequently referenced in newspaper notices of the period, as will be discussed throughout this chapter.

A young milliner working for an establishment where there was no opportunity for promotion might have felt she had no choice but to leave and try her own hand at the business. There are many instances of women leaving their employer after deciding to set up for themselves. Other new businesses appeared when women moved to town from elsewhere and continued their trade in a new location. Mrs Watson, formerly Miss Cooke of York, was one such woman. She moved to Nottingham when she married and set up her millinery business on Long Row. A few years later she sold up in Nottingham, putting a notice in the paper stating that she was returning to York to succeed her mother in business.[151] As the unmarried Miss Cooke she must have learnt the trade from her mother and decided to set up her own shop in Nottingham when married. Mrs Cooke's business was perhaps far more established and successful than Mrs Watson's newer enterprise in Nottingham. Another example records Mrs Haywood, who set up her business on Stoney Street in 1832.[152] A newspaper notice describes her as 'having recently arrived from London where she has been working as a milliner and dressmaker'. She highlights her London experience, and emphasises she has two

[151] (1832, November 24). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
[152] (1832, November 24). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

sisters still working in the business there, with whom she continues close correspondence. Although the women who placed these notices in newspapers may have done so because it was common practice, it was also a good opportunity for marketing.

There are few details regarding the level of investment required to start a new business. Businesses for sale were advertised in newspapers of the period, but details are not included, ostensibly for reasons of confidentiality. Several works of fiction from the period provide some clues as to what was required. In her novel *Cranford,* Elizabeth Gaskell hints that being prudent with one's finances might be all that was required to begin to trade, at least in a village situation, with the suggestion that the Misses Barker managed to save up enough money working as ladies maids to set up their millinery shop.[153] In George Eliot's story *Janet's Repentance* (1857), widowed Mrs Raynor chooses to keep a millinery establishment, and the income she earns is enough to pay for the education of her daughter, plus some more to save for her retirement, however, no details are forthcoming on how she set the business up.[154] Charles Dickens, in his novel *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839) references the topic with regard to Mrs Nickleby and her daughter Kate, suggesting Mrs Nickleby knew the best way to start a business was either with capital or an advantageous marriage.[155]

Whether it was a milliner's initial intention or not, the opportunity to take over a business must have appeared from time to time when the proprietor retired and there was no family member to take over. Proprietors might even have been training their successors with such a takeover in mind, and provided some level of business mentoring before announcing their retirement. Misses A and J Brown advertised in the *Nottingham Review* in January 1831 (see Fig. 36), explaining they were taking over from Mrs W Roe, and would hope to renew their current clientele. If they had worked with Mrs Roe for any length of time they would be familiar to her customers and might rely on that relationship to make sure their takeover was successful. Further examination of similar newspaper notices, reveals that Mrs Roe's former superintendent, Miss Hardy, set up her own establishment around the same time. This demonstrates two things, firstly, that Miss Hardy was not one of the intended inheritors of Mrs Roe's business, and secondly, that it was Mrs Roe's retirement that was the prompt for her to start her own business.

---

[153] Gaskell, E.C. (2017). *Cranford.* Newburyport: Open Road Media. Ch 7
[154] Eliot, G., & Lodge, D. (n.d.). *Scenes of Clerical Life.* Penguin. Although the novel was published in 1857, the action was set in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.
[155] Dickens, C., & Phiz. (1950). *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*. Oxford University Press. Ch 11

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN declining the business of MILLINER and DRESS-MAKER, in favor of Mesdames A. and J. Brown, Mrs. ROE recalls with grateful feeling the kind support she has received from her many Friends and the Public in general, for which she offers her heartfelt thanks, trusting that her Successors will receive the same patronage which has been so liberally extended to herself.

Long-row Dec. 31, 1830.

The Misses A. and J BROWN

PRESENT their grateful acknowledgments to the Ladies of Nottingham and the neighbourhood, for the liberal encouragement they have received, and inform them, that they have succeeded Mrs. W. ROE, who has declined business in their favor.

A. and J. BROWN have removed to the House lately occupied by Mrs. W. ROE, where they respectfully solicit a continuance of that patronage which it will be their earnest endeavour to merit.

Long-row, Nottingham, Jan. 1, 1831.

Figure 36 Nottingham Journal, 1 January 1831

Millinery partnerships did split, and once again newspapers provide the evidence. Some notices made sure to point out that the split was amicable, such as when Miss Hardy and Mrs Leeds of Nottingham announced their end of their partnership in 1835, only four years after entering into one.[156] Miss Hardy went on to trade alone, advertising that same year from the address that the dissolved partnership had traded from. There could be a variety of reasons for separating. One party might have more ambition than the other, or age might have had been a factor, and one party might have retired. Another reason was marriage; one party might receive an offer and decide to give up working. Regardless of the reason for the split, these spin-off businesses stood a better chance of survival than someone starting from scratch, as it was more likely they possessed all necessary equipment and stock, and possibly even an established clientele.

[156] (1831, November 11). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

Running a Business – Workforce

In the 1841 census Alice Butler, aged thirty-five and unmarried, is listed for the first time at her Carlton Street address.[157] She subsequently reappears at this location for every census up until 1891, an achievement not matched by any other dressmaker or milliner in Nottingham during that century.[158] This part of the chapter examines the factors contributing to her longevity in trade, and the challenges she faced as the proprietor of a shop. There were many elements she would have had to contend with, including both the day to day management of the shop, all the way to longer-term outlooks. None of these were necessarily conscious actions or decisions, in the way that organisations today would categorise various aspects of managing a business, such as marketing. As a businesswoman, Alice Butler's duties included (but were not limited to) buying, making and selling her stock, managing a team of apprentices and other workers, attending to visual merchandising and other marketing tactics, keeping abreast of trends and fashions, customer service, and to a degree, shop security.[159]

Amy-Louise Erickson quotes from Joseph Collyer's 1761 *Parents and Guardians Directory*, stating that a capital of £400-£500 was the amount needed to start a business in the late eighteenth century. Rental of a shop premises was a primary consideration if a woman was not running a business from home. The approximate yearly rental of Alice Butler's shop in 1833 was £25, and specifies the building was a substantial dwelling house with a shop in front. The milliners' shop needed stock, and there were a number of ways the milliner could obtain it. The milliner could observe or be taught how her mistress ordered new stock when she was an apprentice or improver, and though there is no specific evidence to show how they ordered it, many newspaper advertisements state 'country milliners supplied', indicating they were wholesalers who supplied smaller establishments.[160] Another source of stock was buying at auction from proprietors who were insolvent or retiring, and these situations are advertised as well. Comprehensive lists of what was being auctioned regularly feature.[161]

The number of staff employed by a milliner depended greatly on both the size of the establishment and the location. It is impossible to know how many workers Alice Butler employed, but census data

---

[157] Alice Butler. 1841. Census return for Carlton Street, Nottingham, St Mary-Byron-District 1, Nottinghamshire. Public Record Office: HO 107/869/1, folio 7, p. 7.
[158] 1841 Census taken on 6 June.
[159] Alice Butler had first-hand experience of this when a theft occurred at her shop in 1859.
[160] (1838, May 4). Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
[161] (1834, 27 October), Morning Advertiser (London), Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

provides some of the names of the women who worked for her. In 1841, the other occupants at her Carlton Street address are her older sister Jane, and eighteen-year-old Charlotte Evans, and all three women give their occupation as milliner.[162] There is no further information regarding Charlotte Evans, but Jane Butler's name appears with her sister's in an 1844 trade directory, where they are listed as milliners and lace dealers.

In the 1851 census Alice has two workers 'living in': fifteen-year-old apprentice Hannah Dutton, and twenty-two year old dressmaker Sophia Aulton.[163] Hannah came from Sutton Bonnington, a village in Nottinghamshire. It appears she was the daughter of a farmer, beyond that there is no further information. There is more information on Sophia Aulton, who was born in Nottingham and had family nearby. She did not continue a millinery career, as newspapers and census records reveal she briefly ran her own business in Nottingham (in small wares, toys etc.), but when it failed and she was declared bankrupt, she moved to Leeds and later married a widower more than twenty years her senior. Despite a respectable birth (her father is referred to as William Aulton, Esq.) she appears to have worked hard her entire life, right up until her death in 1902. Sophia's story is included here as evidence that the career trajectory for a worker in a milliners' shop was far from predictable.

In 1861 and 1871 it appears Alice does not have any live-in workers, though by 1881 her twenty-three year old niece Elizabeth Butler, a dressmaker, has come to live with her.[164] Although in this census Alice still states her occupation as milliner, she is now aged seventy-five. Elizabeth is listed as Alice's niece in two censuses (1881 and 1891) but the exact relationship is less clear.[165] Elizabeth is still living with Alice in 1891, but Alice has presumably stopped working at this stage, as she states she is living on her own means.[166] Elizabeth Butler did not continue to work as a milliner after she ceased to live with Alice, instead she went back to the family farm in Carlton to live and work alone with two sisters. None of these three Butler sisters ever married, a curious coincidence seeing as only one out of five of the older generation of Butler sisters ever married (Jane).

---

[162] Alice and Jane's mother, the widowed Elizabeth Butler was also present at the address that night, and states her occupation as farmer's wife. It is presumed Elizabeth Butler did not normally reside at Carlton Street as later censuses record her living elsewhere.
[163] Alice Butler. 1851. *Census return for Carlton Street, Nottingham, St Mary-Byron-District 1, Nottinghamshire.* Public Record Office: HO 107/2132, folio 400, p. 4.
[164] Alice Butler. 1861. *Census return for Carlton Street, Nottingham, St Mary-Byron-District 10, Nottinghamshire.* Public Record Office: RG 9/2462, folio 110, p. 24.
Alice Butler. 1871. *Census return for Carlton Street, Nottingham, St Mary-Byron-District 10, Nottinghamshire.* Public Record Office: RG 10/3521, folio 121, p. 25.
Alice Butler. 1881. *Census return for Carlton Street, Nottingham, St Mary-Byron-District 14, Nottinghamshire.* Public Record Office: RG 11/3360, folio 93, p. 4.
[165] Elizabeth's father was Samuel Butler, who had a farm in Carlton. However, Alice did not have any siblings named Samuel.
[166] Alice Butler. 1891. *Census return for Carlton Street, Nottingham*, St Mary-Nottingham North East-District 45, Nottinghamshire. Public Record Office: RG 12/2700, folio 43, p. 1. Alice also curiously states she is a widow, but there is no record of her ever marrying.

There is also the possibility Alice had day workers who did not lodge with her, but this would only have been after the 1840s. According to Henry Mayhew, day workers were hired for busy periods, for as much as eight or nine months of the year.[167] This system of employment was beneficial for young women who still lived at home with their parents and enjoyed the income as 'nice pocket-money', but for the women who depended on the work for their living it was a disadvantage.[168] Henry Mayhew claims this form of casual work came into being after the exertions of the Association for the Aid and Benefit of Dressmakers and Milliners, an institution that was formed after the Children's Employment Commission of 1841.

Not all milliners lived on the premises, and it is difficult to discern from census records exactly what the proportion was. Some census records show families with daughters still at home, who are aged in their mid-teens and hold a different occupation to their parents, such as Priscilla Smith, aged fifteen who lived on Stoney Street in Nottingham, whose father was an accountant, or Eliza Wood, also aged fifteen and living on Cross Street with her family, whose father was a butcher.[169] This data suggests they already lived in town and did not need to lodge with their employer. Other family groups suggest apprentices or day workers lived with them as lodgers. One straw bonnet maker, Matilda Barrow aged fifteen, was listed as living on Goose Gate, Nottingham with John and Elizabeth Greasley, along with another apprentice of the same age (trade unknown), named Frances Turner.[170] Unlike subsequent censuses the 1841 census does not specify how people were related to one another, so a lot is open to conjecture. There are many possibilities, but the evidence serves to underline the idea that there was not one universal system that all workers and millinery establishments adhered to.

Working Conditions

There is a wealth of information relating to working conditions for milliners and dressmakers in this period, obtained from the Appendix to the Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission in 1843. In brief, the Second Report is scathing of the conditions and places most of the blame on the

---

[167] Mayhew, p434
[168] Mayhew, p434
[169] Priscilla Smith. 1841. *Census return for Stoney Street, Nottingham*, St Mary-Byron-District 4, Nottinghamshire. Public Record Office: HO 107/869/2, folio 15, p. 25.; Eliza Wood. 1841. *Census return for Cross Street, Nottingham*, St Mary-Byron-District 7, Nottinghamshire. Public Record Office: HO 107/869/2, folio 15, p. 25.
[170] Matilda Barrow. 1841. *Census return for Goose Gate, Nottingham*, St Mary-Byron-District 4, Nottinghamshire. Public Record Office: HO 107/869/2, folio 3, p. 1.

consumers and their unreasonable timeframes for clothing commissions. It explains the milliners and dressmakers are beholden to the power of the consumers, and so take on too much work and insist on late working hours to get the garments done. The impact of the report was significant, and led to the formation of the institution known as the Association for the Aid and Benefit of Dressmakers and Milliners, after which several changes took place in the workplace, in order to improve working conditions. One of these changes was the advent of day workers, casual staff who could be brought in at busy times to help with the workload and thus stop late night working. The change did not bring about reform completely, as when Henry Mayhew writes about milliners in the 1860s, it sounds like in some places conditions have not changed at all.[171]

The report contains a paragraph on Nottingham establishments, which is a condensed version of three separate witness statements taken by R.D. Grainger:

> The evidence shows that, with few exceptions, this business is carried on in the same manner in other towns and cities as in the metropolis, and that the condition of the Young People engaged in it is generally very similar. In Nottingham the regular hours of work are from eight A.M. till eight P.M., but 'in the busy season, which here is from May till October, there are no set hours; they often begin at five A.M. and work till eleven P.M.; at other times they begin later in the morning and work till twelve or one A.M.'. 'When witness was learning the business, in the busy season generally sat up till two or three in the morning, having begun at eight A.M. The same late hours are kept from November till the end of January. This was at the first house in Nottingham. Her health was so seriously injured that for some years it was not restored. It is not at all unusual in the first houses in the country towns to work these long hours.[172]

When the original witness statements are examined, it is true that each of them acknowledge the long hours in the industry do exist, but none of them record anything as severe as the London witnesses, many of whom admit to working through the night and into the morning during busy seasons.[173] However, of the three Nottingham witnesses, only one admits to working hours past midnight, and even states that that was at a previous employer. The conditions at two of the Nottingham establishments do not appear to be too bad at all. The hours are long by modern standards, but the workers are well-fed and one witness notes that they have morning prayers and all attend chapel regularly.

Working conditions are also described by Elizabeth Gaskell in her novel *Ruth*. The titular character is apprenticed for five years to Mrs Mason, a demanding but not unkind employer. The opening chapter

---

[171] Mayhew, p434
[172] (1843). *Second Report of the Commissioners: Trades and Manufactures.* London: Printed by William Clowes, H.M.S.O, p119.
[173] (1843). Appendix to the *Second Report of the Commissioners: Trades and Manufactures.* London: Printed by William Clowes, H.M.S.O, p229.

sees Ruth Hilton and her colleagues still at their worktables at two o'clock in the morning. They are finishing dresses to be worn to a hunt ball the next evening, and Ruth, who has only just begun her five-year tenure, is overwhelmed by the intensity of the experience. She breaks down a little as they all head up to bed, and is consoled by her workmate Jenny:

> 'Oh! how shall I get through five years of these terrible nights! in that close room! and in that oppressive stillness! which lets every sound of the thread be heard as it goes eternally backwards and forwards,' sobbed out Ruth, as she threw herself on her bed, without even undressing herself.
> 'Nay, Ruth, you know it won't be always as it has been to-night. We often get to bed by ten o'clock; and by-and-by you won't mind the closeness of the room. You're worn out to-night, or you would not have minded the sound of the needle; I never hear it. Come, let me unfasten you,' said Jenny.
> 'What is the use of undressing? We must be up again and at work in three hours.'[174]

The dressmaker's establishment is key to the plot of Gaskell's novel, her take on the subject of the 'fallen woman'. This, along Charles Dickens' description of a dressmaker's/milliner's workroom in his novel *Nicholas Nickleby*, are the most prominent examples available with which to compare to the commission reports. Gaskell's description of the working conditions in *Ruth* does align with the commission reports, with regards to the long hours and little sleep, therefore supporting the authenticity of her depiction.[175]

The conditions described in the Commission reports are problematic to evaluate as there is no clear indication of the conditions under which each witness was interviewed. Positive witness statements could have been made under duress, and negative ones could come from employees holding a grudge. Regardless of this, the data contained within the statements is valuable, and worthy of much closer attention than can be gone into for this study. Further research on this topic would bring a more accurate indication of working conditions than can be represented here, however, it would seem that Nottingham, though probably less notorious than the capital for working conditions, had its fair share of negative situations.

Success in Business - Competition, Marketing, Reputation

Location has a lot to do with the success of a business. Unless they were the sole trader in a small village, such as the Misses' Barkers in *Cranford*, millinery shops faced competition from rival

---

[174] Gaskell, E. C. (1967). *Ruth*. London: Dent. Ch 1
[175] For more on the social significance of Gaskell's novel *Ruth* see Brian Crick, 1976. Mrs. Gaskell's "Ruth": A Reconsideration. *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature, 9*(2), pp85-104.

businesses. It is possible that the location of Alice Butler's shop on Carlton Street played a large part in her longevity in trade. Carlton Street was one of the larger thoroughfares in Nottingham, a town which in this period still had many of its narrow medieval alleyways and passages. An article in the *Nottingham Review* from 29 April 1836 describes nearby Goose Gate (an extension of Carlton Street) as 'one of the best paved streets in Nottingham', suggesting it was an area of moderate affluence.[176] The 1841 census also reveals Alice Butler had a female servant living on the premises, suggesting a situation of some comfortability. Analysis of their neighbours in the census reveals many others also employed servants. Having a relatively salubrious address assisted in having a more affluent customer frequent your shop.

Figure 37 Carlton Street South Side c1900 Image © Picture Nottingham
Alice Butler's premises are possibly the building to the left of the main building in the image. The prominent building with the arched windows was built in the late nineteenth-century, after buildings were demolished on Carlton Street to make a thoroughfare to Fletcher Gate. Campion Cycle Depot sits on the corner of Carlton Street and Fletcher Gate.

Figure 38 Carlton Street South Side, February 2020. Image source: author's collection.
The most likely location of Alice Butler's shop is indicated by the arrow. The white building is a public house and has been since at least the early 1800s. The buildings on the south side of Carlton Street all date from the late eighteenth-century.

[176] (1836, April 29). *Nottingham Review.* Retrieved from https://britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

Figure 39 Carlton Street c1860 © Picture Nottingham
This view of Carlton Street is taken from the south side looking to the north east, and is quite possibly taken from or near to Alice Butler's shop. The curved light fittings projecting from the building in the bottom right corner belong to the Lord Nelson public house.

It is assumed Alice Butler did not own the property, as there is evidence suggesting that when trading under the name Whittle and Butler they were tenants.[177] The exact building Alice traded from and lived in is difficult to positively ascertain as trade directories rarely gave street numbers, and census entries show the building number changed frequently. However, as the census records consistently list her business as two doors away from the public house, it can safely be assumed that it was one of two buildings. Alice Butler's neighbours were also in occupations of some regard, the most notable being bookseller and publisher William Dearden, who published a *History, Topography and Directory of Nottingham* in 1834, along with an engraving of Nottingham's market square in 1837 (Fig.40).

[177] (1833, December 6). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

Figure 40 *Detail from Market Square, Nottingham.*
Published by William Dearden, Carlton Street, Nottingham, 1837.

The engraving is very detailed and features names on the buildings, all of which can be found in trade directories of the period. The businesses listed are mostly grocers, but also feature tailors, haberdashers and hosiers.

The successful milliner would have to be aware of her competitors in order to stay ahead of the game. Alice was not the only retailer of headwear situated on Carlton Street, as the 1840 directory records straw bonnet maker Ettia Lees trading nearby.[178] However, as transportation improved and travel between towns and cities became easier, as well as from rural to urban areas, consumers had more choice in the places they frequented for shopping. Milliners in the more populated places could not get complacent and would have had to keep providing what the shopper originally came into town for. The milliner needed to show that they were offering accessories a woman could not make at home. Complicated drawn bonnets and the shapes in both straw and buckram were probably beyond the capabilities of a lot of home sewers. Repairs and minor alterations could be contended with, but some bonnets and hats required specialist tools and equipment which would be impractical for the amateur to invest in. Items such as wooden blocks, still known today as hat blocks, were used to shape bonnet crowns, especially straw ones. The block in Fig. 41 (right), whilst not verified as a block from that era, was used by milliner Josephine Willis to make a reproduction straw bonnet that reproduced a shape common in the 1820s and 1830s.

[178] (1840). *The Nottingham Annual Register containing A New and Corrected Directory*. London: Hamilton, Adams and Co.

Figure 41 [left] Straw bonnet, made in 2020 by theatrical milliner Josephine Willis, using a wooden bonnet block for the crown [right]
This bonnet is a faithful interpretation of an early nineteenth century style using modern materials. A natural straw capeline has been used and approximates the appearance of the Leghorn bonnets. However, the weaving technique for this type of capeline was not introduced to Europe until at least 1835, according to Madeleine Ginsburg.[179]
Both images courtesy of Josephine Willis.

Milliners shops offered services such as bonnet cleaning and renewal, services that they could emphasise were 'specialist' and therefore worth investing in and not trying at home.[180] There is evidence that some milliners in towns and cities kept hat and bonnet making supplies for country milliners. This was useful for the country milliner, who would then not have to travel far to purchase materials, but also lucrative for the town milliners who supplied others in their trade.[181] Alison Adburgham references two women in London named Mrs Smith and Madame La Poulli, who ran a business selling full size patterns to milliners and dressmakers for £1.[182] Their advertisements emphasised that they would only sell to trade, a tactic which helped to ensure consumers continued to visit shops. For reasons of speed, as well as fashion, milliners appear to have stocked pre-made bonnet shapes that were constructed by specialist manufacturers.[183]

---

[179] Ginsburg, M., 1990. *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*, London: Studio Editions, p81.
[180](1830, March 27). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
[181] (1838, May 4). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
[182]Adburgham, A., 1964. *Shops and Shopping 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought Her Clothes*, London: Allen & Unwin., p39.
[183] 'Original Bonnet Shapes Manufactory in Ireland' (1837, March 2). *Saunder's News-Letter,* Dublin. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/ This advertisement specifically lists Parisian, London, French and Coarse Willow bonnet shapes.

Advertising and marketing were certainly something the successful milliner would have paid attention to in some shape or form, whether it was consciously done or not. Advertisements were frequently posted in newspapers of the period, and in Nottingham in the 1830s it appears to be the same few businesses choosing to advertise. Some, like Alice Butler, appear to have never advertised at all. No evidence has yet come to light of what the perception was of businesses who advertised versus ones who did not. Word of mouth was an important form of marketing, as a good reputation was vital to remain in business for any length of time. It appears reputations were valued enough to want to be carried over into new business enterprises, such as the case of Mrs Roe in Nottingham. Milliners A and J Brown continually remind their customers in their newspaper notices that they were 'successors to Mrs Roe', many years after their takeover of the business.[184] Miss Hardy, of Leeds and Hardy, also makes sure the women of Nottingham know that she was 'late Superintendent at Mrs W Roe's'.[185]

Visual merchandising and window dressing also needed consideration, as these were key to getting consumers to notice your shop, even if they did not necessarily enter. The appearance of millinery showrooms is examined in more detail in Chapter Three – The Model, as these were spaces where the milliner and consumer interacted together.

Marriage – A Lot to Lose

Marriage is an important factor to consider when analysing millinery businesses of this period, as there were very different circumstances if matrimony was embarked upon or not. Many young milliners may have used marriage to exit their career early. Their desire to work might only have ever been for the few years before they received an offer of marriage, and could forget millinery and embark on family life instead. Terrible working conditions might have prompted some to make the move more quickly. Some apprentices and improvers may have believed they would meet a young man in the shop itself, such as sixteen-year-old milliner Flora Pierson in Fanny Burney's *The Wanderer*, who is seduced by young baronet Sir Lyell Sycamore after first meeting him in Miss Matson's millinery shop.[186]

---

[184] (1831, January 1). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
[185] (1831, May 21). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

[186] Burney, F., Doody, M., Mack, R. L., & Sabor, P. (1991). *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties*. Book 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Outside of fiction, milliners' names regularly appeared in marriage notices in newspapers. Researching a small sample of these from Nottingham did not reveal any women that had their own business (i.e. listed in a trade directory) so it could be safely conjectured that these women worked for milliners in their establishments. There is no evidence that Alice Butler ever married, but in 1845, Alice's sister Jane married Joseph Booth, a lace manufacturer who lived in Bramcote, just outside of Nottingham. The firm of Booth and Taylor had premises around the corner from Carlton Street, on Pilcher Gate. Joseph Booth was a widower, with no children, and they were of a similar age.[187] Jane moved to his house at Bramcote, and later Stapleford, both small villages to the west of Nottingham. What is curious that Alice and Jane were listed as milliners and lace dealers in 1844, and a year later Jane married a lace manufacturer, which might suggest they met in the Carlton Street shop.

Women in this period might have gained a husband when they married, but they surrendered many freedoms with regards to their rights and their property. Widows had the strongest position in many respects, as they no longer had to answer to their husbands, and they had many more rights than an unmarried woman when it came to owning property. A married woman did not even own the clothes on her own body, as is evidenced in many Old Bailey court records when bonnets, stolen from the wearer's living quarters (or even her head), are listed as the property of their husbands.[188] This law was even more significant in relation to business matters. If a spinster owned and ran a business, and then married, her new husband automatically acquired all of it. It was then his to pass onto whomever he decided, and his widow did not automatically inherit it back if he passed away.

This situation is examined in *Nicholas Nickleby* when Madame Mantalini sells her business to her head of workroom, Miss Knag. After some investigation Miss Knag discovers Mr Mantalini has not only been mismanaging the business finances, but also partaking in some indiscretions of a personal nature. Miss Knag imparts all of this knowledge to her employer, as an extra inducement for selling her the business. Miss Knag must have known that Madame would demand a separation (which she does, in the presence of Ralph Nickleby) but Ralph Nickleby reminds Madame Mantalini that 'married women have no property', underlining the fact that if she does demand a separation from her husband, she loses the business she built herself. Miss Knag is very pleased with the outcome, not only because she now owns the business, but she prides herself on not having ever succumbed to matrimony, thus saving herself from Madame's situation.[189] Victorian historicist Joseph W. Childers suggests *Nicholas Nickleby* is a novel 'fundamentally shaped by the activity of commerce'.[190]

---

[187] The year they married, 1845, Booth turned forty-four, and Jane turned forty-one
[188] MARY RIORDEN, Theft > simple larceny, 15th April 1830.
[189] Dickens, C., & Phiz. (1950). *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*. Oxford University Press. Ch 44
[190] Childers, J. (1996). "Nicholas Nickleby's" Problem of "Doux Commerce". *Dickens Studies Annual, 25*, p49.

Madame Mantalini's millinery establishment could therefore be seen as a key inclusion for Dickens to make comparisons with other commercial enterprises within the novel, such as those of Ralph Nickleby and the Cheeryble brothers. It gives more context as to why Dickens goes into so much detail when describing the Mantalinis, though this could also suggest exaggeration on his part, exploiting key ideas for entertainment value. Therefore, the Mantalini establishment may not be as robust in its significance as a fictional example of a millinery business, but there are still some references less susceptible to exaggeration that can be examined and evaluated.

There is evidence that some women did not immediately give up their businesses upon marriage, as is seen in a notice placed in a Nottingham newspaper by Mrs Henrietta Carter nee Winrow, in 1831.[191] In February of that year she married John Carter, and in the same edition of the paper that their marriage is announced, Mrs Carter places a notice informing the residents of Nottingham that she taking over the millinery business formerly belonging to the Misses Clough. She includes her maiden name for reference. Neither the Misses Clough, nor Mrs Carter are found in the newspapers in any other capacity, so it is not known how long Mrs Carter continued to trade.

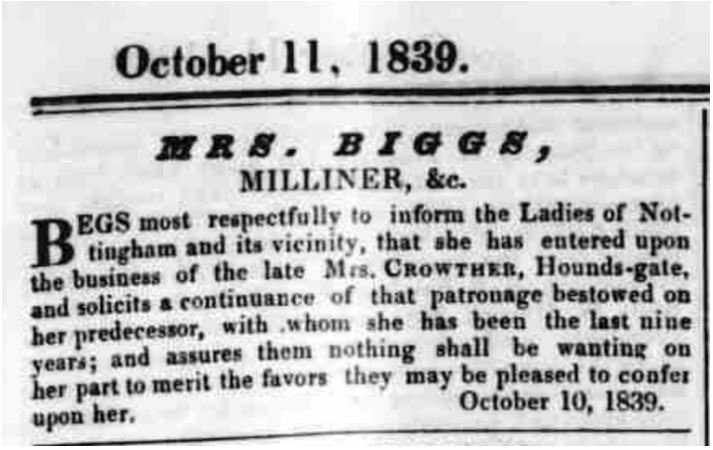
Figure 42 [left] '*Modiste'* 1827-1829, Print by S. Paul, Paris,
© The British Museum, Museum Number 1990,1109.120
[right] '*Ex-modiste'* 1826, Print by Charles Philipon, Paris.
© The British Museum, Museum Number 1861,1012.757

[191](1831, February). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

Shutting Up Shop

Ceasing to trade as a milliner could happen under a number of circumstances, and the first discussed here is retirement. Some milliners would not have been able to retire early due to financial reasons, and would have continued working well into their old age. Indeed, Alice Butler stated millinery as her occupation at the age of seventy-five. Other milliners might have made enough money and decided to stop working. In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*, the Miss Barkers little village millinery shop closes after Miss Barker dies, and Miss Betty discovers 'their profits and income were found to be such that [she] was justified in shutting up shop and retiring from business'.[192]

Some milliners do not appear to have made it as far as retirement, as in the case of Mrs Crowther, a Nottingham milliner who had a shop on Hounds Gate. Mrs Crowther died in 1839 and the business was taken over by Mrs Biggs, who had been working for her since 1830. Mrs Biggs took out an advertisement in the *Nottingham Review* to inform her customers of the change.[193]



October 11, 1839.

MRS. BIGGS,

MILLINER, &c.

BEGS most respectfully to inform the Ladies of Nottingham and its vicinity, that she has entered upon the business of the late Mrs. CROWTHER, Hounds-gate, and solicits a continuance of that patronage bestowed on her predecessor, with whom she has been the last nine years; and assures them nothing shall be wanting on her part to merit the favors they may be pleased to confer upon her.

October 10, 1839.

Figure 43 Nottingham Review, 11 October 1839, British Newspaper Archives

There are frequent announcements in the newspapers of the period of insolvencies and bankrupts, and milliners are commonly amongst them. There are no insolvencies or bankrupts amongst Nottingham milliners in the 1820s or 1830s, but many in London and other towns and cities across England.[194] The system of credit was the ruin of many milliners and similar businesses, as their customers did not always pay their bills.

---

[192] Gaskell, E.C. (2017). *Cranford.* Newburyport: Open Road Media., Ch 7
[193] (1839, October 11). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
[194] The insolvency of milliner Eleanor Hoggan of Newark is the most significant example from Nottinghamshire, and recorded in *Nottingham Journal,* 26 June 1830

In 1827, milliners Byrne and Lindley advertised their new stock in the *Nottingham Advertiser*, but by late the next year, they had published that their partnership was now dissolved 'by mutual consent'.[195] The very next advertisements are from both women, advertising their new establishments, at new addresses, but neither continued to work as milliners for very long afterwards. Martha Lindley diversifies her career and is soon seen to be offering classes in 'Japanning, gilding and embossing, painting on wood, glass &c, also several specimens of drawing and Poonah painting'.[196] In 1834 an advertisement appears stating her household contents are advertised to be auctioned off as she is 'declining housekeeping'. Miss Byrne features in a similar notice in 1833, when an auction takes place of 'all her valuable household furniture, millinery stock in trade, and other effects' at her abode near Bromley House on Angel Row.[197] It is unclear as to whether or not Miss Byrne has passed away, is moving away or is retiring. However, the fact that Byrne and Lindley's dissolved partnership is advertised reinforces the idea that their business, and likely many others, were run in an official registered capacity.

As has been mentioned, in the 1891 census Alice Butler described her occupation as 'living on own means'.[198] She was evidently still living at Carlton Street with her niece Elizabeth, and was aged eighty-five. Between 1891 and 1894 she moved to her sister Jane's home, Cliff House in Stapleford, which is where she died on January 1st 1895, at the age of eighty-nine. She died a relatively wealthy woman, leaving effects to the value of £1508 6s.[199] Without knowing what she inherited upon the death of her parents, or any other relatives, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what component of her estate was earned, and what was otherwise, however, as one of eight children her inheritance was unlikely to be sizable. There is also no information as to what capital she began with so her success can really only be speculated upon.

---

[195] (1828, October 4). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

[196] A type of oriental painting or tinting, executed with a Poonah brush, from Poonah in India. The Young Lady's Book 1829 p469

[197] (1833, August 16). *Nottingham Journal and General Advertiser*. Retrieved from https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

[198] Alice Butler. 1891. *Census return for Carlton Street, Nottingham, St Mary-Nottingham North East-District 45, Nottinghamshire.* Public Record Office: RG 12/2700, folio 43, p. 1.

[199] Roughly £175,000 today. Source: Probate Records, January 1895, Retrieved from https://www.ancestry.co.uk/


BUTLER.—On the 1st inst., at her sister's residence, Cliff House, Stapleford, Alice, fourth daughter of the late Robert Butler, Marshall Hills, Carlton.

Figure 44 *Death notices*, Nottinghamshire Guardian, 5 January 1895
Marshall Hills Farm is the property Alice's nieces, including Elizabeth Butler, continued to manage until the early 20th century.

Alice Butler was buried in Stapleford Cemetery near Nottingham, in a plot next to her sister Jane's husband, Joseph Booth.[200] Jane died in 1898 at the age of ninety-eight, and was buried with her husband, and next to her sister. Alice's headstone reads:

In loving memory of Alice Butler who died January 1st 1895 aged 89 years.
'Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him'.

On the headstone of Jane and Joseph Booth:

In affectionate memory of Jane, widow of Joseph Booth who died June 23rd 1898 aged 98 years.
'His servant shall serve him'.
In affectionate remembrance of Joseph Booth who died July 19th 1882 aged 81 years.
'Trusting in the merits of his redeemer'.

Many of the Butler family death notices appear in Nottingham newspapers, and each notice uses language that is demonstrative of warmth and affection. The family appear to have been close and cared for one another. Alice and Jane's parents, Robert and Elizabeth, were much beloved. Alice and Jane would not have entered the millinery trade without their assistance, and most importantly, their approval. Alice's wealth upon her death is also significant, as it could be conjectured that a long life of hard work meant her later years were easier.

This chapter has demonstrated that the occupation of milliner is more intricate than has been previously presented. By analysing new evidence relating to business practices, it reveals more about the skillset required for milliners than has previously been attributed, and also presented a perspective of regional milliners that is missing from current literature. It has shown that the sources regarding milliners' reputations do not present a very balanced view regarding women, and that further research could be done in this area seeking women's voices and their thoughts on the topic. In addition, this chapter has shown that there is more research to be done in analysing the milliners' and dressmakers' witness statements from the Children's Employment Commission reports, as the individual statements do not always align with the condensed paragraphs presented in the main report, and it could be that

[200] Source: https://staplefordcemeterymemorials.wordpress.com/ Section E, Row EX, Graves EX7 and EX9.

they have never been systematically analysed since they were first published in the 1840s. A task such as this would bring to light even more information about the millinery profession in this period, and enhance our knowledge of the milliner even further.

Chapter Three – The Model

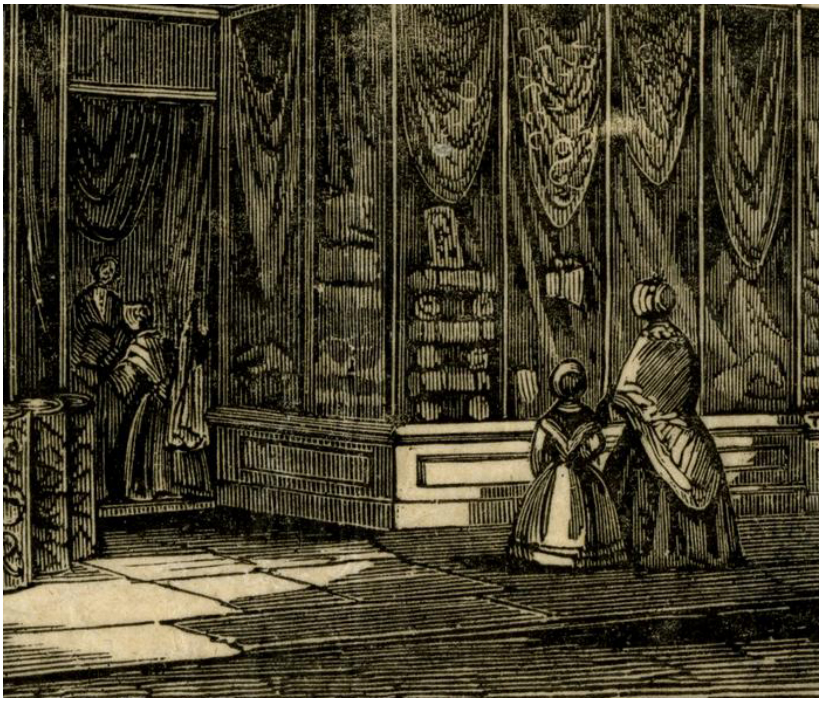


Figure 45 *Detail from Advertisement for Bryant's Millinery, Drapery and Haberdashery,* Canterbury c1810

This final chapter examines the role of the consumer, with regards to both the bonnet in fashion and the milliner. This chapter draws from dress historian Lou Taylor's *The Study of Dress History* (2002), specifically the chapter titled 'Social and economic history and culture' with regard to analysis of consumption during this period. This dissertation purposely keeps the focus of this chapter on the so-called 'basic questions' Taylor asserts are necessary to answer before 'key issues of the relationships between demand-production-consumption' can be unravelled.[201] Taylor declares it is essential to know 'what goods were purchased by whom, what motivated choice, how long consumers used artefacts in the home and what consumers felt about their goods'.[202] The study of consumption in relation to dress is reasonably well-established, particularly regarding the eighteenth-century, and the late nineteenth-century.[203] Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell examines consumption in relation to the eighteenth-century milliner in her 2002 article 'The Face of Fashion: Milliners in Eighteenth-Century Visual Culture', as does Chloe Wigston Smith in her 2018 article, 'The Haberdasher's Plot: The Romance of Small Trade in Frances Burney's Fiction'. Serena Dyer considers the topic in her recent

[201] Taylor, L., 2002. *The Study of Dress History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p64.
[202] Taylor, 2002, p71.
[203] See Taylor, 2002, p69.

publication *Material Lives: Women Makers and Consumer Culture in the 18th Century* (2021), though her focus in this text is more about women who both made and consumed, as opposed to proprietors of shops and millinery businesses. John Styles's *The Dress of the People* (2007) also focuses largely on the eighteenth-century, but his unusual (at the time) sources for finding information on garments of the lower- and middle-classes proved hugely influential whilst researching this dissertation. The section named 'Bonnet Prices' uses data taken from court records of the Old Bailey, much in the same way that Styles examined pawn shop records to glean information. Clair Hughes looks specifically at millinery consumption in *Hats* (2017). In particular, Hughes examines how different shopping habits, starting in the seventeenth-century, evolved and affected hat fashions all the way through to the modern day.[204] Wendy Gamber examines the North American angle, with a focus from 1860 onwards.

The study of consumption in relation to dress is important because, as Taylor asserts, clothing was/is consumed across all levels of society.[205] This chapter will examine how the milliners' shop was one of the first businesses to embrace the idea of shopping as a leisure experience, a concept that would go on to have an enormous influence on retail for the rest of the nineteenth-century.[206] It first considers the bonnet as a commodity, examining prices of bonnets and how they related to a variety of incomes. This chapter then investigates records of consumption, examining a small sample of records that exist from the period of what women bought and how this correlates with what they desired. It then moves on to examine the bonnet as a means of conspicuous consumption, before comparing and contrasting the sartorial choices of three women of the period using portraiture. It examines patterns of consumption, considering the regularity with which women bought new bonnets and the occasions that called for new garments. Finally, this chapter examines the milliners' shop through the lens of the recreational pursuit of shopping, considering how the consumer interacted with the milliner and her shop.

Consumption and Income

This section of the chapter is framed around one of Lou Taylor's aforementioned questions: particularly 'what goods were purchased by whom?', and will first address the topic of income. In 1828 the book *A New System of Practical Domestic Economy* was published with the ambitious aim

---

[204] Hughes, C., 2017. *Hats,* London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.
[205] Taylor, 2002, p71
[206] See Alison Adburgham, 1979. *Shopping in Style: London from the Restoration to Edwardian Elegance,* London: Thames and Hudson. Also, by the same author, 1964. *Shops and Shopping 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought Her Clothes*, London: Allen & Unwin.

of educating those who were 'desirous of properly regulating their establishments'.[207] The chief method of doing so was by providing 'estimates of household expenses adapted to families of every description'. There are twenty-four estimates in total, beginning with a budget breakdown for those with an income of twenty-one shillings a week (annual income £54) all the way up to £5000 a year. All of the estimates are calculated based on a family of five (man, woman and three children), and are laid out in such a way that it can clearly be seen how their income should be allocated proportionally. These estimates have been researched and referenced for this dissertation in order to gauge where the bonnet sat on the spectrum of necessary and unnecessary purchases.

For the family living off twenty-one shillings a week, the weekly rent is around 2s 3d (roughly 10% of income). *A New System* suggests expenses related to clothing and haberdashery for the whole family should be around 3s 6d per week (roughly 17% of income). This percentage is the same for each of the ten 'lower income' estimates in the text. When the income is between £150 and £750 per annum, the percentage allocated to the family's clothing budget is between 12% and 14%. Incomes of £1000 and over recommend a budget of 12% of income, which is also the same amount allocated for rent and house repairs. These figures emphasise the necessity of clothing and textiles, but do not disseminate the vast differences that different income levels would ascribe to the term 'necessary'. For example, these estimates are for the whole family, and for the working-class family that would include work garments for the head of household, clothing for the children, linen for the house. It is reasonable to conjecture that a bonnet for the woman of the house was very low down on the list of priorities. These priorities change vastly when compared with the enormous incomes of the wealthy. For the household with an income of £5000 it is suggested the woman's dress budget alone is £250. A woman belonging to such a wealthy household would have different demands on her appearance, as well as different motives behind consumption.

[207] *A New System of Practical Domestic Economy*. (1828) London: Henry Colburn.

Figure 46 *Mary Richardson, aged 15 years, York,* 1836, Mary Ellen Best
A contemporary depiction of a female domestic servant of the period.

The female domestic servant of this period who earned between £10 per year (16s a week) and £16 a year (26s a week) would not have had the rent to pay, nor the cost of feeding herself. However, having gone to work in service, her income might be going to support her family, and she might have very little to spend on herself in terms of dress. Historian George Malcolm Young commented in *Early Victorian England* that 'cap and bonnet ribbons were almost the only pieces of finery to which the young servant might aspire'.[208] A regional perspective considers the wages of some of the lowest paid workers in Nottingham of this period. Lace makers in Nottingham earned 25s a week in 1829, and 16s a week in 1837.[209] Framework knitters, common across Nottingham town, but also in the surrounding villages, earned an average of 9s a week in 1833, and 11s 6d in 1836.

Other information regarding women's incomes, especially those who were young, unmarried and with considerable disposable income, are found in literary sources. Lydia Bennet buys an 'ugly bonnet' in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and intends to remake it at home.[210] Nothing is mentioned of the cost, but she does mention the extra satin she will have to purchase to trim it with

[208] Young, G. (1934). *Early Victorian England: 1830-1865* / vol.2. Oxford U.P. p150
[209] Church, R.A., 1966. *Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town: Victorian Nottingham,1815-1900.*, Cass .p89.
[210] Austen, J. (2014). *Pride and Prejudice.* (First Avenue Classics Ser). Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group. p232.

afresh. Dress historian Hilary Davidson includes the episode in her analysis of consumer consideration within Jane Austen's novels. She asserts Lydia's impulse purchase 'spells clearly the financial profligacy and thoughtlessness Lydia will extend to her future matrimonial choice and income'.[211] *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813, only fifteen years prior to *A New System of Practical Economy*. Austen states that Lydia's father, Mr Bennet, has an income of £2000 a year. According to *A New System*, this would mean each of his five daughters had a dress allowance of ten pounds per annum. In another instance, in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Wives and Daughters*, Mrs Gibson cannot fathom why her daughter Cynthia cannot afford new clothes as she has twenty pounds a year at her disposal. Her husband (Cynthia's stepfather) is a country doctor, and whilst his actual income is not revealed, he has apparently lived carefully, invested his money well (a few thousands) and earned an increasing amount each year from his profession.[212]

A limited budget was the norm rather than the exception for young, unmarried women, according to Mrs Campbell Swinton (1823-1900), who claimed it was married women who spent the money as young girls did not have large allowances. In the 1880s she recalled the year 1837, when she was aged thirteen:

> A girl thought herself rich with one silk dress and a few muslins, all untrimmed, and one summer and winter bonnet a year. Few had more; many, whatever their rank, had less, and wore no ornaments on neck or arms until they married. A fourth of the money now thought necessary must then have been spent on clothes, and yet I am not sure that girls were not far more attractive than in these days of triumphant millinery.[213]

Mrs Campbell Swinton was born Georgiana Caroline Sitwell, the third daughter of a baronet (Sir George Sitwell) and grew up on the large estate of Renishaw Hall, near Sheffield. The Sitwell family dynasty is well-documented, and their immense wealth came from coal and iron. The fact that she did not have a large allowance was presumably not due to reasons of economy.

Exactly what the women of each type of household of this period were buying is not published in any cohesive format, however the records of the Old Bailey provide some examples pertaining to bonnets. A court case from 1828 records a woman named Mary Lane, a carpenter's wife whose bonnet worth thirty shillings was stolen from her house in Hoxton, London. Author Elizabeth Gaskell was married to a minister and lived in Manchester from 1832 onwards. Her income as a writer did not commence until after 1840. Gaskell recorded in 1836 that she 'bought Bessy's bonnet', and that her aunt paid

---

[211] Davidson, H., 2019. *Dress in the Age of Jane Austen,* London; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p114.
[212] Gaskell, E. C. (1966). *Wives and Daughters*. London: Everyman. Ch 38.
[213] Adburgham, A., 1964. *Shops and Shopping 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought Her Clothes*, London: Allen & Unwin.pp45-46

fifteen shillings for it, but there is no other information as to what type of bonnet it is, how it looked or even if it was second-hand.[214]

Bonnet Prices

To judge whether either of these examples suggests extravagance or prudence on the part of the consumer, it is useful to know the prices of bonnets in this period, in order to establish a frame of reference for comparing what different women bought and wore. Retailers in the 1830s did not publish catalogues with pictures and prices, as in the latter part of the century, so other resources have been consulted. Mentions in diaries, letters and fiction, are sporadic, often localised and there is not always an idea of the context. To date, no visual references with verified values have been found of bonnets in this period.

The most comprehensive record of bonnet values from this period comes from transcripts of court cases heard in the Old Bailey. For this study, the records of just over one hundred court cases between the years 1820 and 1840 were collated, selected because the bonnet featured, usually as a stolen item.[215] Because the data is spread out over twenty years, and there are many years from the sample group that did not mention bonnets (especially in the 1830s) the results should not be considered conclusive. However, they do give an indication of the range of prices a woman might have expected to pay for a bonnet during this period. It should also be emphasised that the location the samples are taken from is London, and therefore should not be considered representative of areas outside the capital.

The values may not be exact as it is unclear who is doing the valuing: if it were the owner of the stolen goods then it was in their best interest to nominate the correct amount, if not a little inflated. There is one incidence whereby a shopkeeper names the price of the stolen goods (fourteen shillings) but the stated value of the bonnet at the beginning of the transcript is twelve shillings.[216] This could indicate the shopkeeper's mark up. If the bonnet was stolen from the wearer, then the value ascribed

---

[214] Gaskell, E. C. (1986). J. A. V. Chapple, & A. Pollard (Eds.) *Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell*. Manchester University Press, p7.

[215] The information that can be gleaned from the data is limited, as the descriptions are largely limited to phrases such as 'one bonnet' or 'eight yards of ribbon', with the recorded value alongside. The descriptions sometimes specify 'straw bonnet' or 'Leghorn bonnet', but no other classifications.; The data was compiled manually, using a keyword search 'bonnet' for all cases between the dates 1820 to 1840. 101 cases in total formed the data, and other items such as fabrics and trims were included if information was present. Each value ascribed to the bonnet or other items was recorded, and the numerical data evaluated by means of a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet data is what this dissertation refers to.

[216] Old Bailey Proceedings Online ANN COOPER, Theft > grand larceny, 16th February 1826. Appendix Reference OB69.

might be its second-hand worth, but bonnets taken from shops could have their 'cost as new' price recorded.

According to the data, bonnets could cost as little as tuppence, or as much as thirty shillings.[217] The most common price of a bonnet during the two decades was five shillings, and of the bonnet values sampled more than half were five shillings or less.[218] A quarter were two shillings or less. Bonnets valued at one pound (20 shillings) or more accounted for 16% of the total. Leghorn bonnets were consistently valued highly, ranging from ten shillings to thirty shillings. Materials commonly used in millinery are also found in the records. A yard of *Gros de Naples,* the favourite of the fashion plates, was 2s 6d.[219] Other silk fabrics cost between one and seven shillings per yard, but most commonly between 2s 6d and 3s 6d.[220] Bombazine cost 3s 9d per yard, crape was 4s per yard, and sarsnet was 5s 8d per yard.[221] Regarding plainer fabrics, muslin could cost as little as 15½d per yard, or as much as 4s 4d per yard.[222] Linen appeared at 14d a yard, and cambric one shilling.[223] Mrs J Howell suggests for drawn bonnets that 'if intended for an adult, one yard and a-quarter of silk will be sufficient,'.[224]

Ribbons and other trims sold by the yard are also recorded. Ribbon could cost as little as 1½*d* per yard, but frequently cost quite a lot more.[225] The most expensive ribbon found amongst the data was 2*s* per yard. Most of the ribbons cost in the region of 6d a yard. When one considers the extravagant use of ribbon on the late 1820s and early 1830s bonnets, and that one four-looped bow could easily use a yard, the yardage required would soon mount up. Bonnet strings (ties) could conceivably require a yard alone.

Records exist of the other raw materials that went into a bonnet, as well as some of the costs associated with labour and a sample of the myriad accoutrements often found in a milliners' shop. A yard of straw plait cost 1½*d* per yard in 1824, a willow square cost 5½d per unit in 1842.[226] The charge for covering a bonnet in 1822 was 15d, though the record does not state whether this covers

---

[217] Old Bailey Proceedings Online MARGARET BYRNE, Theft > simple larceny, 29th October 1829 and MARIA BENJAMIN, Theft > grand larceny, 26th October 1826. Appendix refs. OB128/OB80
[218] See Appendix A
[219] Old Bailey Proceedings Online JOHN SCROGGINS, THOMAS BAKER, JOHN JAMES, ELIZABETH JAMES, Theft > theft from a specified place, Theft > receiving, 3rd December 1829. Appendix ref. OB130
[220] See Appendix A
[221] Old Bailey Proceedings Online ELIZABETH WEBSTER, Theft > grand larceny, 7th April 1825. Appendix ref. OB57
[222] See Appendix A
[223] Old Bailey Proceedings Online JOHN ROACH, Theft > burglary, 18th February 1824. Appendix ref. OB41
[224] Howell, M. J., 1847. *The Handbook of Millinery*. Simpkin, Marshall and Co. London, p8.
[225] Old Bailey Proceedings Online JOHN EASTERBY, HENRY KING, MARIA BENNETT, Theft > burglary, 18th February 1824. Appendix ref. OB38/OB39
[226] Old Bailey Proceedings Online JAMES SUTTON, MARY ANN WOODCOCK, Theft > theft from a specified place, Theft > receiving, 7th April 1824, and GEORGE LOCKE, Theft > stealing from master, 3rd January 1842. Appendix ref. OB44

labour only, or includes materials too.[227] Milliners also sold lace veils, and these cost between 8s and £2 10s.[228] Feather plumes, popular on hats for decades, were four to five shillings each.[229] The finished bonnet might conceivably need a suitable vessel for both transportation and storage, and a bonnet box cost one shilling in 1820, though these could be purchased from hawkers on the street.[230]

Comparing the cost of bonnets with other garments in records from the years 1828-1829 provides even more context. A gown cost between 2s and 12s, a shift was 6d.[231] Stays generally commanded higher prices, with some valued at as much as £1.[232] Pelisses were also expensive, presumably due to both the labour involved and the amount of fabric needed, and values range from 5s to £2 10s.[233] Along with the values for bonnets, trims and garments sample, there were also those of common food items, such as three loaves of bread (1s), 8oz sugar (5d), 8lbs ham (5s).[234] Including these here for comparison serves to show that a would-be thief could analyse a fancy bonnet from distance, either in a shop or upon it's owner's head, and quickly ascertain its potential worth at the pawnbrokers. The proceeds of pawning a silk bonnet, adorned with feathers and ribbon, might conceivably equal the greater part of a workman's weekly wages.

If the household clothing budget for the lowest level of income is considered, the total is just over £9 annually. A woman of this level of income might only have between £1 and £2 to spend on her dress each year, and that estimate is generous; many women likely had less. At this level, a five-shilling bonnet is a quarter of the yearly allowance, something of an extravagance. This type of woman might be one of the ones buying their headwear in the street from hawkers, as recorded by Henry Mayhew, and not frequenting a milliners' shop.

---

[227] Old Bailey Proceedings Online MARTHA FOX, Theft > grand larceny, 11th September 1822. Appendix ref. OB20
[228] Old Bailey Proceedings Online JOHN MITCHELL, Theft > pocket picking, 15th September 1825, EMMA FARROW, Theft > theft from a specified place, 6th April 1826. Appendix ref. OB72
[229] Old Bailey Proceedings Online JOHN EASTERBY, HENRY KING, MARIA BENNETT, Theft > burglary, 18th February 1824. Appendix ref. OB38/OB39
[230] Old Bailey Proceedings Online GEORGE SMITH, Theft > grand larceny, 28th June 1820. Appendix ref. OB9
[231] See Appendix A
[232] Old Bailey Proceedings Online JOHN EASTERBY, HENRY KING, MARIA BENNETT, Theft > burglary, 18th February 1824. Appendix ref. OB38/OB39
[233] Old Bailey Proceedings Online CATHERINE ROACH, Theft > simple larceny, 12th July 1827, Appendix ref. OB90
[234] Old Bailey Proceedings Online ANN BOOTH, ELIZABETH THETFORD, ELIZA SMITH, Violent Theft > robbery, 11th September 1828. Appendix ref. OB111

Records of Consumption

Having established what proportion of income a woman might spend on dress, and how the bonnet fit within that, this section of the chapter examines a number of examples of what individual women bought. An 1835 case from the Old Bailey provides novel insight into what some women may have desired. Thirty-eight year old Ann Wilkes leased a house in London under a false name (lying about her marital status to do so) and after taking possession of the property, went on a shopping spree.[235] Nothing was bought; Ann Wilkes ordered everything on credit, and though she sorted out some food and household items (joints of meat, candles, butter, bacon, a dozen bottles each of port and sherry) it is notable that she also paid a visit to haberdasher George Radford and ordered herself a new black silk velvet bonnet. The one in the shop was made of a velvet 'not so good as she wished', so she had a better one made up. The bonnet was delivered to her house, the haberdasher's boy being persuaded to leave without payment from 'the respectability of the house'. Ann Wilkes' deceptions were found out, and she was caught and imprisoned for two years.[236] The new black velvet bonnet was among her top priorities when treating herself, establishing the bonnet as both a desirable garment and in Ann Wilkes' case, a luxury.

Figure 47 *Black velvet bonnet* c1835, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Museum Number 11.60.236

[235] ANN WILKES, Deception, 23rd November 1835, Old Bailey Online.
[236] The manner of her capture is worthy of mention. She was cornered at the house by several of the tradesmen to whom she owed money, and attempted to make an escape 'elegantly dressed with bonnet in hand, muff and boa'. She ran out a back door, down the garden and tried to get over the fence, but was pulled back by the grocer.

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-1865) ordered two Dunstable straw bonnets in 1838, and had them lined with white, with white ribbons.[237] She relates the purchase excitedly in a letter to her sister-in-law, and mentions that her grandmother bought them.

Figure 48 *Child's straw bonnet,* c1830, Victoria and Albert Museum, London T.78-1963

Figure 49 *Chapeau de paille d'italie (Italian straw),* La Mode 1836
Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figures 48 and 49 show straw bonnets, one an extant example dated 1830-40 in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and a detail from a French fashion plate dated 1836. Both show something of the type of bonnet Elizabeth Gaskell mentions in her letter. The Dunstable straw she mentions means it came from or near the town in Bedfordshire. The straw in the fashion plate is probably Leghorn, and much finer than the Dunstable, but the effect of the white trim against the straw is brought to life in the engraving. The combination was possibly a favourite of Gaskell's, as she uses it in *North and South* (1854) when Mr Thornton first encounters Margaret Hale:

> A young lady came forward with frank dignity, a young lady of a different type to most of those he was in the habit of seeing. Her dress was very plain: a close straw bonnet of the best material and shape, trimmed with white ribbon…[238]

Margaret Hale is a character who is meant to contrast with the ladies of Milton, whom Gaskell describes as showy and lacking elegance. Semiotics are key here, as Gaskell appears to assert that the straw bonnet with white ribbon combination signals dignity and respectability.

---

[237] Gaskell, E. C. (1986). J. A. V. Chapple, & A. Pollard (Eds.) *Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell*. Manchester University Press, p22.
[238] Gaskell, E. C. (1975). *North and South*. London: Dent (etc.). Ch 2.

Figure 50 *Bonnet*, Modes de Paris, 15 May 1834
Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801-1866) describes a visit to a milliner in a letter dated November 1834. She gives an account of both the experience and the bonnet she purchased:

> I went yesterday to a milliner to buy a bonnet— An old very ugly Lady upwards of seventy I am sure was bargaining about a cloak at the same place—it was a fine affair of satin and velvet—but she declared repeatedly that "it had no AIR" and for her part she could not put on such a thing— My bonnet I flatter myself has an air—a little brown feather nods over the front of it, and the crown points like a sugar loaf.[239]

The bonnet in Fig. 50 is from a fashion plate of the same year, and indicates how the little brown feather might have sat alongside the sugar loaf crown. What each of these examples demonstrates, aside from the choices of fabrics and materials, is the lightness of manner with which the headwear was regarded. Elizabeth Gaskell excitedly relates details of her new attire, Jane Carlyle conveys details with a wry sense of humour, and the method of Ann Wilkes' bonnet acquisition screams indulgent luxury.

[239] Jane Welsh Carlyle to Margaret A. Carlyle, 21 November 1834, Carlyle, Thomas, and Jane Welsh Carlyle. *The Carlyle Letters Online [CLO]*. Ed. Brent E. Kinser. Duke UP, 2007-2016, www.carlyleletters.org.

Conspicuous Consumption – Quality and Quantity of Materials

Having gauged how much a bonnet and its trimmings could cost, it is clear to see how easily it could be manipulated as a tool of conspicuous consumption. Bonnets in this period were subject to two methods of conspicuous consumption, showing off either the quality of materials or the quantity. The latter is particularly attuned to the 1830s, as is evidenced in many fashion plates that are so covered in ribbons and feathers that the bonnet shape below is barely discernible. John Styles discusses the idea that in the late-eighteenth century, the poor were sometimes better dressed than the wealthy, to such a degree that a stranger to a village would not know who is who simply by their clothes.[240] By the early-nineteenth century people of all ranks of society could better engage with fashions, so it becomes apparent that quality of materials was the clearest indicator of wealth, rather than the latest styles or styling. You could not rely on an elaborate bonnet being an absolute representation of wealth or status.

One of the most prized types of material were the bonnets made of fine Leghorn straw from Italy. These are frequently mentioned in Old Bailey records, and are consistently the highest valued, generally costing in the region of £1, often more. Madeleine Ginsburg records the details that made the Leghorn straw the most sought-after:

> The unique quality of a Leghorn was its smoothness. While the English braids were stitched and overlapped leaving ridges, the Leghorn plaits were so made that they could be laid edge to edge.[241]

[240] Styles, J., 2007. *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, p182.
[241] Ginsburg, M., 1990. *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*, London: Studio Editions, p59

Figure 51 [left] *Leghorn bonnet* c1830s, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1952-59-18, and [right] *Detail of Leghorn bonnet,* c1830s, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries, NCM 1976-220

Fig. 51 shows an extant Leghorn bonnet from the 1830s (Item 1952-59-18, with a reproduction ribbon trim) from the collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, alongside a closeup of a Leghorn bonnet in the collection Nottingham City Museums and Galleries, held at Newstead Abbey. The intact bonnet shows how sleek and smooth the Leghorn straw could be, and the close-up image of the Newstead Abbey bonnet shows the method of construction. The ridges indicating the joins in the braid can be seen, along with some of the slightly fluffy threads that were used to link the looped edges of the braid. The time invested in making the plait was considerable, as was the process of making the 'Leghorn flats'.[242]

[242] For more on straw work see Veronica Main, 2003, *Swiss Straw Work: Techniques of a Fashion Industry*, Great Britain: Mains Collins Publishing.

Figure 52 *Straw bonnet*, c1820-30, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Museum Number T.1041-1913

Comparing the Leghorn straw with an English straw bonnet (above, T.1041-1913) shows the considerable difference in quality. The English straw (Dunstable or Luton) still presents as neat and tidy, but is much more textured than the Leghorn. Women valued the fine weave of the Leghorn in the same way that fine Panama hats are prized today, and even if the purchase of one was well beyond their purse, that it existed within their individual material literacies would mean they would recognise one when they saw another woman wearing one. The mention of a Leghorn bonnet in literature would have been read in a different context by a contemporary audience than we interpret today. In George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the author's reference to 'new Tuscan bonnets' makes more sense to an audience who knows about the different qualities of straws. It is semiotics at play once again, but this time it is relying on the material literacy of women to recognise the signals.

The quantity of materials displayed by a consumer could also be an indicator of wealth and status. Professor of English Alison Lurie refers to 'wastage in the form of trimming' as a means of displaying wealth, and supports Veblen's principle of 'conspicuous waste' as pointed out in *The Theory of the Leisure Class.*[243] Though written six decades after the 1830s, Veblen's assertion that ostentatiousness in women's dress relieved men of the need to display their wealth themselves is very much applicable to consumption practices of the early nineteenth century.[244] Though it was a small proportion of women wearing the highest and most extreme fashions, they were still the leaders and the ones the aspirational consumers followed. As seen in Figure 53, 1830s bonnets were the perfect

[243] Lurie, A., 1983. *The Language of Clothes* (2nd ed.). London: Hamlyn Paperbacks. p144
[244] Veblen, T. (1899). *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Dover Thrift Editions, 1994) New York: Dover, p44.

item for yards of ribbon, and surviving material culture supports the level of ostentatiousness exhibited.

Figure 53 [right, centre] *Fashion Plate*, 1834 World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons, Costume Institute Fashion Plates, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
[left] *Bonnet*, 1820-1830, Snowshill Manor © National Trust, NT 1349786

The Bonnet as a Sartorial Signifier

Continuing with the theme of conspicuous consumption, this chapter now examines the ways in women exhibited their wealth and status via their headwear, by comparing portraits of three women from the period. As dress historian Lou Taylor states in *The Study of Dress History* (2002), paintings are an 'obvious dress history source', not only for the details they can show, but for the context and styling of the garment.[245] Taylor also emphasises how problematic paintings can be, as they are subject to the tastes and prejudices of both the artist and the period. For this study, the biggest impediment was not having a large sample of portraits with bonnets to analyse. Englishwomen in this period chose to be depicted either bareheaded, wearing caps or wearing elaborate evening headdresses and gowns. The three portraits presented here are therefore chosen by default, as the only paintings of named women in bonnets of this period.[246]

The three portraits compared here (Fig. 54) were all painted within twelve years of each other. The earliest, that of Mrs Captain James Jones (1787-1861) is dated to 1830, and those of Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton (1798-1871) and Euphemia White van Rensselaer (1816-1888), are dated 1841 and 1842 respectively. Euphemia van Rensselaer is the youngest of the women, aged twenty-six when her portrait was painted, Mrs Jones and Miss Brunton were both aged forty-three.

---

[245] Taylor, L., 2002. *The Study of Dress History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press. p115
[246] There are many portraits of women in hats and evening headdresses, but most of the ones available for review feature women from continental Europe and Russia.

The bonnet Mrs Captain James Jones wears is very much like those seen in the fashion plates of the period depicting opera or dinner dress. To sit for a portrait in the attire required for such occasions immediately indicated a certain position in society. Mrs Jones wears other accessories that indicate wealth and status, but it is the nature of the hat rather than anything specific in its decoration or material that provides the main evidence.[247] To possess and wear a hat that is purely decorative is very much a sign of conspicuous consumption. Euphemia White van Rensselaer shows her wealth and status in a number of very specific ways. The primrose yellow bonnet was a fashionable colour of the period, but it is the exotic feathers (possibly bird of paradise) atop the bonnet crown that are the main indicator of her wealth. To unashamedly display a trim that not only came from a different continent, but a different hemisphere, was a bold sign of conspicuous consumption. The flowers inside the bonnet brim were also fashionable for the period, but they are delicate by nature and would almost certainly have been bruised when the bonnet was worn. To sacrifice a trim knowing it will get damaged is another sign of her wealth.[248]

Miss Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton's bonnet is possibly straw, or perhaps buckram covered with a light-coloured fabric.[249] Her portrait says less about her level of wealth (although this is indicated subtly) and more about her status in society. Little is known about Miss Brunton, but from the records available to be examined, it appears she may have had a school for girls, and census data from 1841 supports this theory.[250] Amongst the household she lived with in 1841 were two clergymen and their wives, along with her nephew and three female servants. Later in her life, she is recorded as living in the rectory in Chadwell St Mary, Essex with her nephew William Brunton, who was the rector.[251] At first glance her attire appears austere, but there are subtle clues she has given careful consideration to her dress. Her black satin gown was most likely made of silk, which when considering the values of fabric earlier in this chapter means it was costly. She also wears a lace collar, and a lace cap beneath her bonnet. Over her bonnet she wears a black bonnet veil, and she carries a fox fur stole. Though her clothes appear monochromatic, there are two concessions to colour in the form of her gloves (yellow) and a dark red ribbon at her neck. Her ensemble, while restrained, suggests sensibility, but not at the expense of quality.

---

[247] Little is known about the life of Ann, Mrs Captain James Jones, other than that she was born in Lincolnshire, and married to Captain James Jones of the Royal Marines. Source: British Newspaper Archives.
[248] Euphemia was the daughter of Stephen van Rensselaer, the Lieutenant-Governor of New York and one of the largest land-owners in that state. The portrait was painted by George R. A. Healy when Euphemia was in Paris, the year before her marriage to John Church Cruger, from another of New York's oldest families.
[249] The brim edge looks too thick to be a delicate leghorn, and is more in keeping with a fabric hat.
[250] Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton. 1841. *Census return for Hamilton Terrace, St John's Wood, Marylebone-St John-District 11, Middlesex.* Public Record Office: HO 107/678/10, folio 10, p. 13.
[251] Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton. 1861. *Census return for Chadwell, St Mary-District 4b, Essex.* Public Record Office: RG 9/1074, folio 53, p. 1.

Figure 54 [top left] *Mrs Captain James Jones* by W. Brown, 1830
Leicester Museums and Galleries L.F6.1945.2.0

[top right] *Euphemia White van Rensselaer*, by George P A Healy, 1842
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 23.102

[bottom] *Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton,* by George Frederic Watts, 1841
Tate Britain, London, N06084

Patterns of Consumption - Buying a New Bonnet

As discussed in 'The Mode', women could update their bonnets easily enough, and there were a variety of motives associated with why they might do so. A new bonnet was more of a financial outlay, but certain circumstances prompted such a purchase. John Styles in his book *Dress of the People* (2009), discusses the idea of clothing occupying an awkward position halfway between perishable commodities (such as food) and long-term or lifetime investments.[252] Patterns of consumption were sometimes influenced by garments simply wearing out, and needing replacing. Compared to durable items such as furniture or pewter, garments could wear out after a couple of years' use. It was part of a married woman's role in the household to know how long an item was meant to last, and spend the clothing and textile budget accordingly. In Esther Howlett's 1825 text *Cottage Comforts*, a guidebook for women of the period, she reminds readers that items such as shoes and undergarments will wear out quickly and need replacing, whereas outer garments should not be considered 'things of everyday purchase'.[253] Styles quotes Sir Frederick Eden, and suggests that in the late eighteenth-century 'a man's hat bought at a London slop shop would last three years and the cheapest sort of woman's hat two years'.[254] However Styles suggests that even for the lowest classes, durability was not the only concern regarding replacing garments, and asserts fashion and propriety were also a consideration.[255] He discusses these ideas further, exploring the notion that the need to replace worn-out garments was potentially an occasion for consumers to embrace the newest styles.

A bonnet's useful life could be extended or shortened by how a consumer used it and cared for it. When the bonnet was not on the head, it was susceptible to damage as the materials used to make it are naturally light and fragile. Bonnets were meant for outdoor wear, and wearing your bonnet indoors for the wrong amount of time was something of a faux pas. Many characters in novels remove their bonnets whilst visiting, or arriving home. The removal of one's bonnet could also suggest a level of familiarity, relaxation and comfortability, described by Elizabeth Gaskell in her novel *Wives and Daughters* when Lady Harriet goes to visit the Browning sisters:

> 'By this time she was sitting up—and, looking round her, she saw Lady Harriet, in her velvets and silks, sitting on our rug, smiling, her bonnet off, and her pretty hair all bright with the blaze of the fire.'[256]

---

[252] Styles, J., 2007. *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press. Though Styles' book concerns dress and consumption in the eighteenth century, the ideas he discusses still have pertain to the early nineteenth century, particularly regarding millinery.
[253] Howlett, E., 1828. *Cottage Comforts with Hints for Promoting Them Gleaned from Experience, Enlivened with Anecdotes.* p52.
[254] Styles, J., 2007. *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press., p72.
[255] Ibid, p71.
[256] Gaskell, E. C. (1966). *Wives and Daughters*. London: Everyman., Ch 14.

It seems, however, that society did not expect ladies to completely ignore practicality and common sense when wearing their bonnets out of doors. Though custom and etiquette saw most heads covered, it appears the wearer would discard their headwear in certain conditions. Margaret Hale is disinclined to wear her bonnet whilst drawing:

> 'What is this hanging from the branch of the tree? Not a bird's nest, surely.'
> 'Oh no! that is my bonnet. I never can draw with my bonnet on; it makes my head so hot.'[257]

In *Felix Holt* by George Eliot, the character Esther sits down and takes off her bonnet, 'that the light breeze might fall on her head'.[258] In *Janet's Repentance,* also by Eliot, one character is told 'Come, you don't want a bonnet. It's like walking in a greenhouse this morning…'.[259] Elizabeth Gaskell remarked in 1850 (but still within the era of the bonnet) that she was glad the garden of her new house was quite private, so that 'one may get out without a bonnet which is a blessing'.[260] Because they feature in works of fiction, we cannot take each of these examples as straightforward evidence that this was typical behaviour of all women. However, they do provide evidence of what dress historian Anne Buck termed 'dress in action', and also invites discussion as to what women of the period might have thought of their bonnets.[261] Gaskell and Eliot both reference bonnets as being hot to wear, which raises interesting questions that correlate with the study of surviving material culture. One would presume the brim of a bonnet would shade the face, and the lightness of the material would mean would not overheat the head. Here we align with Jules Prown's 'speculation' stage of analysis of material culture, in that we cannot accurately judge if a bonnet would be comfortable to wear simply by looking at it or holding it.[262] The only way to truly judge would be to wear it, or to wear a very closely copied replica.[263] But the literary references made by Gaskell and Eliot are significant for suggesting it as an avenue of research in the first place.

---

[257] Gaskell, E. C. (1975). *North and South*. London: Dent (etc.)., Ch 3.
[258] Eliot, G., & Mugglestone, L. (n.d.). *Felix Holt, The Radical.* Penguin.
[259] Eliot, G., & Lodge, D. (n.d.). *Scenes of Clerical Life.* Penguin.
[260] Gaskell, E. C. (1986). J. A. V. Chapple, & A. Pollard (Eds.) *Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell*. Manchester University Press. P111
[261] Buck, A. (1983). Clothes in Fact and Fiction. *Costume, 17*(1), p89.
[262] Prown, J. D. (1982). Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method. *Winterthur Portfolio, 17*(1), pp1-19.
[263] See Hilary Davidson, 2019, The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as an Academic Practice, *Fashion Theory*, DOI: 10.1080/1362704X.2019.1603859

Figure 55 William Marshall Craig, Itinerant Traders of London in their Ordinary Costume, 1804

To store a bonnet, the best method appears to have been a bonnet box, or band box. Evidence suggests these were made of heavy card or fine wood, and often sold by street hawkers who were a familiar sight on metropolitan streets. The accompanying description for the band box seller in William Marshall Craig's *Itinerant Traders of London* (1804) is below:

> Band boxes. Generally made of pasteboard, and neatly covered with coloured papers, are of all sizes, and sold at every intermediate price between sixpence and three shillings. Some made of slight deal, covered like the others, but in addition to their greater strength having a lock and key, sell according to their size, from three shillings and sixpence to six shillings each. The crier of band boxes or his family manufacture them, and these cheap articles of convenience are only to be bought of the persons who cry them through the streets.[264]

Not every woman seems to have used one. Pegs on a wall were quite usual for keeping a bonnet handy, and many literary references support this idea. Barbara in *The Old Curiosity Shop* keeps hers on a nail behind a door.[265] In the same novel, caravan-dweller Mrs Jarley keeps hers safe beside her bed, on a drum that serves as a table.[266] The landlady's servant in *Pickwick Papers*, keeps hers on a bannister.[267] The English artist Mary Ellen Best featured bonnets in several of her watercolours from the period, and one in particular, *Cottagers at Tea*, shows a bonnet very safely out of harm's way, hanging from a hook on the rafters.

---

[264] Craig, W. M. (1804) *Itinerant Traders of London in Their Ordinary Costume with Notices of Remarkable Places Given in the Background,* Bishopsgate Institute.
[265] Dickens, C., & Phiz. (1951). *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Oxford University Press.
[266] Dickens, C., & Phiz. (1951). *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Oxford University Press.
[267] Dickens, C., & Kinsley, J. (2008). *The Pickwick Papers*. New York; Oxford; Oxford University Press.

Figure 56 *Cottagers at Tea,* Mary Ellen Best, 1830s

Though a woman's neglect of her bonnet might hasten its replacement, purchases of new bonnets were inevitable for some occasions. The Easter bonnet tradition is referred to in *Wives and Daughters*, when to be seen without a new article of dress would possibly raise some eyebrows.

> 'All Hollingford felt as if there was a great deal to be done before Easter this year. There was Easter proper, which always required new clothing of some kind, for fear of certain consequences from little birds, who were supposed to resent the impiety of those that did not wear some new article of dress on Easter-day. And most ladies considered it wiser that the little birds should see the new article for themselves, and not have to take it upon trust, as they would have to do if it were merely a pocket-handkerchief, or a petticoat, or any article of under-clothing. So piety demanded a new bonnet, or a new gown; and was barely satisfied with an Easter pair of gloves. Miss Rose was generally very busy just before Easter in Hollingford.'[268]

Grand occasions also called for new attire, and weddings provided such an excuse. In George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, Adam's mother Lisbeth wears 'a new gown and bonnet' for her son's wedding.[269] Charles Dickens' describes the panic that might have been prompted by an upcoming wedding in *Pickwick Papers*.

> '…the two young ladies were driven to despair by having no 'things' ready for so important an occasion, and no time to make them in…However, old frocks were

[268] Gaskell, E. C. (1966). *Wives and Daughters*. London: Everyman. Ch 25.
[269] Eliot, G., & Waldron, M. (2005). *Adam Bede* ([New ed.] / edited by Mary Waldron.). Broadview.

> trimmed, and new bonnets made, and the young ladies looked as well as could possibly have been expected of them.'[270]

Impending travel might prompt some sartorial updates, as in *Wives and Daughters* when Cynthia Kirkpatrick needs some new garments for a trip to London. She proclaims she cannot go, because all of her gowns are too shabby, as is her bonnet.

> It would not do to go there in a state of shabbiness, for even in Doughty Street, I remember, my aunt was very particular about dress; and now that Margaret and Helen are grown up, and they visit so much,—pray don't say anything more about it, for I know it would not do.[271]

However, Cynthia cannot afford to buy the new things herself, and will not divulge why. Despite the mystery, Mr Gibson gives her ten pounds towards the new articles of dress, that are seen as essential for the visit. Mrs Gibson, Cynthia's mother, is delighted that her husband comes to the rescue.

> '…Ten pounds! Why, it will quite set her up, buy her a couple of gowns and a new bonnet, and I don't know what all! Dear Mr. Gibson, how generous you are!'[272]

Mourning attire was less concerned with fashion, but wholly concerned with social etiquette of the time. There were differing levels of mourning, depending on the relationship with the deceased. Bonnets and headwear were very much an element of this, and George Eliot mentions some of these rituals in *Middlemarch*, when Tantripp tells Dorothea her thoughts on the subject.

> 'There's a reason in mourning, as I've always said; and three folds at the bottom of your skirt and a plain quilling in your bonnet—and if ever anybody looked like an angel, it's you in a net quilling—is what's consistent for a second year. At least, that's my thinking,'[273]

---

[270] Dickens, C., & Kinsley, J. (2008). *The Pickwick Papers*. New York; Oxford. Oxford University Press. Ch 57.
[271] Gaskell, E. C. (1966). *Wives and Daughters*. London: Everyman. Ch 38.
[272] Gaskell, E. C. (1966). *Wives and Daughters*. London: Everyman., Ch 38.
[273] Eliot, G., & Carroll, D. (2008). *Middlemarch*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 80.

The Recreational Pursuit of Shopping

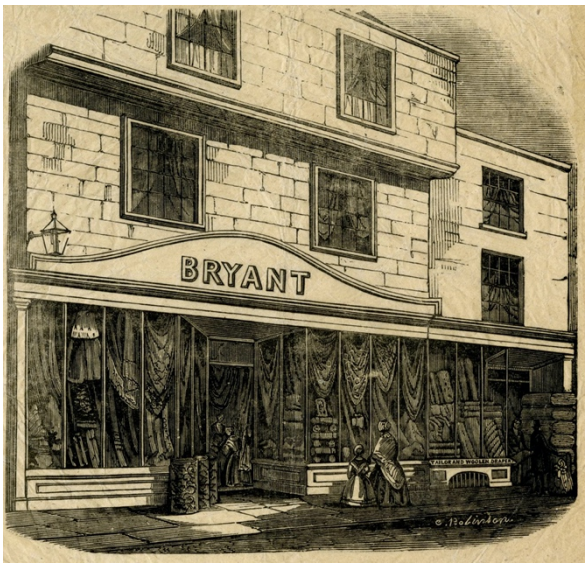


Figure 57 *Detail from advertisement for Bryant's Millinery, Drapery and Haberdashery, Canterbury* c1810

The final part of this chapter examines the relationship between the milliner and the consumer, and examines the beginnings of shopping as a leisure activity. It argues that the milliners' shop was an important feature of the retail landscape of the early nineteenth century, because it sold many items at multiple price points, and therefore took away some of the apprehension that might be involved with other types of shop, such as dressmakers, where a consumer might feel more obligated to make a large purchase or commission a new garment. Dress historian Clair Hughes examines the topic in *Hats* (2017), and quotes from historian Maxine Berg who describes a new class of folk developing in the late eighteenth century, a 'middling class', who were excited about fashion and keen for novelty and variety, and who 'took delight in consumer experiences'.[274] Shopping had moved on from being an errand, and was now a leisure activity. Hughes explains it was men who did the shopping up until the eighteenth century, and that women rarely appeared in public spaces such as shops. But the Georgian woman, Hughes rationalizes, 'began to feel freer to walk about towns and cities', now that streets were paved and lighted, and transport was easier.[275] This was the beginning of shopping as leisure. The millinery shop of the late Georgian period was therefore at the dawn of an exciting era for retail.

The milliners' shop took a variety of forms, but this chapter is chiefly concerned with premises that had traditional shopfronts with window displays and a public face. Others establishments looked like

[274] Hughes, C., 2017. *Hats,* London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, p211.
[275] Ibid.

ordinary townhouses and did not indicated the trade within, but these businesses appear to have relied on repeat custom and word of mouth, as opposed to any form of visual marketing or merchandising. The shop window was key, as that was the public-facing element of the establishment, and the display in the window (be it hats, women or otherwise) was the place to grab consumers' attention. Crime reports from the Old Bailey suggest some millinery shops had sash windows, which presumably were opened during trading hours to better display the wares.[276]

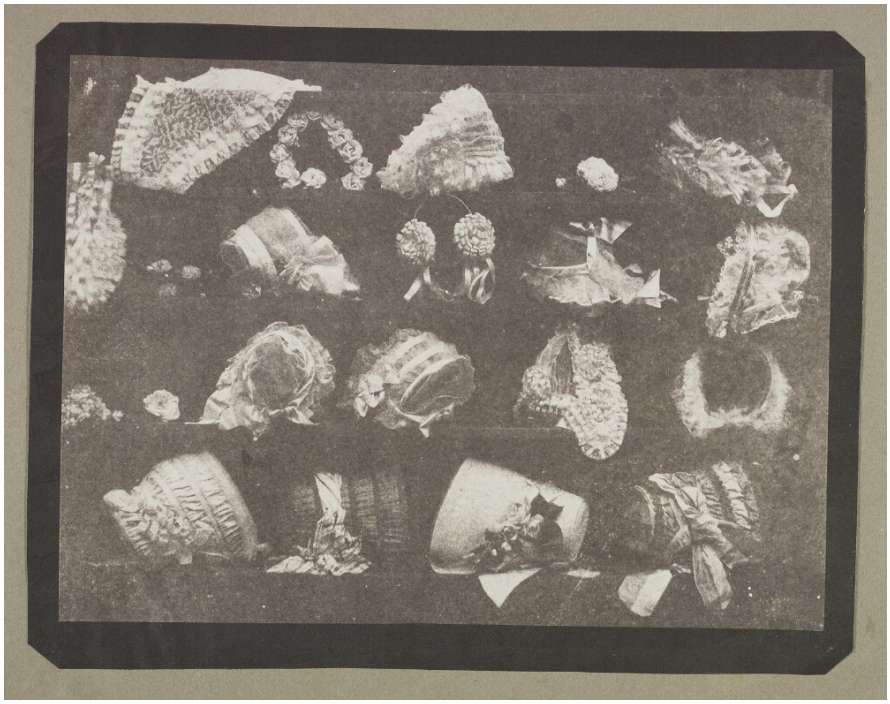


Figure 58 *The Milliner's Window,* 1843 © Talbot Collection, The British Library

There is an image of a milliners' shop window from the early 1840s (Fig. 58), remarkable given that photography was in its infancy at that date. This particular shop window appears to have rows of shelves, each just about high enough to house a bonnet or cap. It would not be recognised as effective visual merchandising today, but the method does allow the milliner to display many hats at one time. There are other items besides bonnets on display, such as the rosette headdress in the top centre, and other small bouquets of flowers. The intricacy of the display would have enticed passers-by to stop for a closer look, and though the colours of the garments is not known, most of the bonnets and caps appear to be light and bright in colour.

[276] Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 18 June 2020, JEREMIAH CRAWLEY, MARTIN BLANEY, Theft > housebreaking, 6th December 1827.

If the shop exterior needed to entice women inside, the interior needed to be an environment to keep them there. The shop counter features in many images of these types of shops of this period.[277] It served as a table for goods and sometimes a workspace, but importantly, provided a physical barrier between milliner and consumer. This is significant in analysing the milliners' shop and how consumers used it, for the barrier provided instant communication to a consumer about their relationship with the milliner. It was less confrontational and more relaxing to shop in a zone where one's territories were clearly marked; the consumer was free to browse and shop at leisure. This notion is supported by the depiction of accessories in shop displays, suggesting they were there to be looked at and considered. The space invited a consumer to stay, and ultimately, to buy. Other images show a table in a more central position within the room, with either the hats and bonnets on display, or women working around it, very often both (Fig. 59). The images firmly support the idea that the shop was a shared space, inhabited by both milliner and consumer.

Figure 59 Detail from '*Le Contraste, ou le Chapeau couleur de Rose'* April 1815
After Louis Marie Lanté, published by Pierre La Mésangère
© The British Museum, Museum Number 1900,0319.8

As mentioned, the counter top served a practical purpose as well as a psychological one, and many of the images show various items pertaining to a milliners' shop, such as ribbons, pincushions, scissors and fabric. Crime reports refer to shop assistants taking ribbons out to be viewed, suggesting most of the wares were tucked away beneath the counters, safe from dirt, dust, and the hands of thieves, but also providing further evidence of their usefulness.[278] The images do not depict the shop as a sterile space, as there is evidence of ornament (such as mirrors), stools and chairs, and plenty of storage in

[277] Figs. 59 and 62 are just two examples of many published in this era. For more see the Collections of the British Museum.
[278] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 02 November 2019), April 1830, trial of ELIZABETH DUGGIN (t18300415-145).

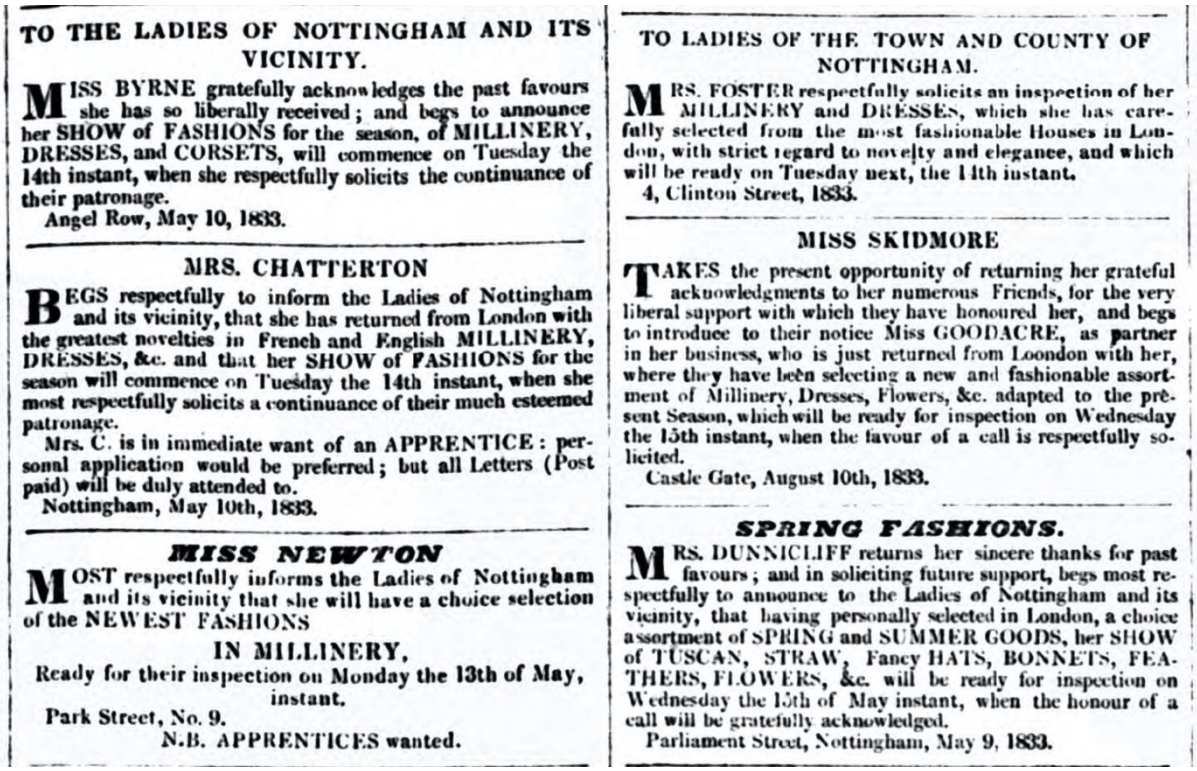
the form of bonnet boxes, shelves and possibly drawers. There was a lot to see and there were many talking points, further establishing it as a place that invited comment and provoked conversation.

Figure 60 *'Une Couleur nouvelle?'* 1831, possibly from Journal des Dames et des Modes (original mis-labelled)
© British Museum, Museum number 1861,1012.867

The workroom was sometimes located within the showroom with the bonnet makers sewing around a table near the window. Larger establishments, such as that of Madame Mantalini in Charles Dickens' novel *Nicholas Nickleby* are described as having two floors, and the showroom is upstairs away from the prying eyes of the workers.[279] Having girls in the window was a factor in the issues of reputation covered in the previous chapter, however, for the milliners and their workers the primary concern would have been making the most of natural light to sew in; and significantly, none of the images here depict candles. Several of the images show or suggest a curtain in the window, which would serve two functions. Firstly, it would provide a uniform backdrop to show off the hats on display, and secondly, it would provide protection from any men, either curious or predatory, who might be inclined to hover outside the shop.

Milliners needed to get consumers into their shops, and an effective method was to advertise. The most usual type of advertisement during this period was one that promoted the arrival of the latest fashions from London. Each shop would nominate the date the showrooms would be open to inspect the new items (see Fig. 61).

[279] Dickens, C., & Phiz. (1950). *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*. Oxford University Press.



TO THE LADIES OF NOTTINGHAM AND ITS VICINITY.

MISS BYRNE gratefully acknowledges the past favours she has so liberally received; and begs to announce her SHOW of FASHIONS for the season, of MILLINERY, DRESSES, and CORSETS, will commence on Tuesday the 14th instant, when she respectfully solicits the continuance of their patronage.

Angel Row, May 10, 1833.

MRS. CHATTERTON

BEGS respectfully to inform the Ladies of Nottingham and its vicinity, that she has returned from London with the greatest novelties in French and English MILLINERY, DRESSES, &c. and that her SHOW of FASHIONS for the season will commence on Tuesday the 14th instant, when she most respectfully solicits a continuance of their much esteemed patronage.

Mrs. C. is in immediate want of an APPRENTICE: personal application would be preferred; but all Letters (Post paid) will be duly attended to.

Nottingham, May 10th, 1833.

MISS NEWTON

MOST respectfully informs the Ladies of Nottingham and its vicinity that she will have a choice selection of the NEWEST FASHIONS

IN MILLINERY,

Ready for their inspection on Monday the 13th of May, instant.

Park Street, No. 9.

N.B. APPRENTICES wanted.

TO LADIES OF THE TOWN AND COUNTY OF NOTTINGHAM.

MRS. FOSTER respectfully solicits an inspection of her MILLINERY and DRESSES, which she has carefully selected from the most fashionable Houses in London, with strict regard to novelty and elegance, and which will be ready on Tuesday next, the 14th instant.

4, Clinton Street, 1833.

MISS SKIDMORE

TAKES the present opportunity of returning her grateful acknowledgments to her numerous Friends, for the very liberal support with which they have honoured her, and begs to introduce to their notice Miss GOODACRE, as partner in her business, who is just returned from London with her, where they have been selecting a new and fashionable assortment of Millinery, Dresses, Flowers, &c. adapted to the present Season, which will be ready for inspection on Wednesday the 15th instant, when the favour of a call is respectfully solicited.

Castle Gate, August 10th, 1833.

SPRING FASHIONS.

MRS. DUNNICLIFF returns her sincere thanks for past favours; and in soliciting future support, begs most respectfully to announce to the Ladies of Nottingham and its vicinity, that having personally selected in London, a choice assortment of SPRING and SUMMER GOODS, her SHOW of TUSCAN, STRAW, Fancy HATS, BONNETS, FEATHERS, FLOWERS, &c. will be ready for inspection on Wednesday the 15th of May instant, when the honour of a call will be gratefully acknowledged.

Parliament Street, Nottingham, May 9, 1833.

Figure 61 *Advertisements*, Nottingham Journal, 10 May 1833

That women had their favoured milliners, and would await the notices in the newspapers before planning their visit is demonstrated by Elizabeth Gaskell in her novel *Cranford*.

> An announcement on the part of the principal shopkeeper of Cranford, who ranged the trades from grocer and cheesemonger to man-milliner, as occasion required, that the spring fashions were arrived, and would be exhibited on the following Tuesday at his rooms in High Street. Now Miss Matty had been only waiting for this before buying herself a new silk gown.[280]

Miss Matty and the narrator go on to attend the exhibition on the stated day. It is market day, and the high street is filled with people from the surrounding countryside, many of whom end up inside the shop to see the latest fashions. Miss Matty initially deliberates on the appropriate time to attend: 'It is not etiquette to go till after twelve; but then, you see, all Cranford will be there, and one does not like to be too curious about dress and trimmings and caps with all the world looking on. It is never genteel to be over-curious on these occasions.'[281] Though the shop staff treat the event with reverence, wearing 'their best looks, and their best cravats', the fashion showroom is in fact nothing more than a converted loft space, accessed by some iron corkscrew stairs. This also supports the idea of the

[280] Gaskell, E.C. (2017). *Cranford.* Newburyport: Open Road Media. Chapter 7
[281] Gaskell, E.C. (2017). *Cranford.* Newburyport: Open Road Media. Chapter 7

shopping trip as an entertaining leisure experience. By creating an event and ensuring the shop was busy, the milliner was providing more than just accessories, they were providing diverting social entertainment. This may or may not have been a typical example of how women purchased goods at a millinery establishment, but it does align with the content of the advertisements in Fig 61. When writing *Cranford*, Gaskell was remembering, or even reminiscing about how things were in her younger years. This situation, plus any of the others in *Cranford* or *Wives and Daughters*, may have been included because Gaskell found the anachronisms amusing, and thought her readers would too. Therefore, they are not included here as straightforward evidence, but more as instances that are potentially plausible.

Figure 62 '*Atelier de Modistes'* from Le Bon Genre, Plate 28, 1802-1812

Figure 63 'Milliner' c1830 Image © Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

That the shops were a predominantly feminine space is also evidenced. Women were beginning to carve out and define their new spaces, something they did very swiftly. In Fanny Burney's *The Witlings* (1779) a male character makes no disguise of his unwillingness to enter or stay within the confines of the millinery shop. 'No, faith, not I! Do you think I want to study the fashion of a lady's top knot?' he exclaims, and then afterwards 'Do as you list, but, for my part, I am gone'.[282] In the course of action however, he is not permitted to leave, and he complains the whole time, exaggerating his lack of comfortability in this 'wilderness of frippery'. That the spaces were beginning to be dominated by women is evident, but the shops were still populated by men to some degree. Elizabeth Gaskell describes 'handsome, young Mr. Carson' lounging in the milliners' shop whilst his sisters made some purchases.[283] Fanny Burney mentions Captain Fuller coming into Miss Widget's milliners' shop in Brighton, and stopping to have a chat.[284] It supports the idea that men were not the target demographic, but they were not forbidden.

Beyond the shop floor, the relationship between the milliner and the consumer could range from personal and private to something purely commercial. Historian Wendy Gamber argues for the former, having extensively researched the millinery and dressmaking trades of the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although all of her research comes from North American

[282] Burney, F., 1779. *The Witlings*. Stage Door. Act I.
[283] Gaskell, E. C., & Munro, R. (2006). *Mary Barton*. London: Nick Hern Books.
[284] SATURDAY, MAY 29 Fanny Burney Diary 1779

sources and details the North American experience from 1860 onwards, some of the ideas and points she raises have validity in relation to early nineteenth-century England.[285] She suggests that the consultation and fitting process required for custom-made garments helped cement a relationship between producer and consumer that maintained a certain degree of intimacy. Gamber quotes from historian Lois Banner's book *American Beauty* (1983) in reference to the idea that this relationship was mostly made up of 'flattery and imperiousness' and not at all genuine, but then disagrees with the notion that this was widely prevalent, and strongly suggests that the opposite could also be true.[286] She gives the example of Elizabeth Keckley, dressmaker to Mary Todd Lincoln. She explains that Keckley 'was Mrs Lincoln's closest friend and confidante' during her years at the White House.[287] Gamber suggests this close kind of relationship was nothing new, and still present in the late nineteenth-century. Elsewhere in the chapter she presents further evidence supporting the idea of the dressmaker and milliner as an agony aunt.[288] We have little evidence that such relationships existed in the same way in England, but the ritual of the fitting and consultation must have prompted and provoked intimate conversations nonetheless. Therefore, it is logical to frame the milliners' shop as a woman's 'safe space', where she could speak with a degree of candour and expect a sympathetic ear.

[285] Gamber, W. (1997). *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. p211
[286] Gamber, 1997, p102
[287] Gamber, 1997, p102
[288] Gamber, 1997, p103

Figure 64 *A Bonnet Shop*, 1810
The larger lady has a seat, but so does her little dog. The workroom girls, much younger and prettier than the customers, are gathered around a table beside a window, whilst a man in the street has a good look inside.

Fanny Burney's take on the relationship in her play *The Witlings* seems to support Lois Banner's idea that the relationships could be polite and congenial, but not at all genuine. Milliner Mrs Wheedle and her workroom girls are very attentive to some customers, but only politely tolerant of others. Burney features a milliners' shop again in *The Wanderer* (1779), and has little sympathy for either consumers or shopkeepers. She denounces the ladies who try on everything in the shop, injuring stock so badly it needs to then be discounted. These ladies order articles, then change their mind and return them, and after 'two or three hours of lounging, rummaging, fault-finding and chaffering, they purchased a yard or two of ribbon, or a few skeins of netting silk.'[289] But her assessment of the milliner and her work-women is just as scathing. Burney asserts they favour the wealthy and aristocratic customers, and shun those without rank or fortune. They attempt to dupe the customers by selling 'old goods as if new, cheap goods as if dear, and ancient ornaments…as the very pink of the mode'. Burney's narrator is unable to decide which party is worse; the 'insolent, vain, unfeeling buyer', or the 'subtle, plausible, over-reaching seller.'[290]

[289] Burney, F., Doody, M., Mack, R. L., & Sabor, P. (1991). *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties*. Book 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 45
[290] Burney, F., Doody, M., Mack, R. L., & Sabor, P. (1991). *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties*. Book 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 45

This chapter has presented an analysis of women consumers of the 1830s in regards to their consumption of millinery, and their relationship and interaction with milliners. Significantly, it has presented new evidence of bonnet prices and related them to incomes of the period, to demonstrate exactly where the bonnet sat in terms of desirability as a consumer object. It has shown the various ways consumers used their bonnets in both their daily life and for special occasions, to explore the situations which might spur consumption. In analysing the bonnet as a means of conspicuous consumption, this chapter has demonstrated that the bonnet, more so than other accessories, was an intricate means of conveying one's wealth and status. Finally, in examining the relationship between the milliner and the consumer, it has provided a fresh analysis of the retail shop as a feminine space in the early nineteenth century.

Conclusion

When visiting museums to examine extant bonnets in their collections for this study, it was reported that bonnets are rarely requested for viewing by researchers, for reasons that are not quite clear. Perhaps because the hat has largely disappeared from our attire today, it has also been neglected by dress historians as an area of study. There are other garments that precede the bonnet in importance for reasons of decency, perhaps, but millinery should not be demoted from our attention for that reason alone. In the same way that today a woman might wear only jeans and t-shirts, but have a fabulous collection of expensive handbags or shoes as her means of sartorial expression, perhaps the bonnet needs to be further reconsidered as a fashion favourite of the nineteenth century woman.

This study has only examined the millinery occupation in England, and given no consideration to how it worked elsewhere in Britain, Europe, or further afield. The millinery trade that exists today around the world is not the same in every location, so it is likely the same was true in the nineteenth century. Further investigation of the differences could bring even more details to light about the occupation in England. This dissertation aimed to give a fuller picture of the bonnet in fashion, but also aimed to fill specific gaps in knowledge, such as a cohesive history of the bonnet, and a clear breakdown of the main types of bonnet worn in this period. The objective was to find out more about what the bonnet meant to the women who wore it, and this has been demonstrated by establishing the bonnet as one of the most accessible means of interpreting changing fashion trends. Only a small sample of extant bonnets were examined in person for this study, and there is further work that could be done that would enhance our knowledge not only of how they were made, but how they were worn and how they were used.

Because there are many accounts, both from the period and afterwards, that consider both the milliner and the dressmaker together, this study aimed to separate the milliner from the dressmaker and examine the circumstances that were particular to her. It also aimed to give a regional perspective on the milliner, as so much previous research contains a London bias. The information presented in this dissertation shows milliners to have been somewhat misrepresented by literature and common assumptions. Far from being just needlewomen, they possessed something of an entrepreneurial spirit, in an age when it was not necessarily encouraged in women. Furthermore, milliners' skillsets appear to have been more varied and complex than research until now suggests. Significantly, the story of Alice Butler – who defied many of the millinery stereotypes, and who has been invisible for over a century – has given a fresh perspective on the world of the milliner, as well as highlighting the differences between the occupations of country and city milliners. She was only one milliner, in one city, and there were thousands of milliners, each with their own story. For the makers of an essential

accessory that played such a large part in women's lives, milliners deserve more visibility, plus more credit for the role they played in shaping, driving and disseminating fashion trends.

This research has also enhanced our knowledge of millinery consumption habits in the nineteenth century, by presenting evidence showing consumption patterns specific to the bonnet and also by analysing income information to assess spending habits. Significantly, this dissertation presented new research regarding bonnet prices. Previous research provides little to no information regarding prices of bonnets, or the materials that were used for making them, and further work could be done in examining extant bonnets and cataloguing the materials, trims and making methods, and comparing them with data concerning prices. Regarding shopping and retail, previous research has tended to focus on shopping for dress in general, and not specifically millinery. The research presented in this dissertation has carefully selected sources pertaining to shopping for millinery, and collated them in one place.

This study contributes to our understanding of the milliner in the nineteenth century, and builds on previous research to give a fuller picture of the bonnet in fashion. It is hoped the findings will be of interest to all dress history scholars, not just those with an interest in millinery, and that the research highlighting how important the bonnet was to women will invite conversation and debate. For although the bonnet might be the last thing a woman puts on to go out, in the realm of dress history, it should not be an afterthought.

Figure 65 *Before the Mirror*, 1827
George Friedrich Kersting

Bibliography

Books

Adburgham, A., 1972. *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women's Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Adburgham, A., 1979. *Shopping in Style: London from the Restoration to Edwardian elegance,* (London: Thames and Hudson)

Adburgham, A., 1964. *Shops and Shopping 1800-1914: Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought Her Clothes*, London: Allen & Unwin.

Batchelor, J. (2010). *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750-1830*. Manchester University Press.

Bradfield, N. (1997). *Costume in Detail: Women's Dress 1730-1930* (New ed.). Orpington: Eric Dobby.

Bryson, E., 1978. *Portrait of Nottingham* (2nd ed., [Portrait books]). London: Hale.

Buck, A. (1979). *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England*. London: Batsford.

Buck, A. (1984). *Victorian Costume and Costume Accessories* (Rev. 2nd ed.). Bedford: Ruth Bean.

Burney, F., 1779. *The Witlings*. Stage Door.

Burney, F., & Sabor, P. (Ed.). 2001. *Journals and Letters*. Penguin Classics

Campbell, R. 1747. *The London Tradesman: Being a Compendious View of All the Trades, Professions, Arts, Both Liberal and Mechanic, Now Practised in the Cities of London and Westminster. Calculated for the Information of Parents, and Instruction of Youth in Their Choice of Business*. London: T. Gardner. Retrieved from http://archive.org/

Carlyle, Thomas, and Jane Welsh Carlyle. *The Carlyle Letters Online [CLO].* Ed. Brent E. Kinser. Duke UP, 2007-2016, www.carlyleletters.org.

Church, R.A., 1966. *Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town: Victorian Nottingham,1815-1900.*, Cass.

Clark, F. (1982). *Hats (The costume accessories series)*. Batsford.

Cleland, J., 1747. *Fanny Hill or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. Penguin Books Limited.

Craig, W. M. (1804) *Itinerant Traders of London in their Ordinary Costume with Notices of Remarkable Places given in the Background,* Bishopsgate Institute.

de Courtais, G. (1973). *Women's Hats, Headdresses and Hairstyles*. Batsford.

Cunnington, C. W. (1936). *Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century.* New York: The Macmillan Company.

Davidson, C., 1985. *The World of Mary Ellen Best*, London: Chatto and Windus Ltd.

Davidson, H., 2019. *Dress in the Age of Jane Austen,* London; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Davis, D., 1966. *A History of Shopping*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Dyer, S., & Wigston Smith, C. (2020). *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Nation of Makers*. Bloomsbury.

Dyer, S. (2021). *Material Lives: Women Makers and Consumer Culture in the 18th Century*. Bloomsbury.

Engels, F., 1892. *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844.*, London: Allen & Unwin.

Gamber, W., 1997. *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Gaskell, E. C. (1986). J. A. V. Chapple, & A. Pollard (Eds.) *Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell*. Manchester University Press.

Ginsburg, M., 1990. *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*, London: Studio Editions

Hopkins, A., & Hopkins, V. (2020). *Headwear: Hats, Bonnets and Caps from the Hopkins Collection*. The School of Historical Dress.

Horne, C., 1787. *Serious Thoughts on the Miseries of Seduction and Prostitution, etc.* https://books.google.co.uk/

Howell, M. J., 1847. *The Handbook of Millinery*. Simpkin, Marshall and Co. London.

Howlett, E., 1828. *Cottage Comforts with Hints for Promoting Them Gleaned from Experience, Enlivened with Anecdotes.*

Hughes, C., 2006. *Dressed in Fiction*. Berg.

Hughes, C., 2017. *Hats,* London; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

Inder, P., 2017. *The Rag Trade: The People Who Made Our Clothes,* Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Amberley Publishing

Inder, P., 2018. *Dresses and Dressmaking: From the Late Georgians to the Edwardians*. Amberley Publishing.

Lane, J., 1996. *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*, London: U.C.L. Press.

Lurie, A., 1983. *The Language of Clothes* (2nd ed.). London: Hamlyn Paperbacks.

Mackenzie, A. & National Trust, 2004. *Hats and Bonnets*, London: National Trust.

Main, V., 2003. *Swiss Straw Work: Techniques of a Fashion Industry*, Great Britain: Mains Collins Publishing.

Mayhew, H., 1967. *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of those that will work, those that cannot work, and those that will not work / Vol.4* Enlarged., London: Cass.,

Mayhew, H., Thompson, E. P & Yeo, Eileen, 1971. *The Unknown Mayhew: Selections from the 'Morning Chronicle', 1849-1850*, London: Merlin Press.

Mida, I., & Kim, Alexandra. (2015). *The Dress Detective: A practical guide to object-based research in fashion*. London, England: Bloomsbury.

Nicklas, C., & Pollen, Annebella. (2015). *Dress History: New Directions in Theory and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Perry, D., 2016. *Drawn Bonnets – Examination and Construction*, Timely Tresses, USA (self-published).

Styles, J., 2007. *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press.

Taylor, L., 2002. *The Study of Dress History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Tarrant, N. E. A. (1983). *The Rise and Fall of the Sleeve 1825-1840: A catalogue of the costume and accessories in the Charles Stewart and Royal Scottish Museum collections.* Scotland: Royal Scottish Museum.

Turner Wilcox, R. (2008). *The Mode in Hats and Headdresses* (3rd ed.). New York: Dover.

Veblen, T. (1899). *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Dover Thrift Editions, 1994) New York: Dover.

Wigston Smith, C. (2013). *Women, Work and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel*. Cambridge University Press.

Young, G.M., 1934. *Early Victorian England, 1830-1865*. Volume I, London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford.

Young, G.M., 1934. *Early Victorian England: 1830-1865* / vol.2, Oxford U.P.

The Book of English Trades and Library of the Useful Arts. (1818). J. Souter, London.

A New System of Practical Domestic Economy. (1828) London: Henry Colburn.

The Guide to Trade – The Dress-Maker and The Milliner. (1843). Charles Knight and Co.

Second Report of the Commissioners: Trades and Manufactures. (1843). London: Printed by William Clowes, H.M.S.O.

Articles

Arnold, J. (1973). The Dressmaker's Craft. *Costume, 7*(1), pp29-40. https://doi.org/10.1179/cos.1973.7.s1.29

Buck, A. (1983). Clothes in Fact and Fiction. *Costume, 17*(1), pp89-104. https://doi.org/10.1179/cos.1983.17.1.89

Bullard, Daphne. (1969): *Hats, Bonnets and Hairstyles 1830-60*, Costume, Volume 3, pp. 24-25.

Butler, Marilyn. (1972). The Uniqueness of Cynthia Kirkpatrick: Elizabeth Gaskell's Wives and Daughters and Maria Edgeworth's Helen. *The Review of English Studies, 23*(91), new series, 278-290.

Childers, J. (1996). "Nicholas Nickleby's" Problem of "Doux Commerce". *Dickens Studies Annual, 25*, pp49-65.

Crick, B. (1976). Mrs. Gaskell's "Ruth": A Reconsideration. *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature, 9*(2), pp85-104.

Chrisman Campbell, K. (2002). The Face of Fashion: Milliners in Eighteenth-Century Visual Culture. *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 25*, p157-172.
Davidson, Hilary, (2019), The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as an Academic Practice, *Fashion Theory*, https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2019.1603859

Erickson, A. L. (2011). *Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies* 1700–1750. History Workshop Journal, (71), 147.

Halbert, J. (2014). Liberating the Slaves of the Needle: The Association for the Aid and Benefit of Dressmakers and Milliners 1843-1863. *Retrospectives: A Postgraduate History Journal. 3*, 1, p44-58

Lambert, M. (2009). 'Sent from Town': Commissioning Clothing in Britain During the Long Eighteenth Century. *Costume, 43*(1), 66-84. https://doi.org/10.1179/174963009x419737

Ginsburg, M. (1972). The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades, 1700-1850. *Costume, 6*(1), 64-71. https://doi.org/10.1179/cos.1972.6.1.64

McClung Fleming, E. (1974). Artifact Study: A Proposed Model. *Winterthur Portfolio, 9*, pp153-173.

McKnight, A. (2018). Dressmakers and Seamstresses in Toronto, 1834–1861. *Costume, 52*(1), 48-73. https://doi.org/10.3366/cost.2018.0047

Prown, J. D. (1980). Style as Evidence. *Winterthur Portfolio, 13*(3), pp197-210.

Prown, J. D. (1982). Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method. *Winterthur Portfolio, 17*(1), pp1-19.

Starr, E. (2002). ; A Great Engine for Good': The Industry of Fiction in Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Mary Barton' And 'North and South'. *Studies in the Novel, 34*(4), pp385-402.

Tetart-Vittu, F. (1992). The French-English Go-Between: 'Le Modéle de Paris' or the Beginning of the Designer, 1820–1880. *Costume, 26*(1), pp40-45. https://doi.org/10.1179/cos.1992.26.1.40

Tozer, J. (1986). Cunnington's Interpretation of Dress. *Costume, 20*(1), pp1-17. https://doi.org/10.1179/cos.1986.20.1.1

Wigston Smith, C. (2018). The Haberdasher's Plot: The Romance of Small Trade in Frances Burney's Fiction. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, pp. 271-293. https://doi.org/10.1353/tsw.2018.0027

Worth, R. (1998). Elizabeth Gaskell, Clothes and Class Identity. *Costume, 32*(1), pp52-59. https://doi.org/10.1179/cos.1998.32.1.52

Yonan, M. (2011). Toward a Fusion of Art History and Material Culture Studies. *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History and Material Culture, 18*(2), pp232-248.

PhD Theses

Batchelor, J. (2002). *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and Sentimental Literature* [PhD Thesis, Queen Mary, University of London].

Gernerd, E. 'Têtes to Tails: Eighteenth-Century Underwear and Accessories in Britain and Colonial America'. PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015.

Novels

Austen, J. (2014). *Pride and Prejudice.* (First Avenue Classics Ser). Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group.

Burney, F., Doody, M., Mack, R. L., & Sabor, P. (1991). *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties*. Book 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dickens, C., & Phiz. (1950). *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*. Oxford University Press.

Dickens, C., & Phiz. (1951). *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Oxford University Press.

Dickens, C. (1966). *David Copperfield* (Penguin classics). London: Penguin.

Dickens, C., & Kinsley, J. (2008). *The Pickwick Papers*. New York; Oxford; Oxford University Press.

Eliot, G., & Carroll, David. (1997). *Middlemarch* (World's classics). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eliot, G., & Waldron, M. (2005). *Adam Bede* ([New ed.] / edited by Mary Waldron.). Broadview.

Eliot, G., & Carroll, D. (2008). *Middlemarch*. Oxford University Press.

Eliot, G. (2011). *Silas Marner* (Collins classics). London: HarperPress

Eliot, G., & Mugglestone, L. (n.d.). *Felix Holt, The Radical.* Penguin.

Eliot, G., & Lodge, D. (n.d.). *Scenes of Clerical Life.* Penguin.

Gaskell, E. C. (1966). *Wives and Daughters*. London: Everyman.

Gaskell, E. C. (1967). *Ruth*. London: Dent.

Gaskell, E. C. (1975). *North and South*. London: Dent (etc.).

Gaskell, E. C., & Munro, R. (2006). *Mary Barton*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Gaskell, E.C. (2017). *Cranford.* Newburyport: Open Road Media.

Media

SHOWStudio. (2014, November 13). *Bonnets: A History - Oriole Cullen / Lou Stoppard* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8dwAyRGI1k

Langley Moore, D. (Writer) (1957). Sense and Nonsense in Fashion [Television series episode]. In Rogers, C. R. (Producer). *Men, Women and Clothes*. United Kingdom: BBC.

Langley Moore, D. (Writer/Presenter), (1957). Facing the Elements [Television series episode]. In Rogers, C. R. (Producer). *Men, Women and Clothes*. United Kingdom: BBC.

Trade Directories

(1815). *The Nottingham Directory*. Nottingham: Sutton and Son.
(1825). *Glover's Nottingham Directory*. Nottingham: S. Glover
(1828-9). *Pigot's National Commercial Directory*. Manchester: J. Pigot and Co.
(1832). *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Nottinghamshire*. Sheffield: William White.
(1834). *History, Topography and Directory of the Town of Nottingham and the Adjacent Villages*. Nottingham: William Dearden.
(1835). *Pigot and Co's National Commercial Directory.* Manchester: J. Pigot and Co.
(1840). *The Nottingham Annual Register containing A New and Corrected Directory*. London: Hamilton, Adams and Co.
(1844). *Glover's History and Directory of the Town and County of the Town of Nottingham*. Nottingham: S. Glover and Son
(1847). *Slater's Classified Directories*. Manchester: Isaac Slater (late Pigot and Co.).

Appendix A

Records taken from

The Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 1674-1913

www.oldbaileyonline.org

These records all featured the search term 'bonnet' in transcriptions dating between 1820 and 1840. Some years did not feature the word bonnet, which explains the gaps between years in the records.

The 'OB' reference number is specific to this Appendix, and used for reference in the main dissertation text.

Record Reference No.	Year	Item	Value	Incident
1812				
OB1	1812	2 straw bonnets	10s	ELIZABETH BURN, MARY SMITH, Theft > shoplifting, 8th April 1812.

1820				
OB2	1820	bonnet	9s	DUGGAN DANIELS, Theft > grand larceny, 12th January 1820.
OB3	1820	bonnet	2s	SOPHIA DAVIS, Theft > grand larceny, 17th February 1820.
OB4	1820	bonnet	12s	MARIA COLEMAN, Theft > theft from a specified place, 12th April 1820.
OB6	1820	bonnet	6d	MARGARET HOLLOWAY, Theft > grand larceny, 12th April 1820.
OB7	1820	bonnet	7s	BENJAMIN JOHNSON, BENJAMIN JOHNSON, ROBERT JOHNSON, Theft > burglary, 17th May 1820.
OB8	1820	bonnet pelisse petticoat stockings cap	2s 10s 2s 1s 6d	JAMES MARTIN, WILLIAM HYDE, ANN HYDE, Theft > grand larceny, 28th June 1820.
OB9	1820	3 bonnet boxes	3s	GEORGE SMITH, Theft > grand larceny, 28th June 1820.
OB10	1820	bonnet	1s	SARAH CHAMBERLAIN, Theft > grand larceny, 28th June 1820.
OB11	1820	bonnet 4 gowns 2 shawls	4s 10s 6s	HARRIET SUMMERS, Theft > grand larceny, 18th September 1820.

OB12	1820	bonnet 2 gowns dress spencer 3 frills 2 pair stockings gloves petticoat bedgown stays	30s 6s 4s 1s 3s 1s 1s 2s 6d 2s	CATHERINE M'DONALD, Theft > theft from a specified place, 6th December 1820.

1821				
OB13	1821	bonnet	£1	RALPH DOUGHTY, Theft > pocketpicking, 14th February 1821.
OB14	1821	bonnet	4s	JAMES GILCHRIST, Theft > grand larceny, 14th February 1821.
OB15	1821	bonnet	1s 6d	MARY KING, Theft > pocketpicking, 6th June 1821.
OB16	1822	bonnet	12s	JOHN CRACKER, Theft > theft from a specified place, 9th January 1822.
OB17	1821	bonnet	4s	JOHN DRISCOLL, Theft > pocketpicking, 5th December 1821.
OB18	1821	bonnet	2s	JOHN JACOBS, Violent Theft > highway robbery, 24th October 1821.

1822				
OB19	1822	50 yards ribbon	30s	JANE JONES, Theft > shoplifting, 3rd July 1822.
OB20	1822	2 pair stays	7s	MARTHA FOX, Theft > grand larceny, 11th September 1822.
OB21	1822	bonnet	10s	CATHERINE MEAD, Theft > grand larceny, 3rd July 1822.
OB22	1822	bonnet	3s	ELIZA BRADLEY, Theft > grand larceny, 11th September 1822.

OB23	1822	bonnet	5s	MARTHA READ, Theft > grand larceny, 11th September 1822.
OB24	1822	four bonnets	£3	GEORGE BRINDLE, Theft > burglary, 23rd October 1822.

1823				
OB25	1823	40 yards ribbon	11s	SARAH WIGLEY, ELIZABETH GILES, Theft > shoplifting, 19th February 1823.
OB26	1823	30 straw bonnets	£17	GEORGE WEST, Theft > grand larceny, 14th May 1823.
OB27	1823	2 pelisses gown pelisse bonnet	£3 5s 10s 10s	LUCY RICHARDSON, Theft > theft from a specified place, 14th May 1823.
OB28	1823	bonnet	10s	KITTY SHEENE, Theft > theft from a specified place, 14th May 1823.
OB29	1823	bonnet	3s	WILLIAM DOUGHTY, Theft > grand larceny, 14th May 1823.
OB30	1823	bonnet gown	6d 2s	MARY ANN STRANGE, Theft > grand larceny, 14th May 1823.
OB31	1823	yard of silk	7s	ELIZABETH WILLIAMS, Theft > stealing from master, 14th May 1823.
OB32	1823	bonnet	14s	SARAH DAY, Theft > stealing from master, 25th June 1823.
OB33	1823	child's hat	10s	MARTHA SHAW, ANN POWELL, Theft > pocketpicking, 25th June 1823.
OB34	1823	2 caps 10 yards lace	15s £1	MARY CONNOR, Theft > shoplifting, 25th June 1823.
OB35	1823	bonnet shift pocket	10s 1s 2d	SARAH RUTHERFORD, Theft > grand larceny, 25th June 1823.

OB36	1823	bonnet	5s	MARY THON, Theft > grand larceny, 10th September 1823.

1824				
OB37	1824	bonnet 2 bonnets	3s 5s	MARGARET KELLY, MARGARET BRYAN, Theft > grand larceny, 14th January 1824.
OB38	1824	8 gowns 4 shawls 3 petticoats 8 shifts bonnet 8 handkerchiefs 2 frills piece of lace	£9 20s 6s 20s 5s 15s 3s 4s	JOHN EASTERBY, PETER RYAN, HENRY KING, MARIA BENNETT, Theft > burglary, Theft > receiving, 18th February 1824.
OB39	1824	five silver thimbles velvet pelisse silk scarf plume of feathers 2 lace caps 6 sml pieces lace 3 small pieces muslin 4 small pieces muslin small piece of satin	1s 30s 40s 5s 2s 10s 1s 3s 6d	JOHN EASTERBY, HENRY KING, MARIA BENNETT, Theft > burglary, 18th February 1824.

		2 1/4 yards brown holland	1s	
		4 pairs scissors	4s	
		9 yds broad ribbon	4s 6d	
		10 yds other ribbon	5s	
		3.25 yds other ribbon	1s	
		34 yds other ribbon	5s	
		30 yds silk ferret	2s	
OB40	1824	stays	10s	CATHERINE DRISCOL, Theft > theft from a specified place, 18th February 1824.
		shift	5s	
		flannel petticoat	5s	
		bonnet	5s	
		2 shirts	15s	
		black satin spencer	10s	
		coral necklace	40s	
		brooch	20s	
		three caps	40s	
		3 handkerchiefs	3s	
		gown	10s	
		thimble	1s	
		shawl	6s	
		scarf	40s	
		pocket	6d	
OB41	1824	9 awls	18d	JOHN ROACH, Theft > burglary, 18th February 1824.
		pair of pinchers	9d	
		yard of muslin	18d	
		half yard cambric	6d	

		6 yards lace	6d	
OB42	1824	bonnet 2 feathers 5 shirts 2 shawls 2 gowns 3 petticoats 4 handkerchiefs	£1 10s £2 30s 30s 8s £1	MARY ANN HUDSON, Theft > theft from a specified place, 7th April 1824.
OB43	1824	5 yards ribbon	3s	WINIFRED MILLMORE, Theft > grand larceny, 7th April 1824.
OB44	1824	2 gowns 2 shirts bonnet crown 40 yards straw plait scissors rule apron	20s 8s 9s 5s 1d 2d 1s	JAMES SUTTON, MARY ANN WOODCOCK, Theft > theft from a specified place, Theft > receiving, 7th April 1824.
OB45	1824	bonnet	5s	JOHN CRAMER, MARY CRAMER, Theft > grand larceny, 3rd June 1824.
OB46	1824	bonnet 3 frills 15 caps	9s 1s 20s	JOSEPH SCRIVEN, Theft > grand larceny, 3rd June 1824.
OB47	1824	bonnet gown scarf shawl	10s 10s 4s 5s	SARAH WEBB, Theft > grand larceny, 15th July 1824.
OB48	1824	bonnet cloak	1s 10s	MARY SULLIVAN, Theft > grand larceny, 15th July 1824.

OB49	1824	time piece coat pelisse shawl hat	£1 £2 £2 £3 6s	THOMAS WATTS, Theft > housebreaking, 15th July 1824.
OB50	1824	silk gown silk pelisse bonnet veil parasol	12s 30s 5s 5s 7s	LETITIA PICKERS, Theft > theft from a specified place, 16th September 1824.
OB51	1824	shawl bonnet veil feathers plume	15s 4s 4s 4s	MARY GRAHAM, Theft > grand larceny, 16th September 1824.
OB52	1824	bonnet	16s 6d	JOHN COOK, Theft > grand larceny, 16th September 1824.
OB53	1824	2 gowns shawl bonnet hat	15s 10s 18s 18s	GEORGE HAYNES, Theft > housebreaking, 16th September 1824.

1825				
OB54	1825	umbrella bonnet	5s 10s	CHARLOTTE JACKSON, Theft > grand larceny, 13th January 1825.
OB55	1825	reticule handkerchief 2 veils earrings thimble purse	3s 1s 30s 4s 2s 6d	JAMES DEWELL, Violent Theft > highway robbery, 13th January 1825.

OB56	1825	gown shoes picture bonnet	6d 18d 1s 6d	THOMAS TURNER, Theft > grand larceny, 17th February 1825.
OB57	1825	20 yards bombazeen 13 yards crape 24 yards sarsnet 24 yards printed cotton 8 yards lawn 3 pairs stockings 3 yards muslin 3 scarves	 £3 15s £2 12s £6 16 £3 £1 27s 13s £5	ELIZABETH WEBSTER, Theft > grand larceny, 7th April 1825.
OB58	1825	10 yards ribbon	8s	REBECCA BARRETT, Theft > shoplifting, 7th April 1825.
OB59	1825	gown petticoat 2 shifts bonnet pair stays	3s 2s 6s 18d 10s	MARTHA COE, Theft > grand larceny, 7th April 1825.
OB60	1825	pelisse 2 gowns coat trousers 3 petticoats 2 frocks bonnet	15s 12s 12s 6s 4s 4s 3s	JOHN WILLIAMS, Theft > burglary, 7th April 1825.
OB61	1825	bonnet veil	15s 15s	ANN MARTIN, Theft > grand larceny, 7th April 1825.

OB62	1825	2 bonnets 4 bonnet crowns 4 bonnet fronts	8s 20s 12s	WILLIAM GAMSON, Theft > grand larceny, 19th May 1825.
OB63	1825	bonnet pelisse	20s 10s	MARY SMITH, Theft > pocketpicking, 30th June 1825.
OB64	1825	lace veil	8s	JOHN MITCHELL, Theft > pocketpicking, 15th September 1825.
OB65	1825	4 petticoats 2 gowns 2 aprons 3 shifts shawl shoes stays bible bonnet	6s 5s 1s 3s 1s 2s 1s 2s 1s	MARY ANN WOOD, Theft > grand larceny, 27th October 1825.
OB66	1825	bonnet 3 yards ribbon	30s 1s	ELIZABETH ROWLAND, Theft > grand larceny, 27th October 1825.
OB67	1825	stays bonnet	10s 5s	MARY ANN PEARCE, Theft > housebreaking, 27th October 1825.

1826

OB68	1826	gown shawl pelisse boots bonnet shoes 2 dresses	5s 3s 10s 2s 2s 1s 30s	ANN CONROY, Theft > theft from a specified place, 12th January 1826.

		2 pelisses 3 petticoats 2 nightgowns 4 shifts 45 yards silk	20s 3s 2s 4s £8	
OB69	1826	bonnet	12s	ANN COOPER, Theft > grand larceny, 16th February 1826.
OB70	1826	gown bonnet	2s 2s	MARY TRIGG, Theft > grand larceny, 16th February 1826.
OB71	1826	bonnet gown apron	5s 2s 6d	CAHERINE BROWN, Theft > grand larceny, 16th February 1826.
OB72	1826	shawl veil stays 2 petticoats shift stockings bonnet shoes silk dress	30s 50s 20s 2s 2s 8s 20s 2s £2	EMMA FARROW, Theft > theft from a specified place, 6th April 1826.
OB73	1826	bonnet hat	25s 10s	WILLIAM CLARKE, Theft > housebreaking, 22nd June 1826.
OB74	1826	ring bonnet pocket	2s 1s 1d	MARY ANN KING, LOUISA KING, MARY CARTER, Theft > pocketpicking, 14th September 1826.
OB75	1826	3 robes 130 yards silk	£3 £29	HENRY DUNN, MARTHA SMITH, Theft > theft from a specified place, Theft > receiving, 14th September 1826.

		spencer 3 caps 4 collars 11 handkerchiefs 11 pairs stockings 14 pairs gloves 44 yards printed cotton 9 shawls 2 scarfs 1 parasol 2 veils piece of gingham 4 yards cloth 10 yards muslin 26 yards linen hat	8s 30s 30s 40s 40s 14s £3 £13 30s 17s 50s 10s 40s 13s 30s 10s	
OB76	1826	spencer bonnet	4s 7s	MARY BARLOW, Theft > grand larceny, 14th September 1826.
OB77	1826	bonnet 2 yards ribbon	20s 2s	GEORGE NORRIS, Theft > grand larceny, 14th September 1826.
OB78	1826	hat bonnet	3s 2s	THOMAS SORRELL, Theft > grand larceny, 14th September 1826.
OB79	1826	bonnet	2s	ANN MILLER, Theft > grand larceny, 14th September 1826.
OB80	1826	pelisse bonnet petticoat	30s 30s 1s	MARIA BENJAMIN, Theft > grand larceny, 26th October 1826.

OB81	1826	yard silk 2 yards calico bonnet pattens	2s 1s 3s 1s	ELIZABETH WHEATLEY, Theft > grand larceny, 7th December 1826.
1827				
OB82	1827	bonnet coat 4 gowns shawl	4s 20s 2s 5s	CATHERINE ROBINSON, Theft > grand larceny, 11th January 1827.
OB83	1827	leghorn bonnet	10s	MARY DUNN, Theft > shoplifting, 5th April 1827.
OB84	1827	watch bonnet gown night gown thimble collar pelisse 2 gowns	35s £1 5s 1s 6d 1s 9d 30s 15s	AVIS POPE, Theft > theft from a specified place, 31st May 1827.
OB85	1827	shift sheet 3 petticoats 2 spencers yard jean 10 yards binding stays 3 whalebone busks straw bonnet	6d 1s 3s 6d 1s 6d 6d 6d 1s 6d 1s 6d	HARRIET HANN, Theft > stealing from master, 31st May 1827.
OB86	1827	4 bonnets	7s	JANE CROCKET, Theft > theft from a specified place, 31st May 1827.

		5 yards satin 25 yards ribbon 1 piece gimp	£1 16s 6d 2s	
OB87	1827	gown bonnet scarf	20s 12s 20s	CHARLOTTE FERGUSSON, Theft > grand larceny, 31st May 1827.
OB88	1827	bonnet shift stays stockings 2 caps thimble scissors 9 books wine glass	10s 2s 1s 6d 2s 6d 6d 10s 6d	BRIDGET MAHAGAN, Theft > theft from a specified place, 31st May 1827.
OB89	1827	3 gowns parasol straw bonnet 2 pairs stays petticoat 8lbs ham 2 muslin collars pelerine pair net sleeves headdress	£6 8s 1s 7s 6s 5s 20s 2s 2s 6s	WILLIAM JONES, GEORGE JENKS, Theft > grand larceny, 12th July 1827.
OB90	1827	cloth cape 2 yards net pelisse bonnet half handkerchief	1s 10s 5s 1s 6d	CATHERINE ROACH, Theft > simple larceny, 12th July 1827.

OB91	1827	leghorn bonnet	30s	SUSAN SMITH, Theft > pocketpicking, 12th July 1827.
OB92	1827	4 gowns bonnet 2 veils skirt	£1 5s 5s 1s	JOHN ROACH, Theft > simple larceny, 13th September 1827.
OB93	1827	bonnet 3 caps 2 collars	10s 3s 1s	WILLIAM BROWNUTT, Theft > simple larceny, 13th September 1827.
OB94	1827	bonnet	5s	MARY HAROLD, Theft > housebreaking, 25th October 1827.
OB95	1827	leghorn bonnet	15s	THOMAS WALKER, RICHARD THOMAS, Theft > simple larceny, 25th October 1827.
OB96	1827	gown	8s	ANN PAGE, Theft > theft from a specified place, 6th December 1827.
OB97	1827	bonnet	3s	JOHN KILMINSTER, CHARLES STANLEY, Theft > theft from a specified place, 6th December 1827.
OB98	1827	2 straw bonnets	20s	JEREMIAH CRAWLEY, MARTIN BLANEY, Theft > housebreaking, 6th December 1827.

1828				
OB99	1828	leghorn bonnet spencer 2 ribbons 4 gowns pelisse 2 shawls	20s 12s 2s 50s 50s 25s	MARY ANN RUSH, Theft > theft from a specified place, 10th January 1828.
OB100	1828	bonnet leghorn bonnet	12s 12s	THOMAS FLOODGATE, Theft > housebreaking, 10th January 1828

OB101	1828	leghorn bonnet 20 yards silk 5 yards ribbon black bodkin and tweezers	£1 50s 4s 1s	RICHARD JONES, Theft > housebreaking, 10th January 1828
OB102	1828	bonnet gown	2s 4s	MARY SHERBIRD, Theft > stealing from master, 10th January 1828.
OB103	1828	bonnet 4 dead ducks	10s 3s	JOHN HERRING, Theft > simple larceny, 21st February 1828.
OB104	1828	18 yards ribbon	13s	ELIZABETH AUSTIN, Theft > simple larceny, 10th April 1828
OB105	1828	bonnet	£1	GEORGE HENSEL, Theft > housebreaking, 10th April 1828
OB106	1828	leghorn bonnet 2 gowns	10s 7s	ELIZA COLLINS, Theft > simple larceny, 10th April 1828.
OB107	1828	7 yards ribbon	4s	FLORINDA WISEMAN, Theft > simple larceny, 29th May 1828.
OB108	1828	bonnet	2s	ISABELLA EDWARDS, Theft > simple larceny, 29th May 1828.
OB109	1828	bonnet frill	20s 5s	JOHN EDMUNDS, ANN JOHNSON, Violent Theft > highway robbery, 3rd July 1828.
OB110	1828	4 yards ribbon	8s	REBECCA HILL, ELIZABETH BOYCE, Theft > simple larceny, 3rd July 1828.
OB111	1828	3 loaves bread 8 oz sugar bonnet	1s 5d 2s	ANN BOOTH, ELIZABETH THETFORD, ELIZA SMITH, Violent Theft > robbery, 11th September 1828.

OB112	1828	bonnet	8s	JOHN COOTE, Theft > simple larceny, 11th September 1828.
OB113	1828	bonnet 2 hats 2 gowns 1 hat	30s 9s 10s 20s	ELIZABETH STRUTTON, Theft > housebreaking, 23rd October 1828.
OB114	1828	bonnet printed bound book	2s 2s	WILLIAM HALL, Theft > simple larceny, 23rd October 1828.
OB115	1828	yard ribbon yard ribbon 1.5yard other ribbon 3 yards other ribbon 1.5 yard other ribbon 3.5 yards other ribbon stay lace yard of trimming 2 yards edging 2.5 yards lace 1.5 yards gros de Naples 10 yards silk lace veil bonnet	1s 3d 2s 2s 6d 3s 1s 3d 6d 6d 1s 8d 10s 5s 3d £1 10s 1s 17s	ELIZA BOLTON, Theft > stealing from master, 23rd October 1828.
OB116	1828	bonnet tippet flat iron	5s 9s 1s	ANN BARNETT, Theft > simple larceny, 23rd October 1828.

OB117	1828	bonnet	6d	ROBERT BUTLER, Theft > theft from a specified place, 23rd October 1828.

1829				
OB118	1829	8 pairs stays	20s	MARGARET JENKINS, Theft > simple larceny, 15th January 1829.
OB119	1829	bonnet veil	3s 2s	WILLIAM CRAIGEE, Theft > simple larceny, 15th January 1829.
OB120	1829	dress pelisse bonnet neck chain veil 4 shifts bed gown collar 1 3/4 yard lace stays	£1 £1 10s 10s 6s 12s 1s 6d 1s 1s 6d 9s	MARY ANN SMITH, Theft > theft from a specified place, 19th February 1829.
OB121	1829	bonnet	1s 6d	JANE SWAN, Theft > simple larceny, 11th June 1829.
OB122	1829	bonnet	12s	SARAH SPALDING, Theft > simple larceny, 11th June 1829.
OB123	1829	4 yards silk 3.5 yards other silk 3.5 yards other silk 1.5 yard other silk 10 yards other silk	14s 14s 14s 7s £3	ELLEN LEONARD, Theft > stealing from master, 11th June 1829.
OB124	1829	2 leghorn flats	39s	ANN LILLY, Theft > simple larceny, 16th July 1829.

OB125	1829	bonnet veil tippet cap	6s 9s 16s 3s	HANNAH FRENCH, Theft > stealing from master, 10th September 1829.
OB126	1829	dress hat bonnet 2 lace caps 2 lace collars	13s 8s 5s 8s 2s	EDWARD HICKEY, Theft > simple larceny, 10th September 1829.
OB127	1829	bonnet	25s	HANNAH ALLEN, Theft > simple larceny, 10th September 1829.
OB128	1829	spectacles bonnet 3 thimbles	10s 2d 1/2d	MARGARET BYRNE, Theft > simple larceny, 29th October 1829.
OB129	1829	bonnet	1s	LOUISA HESKINS, Theft > theft from a specified place, 3rd December 1829.
OB130	1829	40 yards gros de Naples	£5	JOHN SCROGGINS, THOMAS BAKER, JOHN JAMES, ELIZABETH JAMES, Theft > theft from a specified place, Theft > receiving, 3rd December 1829.

1830				
OB131	1830	bonnet	5s	ROBERT RICHARDS, JAMES FOX, JANE McCOY, Theft > simple larceny, Theft > receiving, 14th January 1830.
OB132	1830	straw plait - 20 scores	6s	ELIZABETH NORTH, Theft > receiving, 18th February 1830.
OB133	1830	18 yards ribbon	10s	ELIZABETH DUGGIN, Theft > simple larceny, 15th April 1830.
OB134	1830	6 bonnets	12s	JEREMIAH TIERNEY, Theft > simple larceny, 15th April 1830.
OB135	1830	bonnet	4s	MARY RIORDEN, Theft > simple larceny, 15th April 1830.

1836				
OB136	1836	bonnet	3s	JANE CLAYWORTH, Miscellaneous > kidnapping, 4th July 1836.

1842				
OB137	1842	72 willow squares	£1 13s	GEORGE LOCKE, Theft > stealing from master, 3rd January 1842.