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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Undressed:
Undergarments as Cultural Limina in Eighteenth-Century France

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Emily Catherine Pfiefer

December 2014

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2014

The Dissertation of Emily Catherine Pfiefer is approved:

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University of California, Riverside

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For my Dad,
the first Dr. Pfiefer

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Undressed: Undergarments as Cultural Limina in Eighteenth-Century France

by

Emily Catherine Pfiefer

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in History
University of California, Riverside, December 2014
Dr. Randolph C. Head, Chairperson

In the sixteenth century, few Europeans wore undergarments; by the nineteenth century, undergarments were commonplace. This change came about through the invention, production, and adoption of a new form of clothing, closely connected to changing concepts of the body as well as evolving social codes of consumption, hygiene, and class. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the people of Europe, and particularly of France, developed an obsession with undergarments. Full court dress began to lose its appeal, and by the end of the century, Queen Marie Antoinette shocked the nation with her *Gaulle*, an informal gown made to look like an undergarment itself.

Through a multitude of sources and interdisciplinary methods of analysis, this study presents an interpretation of undergarments as the limina between public and private, as well as the locus in where changing concepts of the body played out over the long eighteenth century. By analyzing ideas about undergarments and their relationships with the body and society in comparison with social and individual conceptions and uses of undergarments, this study illuminates cultural concepts of outer and under in addition

to notions of public and private. Similarly, by interpreting ideas about the outer and under and the role of undergarments for personal, individual use versus public, social use, this study probes evolving concepts of private and public in eighteenth-century France. By incorporating personal sensibilities about undergarments with social and cultural analyses of undergarments as material goods, this project contributes to studies of material culture and material life, as well as to understandings of the body and its relationship with material goods and society. Hence, this study, with its systematic, cultural approach provides a new, historical conceptualization of undergarments, so long unmentionable, as they emerged in the eighteenth century.

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INTRODUCTION: Undressing the Eighteenth Century

In the sixteenth century, few Europeans wore undergarments; by the nineteenth century, undergarments were commonplace. This change came about through the invention, production, and adoption of a new form of clothing, one closely connected to changing concepts of the body, as well as evolving social codes of consumption, hygiene, class, and political economy. This change began over the course of the seventeenth century as undergarments, which absorbed bodily dirt and oils, replaced bathing as the primary means of physical cleansing. Indeed, over the course of the eighteenth century the people of Europe, and particularly of France, developed an obsession with undergarments. In the beginning of the century, the hints of white linen collar and cuffs, which had peeked out from one's clothing in the seventeenth century, were no longer enough: women began to open or tuck up their skirts to reveal their petticoats beneath, lower their necklines to show a lacy décolleté, and shorten their sleeves to give way to ruffled undersleeves. Over the course of the century, full dress began to lose its appeal, and undress, the billowy, relaxed garments previously worn only in the privacy of one's home, became the standard. At the end of the century, Queen Marie Antoinette shocked the nation with her *Gaulle*, an informal gown made to look like an undergarment itself (Figure 0.1).



Figure 0.1. Louise Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, Marie Antoinette, 1783, Private Collection.

Early Modern European society rested on a culture of visual cues and displays. People discerned one another by the appearance of their clothing and belongings; succinctly put, the habit, did, in fact, make the monk. As such, each person was expected to dress so as to display him- or herself appropriately. Clothing revealed one's gender, age, rank, occupation, and social position by communicating through a culturally defined

language of visual cues understood by all, despite variations.¹ “Social identification through clothing was for centuries one of the underpinnings of European society. It was assumed that a quick scanning of the stranger would provide sufficient clues to status, occupation, and perhaps regional association.”² This ability to discern persons by their clothing and outward presentation is what Daniel Roche has termed “the culture of appearances.”³ Displays of one’s self followed culturally sanctioned methods and needed validation by an audience. Moreover, “judging people by their sartorial appearance entailed the obligation to teach and learn the correct way to dress in order to present a just and good idea of oneself which corresponded to the real person.”⁴ Additionally, clothing was “the body’s body and an expression of the soul’s disposition”; hence, one’s dress also revealed one’s character.⁵ Fashion—as both a set of regulatory practices and as a system of signification—and clothing were evolving over the course of the eighteenth century as undergarments became more publicly visible, thus necessitating changes in cultural understandings of what could be worn as well as the meanings of the new attire.⁶

As the foundation of clothing culture, undergarments are a significant element of material culture that has not yet experienced the critical academic study it is due. Up to now, most scholarship has, at best, focused on the connection between undergarments

¹ Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, trans., Brian Pearce, Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 194.

² Beverly Lemire, *Fashion’s Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 161.

³ Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴ Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 202.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jill Fields, *An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 2.

and hygiene or has jumped directly to issues of sexuality and titillation, owing to current associations of French lingerie with sexualized women in lacy panties. However, in focusing primarily on issues of hygiene and sex, historians who have addressed undergarments have allowed modern sensibilities to shape their questions and interpretations, rather than allowing the cultures of the past to guide their analyses. To disrupt the established modes of analyzing undergarments as hygienic or sexualized, this project explores the significance of undergarments in European culture throughout a period of significant social and cultural transformation. It does this by focusing on changes in undergarments, the relationship between underclothing and physical bodies, public and personal sensibilities regarding underwear, and the effects of a culture demanding greater quantities of undergarments in an economy that could not meet the demand. Because underclothing lies between the body and that which is displayed and seen by society, it provides a unique conduit into understanding both what is inside clothing and what is outside. Undergarments came to form the cultural threshold between the physical body and the social body.

To better understand these garments and their relationship to physical and social bodies, this study explores the ways undergarments were conceived, worn, experienced, and used in France in the long-eighteenth century. I seek to explore the impetus for their growing prevalence, as well as the effects of the increasing demand for undergarments. In discovering the ways in which undergarments were used and understood, this study will help readers understand the relationships between physical bodies and clothing as well as between bodies and society as undergarments gained prominence. Understanding these

relationships between the body and society, which can be discovered by studying undergarments, links to the history of the body and to clothing culture—two recent and significant avenues of historical research—and provides insight into the establishment of undergarments as a cultural standard in the West. Key to understanding the role of undergarments is recognizing that the sorts of binaries that turn undergarments into liminal objects are themselves constructed by the culture of undergarments. These binaries are not static and are continually defined redefined by society. Nevertheless, such dichotomies shape cultural products including undergarments. Yet, as boundaries, when undergarments change and develop, the concepts they define and distinguish change and adapt. Therefore, we see a symbiotic evolution of undergarments as boundaries and the binaries which undergarments establish.

Undergarments are material products which reveal social and cultural codes. To fully comprehend undergarments and their role as cultural limina between physical and social bodies, it is necessary to better understand the cultural roles of these garments in the eighteenth century as they became more prevalent. Specifically, this project explores both individual and larger social uses and interpretations of undergarments, addressing a larger variety of undergarments than previous studies. All studies thus far have focused solely on shirts or shifts when addressing undergarments. This limited focus neglects the much wider range of garments that was considered “underwear” in the eighteenth century. The assortment of eighteenth-century undergarments includes shirts, shifts, drawers, corsets, hoop-petticoats, petticoats, collars, cuffs, and even swaddling bands for

infants. By exploring a greater variety of garments, this project is able to address a wider scope of cultural roles.

France, and specifically Paris, became established as the major European fashion center in the seventeenth century and remained so through the twentieth century, making it the ideal locus for this study of undergarments, so necessary to the shape and elements of eighteenth century fashion. The reign of Louis XIV witnessed the development of the fashion press, fashion boutiques, and fashion seasons in France. Thus, in the 1670s, the French were the first to begin marketing fashion, particularly fashions in clothing. Moreover, to market French fashions to an international audience, Parisian couturiers sent wooden fashion dolls dressed in the latest styles, including appropriate underclothes, to clothing shops in London and other European capitals. By the eighteenth century, Parisian clothing styles were preeminent throughout Europe. Because it led the Western World in fashions, France propagated new forms of undergarments that shaped fashions and that altered bodies to fit fashions. In creating a fashionable body to fit fashionable clothes, the French cultivated and disseminated a culture of undergarments. Moreover, within the subject of fashion, one discovers an entire culture of foundation garments based on emerging social ideas and emphasized by the proliferation of clothing. Thus, though concealed, undergarments are particularly revealing as expressions both of the physical body and of the social body.

Although Paris became the fashion capital promulgating new clothing styles that required multiple layers and forms of undergarments, the French mercantilist economy severely limited access to less expensive imported cottons and linens needed to make

these garments. Therefore, demand for undergarments far outweighed production, and what was made was far too expensive for the common people to afford. In eighteenth-century French society, undergarments became a site of enormous attention and value, both cultural and economic.

Finally, this project, like the people of the eighteenth century, understands clothing as the body's body. Not only is the term "body" used to refer to the part of a dress that covers the torso, but clothing is a collection of garments which work together to present a particular picture of the body to society. Thus, clothing creates a new body out of the wearer's body. With these many new avenues for exploration in the culture surrounding undergarments, this study provides significant insight into the lives of people in early modern France, material culture and material life, as well as understandings of the body (without the influence of modern sensibilities).

As a fundamental part of material culture and body culture, undergarments have received surprisingly little consideration. The study of material culture examines physical objects, both natural and man-made, and their roles in society in a historical context. To study these objects, historians must examine both the objects themselves and other evidence to understand the larger context.⁷ While histories of material culture so far have taken a primarily economic focus, more recent scholarship has begun to focus on social aspects. This direction is especially relevant for the study of clothing. Recent studies

⁷ "Material Culture/ Objects", ed. Daniel Waugh, in the George Mason University Center for History & New Media, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/unpacking/objectsmain.html> (accessed 21 May 2007).

detail the interaction between suppliers and consumers, as in Beverly Lemire's *Fashion's Favourite*; the meanings and motives of the individual consumer, a concept developed in Amanda Vickery's *The Gentleman's Daughter*; group ideals, an approach found in John Styles's essay "Custom or Consumption? Plebeian Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England" and Rosalind H. Williams's discussion on Dandies in *Dream Worlds*; and the social changes that changed consumption, such as those found in Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough's *The Sex of Things*.⁸ These recent interpretations, which do not follow a traditional Veblenesque theory of emulation, allow historians to interpret the multiple meanings given to material objects, providing rich studies of the resulting cultural phenomena.⁹ In this new form of interpretation, the material culture of fashion emerges as a large and nuanced subject for historical consideration.

Historically, undergarments occupied a liminal space between one's body and one's garb. Historians like George Vigarello, Daniel Roche, and John Styles have established that undergarments became more commonly worn in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as linen became more readily available. However, because they were not seen, undergarments have been largely neglected in historical studies. Historians, when they have considered undergarments in the early modern period, have linked these garments to changing ideas of cleanliness and to cultures of outward

⁸ Victoria De Grazia and Ellen Furlough, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Lemire; John Styles, "Custom or Consumption? Plebeian Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, ed. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998); Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁹ Colin Campbell, "Understanding Traditional and Modern Patterns of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century England: a Character-Action Approach," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993), 55.

appearance. In contrast, historians of the nineteenth century through the present often discuss undergarments in terms of sexuality.¹⁰ Fortunately, advances in the field of material culture have widened and furthered the range of interpretive tools available for objects like clothing, providing for a more nuanced, critical examination of these objects and their cultural contexts.

In his seminal study *The Culture of Clothing*, historian Daniel Roche intimates that the advent of linen undergarments and such garments themselves give insight into early modern French civilization by revealing its codes. Roche believes that the history of clothing can be “approached from two principal standpoints: that of the function of clothing and that of changes in sensibility,” which are inextricably linked.¹¹ Additionally, he finds that fashion operates in three essential ways: through imitation, which demonstrates the different social habitus of various groups; through conventions in vogue; and through the affirmation of good manners and propriety. In all of these, the visible construction of conduct and dress depends upon its relationship to the body, a relationship that was changing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Following Roche’s argument, social and cultural concepts of the body are manifest in the presence (or lack), variety, and uses of undergarments, suggesting a poststructuralist interpretation in which societies are understood as much by what they conceal as by what they reveal. In this view, undergarments, the threshold between the revealed and the concealed body,

¹⁰ For histories of underclothing and sexuality, see Farid Chenoune, *Beneath It All: a Century of French Lingerie* (New York: Rizzoli, 1999); Fields; Béatrice Fontanel, *Support and Seduction: the History of Corsets and Bras* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997); Norma Shephard, *Lingerie: Two Centuries of Luscious Design* (Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 2008).

¹¹ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 5, 33.

must be explored in order to understand the developing modern society and its culture in the transitional eighteenth century.

Published research on French undergarments in the early modern period displays several gaps, however, owing to the limited perspectives of these publications. Vigarello and more recently Roche discuss linen undergarments in their studies of early modern cleanliness and clothing, respectively. Vigarello argues that undergarments became more widely worn in the sixteenth century as linen became more readily available, since linens, according to popular belief, absorbed sweat and dirt from the body.¹² Roche expands upon Vigarello's argument by exploring undergarments in the wider context of clothing culture. Vigarello and Roche argue that undergarments, as they began to be seen at the edges of clothing—collars, cuffs, etc.—became signs of bodily cleanliness. Thus, dirty linen indicated a dirty body, whereas clean, white linen indicated a clean body, regardless of the body's physical cleanliness. Here we see Barthes' mythological semiotics in action, as the bourgeoisie interpreted undergarments as signs of cleanliness or dirtiness to maintain the status quo—clean undergarments upheld new bourgeois ideals of cleanliness. Since, in the eighteenth century, ideas of courtesy and propriety necessitated the appearance of cleanliness, people sought to acquire more linens, providing them with the opportunity to continually wear cleanly laundered linens—one clean shirt could be worn while others were washed—hence demonstrating propriety through the appearance of cleanliness. In this variation of Veblen's conspicuous consumption, society

¹² Georges Vigarello and Jean Birrell, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France Since the Middle Ages* (Cambridge; New York; Paris: Cambridge University Press; Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1988), 41-77.

emphasized conspicuous cleanliness. With cleanliness understood primarily in terms of appearance, the need for bathing was replaced with a need for clean linen, and the wearing of undergarments developed as a hygienic necessity.¹³ With this interpretation, Roche eloquently concludes that “the outer and the unmentionable underneath were united in an obsessive pursuit of decency and modesty,” which began the “cult of underwear.”¹⁴

Although appealing, Roche’s analysis of undergarments is also problematic in this hygienic “cult of underwear” interpretation, because it presents an almost fetishistic interpretation of undergarments as body. In his work on the discourse of fashion and modernity in the nineteenth century, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity*, Ulrich Lehmann demonstrates that sartorial representations of female anatomy, specifically the shoe and stocking that could be glimpsed beneath a woman’s clothing, substituted for the unseen, more erotic parts of the woman’s body. This voyeuristic perception of interchangeability between a garment and body parts fetishizes the garment.¹⁵ According to Vigarello and Roche, linen at the edges of clothing took on a similarly fetishistic role as a visual representative of the body beneath. Thus, although couched in terms of hygiene, this interpretation also implies a sexualized view of underwear. The perception of undergarments as sexual goods, however, is a distinctly modern interpretation. While undergarments today are often sexualized, they were not always sexualized. Thus, even if these historians could prove that people in eighteenth-century Europe understood

¹³ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 151; Vigarello and Birrell, 61.

¹⁴ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 47, 62; Vigarello and Birrell, 41-77.

¹⁵ Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).

undergarments as sexualized items, it would be unreasonable to assume this was the only understanding of these clothes. Similarly, their interpretations' focus on hygiene conflates the body and undergarments. To truly understand whether people in this period saw undergarments as representative of the body, one must explore the many uses and conceptions of undergarments in circulation, as well as the ways in which they related to and reflected the body.

Roche's "cult" interpretation is ultimately too limited in scope then, since it offers only a single concept—hygiene—to explain the proliferation of undergarments in a three hundred year period. This perspective also lumps together all persons at all levels of society, suggesting that society as a whole began to acquire more linen undergarments that would be changed for hygienic reasons and for propriety. This interpretation does not consider personal motivations or group dynamics in the spread of undergarments. Moreover, Vigarello's perspective suggests that the social concept of cleanliness changed smoothly, and that the new ideas were quickly taken up. However, he provides no clear catalyst for such a change in understanding cleanliness, and it is unreasonable to assume that all persons and all levels of society changed their conceptions and behaviors in a relatively short period of time, or even at all. Furthermore, Vigarello and Roche's approach does not take other cultural factors into account, such as multiple uses for undergarments, individuals' understandings of undergarments, social perceptions of undergarments, and cultural expressions of undergarments in art and literature. They also neglect political and economic aspects of the creation, distribution, and care of undergarments themselves (as opposed to linen textiles)—important elements for a

thorough cultural history of undergarments. Finally, these studies do not take into account other cultural influences such as ideas about the body, and the display and performance of self.

Even on its own terms, the hygienic focus in the “cult of underwear” interpretation is flawed. My preliminary research into medical advice and bathing practices has shown that bathing was never completely replaced by undergarments, and that bathing actually experienced a resurgence in the eighteenth century, simultaneous with the surging demand for undergarments. A cult-like focus on the appearance of cleanliness cannot have been the only impetus for the increasing acquisition of undergarments. Rather, the present study suggests that a variety of cultural conventions and attitudes about bodies and society were united resulting in the perceived need for undergarments. These cultural concepts included, but were not limited to, ideas about hygiene. Additionally, this greater need led to greater use of underclothes. Moreover, works such as Amanda Vickery’s *The Gentleman’s Daughter* that emphasize individual perceptions of practical objects, because objects are ascribed differing symbolic values from person to person, demonstrate that it is not possible to interpret linen undergarments simply as a cleansing layer of clothing. Vickery proves that garments, including underclothing, could be remade into other objects, providing them with new cultural and personal roles.¹⁶ Thus, the study of linen undergarments is more than one of just consumption or a change in ideas of cleanliness: linen undergarments provide a link between a variety of persons, symbols, social practices, and notions about the body.

¹⁶ Vickery.

In addition to evolving interpretations of clothing as material goods with cultural lives, researchers have only recently begun considering the relationship between fashion and the body. The study of the body, like material culture, is emerging as a field of historical inquiry. Historians of the body often focus on corporeal metaphors in politics and the physical body in medicine, while anthropologists have addressed body decoration and mutilation. There is, however, a significant gap in studying the physical body and its relationship to clothing. Only recently have sociologists, anthropologists, and folklorists begun to establish a philosophy of dress in relation to the body, yet these ideas are rarely explored by historians. In *Body Dressing*, sociologists Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson note the gap between studies of the body and of fashion, explaining that fashion and dress reinvent the body each time clothing styles change. Thus, the authors seek to begin to fill this void in body-dress relations. Entwistle and Wilson suggest that constant innovations in fashion work to reinvent the body by displaying and concealing different body parts and marking out particular bodies, specifically in terms of class, status, gender, age, and sub-cultural affiliations, which uniformity and stability in dress would hide. As such, fashion highlights the ways in which bodies are made culturally meaningful and enter the realms of aesthetics and individualism.¹⁷

Entwistle, drawing on post-structural and phenomenological social theory, suggests that dress is best understood as a form of “situated bodily practice.”¹⁸ In this interpretation, dress forms the link between individual identity and the body, providing

¹⁷ Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, *Body Dressing* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 4.

¹⁸ Joanne Entwistle, "The Dressed Body," in *Body Dressing*, ed. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 47.

the material for performing social identity. Moreover, Entwistle suggests that clothing, while used to adapt the body to society, also requires the body to adapt physically, such as changing one's manner of walking to suit high-heeled shoes. As a result, dress provides a means by which the individual can reconcile him- or herself with society, but which also requires physical changes from the wearer.¹⁹ Similarly, sociologist Paul Sweetman deplores the neglect of the corporeal in studies of clothing that relegate the body to the role of "mannequin."²⁰ Sweetman then outlines some of the ways in which the body is implicated in fashion; opposing analyses of disembodied adornment, he highlights the embodied reality of fashion in which fashion is implicated in the construction and reconstruction of physical bodies and in which fashion provides both a tangible and symbolic link between the body and society.²¹

Finally, historian Christoph Heyl explores masks outside of the masquerade context as an accessory of dress, presenting a case study for the interaction between the dressed body and society. The wearing of masks as a fashion accoutrement in public is illustrative of the ways in which outer bodily accessories relate to both the wearer's own sense of body and public self, as well as the sense of the body in society. Heyl emphasizes that wearing masks affected patterns of public behavior. Specifically, Heyl argues that masks were infused with new meanings as public and private became

¹⁹ Ibid., 38-40.

²⁰ Paul Sweetman, "Shop-Window Dummies? Fashion, the Body, and Emergent Socialities," in *Body Dressing*, ed. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 59.

²¹ Ibid.

segregated, because masks could be used as intermediaries between the public and the private.²²

Much as Heyl's masks traversed the boundary between public and private, so too do undergarments lie at the threshold between body and society, public and private, personal and cultural. Therefore, it is surprising that sociologists have not investigated the role of undergarments in relation to the body and society, as undergarments are worn directly against the skin between the body and outer-clothing. Undergarments, following Entwistle's ideas, often force the body to adapt physically to clothing, but also reconcile the body with society. Moreover, because of their direct connection with the body, undergarments cannot be examined as the disembodied decoration that Sweetman deplors. A historical study of the culture of undergarments and their role at the threshold between the body and society has not been produced, until now. This project on the culture of undergarments presents a first tangible case-study of the ways underwear shaped and distinguished the (un)dressed body and society.

By broadening my scope to undergarments as cultural phenomena, this project demonstrates that cultural concepts of the body and its relationship with the self and society are manifest in the presence (or lack), variety, and uses of undergarments. Thus, this study presents undergarments as the threshold between the revealed and the concealed body in order to understand the developing modern society and its culture in the transitional eighteenth century. Rather than Roche's "cult of underwear," I argue that

²² Christoph Heyl, "When They Are Veyl'd on Purpose to be Seene: The Metamorphosis of the Mask in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century London," in *Body Dressing*, ed. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001).

a *culture* of underwear developed in eighteenth-century France, one which influenced and was influenced by the daily lives of all people.

In order to better understand the cultural changes which led to increased undergarment consumption over the course of the eighteenth century, it is first necessary to understand the materials of change—the undergarments themselves. “Underwear,” or “*sous-vêtement*,” is a modern term which describes garments worn beneath one’s clothes and next to one’s skin.²³ Prior to the twentieth century, undergarments were known as linen (*linge*) or body linen (*linge de corps*)—terms used since the early thirteenth century. “*Linge*,” however, could also refer to laundry or any household linen, such as napkins, tablecloths, bedsheets, towels and lengths of cut fabric, as well as body linens. “*Petit linge*,” or small clothes, was often used colloquially to indicate those body linens worn beneath one’s clothes, while “*dessous*,” a fifteenth-century term, referred to any garment worn under another.²⁴ “*Linge de corps*,” a term which first appears circa 1225 CE, refers specifically to linen garments for the body. From the thirteenth century through the fifteenth century, *linge de corps* was synonymous with the *chemise*, or shirt worn by both men and women under their clothing. The term began to include other related elements of dress, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and underclothes became more profuse and varied. *Linge de corps*, defined as “*vêtements de dessous et certaines pièces accessoires de l’habillement*” is the most appropriate term and definition of

²³ *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, s.v. “*sous-vêtement*.”

²⁴ *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, s.v. “*dessous*.”; *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, s.v. “*linge*.”

undergarments in the long-eighteenth century.²⁵ Therefore, while this study makes use of a variety of terms including “undergarments,” “underclothes,” “linens,” “linge,” and “lingerie,” each term refers to the larger-encompassing definition of the garments worn under one’s clothes, as well as particular parts of one’s dress that peeked out from between the body and the clothing such as collars, under-sleeves, and cuffs. By 1798, *linge* was used to refer abstractly to clothing, and in the early nineteenth century *lingé(e)* meant “dressed” or “outfitted.” By the early nineteenth century, the phrase “avoir de beau linge” was popularly used to convey that a person was well turned-out or had fine clothing. Similarly, to be “du beau linge” was to be of good society or from a good family.²⁶ *Lingerie* refers to both the manufacture and commerce of linen as well as one’s collective linen, particularly one’s *linge de corps*.²⁷ With this understanding of undergarments as more than simply a *chemise* and *caleçons*, one can begin to discover a more nuanced understanding of the cultural role of undergarments.

Following the sixteenth century bathing hiatus which took place throughout most of Europe due to fears of water spreading pestilence, undergarments experienced a renewed emphasis throughout the seventeenth century. The basic gender neutral chemise or shift (a long, loose shirt) and men’s braies (a loose, bifurcated garment) from the early medieval period, which remained relatively unchanged since their development, began to change in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. While the origins of this

²⁵ s.v. “linge.”

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, s.v. “lingerie.”

shirt or shift are unknown, it probably developed from the simple Gallo-Roman tunic, just as medieval braies developed from Gaulish braies, or loose breeches worn under a tunic, likely to prevent chafing while riding horses.²⁸ While braies, rarely worn in the medieval period, grew shorter and soon fell out of use as chausses and hose became popular, chemises or shifts remained a consistent undergarment for both men and women—sometimes lengthened or shortened to fit clothing trends. The long eighteenth century saw the chemise and caleçon (modified braies with a waistband) joined by myriad other undergarments, including petticoats, pockets (Figure 0.2), hoopskirts, garters, chemisettes, brassières, sleeves, engageantes (Figure 0.3), cuffs, collars, fichus, stays, corsets, camisoles, corselets, bed jackets, matinées, nightshirts, nightgowns, peignoirs, mantles and mantelets. The incredible variety of undergarments which developed over the course of the eighteenth century, along with the previously extant chemise and caleçon, as well as the often overlooked stockings, caps, and swaddling bands, are evidence of significant cultural changes at all levels of society, suggesting more than just a cultish obsession with undergarments.

²⁸ François Boucher and Yvonne Deslandres, *20,000 Years of Fashion: the History of Costume and Personal Adornment* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1987), 139-141.



Figure 0.2. Pocket, c. 1784, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 0.3. Engageantes, 1770, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

While the desire to appear clean and proper and to distinguish oneself as such by wearing clean, white linen might have impelled persons to begin displaying undergarments at the edges of clothing, the growing visibility and availability of these garments exposed them as sites for greater cultural expression. Rather than a purely hygienic tool, undergarments, like all clothing, were items of distinction, providing visual signals to wearer and viewer that conveyed a variety of information from social identities to personal tastes. Thus, undergarments could signal that a person belonged to the social realm of clean and proper, or to that of the dirty and uncouth via clean white linen or dingy yellow-gray. As undergarments became more visible, they became more specialized to better distinguish their wearers. As such, beginning in the eighteenth century, undergarments also conveyed such concepts as gender differentiation. Furthermore, undergarments (via style, quality, material, decoration, color, and more)

demonstrated a person's wealth, status, social roles, and access to goods. Finally, like all personal material goods, wearers imbued their clothing and undergarments with personal preferences, sentiments, concepts, and meanings. Therefore, undergarments took on more personal significance while simultaneously taking on more cultural meanings. Significantly, undergarments, simultaneously hidden and displayed, represented and distinguished cultural concepts such as inner and outer, public and private. Hence, as undergarments became more visible, they became a site of myriad cultural concepts which led to the significant increase in undergarments and the demand for these garments over the course of the eighteenth century.

The first chapter of this study analyzes the clear cultural fascination with undergarments by looking at changing fashions, both under and outer, as well as considering the newfound changes and styles of undergarments which gained popularity throughout the eighteenth century in France. In exploring these new forms of undergarments, this chapter will necessarily address the gendering of undergarments and gender differentiation, since undergarments for men and women developed along different trajectories over the course of the century. Finally, this chapter presents a picture of clothing and underclothing worn by a variety of people on a daily basis to demonstrate the correlation between the standards of fashion and the actuality of daily life. With a solid understanding of the ways undergarments changed and multiplied, the significance of newly gender-specific undergarments, and a picture of daily garb, we can begin to understand the influence of gender on consumption and the increased perceived need for more underclothes among the people of France. Furthermore, exploring these

changes in undergarments will demonstrate the liminality of undergarments, which are both intimately close to the body and publicly visible at the edges of outerwear.

The second chapter begins by refuting the purely hygienic interpretation of the proliferation of undergarments, which relies on a cultish conflation of body and undergarments. Rather, by examining advice manuals, prescriptive literature, and medical texts, it suggests that hygienic concepts were only a small part of undergarments' significance in the eighteenth century and intimates the need for a much broader conception of the cultural role of undergarments. Furthermore, the chapter reveals standards of dress, including culturally determined minimum undergarment requirements, while also considering medical advice regarding undergarments and health. This chapter examines documents relating to undergarment standards for foundlings and unwed mothers, as well as for students at convent schools. It also looks at medical literature to understand cultural standards created and propagated by the medical community. With this chapter, I seek to understand socially and culturally accepted standards in undergarments, particularly minimum standards such as those which applied to persons cared for by the state. This examination of standards reveals another, significant factor in the study of undergarment culture: public discussion of private garments. Undergarments, while private, were also surprisingly public.

After presenting standards in undergarments, and demonstrating that undergarments traverse the lines of public and private in various ways, chapter three will cover the political and economic policies in France that impacted undergarment imports, production, and distribution. Specifically, this chapter will address the ways in which

these policies impacted the common people in France and the circulation of undergarments. To trace the circulation of goods, I consider the various modes of accessing undergarments from custom-made to resale and even theft. With a particular focus on resale—a thriving trade in France where new goods were inaccessible to the masses—I examine the transfer of underclothes from one person to another. In exploring this transfer of intimate apparel between persons, I analyze the personalization of undergarments through markings made on the clothing, markings which allow us to trace the movement of these garments. Moreover, examining the markings on individuals' undergarments also illuminates personal sentiments regarding underclothes. In this, I demonstrate another area where and methods by which undergarments penetrated the lines of public and private.

In chapter four, I present one of many ways this cultural phenomenon impacted the common people. The increased cultural demand instilled in the public a growing personal drive to acquire undergarments, even among the masses. Significantly, France, the country generally acknowledged as the progenitor of this undergarment obsession, maintained a mercantilist economy that restricted access to inexpensive foreign textiles such as linen and cotton (the main textiles used for undergarments). Therefore, although the demand for these garments increased, the country's economic policies failed to adequately supply the people of France with the textiles needed for their undergarments. This economic limitation resulted in a significant increase in incidents of undergarment theft, providing a telling perspective on the significance of undergarments in the

eighteenth century. These thefts again take underclothes from private items to public, both in the perpetration of the theft and in the courtroom when the thefts were prosecuted.

By analyzing ideas about undergarments and their relationships with the body and society as well as individual conceptions and uses of undergarments, this study illuminates cultural concepts of outer and under in addition to notions of public and private. I analyze individual and social notions about what must be covered and what may be shown, as well as the ways items that must be covered in one situation could be displayed in another to illustrate concepts of outer and under. Similarly, by interpreting ideas about the outer and under and the role of undergarments for personal, individual use versus public, social use, I present evolving concepts of private and public. Thus, as the garments creating boundaries between the individual and society, between the body and society, between physical bodies and cultural bodies, between concepts of outer and under, and between public and private, foreign and native, undergarments will be revealed as cultural limina.

1. A Century of Undress

In the mid-seventeenth century, Mademoiselle de Montpensier possessed only two chemises—her sole undergarments. She recalls finding it comical when, one day, as bad weather delayed the arrival of her belongings after traveling to a new chateau, she was left without clean undergarments. “Je n'avois point de linge à changer, & l'on blanchissoit ma chemise de nuit pendant le jour & ma chemise de jour pendant le nuit.” Her father was happy that she did not complain, unlike her mother, but Mlle de Montpensier claims nothing ever bothered her because incidents like this gave her great stories to tell.²⁹ In contrast, between 1767 and 1771, the financially conservative Baronne de Schomberg's wardrobe included twenty-two night shirts, twenty-four day shirts, six peignoirs and déshabillés, eighteen underskirts, and thirteen pairs of stockings, as well as “mantles for night wear, mantelets, toilettes, furbelows, caps, fichus, coifs, cuffs, [and] pockets.”³⁰ Montpensier was adequately clean and proper with just two sets of undergarments, and was not put out (although her mother was) at having to go without a clean set for a day. However, a century later, the Baronne de Schomberg, whose extensive lists of undergarments present a picture of her linen wardrobe, could change her undergarments nearly every day for a month without laundering. Moreover, Schomberg possessed a great variety of uniquely feminine lingerie, which made its debut in the eighteenth century.

²⁹ Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans (1627-1693) Montpensier, *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier, fille de Mr. Gaston d'Orléans, Frère de Louis XIII. Roi de France*, II vols., vol. Tome I (Paris: Le Breton, 1728), 148-149.

³⁰ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 200.

The wealth of the nobility might suggest that the two cases above present an idealized or extreme picture of changes in fashion, as this group had the means to acquire such fashionable goods. But an increase in linen wardrobes took place across multiple social groups from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Servants and tradesmen and -women increased their consumption of undergarments in parallel with the social elite. The significant shift from a simple linen wardrobe to an extensive and varied collection of undergarments thus points toward changing attitudes regarding underclothes between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that affected every level of French society.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, early infatuation with visibly clean linen at the edges of dress led to new fashions which revealed increasing surfaces of undergarments. These new styles ultimately led to garments that themselves resembled undergarments among women and clothing that displayed decorated undershirts and collars among men. Moreover, the eighteenth century simultaneously saw increasing gender differentiation in undergarments and the production of a greater variety of undergarments. The shirt, or *chemise*, once a gender neutral undergarment, became gendered with particular styles for men and others for women. Moreover, the chemise, which had been the standard undergarment (if undergarments were worn at all) since the Middle Ages, became only one layer among many. Furthermore, eighteenth-century underclothing shaped the body with stays and corsets, hoop skirts, and more. These changes led to increased consumption, as the garments became more visible and people sought to distinguish themselves with their garments, either consciously or unconsciously. Even though the visibility of undergarments at the edges of dress made

them public goods, undergarments simultaneously remained private as garments worn next to the skin, and garments primarily covered by outerwear, despite their increased visibility. Therefore, undergarments became uniquely both public and private, and thus garnered increasing attention as a cultural commodity over the course of the eighteenth century.

I

The eighteenth century was a period dominated by undress—loose, light, informal clothes often open, tucked-up, or cut-away to reveal new layers of underclothes beneath. This style was in stark contrast to the stiff, heavy, formal, and lavish dress of the previous century. By the end of his reign, Louis XIV, who had strictly controlled the fashions of his court, began to relax his hold on aristocratic dress, providing for the swift triumph of simpler, informal clothing. As the court of the young Louis XV left the pomp and ceremony of Versailles for the salons of Paris, where the aristocracy mingled with the wealthy merchants, they abandoned the stiff court dress for the simpler styles favored by the haute bourgeoisie. Later they even adopted romanticized peasant fashions in a sort of “trickle up” appropriation of fashion. By the late eighteenth century “the Parisian fashion culture had been transformed dramatically. Fashionable dress was no longer solely the privilege of the elite, but something which men and women across a broad range of classes could indulge.”³¹ This democratizing power of fashion promulgated a stripping

³¹ Jennifer Jones, "Coquettes and Grisettes: Women Buying and Selling in Ancien Regime Paris," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed. Victoria De Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 30.

away the stiff formality of courtly dress to reveal the softer, lighter layers beneath. This exposure of underclothes in combination with the increased desire for luxury and elegance prompted the creation of myriad new undergarments intended to be seen, at least in part.

In the seventeenth century, as in previous centuries, fashion was understood as a means of distinguishing the nobility from the popular classes, thus relegating the pursuit of fashion to the aristocracy. The king and his court occupied the preeminent fashion role, with the aristocracy displaying their wealth and position through luxurious fashions which imitated the king's. Louis XIV harnessed the power of fashion as part of his performance of absolutism "by deploying the artifice of fashion for the purpose of court spectacles, and by disciplining fickle fashion into a fixed court costume."³² Louis XIV established his own version of "fixed dress" (characterized by its lack of change over time and symbolic value derived from an "impulse toward uniformity") harkening back to the early part of his reign of triumphal absolutism.³³ Especially toward the end of his reign, Louis emphatically supported this fixed dress of seventeenth-century France, the *grand habit*, a traditional French courtly style, in order to valorize adhesion and cohesion in his absolutist state (Figure 1.1).³⁴ Not only did Louis XIV encourage the donning of the grand habit for conformity, but also to instill French sentiment and allegiance among the people by emphasizing "French" dress that inspired a lost "sentiment d'être habillé 'à

³² Jennifer Michelle Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2004), 9.

³³ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 41.

³⁴ Diana De Marly, *Louis XIV & Versailles*, Costume and Civilization (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1987), 64.

la française.’”³⁵ For Louis XIV, fashion provided distinction between the aristocracy and the common people, created unity among the elite, and “[instilled] desire throughout Europe for French commerce, culture and clothing.”³⁶ Fashion became an integral part of Louis XIV’s absolutist state—but by the end of his reign, his hold on fashion was weakening.



Figure 1.1. Grand habit, c. 1770, Versailles.

³⁵ Louise Godard de Donville, *Signification de la mode sous Louis XIII* (Aix-en-Provence: ÉDISUD, 1978), 25.

³⁶ Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France*, 9.

In the 1670s, as Madame de Maintenon rose to prominence as royal mistress and eventually wife to the king, she propagated a more somber style of court dress. Simultaneously, Louis XIV launched renewed efforts to control aristocratic fashions, resulting in a solemn and formal style of court dress. The extant lacy, ornamented styles were replaced by more sedate, conservative styles. In the previous decades, men had flaunted their beribboned petticoat breeches or “Rhinegraves” with *canons* of lace and bows tied at the knee (Figure 1.2). A short doublet with elbow-length sleeves topped off the lacy kilt-like culottes.³⁷ Beribboned, curly wigs and high-heeled shoes had also been popular. However, in the 1670s, the French court adopted the proto-three-piece suit. Earlier in the seventeenth century, the Spanish and English had banished the extravagant French fashions, imposing more restrained styles on their subjects. In England, Charles II employed two tailors “to devise a more virile, anti-French and anti-Catholic style.”³⁸ The narrow Spanish-style breeches replaced French petticoat breeches, and the short-sleeved doublet (now an under layer) and outer coat lengthened to the knee in pursuit of Protestant modesty (Figure 1.3). Despite his anger at the audacity of the English for banning French fashions, Louis XIV sported the new English fashion as early as 1667.³⁹ By the end of the eighteenth century, men of all ranks were beginning to sport *pantalons*, or long pants (Figure 1.4). These pants, previously reserved for the laboring man, took on a new, political significance in the hands of the *sans-culottes* during the Revolution and

³⁷ Ibid., 20.

³⁸ Ibid., 22-23.

³⁹ Ibid., 23.

became the newest men's fashion at the end of the century—a fashion which set the standards for the following two centuries.



Figure 1.2. Rhinegraves, c.1650.



Figure 1.3. Suit, 1760-1770, Manchester Galleries.



Figure 1.4. Costume Parisien, Culotte de pantalons, 1803.

Similarly, women's clothing experienced a shift toward simplicity, although Louis XIV was less accepting of these new fashions. As Louis XIV and Maintenon began to establish a more solemn form of court dress, "elite women began to experiment with wearing a new, one-piece dress called the mantua... for less formal occasions in town and at court."⁴⁰ This *déshabillés*, or undress (a term used for informal dress), was a much more comfortable and simple style than the formal two-piece court gown consisting of a stiffly boned bodice and heavy matching skirt worn with layers of underskirts for volume and decorated with ribbons, flounces, and lace. The mantua was worn like a dressing gown, wrapping around the body, and was fastened with a sash (Figure 1.5). Some fashion historians have suggested that the mantua was a style made popular by Madame de Montespan, another of Louis's mistresses, who wore them to conceal her illegitimate pregnancies.⁴¹ Unlike formal court dress, the mantua was not boned and was particularly suited to the new light, printed calicoes, or *indiennes*, introduced to France at the end of the seventeenth century. The comfortable mantua quickly gained popularity in the decades leading into the eighteenth century and set the tone of informality for the century. Louis found it difficult to enforce the formal dress of women at court with the advent of the mantua; thus, he created the official *grand habit* and declared it mandatory for all formal occasions. According to the duc de Saint-Simon, "Whether pregnant, ill, less than six weeks after a delivery, and whatever the ferocity of the weather, [women]

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁴¹ Boucher and Deslandres, 261.

had to be in the grand habit, dressed and laced into their corsets.”⁴² Elisabeth Charlotte, Princess Palatine and sister-in-law to Louis XIV, aided and supported the strict establishment of the grand habit, refusing to wear the casual mantua even when sick, proclaiming that “it made one look ‘like a chambermaid.’”⁴³ While Louis accepted the changes in men’s clothing at the end of his reign, the changes in women’s dress blurred distinction between the aristocracy and the people, threatening the absolutist display.



Figure 1.5. Mantua, 1708, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁴² Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, ed. Yves Coirault, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 112. Quoted in Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France*, 25.

⁴³ "To Louise, December 20, 1721," in *Letters from Liselotte*, ed. Maria Kroll (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970), 238. Quoted in Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France*, 52.

The changes to aristocratic dress that took place at the end of Louis XIV's reign set the tone for fashion throughout the eighteenth century. New fashions which developed at the end of the seventeenth century emphasized the growing distinctions between fixed dress and capricious fashion, court dress and town dress, *grand habit* and undress, male dress and female dress.⁴⁴ For men, the simplicity, modesty and slim lines in the cut of their clothing, if not in its decoration, which continued to be ornate for a large part of the eighteenth century, marked the beginning of a distinction between male and female aesthetics in dress: men needed less adornment to display their natural virtue, masculinity, and public utility. Over the course of the eighteenth century, contemporary critics suggested that men's clothing "transparently reveals the true (*véritable*) man beneath" while "women have a more essential and natural need for fashion and adornment" and that women's clothing "hides physical and moral defects."⁴⁵ For women, however, as historian Clare Crowston persuasively argues, the mantua provided "a new conceptual and visual terrain in which women could experiment with self-presentation in a way that challenged traditional social hierarchies."⁴⁶ New men's fashions emphasized men's public roles while female fashions challenged traditional female roles. Both men and women began to establish individual, private roles through their individual clothing choices. Despite Louis's many attempts to enforce a more traditional mode of dress to create an appearance of strong French fealty, French aristocrats, especially women, were

⁴⁴ Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France*, 24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁶ Clare Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 41.

becoming more interested in following the new fashions of the day than in sporting the established court dress of Louis XIV's absolutist reign.

Along with the new gendered aesthetics that developed in fashion at the end of the seventeenth century, a new commodification of fashion developed, particularly among the elite, which further contributed to the possibilities of self-presentation and individual taste in fashion. Modern concepts of "consumption" and "ownership" developed only over the course of the eighteenth century, and did not apply to the relationship between persons and objects in the previous centuries. Before the eighteenth century, courtiers' personal belongings, including their clothing, were not truly their own possessions, but were ultimately the property of the court and were controlled by the royal officers. Clothing could be taken and distributed at will by the court. Thus, consumption and material goods "provided an unsure foundation on which to build one's identity and a risky manner in which to fashion a self."⁴⁷ By the early eighteenth century, Louis' control over fashion was waning and a new fashion culture began to take over. The aristocracy began to develop a new relationship with consumerism and commercial culture, particularly through their clothing. As historian Jennifer Jones explains, "By the end of Louis's reign, an increasing aestheticization and commodification of both clothing and private life offered to elite men and women the seductive possibility of dressing to please, not king and court, but one's husband or wife, one's lover, or even one's self."⁴⁸ In this new relationship with fashion, while continuing to designate class and station, clothing

⁴⁷ Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France*, 60-61.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

became increasingly nuanced and conveyed ideas of both “public” and “private” in a manner that was both political and personal.⁴⁹

II

The new relationship with fashion and the new clothing styles that developed over the course of the eighteenth century required a new set of undergarments specifically suited to the new shapes, styles, and especially personal choices in dress. For men, the simplified, slim lines of the new clothing styles required a new form of undergarments. Men’s undergarments became more streamlined and less frilled, remaining limited in form, and men began to acquire more sets of undergarments over the course of the eighteenth century. Women’s new clothing required an immense variety of new forms of undergarments. Just as men’s clothing reflected their virtue and public roles, so too did their simple, modest undergarments in a new way. Similarly, women’s undergarments emphasized women’s private lives and personal tastes. Thus, while men’s private garments became designations of their public roles, women’s private garments displayed their private, domestic roles, often in very public ways.

Beginning with the shift toward English fashions, men’s clothing experienced a significant trend toward streamlined simplicity, which included more austere undergarments to fit beneath, over the course of the eighteenth century. As the century progressed, the outer coat, called the *justaucorps*, and the doublet worn beneath became

⁴⁹ Ibid.

shorter, slimmer, and simpler. By mid-century, the now-shortened *justaucorps* became known as the *habit* and was worn open to reveal the doublet which was similarly shortened and lost its sleeves, making it a *gilet*. Beneath the coat and vest, men wore a white *chemise* commonly made of cotton, linen, or a blend of the two with a collar and long sleeves. The men's chemise, like the coat and vest, became shortened over the course of the eighteenth century (Figure 1.6). Chemises in previous centuries were long and often gender-neutral. For men, the chemise bloused over the buttocks and genitals, and was often wrapped or tucked between the legs to create a sort of underpants which provided protection and support. The newly shortened chemises, however, mirrored the changing styles of men's clothing. By the late eighteenth century, the shorter chemise with its collar and long sleeves also could be decorated with a fancy, ruffled jabot at the neck and decorations on the sleeves. Men began to go without their *habit* coat, wearing their *gilets* loose and unbuttoned to better reveal their chemises.⁵⁰ The shortening of chemises for men, along with the addition of a collar and simple, long sleeves marked a clear distinction between men's and women's undergarments (Figure 1.7).

⁵⁰ "Planche III. Modes Angloises," *Magasin des modes nouvelles, françaises et anglaises, décrites d'une manière claire et précise, et représentées par des planches en taille-douce enluminées.*, 30 November 1786 1786.



Figure 1.6. Shirt, 1750-1800, Victoria and Albert Museum.



Figure 1.7. Woman's Chemise, third quarter 18th century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The shortening of men's chemises went hand-in-hand with the changes in vests and coats while also contributing to the development of *caleçons*, or early underpants. The slim line of the breeches, known as *culottes*, which fastened below the knee did not have room for the bulky long shirts to be tucked in around the buttocks and genitals.⁵¹ Thus, the shortening of men's chemises both mirrored the simplification of vests and

⁵¹ Grace Q. Vicary, "Visual Art as Social Data: The Renaissance Codpiece," *Cultural Anthropology* 4, no. 1 (1989): 4-5.

coats, as well as minimized bulky layers beneath the new styles of breeches. Unfortunately, this left men with no protection from bodily secretions or air-born miasmas, nor from chafing. Therefore, tailors began to pad the fronts of breeches with linen or cotton linings, where they fastened over the genitals, much like a renaissance codpiece. However, by the late eighteenth century, *caleçons*, much like modern briefs, began to gain popularity as an undergarment for wear under tight breeches and even under the *pantalons*, or long pants, which began to appear at the end of the century.

Women's dress and undress underwent much more extensive changes than men's clothes and undergarments throughout the eighteenth century. Before the advent of the mantua, the bodices (*corps*) of women's gowns were stiffened with whalebone (baleen) or cane inserted into the lining which served to shape the torso into the desired conical V-shape. However, with the arrival of the unstructured mantua gown, "these whalebone linings became distinct, separate structures known as 'stays.'"⁵² Because the mantua wrapped around the body with no stiffening, stays were worn underneath to give the wearer a fashionable shape as well as provide support for the bust and the weight of gowns and underskirts. In France, stays were known as "*corps à baleine*" or "*corps*" for short, linguistically mirroring the transition of the boned bodice from outer garment to undergarment (Figure 1.8). Significantly, just as the *corps* as bodice shaped a woman's body into the desired form, creating a new body with her gown, so too did the *corps* as undergarment, creating a new body for her to dress. These stays were created just like bodices, but without the sleeves, and were made in a variety of colors and fabrics,

⁵² Eleri Lynn, *Underwear: Fashion in Detail* (London: V&A Publishing, 2010), 73.

although most extant garments are of plain, sturdy fabrics. Because of the way a mantua wrapped around the body, the front of the corset often showed, peeking out between the two sides of the mantua. For both modesty and decoration, women often fastened stomachers (*pièces d'estomac*) which coordinated with their gowns to the front of their stays (Figure 1.9). From the sack gown, a modified mantua worn loose and open in front beginning around 1705 to the fitted but still open-fronted gown à la Française of the 1720s (Figure 1.10) and its less decorated cousin the gown à l'Anglaise of the 1740s (Figure 1.11), and even the eastern-influenced *Polonoise* and *Turque* of the 1770s (Figure 1.12), the *corps* was the foundation for the bodice of fashionable gowns throughout the century. The *corps* remained popular throughout the eighteenth century, although it began to fall from favor at the end of the century as the fashion for pastoral simplicity began to dominate (Figure 1.13). The *corps* was eventually replaced with the *corset*, a less severely boned underbodice which provided structure but more flexibility.



Figure 1.8. Corps à baleine, c. 1735, Musée des Arts Decoratifs.



Figure 1.9. Stomacher, c. 1720, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 1.10. Robe à la Française, 1765–70, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 1.11. Robe à l'Anglaise, 1740–60, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 1.12. Robe à la Polonoise, 1780–85, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 1.13. Dress, 1790s, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

While the corps and later the corset shaped a woman's torso, the prominent *panier* hoop-skirts and petticoats created the exaggerated shape of a woman's lower body. The *panier*, named for its resemblance to a wicker poultry cage, most likely derived from *criardes*, or gum-starched petticoats which rustled loudly and creakily, and which were worn originally by actresses but taken up by many aristocrats to fill out one's skirts and make one's waist appear smaller. This stiffened underskirt was replaced with an underskirt consisting of multiple tiers of graduated whalebone, cane, or steel rungs to make the skirt wider at the base and narrower at the top. Panniers came in a variety of shapes and styles including funnel-shaped *paniers à guéridon*, dome-shaped *paniers à coupole*, flared *paniers à bourrelets*, *paniers à gondoles* which resembled water-carrier buckets, knee-length *cadets*, and *paniers à coude* on which women could rest their elbows.⁵³ Panniers appeared in France in the late-seventeenth century and were quickly appropriated by aristocrats and haute bourgeoisie. In 1721, the conservative Elisabeth Charlotte, Princess Palatine, criticized the popularity of panniers, linking them to the sexual transgressions of Louis XIV's deceased mistress, Mme de Montespan. Elisabeth Charlotte wrote to her half-sister, "The wide skirts which are worn everywhere are my aversion, they look so insolent, as though one had come straight out of bed...The fashion of the beastly skirts first dates from Mme de Montespan. She used to wear them when she was pregnant, so as to hide her condition."⁵⁴

⁵³ Boucher and Deslandres, 296; Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *The Woman of the Eighteenth Century: Her Life, from Birth to Death, Her Love and Her Philosophy in the Worlds of Salon, Shop and Street* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1927), 215.

⁵⁴ "To Louise, December 1721," in *Letters from Liselotte*, ed. Maria Kroll (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970), 238.

Despite Elisabeth Charlotte's condemnation of panniers, they continued to enjoy popularity well into the eighteenth century. Between 1720 and 1730, the conical pannier shape was modified into the recognizable horizontal side hoops by flattening the front and back through a system of ties and cords inside the skirt (Figure 1.14). By about 1750, half-length panniers, called *jansénistes*, and split panniers were available, consisting of two semi-circular hoops which sat on a woman's hips and fastened together by sturdy canvas or ribbons and ties (Figure 1.15).⁵⁵ Panniers were notoriously inconvenient, requiring the wearer to adjust her gait, turn sideways to travel through doorways and narrow spaces, and requiring extra space around one's person.⁵⁶



Figure 1.14. 18th century undergarments, c. 1750-80, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

⁵⁵ Boucher and Deslandres, 296; Goncourt and Goncourt, 215.

⁵⁶ Boucher and Deslandres, 296.



Figure 1.15. Side Hoop, 1778, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Panniers, like many extreme fashions, were also the subject of many satirical and moralizing pamphlets. In *The Enormous Abomination of the Hoop Petticoat as the Fashion now is*, a 1745 pamphlet condemning the pannier, the writer complained that “the massive hoops took up too much space on pavements and in carriages, and that by lifting them up to step through mud in the street the wearer caused her ankles and lower legs to be disgracefully visible.”⁵⁷ This fetishistic glimpse of lower feminine lower limbs

⁵⁷ Lynn, 166.

emphasizes the sexualization of the pannier that took place in the eighteenth century. Despite being a hidden garment, the pannier could reveal (and thus by suggestion did reveal) a woman's entire lower body; little to nothing was worn beneath the pannier. Imagine the erotic show provided to onlookers should a strong gust of wind, or worse, a tumble, lift the pannier and skirts. Other articles and cartoons featured sudden movements, gusts of wind, or a fall resulting in embarrassing exposure. The authors of the *Encyclopédie* summarized the rise and fall of the popular pannier, explaining,

Ce vêtement a scandalisé dans les commencemens: les ministres de l'Eglise l'ont regardé comme un encouragement à la débauche, par la facilité qu'on avoit au moyen de cet ajustement, d'en dérober les suites. Ils ont beaucoup prêché; on les a laissé dire, on a porté des *paniers*, & à la fin ils ont laissé faire. Cette mode gotesque qui donne à la figure d'une femme l'air de deux éventails opposés, a duré long - tems, & n'est pas encore passée: elle tombe. On va aujourd'hui en ville & au spectacle sans *panier*, & on n'en porte plus sur la scene, on revient à la simplicité & à l'élégance; on laisse un vêtement incommode à porter, & dispendieux par la quantité énorme d'étoffe qu'il emploie.⁵⁸

For women who wanted or needed more freedom of movement, but still desired the fashionable silhouette, or for those who could not afford the expensive steel petticoats, more flexible *considérations*, or quilted petticoats shaped and stiffened with horsehair were available.⁵⁹ By the mid-1760s, the pannier was on its way out of fashion as more bucolic styles began to take over.

While panniers provided the iconic shape of the eighteenth century skirt, petticoats, or *jupons*, were a necessary element in the shape and style of women's dress. Before the advent of the pannier, women wore layers of petticoats, or skirts beneath their

⁵⁸ *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.* Spring 2013 Edition ed. (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project), s.v. "Panier, (Mode.)."

⁵⁹ Boucher and Deslandres, 296.

dresses for volume. Many women simply layered the skirts from other gowns beneath their chosen outer gown; others, however, had dedicated underskirts. By the eighteenth century, the wealthy generally possessed a selection of petticoats to wear under their gowns, and even the less well-to-do owned some combination of petticoats and skirts to fill out their dresses (Figure 1.16). Layers of petticoats could be and were often worn as a substitute for the fashionable but expensive panniers. Petticoats could also be stiffened with gum paste, starch, or horsehair to produce a fuller skirt. Furthermore, because the rungs of the panniers stuck out, creating ridges, petticoats were worn over them to soften the effect and keep gowns looking smooth and effortless. Because the popular mantua wrapped around a woman's body like a robe, the skirt opened at the front, creating an inverted triangle from hem to waist through which the topmost petticoat would show. Thus, like the stomacher, the top petticoat would be decorative and made to coordinate with a woman's gown. As the century progressed, women began to tuck the skirts of their gown up through their pocket slits, revealing even more of their petticoats beneath. Over the course of the eighteenth century, petticoat were becoming a codified element of dress, transforming from a skirt which could be worn as under- or outer-wear to a specialized undergarment which came in both simple and decorative form. Throughout the eighteenth century, *jupon* (petticoat) was used interchangeably to skirt or underskirt. However, in the nineteenth century *jupon* clearly distinguished the undergarment from the *jupe*, or outer skirt.



Figure 1.16. Stays and quilted petticoat, 18th Century, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The private roles of women further necessitated the creation of various other *négligée* items and undergarments. Women wore a variety of lacy garments including the fichu, or gauzy scarf which covered the *décolleté*. Originally suggesting the lacy neckline of a chemise, the fichu developed over the century into a large lacy scarf which could cross over a woman's chest and be tied at the waist or pinned at the chest. For example, the 30 November 1786 issue of the “*Magasin des modes nouvelles*” presents a woman wearing a fichu, explaining “*Cette femme porte sur le col un ample fichu de gaze en*

chemise, à trois colets, retenu par une épingle en flèche.”⁶⁰ Sleeves and engageants, or lacy, ruffled cuffs, were worn with gowns and made to billow out at the elbow where the sleeve of the gown ended. Chemisettes and camisoles were short undershirts worn close to the skin, often for extra layers of warmth or for health reasons. Pockets were worn separately, attached to a band or tape and tied around the waist. Pockets were accessed through slits in the sides of gowns and petticoats. Furthermore, as seen in Mlle de Montpensier’s memoirs, the seventeenth century woman wore a chemise as nightclothes, while the Baronne de Schomberg’s wardrobe clearly delineates separate shirts for nighttime wear. The eighteenth century thus saw the distinction between chemises for day and nighttime wear, as well as the creation of nightgowns which developed from nightshirts. Mantles, peignoirs, and déshabillés—less formal versions of the mantua—were often frothy robe-like dressing gowns, sometimes worn with nightgowns or over undergarments before a woman dressed formally for the day. Peignoirs and déshabillés were undress options for women at home, and could be worn when close friends came to visit without being too revealing or inappropriate. The “Magasin des modes nouvelles” explains this phenomenon of women going about in “undress” by presenting two women who “se portent en demi-toilette. Autrefois elles ne servoient que le matin, pour sortir sans être paré; mais aujourd'hui nos Dames ne sortent guère le matin qu'en bonnets de nuit, garnis de blondes ou de dentelles.”⁶¹ A state of undress which used to be acceptable only in the privacy of one’s home had become

⁶⁰ “Planche II,” *Magasin des modes nouvelles, françaises et anglaises, décrites d'une manière claire et précise, et représentées par des planches en taille-douce enluminées.*, 30 November 1786, 11.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

acceptable morning wear for the fashionable lady—clearly these undergarments were redefining concepts of public and private.

Beneath all her other layers of undergarments, a woman of the eighteenth century wore a chemise, and rarely drawers. The previously gender-neutral T-shaped chemise developed a slimmer profile for the new, simpler styles of the eighteenth century. Unlike for men, women's chemise sleeves were shortened and tightened to fit invisibly beneath tight-fitting elbow-length gown sleeves, while necklines plunged to hide under gaping mantuas and corps. Women's chemises, furthermore, remained long, unlike their male counterparts, reaching to the knees. Chemises were generally made of lightweight cottons and linens, or cotton-linen blends which were durable, washable, and soft against the skin. By the end of the eighteenth century, there was a clear, codified distinction between men's and women's chemises. Both official documents such as notorial and coroner's reports, as well as the fashion press, specify male versus female shirts at the end of the century. In the "Magasin des modes nouvelles," several articles mention women wearing men's shirts for riding, which appears to be the only time this phenomenon was socially acceptable. On 7 November 1786, the description of a woman ready to go riding claims "Sur le corps, une chemise d'homme, dont le jabot s'échappe au milieu des revers du gilet. Autour du col, une ample cravatte, liée lâche, à la manière de celle des hommes."⁶² However, it is most likely that women did not wear men's shirts, but women's shirts styled like men's shirts with collars and long sleeves. Men's style women's chemises are

⁶² "Planche III. Modes Angloises," *Magasin des modes nouvelles, françaises et anglaises, décrites d'une manière claire et précise, et représentées par des planches en taille-douce enluminées.*, 7 Novembre 1786, 6.

mentioned in another issue of the magazine, which depicts a woman and explains, “Sa chemise est coupée comme celle des hommes. Elle est garnie d'un jabot très-large par devant.”⁶³ Like the men’s style shirt, drawers or caleçons appear to have been worn, albeit infrequently, by women for riding, most likely as a layer of protection. More often than drawers, women, including Marie Antoinette and Elisabeth Charlotte wore men’s breeches alone or under their skirts for riding when they wanted more flexibility of movement. The chemise remained the primary undergarment for women until the end of the nineteenth century.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the trend toward pastoral simplicity and the fashion for déshabillé culminated in the fashion for *Gaulles*, also known as *robes en chemise* or *robes à la créole* (Figure 1.17). Marie Antoinette first introduced the style in 1783 at the Salon by wearing this romantic, pastoral style in a portrait by Louise Vigée-Lebrun. In contrast to the voluminous gowns popular at the beginning of the century, the Gaulles were tube-like “false gowns” made in one piece which could be drawn over the head or stepped into. Made from plain white muslin, they resembled traditional undergarments and were condemned by many as immodest and overtly sexual. Cartoonists and satirists often suggested that women wore no underwear beneath their chemise dresses, or that their dresses were, in fact, simply chemises worn with nothing else. An article translated from a French magazine and featured in *The Lady’s Magazine* in 1800 entitled “Dialogue between a Lady and a Man-Milliner” demonstrates the satirical value of the Gaulle. The dialogue begins with the lady asking the milliner:

⁶³ "Modes Angloises," *Magasin des modes nouvelles, françaises et anglaises, décrites d'une manière claire et précise, et représentées par des planches en taille-douce enluminées.*, 30 Mars 1787, 107.

“Citizen, I am just come to town, pray have the goodness to inform me how I must appear to be in the fashion?” The milliner responds by suggesting that she remove her bonnet, petticoat, handkerchief, stays, and sleeves, leaving her in nothing but her chemise. He concludes cheekily, “’Tis an easy matter you see—to be dressed in the fashion you have only to undress!”⁶⁴ However, as the fashion press, such as the “Magasin des modes nouvelles,” was quick to point out, women were always dressed under their chemise dresses, even if they were made to look like an undergarment with nothing underneath.⁶⁵ In fact, many light-weight undergarments were developed specifically to fit beneath these sheer gowns, including simplified chemises, light-weight corsets, “invisible” tube petticoats made of clinging knit fabric to reduce bulk, and even flesh-colored knit silk corsets and petticoats which clung to the body and simulated nakedness beneath the gown.⁶⁶ The Gaulle was the culmination of the era of undress, beginning with the open mantua, moving into the undress of déshabille, and finally resulting in this simple gown which resembled an undergarment and was worn in such a way as to emphasize its undergarment-like appearance.

⁶⁴ Lynn, 192.

⁶⁵ “Planche III,” *Magasin des modes nouvelles, françaises et anglaises, décrites d’une manière claire et précise, et représentées par des planches en taille-douce enluminées*, 1 Juin 1789, 149.

⁶⁶ Lynn, 192.



Figure 1.17. Gaulle, or Chemise à la Reine, 1783-1790, Manchester Galleries.

III

While attention to fashion trends tends to place the focus on the wealthy and aristocracy, fashions in clothing and undergarments followed a similar trajectory for the working classes and poor. The average working citizen of Paris could afford to dress like the *haut bourgeoisie* through the used clothing market, clothing gifts from employers, and clothing made from less costly materials in the same styles. Just like their aristocratic counterparts, the common people of France, and particularly Paris, acquired fashionable wardrobes of clothing and undergarments over the course of the eighteenth century.

For eighteenth century French men, differentiation in clothing and appearances “was a matter of quantity and quality,” as well as of personal sensibilities and tastes.⁶⁷ By analyzing over 1000 *inventaires après décès* from 1700 and 1789, historian Daniel Roche was able to discover general clothing trends among different social groups over the course of the eighteenth century. Roche found that aristocratic men possessed a greater quantity and variety of garments, as well as garments made of more costly materials in the eighteenth century than they had in the seventeenth century (Table 1). Between 1700 and 1789, the number of garments in noblemen’s wardrobes increased: only twenty-five percent of complete wardrobes contained more than six examples of full suits of clothing in 1700, whereas more than half of the wardrobes held ten to thirty full suits in 1789.⁶⁸ Noblemen generally had a variety of garments that they could mix and match to form outfits, and were more likely to possess garments with embroidery and fancy trimmings, as well as indoor or dressing gowns.⁶⁹ Some noble dandies had hundreds of garments, and all possessed garments in a variety of colors and textiles.⁷⁰ The suits of craftsmen and shopkeepers were comprised of the same basic elements as those of the nobility, and twenty-five percent of wardrobes contained matching sets in 1700. The majority of these men’s wardrobes had more than two full outfits; as many as fifty percent had more than two waistcoats and two pairs of breeches, which allowed some flexibility in mixing and matching to create outfits.⁷¹ Generally, the men of the merchant and working bourgeoisie dressed soberly, preferring solidity and functionality to the decorated richness of the

⁶⁷ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 129.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 130, 135.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

nobility.⁷² While these men continued to wear more somber colors, most owned between fifteen and twenty principal garments, and often new items such as frockcoats, by 1789.⁷³

MEN'S CLOTHING

Circa 1700

	Nobility	Office-holders & Professionals	Artisans & Shopkeepers	Wage-Earners	Domestics
Coat (justaucorps)	94	85	100	95	89
Waistcoat (veste)	94	80	90	65	75
Breeches	89	85	92	80	90
Doublet	30	24	5	0	0

Circa 1789

	Nobility	Office-holders & Professionals	Artisans & Shopkeepers	Wage-Earners	Domestics
Coat (habit)	100	72	83	84	100
Waistcoat (veste)	100	100	91	86	90
Vest (Gilet)	100	30	56	51	47
Breeches	100	100	86	89	95
Pantalons					

Table 1. Men's Clothing (by percentage). Composition of male wardrobes adapted from Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 135.

Professionals, such as lawyers, similarly adopted the more somber three-piece suit when it emerged; it was found in ninety-five percent of their inventories in 1700.⁷⁴ Few possessed more than two suits, but several owned assorted individual items such as vests and breeches, which provided for minimal variations.⁷⁵ Most wage-earners possessed one simple, functional suit, and perhaps a few assorted garments. The wealthier wage-earners, particularly domestic servants, owned a significant amount of clothing: three or four suits, breeches, three to four waistcoats, and a mantle. The wealthiest among them,

⁷² Ibid., 132.

⁷³ Ibid., 135, 138-139.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 132.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

specifically unmarried journeymen, maîtres d'hôtel, and valets followed fashions more vigorously, although primarily in details rather than base garments.⁷⁶ By 1789, a significant increase in garments among wage earners and domestic servants had become evident. "For every two items previously inventoried, there were now five or six."⁷⁷ Some even owned fashionable frock coats, and their clothing was made in a greater range of colors.⁷⁸ Roche has clearly established that working-class men followed the fashions of the day to the best of their ability.

Common men not only kept up with fashions in clothing, but also in their underclothing. Early in the century, among the artisans and shopkeepers, linen "accounted for a quarter of their wardrobes, on average 86 *livres*," or more than two percent of their moveable wealth (Table 2).⁷⁹ For the wealthier bourgeois families, between 200 and 300 *livres* were spent on clothing, with one third to one half spent on linens.⁸⁰ Of course, there were variations in accumulation and spending on linens according to wealth and individual preference. As Roche suggests, "among artisans and shopkeepers, a greater use of linen went with wealth and a concern for appearances."⁸¹ Among the professional bourgeoisie, "expenditure on linen rose to a quarter of the value of wardrobes."⁸² As with their clothing, lawyers and other professionals had what was required to appear well-dressed, but were not extravagant in their accumulation of undergarments. Domestic servants, by contrast, quickly acquired and used a profusion of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 129.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 136-137.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 160.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 161.

⁸² Ibid.

linen undergarments. Proportionally, “their expenditure was on average four times greater than that of wage-earners. With 8.4 per cent of their moveable wealth invested in their wardrobes, they headed the ranks of clothes consumers, and linen was of prime importance, accounting for 51 percent of the value of wardrobes.”⁸³ By the end of the century, these levels of linen consumption compared to clothing consumption remained relatively static—the nobility and haute bourgeoisie spent less than three percent on their underwear, while wage-earners, domestic servants, artisans, and shopkeepers spent between 10.5 and 71 percent of their income on underwear. While these percentages remained relatively static, overall clothing and undergarment consumption increased.⁸⁴

MEN’S LINEN

Circa 1700

	Nobility	Office-holders & Professionals	Artisans & Shopkeepers	Wage-Earners	Domestics
Shirts	53	88	98	87	100
Stockings	66	68	56	47	50
Drawers	20	32	18	17	20
Indoor & Night-clothes	45	43	32	22	25

Circa 1789

	Nobility	Office-holders & Professionals	Artisans & Shopkeepers	Wage-Earners	Domestics
Shirts	100	100	97	96	100
Stockings	100	97	91	80	74
Drawers	46	22	6.2	4	12
Indoor & Night-clothes	57	100	16	33	28

Table 2. Men's Linen (by percentage). Adapted from Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 164-165.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 162.

For women, clothing in the beginning of the eighteenth century was more clearly delineated along lines of class than it was among men. In 1700, only noblewomen owned gowns, while the popular classes owned wardrobes primarily consisting of separate skirts and bodices. The mantua, however, was beginning to appear at all levels of society (Table 3). Noblewomen possessed the largest quantity of clothing: “10 per cent of the inventories mention only one mantua, but the majority record at least four, two-thirds noted three petticoats, three-quarters more than three skirts.”⁸⁵ Aristocratic women’s wardrobes, moreover, consisted of a variety of fine textiles such as silks and newly arrived *indiennes*, as well as myriad colors. The wives of lawyers, doctors, and other professionals generally owned more than three petticoats and skirts, as well as two mantuas. Only five inventories included gowns.⁸⁶ “Among women of the craft and commercial bourgeoisie, where the shop-window effect begins to operate, 52 per cent had at least two mantuas, and a third more than four; whilst a quarter had only one skirt, a third had more than ten” and three quarters of female shopkeepers had more than two petticoats.⁸⁷ Most laboring women owned two or three skirts and petticoats and a mantua. Domestic servants generally possessed four or five petticoats, eight to ten skirts, and at least two mantuas.⁸⁸ The wardrobes of non-nobles consisted primarily of functional garments in sturdy fabrics and austere colors.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 124-125.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 124.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

Circa 1700

	Nobility	Office-holders & Professionals	Artisans & Shopkeepers	Wage-Earners	Domestics
Skirt or Petticoat	100	93	89	89	100
Gown	16	5	2	0	0
Mantua	91	93	90	87	90
Apron	46	31	70	57	65
Bodice (Corps)	53	38	50	41	45

Circa 1789

	Nobility	Office-holders & Professionals	Artisans & Shopkeepers	Wage-Earners	Domestics
Skirt or Petticoat	100	100	100	94	95
Gown	100	100	90	53	100
Mantua	44	0	0	0	5
Mantelet	55	85	82	58	85
Apron	100	39	55	88	62
Corset	81	65	66	50	60

Table 3. Women's Clothing (by percentage). Composition of female wardrobes adapted from Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 121.

By 1789, women's clothing among the popular classes had undergone a significant shift. As with men, general clothing consumption increased among all levels of society; however, less affluent women began to accumulate wardrobes closer in size and composition to their noble counterparts. As mantuas transformed into simpler gowns, gowns became more common in all wardrobes, where before they belonged only to the wealthy. Similar to their male counterparts, noblewomen's wardrobes had increased in abundance over the course of the century, containing on average fifty-five garments. The profusion of garments allowed for frequent changes of clothing. "Most noblewomen owned between twenty and forty garments... including some twenty gowns, as many petticoats, and ten or so additional items: déshabillés to be worn indoors, mantelets,

mantles, ‘amazons’ (riding habits), redingotes, surtouts, caracos, casaquins” and more.⁸⁹ Among women of the professional bourgeoisie, gowns were ubiquitous and two-thirds of inventories listed more than five gowns, along with matching skirts and petticoats, and almost all contained at least one or two newly fashionable garments such as redingotes and *Gaulles*.⁹⁰ These women also possessed garments in a greater variety of fine textiles and fashionable colors than they had at the beginning of the century. Unlike their husbands, wives of the professional class were more interested in keeping up with fashions.

Women in the crafts and artisan groups still had a more limited wardrobe than women in other groups, but most possessed at least one gown with matching petticoats, while the better off women might have a few as well as a newly fashionable garment or two.⁹¹ Even in these more limited wardrobes, garments were made of more fashionable silks and cottons, and brighter colors had become more popular.⁹² Wage-earners and domestic servants with some means had extensive fashionable wardrobes relative to their incomes. Gowns, sometimes several at a time, were found in 53 percent of wage-earner wardrobes and in all wardrobes of domestic servants.⁹³ These women also possessed garments made not of durable, functional textiles, but fashionable cottons and even silks. “Lower-class women were much better dressed, and women servants better dressed still; they could enjoy supple satins, soft taffetas, cheerful prints and exotic siamoises,

⁸⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 145-146.

⁹¹ Ibid., 146.

⁹² Ibid., 146-147.

⁹³ Ibid., 144.

Persians, and nankeens.”⁹⁴ The wardrobes of domestic servants became increasingly similar to those of their wealthy employers, sometimes consisting of employer cast-offs and other times of second-hand but still fashionable garments. Simultaneously, as intermediaries between the wealthy and those with less, domestic servants introduced finer fashions to average working women, who began to adapt the more fashionable styles, albeit with less abundance and fancy details.⁹⁵ The late eighteenth century thus also saw greater homogeneity among the dress of women of all classes.

At the end of the seventeenth century, women had no more undergarments in their wardrobes than did men; however, this was no longer the case by the end of the eighteenth century, when women had significantly more undergarments than their male counterparts. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, women at all levels of society possessed a few ubiquitous undergarments: the chemise, the petticoat, stockings, caps, and the *corps* (primarily worn as an outer garment) (Table 4).⁹⁶ While the average noblewoman had a dozen shifts at the beginning of the eighteenth century, she had hundreds by the end.⁹⁷ Noblewomen similarly increased their collections of petticoats, stays, corsets, stockings, caps, camisoles, and a variety of *déshabille* items. For the average professional’s wife at the beginning of the century, it was common to have three to four petticoats, five or six pairs of stockings, ten shirts, a selection of caps, two stays, and perhaps a *déshabille* outfit. By 1789, these women were likely to possess more than twenty chemises, a dozen petticoats, and a dozen pairs of stockings, as well as peignoirs,

⁹⁴ Ibid., 145.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 163, 168.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 169.

nightgowns, bedjackets, camisoles, and flexible stays or corsets.⁹⁸ In 1700, shopkeepers and craftswomen possessed primarily the essentials in undergarments: one or two simple petticoats, one to three pairs of wool stockings, six to twelve shifts. Most of these women also owned a few collars and *engageants* and practical caps. By the end of the century, these women had as many as twenty chemises, primarily in fine linens and cottons, camisoles of imported cotton, ten pairs of stockings often silk, corsets, nightgowns, peignoirs, and déshabillés. The more prosperous had as many as fifty to sixty chemises.⁹⁹

WOMEN'S LINEN

Circa 1700

	Nobility	Office-holders & Professionals	Artisans & Shopkeepers	Wage-Earners	Domestics
Shirt	76	73	91	78	75
Petticoat	90	75	80	53	60
Stockings	62	38	30	39	46
Head-wear	50	54	57	79	75
Drawers	3.5	1.6	12	0	1.6
Night-clothes	25	59	30	5	25
Stays	14	38	22	41	25

Circa 1789

	Nobility	Office-holders & Professionals	Artisans & Shopkeepers	Wage-Earners	Domestics
Shirt	100	100	100	93	100
Petticoat	100	100	100	94	95
Stockings	100	100	97	87	90
Head-wear	90	100	100	96	84
Drawers	7.2	6.6	0	0	2.6
Night-clothes	50	90	76	19	27
Stays and Corsets	81	65	66	50	60

Table 4. Women's Linen (by percentage). Adapted from Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 166-167.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 172.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 171, 169.

Domestic servants, who often had more outer clothing than their wage-earning counterparts, generally owned at least a dozen chemises, a dozen pairs of stockings, four to six petticoats, and several caps at the beginning of the century. By the end of the eighteenth century, domestic servants had accumulated large numbers of undergarments: twenty to fifty chemises, dozens of petticoats and stockings, two or more stays or corsets, and numerous caps and fancy coifs. These women were also more likely to own undergarments decorated with laces, frills, and ribbons, as well as made of finer fabrics.¹⁰⁰ Wage-earning women in 1700 had the fewest undergarments, averaging two petticoats, one or two stays, one or two pairs of stockings, and no more than a dozen shirts. These women, like the others, had increased the number of undergarments in their wardrobes by the end of the century. Most wage-earners had five or six petticoats, two or three stays or corsets, six to twelve pairs of stockings, and as many shifts.¹⁰¹ The changes in women's undergarments included quantity and quality, in addition to the acquisition of some of the newer *déshabille* items.

Both men and women were able to change their undergarments frequently by the 1780s, often on a daily basis, and several times a day for the wealthy. With their new collections of several, often finer undergarments, the common people could distinguish themselves in a way that had previously not been available to them. Thus, the visual distinctions between classes became less distinct, a cause for concern among many social critics, though the lines did not blur as much as critics feared. Some historians, such as Daniel Roche and Georges Vigarello, have suggested that this greater accumulation of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 173.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 168.

undergarments, and thus the greater ability to change undergarments more frequently, reflected an increased desire for cleanliness. Many fashion historians suggest that the increase in undergarment varieties and *déshabillé* garments for women and the simplification of men's undergarments point to a codification of Rousseauian ideals of women as domestic, while men took on more public roles. A domestic woman could run her home in *déshabille*, maintaining her perfectly unkempt fashion, hiding her flaws beneath her layers. A man presented himself simply, soberly, to demonstrate his public virtue. Moreover, and perhaps more significantly, the choice of undergarments—in style, color, fabric, etc.—which differed greatly among individuals and not just class lines indicates the importance of individual tastes and preferences to overall consumption.

IV

While wardrobe accounts give us a significant peek into individual consumer habits and personal choices in dress, they cannot provide a sense of the day-to-day clothing choices made by individuals. The wardrobe accounts provide a general sense of the types and styles of garments various individuals possessed, but not the ways in which they assembled their outfits on a daily basis—a stronger representation of personal preferences and individual self-representations. Thus, to thoroughly understand the significance of any garments for individuals, one must reconstruct the daily clothing choices these people made.

To construct a picture of daily clothing choices, one can look to an unexpected source: coroner's reports from accidental deaths. These accounts, found primarily for

Paris at the end of the eighteenth century, detail the garments worn by individuals at their time of death. While morbid, these reports provide a unique look into the clothing choices made by individuals on a specific day. Unfortunately, during the Franco-Prussian war in 1871, the Communards set fire to the Hôtel de Ville which housed the public records, and only a few documents survived the fire. Thus, the only extant coroner's reports from the eighteenth century are those from 1795 to 1800. Another limitation among these sources is the potential for incomplete listings. It is possible that the coroners or notaries did not list items perceived as overly mundane for every individual found. It is also possible that items went missing, either due to the nature of the death or post-mortem thefts. While limited, these documents nevertheless provide a significant portrait of common wardrobes at the end of the eighteenth century as no other source can.

With a variety of subjects, male and female ranging from infants to the elderly, the coroner's reports present a picture of general trends and daily practices in dress among common people. Of the reports surveyed, 107 subjects were male, and 36 were female. More than eighty-five percent of men wore a chemise, while fewer than ten percent wore caleçons. 36-year-old Adrien Sanguier, a well-dressed wine merchant, wore both "une chemise marqué a S.... [et un] calleçon [sic] de toile blanche" under his clothes.¹⁰² Like Sanguier, Louis Mathurin Antoine Bricard, a 19-year-old candlestick maker, was dressed in "un calleçon [sic] de toile... et d'une chemise marquée L.B."¹⁰³ Those who wore caleçons all wore chemises, as well, suggesting that caleçons were a

¹⁰² Sanguier, 17 Floreal 6 (6 May 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 17 Floreal an six, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹⁰³ Bricard, 12 Pluviose 6 (31 January 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 19 Pluviose an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

supplement to the standard chemise. A few men wore *culottes*, or breeches, under *pantalons*, making an outer garment into a type of undergarment. 55-year-old postal employee Jean Christophe Frère wore both “un pantalon bleu, [et] une culotte noire.”¹⁰⁴ Lubin Anfroy, a 33-year-old porter from Avranches similarly wore both “un pantalon de coutil gris, [et] une culotte de velours brun rayé.”¹⁰⁵ The choice to wear both culottes and pantalons is unexpected, and only a small number of men chose this combination. Both Frère and Anfroy were generally well-dressed, wearing fashionable under and outer garments, suggesting they were not vagrants wearing all they owned. At the same time, both of these men wore two pairs of pants in the warm spring, not the cold winter,¹⁰⁶ making this clothing choice quite puzzling to us today. Twenty six percent of men wore shirts with fancy collars intended for show, such as jabots or cravats, and sixty-six percent wore stockings. Only one man was found in his dressing gown;¹⁰⁷ most were found in the clothing of their professions—aprons, leggings, over-shirts, uniforms, etc.

Among the women, eighty-three percent wore chemises, and eighty-three percent wore petticoats. Almost half of the women wore corsets, a full fifty percent wore pockets, and seventy percent wore stockings. Seven of the women wore fichus or kerchiefs, eight

¹⁰⁴ Frère, 29 Pleuvose 6 (17 February 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 11 Ventose an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹⁰⁵ Hanfroy, 13 Floreal 7 (2 May 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 2 Germinal an 8, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹⁰⁶ Only one man, Saul Le Roux, a mason about 50 years old was found wearing thermal culottes under his pants in the middle of winter—he was dressed in “un pantalon de coutil gris, [et] d’une culotte noire de tricot.” Le Roux, 12 Frimaire 6 (2 December 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, an 6 12 Frimaire, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹⁰⁷ The body of cabinet maker Pierre Jean Danis, 32 was found wearing “une levite merdoye, une culotte pareille, un gillet de casimir brodé, une paire de bas de coton bleus, une chemise marqué de PD, une pare de souliers avec une maore de boucles de cuire...une cravatte de Madras fond puce et une de mousseline et un mouchoir de poche à carreaux rouges et bleus.” Danis, 10 Ventose 6 (28 February 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 10 Ventose an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

wore camisoles, three wore stomachers, two wore garters with their stockings, two wore sleeves, and only one wore a pannier (Table 5). 21-year-old Marguerite Merle, a governess, is an exemplar in that her outfit comprised most of these elements: she was dressed in “une chemise...un corset de drap rouge une pièce d'estomac, un casaquin fond sablé à petits bouquets rouges, un jupon de Nankin, un autre jupon d'indienne fond blanc à petits points rouges, ...une paire de poches blanches, une paire de bas de coton et deux jarretières rouges.”¹⁰⁸ Marie Aleseandrine Houpat, a 31-year-old native of Paris, wore the only recorded pannier, a pannier doucette. Houpat's undergarments included: “une chemise... une douzette [sic] de taffetas puce, une paire de poches de toile de coton rayé, [et] une paire de bas de soye [sic] bleue.”¹⁰⁹ Though vaguely described, in the lists of effects found on two women are items which are most likely sanitary napkins.¹¹⁰ The majority of women wore some form of déshabille, with caracos, or short gowns, paired with petticoats being the most popular. Only one young woman was found in a full gown—Mlle Louise Emilie Charlotte Harmand, aged 14, whose clothing suggests some wealth, wore “une robe de mousseline brodée, un fichu de soye [sic] rayé bleu et blanc, un corset de basquin, une chemise de toile blanche marquée E.H. une paire de poche dans laquelle il y avoit un mouchoir blanc marqué E.H., une paire de bas de coton sale marqué

¹⁰⁸ Merle, 3 Brumaire 5 (24 October 1796), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 3 Brumaire an 5, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹⁰⁹ Houpat, 22 Ventose 8 (13 March 1800), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 25 Ventose an 8, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹¹⁰ While not clearly sanitary napkins, Marguerite Bildé was found wearing “un bandage de desiente” and another woman was found wearing “un morceau de linge.” Menstruation and the material culture of menstruation is a fascinating topic which cannot be covered in this study, but does warrant further investigation by historians despite the difficulty in locating data. Bildé, 3 Germinal 6 (23 March 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 3 Germinal an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

H. ... et une paire de souliers de drap de cotton.”¹¹¹ Overall, both men and women dressed practically, choosing basic undergarments such as chemises. Women, however, were more likely to wear a variety of undergarments, particularly newer and specialized underclothes such as corsets, camisoles, and pockets.

UNDERGARMENTS FOUND IN CORONER’S REPORTS, 1795-1800

MALE <i>(107 individuals)</i>		FEMALE <i>(36 individuals)</i>	
Shirts	94	Shirts	30
Caleçons	10	Petticoat(s)	30
Jabots & Cravats	28	Corset	16
Stockings	71	Pockets	18
Dressing Gown	1	Stockings	25
		Fichu or Kerchief	7
		Camisole	8
		Stomacher(s)	3
		Garters	2
		Sleeves	2
		Panniers	1
		Brasière (Bras)	2
		Casaquin	20
		Déshabille	2

Table 5. Undergarments Found in Coroner's Reports, 1795-1800.

Individuals generally kept up with fashions as much as they were able; young people were most likely to follow newest trends while older men and women sported past trends. Many young wage-earners and shopkeepers kept up with fashions, but still focused their clothing choices on functionality, while domestics were more likely to put fashion before function. Almost all men wore a chemise, some fashionably decorative,

¹¹¹ Harmand, 23 Messidor 7 (11 July 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 24 Messidor an 7, Archives de Paris, Paris.

often with fancy shirts or cravats. Jean Jacques LeMaire, a wine merchant about 30 years old wore “une veste d'estoffe [sic] de laine gris foncée, [une] culotte de peau, une paire de bas de laine gris... [et] une chemise garnie.”¹¹² Monsieur LeMaire wore functional but fashionable leather breeches and a decorated chemise. Jean Joseph LeDuc, 36, a carpenter, wore “une veste de drap bleu, un gillet [sic] de velours de coton bleue rayé... un pantalon de coutil bleu, une chemise de toile blanche garnie d'un jabot de grosse mousseline.”¹¹³ Despite his functional pants, LeDuc chose fashionable bright colors and a chemise with a fancy muslin jabot. True to form, a domestic presumed to be a man called de Sierre was fashionably dressed in “une chemise usée... Un gillet [sic] de Manquin [sic] des modes, un habit de laenti rayé, une culotte de Manquin [sic] rayée gris et blanc, une paire de bas de fil, une pair des souliers à rosette, un vieux muchoir de poche à rayes rouges et blanches, un col de mousseline, une boucle a col de cuivre.”¹¹⁴ Despite his used chemise, de Sierre sported a fancy muslin collar with a leather clasp, fine stockings, fashionable striped breeches, and even shoes decorated with rosettes, making him quite the dandy.

Many working women wore fashionably colorful, patterned petticoats—often several at once—as well as colorfully patterned corsets and practical pockets. Marieanne Lauriouse, a merchant, wore “Une chemise... un casaquin d'indienne fond blanc sablé de jaune, un corset de toile serée [sic] bleu, un jupon d'indienne piqué fond blanc à fleurs

¹¹² LeMaire, 19 Messidor 5 (7 July 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 19 Messidor an 5 (7 July 1797), Archives de Paris, Paris

¹¹³ LeDuc, 20 Thermidor 6 (7 August 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 21 Thermidor an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹¹⁴ de Sierre, 29 Prairial 4 (17 June 1796), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 3 Mesidor an 4 Archives de Paris, Paris.

rouges et brunes, un pair de bas de coton bleu, une paire de souliers, un tablier de toile blanc, deux pièces d'estomac de toile de coton blanche.”¹¹⁵ Lauriouse chose new and stylish Indienne, or imported, cotton and cotton blend textiles from the West Indies which usually came in bright, colorful prints such as her petticoat with red and brown flowers. She also chose a colorful corset and stockings. Jeanne Genevieve Valiton, 35, who worked in a tobacco shop, wore:

une chemise... un casaquin de toile de coton rouge et bleu, un corset de laine, un jupon [sic] piqué de différentes couleurs, un autre jupon [sic] de drap vert, une paire de poches de toile blanche, une paire de bas de filosel bleu, une paire de souliers à boucles de cuivre... un tablier de toile bleu rayée, un bonnet rond uni, un bonnet piqué, [et] un mouchoir de col rouge et blanc.¹¹⁶

Valiton chose a colorful casaquin, a functional corset and pockets, two colorful petticoats, as well as blue stockings and a blue apron. Like male domestic servants, female domestics were often well-dressed. Monique Constance Monin, a 19-year-old governess at the house of Citoyen Georges Odunne, wore:

une chemise marquée C.M., un corset de siamoise à raye [sic] rouge, un casaquin de nanquin jaunes à carreaux blancs, un Jupon de Siamoise rayée bleu et brun, un autre jupon d'indienne à fleurs rouges, un paire de poches, ... deux mouchoirs de col fond blanc dont un ayant une raye brune et l'autre à fleurs bleue, une paire de bas de coton blanc, [et] une paire de souliers de nanquin avec des rosettes vertes.¹¹⁷

Monin's fashionable ensemble included a chemise, a colorfully striped imported corset, a colorfully printed casaquin and two petticoats made from fashionable imported textiles, pockets, two colorful fichus, cotton stockings, and fancy shoes with rosettes. Domestic

¹¹⁵ Lauriouse, 24 Prairial 6 (12 June 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 27 Prairial an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹¹⁶ Valiton, 21 Nivose 7 (10 January 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 21 Nivose an 7, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹¹⁷ Monin, 10 Floreal 8 (30 April 1800), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 12 Floreal an huit, Archives de Paris, Paris.

servants who had access to finer garments were often well-dressed, but other working men and women had gained access to and often chose fashionable garments for daily wear by the end of the eighteenth century.

Many middle-aged and elderly men preferred older or more basic clothing styles, while their female counterparts were more likely to keep up with newer trends and garments. Pierre Sarré, “ancien Menuisieur,” aged about 62, was dressed in “un gillet [sic] de velours, culotte de casimir noir, bas de laine gris, souliers à cordons, chemise de toile marquée derriere du col P. et C. P. un chapeau à trois cornes, une perruque rouge et une cravatte long de toile.”¹¹⁸ Sarré’s choice of clothing was simple and functional; he opted for simple black breeches, sturdy wool stockings, and a basic chemise and cravat. Michel Datte, aged 67, a printer, was “vetu d'une veste de camelot couleur ardoise, une mauvaise chemise, une culotte noire de satin...une paire des bas de coton et un soulier.”¹¹⁹ Datte’s shabby chemise, plain slate vest, and older style satin breeches indicate a simple, functional, but older style of dress.

Mature women, who often chose functional garments, were nevertheless more likely to sport newer fashions and styles. Marie Anne Poirier, a working woman aged 56, wore “une chemise non marquée, un casaquin de toile de coton blanche, un jupon piqué d'indienne a fleurs rouges, une paire de bas de laine gris, une paire de poches de bazin rayé et un mouchoir de col à petit carreaux bruns.”¹²⁰ Despite her simple chemise and

¹¹⁸ Sarré, 8 Fructidor 5 (25 August 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 8 Fructidor an 5, Archives de Paris Paris.

¹¹⁹ Michel Motte, 21 Messidor 5 (9 July 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 21 Messidor an 5, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹²⁰ Poirier, 25 Floreal 6 (14 May 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 26 Floreal an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

plain casaquin, Poirier chose a fashionable petticoat of Indiennes and the more fashionable casaquin, combining function and fashion. Marie Anne Burel, a 76-year-old cook and native of Orleans, was found wearing:

une chemise... un corset d'indienne fond rouge à grands ramages, un casaquin blanc de toile de coton, un jupon [sic] de siamoise fond rouge à rayes bleues, un jupon piqué de différentes couleurs et rapiecé, un autre jupon piqué de satin noir doublé de toile gris, un tablier de toile des indes rouge, un mouchoir de col de mousseline rayée... une tête de taffetas noir, une paire de bas de coton gris, deux petites lentilles en or... et une paire de poches de toile.¹²¹

Burel was well-dressed in imported Indiennes, colorful petticoats and a flower print corset, as well as her functional but fashionable casaquin and pockets, and a practical apron, which she topped off with a fancy, older style headdress, a fichu, and some gold earrings. While the older population, like most common people, chose practical garments for daily wear, many women preferred garments that were both functional and newly fashionable.

Children of the common people in Paris often dressed like their parents, yet young men predominantly wore newly fashionable garments such as pants and redingotes. 7-year-old Henry Seraphin Lapaix was dressed in “un gillet [sic] d'indienne fond rouge, d'une culotte en pantalon d'etoffe jaune et d'une chemise de toile.”¹²² Lapaix wore a vest of fashionable Indienne and pants over his chemise. 12-year-old button maker and seller Pierre Baptiste Lequiré wore “un pantalon de coutil noir.”¹²³ Henri Marie Louis Cheron, aged 8, wore “une redingotte brune, un gillet [sic] gris rayé, une culotte de peau noire,

¹²¹ Burel, 26 Floreal 8 (16 May 1800), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U17, 27 Floreal an huit, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹²² Henry Seraphin Lapaix, 18 Messidor 5 (6 July 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 18 Messidor an 5, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹²³ Lequié, 6 Thermidor 6 (24 July 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 6 Thermidor an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

une paire de bas de laine gris, une paire de chaussons de laine et une paire de sabots, une chemise de toile non marquée.”¹²⁴ Along with a basic chemise, Cheron sported leather breeches and a striped vest under his redingote. Louise Emilie Charlotte Harmand, aged 14, was dressed like a miniature woman in her chemise, corset, and pockets under her “robe de mousseline brodée,” worn with “un fichu de soye [sic] rayé bleu et blanc.”¹²⁵ 9-year-old Jeanne Sueur dressed like her mother, a laundress, wearing “une chemise, un casaquin de drap blanc, deux jupons bleu et blanc rempiecés, une poche de toile blanche, une paire de bras de fil gris et un grand tablier.”¹²⁶ Her chemise, practical pockets, patched petticoats, simple casaquin, and pair of *bras* (a fitted, shirt-like undergarment partway between a camisole and a corset unique to infants and young female children, also called a *brassière*) indicate an outfit based on functionality, yet adherence to new undergarment norms. Generally, children dressed like their parents, following modern standards in undergarments and fashions in clothing as well as possible.

Nevertheless, many people could not afford new and fancy garments, resulting in old, worn, shabby, and patched, but serviceable clothing. Charles Lepreux, aged 52 was “vetu d'une chemise, d'un mauvais gillet [sic] de Nankin, d'une blouse de grosse toile, d'une mauvaise culotte de velours maron, [et] d'une mauvaise paire de bas drape.”¹²⁷ Despite the shabby vest and breeches and rough smock, Lepreux nevertheless wore a chemise and constructed a functional outfit. Often basic undergarments were worn and

¹²⁴ Cheron, 20 Pluviose 6 (8 February 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 22 Pluviose an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹²⁵ Harmand.

¹²⁶ Sueur f^m Budde et sa fille, 6 Germinal 6 (26 March 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 6 Germinal an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹²⁷ Lepreux, 2 Floreal 5 (21 April 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 2 Floreal an 5, Archives de Paris Paris.

patched such as Citizen Gaspard Patrice Toussaint Raphael Soyeux's "chemise de toile blanche rapiecée."¹²⁸ Marie Jeanne Lardiere wore "un mauvais jupon d'indienne fond violet, un autre mauvais jupon piqué à rays et rapiecé, un jupon de soutine déchiré, un petit tablier de toile à carreaux, une mauvaise camisole piquée d'indienne fond bleu à fleurs, [et] un casaquin de molleton."¹²⁹ Lardiere's ensemble was patched and shabby, yet she chose more fashionable colorful petticoats, even of Indiennes, and a camisole of Indienne. Marie Genevieve Sueur, a laundress, wore "un vieux jupon à barres blanc, tout rempiecé, une camisole de drap blanc... une vieille paire de bas de fil gris, un corset bleu avec une piece rouge et une vieille chemise de toile."¹³⁰ Despite her old, patched garments, Sueur nevertheless chose to wear a corset and camisole to complement her functional outfit. The poorest also made do with whatever they could acquire, including basic undergarments usually reserved for alternate genders. An unidentified man in his fifties was found wearing "un mauvais habit de drap couleur verde couteil... culotte de drap couleur de gris... bas de coton gris, pair de souliers, [et] une mauvaise chemise de femme."¹³¹ While chemises were not gender-specific in the previous century, by the end of the eighteenth century, they were clearly distinct. However, it is likely that this man had little access to new garments and had to make do with what he could find, regardless of gender norms. Clearly, even the poorer people of Paris made do as well as possible in

¹²⁸ Soyeux, 13 Brumaire 6 (3 November 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, Brumaire an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹²⁹ Lardiere, 12 Germinal 5 (1 April 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 12 Germinal an Cinq, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹³⁰ Sueur f^m Budde et sa fille.

¹³¹ 20 Pluviose an 6, 20 Pluviose 6 (8 February 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 20 Pluviose an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

their clothing choices and kept up with newer standards in undergarments to the best of their ability.

As with all garments, both groups and individuals assembled and used garments in their own ways, different from the standards of fashion popular among the elite and published in the fashion press. The coroner's reports present some of these non-standard uses of clothing and thus demonstrate some of the ways in which individuals both conformed to standards of fashion and invented their own interpretations. The most unconventional clothing combinations found in the coroner's reports are the layers of similar items of clothing such as pants and breeches (as discussed above) and multiple vests or shirts. Just as some men wore *culottes* under their *pantalons*, others wore two pairs of pants. Jean Clery, a day laborer, wore "deux pantalons de coutil gris."¹³² While Pierre Francois Caillot, a newspaper seller from Versailles, wore "un pantalon de drap bleu, [et] un autre pantalon de drap gris" along with "une paire de guêtres de laine couleur Ramoneur."¹³³ Several men wore two vests, not for warmth in the winter, but in the spring and summer, likely due to a particular fashion culture among wage-earners and laborers. In fact, a full ten percent of men in the reports wore two vests at once. Charles Francois Vincent D'aubigny, a lemonade seller, wore "un gillet [sic] rouge de soye [sic], [et] un autre de Basin Piqué."¹³⁴ Nicolas Julien Doguet, wore "deux gilets [sic] dont un

¹³² Jⁿ Clery, 14 Floreal 7 (3 May 1799), Justice de Paix du 4^{ème} Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 14 Floreal an 7, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹³³ Caillot, 24 Pleuviose 7 (12 February 1799), Justice de Paix du 4^{ème} Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 26 Pleuviose an 7, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹³⁴ D'aubigny, 8 Brumaire 6 (29 October 1797), Justice de Paix du 4^{ème} Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 8 Brumaire an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

de soutine blanche et l'autre de toile blanche marqué d'un A, et a mouches.”¹³⁵ Louis Hervieux, a tiler, wore “un gillet [sic] de muelton [sic] blanc, [et] un autre gillet [sic] de drap blanc.”¹³⁶ Similarly, Louis Tiphaigne, a huckster, wore “deux gilets [sic] dont un de velours rouge rayé et l'autre de drap blanc.”¹³⁷ A few men wore multiple shirts which appear related to their professions, while a small number of men chose to sport several cravats in a flamboyant fashion. Jean Samuel Brun, a Swiss painter, wore “deux chemises dont un sans manches et très courte, toutes deux marquées S.B. N.º 12.”¹³⁸ Brun’s sleeveless shirt is most likely some kind of painter’s smock. Pierre Jean Danis, a cabinetmaker, chose to wear “une cravatte de Madras fond puce et une de mousseline.”¹³⁹ Jacques Morel, a wig-maker, was even more flamboyant than Danis in his “trois cravattes de toile blanche dont une à bordure rouges.”¹⁴⁰ Through layering, pants, vests, and shirts became both undergarments and outer-garments. Whether or not these men were aware of the paradigm shift their clothing choices created, this layering of garments allowed the garments to transgress the line between outer- and undergarments.

¹³⁵ Doguet, 18 Germinal 6 (7 April 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 18 Germinal an Six, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹³⁶ Hervieux, 4 Brumaire 7 (25 October 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 5 Brumaire an 7, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹³⁷ Tiphaigne, 15 Floreal 7 (4 May 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 16 Floreal an Sept, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹³⁸ Jⁿ Samuel Brum, 23 Germinal 7 (14 April 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 25 Germinal an 7, Archives de Paris, Paris.

¹³⁹ Danis.

¹⁴⁰ Morel, 15 Floreal 7 (4 May 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 16 Floreal an Sept, Archives de Paris, Paris.

V

Over the course of the eighteenth century, many garments evolved from outer- to under (like the *corps*) or from under- to outer (like the petticoat) while new garments became available (such as *déshabillés* and *caleçons*). As their roles shifted, so too did their meanings as the concept of *sous-vêtements* became established. Simultaneously, undergarments became more gendered, and increased undergarment ownership and variety suggests a greater awareness of undergarments, despite their hidden and personal nature. As consumption of underclothes among the elite increased, and the fashion for undergarments, or undergarment-like clothing, surged, so too did undergarment consumption among the common people. By the end of the eighteenth century, common people were clearly as concerned about their underwear as the nobility, even if they could not accumulate the same quality or quantity. Only the very poorest people of Paris suffered with only one or two shirts as Mlle de Montpensier did (although without the luxury of servants to do the daily washing), and many had a change of undergarments for every day of the week. Common people's wardrobes increased in both quality and quantity overall, and many working people sported newer types of undergarments such as *caleçons*, *camisoles*, and corsets, often of finer and imported textiles, under their fashionable but functional *pantalons* and *casquins*. Finally, just as working-class women layered their technicolored and multi-patterned petticoats, working-class men layered their pants and vests in a unique phenomenon which emphasized the interplay between and creation of under and outer, hidden and revealed, that took place over the course of the eighteenth century.

2. Propreté and Santé

In an issue of the *Gazette de Santé* published in 1783, the Faculty of Medicine said of Paris, “Le linge, second instrument de propreté, y est en abondance ; celui destiné pour les bains médicaux n'est point confondu avec celui des bains simples ; l'ordre, la propreté, la vigilance, l'exactitude, tout regne dans la maison avec la plus grande décence.”¹⁴¹ This pronouncement emphasizes the abundance of linen undergarments as an instrument of health and cleanliness; however, it also demonstrates that the medical profession saw undergarments as only the second tool in a person's hygienic practice, following the simple bath which all decent households employed. Historians of health and hygiene have often linked the eighteenth century proliferation of undergarments with the decline of bathing, citing a shift from washing to wiping with linen and a change from desiring physical cleanliness to wanting only the appearance of cleanliness.¹⁴² This appearance of cleanliness could be achieved with linen undergarments peeking out from the edges of clothing; the appearance of clean undergarments at the limina between clothing and body here represented the cleanliness of the body. However, medical advice, advertisements, personal accounts, and other sources, including the *Gazette de Santé*

¹⁴¹ "Décret de la Faculté de Médecine, sur les nouveaux Bains établis à Paris sur la Quai de la Grenouillère. Rapport des Commissaires nommés par la Faculté de Médecine pour examiner les nouveaux Bains de M. Albert," *Gazette de Santé*, 1783, 88.

¹⁴² Katherine Ashenburg, *The Dirt on Clean: An Unsanitized History* (New York: North Point Press, 2007); Virginia Smith, *Clean: a History of Personal Hygiene and Purity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Georges Vigarello, *Le propre et le sale : l'hygiène du corps depuis le Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 1985); Georges Vigarello, *Le Sain et le Malsain: santé et mieux-être depuis le Moyen Age* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993); Vigarello and Birrell, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France Since the Middle Ages*; Georges Vigarello, Jean-Jacques Courtine, and Alain Corbin, *Histoire du corps I: De la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005).

demonstrate that both bathing and undergarments grew in popularity over the course of the eighteenth century in France to reflect changing notions of hygiene and propriety.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, medical professionals and individuals began to view the human body as naturally strong and vigorous rather than frail and in need of care and protection. In the seventeenth century, the weak body needed protection from dangerous waters which could transmit disease and was thus coated in ointments and wrapped in protective linen. Undergarments, primarily made of linen, wicked away sweat and toxins produced by the body, protecting the body from itself and outside dangers. Hence, underwear, in taking on the role of the skin, became conflated with the body—undergarments became the body's skin. In the eighteenth century, however, physicians, hygienists, and philosophers began to reconsider this concept of the frail human body. These medical professionals began to advocate bathing, cleansing the body with water rather than linen, and wearing linen not to protect the body from itself, but from external dangers. Underclothes were no longer required to take on the role of the skin. Instead, undergarments were worn over a clean, healthy body to create a boundary between the body and outer clothing and the body and the elements. Undergarments took on a middle role, protecting the body from dirt, grime, and airborne miasmas, but also helping to prevent the spread of bodily secretions through wicking and regular washing. Thus, the eighteenth century saw health advocates emphasize regular bathing and frequent undergarment changes (which required both greater accumulation of underclothes and regular washings thereof). Undergarments were thus no longer garments which washed the body, but garments which assisted the body in its pursuit of

cleanliness and propriety. Both the body and undergarments required regular washing to maintain new standards of hygiene. Underwear's new role disassociated it from a purely bodily context, creating a new function which straddled the private body and public body.

Here, the physical body refers to the medicalized concept of the body, while the social body is the body which one presents to others. Specifically, "physical" refers to a function designed to have an effect on the internal health and bodily integrity of the wearer. "Social" refers to the conception and perception of the body by individuals and groups. The discussion of these two ideas of the body also introduces the notion of the private body, which here refers to an individual's conception of his or her own body. Undergarments and their newfound roles helped to shape and solidify these dichotomous concepts of the body.

Previously, historians such as Georges Vigarello and Alain Corbin studied the body and health in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to discover the cultural changes that led to a society that shunned bathing and instead relied on linens, which wicked sweat away from the body, and perfumes, which masked bodily odors. Other historians who have traced the changing notions of cleanliness include Katherine Ashenburg and Virginia Smith, whose works survey general Western ideas about cleanliness from the Ancient Greeks and Romans to the present-day.¹⁴³ These historians have shown that cleanliness in the late-medieval period and throughout most of the early modern periods simply addressed appearances: only that which could be seen was wiped

¹⁴³ Ashenburg; Smith.

of dirt and grime. Baths and washing were credited with spreading disease by softening the body and opening the pores to bad humors, thus leading to the use of dry forms of cleansing such as linen.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, these past studies have shown that linen undergarments were widely worn by the end of the eighteenth century and suggest that they became fundamental to hygiene.

Vigarello and, more recently Daniel Roche, discuss linen undergarments in their studies of early modern cleanliness and clothing, respectively. Roche expands upon Vigarello's argument by exploring undergarments in the wider context of clothing culture. Moreover, Vigarello and Roche argue that undergarments, as they began to be seen at the edges of clothing—collars, cuffs, etc.—became signs of bodily cleanliness. Thus, dirty linen indicated a dirty body, whereas clean, white linen indicated a clean body—regardless of the body's actual cleanliness. Additionally, in the eighteenth century, ideas of courtesy and propriety necessitated the appearance of cleanliness. With cleanliness understood primarily in terms of appearance, the need for bathing was replaced with a need for clean linen, and the wearing of undergarments became a hygienic necessity.¹⁴⁵ According to these authors, individuals were compelled to acquire multiple undergarments throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of this hygienic necessity. While this explanation sets clean undergarments at the apex of personal cleanliness and decency, the return to bathing and the growing emphasis on

¹⁴⁴ Ashenburg, 97-123; Smith, 157-159, 193-194; Vigarello, *Le propre et le sale : l'hygiène du corps depuis le Moyen Age*, 49-104; Vigarello, *Le Sain et le Malsain: santé et mieux-être depuis le Moyen Age*, 103-107; Vigarello and Birrell, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France Since the Middle Ages*, 39-90; Vigarello, Courtine, and Corbin, *Histoire du corps I: De la Renaissance aux Lumières*, 362-365.

¹⁴⁵ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 151; Vigarello and Birrell, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France Since the Middle Ages*, 61.

personal baths for hygiene throughout the eighteenth century renders this hygienic argument insufficient for the growing preponderance of linen.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, both medical professionals and society emphasized the roles of both undergarments and bathing for personal hygiene. Bathing experienced a resurgence during the eighteenth century, however, and eventually usurped undergarments' place as the principal hygienic standard. Yet, undergarments did not lose their hygienic significance, and remained an integral part of hygiene and propriety throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. Even though the resurgence of bathing destabilized the use of undergarments as the sole method of hygiene, moreover undergarments continued to gain ground in other areas of life as well. Specialists often debated the uses of particular undergarments, such as camisoles, corsets, and swaddling bands; however, they did not debate the necessity of basic undergarments such as chemises. Such medical advice and discussions about undergarments reveal the health standards created and propagated by the medical community, which contributed to the social and cultural emphasis for undergarments despite their declining role in hygiene, itself.

As hygienic and social requirements for undergarments became standardized over the course of the eighteenth century, a culturally determined minimal set of undergarments was established and codified by the government and other institutions. Many boarding and convent schools established undergarment requirements for students. Such schools required students to bring their own underclothes, which had to meet the descriptions provided, and to care for them as required. While such standards are not

unexpected at schools for wealthier families who owned many undergarments, surprisingly, the government even held the poor and those in need to similar standards. Government funds were allocated to provide appropriate undergarments for children in foundling homes, unwed mothers seeking help, and wet nurses who provided their services for the state. The cultural standards for undergarments were clearly being established, codified, and disseminated through a variety of institutions.

I

Owing to fears of plague and sexual transgression, public bathing in France was abrogated in the mid-sixteenth century, with the closing of public bathhouses and the closing of the bawdy houses shortly thereafter. This turn away from bathing was a major transition in concepts of cleanliness and ideas about baths. With the development of Christianity in the West, the social, communal baths of the Greeks and Romans had been adapted to fit Christian ideas of religious purity and metaphorical bathing in Christ. As bathing for physical purity and metaphorical bathing (which de-emphasized physical bathing) waxed and waned in importance into the eleventh century, so too did the custom of bathing; however, the practice of bathing never fully disappeared despite. From the eleventh century to the mid-fourteenth century, bathing reached great heights in its popularity; particularly popular were the communal steam baths, the “stews” in England and “*étuves*” in France. Such popularity led many wealthy persons to create and install private baths, or *salles des bains*—rooms with several small steam baths or a large, communal steam bath—in their houses. This progression of bathing from the Greeks and

Romans to the mid-fourteenth century was generally the same throughout Western Europe.

The plague in the mid-fourteenth century led to a break from the relatively simultaneous fluctuations and transitions in bathing, beginning with action taken in France. With the outbreak of bubonic plague, Philippe VI called on the medical faculty of the University of Paris to determine the cause of the pestilence in 1348. The medical faculty determined that the origins of the plague were noxious vapors in the air and water, and indicated that hot baths which moistened and relaxed the body, opening the skin's pores, allowed the foul vapors of the plague to easily invade the body.¹⁴⁶ This led to intermittent closings of the bathhouses during outbreaks of plague until the sixteenth century. These closures also affected the bathhouses that functioned as brothels, and many bathhouse owners and their clients resisted these interruptions to their businesses and practices. With the idea that the baths made bodies vulnerable to disease, and a growing conflation of stews and sex, water became more threatening to bathers who feared they "might contract syphilis or diseases as yet unknown and unnamed, or even become pregnant from sperm floating in bathwater."¹⁴⁷ Thus, when François I closed the bathhouses of France in 1538, and the States General at Orléans closed the brothels of France, thus closing the remaining public baths, in 1566, there was little resistance due to widely accepted beliefs about disease and the permeability of the body.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Ashenburg, 93-94.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 95.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 94-95.

Unlike in France, where bathhouses began to close for health reasons, baths in England became more controlled in the fifteenth century for moral reasons, while baths in Spain were closed on religious grounds and baths in Germany continued to experience popularity throughout the centuries of plague outbreaks. In 1417, Henry II of England attempted to ban public bathhouses, due in large part to the promiscuity associated with the stews, a term which had become synonymous with brothels by the fifteenth century. However, his ban was disregarded, and a series of fifteenth-century laws were passed in vain attempts to keep the stews respectable.¹⁴⁹ Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain had the Moorish baths destroyed in 1492.¹⁵⁰ Yet as ideas about the dangers of illness from bathing spread outward from France in the sixteenth century, countries including England, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands began closing public bathhouses to prevent the spread of disease. Henry VIII of England closed the stews in 1546 and Philip II of Spain definitively banned whatever baths were left in 1576. The German-speaking countries, however, cherished their public bathhouses and did not commonly close them during disease outbreaks or when French ideas of the unhealthiness of baths were brought in. This is likely because the German, Austrian, and Swiss bathhouses were used as facilities for a variety of medical treatments such as bleeding, sweating, and other purgatives.¹⁵¹ Therefore, even if taking baths was unhealthy, the other treatments taking place in the bathhouses were healthful. This led many in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 87.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 111.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 112.

Western Europe to the conclusion that to immerse oneself in warm water, one must be a fool, ill, or German.¹⁵²

Although bathing had all but disappeared in the sixteenth century, natural hot springs, or spas, in France, Italy, and Switzerland became increasingly medicalized in the seventeenth century, following the Swiss-German example. While spas in Italy and Switzerland were patronized by a wealthy elite, including merchants, lawyers, and priests in search of cures for their ailments, and rarely the poor through alms and charity, French spas were successful primarily due to royal patronage.¹⁵³ Thus, in France, these natural spas were open to the wealthy, primarily the aristocracy, and controlled by physicians who could monitor the patients to prevent the spread of disease through water. However, visiting the spas was extremely uncommon, and going to the spa for a cure was considered a last resort, not to mention an event for which one needed to take several protective measures. When Louis XIV was treated with a bath after no other medical action had cured his convulsions and rash, he was well-prepared with extra purges, enemas, and extra rest for days before the bath occurred.¹⁵⁴ Plombières-les-Bains, Bourbon, Vichy, and Forges, France's main health spas, were attended by the wealthy and the nobility who desperately sought cures for health concerns which did not improve with other, safer treatments. Moreover, although spa cures sometimes involved

¹⁵² Ibid., 114; G. Cheyne, "An Essay of Health and Long Life," (London: George Strahan and J. Leake, 1725), 195-198.

¹⁵³ Ashenburg, 118.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 115-116.

immersion in the natural springs, they were based primarily on drinking large quantities of the often sulfurous water.¹⁵⁵

By 1701, physicians were ready to begin relieving Western Europe of its hydrophobia. English physician Sir John Floyer published *Psychrolousia. Or, the History of Cold Bathing: Both Ancient and Modern* in 1701, in which he extolled, and sometimes exaggerated, the benefits of cold bathing.¹⁵⁶ The English had taken up the French spa movement in the late seventeenth century and moved quickly into the practice of cold water bathing. While Germany quickly took up cold English baths in the early eighteenth century, the French were more hesitant, only beginning to adopt cold bathing around 1740.¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the Spanish and Italians remained aloof.

Because health advice encouraged one to bathe in cold water often, even daily, as a preventative measure, bathing experienced a resurgence, replacing linen that “washed” the body. The practice of bathing began to move from the realm of medicines and cures to that of prevention and hygiene while undergarments took on a new role between a clean body and a dirty world. This transition was particularly important in shaping hygiene in the nineteenth century, a period when bathing regularly for hygiene became commonplace for those with the means to bathe, and undergarments increased in use and

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 116-123. Klaus Bergdolt, *Wellbeing: A Cultural History of Healthy Living* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2008), 199-225; Michel Jaltel, *La santé par les eaux : 2000 ans de thermalisme* (Clermont-Ferrand [France]: L'Instant durable, 1983), 27-46.

¹⁵⁶ Ashenburg, 129; J. Floyer and E. Baynard, *Psychrolousia. Or, the History of Cold-bathing: Both Ancient and Modern. In two parts. The First, Written by Sir John Floyer, The Second, Treating of the Genuine Use of Hot and Cold Baths* (London: William and John Innys, 1715).

¹⁵⁷ The earliest French medical manuals which encourage cold bathing appear in the late-1730s. The practice of cold-water bathing in France appears to come from England where earlier health manuals from the end of the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-centuries began to explore the benefits of cold water and encourage cold baths to promote northern Scotch strength and vigor. This transmission of ideas from England to France and the social and political implications thereof is an area as yet unexplored by historians that would greatly contribute to the history of bathing and the political economy of baths.

number. In order to combat beliefs that water weakened the body, opening it to illness, Enlightenment notions of man's innate strength provided the explanation for how a body could remain healthy even after bathing. This was added to observations about the cold as a hardening, thus strengthening element; just as cold enough water turned into ice and became strong, so too would the human body.

By 1793, Jean François Lavoisien's *Dictionnaire portatif de médecine, d'anatomie, de chirurgie, de pharmacie, de chymie, d'histoire naturelle, de botanique et de physique* defined a bath as a "lieu plein d'eau, où l'on se met quelque temps, soit pour se décrasser, se laver, ou se rafraîchir, soit pour le guérir de quelque maladie."¹⁵⁸ The bath was for both cleaning and curing oneself. Thus, when undergarments were added to bathing, they worked like a second skin, a protective layer keeping the clean body free from external contaminants.

II

In eighteenth-century France, cleanliness, or *propriété*, which previously was simply about appearance, became more broadly defined as something for the whole body and overall health. As Vigarello has demonstrated, "Cleanliness was no longer exclusively expressed in vestimentary signs. It had a more directly bodily manifestation."¹⁵⁹ Rather than cleanliness being manifest only in the wearing of clean linen under one's outer clothing (with the clean, white linen peaking out at the collars,

¹⁵⁸ Jean François Lavoisien, *Dictionnaire portatif de médecine, d'anatomie, de chirurgie, de pharmacie, de chymie, d'histoire naturelle, de botanique et de physique* (Paris: Théophile Barrois le jeune, 1793), 74.

¹⁵⁹ Vigarello and Birrell, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France Since the Middle Ages*, 136.

cuffs, and between buttons) and hands and face wiped clean, cleanliness began to manifest itself in the washing of one's body. The dirt and oils that covered the body and filled the pores were to be washed away with water, and even with soap in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Moreover, as Ashenburg explains, "The late-century vogue for cotton—chintzes, calicos, and muslins—and simpler silhouettes made... unwashed bodies more noticeable" as the garments clung more closely to the body and the fabrics absorbed and showed bodily secretions.¹⁶⁰ Even the less expensive cotton undergarments which began to replace costly linens required a clean body, as bodily secretions and grime permeated the garments which previously masked dirty bodies.

Moreover, according to the great Enlightenment *Encyclopédie* of Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert published between 1751 and 1772, health or *santé* is defined as the most perfect state of life, or the natural state wherein all parts of the body are functioning properly and "d'une maniere durable, avec la facilité, [et] la liberté."¹⁶¹ The entry goes on to refer the reader to the entry on hygiene to discover "les moyens propres à conserver la santé... que l'on doit observer pour cet effet le plus qu'il est possible."¹⁶² To understand the proper ways to restore one's *santé*, the reader is directed to articles on medicine, treatments, and therapies. During this period, hygiene was clearly understood as preserving health rather than restoring it. In fact, hygiene is defined as "la premiere des deux parties de la méthode medicinale concernant la conduite qu'il faut tenir pour la conservation de la santé actuellement existente" as opposed to the second part of

¹⁶⁰ Ashenburg, 146.

¹⁶¹ *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* Winter 2008 ed. (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Projet), s.v. "Santé."

¹⁶² Ibid.

the method which is “la Thérapeutique qui traite de la maniere de rétablir la santé lorsque l'on l'a perdue.”¹⁶³ Undergarments, conspicuously absent in this definition, were clearly no longer a prime embodiment of hygiene in the eighteenth century.

Before the eighteenth century, all bathing was understood to be an externally applied medicine, or a curative practice; however, in the eighteenth century, cold bathing began to be advocated as preventative. Of course, the idea of bathing as curative did not disappear overnight, and warm baths were still believed to be curative in the eighteenth century. According to the *Encyclopédie*, a bath, or what is listed as “Bain de santé ou de propreté,” a bath of health or cleanliness, is recognized by doctors for producing good health and treating several maladies.¹⁶⁴ The entry explains the ways different types of baths have different effects on the body. “Les différentes qualités de l'eau, que l'on employe pour le bain, en changeant la propriété.”¹⁶⁵ In *Histoire de la santé, et de l'art de la conserver*, Scottish doctor James Mackenzie explained the difference between varied temperatures of baths: “Le bain d'eau froide humecte & rafraîchit le corps mais le bain d'eau salée échauffe & dessèche: les bains chauds exténuent & rendent frilleux quand on les prend à jeun.”¹⁶⁶ The temperature of the bath was particularly important for producing the correct results.

¹⁶³ *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* Winter 2008 ed. (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Projet), s.v. "Hygiène."

¹⁶⁴ *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* Winter 2008 ed. (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Projet), s.v. "Bain."

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ James Mackenzie, *Histoire de la santé et de l'art de la conserver* (La Haye: Daniel Aillaud, 1759), 97-98.

In order to show the greater effects of cold bathing, and particularly cold bathing in a natural cold water source, the *Encyclopédie* provided an example of a girl whose illness was not cured in a domestic bath. Upon taking a river bath, the girl became both healthy and stronger: “Le bain d'eau simple pris dans la riviere, pendant un quart-d'heure, calma tous les accidens, lui procura un sommeil tranquille, & elle fut guérie sans avoir besoin d'autres remedes.”¹⁶⁷ The authors of the *Encyclopédie* concluded, “Ce que l'on peut encore assûrer, c'est que l'usage des bains de riviere, pendant les chaleurs de l'été, est un sûr préservatif contre les maladies qui regnent ordinairement dans cette saison.”¹⁶⁸

The medical manuals reiterated this notion that a bath in a natural water source, generally a river, was the most beneficial. Doctor and hospital inspector, Adriaan Helvétius's manual included an entire subsection on river baths under the section on bathing. Helvétius proclaimed the benefits of these baths, but warned that staying in the water too long could have adverse effects on the skin.¹⁶⁹ Doctor Jean Nicolas's manual also advocated river bathing for its benefits and ease of access.¹⁷⁰ Buchan, too suggested river bathing, particularly for children, due to its invigorating effect.¹⁷¹ In addition, Jean-André Venel's *Essai sur la santé et sur l'éducation médicinale des filles destinées au mariage* encouraged river or lake bathing because he believed that fully submerging one's self was better than sitting in a small tub of water. Moreover, Venel observed that

¹⁶⁷ , s.v. "Bain."

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Adriaan Helvétius, *Traité des maladies les plus fréquentes et des remèdes propres à les guérir* (Paris: D. A. Pierres, 1739), 489-490.

¹⁷⁰ Jean Nicolas, *Manuel du jeune chirurgien* (Paris: J.P. Costard, 1771), 429-430.

¹⁷¹ William Buchan, *Médecine domestique: ou, Traité complet des moyens de se conserver en santé, de guérir & de prévenir les maladies, par le régime & les remedes simples: Ouvrage utile aux personnes de tout état, & mis à la portée de tout le monde*, trans., Jean Denis Duplanil, 3 ed., vol. 1 (Paris: Chez Froullé, 1783), 75.

the peasants bathe in rivers and lakes, and believed that such baths contributed to their health and vigor.¹⁷² While it is clear that river bathing was being advocated for its health benefits, river bathing also connected the proto-bourgeois with the peasants, as well as with nature.

By the end of the century, these new concepts and ideals of health and hygiene culminated in advice manuals and other prescriptive literature with specific details about the best ways to bathe and the absolute necessity of such bathing. In his *L'art de prolonger la vie humaine*, Christoph Hufeland emphasized his intention to present methods for people to prevent illness, stay healthy, and extend their lives. In his book, Hufeland underscored the importance of healthy skin in human health. “Nous devons considérer notre peau non seulement comme une défense que la nature nous donne contre la pluie et le soleil, mais encore comme un de nos organes les plus importants sans l'activité continuelle duquel il n'y a ni santé ni longue vie à espérer.”¹⁷³ According to Hufeland, the skin purifies itself through secretions and sweat which helps with the circulation of blood, thus dislodging and emitting contaminants. Therefore, if the skin is obstructed in any way, contagion and other “petites parcelles corrompues” cannot be removed from the body.¹⁷⁴ Hufeland complained that many people overlook the care of their skin and health, neglecting to bathe and blocking their pores with unguents and overly warm clothes:

¹⁷² Jean-André Venel, *Essai sur la santé et sur l'éducation médicale des filles destinées au mariage* (Yverdon: la Société littéraire & typographique, 1776), 198.

¹⁷³ Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland, *L'art de prolonger la vie humaine* (Lausanne: Hignou et Comp^e, 1799), 281.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 282.

La plupart des hommes ne prennent, pendant toute leur vie, d'autre bain que celui du baptême. La sueur et la malpropreté continuelles l'obstruent encore davantage; les vêtemens chauds, les fourrures, les lits de plumes l'amollissent et l'affoiblissent; l'air renfermé, la vie sédentaire la paralysent; et je crois pouvoir avancer sans exagération, que dans la plupart des hommes la peau est à moitié obstruée et dans l'inaction.¹⁷⁵

Ultimately, Hufeland offered three precepts to prolong one's life:

1. Ecarter avec soin tout ce que notre corps a rejeté comme corrompu et comme lui étant nuisible. Pour cela, *il faut changer de linge souvent*, tous les jours même, s'il est possible...; 2. Se laver chaque jour tout le corps avec de l'eau fraîche...; 3. Se baigner au moins une fois par semaine dans de l'eau tiède, dans laquelle il est bon de mêler trois onces de savon [emphases added].¹⁷⁶

These practices, he explained, would greatly contribute to keeping one healthy and robust.

Despite its move from a primary modus of hygiene to a secondary one, undergarments continued to hold great hygienic influence, which aided in the perpetuation of greater undergarment wear. In fact, most of the physicians who acted as proponents of bathing simultaneously emphasized the need for clean linen and regular changes of undergarments. Combined, bathing and proper use of body linen created the ideals of *santé* and *propreté*. Just as physicians pushed for the resurgence of bathing for hygiene, so, too, did physicians emphasize the need for clean undergarments. Not only did these doctors encourage the regular use of underclothes, they also underscored the need for regularly changing and washing underwear. Following this medical advice, both

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 283-284.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 284-285.

private and public institutions emphasized and eventually codified the need for regularly changing and washing undergarments.

Hufeland extensively discussed the importance of bathing, yet he also advocated the regular changing of underclothes. His first precept of health emphasized the need for a combination of hygienic activities for personal health, including both bathing and the use of clean undergarments—both the body and the second skin of undergarments had to be clean. He counseled his readers, “Observer la plus grande propreté... Il faut se laver souvent, se baigner, se laver la bouche, se peigner exactement, et changer souvent de linge d'habits et de draps.”¹⁷⁷ Hufeland went on to provide specific details about healthy clothing and linen. Clothing, according to Hufeland, should not be too tight or too warm, nor should it “conserve les evaporations.”¹⁷⁸ Rather, clothing should be “tels qu'on puisse en changer ou les laver souvent, de coton, et au fort de l'hyver de laine légère.”¹⁷⁹ Hufeland cautioned against “de bandages, de corsets roides, de souliers étroits etc.,” which might cause illness and abridge a person’s life.¹⁸⁰ Hufeland discussed undergarments and linens more specifically. He suggested that, for the greatest propreté, persons should change their linen daily. “On doit observer la plus grande propreté, c'est-à-dire changer tous les jours de chemise, toutes les semaines d'habits, [et] tous les mois de draps de lits.”¹⁸¹ Just as the skin should be washed to allow for the body to cleanse itself, clothing, too, should aid the body in its healthy, natural processes.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 204.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 237.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

According to Jean André and Anne Perreau in their *Instruction du peuple*, health was “le premier des biens.”¹⁸² “Elle est le moyen par lequel on jouit de tous les autres, quand on les possède, & le moyen encore d'en supporter plus facilement la privation.”¹⁸³ Thus, to achieve the greatest health, one must be clean in both clothing and body. André and Perreau emphasized that even the poorest people could keep themselves in good health through cleanliness.

Le peuple, & le peuple le plus pauvre, n'a pas la facilité d'en changer [le linge], mais il peut les tenir nets & sains, en les lavant, en les exposant tantôt au feu... On doit leur recommander aussi d'éviter avec soin de les laisser sécher sur eux quand ils sont mouillés; il est moins dangereux de se tenir nud que de laisser sécher sur soi un vêtement mouillé.¹⁸⁴

Even if they could not change their undergarments frequently, they could keep them clean, but they should be careful not to wear damp clothing, which is detrimental to their health. As with their clothing, the poor could keep their bodies clean through frequent washing. “Il conviendrait qu'ils se lavassent fréquemment dans tous les temps. Cela importe autant à la santé qu'à la propreté. L'air & l'eau qui sont les deux grands moyens de se tenir propres & sains, sont heureusement à la portée de tout le monde, du pauvre & du riche; il n'y a point de raison à donner pour en négliger l'usage.”¹⁸⁵ Because water was available to the poor as well as the wealthy, all persons could keep themselves clean, proper, and healthy.

¹⁸² Jean André and Anne Perreau, *Instruction du peuple, divisée en trois parties* (Paris: Moutard, 1786), 164.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 189-190.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 190.

Like Hufeland's work, Dr. Anthony Willich's 1802 work, *Hygiène domestique, ou l'Art de conserver la santé et de prolonger la vie mis à la portée des gens du monde* is a particularly salient example of this new health advice. Willich emphasized that hygiene was about keeping the body in its natural, healthy state: "On peut appeller hygiène ou doctrine de la santé, la connaissance des objets relatifs à la conservation du corps humain, dans son état naturel."¹⁸⁶ Willich discussed baths and bathing in subsection "De la grande influence des fonctions de la peau sur la conservation de la santé." He explained that there were many illnesses which resulted from problems with the function of the skin. He addressed the questions he expected to raise about how the skin, just a covering for the body, could cause illness. He stated that the skin was both the organ for the sense of touch, but also the instrument of transpiration (sweating) and that it must be kept clean for it to best perform these functions. He went on to say that

Les enfans des classes moyennes et inférieurs sont, dans ce pays, peut-être mieux traités que dans la plûpart des contrées du continent, parce que le bain fréquent et journalier n'est, à mon connaissance, plus généralement pratiqué ailleurs qu'en Angleterre. Cependant cette pratique est, en générale, négligée dès que les enfans on atteint un certain âge ; et à dix ou douze ans passés on ne s'occupe plus guère de la surface du corps.¹⁸⁷

He further said that it was necessary to get exercise and sweat often to fortify the skin and body, and that not bathing allowed people to become accustomed to a sedentary life. Moreover, it is not enough for the wealthy families to simply visit the baths each season; rather, it was necessary for everyone to have domestic baths like the ancients had.

¹⁸⁶ Dr. Anthony Florian Madingerr Willich, *Hygiène domestique, ou l'Art de conserver la santé et de prolonger la vie mis à la portée des gens du monde*, trans., E. M. Itard, vol. I (Paris: Ducauroy & Déterville, XI (1802)), 106.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 27.

Willich suggested that “Le bain fréquent est, dans l'enfance, un moyen puissant d'arrêter et de supprimer la disposition aux maladies stomachiques et bilieuses, qui sont aujourd'hui très-communes parmi les enfans et les adultes.”¹⁸⁸ He suggested that baths for babies should be between eighty-four and ninety-six degrees Fahrenheit, or a little warmer than fresh milk.¹⁸⁹ He also said that it was wrong to believe that only cold baths could fortify the body. When using water from a fountain or “puits” he suggested adding a small amount of boiling water into which one quarter of an ounce of soap was dissolved. To this could be added a little “son gras” or oat flour, or milk. Early on the child should not be in the bath for more than five minutes, but this should gradually increase as he gets older. He should be washed with a soft sponge. He also cautioned against leaving the child wet once he was taken out of the bath.¹⁹⁰ He further suggested that bathing is best done right after waking up in the morning. He claimed, “On peut recommander encore l'usage de laver et de baigner les enfans, parce qu'il tend à fortifier cette habitude de la propreté, qui, par elle-même, est si digne de louange et si utile, mais qui n'est pas assez générale chez les nations où le bain n'est pas en usage.”¹⁹¹

Willich explained that regular bathing should be adopted by everyone in order to keep the body healthy and the pores open.

On doit souvent laver le corps avec de l'eau pure, spécialement en été, où la matière transpirable étant d'une nature onctueuse et gluante, s'oppose à l'exhalation cutanée. On doit laver, tous les jours, soir et matin, la visage, le cou et les mains qui sont exposés à l'air, à la poussière, etc. on doit aussi donner son attention aux oreilles, en les nettoyant de temps en temps, afin que l'accumulation du cérumen, qui, par sa nature, est sujet à s'épaissir, n'altère point le sens de l'ouïe.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 38.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 40-43.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 50.

Il faut souvent laver et nettoyer toute la tête... car elle transpire beaucoup... Le lavage ouvre les pores ; et le peigne par son étroite application à la peau, enlève cette humeur visqueuse qui s'y épaissit.¹⁹²

Willich explained that, as baths are considered a universal remedy for illness and the basis for “propriety” and hygiene, they are one of the most salutary methods for restoring one’s vitality.

Additionally, baths, Willich claimed, are good for the spirit. Baths could also be used to help promote eternal youth since they “conserve la mollesse et la souplesse de toutes les parties solides” and make the skin more elastic.¹⁹³ Furthermore, baths are equally the best conserver of beauty:

J’ai souvent eu occasion d’observer que le desir de la beauté, quand il est raisonnable, peut devenir la source de plusieurs efforts louables et vertueux, et un grand moyen de conserver la santé. Je suis également persuadé que ce desir donne souvent lieu à des méthodes préjudiciables, et que c’est parce qu’elles n’ont pas une juste idée de la beauté, que les femmes font plusieurs sacrifices précieux, non seulement de choses essentielles à la santé, mais quelquefois à la vie même. Il n’est pas rare que de jeunes personnes, pour blanchir leur peau et se rendre belles, évitent le grand air, se soumettant à un régime affaiblissant et même à une sorte d’abstinence, tous moyens qui, en altérant la santé, détruisent nécessairement la fraîcheur et la beauté.¹⁹⁴

He went on to explain that the mercury and “plomb,” which are used in modern cosmetics, are deleterious for health and that “Par beauté du teint nous n’entendons ici autre chose qu’une peau propre et saine. Elle est le fidèle miroir de l’harmonie des parties internes avec leur surface, ou, sil l’on peut me permettre cette expression, *elle est la santé visible*.”¹⁹⁵ Thus, “La conservation de la beauté du teint et de la fraîcheur de la peau tient

¹⁹² Ibid., 148.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 31.

plutôt à l'observance des préceptes de la saine hygiène.”¹⁹⁶ Willich’s advice promotes the concepts and principles of health that developed over the eighteenth century from hygiene as the practice of keeping the body in its natural, healthy state to bathing keeping the skin healthy and pores open to allow contagions to be expelled from the body.

Furthermore, just as Dr. Willich extensively discussed the merits of bathing and described the best methods for healthy bathing, so too did he address healthy clothing at length. Willich’s work includes a full chapter on clothing: “Des vêtements.--Avantages et désavantages de la manière ordinaire de se vêtir.-- Moyens proposés pour remédier à ces défauts.” In this chapter, Willich explained, “En examinant les divers objets de vêtement, on doit faire attention à la substance et à la forme. Notre manière de nous vêtir abonde en inconvénients de tous genres, dont le principal est de varier continuellement pour s'adapter aux caprices de la mode.”¹⁹⁷ He expressed his concern over the way that people dress according to the caprices of fashion and to avoid ridicule, often at the expense of their health. “On veut, pour éviter le ridicule, en suivre tous les changemens, quoiqu'ils soient préjudiciables à la santé. C'est une preuve de grande faiblesse de se laisser entraîner par le torrent, quelque ridicule qu'on puisse paraître d'abord en résistant à la mode dominante.”¹⁹⁸ Willich encouraged his readers to resist the temptation of fashion in favor of healthful clothing choices. “Cette hardie résistance peut cependant, à la fin, triompher d'un caprice nuisible à la santé et l'on peut même avoir la satisfaction d'introduire des habits tout-à-la-fois commodes et élégans.”¹⁹⁹ The best, healthiest clothing, according to

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 33.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 171.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Willich, is that which consists of three general properties. 1) Clothing should be neither too tough nor too inflexible that it interferes with natural movement. Similarly, clothing should not be too heavy or thick. 2) Clothing should keep the body at a healthy temperature to allow the greatest function and movement of the body. 3) Clothing should create no harmful stress on the body, not increase sweating, nor absorb vapors in the air.²⁰⁰

Additionally, Willich discussed the materials of clothing, explaining that it is necessary to choose the appropriate clothing for each season. Wool is better for cooler weather, while lighter fabrics are better in warmer seasons. “Les habits de laine conviennent mieux aux printemps, en automne, et en hiver... En été la plupart des gens sont accoutumés à porter des habits legers.”²⁰¹ He claimed that wool created moderate warmth and stimulates the skin, provoking perspiration; it absorbed the perspiration, and allowed it to evaporate into the air. Toile (linen), however, absorbs perspiration, but does not allow it to evaporate like wool, which is why underclothes and shirts should be changed regularly. “Les chemises sales produisent donc une sensation de froid désagréables et nuisent à la transpiration sur-tout si elles sont de toile fort et épaisse et si on n'en change pas régulièrement tous les jours.”²⁰² Silk does not create enough perspiration, although it does allow perspiration to evaporate. Cotton, he says, is something in between wool and toile; “Il augmente la chaleur et la transpiration, s'imprègne des humeurs transpirés au préjudice de celui qu le porte et, comme, la laine,

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 171-172.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 174-175.

²⁰² Ibid., 173.

attire promptement la matière infectée.”²⁰³ Willich also explains that light-colored clothes are more beneficial to one’s health, as they reflect the sun’s rays and do not cause overheating.²⁰⁴

In an extensive section, “De la partie du vêtement qui doit couvrir immédiatement la peau,” Willich described the best undergarments for health. He concluded that wool is the best “*étoffe pour habillement*” because “le bon effet principale de la flanelle est ce frottement doux et salutaire qu'elle excite sur la peau, et qui fait ouvrir les pores. Il ne faut pas croire que la flanelle échauffe plus elle-même plus que le linge ou le coton ; car ce n'est pas la chaleur qui cause des inconvénients, mais l'adhérence de la matière transpirable sur la peau.”²⁰⁵ Wool does not stay wet against the skin, while linen and cotton do. He explained “Il est certain encore qu'une chemise de flanelle peut maintenir le corps aussi propre et beaucoup plus propre que le linge, *si on en change souvent*.”²⁰⁶ With regular, frequent changing, wool is at least as healthy and proper as linen undergarments when changed frequently. With regards to chemises, it is important to make sure that nothing is so tight as to limit circulation: “elles peuvent être sérieusement préjudiciable à la santé, si le col ou les poignets en sont trop étroits... le sang ne pouvait circuler librement.”²⁰⁷ Willich similarly cautioned against “*les corps laces*” which could impede circulation as well as cause diseases of the chest, problems with the spine, problems with the lungs, and trouble with digestion.²⁰⁸ The author pointed out that these problems did

²⁰³ Ibid., 174.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 172.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 177-178.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 180-181.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 189.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 191.

not apply only to corsets, but also to the newer, more flexible corsets and any other garment which wraps tightly around the abdomen.²⁰⁹

Willich's lengthy advice tome was a culmination of the changing ideas about and concepts of health and hygiene that developed over the eighteenth century. While Willich's work addresses adult dress and hygiene, most of the texts advocating new ideas about clothing focus on the dress of children. Such ideas about children began to change much earlier in the century and were later adopted by adults, as the general precepts became more standardized and widely accepted. Other texts focus primarily on enumerating the dangers of particular garments, much as Willich does. These concepts of dangerous or unhealthy garments contributed to concepts of healthy and beneficial clothing for children which soon translated into salutary clothing for all persons in society.

As with adults, the dress of children served two purposes: propriety and health. Healthy clothing, like baths, promoted perspiration and prevented the retention of excess or bad humors. "Si la propreté rend les enfants agréables à la vue, elle contribue aussi à conserver leur santé. Elle facilite la *transpiration* ; & par ce moyen, elle aide le corps à se débarrasser des humeurs superflues, qui, lorsqu'elles sont retenues, occasionnent toujours des Maladies."²¹⁰ While adults were expected to care for themselves, children depended on their parents and nurses to keep them proper and healthy. Dr. Buchan emphatically alleged, "Une mere ou une Nourrice, ne peut être excusable de laisser les enfants dans la mal-propreté. Les femmes pauvres peuvent être forcées de ne donner à leurs enfants que

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 192.

²¹⁰ Buchan, 35-36.

des habits grossiers; mais si elles ne les tiennent pas propres, cela ne peut être que par leur propre faute.”²¹¹ While Buchan understood that poor women might not be able to dress their children in finery, it was their own fault if they could not keep their children clean.

In an article on children’s clothing in the *Gazette de Santé*, the author advocated an alternative to tight swaddling on infants. Rather than wrapping a child in swaddling bands, the author suggests a small, short chemise called a *chemise à corset*: “On lui passera dans les bras une petite chemise fendue par derriere, qui ne doit pas passer de deux à trois travers de doigt le nombril ; c'est ce qu'on appelle communément *chemise à corset*.”²¹² Over this short chemise, a baby should wear a light, woolen *brassière*. The rest of the baby’s body should be covered with a *maillot*, or a woolen or linen cloth lined with toweling and pinned loosely around the baby. Beneath the *maillot*, a baby should be diapered in a soft, absorbent cloth which must be changed as soon as it is soiled.²¹³ Dr. Buchan similarly advocated dressing infants in chemises and maillots, and reminds parents to keep enough of these clothes to change their babies regularly.²¹⁴

Buchan encourages parents not to dress their young children like adults until they have finished growing.

Les enfants ne doivent prendre nos habits, qu’après qu’ils ont pris absolument leur forme & leur accroissement. Il est bien étonnant que nos modes ridiculisées par nos voisins, en ce qui concerne les ajustements, aient été acceptées par eux &

²¹¹ Ibid., 36.

²¹² "Vêtement des Enfants & soins qu'on doit avoir de leur peau; suit de leur education physique," *Gazette de Santé* 1782.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Buchan, 32.

par toute l'Europe en ce qu'elles ont d'absurde, de nuisible à la santé, & de contraire aux intentions de la Nature.²¹⁵

Dressing children in adult fashions is bad for their health and contrary to nature. Rather, Buchan encouraged parents to dress their young boys who have outgrown their maillots in “Matelots, en Hussards, en Turcs, &c.,” or suits consisting of roomy culottes and jackets until the age of six or seven.²¹⁶ A young boy's clothes should encourage activity. Little girls should be dressed just like little boys for the first two years, after which they can begin to wear more feminine clothes (about the same time boys begin to wear culotte suits). For young girls, Buchan discouraged the use of *corps de baleine* and *corps de cuir*, explaining that he prefers the newer fashion of a soft, flexible, un-stiffened “petit corset.”²¹⁷ The petit corset is made of two pieces of fabric tied together with ribbons. Over the petit corset, a little girl should wear a simple light-weight dress that is not too fancy as to prevent her from running and exercising. Young children should not wear garters to hold up their stockings, as they are too tight and prevent good circulation. Instead, stockings should be held up with ties that attach to the child's chemise.²¹⁸ Children's clothing and undergarments should be clean and should not be constrictive, and their undergarments should be clean and changed regularly.

For young ladies who have moved into wearing more adult clothing, Willich advocates drawers, or *caleçons*, to protect their morality and decency. “Il y a plusieurs raisons physiques et morales que la délicatesse m'empêche d'enoncer et qui devraient

²¹⁵ Ibid., 33.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 32.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 34.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

obliger les femmes à porter des caleçons, du moins après un certain âge.”²¹⁹ Caleçons, according to Willich, prevent many inconveniences to which these young ladies are subject and prevents the premature sexual development encouraged by their adult-style dress. “Ils préviendraient efficacement plusieurs inconvénients auxquels elles sont sujettes. Il y a d’autres circonstances, dans leur habillement, qui contribuent à avancer prématurément le développement du sexe, et qui peuvent les porter à des habitudes également irrégulièrement et nuisibles à la santé.”²²⁰ Willich hopes that mothers of young women will take his advice and encourage their daughters to wear drawers, particularly as young ladies “s’accoutument trop facilement à prendre, en s’asseyant, des postures non décentes.”²²¹ Thus, while *chemises* and soft *petits corsets* or *brassières*, were standard for infants, little girls, and young women, by the end of the century, young women were encouraged to practice even greater modesty by wearing *caleçons*, or drawers, under their skirts. The purpose of undergarments was twofold, providing for propriety and modesty, as well as health.

Much of the advice and prescriptive literature of the eighteenth century related to undergarments focuses on encouraging readers to avoid dangerous garments. Primarily, complaints are about corpes, corsets, swaddling bands, and other undergarments which were worn tightly around the body. In a 1773 review of M. Maret’s, *déterminer quelle influence les mœurs des François avoient sur leur Santé*, the authors of the *Gazette de Santé* agree with Maret’s assessment that tight underclothes are an affront to nature.

²¹⁹ Willich, 194.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid., 195.

Les bandes, les corps à baleine, les croix de fer, les bottines, moyens malheureusement trop employés, sont autant d'agens destructeurs qui répugnent à la nature. Ici M. Maret rappelle avec éloquence, tout ce que la saine physique a imaginé pour la conservation de l'espece humaine, & fronde les abus meurtriers que le luxe & la mollesse ont introduits pour la degrader.²²²

Much of the advice against tight undergarments focuses on infants who are swaddled tightly in swaddling bands. A 1782 article in the *Gazette de Santé* disparages swaddling bands and explains the best way to dress and diaper a baby. The author explained that appropriate clothing and good health are essential for a child, and that wrapping a child in swaddling band is, in effect, the equivalent of shackling a child. Tight swaddling is painful for a child, thus a child wrapped in swaddling bands will “partager son existence entre le sommeil & les pleurs.”²²³ Such swaddling can also lead to irritation, nodules, inflammation, sores, and suppuration. Because swaddling constricts the abdomen, it causes excess vomiting and liver stasis. The tight-binding can also cause malformations of the spine. Similarly, the compression of the bands prevents perspiration from exiting the body and leads to greater illness and skin disorders.²²⁴ Dr. Buchan similarly discouraged swaddling bands for babies, as well as advising against corps and corsets for older children. Buchan suggested that infants be put to bed wearing only their chemises, without swaddling bands or diapers.²²⁵ He also claims that “les corps de baleine sont des instruments mortels,” and that the horrors and dangers of this garment deserve a full

²²² "D'Amiens, le 5 Août," *Gazette de Santé* 1773, 28.

²²³ "Vêtement des Enfants & soins qu'on doit avoir de leur peau; suit de leur education physique."

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Buchan, 32.

volume of their own.²²⁶ Like adults, children should not be bound by tight undergarments which interfere significantly with their health and wellbeing.

III

In response to these changing concepts and new ideals and principles of health, bathing became a more popular activity among all classes of people by the end of the eighteenth century. Bathhouses sprang up along the Seine, primarily in Paris and Versailles, opening their doors to all levels of society and encouraging all people to bathe. Proprietors of these establishments advertised their wares in magazines and newspapers, while bath shops sold tubs, soaps, and towels to those who wished to bathe in the privacy of their own homes. Doctors still reported that bathing was less common than they would like to see, but the push for bathing, the greater availability of bathing facilities, and anecdotal evidence indicates that bathing had reemerged as a mainstream hygienic practice.

As cold bathing became more widely accepted and new bathhouses began to spring up in the mid-eighteenth century, working class men and women continued to bathe in natural water sources. Particular sections of the Seine were popularly used for bathing among the working populace. A regulation which was implemented in 1740 and renewed yearly between 1740 and 1744 prohibited bathing in the river near the ports. The Procureur of the city

seroit troublé par ceux qui prennent le Bain dans la Riviere, dans l'étendue des Portes de cette Ville, par les Compagnons de Riviere qui conduiroient les Trains

²²⁶ Ibid., 35.

de Bois flottés sans être vêtus de leurs habits, & par les Maîtres Pescheurs & autres Particuliers, si l'espace de la Riviere, depuis la tête du lieu appelé le Terrain, jusques au-dessous du Petit-Pont, n'étoit interdit aux uns & aux autres... Pourquoi requéroit le Procureur du Roy & de la Ville, qu'il Nous plût faire très-expresses inhibitions & défenses à toutes personnes de se Baigner, à tous Compagnons de Riviere de conduire des Trains de Bois flotté, sans être vêtus de leurs habits...à peine contre lesdits Baigneurs & Compagnons de Riviere, Conducteurs de Trains, de punition exemplaire; & contre lesdites Maîtres Pescheurs & autres Particuliers de trois mois de Prison, même pour la première fois.²²⁷

For fear of the scandal caused by these persons bathing without their clothes in the river, bathing in such public locations was punishable by three months in prison.

Because bathing in public places was restricted, public bathhouses began to appear to fulfill the increased demand for bathing. In his 1760 work, *État ou Tableau de la ville de Paris*, Jèze comments on the state of bathhouses in Paris, lamenting their scarcity while listing current locations and availability. "Nous n'avons point à *Paris*, comme on avoit autrefois à *Rome*, des édifices publics destinés aux Bains ; la différence des climats a dû nécessairement en apporter pour nous une fort considérable dans ces choses d'usage & de commodités."²²⁸ Yet, he explains, it is often necessary to bathe, particularly in warm weather, thus he provides detailed information about the baths available in Paris.²²⁹ He begins with *Bains de Rivière*, explaining,

Les seuls Bains, qui soient ici *publics*, sont certains endroits de la Riviere où tout le monde a le droit de se présenter, moyennant une modique retribution, au Maître

²²⁷ Taitbout, "Défenses à toutes Personnes de se Baigner, à tous Compagnons de Riviere de conduire des Trains de Bois flottés, s'ils ne sont vêtus de leurs habits, & à tous Maîtres Pescheurs & autres Particuliers de Pescher dans l'espace de la Riviere de Seine, depuis la tête du lieu appelé le Terrain, jusques au-dessous du Petit-Pont, à peine de trois mois de Prison," in *Prevost des Marchands et echevin de la ville de paris*. (France: Recueil de Police, Tome XII 1744, 1740), 32-33.

²²⁸ Jèze, *État ou Tableau de la ville de Paris, Considérée Relativement au Necessaire, à l'Utile, à l'Agreable, & à l'Administration*, ed. Charles-Etienne Pesselier (Paris: Prault pere, Valat-Lachapelle, Guillyn, Duchesne, Lambert, 1760), 336.

²²⁹ Ibid.

de Batteaux qui y conduisent, & qui fournissent ce dont on a besoin pour prendre le Bain : les Batteliers enseignent à nager. Voici leurs principaux emplacements, tant pour les hommes que les femmes.²³⁰

The proprietors of these public river baths opened their services to all classes of people, both male and female, and provided all necessities for bathing including bathing garments, which were a kind of pseudo-undergarment. They also would teach patrons to swim. These baths could be found in the following locations: “Proche l'Archevêché; Quai des Morfondus; Port Saint Nicolas, vis-à-vis la rue des Poulies; Quai des Quatre Nations [et] Proche la Barriere des Invalides.”²³¹

Articles and advertisements in the *Gazette de Santé* from 1770 through the end of the eighteenth century demonstrate a significant increase in the availability of public baths. A 1776 notice in the *Gazette* notes the increase in baths claiming, “Depuis que les hommes ont plus de soin de veiller à la propreté de leur coprs, les bains se sont infiniment multipliés dans cette Capitale.”²³² The same notice discusses a new bathing machine available at M. Leclerc’s bathhouse on the rue Pierre Sarrazin in Fauxbourg S. Germain . Leclerc’s “nouvelle Baignoire mécanique” is a domestic bath which simulates a river bath. “Par le moyen de cette Baignoire on peut communiquer à volonté du mouvement à l'eau d'un bain domestique, ce qui en rapproche l'effet de celui du bain de riviere, en augmentant l'action de l'eau sur la surface de la peau, & en produisant en quelques minutes d'immersion, plus d'effet qu'on en obtiendrait en plusieurs jours par la méthode ordinaire.”²³³ In 1778, a husband and wife team opened a bathhouse in Versailles which

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² "De Paris, le 2 Juillet," *Gazette de Santé* 1776, 107.

²³³ Ibid.

they advertised in the *Gazette*: “Les Sieur & Dame *Labouche*, Eleves de Sieur *Poitevin*, Baigneur à Paris, préviennent le Public qu'ils ont établi à Versailles, des Bains de santé, de propreté, épilatoires & douches, à l'usage des hommes & des femmes, pareils à ceux dudit Sieur Poitevin ... On pourra s'y baigner à toute heure de jour & de nuit. Le prix de chaque Bain est de 2 liv. 8 s.”²³⁴ Another baigneur étuviste, Le sieur Turquin, invented a bathing boat in 1782 called the *Bains Chinois*, and located below the Pont de la Tournelle on the Seine. The boat offered twenty-two public baths in small compartments outfitted with “un siege, une tablette, un portemanteau, un miroir, un condon de sonette, &c.”²³⁵ River water was used to fill the baths in the compartments. “Chaque cabinet reçoit ses eaux séparément & les rend par un autre conduit, de sorte que celui qui se baigne n'est jamais dans l'eau qui sert à un autre.”²³⁶ Patrons were assured that “Ces bains sont propres & se trouvent placés de maniere à recevoir une eau pure, à cause de leur emplacement à la partie supérieure de Paris.”²³⁷ The boat baths cost twenty-four sols per person, not including linen towels. These public baths, particularly with their new-style baths and variety of bathing options were not particularly expensive; however, they were not affordable for all people.

Because the price of public baths made them unavailable to the working classes, some sympathetic entrepreneurs hoped to implement bathing solutions for the poor. In 1777, the Abbé Arnaud wrote a letter to the *Gazette de Santé* expressing his desire to establish two public baths as well as a swimming school in Paris, which would cost very

²³⁴ “Bains publics,” *Gazette de Santé* 1778, 130.

²³⁵ “Avis Divers,” *Gazette de Santé* 1782, 87.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

little, thus making them available to “personnes d'une fortune médiocre ou borne.”²³⁸ The editors of the *Gazette* responded that they favored the Abbé’s plan, since the city had forgotten all of the old ways, including bathing, much to the detriment of society (and against human nature), and Paris had long been without public baths. Furthermore, they claimed that the people of Paris “ont tort” for not using lotions, étuves, and baths more often.²³⁹ A 1783 report in the *Gazette* addressed the new baths established by M. Albert which include “de bains simples & composés, & de vapeurs, des douches & fumigations seches & humides” as well as étuves which provided many different options and ways to clean oneself and treat disease.²⁴⁰ The editors all agree that this was a wonderful, sanitary, healthful bathing place and added that these baths were “unique dans son genre.”²⁴¹ M. Albert, according to the editors, demonstrated his “amour patriotique” by providing baths for the “pauvres indigens des deux sexes,” a resource which they believed Paris lacked.²⁴² Thus, toward the end of the eighteenth century, even the poor, whose bathing in natural sources had at least in part inspired others to bathe more, were targeted as prospective bathing consumers and bathhouse patrons.

By the end of the century, a few particularly wary physicians worried that cold baths had become too prevalent and cautioned those of delicate constitutions not to abuse the cold bath. In 1787 the *Gazette de Santé* published the aphorism: “Les bains sont,

²³⁸ "Lettre de M. l'Abbé Arnaud, Chanoine de la Sainte Chapelle de Dunois, aux Auteurs de la Gazette de Santé, sur un projet d'établissement des Bains publics," *Gazette de Santé* 1777, 97.

²³⁹ Ibid., 98.

²⁴⁰ "Décret de la Faculté de Médecine, sur les nouveaux Bains établis à Paris sur la Quai de la Grenouillere. Rapport des Commissaires nommés par la Faculté de Médecine pour examiner les nouveaux Bains de M. Albert," 86.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 87.

²⁴² Ibid., 88.

avec raison, partie du régime de la santé; mais on abuse de ce préservatif dans la Capitale, d'une manière sensible. Les personnes les plus délicates, sont celles qui en prennent le plus, & celles qu'il faudroit plutôt en détourner.”²⁴³ While baths were integral to health and hygiene, they still needed to be used with caution among those who were not healthy and vigorous. A *Gazette* article from the same year presented similar concerns. In the article, author M. le Febvre de Villebrune considers the advice given by Tissot in his *Avis au peuple*, and by Rousseau in his *Emile* about bathing infants and children in cold water on a daily basis to make them strong. Villebrune, who translated M. Underwood's 1786 *Traité des maladies des enfans*, disagrees with the use of cold baths during childhood, finding that such baths damage the precordial region, leading to convulsions, spasms, and “rigueurs fébriles.”²⁴⁴ The author concludes that cold baths are an excellent remedy for certain infirmities of children and certain constitutions which need to be fortified. However, they are often superfluous for healthy and robust children.²⁴⁵ Despite the few naysayers, bathing continued to grow in popularity at the end of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries.

While individuals were washing themselves in the bathhouses, laundresses were busy washing undergarments in the river. In Antoine-Alexis Cadet-De-Vaux's pamphlet on laundry, *Instruction populair sur le blanchissage domestique à la vapeur*, Cadet-De-Vaux briefly summarizes the state of laundering in France saing “Le blanchisaage est, ou

²⁴³ "Médecine Préservative: Aphorismes relatifs à la conservation de la santé. (Nouvelles instructives bibliographiques, &c. Par M. Retz, tome II, ann. 1786). ," *Gazette de Sante* 1787.

²⁴⁴ "Hygienne: L'usage des bains froids est-il en général utile à l'enfance durant toutes les saisons de l'année?," *Gazette de Santé* 1787, 97.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 97-99.

une opération de l'Economie domestique, ou une profession. Qu'il devienne aujourd'hui un objet de bienfaisance!”²⁴⁶ He explains that in small villages and in the country, “chaque ménage fait son blanchissage,” while in large cities, “on donne à blanchir en tout ou en partie.”²⁴⁷ Among bourgeois households, “le linge fin se blanchit le plus souvent à la maison.”²⁴⁸ As for the destitute, because of their inability to wash or have their linen washed, they were “condamnés à porter du linge sale et fangeux.”²⁴⁹ Thus, in cities particularly, laundresses did most of the laundry, while in the country families did their own washing. Only the destitute went about in dirty linen.

Cadet-De-Vaux, whose pamphlet was designed to sell his new style of laundering “à vapeur,” discusses the process and problems of traditional laundering. First, the laundry is scrubbed with soap, it is then boiled in vats, followed by another soap scrub, boiled with bluing, rinsed, and hung to dry. Cadet-De-Vaux observes that this process uses “beaucoup de savon,” and wood for fires, which make up the bulk of laundry costs.²⁵⁰ He also warns that one must constantly watch the boiling laundry, because if one forgets about it, “*Elle tourne, le linge est brûlé.*”²⁵¹ Moreover, this process does not remove stains and leaves laundry dingy and grayed. The author discusses different forms of spots and stains from skin oils and sweat and claims that “La propreté dit: *mieux vaut un trou qu'une tache*; l'économie dit: *mieux vaut une tache qu'un trou*; et c'est un trou

²⁴⁶ Antoine-Alexis Cadet-De-Vaux, *Instruction populaire sur le blanchissage domestique à la vapeur* (Paris: Bureau du Journal d'Économie rurale et domestique, VIII (1805)), 5.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 15.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

qu'on prépare en voulant enlever violemment des taches trop résistantes.”²⁵² The dinginess left by traditional laundering required dangerous bluing to brighten. Laundry was boiled in vats with bluing, leading to chemical burns and illness from breathing the fumes.²⁵³ Cadet-De-Vaux advertises that “Le blanchissage à vapeur n'a aucun de ces inconvénients.”²⁵⁴ Laundering practices were harsh and grueling.

Because of the harsh laundering methods used, only certain, sturdy garments could hold up in the wash. Outer clothing made of silks would be destroyed by the scrubbing and boiling, and thus were only aired out before wear. The colors of dyed or printed textiles bled in the hot water or were washed out by soap, as dyes were not colorfast. Un-dyed wool could be washed if treated gently, as rough scrubbing in hot water would felt and shrink the textile. Furthermore, as wool was often used for its water-resistant properties, it would need to be washed with lanolin, or sheep grease, to retain the waterproofing. Thus, it was the plain, un-dyed, sturdy linen and cotton undergarments that could be washed. These garments thus protected the un-washable outer garments from bodily dirt and secretions, while simultaneously protecting the body from the dirt, grime, and vermin collected in unwashed outer clothes. It is important to note, however, that decorative and shaping undergarments, like outer garments, were not washed. Panniers, though commonly made of durable linen, were stiffened with cane, or rarely steel, neither of which could withstand the washing process—cane would break or warp, while steel rusted. Similarly, corsets, stiffened with cane, steel, bone, and whalebone

²⁵² Ibid., 20.

²⁵³ Ibid., 11-13.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 15.

would be destroyed with vigorous washing. Moreover, corsets were often made of non-washable decorative fabrics such as silk or fine printed cottons. Even decorative petticoats were rarely, if ever, washed due to the likelihood of bleeding dyes and damage to fine fabrics. Thus, while health advocates strongly recommended that one wash one's undergarments, only those garments worn directly against the skin were included in this advice.

Despite the likelihood that washing would damage clothing, in some cases health advocates recommended risking this damage. In Louis Bourne's, *Petit Manuel de la bonne ménagère ou de l'économie domestique*, the author suggests washing one's linens and clothing, particularly if one has been ill, to "faire disparaître les odeurs que les habits ont absorbées."²⁵⁵ He also recommends that individuals "désinfecter les vêtements achetés dans les boutiques des fripiers" with chlorinated water.²⁵⁶ Thus, when garments were exposed to illness or other significant contamination, it was wise to wash them. Just as bodies were washed to remove dirt and contagion, as well as perspiration, so too were undergarments. Like a second skin, undergarments were cleansed of both bodily secretions and outside contaminants.

IV

New minimum standards in undergarments for people at all levels of society reflected new ideas of health and propriety, and were perpetuated by both private and

²⁵⁵ Louis Bourne, *Petit Manuel de la bonne ménagère ou de l'économie domestique*, ed. Montbéliard (Deckherr Frères), 101.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

public institutions. Many boarding and convent schools established undergarment requirements for students and required students to provide these underclothes according to their standards. While such standards are not unexpected at schools for wealthier families who owned considerable undergarments, the government held the poor and those in need to comparable standards. State funds were allocated to provide appropriate undergarments for orphaned children in foundling homes and children sent out to wet-nurses. The public assistance provided to orphans for their clothing illuminates the minimum standards in clothing and undergarments that had become established by the end of the century.

The wardrobe inventories from the Maison Royal de Saint-Louis à Saint-Cyr, a girls' boarding school founded by Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon to educate and house girls from impoverished noble families, provide a list of necessary linens for girls ages seven to twenty. While the school taught girls destined for the life of noblewomen, and thus held high expectations of dress and cleanliness, the required garments nonetheless offer a sense of developing standards in undergarments during the eighteenth century. The "État du Linge que chaque personne doit avoir par Teste" provides a list of undergarments required for each woman or girl at the school depending on her role. The demoiselles of the *Grandes Classes* were expected to have twenty chemises, "à cause de la quantité qu'il en faut pour celles qui sortent;" two dozen handkerchiefs; six *bonnets à cordons*; one dozen *cornettes*, "tant doubles que simples;" eight pairs of stockings, and

one dozen slippers.²⁵⁷ In the *Petites Classes*, the young ladies required one dozen chemises; eight beguin bonnets (only for the youngest girls); six *bonnets à cordons*; eight *cornettes*, and eight pairs of stockings.²⁵⁸ The staff— forty five sisters, fifteen professes, and thirty simples—needed one dozen chemises; sixteen handkerchiefs for the day; eight handkerchiefs for the night; two pocket handkerchiefs; eight *bonnets à cordons*; coiffes; piqué bonnets; sixteen *bonnets à Bandes*; sixteen *cornettes* for the day; one dozen *cornettes* for the night, “comptant les doubles;” one dozen veils, two dozen guimpes; and two dozen bandeaus.²⁵⁹ The linens enumerated in the list consist primarily of chemises, mouchoirs or handkerchiefs, and a variety of bonnets.

Each year, the mistress of the wardrobe was expected to provide a collection of linen garments for the community at the school. She provided dozens of chemises, camisoles, guimpes, mouchoirs and mouchoirs de col, bonnets of all kinds, *cornettes*, coiffes, and chaussettes.²⁶⁰ In addition, each class was provided with “Linge à l’usage des D^{lles} dont les Maitresses sont Chargées” (Table 6). This collection of linen, also provided by the school, generally included trimmings for bonnets, collars, and mouchoirs, as well as sleeves, camisoles, and, rarely, *corps*. The girls were also provided with a toiletry box which “on... rend a la maitresse générale quand ells sortent de la maison.”²⁶¹ At the school, the girls were provided with enough undergarments to change on a daily basis,

²⁵⁷ État du Linge que chaque personne doit avoir par Teste 10 July 1750, Inventaire des Linges, 2 MI 295, D.147, Archives des Yvelines et de l'Ancient Departement de Seine-et-Oise, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Detail du Linge que la M^{se} d'Ouvrage fournit tous les Ans a la Lingerie qu'on appelle le Rang, 10 July 1750, Inventaire des Linges, 2 MI 295, D.147, Archives des Yvelines et de l'Ancient Departement de Seine-et-Oise, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

²⁶¹ Linge à l'usage des D^{lles} dont les Maitresses sont Chargées, 1748, Inventaire de la classe bleue, 2 MI 291, D. 134, Archives des Yvelines et de l'Ancient Departement de Seine-et-Oise, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

with washing done weekly, as well as have a few extra items for special occasions. While convent schools for the wealthy nobility required students to provide their own basic linens and clothing, the Maison Royale de Saint-Louis was unique in that it provided the girls with garments deemed necessary for their daily use.

**LINEN PROVIDED TO THE STUDENTS
AT THE MAISON ROYALE DE SAINT-LOUIS AT SAINT-CYR**

	Classe Bleue (17-20 years)	Classe Jaune (15-16 years)	Classe Verte (11-14 years)	Classes Rouge (7-10 years)
Shirts	20	12	12	12
Camisoles	n/a	2	n/a	n/a
Stays	n/a	n/a	2	n/a
Kerchiefs	24	24	n/a	n/a
Bonnets	6	6	6	6
Beguin Bonnets	0	0	0	8
Cornettes	12	12	8	8
Socks & Stockings	8	8	12	12
Sleeves	10	6	20	36
Trim for Day Caps	4	4	5	5
Trim for Night Caps	3	3	3	3
Trim for Church Caps	4	4	5	5
Trim for Collars	6	6	6	6
Trim for Kerchiefs	6	6	n/a	n/a

Table 6. Clothing Provided to the Students at Saint Cyr.

Just as the impoverished nobility were expected to maintain their *propreté* and cleanliness, by mid-century, so, too, were the poor. In 1765, Baudeau, an advocate for the poor, emphasized the need for foundlings, wet-nurses, and the poor in general to have the means to keep themselves in clean clothes and linens. Baudeau suggests that nurses for foundlings be established and furnished by the city government, and that they be provided with “une provision suffisante de linges, de petites ustensiles & vêtements

nécessaires à ces enfans.”²⁶² Moreover, Baudeau believes that the poor should be provided with a reasonable quantity of basic clothing and underwear, even if it comes second-hand. Women should have “des coefferes de jour & de nuit, des chemises, des mouchoirs de poche, des collerettes, des corsets, des jupes simples l’été, doubles l’hiver, des bas & des chaussures.”²⁶³ Men require “des bonnets de jour & de nuit, des chemises, des cravates, des habits, des vestes, des culottes, des bas & des chaussures.”²⁶⁴ Furthermore, the poor should each been provided with “quatre ou cinq chemises au moins, à cause de la propreté.”²⁶⁵

Baudeau also suggests a system by which the poor can have their laundry washed regularly to keep these garments clean. Cadet-De-Vaux similarly expresses his concerns about the poor needing access to laundry, explaining that the "classe populaire," made up of petty artisans and day-workers, often have no access to laundering, “et moins encore la class vraiment indigente.”²⁶⁶ Without access to laundering, “l’indigent alors continuera de porter du linge sale, fangeux, insalubre, l’asyle constant de la vermine, et qu’il faut cependant finis par blanchir.”²⁶⁷ Cadet-De-Vaux suggests that locations already established for public aid also provide laundresses. He notes that that laundry services are often already provided for "femmes en couches indigents.”²⁶⁸

Le blanchissage du linge des femmes en couches indigentes est un des objets de la sollicitude des comités : la dépense en est prise sur les fonds de bienfaisance, et

²⁶² Baudeau, *Idées d’un citoyen sur les besoins, les droits, et les devoirs des vrais pauvres* (A Amsterdam; Et se trouve à Paris: Chez Barthelemi Hochereau, le jeune, libraire, 1765), 14.

²⁶³ Ibid., 78.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Cadet-De-Vaux, 76.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 83.

même les comités tiennent une quantité de linge disponible pour cette classe, afin qu'un dénuement absolu n'accable pas celle qui donne un citoyen à l'Etat.”²⁶⁹

Cadet-De-Vaux explains that the destitute may be unwilling to accept charity in the form of food, “mais elle ne refusera pas à vêtir un linge blanc, bien odorant et salubre.”²⁷⁰ Even the poor should meet the standards of propriety and cleanliness with a weekly supply of chemises and a set of basic clothing, as well as access to laundry to keep them clean.

Despite the urging of advocates like Baudeau, men and women in France were not systematically provided with basic clothing necessities by the state; however, orphaned children and wet-nurses were provided with a minimum standard of underclothes. Funding was provided for orphans ages newborn through twelve years. While a few foundling homes took in newborns through young adults and employed wet-nurses and teachers, most infants and young children were sent to live with wet-nurses and their families, often in the countryside. When the children were older, they were sent to foundling homes and trained for employment or immediately found some form of employment. By age ten or so, the children would be sent out to work or apprentice. Children were cared for through their twelfth year, after which, they were sent out on their own to work and care for themselves.²⁷¹ In this system of state-funded orphan care, assistance was organized bureaucratically by regional Département. Each department in the country was responsible for distributing aid to individual Cantons, which, in turn,

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 84.

²⁷¹ Ivan Ivanovich Betskoi, *Les plans et les statuts des différents établissements ordonnés par Sa Majesté Impériale Catherine II pour l'éducation de la jeunesse et l'utilité générale de son empire*, ed. Nicolas-Gabriel Clerc and Denis Diderot, trans., Nicolas-Gabriel Clerc, 2 v. vols., vol. 1 & 2 (A Amsterdam :: Chez Marc-Michel Rey, 1775); Lépicier, Le Président du Département de Seine et Oise, A l'Administration Municipale du Canton de Chalon Mare, 7 Ventôse 4 (26 February 1796), Enfants Trouvés et Filles Mères, 1L 775, LIX, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

were responsible for distributing aide to individuals and keeping accounts to submit to the Départments.

According to a law passed on 3 April 1791, wet-nursing families caring for children had to be reimbursed for the costs of feeding and clothing the children in their care. However, the families were required to keep accounts of these expenses and turn them in at the end of the trimester to be certified and receive their reimbursements.²⁷² Moreover, a 1796 proposal by the minister of the interior suggested that the state pay wet-nurses 300 livres per month for each orphan they nurse to cover the layette, to begin with, along with the rest of the child's needs until age seven when the children would be placed for employment. If families were willing to keep on or take on a child of seven or more as a worker or apprentice, the family should receive 300 livres per year, along with the benefits of the child's labor, to cover the child's needs.²⁷³ The administrations in the Cantons and Départements were responsible for implementing these policies and distributing the funding for orphans and wet-nurses.

These departmental and cantonal administrations, like wet-nurses, were required to keep accounts of funds for orphans and their distribution. Between 1796 and 1797, the Département de Seine et Oise performed an audit of the funds for orphans by Canton. Each Canton provided a breakdown of yearly costs for food and clothing by age for the orphans in their care. The cost of clothing varied significantly by Canton, likely due to differences in the number of orphans (Table 7). Furthermore, the cost reports from the

²⁷² Lépicié, Le Président du Département de Seine et Oise, Aux Administrations Municipales de son ressort, 7 Prairial an 4 (26 May 1796), Enfants Trouvés et Filles Mères, 1L 775, LIX, 93, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

²⁷³ Lépicié, Le Président du Département de Seine et Oise, A l'Administration Municipale du Canton de Chalon Mare.

various Cantons demonstrate differences in expenditures on clothing. In some Cantons, children were provided with new clothes every other year, engendering higher costs in those years.²⁷⁴ In other Cantons, like Rambouillet, clothing costs varied between boys and girls, with girls' clothing generally costing somewhat more than clothing for boys.²⁷⁵ In yet other Cantons, like Magny, only a minimum was spent on clothing orphans each year.²⁷⁶ Moreover, several Cantons did not spend money on clothing the oldest children, as the children's earnings from their labor, or the families who provided them with work, furnished these children with garments.²⁷⁷ Government coffers generally provided orphans with the minimum required for health and propriety.

²⁷⁴ Canton de Étampes (intra), Serie de question, Enfants Trouvés, 1L 775, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

²⁷⁵ Canton de Rambouillet, Série de questions, Enfants Trouvés, 1L 775, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

²⁷⁶ Canton de Magny, Serie de question, Enfants Trouvés, 1L 775, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

²⁷⁷ Canton de Chevreuse, 6 Florial 5 (25 April 1797), Enfants Trouvés, 1L 775, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines; Canton de Neauphle-le-Chateau, Serie de questions proposée par le Département, 30 Florial 5 (19 May 1797), Enfants Trouvés, 1L 775, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines; Canton de S^t Germain (extra), Enfants Trouvés, 1L 775, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines; Canton de Taverny, Serie de question, Enfants Trouvés, 1L 775, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

ORPHAN CLOTHING EXPENDITURES BY AGE

	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years	11 years	12 years
Arpajon	24	24	24	30	30	30	36	40	50	50	50	50
Beaumont-sur-Oise	36	48	72	72	72	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
Chamarande	60	60	70	80	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Chevreuse	30	15	36	20	36	18	24	12	24	0	0	0
Criel	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	72	72	72	72	72
Étampes (intra)	104	30	90	30	100	35	120	40	120	50	135	55
Gonesse	50	50	60	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
Houdan	67	34	40	34	34	45	45	50	50	50	60	60
Jouy	50	35	45	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
L'Isle-Adam	40	40	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
La Roche-Guyon	25	25	20	20	20	20	25	25	18	18	18	18
Limay	50	25	30	35	40	40	40	30	30	25	25	25
Magny	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Mantes	50	20	20	30	40	40	50	50	50	50	50	50
Marines	30	30	20	30	15	20	40	15	15	30	25	25
Marly	60	60	60	60	60	60	72	72	72	72	72	72
Milly	72	72	72	36	40	50	50	72	72	80	90	90
Neauphle-le-Chateau	50	50	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	n/a	n/a
Pontoise (extra)	50	50	50	50	50	50	60	60	60	60	70	70
Rambouillet	36-40	42-48	48-54	60-62	72-78	80-84	84-90	80-84	80-84	80-84	80-84	80-84
Septeuil	30	40	48	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	120	120
St. Germain (extra)	30	30	30	30	60	60	80	80	100	50	n/a	n/a
Sucy	30	30	35	35	35	40	40	50	50	60	60	60
Taverny	40	40	40	50	50	50	60	60	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Versailles	60	60	60	60	60	60	100	100	100	100	100	100
Versailles (Intra)	74	89	113	137	161	185	209	233	257	281	305	329

Table 7. Orphan Expenditures (in livres).

Clothing costs furnished by the government covered both minimum under- and outer-garments for the children. A table published in 1796 to reflect the decree passed by the Minister of the Interior on 15 July displays the clothing requirements for orphaned children cared for by wet-nurses (Table 8). The table divides the children into two groups, those who first arrive at the Hospice, or foundling home, at age one, two, or three, and children aged one to six who have already been assigned to a wet-nurse with whom they board. According to the table, all infants under the age of one must be

provided with two swaddling bands, two pairs of stockings, six béguin bonnets, one woolen bonnet, one bonnet of Indienne, two brassières, six chemises, six woolen chemises or camisoles, eight diapers, one blanket, two cloth swaddling gowns, two quilted swaddling gowns, six fichus (or bibs), six gowns, and six petticoats.²⁷⁸ An infant's wardrobe, even the minimal wardrobe of an orphan, consisted of primarily, and extensively, undergarments—only the six gowns and the blanket were not undergarments. Children a year or older required a somewhat less extensive wardrobe than infants; nevertheless, their wardrobes consisted of several chemises, diapers, and brassieres, along with stockings, bonnets, and swaddling gowns. Only one gown was required for children over the age of one year, but enough undergarments were provided for nearly daily changes within a week. Thus, the funds went to furnish these children with a variety of necessary undergarments and a gown to wear daily.

²⁷⁸ Tableau de la Composition des Vêtemens des Enfans chez les nourrices, Qui a rapport à l'article du Règlement arrêté par le Ministre de l'Intérieur, le 27 Messidor, an 4, 27 Messidor an 4 (15 July 1796), Enfants Trouvés, 1L 775, Objets Généraux, Archives Départementales des Yvelines, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

TABLEAU
DE LA COMPOSITION DES VÊTEMENTS DES ENFANTS
CHEZ LES NOURRICES,

Qui a rapport à l'article du Règlement arrêté par le Ministre de l'Intérieur, le 27 Messidor, an 4^o

VÊTURES	AGES	Bandes	Bas	Begains	Bonnets de laine	Bonnets d'indienne	Brassieres	Chemises	Chemisettes ou Camisoles de laine	Couches	Couvertures	Langes d'étoffe	Langes piques	Fichus	Robes	Jupons
Layette		2	”	6	1	”	2	6		8	1	2	2	6	”	”
Vêtements des Sevrans (*)	1 ^{er}	”	2	4	1	2	”	4	1	4	1	2	2	4	1	1
	2 ^e	”	2	2	1	2	”	4	1	4	1	2	2	2	1	1
	3 ^e	”	2	2	1	2	”	4	1	4	1	2	2	2	1	1
Vêtements de Bordereaux, &c. (**)	1 ^{er}	”	2	4	1	2	”	4	1	4	”	2	1	4	1	1
	2 ^e	”	2	2	1	2	”	4	1	”	”	”	”	2	1	1
	3 ^e	”	2	2	1	2	”	4	1	”	”	”	”	2	1	1
	4 ^e	”	2	2	1	2	”	4	1	”	”	”	”	2	1	1
	5 ^e	”	2	2	”	2	”	4	1	”	”	”	”	2	1	1
	6 ^e	”	2	2	”	2	”	4	1	”	”	”	”	2	1	1

(*) Cette qualification s'applique aux enfants apportés à l'Hospice à l'âge d'un, deux ou trois ans, & de fuite envoyés dans les campagnes.

(**) Il s'agit de vêtements demandés par les nourrices, lors de la liquidation de leurs salaires.

Table 8. Tableau de la composition des vêtements des enfants chez les nourrices (Copied from the original).

From this data on clothing some of the poorest inhabitants of France for whom the state provided only the minimum assistance, it is clear that minimal standards in undergarments had become established and codified by the end of the eighteenth century. Such standards which developed over the course of the century in conjunction with changing ideas about cleanliness and propriety included a daily change of undergarments for one week, along with a small supply of stockings, handkerchiefs, and head coverings. A daily change of clean underclothes, along with regular baths, became the standard for health and propriety over the course of the eighteenth century. Such standards were created, accepted, and supported by medical professionals and health advocates, as well as institutions including schools and the state, and the general population. In addition to functioning as significant components in the standardization of undergarments, the

published discussions regarding undergarments, whether medical, prescriptive, or financial, present a unique phenomenon: public discussion and propagation of particularly private garments.

The role of undergarments shifted over the course of the eighteenth century from body proxy to the boundary between the body and the exterior. Rather than washing the body, eighteenth century undergarments protected a clean body from external contamination. Eighteenth century underclothes simultaneously protected outer clothes from bodily contamination such as sweat and illness. To keep clean and healthy, individuals had to wash and change their undergarments regularly, as these garments were the layer which caught all of this contamination. Additionally, undergarments provided the boundary between the private self and the public self. Outer clothing, along with undergarments that shaped the body into a desired form, made up the public persona—individuals used their clothing to present themselves as they desired. These public garments, including such undergarments as corsets and panniers, were separated from the private body by washable underclothes. Furthermore, as undergarments became an issue of public health, they also acted as the boundary between the individual and the social body. It was important for individuals to be outfitted with clean underclothes both for their own good and the public good. Health advocates encouraged aid organizations to provide the poor with clean linen to protect both themselves and society from their dirt and contagion. While underclothes acted as a boundary in this period, as medical professionals and society began discussing the roles and standards of undergarments they

brought these previously private entities into public discourse. Therefore, these liminal garments were both private and public, fashionable and functional.

3. Consuming Corsets and Culture

On 6 December 1764, Madame du Bec placed an order with her *lingère* for new fichus, manchettes, decorations for her corset, a cap, and a new gown. The *lingère*, who made the garments, provided the muslin, cotton, and linen for the garments, but purchased the blonde lace from a *revendeuse de dentelles*.²⁷⁹ When she needed new chemises for her servants in November 1772, the marquise du Bec ordered one dozen coarse chemises from another *lingère*, Legris.²⁸⁰ Conversely, Guillaume Guillebert, a domestic servant, purchased his clothes from a *revendeuse*; and when he needed ready cash, he sold a selection of new and used underclothes to a *fripier* for re-sale.²⁸¹ In the eighteenth century there was a hierarchy of buying and selling clothing and undergarments. Furthermore, undergarment purchases, use, and resale were influenced by both social convention and personal needs and desires. Examining undergarments as commodities and the circulation of underclothes provides insight into the ways groups and individuals appropriated new standards and fashions, as well as the ways they adapted these changing ideas to fit their own needs. Consumption, “the desiring, acquiring and enjoying of goods and services which one has purchased,” is used as a means of “presenting the self in a favourable light,” according to historian Peter Burke.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Vendu a Madame du bec. ce qui suit scavior, 6 December 1764, Féodalité et Familles, 1 ER 1594, 6 xbre 1764, Archives départementales de la Seine-Maritime, Rouen.

²⁸⁰ Fille Legris, Memoire pour Madame la marquise du bec, 5 November 1772, Féodalité et familles, 1 ER 1594, 5 novembre 1772, Archives départementales de la Seine-Maritime, Rouen.

²⁸¹ Moreau, Guillaume Guillebert, 15 November 1764, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10265, 15 9bre. 1764, Archives Nationales, Paris.

²⁸² Joyce Appleby, "Consumption in early modern social thought," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 162; Peter Burke, "*Res et verba*: conspicuous consumption in the early modern world," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 149.

Thus, by focusing on consumer behavior and choices regarding undergarments, one can begin to understand the ways that both goods and ideas are embraced and adapted by individuals. We can also begin to see that individuals consumed undergarments in order to distinguish themselves or to associate themselves with a particular group. Furthermore, by examining the circulation of goods, it is possible to see the ways by which the economy influenced consumer behavior and vice versa. Finally, undergarments as consumer goods cycled between public (the public marketplace) and private (private ownership) and thus traversed the limens of society.

As standards for clean, healthy undergarments in conjunction with fashion's new emphasis on undergarments developed over the course of the eighteenth century, the market for underclothes increased substantially. Items of underwear became commodities in high demand among all levels of society. The increased demand instilled in the public a growing personal drive to acquire undergarments, even among the masses. Moreover, in fashion centers like Paris and Versailles, undergarments that were not worn directly against the skin, such as corsets, and especially those which were meant to be seen, such as petticoats, were often made of the colorful, printed textiles that became popular throughout the century. While patterned silks and brocades from such places as Lyon were popular among the wealthy at the beginning of the century, cheap, imported, printed textiles from India or locally made imitations were popular options among the working classes. By mid-century, the lightweight cottons and cotton blends from India and locally made copies came in a variety of qualities and were worn by persons at all levels of

society. Thus, demand for both plain cotton and linen undergarments as well as for brightly-colored and patterned undergarments increased. Furthermore, demand for undergarments was not limited to cities where fashion dominated the scene. In fact, “in the countryside, the conquest of linen preceded that of clothes and the changing tastes which imposed urban fashions.”²⁸³ The increasing demand for undergarments pervaded the eighteenth-century French economy.

Significantly, France, the country generally acknowledged as the progenitor of this undergarment obsession, maintained a mercantilist economy which restricted access to inexpensive foreign textiles such as linen and cotton (the main textiles used for undergarments). Therefore, although the demand for these garments increased, the country’s economic policies failed to adequately supply the people of France with the textiles needed for their undergarments. This political limitation resulted in a significant second-hand market for undergarments. Moreover, those who did not have the means to acquire new undergarments, but who still wanted to participate in the changing fashion and health trends, could access goods at a lower price by buying them used. Hence, undergarments had a significant resale value throughout the eighteenth century.

Women were the primary household consumers, and their personal preferences dictated their commodity choices. Clothing and underclothing, elements in the material culture of domestic life, were linked with the social and practical lives of households—a family’s daily activities and experiences significantly influenced undergarment

²⁸³ Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 216.

consumption.²⁸⁴ Yet, as part of one's visible social life, underclothing was also used to present one's self in a particular way. Women bought undergarments for their families based on their own needs, as well as to dress according to their own tastes, albeit influenced by cultural standards and fashion.²⁸⁵

The market for undergarments in eighteenth-century France presents a distinctive cycle of commodification, de-commodification, and re-commodification. Underclothes were purchased as commodities from shopkeepers and linen drapers, they were taken home and personalized for wear and other uses, resulting in de-commodification; then when the consumer had finished with them, the undergarments were often resold as commodities again. This cycle presents the transfer of undergarments between people—from producers to customers to family members to re-sellers to new customers and beyond. It also demonstrates the modes by which undergarments began as both public and private commodities, became private garments, and returned to the public realm for resale.

Before a garment could be sewn, textiles had to be produced and sold to garment merchants, who usually made the textiles into clothing for their consumers. However, sometimes merchants sold lengths of the textiles to be made into garments by the consumer. In either case, the availability of textiles greatly impacted the availability of garments. For undergarments, usually made of linen, cotton, and less often wool, or a

²⁸⁴ Lorna Weatherill, "The meaning of consumer behaviour in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 206.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

blend of any of these, farmers had to grow the flax, cotton, or raise the sheep for sheering. These raw materials had to be spun into thread by spinners, then woven into lengths of cloth by weavers. Once complete, spinners and weavers sold their wares to the linen drapers who used the cloth and thread to create undergarments. While some of the cotton, linen, and wool textiles were created in France, others were imported from England, the Netherlands, and India.

For the eighteenth-century consumer there were two primary ways to acquire new undergarments: made-to-order or home-made.²⁸⁶ Garments were either sewn by a trained tailor or linen draper to fit the individual customers, or customers purchased fabrics to make their own garments (or have someone in their household make the garments). The market for ready-made garments did not begin to develop until the end of the eighteenth century and began primarily for men's shirts.²⁸⁷ Generally, in larger cities such as Paris, Versailles, Lyon, and others, customers would have shirts made by the linen-drapers or *marchandes des modes*, whereas, in rural areas, customers generally purchased lengths of cloth which they made into underclothes themselves.

In the countryside, where the spread of linen surpassed that of other fashions, most households made their own undergarments. Sewing undergarments, as well as washing and repairing them, was the purview of women and girls in rural households.²⁸⁸ The preparation of household and personal linen, particularly trousseaus, was dominated

²⁸⁶ While the terms "made-to-order," "bespoke," "custom-made," "ready-made," etc. are modern terms, there are no contemporary terms to express these types of garment production. However, using these modern terms can help clarify the processes by which the eighteenth-century consumer acquired his or her clothing.

²⁸⁷ *Shirt, Garment, 1700-1750*, Manchester Galleries.

²⁸⁸ Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 200.

by women. Thus, the female association with linen and undergarments provided a significantly feminine element to rites of passage involving new linens, such as marriage trousseaus to set up a household, infant layettes for new babies, and shrouds for deaths in the family. Yet, these particular events and linen collections were not the only impetus for making family undergarments. Families also needed practical underclothes for everyday wear. Significantly, while their wardrobes remained more functional and less fashionable, villagers owned at least as many undergarments as their city-dwelling counterparts. By the mid-eighteenth century, most peasants had at least enough underwear to change daily for a week, while the wealthier peasants often had more, along with a few more specialized luxury items, although corsets were relatively rare.²⁸⁹ Moreover, in rural areas, women and girls produced household linen articles in large quantities to fill their wardrobes, as well as to act as a reserve fund. Among the wealthier peasant populations, production could often be greater than consumption. Linen could be used to pay for urgent purchases or to settle debts. Families that could afford to keep “textile capital slumbering quietly in their chests” did so.²⁹⁰

As in the countryside, linen manufacture and linen garment creation in cities was dominated by female linen-drapers. These women occupied an intermediate position in the clothing trade and society. Their specialization included not just the manufacture and sale of undergarments, but also that of “household textiles, sheets, cloths and all household linen” as well as ecclesiastical linen.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 215, 216.

²⁹⁰ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 265.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 304.

As the use of linen became general, there appeared, in addition to numerous urban and rural technical specializations, male spindle and shuttle makers, flax merchants and hemp merchants, both male and female tow combers, hemp and linen spinsters, male canvas-makers and women linen merchants who bought, processed, and resold the products of thousands of weavers.²⁹²

Furthermore, “linen merchants operated between manufacture and sale, between the provinces and Paris and between women and men.”²⁹³ While linen-drapers possessed a monopoly over the linen trade in Paris and within a twenty league radius (about 50 miles) of the city, linen craft overall was primarily domestic, dominated by small workshops and family labor at home.²⁹⁴

For men’s and women’s shirts and drawers, white linens, cottons, and woolens were the most common choices in textiles; however, for women’s corsets and petticoats, as well as all other fashionable items such as kerchiefs, handkerchiefs, cravats, dressing gowns, etc., colorful, patterned textiles became increasingly popular. The fascination with colorful, patterned textiles for clothing seems to have begun with the wealthy bourgeois and nobility, who began sporting colorful, flowery Lyonnais silks made into mantuas and decorative petticoats or vests, coats, and breeches at the beginning of the century. However, these expensive textiles were not available to everyone, although the new styles were becoming more popular among all levels of society. At the same time, however, new imported cottons from India were beginning to take hold in France and elsewhere in Europe. These Indian textiles were often printed with bright colors and patterns, just like the French silks. Furthermore, these imported textiles could be had at a

²⁹² Ibid., 305.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 313.

fraction of the cost. Thus, the Indian textiles, both plain and printed, became a major commodity and a significant factor in the undergarment trade.

Printed textiles from India²⁹⁵ began to trickle into France through Marseille, brought by Portuguese merchants, as early as 1587. The demand for these textiles grew slowly through the first half of the seventeenth century along with the demand for other exotic East Indian goods, such as spices. However, “by c. 1650 the passion for *toiles peintes* and *chintzes* had grown to such dimensions... that it was known as the ‘Indian craze.’”²⁹⁶ India produced a greater variety of textiles than anywhere in Europe, and the myriad exotic colors and patterns appealed to the masses, so that Indian textiles, *toiles Indiennes* or *toiles peintes*, gained “phenomenal popularity almost overnight” at the end of the seventeenth century (Figure 3.1).²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ *Toiles Indiennes*, *toiles peintes*, *chintzes*, and other terms used to describe textiles from the East were used to refer to cotton and cotton-blend fabrics from East Asia and South-East Asia, primarily imported by way of India through the East India Companies. Only specific types of these fabrics were referred to by the names of the regions in which they were produced, such as Siamois (Siam, modern-day Thailand), Calico (Calcutta, modern-day Kolkata), etc. Following this terminology, this paper will refer to cotton and cotton-blend fabrics from East and South-East Asia as Indian textiles unless referring to a specific type of textile, when its given name will be employed.

²⁹⁶ Stanley D. Chapman and Serge Chassagne, *European Textile Printers in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Peel and Oberkampf* (London: Heinemann Educational : Pasold Fund, 1981), 103.

²⁹⁷ Lemire, 4.



Figure 3.1. Dress (side view), French, printed cotton, 1750–75, Metropolitan Museum of Art. An example of *toile indienne*.

Noting the lucrative trade in Indian products, Jean-Baptist Colbert, Minister of Finances, established the *Compagnie Française des Indes* in 1664, a belated attempt to compete with the East India Companies of the English, Dutch, and Danish, founded early in the seventeenth century. Unfortunately for him, the English East India Company had

monopolized the trade with India by this point, and the French company struggled through the end of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century.²⁹⁸

Unsurprisingly, the French quickly founded an industry of painting and printing textiles to imitate the profitable *toiles Indiennes*. Textile painting and printing appears in Marseille, the major port of Indian goods, in the 1640s, and progresses into the eighteenth century despite the difficulties of developing new processes for dyeing cotton and other vegetable fibers.²⁹⁹ Moreover, French textile dyeing continued to develop and expand, unstinted by the enormous growth in Indian textile imports and their subsequent demand, which, by 1680, rivaled the demand for French domestic *étoffes*, or fabrics.³⁰⁰ This late-seventeenth century boost in demand and in imports gained momentum through the advertising campaigns of the English East India Company, whereby samples of novel prints and colors were ordered in a great array, sent to a small number of women who headed the most fashionable social *salons* in Paris, and, according to the tastes and preferences of these ladies and their circles, ordered *en masse* from the factories in India to be sold in Europe.³⁰¹ A similar method was used by the Lyons silk industry in the eighteenth century to stay ahead of the fashion trends.³⁰²

Most importantly, the spread of *toiles Indiennes* across France and the rest of Europe and their ever growing demand stemmed from the accessibility of the textiles.

²⁹⁸ Chapman and Chassagne, 103.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 103-104.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 104.

³⁰¹ Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 50-53.

³⁰² Carlo Poni, "Fashion as Flexible Production: The Strategies of the Lyons Silk Merchants in the Eighteenth Century," in *World of Possibilities: Flexibility and Mass Production in Western Industrialization*, ed. Charles F. Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin (Paris, Cambridge, and New York: Cambridge University Press, Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1997).

Indian textiles were not only bright, exotic, and colorful, but also inexpensive and durable. As Beverly Lemire explains, “The cost of the East Indian calicoes, chintzes, and muslins allowed even the less affluent to own vivid, floral patterned, checked, or plaid clothing... Moreover, many of the fabrics could be substituted for costly French [flowered *façonné*] silks.”³⁰³ In addition, people put these durable *toiles Indiennes* to greater use than could be done with silk *façonné*. As social critic Daniel Defoe scathingly observed in 1708,

chints and painted calicoes, which before were only made use of for carpets, quilts, etc., and to clothe children and ordinary people, [has] now [become] the dress of our ladies; and such is the power of a mode, as we saw some of our persons of quality dressed in Indian carpets, which a few years before their chambermaids would have thought too ordinary for them, the chints were advanced from lying on their floors to their backs, from the footcloth to the petticoat.³⁰⁴

Indian textiles became so ubiquitous that nearly every house was replete with objects made of *Indiennes*; gentlemen, ladies, and their servants wore clothes of *toiles Indiennes*; tradesmen worked wearing imported calicoes, merchants, tailors, dressmakers, fripières, peddlers; and even almshouses possessed stores of Indian textile goods. Local industries producing imitation *Indiennes* sprang up all over France.³⁰⁵ This truly was a fashion mania, and everywhere one looked in late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century France, the calico craze was displayed in full view.

With an aim at promoting the national textile industries, particularly the luxury fashion goods such as Lyonnais silk, as well as a desire to control the visual hierarchy of

³⁰³ Lemire, 13.

³⁰⁴ Daniel Defoe, *Weekly Review*, 31 January 1708. Quoted in Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800*, 50.

³⁰⁵ Chapman and Chassagne, 103-104; Lemire, 16-17; Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 211, 213, 215.

dress which dominated his reign, Louis XIV issued a series of edicts and decrees prohibiting Indian goods in France. On October 26, 1686, all importation of painted and printed fabrics from India was forbidden, and the use and wearing of all such goods was outlawed by a second arrêt in 1692. Between 1686 and 1748, two edicts and eighty arrêts further restricted the use and importation of textile goods from India.³⁰⁶ For example, the decrees of 17 February 1705 and 24 August 1706 both “[fait] défenses à toutes personnes de quelque qualité & condition que ce soit, de porter, s’habiller, faire ou faire faire aucuns vestemens ni meubles desdites Etoffes... venant des Indes, ou contrefaites.”³⁰⁷ Regardless of social station, no one was allowed to have clothing or furniture made from East Indian, or counterfeit, textiles. Similarly, no one was to buy or sell any of these textiles, according to a decree on 18 November 1702: “fait Sa Majesté défenses aux Directeurs de ladite Compagnie des Indes, & à tous Marchands & autres Personnes de quelque qualité & condition que ce soit, de faire commerce, exposer en vente, vendre ni debiter dans le Royaume des Toiles Peintes & des Etoffes d’Ecorces d’Arbres.”³⁰⁸ Indian

³⁰⁶ "Arrest ... qui ordonne que la declaration du 9. May 1702. sera executée selon sa forme & teneur: & fait défenses aux directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes, & à tous marchands & autres personnes de quelque qualité que ce soit, de faire commerce, vendre ni debiter dans le royaume après le dernier decembre 1703, des etoffes de soye pure ou mêlée de soye, or ou argent, à peine de confiscation, & de trois mille livres d’amende. Du 12. decembre 1702," (Paris: 1702); Chapman and Chassagne, 104.

³⁰⁷ "Arrest ... qui ordonne qu l’arrest du Conseil du 12. decembre 1702. & les autres reglemens concernans les etoffes des Indes, seront executez selon leur forme & teneur, & en consequence fait sa majesté défenses à toutes personnes de quelque qualité & condition que ce soit, de porter, s’habiller, faire ou faire faire aucuns vestemens ni meubles desdites etoffes de pure soye, ou de soye meslée d’or ou d’argent, ou des étoffes appellées furies venant des Indes ou contrefaites, apres le dernier jour du mois d’aoust prochain; & aux tailleurs, couturieres, tapissiers & fripiers, d’employer ni d’avoir chez eux desdites etoffes, à peine de confiscation des habits & vestemens. Du 17. fevrier 1705," (Paris: 1705).

³⁰⁸ "Arrest ... qui ordonne que dans huitaine du jour de la publication du present arrest, les directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes orientales remettront entre les mains du sieur Chamillart un état par eux certifié, contenant les noms des marchands ... qui ont acheté les 7164. pieces de toiles peintes, tapis & couvertures des Indes, & les 1541. pieces d’écorces d’arbres, avec la quantité ... vendues à chacun ... le prix de chaque piece, & les termes convenus pour le payement. Avec défenses de faire dans le royaume aucun commerce ni usage des toiles peintes & écorces d’arbres. Du 18. novembre 1702," (Paris: 1702).

textiles were a forbidden, yet sought-after commodity. In fact, they may have been more desirable because they were forbidden.

Just as imported Indian textiles were regulated by the French state, so too were imitation *Indiennes* made by national manufacturers. On 24 December 1701, the King's Council of State passed a decree prohibiting the painting or printing of Eastern style textiles called *Siamoise*, a fine cotton and silk or wool blend, as well as any similar sort of textile made of cotton and fine wool or silk. The King "a fait & fait tres-expresses inhibitions & defenses à toutes Personnes, de peindre ou imprimer, faire peindre ou faire imprimer, même dans les Lieux Privilegiez, aucunes Fleurs ou autres Figures sur ladite Etoffe."³⁰⁹ In a similar vein, several *arrêts* mention the financial harm incurred by the *Manufactures de Draperies*, or cloth manufacturers of the realm, caused by the market for Indian textiles. The decree of 24 December 1701 states that prohibiting painted and printed textiles from India is "pour le bien & l'avantage des Manufactures de Draperies, ausquelles l'usage desdites Toiles Peintes fait un préjudice tres-considerable."³¹⁰ The edict of 18 November 1702 declares that "l'usage & la consommation de ces Toiles Peints & Ecorces d'Arbres tirées des Pays étrangers feroient un préjudice tres-considerable aux différentes Manufactures de petites Etoffes du Royaume, dont le travail cesseroit presque entierement faute de débit."³¹¹ This *arrêt* goes on to say that those who

³⁰⁹ "Arrest ... qui fait défenses à toutes personnes de peindre ou imprimer, faire peindre ou faire imprimer, même dans les lieux privilegiez, aucunes fleurs ou autres figures sur l'etoffe appelée siamoise, & sur toute autre sorte d'etoffe, composée de coton & de fleuret ou soye, &c. et aux fabriquans & marchands desdites etoffes d'en avoir chez eux de peintes, après le premier janvier prochain, à peine de confiscation & de trois mille livres d'amende. Du 24. decembre 1701," (Paris: 1701).

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ "Arrest ... qui ordonne que dans huitaine du jour de la publication du present arrest, les directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes orientales remettront entre les mains du sieur Chamillart un état par eux certifié,

work in manufacturing will lose their jobs, a fate the king highlights as something he wishes to prevent.³¹²

The decrees dealing with Indian textiles also prohibited local and domestic industries, which appear to have been quite prosperous, from producing imitation *toiles Indiennes*. According to S. D. Chapman and S. Chassagne, French drapers and other textile manufacturers were not discouraged by the Indian fabrics, which began “to rival the *étoffes nationales*, the Norman clothes and Lyonnais silks.”³¹³ In fact, many domestic textile manufacturers were experimenting with imitations of Indian textiles to fit themselves into the new market, and in hope of not falling into debt.³¹⁴ For example, the arrêt of 24 December 1701 states that the King had been informed that, for two or three years,

il se fabrique en quelques Villes du Royaume, & particulièrement à Rouen, une sorte d'Etoffe appelée Siamoise...sur laquelle les Marchands font peindre ou imprimer des Fleurs & autres Figures; ce qui pourroit server de pretexte à conserver les Moules & Instrumens servant à peindre & imprimer des Toiles, ou tenant lieu des Toiles Peintes.³¹⁵

Having outlawed “*Toiles Peintes*” in a previous arrêt, the King goes on to outlaw these molds and instruments that were kept under pretext, and which allowed for *Toiles Peintes* to be produced. Similar attempts to obstruct loop-holes are found in most legislation,

contenant les noms des marchands ... qui ont acheté les 7164. pieces de toiles peintes, tapis & couvertures des Indes, & les 1541. pieces d'écorces d'arbres, avec la quantité ... vendues à chacun ... le prix de chaque piece, & les termes convenus pour le payement. Avec défenses de faire dans le royaume aucun commerce ni usage des toiles peintes & écorces d'arbres. Du 18. novembre 1702.”

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Chapman and Chassagne, 104.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 103-104.

³¹⁵ “Arrest ... qui fait défenses à toutes personnes de peindre ou imprimer, faire peindre ou faire imprimer, même dans les lieux privilegiez, aucunes fleurs ou autres figures sur l'etoffe appelée siamoise, & sur toute autre sorte d'etoffe, composée de coton & de fleuret ou soye, &c. et aux fabriquans & marchands desdites etoffes d'en avoir chez eux de peintes, après le premier janvier prochain, à peine de confiscation & de trois mille livres d'amende. Du 24. decembre 1701.”

which often reiterated past edicts and went on to add more details or restrict items more specifically.³¹⁶

One of the many penalties these anti-Indiennes laws threatened was the revocation of licenses for fabric workers—weavers, upholsterers, tailors, seamstresses, etc.—and merchants. When one's license was revoked, one's shops and warehouses often would be closed, and customers could not purchase or commission goods from the fabric worker or merchant. In the arrêts, the King's revocation of licenses and trade privileges focused specifically on those who imported Indian textiles or produced counterfeit *toiles Indiennes* within the realm, yet often extended to tailors, seamstresses, upholsterers, *friprières*, and others as well. In the decree of 24 December 1701, Louis XIV prohibited the painting and printing of Indian textiles and forbids “Fabriquans desdites Etoffes” and “Marchands” to

³¹⁶ "Arrest ... qui ordonne qu l'arrest du Conseil du 12. decembre 1702. & les autres reglemens concernans les etoffes des Indes, seront executez selon leur forme & teneur, & en consequence fait sa majesté défenses à toutes personnes de quelque qualité & condition que ce soit, de porter, s'habiller, faire ou faire faire aucuns vestemens ni meubles desdites etoffes de pure soye, ou de soye meslée d'or ou d'argent, ou des étoffes appellées furies venant des Indes ou contrefaites, apres le dernier jour du mois d'aoust prochain; & aux tailleurs, couturieres, tapissiers & fripiers, d'employer ni d'avoir chez eux desdites etoffes, à peine de confiscation des habits & vestemens. Du 17. fevrier 1705."; "Arrest ... qui ordonne que ceux des marchands de Paris qui ont chez eux des etoffes des Indes de pure soye ou meslées de soye, d'or ou d'argent, & des etoffes appellées furies, seront tenus dans quinzaine du jour de la publication du present arrest de remettre au Sieur d'Argenson lieutenant general de police, un etat certifié & signé d'eux de toutes les pieces desdites etoffes dont ils sont chargez, & de les luy représenter lorsqu'il sera par luy ordonné, &c. Du 26. May 1705," (Paris: 1705); "Arrest ... qui ordonne que la declaration du 9. May 1702. sera executée selon sa forme & teneur: & fait défenses aux directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes, & à tous marchands & autres personnes de quelque qualité que ce soit, de faire commerce, vendre ni debiter dans le royaume après le dernier decembre 1703, des etoffes de soye pure ou mêlée de soye, or ou argent, à peine de confiscation, & de trois mille livres d'amende. Du 12. decembre 1702."; "Arrest ... qui ordonne que les marchands de Paris & autres nommez dans les procès verbaux des visites faites par les commissaires Bourfin, Langlois, François & Camuset, de l'ordre du Sieur d'Argenson le 19. juin dernier, seront tenus de porter dans huitaine du jour de la publication du present arrest, toutes les pièces d'étoffes de pure soye ou de soye meslées d'or ou d'argent, les pieces d'étoffes appellées furies, les pieces d'étoffes de soye à mouchoirs, les pièces d'écorces d'arbre, & tous les restes & morceaux desdites étoffes ... mentionnées ausdits procès verbaux, dans le bureau établi sous la Halle aux Draps. Du 24. aoust 1706," (Paris: 1706).

avoir chez eux de Peintes... à peine de confiscation & de trois milles livres d'amende pour la premiere fois, & de privation de la Maîtrise pour les Fabriquans, & d'interdiction du Commerce pour les Marchandes, en cas de récidive. Fait Sa Majesté défenses aux Tapissiers, Fripiers, & Tailleurs d'habits, sous pareilles peines, d'avoir chez eux, & d'employer en Meubles, Hardes ou Habits desdites Etoffes Peintes.³¹⁷

The arrêt of 18 November announces similar public punishments for merchants and the various textile workers. For merchants "qui seront trouvez en contravention," the King threatens "[l]'interdiction de Commerce pendant trios mois, & d'avoir leurs Boutiques fermées pendant ledit temps."³¹⁸ As for the "Tailleurs, Couturieres, Tapissiers, & Fripiers," they were forbidden "d'employer ni avoir chez eux des Toiles Peintes & Ecorces d'Arbres, ni des hardes ou meubles faits d'icelles, à peine de confiscation... de trois mille livres d'amende, d'interdiction des Maistrises, & de tout exercice desdits Mestiers."³¹⁹ The decree of 24 August 1706 adds the threat that the use and sale of both old and new items made with Indian textiles will lead to these punishments, intimating that merchants and clothes dealers were selling goods of *toiles Indiennes* under the guise of old store stock and resale items rather than new imports, which had previously been banned.³²⁰

³¹⁷ "Arrest ... qui fait défenses à toutes personnes de peindre ou imprimer, faire peindre ou faire imprimer, même dans les lieux privilegiez, aucunes fleurs ou autres figures sur l'etoffe appelée siamoise, & sur toute autre sorte d'etoffe, composée de coton & de fleuret ou soye, &c. et aux fabriquans & marchands desdites etoffes d'en avoir chez eux de peintes, après le premier janvier prochain, à peine de confiscation & de trois mille livres d'amende. Du 24. decembre 1701."

³¹⁸ "Arrest ... qui ordonne que dans huitaine du jour de la publication du present arrest, les directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes orientales remettront entre les mains du sieur Chamillart un état par eux certifié, contenant les noms des marchands ... qui ont acheté les 7164. pieces de toiles peintes, tapis & couvertures des Indes, & les 1541. pieces d'écorces d'arbres, avec la quantité ... vendues à chacun ... le prix de chaque piece, & les termes convenus pour le payement. Avec défenses de faire dans le royaume aucun commerce ni usage des toiles peintes & écorces d'arbres. Du 18. novembre 1702."

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ "Arrest ... qui ordonne que les marchands de Paris & autres nommez dans les procès verbaux des visites faites par les commissaires Bourfin, Langlois, François & Camuset, de l'ordre du Sieur d'Argenson le 19.

In several of the arrêts, Louis XIV explained that illegal goods would be confiscated and a payment demanded for disobeying the laws, even for the people who wear illegal Indian textiles; “à peine de confiscation des habits & vestements dont les Particuliers se trouveront vestus & de cent cinquante livres d’amende; & à peine aussi contre lesdits Tailleurs, Couturiers, Tapissiers & Fripiers, de confiscation des hardes & meubles qui seront trouvez chez eux, de trois mille livres d’amende.”³²¹ To be able to discover those in dereliction of the decrees, the King announced in the arrêts that police forces would be sent out to enter shops and other locations where illegal goods might be found in order to confiscate goods and exact the charges. “Il sera fait des visites par les Juges de Police chez les Marchands, Negocians, Tailleurs, Couturiers, Tapissiers & Fripiers, dans toutes les Villes du Royaume.”³²² Stocking and selling cloth and clothing from India was subject to significant fines and was risky for shopkeepers who could lose both their shops and their wares.

juin dernier, seront tenus de porter dans huitaine du jour de la publication du present arrest, toutes les pièces d’étoffes de pure soye ou de soye meslées d’or ou d’argent, les pieces d’étoffes appellées furies, les pieces d’étoffes de soye à mouchoirs, les pièces d’écorces d’arbre, & tous les restes & morceaux desdites étoffes ... mentionnées ausdits procès verbaux, dans le bureau établi sous la Halle aux Draps. Du 24. aoust 1706."

³²¹ "Arrest ... qui ordonne que dans huitaine du jour de la publication du present arrest, les directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes orientales remettront entre les mains du sieur Chamillart un état par eux certifié, contenant les noms des marchands ... qui ont acheté les 7164. pieces de toiles peintes, tapis & couvertures des Indes, & les 1541. pieces d’écorces d’arbres, avec la quantité ... vendues à chacun ... le prix de chaque piece, & les termes convenus pour le payement. Avec défenses de faire dans le royaume aucun commerce ni usage des toiles peintes & écorces d’arbres. Du 18. novembre 1702."

³²² Ibid; "Arrest ... qui ordonne que les marchands de Paris & autres nommez dans les procès verbaux des visites faites par les commissaires Bourfin, Langlois, François & Camuset, de l’ordre du Sieur d’Argenson le 19. juin dernier, seront tenus de porter dans huitaine du jour de la publication du present arrest, toutes les pièces d’étoffes de pure soye ou de soye meslées d’or ou d’argent, les pieces d’étoffes appellées furies, les pieces d’étoffes de soye à mouchoirs, les pièces d’écorces d’arbre, & tous les restes & morceaux desdites étoffes ... mentionnées ausdits procès verbaux, dans le bureau établi sous la Halle aux Draps. Du 24. aoust 1706."

All of the legislation against the inexpensive and in-demand Indian textiles made affordable and colorful undergarments more difficult to acquire in the first half of the century. Their exclusivity may even have contributed to the growing demand for such garments. However, by the mid-eighteenth century, this legislation was either largely ignored or had been phased out, and Indian textiles began to flood the textile market, providing men and women from all different levels of society with access to fashionable yet affordable clothing and underclothing. By the end of the century, most common people owned and wore a variety of white cotton and linen, as well as colorful, patterned *Indiennes*, or *Indiennes*-style undergarments.

Nevertheless, because the restrictions on textile imports in the first half of the eighteenth century drove up prices, new undergarments purchased from the shops of linen drapers and tailors were most often purchased by those with some means, such as professionals, merchants, and other shopkeepers. Undergarments were expensive and new undergarments were difficult to acquire for the majority of the people in France. It cost about six *livres* to have a shirt or chemise made in Paris, not including the additional four to six *livres* to purchase the cotton, linen, or muslin for the shirt.³²³ In Rouen, Madame la marquise du Bec paid six livres for her chemise³²⁴ in addition to the cloth and buttons for the required garments.³²⁵ Similarly, Madame de Froneaque, a marchande

³²³ Fille LeGriz, *Memoire de Louvrage que jay fait pour Madame La marquise du bec*, 1 March 1774, *Féodalité et familles* 1 ER 1594, un mars 1774, Archives départementales de la Seine-Maritime, Rouen. 27 avril 1772, 27 April 1772, *Féodalité et Famille*, 1 ER 1594 27 avril 1772, Archives départementales de la Seine-Maritime, Rouen.

³²⁴ LeGriz.

³²⁵ Legris.

bonet piqué and lingère, charged six livres to make a chemise.³²⁶ The cost of having a shirt made, not including the cost of fabric, was equivalent to two week's pay for a poor working man, or meager lodgings for a month.³²⁷ Even the cost of fabric alone was more than the working poor could afford. Other newly fashionable undergarments were equally cost prohibitive for the working poor of France as textile prices rose and the greater demand for such garments resulted in more competitive pricing. Evidently, new undergarments were costly and limited to those who could afford them.

In a separate development, the shops of the linen-drapers *and marchandes des modes*, like the workshops of tailors and boutiques of the modistes, became "the theatres of the clothing revolution."³²⁸ Over the course of the eighteenth century, "shops became more inviting and hospitable spaces for women" thus changing the shopping environment into one of both consumption and entertainment.³²⁹ Linen shops were a feminine space "where shopkeepers, shop-girls, and their female customers" talked and did business.³³⁰ Linen-drapers generally dressed more soberly than their customers, presenting an air of respectability.³³¹ Their shops and personal appearances demonstrated the cultural standards of propriety associated with various undergarments, while still incorporating the latest fashions in underclothing into their dress. Furthermore, as linen was so

³²⁶ Madame de Froneaque, *Marchande bonet piqué a Paris*, 1781, B 4322, 2B1227, Archives Departementales des Yvelines.

³²⁷ Anne Marie Pugibet, "Contribution à l'étude de la criminalité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle: étude du vol de linge, 1710-1735" (*Mémoire de Maîtrise*, Université de Paris X., 1970), 14-25, 43-44; J. V. Quicroix, "Le Vol de linge et le voleur de linge, 1670-1765" (*Mémoire de Maîtrise*, Université de Paris X, 1970), 60-65.

³²⁸ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 320.

³²⁹ Jones, "Coquettes and Grisettes: Women Buying and Selling in Ancien Regime Paris," 34.

³³⁰ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 320.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

intrinsically linked to major life events—weddings, births, puberty, deaths, and religious ceremonies—the linen-draper clothed both men and women (and outfitted their homes) from birth through life and even after.³³² Thus, linen shops and linen-drapers supplied articles of underwear and ideas about them while influencing styles, shapes, and combinations.

In selling underclothes, linen drapers also sold cultural ideas about their goods. Linen drapers could encourage customers to purchase more, citing the health benefits of their goods. These merchants also promoted fashions which revealed their goods, such as raised skirts revealing decorative petticoats and low necklines revealing chemises and kerchiefs. Moreover, the tailors, who retained control over stay- and corset-making, shaped women's ideas about undergarments while simultaneously shaping their bodies.³³³ While medical professionals disparaged tight-lacing and encouraged women to forego their corsets, the anti-stay advice was generally rejected. At least half of the female population wore corsets throughout the eighteenth century, and fashion magazines depicted women clearly shaped by stays and corsets. It is likely that tailors continued to emphasize the usefulness and necessity of their wares for their customers. Tailors both created and promoted the ideal shape for women.

While linen-draper shops were open to people in all levels of society, for those who could not afford to buy their undergarments new there were other systems for accessing fashionable underclothes. In the cities, second-hand clothing dealers and shops were incredibly popular. According to Roche, "In a world of scarcity, resale was

³³² Ibid., 329.

³³³ Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France*, 83, 84.

essential; it prevented objects from being lost, ensured their re-use and facilitated the circulation of habits. In the case of clothes, at a time when the rich were consuming even more, resale allowed the poor to gain some benefit.”³³⁴ Author Nicolas des Essarts contends that without the second-hand dealers “countless poor citizens would be obliged to go without necessities.”³³⁵ In the early part of the eighteenth century, a used shirt cost about two *livres*. By mid-century, as demand increased and prices became more competitive, a second-hand shirt could be sold for about four *livres*, the equivalent of about one week’s work. While making one’s own shirt was an option, if one could acquire the material, it was generally cheaper to purchase a second-hand shirt than to buy the cloth to make a new shirt for oneself. Therefore, the used clothing trade made it possible for the working public to afford the newfound necessity of undergarments.

Another option for the working people of France, limited primarily to domestic servants, were gifts of clothing. Daniel Roche has explored this phenomenon thoroughly, finding that servants were often gifted the used clothing of their wealthy employers. This, Roche claims, resulted in domestics with extravagant wardrobes, as well as servants who acted as fashion intermediaries, taking fancy city fashions home to working-class lodgings in the city and to laboring families in the countryside. Specifically, “the dress of domestic servants was designed as a...demonstration of the omnipotence of their masters. Through their clothes, servants were introduced to habits of consumption which they, in their turn, passed on to other sectors of the population.”³³⁶ Moreover, as Roche explains,

³³⁴ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 348.

³³⁵ Nicolas Toussaint des Essarts, “Fripier,” in *Dictionnaire universel de police* (Paris: 1786-90).

³³⁶ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 106.

before the ubiquity of wage labor had standardized the position of domestic servants, gifts in kind, old clothes among them, were part of their remuneration, along with food and lodgings. The contract of hire sometimes provided for servants to be given items of clothing, lengths of material, or even a bonus so that they could change their old clothes for a festival or funeral.”³³⁷

Furthermore, “It is clear from Parisian wills that employers frequently bequeathed clothes or linen to their manservants and maidservants.”³³⁸ Underclothes were common gifts. For example, François Grimod left his two manservants all of his nightshirts and daytime shirts without embroidery, along with his corsets, nightcaps, stockings, coats, waistcoats, breeches, dressing gowns, collars, and handkerchiefs.³³⁹ As with domestic servants, some merchants promised gifts of clothing at the end of an apprenticeship.³⁴⁰ Even the queen made gifts of her old gowns for her ladies in waiting when she was finished with them. Of course, servants, apprentices, and ladies-in-waiting did not necessarily wish to imitate their superiors by wearing their cast-offs—some may have chosen to wear their gifted clothing, but others sold them to second-hand traders for their high resale value.³⁴¹ Regardless of what was done with these garments, the culture of gifting clothing and underclothing “affected the whole social body since servants linked town and country, and refined and inferior milieus.”³⁴²

In the countryside, where linen fashions permeated more quickly than fashions in outer clothing, people were more likely to make their own undergarments, but they also

³³⁷ Ibid., 101.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe*, trans., Vicki Whittaker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 21.

³⁴¹ Amanda Vickery, “Women and the World of Goods: a Lancashire Consumer and her Possessions, 1750-81,” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 284.

³⁴² Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 102.

had access to underclothes through peddlers. Small, local shops often stocked lengths of cloth used for making undergarments and household linens, as well as some basic underclothes. “In his two shops and his stockroom, Jacques Bérard had a total of 195 pairs of stockings of all sizes and materials, 20 dozen bonnets... ribbons, laces of all possible colours, and fabrics: cordillat, cadiz, serge, drugget, calico, canvas, ratine, muslin woollen cloth and homespun, of varied quality and origin.”³⁴³ Similarly, the Droz family’s haberdashery shop included “light articles of clothing, haberdashery, hosiery and fancy goods.”³⁴⁴ Thus, local shops provided basic items for assembling one’s own linens. Like local merchants, the elite traveling merchants, the *Dauphinois*, offered a wide array of cloth and small clothing articles. The selection offered by a *Dauphinois*, who had a horse at his disposal, included “a vast array of fabrics (cottons, muslins, percalines, calicos and silks).”³⁴⁵ These fabrics accounted for over three-quarters of the value of the merchant’s goods. Additionally, these merchants carried “a sizeable quantity of haberdashery goods and trinkets... clothing accessories and a few articles of clothing (gloves, socks, headgear, hats, belts and cloaks) [as well as], some small luxury items: spectacles, fabric collars, bracelets, spices and objects used in country ceremonies.”³⁴⁶ Less elite itinerant merchants also peddled readymade linens, often second-hand. Like domestic servants, peddlers acted as fashion intermediaries, bringing city clothing and styles to the country, as well as spreading fashions from small towns and villages. In fact, historian Laurence Fontaine demonstrates that peddling, with its extensive range of

³⁴³ Fontaine, 19.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 30.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 184.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

influence, played a crucial role in the formation of the modern European economy. In particular, peddling provided a significant means of distributing new commodities such as books, watches, and tobacco, and garments. According to Fontaine, “from the seventeenth century onwards, the dense network of travelling merchants introduced new fashions, which symbolized a new way of relating to oneself and to others. The enthusiasm for household linen and the emergence of underclothes overturned accepted standards of modesty and altered the way the erotic was defined; and accessories, ribbons and lace blurred the everyday distinctions of social hierarchies.”³⁴⁷

Peddlers, like their stationary counterparts in the city, were concerned with their own appearance, placing great importance on fine shirts, collars, and handkerchiefs. Thus, they “created a hierarchy of appearances which reproduced the peddling hierarchy [while] distinguishing the migrant merchant from the other villagers.”³⁴⁸ A peddler’s status and creditworthiness, like that of any other man, were to be gauged from the whiteness of the clothes he wore. Peddlers not only sported new undergarments, modeling these fashions for their customers; they also sold them to their customers in the countryside and mountains so that they, too, could participate in new cultural behaviors. According to Fontaine, objects such as white undergarments and handkerchiefs “were essential milestones in the process of the civilization of manners [and] were... appropriated by the masses, who thus gained access to the culture which had produced them.”³⁴⁹ Yet, like all individuals and groups, those who lived outside of the cities

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 188-189.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 180.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 179.

appropriated the undergarments in new and different ways. Just as the handkerchief was used in the country not for blowing one's nose, but for waving to one another, thus demonstrating one's status as a handkerchief owner—one wouldn't want to befoul one's prized possession, and thus the sleeve remained the location for nose-blowing—new undergarments were sported proudly as markers of status. "In the mountains the importance of the shirt was as a status symbol."³⁵⁰ Thus, as people acquired undergarments, they also bought into the cultural standards imbued in the garments.

Individuals often acquired and wore undergarments to demonstrate their status, adherence to cultural standards, and inclusion in a group. Because undergarments had become more visible, they, like outer clothing, could convey information about the wearer in this visual culture. Therese LeDuc, who had recently begun a position as a domestic purchased new clothing and underclothing—including two decorative petticoats (one of *indiennes*) and *manchettes* with three rows of lace—because she was "*curieuse d'avoir des hardes propres pour son état*."³⁵¹ For LeDuc, it was important that the undergarments which would be fashionably visible would reflect her new position and status, as well as be fashionable. She was less interested in buying new underwear that was unlikely to be seen, suggesting a preoccupation with appearances. Similarly, many women in the crafts, trades, and services sported several petticoats of *Indienne* or imitation printed cottons. Because these petticoats were commonly worn with *casaquins*, or short gowns, the petticoats were as visible as outer-skirts. Such clothing choices

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 180.

³⁵¹ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Marie Jeanne Magniot fe. de Robert Mennier terassier, elle gagne demier, Marie Catherine Mennier ve. de Jaques Nicolas Cossart coiffeuse, elle ouvriere en linge deffenderesses et accusées, 21 February 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 21 Fevrier 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

reflected both an interest in fashion and the need for sturdy, practical garments, while marking these women as working women, rather than women of leisure. For working men, the white shirt was omnipresent and visible beneath vests and coats, clearly indicating an appropriation of standards and a desire to demonstrate this appropriation. Thus, because of the visibility of undergarments, individuals' choices of garments—while limited by fashion and cultural standards—conveyed one's status, identity, and role.

II

Once customers purchased or made their undergarments, they took their cultural commodities home and personalized them, beginning the process of de-commodification. Just as the handkerchief and shirt were appropriated differently by different groups—some for fashion, some cleanliness, some status, and some a combination thereof—individuals made use of their undergarments in different ways. Undergarments could be adapted to fit one's needs and lifestyle, as well as one's own style choices. Once undergarments were acquired, regardless of whether they were new, second-hand, or home-made, individuals took their garments and altered them both in terms of form and function.

It is not uncommon to use objects for other than their intended purpose, and undergarments were no exception. Undergarments could be, and often were, used for a variety of functions. Like many personal belongings, underclothes could hold sentimental

value; thus undergarments could be used for either practical or sentimental purposes.³⁵² Old and outgrown undergarments could be remade for smaller children or repurposed into rags for cleaning or sanitary napkins. They could also be used to patch other garments or be made into small personal items such as pincushions.³⁵³

Linens were laboriously maintained and if beyond mending, adapted. [Women] regularly cut ancient sheets into tea cloths and worn tablecloths into china cloths and dusters. Clothing received particular attention. It was mended, made over, retrimmed, redyed, converted into household items or cast off to servants.³⁵⁴

Underclothing could also be used for a combination of practical and sentimental functions such as wrapping a new baby in his father's shirt.³⁵⁵ As Roche explains, not only is there sentiment in using a parent's shirt to wrap a baby, but the act is also "the first significant act in the socialization of children" making a child's natural body into a social body.³⁵⁶ Even abandoned children like Denise Moreau were often found wrapped in an old chemise.³⁵⁷ An old chemise could also be made into swaddling bands. Yet, undergarments could also be used for more sinister purposes. A young English school mistress, Anne Gordon, concealed her pregnancy, and ultimately the infant "was found...wrapp'd first in a chemise, and then in a towel. The sleeve of the chemise being separated from the body was stuffed into its mouth, by which it was suffocated."³⁵⁸ Thus, while undergarments were primarily worn for fashion, hygiene, status, and other

³⁵² Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Vickery, "Women and the World of Goods: a Lancashire Consumer and her Possessions, 1750-81," 282.

³⁵⁵ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 154-155.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Denise Moreau, 17 Juillet 1701, Enfants Trouvés, 424, 979, Archives de Paris, Paris.

³⁵⁸ Justice John Heath, Report on the Case of Anne Gordon, 12 April 1805, HO 47/34, 38, British National Archives, Kew, London.

culturally significant purposes, these garments could also be used and transformed to suit alternative functions.

Despite the myriad alternative uses for underclothes, most were used for their intended purpose; however, individuals often altered their garments to fit their needs and desires. The most obvious methods of altering and personalizing undergarments included making physical changes such as the addition of decorations, repairing and patching, using fripperies such as lace and ribbons sold by fripières and marchandes des modes. By adding to one's underclothes, one could demonstrate one's own sense of style and status. François Boucher's painting *La Marchande de modes*, also known as *le Matin*, depicts one of these merchants selling her ribbons and laces to a young woman (Figure 3.2). In the painting, the marchande is displaying her wares to a young woman fashionably undressed in her petticoats, a corset, and a matinée. The decorations sold by the marchande could be added to petticoats, corsets, garters, engageants, peignoirs, matinees, and more. By adding ribbons and lace, a woman could personalize her undergarments and display her personal style. Moreover, the shops of the marchandes des modes were not only frequented by the wealthy. In fact, women of all walks of life could purchase a small piece of ribbon or embroidery to add to her garments.³⁵⁹ For only a few sous, a woman could revamp her simple undergarments and make them more elegant and fashionable to her own taste.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ Jones, "Coquettes and Grisettes: Women Buying and Selling in Ancien Regime Paris," 30, 33.

³⁶⁰ Froneaque; Vendu a Madame du bec. ce qui suit scavior.



Figure 3.2. François Boucher, *La Marchande de modes*, 1746, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

While decorations were primarily the purview of women, both men and women wore undergarments that were repaired, patched, and darned—for with wear comes tear. While the practice of repairing clothing primarily fell to women in a household, the high cost of undergarments meant that most people wore garments with some degree of repairs. Types of patching and repairs were unique to individuals. For example, Gaspard Soyeux, aged fifty-two, wore a “chemise de toile blanche rapiecée.”³⁶¹ Because there was no mention of miss-matched patching, Soyeux’s chemise was likely repaired with darning and some matching patches, as many extant garments are. Marie Genevieve Sueur and her daughter Jeanne both wore patterned petticoats “tout rempiecés.”³⁶² Because their garments were described as coarse and of poor quality, their repaired petticoats were likely patched with materials that did not match, like an unnamed ten-year-old boy’s pantallons de toile which were “rapiecé avec Siamoise Rayé de differents couleurs.”³⁶³

Yet, patched and darned undergarments were not only for the poor. Even the king’s undergarments were often repaired and returned to his wardrobe for wear.³⁶⁴ In several charts detailing the “Etat du Linge” drawn up by the keepers of the Lingerie du Guardemeuble, chemises, linges du bain, and other “linge d’affaires” were often left

³⁶¹ Soyeux.

³⁶² Sueur f^m Budde et sa fille.

³⁶³ Bureau Central du Canton de Paris, le 15 Prairial an 4, 14 Floréal 4 (3 May 1796), Etat des citoyens et citoyennes décédés de mort subites, violentes, ou accidentelles, suivant les procès verbaux et rapports des Commissaires de Police parvenus au Bureau Central depuis le premier Floréal au 4^e jusqu’au 30 dudit. Justice de Paix du 4^{ème} Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, le 15 Prairial an 4, Archives de Paris, Paris.

³⁶⁴ Etat du Linge de la Lingerie du Guardemeuble de Versailles, 3 October 1785, Archives de la Maison du Roi, O¹ 3377, 28, Archives Nationales, Versailles; Thierry, Etat Du Linge Laissé au chateau de fontainebleau à la garde du M. Longevin garçon du gardemeuble, 1783, Archives de la Maison du Roi, O¹ 3377, 3, Archives Nationales, Fontainebleau.

behind for repairs when the king moved on to a new palace.³⁶⁵ Moreover, extant garments worn by royal children show evidence of patching and darning.³⁶⁶ Reuse and repair by a king suggests that the recycling of underwear is not only a story of economic necessity.

A significant personalization of undergarments in the eighteenth century took place through the marking of initials, usually with thread or ink, on the garments. Interestingly, this practice applied only to undergarments, as other clothing was not monogrammed. The application of one's initials onto one's underclothes was most likely a practice used to distinguish garments sent out for washing, and to keep the clothing of individuals within a household separate. Marking one's undergarments with one's monogram appears to have been more common among shopkeepers, artisans, and professionals, and less common among wage-earners (Table 9). Nevertheless, marking one's linens was an indication of ownership and could be seen at all levels of society. Of ninety-nine coroner's reports which specifically mention monogrammed or otherwise marked undergarments, fifty-seven reports detail underclothing with initials emblazoned on them in thread or ink. The coroners also clearly noted when the garments were "non marqué" as though this were both significant and unusual. Only three of the ninety-nine

³⁶⁵ Etat du Linge Existant au chateau de fontainebleau Verifie au 1er. avril 1784, 1 April 1784, Archives de la Maison du Roi, O¹ 3377, 7, Archives Nationales, Fontainebleau; Etat du Linge resté, en vertu de l'ordre de Monsieur le Commissaire Général entre les mains du Sr. Baugé Conciere et dont il se rend le depositaire et le Garant, October 1784, Archives du Maison du Roi, O¹ 3377, 18, Archives Nationales.

³⁶⁶ *Shirt; Vest*, 1689-1700, London Museum.

reports noted persons wearing undergarments marked with numbers, which were likely marks from early manufacturing.³⁶⁷

INITIALS AND MARKINGS

	Own Initials	Other Initials	Numbers	Unmarked
Office-holders & Professionals	7	3	1	6
Artisans & Shopkeepers	14	9	1	10
Wage-earners	8	8	1	26
Domestics	1	1		

Table 9. Initials and Markings on Undergarments.

Undergarment monograms came in a variety of forms. Markings could include just the initial of one's surname like Consul Leon Delanney's fancy chemise which was "marqué de la lettre D. avec un gros point" or toymaker Sebastienne Victoire Rivoal's "chemise marqué R."³⁶⁸ Others included the initials of their first, middle, and last names as did grocer Marie August Racin who sported "une chemise de toile marqué d'un A.M. et R. en fil rouge."³⁶⁹ Among others, a fruit-seller from Brie, Claude Laurent Mary, also

³⁶⁷ André, 15 Germinal 5 (4 April 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 15 Germinal an 5, Archives de Paris, Paris; Jⁿ Samuel Brum; Bureau Central du Canton de Paris, le 22 Floréal an 4, 12 Germinal 4 (1 April 1796), Etat des citoyens et citoyennes décédés de mort subites, violentes, ou accidentales qui ont eu lieu d'après le procès verbaux et rapports des Commissaires de Police parvenues au Bureau Central depuis le p^{er} Germinal an 4^e jusqu'au 30 dudit., Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, le 22 Floréal an 4, Archives de Paris, Paris; *Shirt*.

³⁶⁸ Delanney, 24 Germinal 6 (13 April 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, , D4U1 7, 24 Germinal an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris; Rivoal, 7 Brumaire 8 (29 October 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 8 Brumaire an huit, Archives de Paris, Paris.

³⁶⁹ Racine, 2 Vendemiaire 6 (23 September 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, An 6 4 Vendemiaire, Archives de Paris, Paris.

wore a chemise with all three initials—CLM.³⁷⁰ Yet, the most common combination appears to have been two letters: a first and last initial. The cabinet maker Pierre Jean Danis wore “une chemise marqué de PD” while candlestick maker Louis Mathurin Antoine Bricard’s chemise was “marquée L.B.”³⁷¹ Alternatively, some used a middle and last initial, presumably those who used their middle names rather than first names. For example, young Louise Emilie Charlotte Harmand wore “une chemise de toile blanche marquée E.H.” and carried “un mouchoir blanc marqué E.H.” in her pocket.³⁷² Similarly, Edme Francois Terron was dressed in “une chemise marqué F. T.”³⁷³ While most marked only their chemises and handkerchiefs, a few, like Philippe Coronelle, marked other undergarments such as stockings and caleçons: Coronelle sported “une paire de bas bleus marquées P.C....une chemise de toile marquée P.C. ...et un callecon marqué en deux endroits P.C.”³⁷⁴ Henry Canda, a butcher, similarly marked additional linen, including “une chemise marquée H. C. ...un tablier de toile blanche, marquée H. C. et un mouchoir de poche à carreaux bleus, marqué également H.C.”³⁷⁵ Initialing one’s undergarments appears to have been a common practice, particularly for tradesmen, merchants, and other, more affluent persons—often those who could purchase new undergarments.

While those with some means were more likely to adorn their underclothes with initials, many of the working poor sported initials as well. The initials, however, were

³⁷⁰ Mary, 14 Messidor 7 (2 July 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 16 Messidor an 7, Archives de Paris, Paris.

³⁷¹ Bricard; Danis.

³⁷² Harmand.

³⁷³ Terron, 12 Vendemiaire 8 (4 October 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 12 Vendemiaire an huit, Archives de Paris, Paris.

³⁷⁴ Philippe Coronelle, 24 Brumaire 6 (14 November 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 24 Brumaire an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

³⁷⁵ H. Canda, 23 Prairial 7 (11 June 1799), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 24 Prairial an Sept, Archives de Paris, Paris.

much more likely to be someone else's, rather than their own. This discrepancy in personalization is indicative of a thriving second-hand trade. Some wore undergarments with a combination of their own initials and other letters. For example, Marguerite Genevieve Rouvre, a housekeeper, wore "une chemise marquée G.R."—her own initials—and carried "un mouchoir de toile marqué d'un O."³⁷⁶ Similarly, Louis Didier Dherbois, a rentier, wore "deux chemises, dont une marquée d'une L et de deux D et la seconde d'une S et d'un I."³⁷⁷ These consumers appear to have and wear a combination of new and second-hand undergarments with the new clothing being personalized with their own initials. On the other hand, the second-hand trade involved more than just the second-hand dealers—the *dépeceuses* unpicked garments and monograms in old clothes.³⁷⁸ Thus, it is possible that used garments which either never had markings or which had previously had markings removed were monogrammed by the secondary consumers. More than a quarter of the working poor listed in the coroner's reports sported undergarments with initials that were not their own like Louise Fauque, a paper-maker, wore "une chemise de toile marqué d'un O. en fil rouge."³⁷⁹ Likewise, Adrien Denis Vaudié, a butcher, wore "une chemise de toile marqués R.V."³⁸⁰ It is also possible that these persons did not send their laundry out and thus did not need to distinguish their underclothes from others'. It is also possible that some of these individuals stole the

³⁷⁶ Rouvre, 4 Prairial 6 (23 May 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 4 Prairial an 6, Archives de Paris, Paris.

³⁷⁷ Dherbois, 3 Nivose 7 (23 December 1798), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 3 Nivose an 7, Archives de Paris, Paris.

³⁷⁸ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 347.

³⁷⁹ Fauque, 29 Fructidor 5 (15 September 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 29 Fructidor an 5, Archives de Paris, Paris

³⁸⁰ Vaudier 2 Vendémiaire 6 (23 September 1797), Justice de Paix du 4ème Arrondissement Ancien: Section du Louvre, Puis du Museum, D4U1 7, 17 Germinal, Archives de Paris, Paris.

underclothes they wore. For some, due to their daily needs and lifestyles, monogramming their undergarments was less important than owning and wearing undergarments.

The eighteenth-century French public, impelled by standards of cleanliness, propriety, fashion, and their own values, sought to own a selection of undergarments to serve their needs. For many, the garments did not need to be new to meet their requirements—clean, sturdy undergarments were more important than new, elegant, decorated undergarments. While the second-hand trade provided these more functional garments, it also supplied those, perhaps more fashion-conscious consumers who desired more frivolous options at a lower cost. The second-hand market provided those less concerned with previous bodily contamination and more concerned with their own needs and desires with underclothes at reasonable prices.

III

Second-hand dealers not only sold goods to consumers, they also provided a means by which to sell one's used undergarments for much-needed cash. For many of the working poor in France, clothing and underclothing was their only wealth. Clothing, as Roche eloquently observes, "was part of the economy of everyday... Precious and scarce among the poor, clothing was increasingly more than a necessity, and something to covet. It was a relatively convenient means of exchange, whose monetary value constantly grew."³⁸¹ Clothing could be used for barter and to pay debts, or sold for cash when

³⁸¹ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 342-343.

necessitated by hardship.³⁸² Just as women were the principal household consumers, so too were they in charge of barter, pawning, and sale in times of need. “The woman was in charge of the household: it was she who, in case of need, chose the items to be pawned—which were usually clothes, jewels and linen, i.e. whatever belonged to the domestic sphere, the body, and appearances.”³⁸³ Moreover, resale was primarily a female occupation, “a sign of its adaptation to the circumstances of ordinary life and family economy.”³⁸⁴ Because the demand for undergarments was continually increasing, undergarments were commonly sold to used-clothing dealers, since the garments were easily resold to the underwear-hungry populace. Selling undergarments and clothing to a used-clothing dealer, even for a fraction of their cost, was a way to get money for those in need. Thus, the second-hand trade in undergarments provided the locus for re-commodification.

Undergarments, like all clothing, were both valuable and easy to re-sell. Hence, an industry dealing in their re-commodification developed over the eighteenth century. Prior to the eighteenth century, the guild of *fripriers* held the monopoly on re-sale, particularly of used clothing and domestic goods, while the *brocanteurs* dealt in a variety of second-hand goods. From 1664 the merchant *fripriers* dealt in the re-sale of a variety of goods, both old and new, which they often embellished, mended, and cleaned for sale. Fripiers sold “merchandise of every possible type and quality;” they could “buy and sell, barter and exchange all sorts of furniture, clothes, linen, tapestries, fabrics, lace, braid,

³⁸² Ibid., 343.

³⁸³ Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 210.

³⁸⁴ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 348.

trimmings, muffs, furs, leather goods, hats, belts, shoulder-belts...and all other types of old and new resold merchandise.”³⁸⁵ The *revendeurs*, who were authorized to buy and sell in the streets without forming a guild were the male rivals to the *fripiers*. Over the course of the eighteenth century, *revendeurs* and *revendeuses* became more specialized and stratified. At the top were the *revendeuses à la toilette* who “bought and sold fabrics, lace, jewels, and other items which the rich wished to dispose of,” often for ready cash to pay debts.³⁸⁶ These items were second-hand but never old, fine and only gently used. Below the *revendeuses à la toilette* came the *fripiers* who ran shops which catered generally to the lesser bourgeoisie. The *revendeuses en vieux* came next, selling old clothes, linens, and other items to the masses, often from street stalls. They sold items alongside *revendeurs*, “who sold old clothes, small linen goods and old breeches,” and *revendeuses* who sold old lace, ribbons, and other small linens.³⁸⁷ As more clothing flooded the second-hand market, specialty workers sprang up to repair, re-make, alter, take apart, and pull out stitching. These *refaçonneuses*, *raccomodeuses*, and *dépeceuses* were at the very bottom of the re-sale hierarchy.³⁸⁸ It was the *fripiers* and *revendeuses* who primarily dealt in the second-hand lingerie trade.

While *fripiers* and *revendeuses* bought used clothing from a variety of persons, they did face restrictions. These merchants “were forbidden to buy clothes from people with infectious diseases or from soldiers; they were forbidden to buy anything from children or apprentices or from domestic or other servants without the permission of their

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 346.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 346-347.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 347.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

parents or employers, or from vagabonds or strangers.”³⁸⁹ Moreover, they were required to diligently record all purchases in a police register, listing the items purchased and the price, as well as the name, status, and address of the seller.³⁹⁰ Such restrictions were instigated to deter theft, as stolen goods often wound up in the second-hand trade, particularly undergarments. The high demand, easy access to resale outlets, and mundanity of undergarments made them an ideal target for thieves.

Undergarments were publicly visible goods from their manufacture through their sale as a commodity. Linens were on display in shops for ladies to peruse and purchase, as well as on mannequins to demonstrate new styles and modes of dress (Figure 3.3).³⁹¹ If one cared to look, Pandora fashion dolls and other lay figures were fashionably clothed underneath, wearing miniature shirts and chemises, calecons and petticoats, corsets and panniers, stockings and sleeves, collars and fichus.³⁹² Yet, once purchased, undergarments became more private and personalized through processes of de-commodification. Undergarments were adapted to fit the needs and purposes of the wearers. Finally, for those who no longer had need of their personal underclothes, re-sale was a common option. Thus underwear, influenced by public standards and personal preferences, cycled from public commodity to private good and back to public commodity and from person to person, morphing to individuals’ needs.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 348.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ *Underskirt; Undershirt for Artist's lay figure*, 1750-1762, London Museum.

³⁹² *Chemise*, 1756-1760, London Museum; *Petticoat; Doll's Petticoat*, 1756-1760, London Museum; *Underskirt; Undershirt for Artist's lay figure*.



Figure 3.3. Pandora (Fashion Doll), 18th Century.

4. Lingerie Larceny

On the morning of August 14, 1746, Anne Carpe, a *lingère*, or linen worker, left for work, locking her door as usual. When she returned home late in the evening, everything seemed normal until she went to put away her clothing for the evening and found, to her great surprise, her armoire door (which she always locked and for which she had the only key in her pocket) had been forced open. She was stunned to find, upon opening the broken door, the armoire was empty, her dresses and undergarments gone. To make matters worse, five shirts she was repairing for a customer had disappeared from the armoire as well.³⁹³

Undergarments, both valuable enough for resale and mundane enough that they were unlikely to be discovered, were an ideal target for thieves. Examining the theft of clothing in general, and undergarments in particular, throughout the eighteenth century provides for an understanding of the ways in which the majority of people in France accepted and participated in changing sartorial and corporeal habits.³⁹⁴ Clothing historian Daniel Roche explains that the theft of linen and clothing changed in terms of both its increasing frequency and its perceived threat to the social order, ultimately revealing “both mental changes affecting consumption and sociological changes among

³⁹³ Jean Baptiste Joseph Thierry, Anne Carpe fille majeure ouvriere en linge et demeurante a Paris, 14 Aout 1764, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, Archives Nationales, Paris.

³⁹⁴ Daniel Roche explores the connection between theft and clothing in general for financially fragile populations in Paris. See chapter 12 of his work. Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 332.

consumers.”³⁹⁵ By exploring the theft of undergarments, it is possible to discover changing ideas about undergarments and the body which permeated eighteenth-century French society, as well as their significance to individuals who acquired undergarments in order to embody these changing concepts and adapt them to suit their own needs and purposes. Specifically, the increase in undergarment theft over the course of the eighteenth century reflects the increase in underwear consumption and highlights the increasing value of these garments.

An examination of cases of clothing theft brought to the judges at the Châtelet in Paris reveal that undergarments were more commonly stolen than outer clothing; about three quarters of clothing stolen were underclothes.³⁹⁶ According to Roche, “It was linen—so easy to snatch—which was most frequently stolen.”³⁹⁷ However, it is not simply the ease of filching a handkerchief from a pocket in a crowd or a shirt from a bundle of laundry waiting to be washed on the quay that made linen such a common item of theft. The growing prevalence of linen throughout the eighteenth century, as shifting concepts of the body, health, and respectability led to wider ownership of and more frequent changing of undergarments, resulted in larger numbers of undergarments in circulation and use than of outer clothing. Where previously even the wealthy had only one change of undergarments, by the mid-eighteenth century, the average person owned several undergarments to change with some regularity, but only one or two dresses or

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 333.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 344.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

suits of clothing.³⁹⁸ For example, Anne Carpe who found her entire wardrobe of clothing missing from her armoire, reported the loss of only two dresses, but eight chemises. Therefore, Roche's conclusion that the majority of thefts in Paris were of linen because it was easy to steal is only part of the explanation—the growing preponderance of these garments and the changing sensibilities regarding undergarments made them common targets for thieves. Despite the greater number of undergarments in circulation, there were evidently not enough to satisfy the exponentially increasing demand for greater undergarment ownership and wearing, which incited the theft of these garments, both for resale and for personal use.

Stolen clothing and undergarments were often sold to used-clothing traders. The theft of clothing as an integral part of eighteenth-century clothing circulation, particularly as part of the used clothing trade, is well-established. Roche has examined the rising occurrence of clothing theft, despite more extreme punitive measures for such thefts, as clothing consumption increased throughout the eighteenth century.³⁹⁹ Similarly, historian Laurence Fontaine has shown that peddlers and other traveling used-clothing sellers aided in the distribution of city clothing and fashions to the country, often by means of stolen items. The resale of stolen garments was a common phenomenon, and resellers, the *fripriers*, *revendeurs*, and *brocanteurs*, were notorious for selling stolen goods. Thieves were also often caught when they tried to sell off articles they had stolen. For many of these resellers, stolen undergarments became integral to their livelihoods as the demand

³⁹⁸ Montpensier, 149. Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, See Chapter 7.

³⁹⁹ Fontaine; Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*.

for undergarments among all classes increased, since stolen garments could be bought cheaply—thieves were often desperate for money—and then sold at a higher price. On the other side of the transaction were those who purchased used undergarments, sometimes to sell yet again, but more often for their own personal use. Thieves did not always steal to sell, however. Undergarment thieves sometimes stole items to wear for themselves, as was the case with nineteen-year-old Claudine Boursier, the shop girl for a wig-maker who was eventually charged and sentenced for the theft of Anne Carpe's wardrobe. In fact, Miss Boursier was caught trying to sell the five men's shirts Miss Carpe was repairing for a customer, and a subsequent search of Miss Boursier's home led to the discovery of Miss Carpe's personal undergarments (marked with her initials, A. C.) in Miss Boursier's own wardrobe.⁴⁰⁰ Miss Boursier's choice to both sell and keep some of the garments she stole indicates both the growing necessity of numerous undergarments and the value of undergarments in the French economy.

For thieves like Miss Boursier, in possession of stolen undergarments there were two options: sell them for cash or keep them for personal use. The theft of undergarments for resale provides a sense of their value, economic and cultural, as well as personal. A notorious realm of stolen goods, the used clothing trade made garments available to common people who could not afford new garments. Conversely, theft for personal gain afforded individuals access to garments for personal use. For many, criminality and the risks inherent in theft were worthwhile either to procure cash or to meet social and cultural standards of appearance. An examination of several cases of theft involving

⁴⁰⁰ Thierry, Anne Carpe fille majeure ouvriere en linge et demeurante a Paris.

undergarments, which were heard by the judges at the Châtelet in Paris, illuminates the individual and societal values of these garments and the ways in which theft allowed the common people to partake in these values.

I

The theft of undergarments was a necessary social evil. As changing social values emphasized the requirement of several changes of undergarments, and as people from all walks of life began adopting new sensibilities about their bodies and undergarments, the demand for undergarments increased exponentially. However, undergarments were expensive, and new undergarments were difficult to acquire for the majority of the people in France. Despite the expense, people felt they were essential and were willing to break the law to obtain them—for some, undergarments were more important than the law. Others, knowing their value, stole them to sell to used-clothing merchants for cash, particularly when they had little recourse to funds to pay for expenses like rent, food, and travel. The demand for undergarments could not be satisfied by undergarment producers, nor could new undergarments be produced and sold at an affordable rate for the average French laborer, resulting in greater incidence of undergarment theft.

Throughout the eighteenth century, linen became a prime object of theft, not only owing to greater demand, but also because it was becoming more ubiquitous among personal wardrobes. A working person's wardrobe consisted of about six to eight articles of outer clothing and almost three times as many undergarments. Because of this increase in ownership, it was not unusual to end up stealing significantly more undergarments than

clothes. For thieves like Pierre Gabriel Ledien, a tinsmith who broke into a house and stole the contents of the household armoire, undergarments made up the bulk of a thief's loot.⁴⁰¹ Claudine Boursier similarly found herself in possession of more undergarments than outer garments when she stole the entire contents of Anne Carpe's wardrobe.⁴⁰² Thus, the prevalence of undergarments in personal wardrobes was reflected in an increase in underwear theft throughout the eighteenth century.

Not only did undergarments make up the bulk of clothing thefts because of their increasing predominance in personal wardrobes—particularly in comparison to more expensive outer clothing—they were also more mundane and pervasive on a day-to-day basis. People hung linen to dry outside their homes, sent bundles of undergarments to the laundress for washing or packets of linens to the seamstress for mending, and laundresses lined hampers of linen along the quay. This regular ubiquity of undergarments in public places made them tempting for opportunists. A thief famously stole Jean-Jacques Rousseau's shirts from the garret where his recently washed linen had been left out to dry.⁴⁰³ The Gaudat sisters pinched chemises from the laundry, and Pierre Ledien stole two bundles of laundry, which had been set out for the washerwoman, from a cobbler's shop.⁴⁰⁴ Meanwhile, Pierre Delouer pick-pocketed handkerchiefs from unsuspecting

⁴⁰¹ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demande. et accusateur, Pierre Gabriel Ledien ferblantier deffendeur et accusé, 8 February 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 8 Febr. 1765, Archives de Paris, Paris.

⁴⁰² Thierry, Anne Carpe fille majeure ouvriere en linge et demeurante a Paris.

⁴⁰³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions*, Oeuvres complètes, vol. I (Paris: Penguin, 1953), 339-340.

⁴⁰⁴ Linous, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Marie Nicole Gandat fille travaillant chez les Blanchisseuses deffesnderess et accusée, 16 January 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 16 Janvier 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris; Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demande. et accusateur, Pierre Gabriel Ledien ferblantier deffendeur et accusé.

passers-by along the quay and hid his deeds in the crowd.⁴⁰⁵ Linen and undergarments were everywhere, and thieves took advantage of the greater opportunities for linen theft. It is thus not surprising that linens constituted a significant portion of clothing thefts in the eighteenth century, since people's wardrobes were made up of significantly more undergarments than outer garments, and linens were easy to snatch for opportunist thieves.

II

Despite the ease of snatching a shirt from a clothesline or laundry bundle, most thieves turned to larceny out of desperation. Most thieves were from the lower social groups and only occasional offenders. Overall, there were more male thieves than female. Two thirds of male thieves were wage earners, including journeymen, laborers, assistants, and errand-boys. Eleven percent of male thieves were domestic servants, primarily from the lowest levels of service. Of the female thieves, almost fifty percent were wage-earners, primarily employed in the textile trades. Nineteen percent of female thieves were old-clothes dealers, and seven percent were laundresses.⁴⁰⁶ These wage-earning thieves were primarily people of little means, but some had even less. Twenty percent of thieves were unemployed at the time of their offense, like Jean Dosseur, an unemployed servant, or Jean Baptiste LeSeuer, an unemployed postillion, despite declaring a trade, status, or

⁴⁰⁵ Moreau and Linous, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Pierre DeMaurier tailleur pour femmes deffendeur et accusé, 16 January 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 16 Janvier 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴⁰⁶ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 338-339.

work experience.⁴⁰⁷ However, some thieves, including François Bellegarde, had neither trade nor position.⁴⁰⁸ Others, like Gilles Herbert Filassier, claimed neither status nor domicile.⁴⁰⁹ Furthermore, clothing theft was more common in the cold winter months, when seasonal employment was down and unskilled laborers experienced greater hardship.⁴¹⁰ Hence, we may conclude that the impoverished were occasionally impelled to steal in order to provide for their own survival.

Thefts of linen and undergarments took various forms, from handkerchiefs pinched from pockets, to shirts purloined from bundles of laundry along the quay, to items lifted from personal armoires in homes and rented rooms. Most undergarment thefts, for both men and women, “were carried out close to home, in a shared bedroom, in a workshop or shop, at a laundress’s street stall, from the counter of a small trader, even from a stall selling old clothes.”⁴¹¹ Claudine Boursier, who stole from Anne Carpe, was a friend of the victim. A witness said that he saw Miss Boursier, whom he knew to be a friend of Miss Carpe’s, leaving Miss Carpe’s house. He said he often saw her coming and going from Miss Carpe’s house. The other witnesses corroborated this information about Boursier and Carpe being friends, claiming they had seen Miss Carpe’s friend leaving

⁴⁰⁷ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Jean Baptiste LeSeuer Postillon ci-devans du S. Duverges Mtre. Des Postes à Estampes et actuellement sans condition defendeur et accusé, 14 August 1764, Fonds du Chatelet, Y10260, 14 Aoust 1764, Archives Nationales, Paris. Moreau and Linous, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Jean Dosseur domestique sans condition deffendeur et accusé, 27 February 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 27 Fevrier 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴⁰⁸ Moreau and Linous, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, François Bellegarde sans état deffendeur et accusé, 6 January 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 6 Janvier 1765, Archives nationales, Paris

⁴⁰⁹ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Gilles Herbert filassier sans ouvrage ni domicile defendeur et accusé, 26 February 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 26 Fevrier 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴¹⁰ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 343.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 340.

with a bundle. Clearly Boursier had easy access to her friend's house— and she took advantage.⁴¹²

Easy access and opportunity encouraged many cases of theft. Marguerite de la Haye, a young journeywoman, went to Rouen and left her friend Julie in charge of her room. She claimed that, while she was gone, Julie stole

une robbe de taffetas petit gris, un jupon de taffetas couleur de rose, un pair de drap, une paire de manchettes a deux rangs de mousseline brodee, une garniture de dentelle avec les barbes... une grande bonnet pique, un jupon de siamoise a grand carreaux rouges et bruns font doubleur, un paire de bas de cotton tout neuf, une serviette a linteau bleue.⁴¹³

According to Marguerite, this comprised only part of the theft, since Julie also stole her linge. The clothing was sold to Marguerite Hedeline, a vendeuse de vieux linge.⁴¹⁴ Julie, if we believe the accusation, took advantage of her friend's absence and the easy access to Marguerite's clothing. Similarly, Marianne Sorent, an ouvrier en linge, had a woman by the name of Valoit lodging at her home. One day Valoit offered to help Marianne "ranger son ménage" and in the process stole "un chemise d'homme de toile blanche garnie de dentelles tant au jabot" with manchettes marked J.B. from an open armoire.⁴¹⁵ Jacques Mathieu Galloir, a marchand mercier, left two servants in his room while he went out. From the armoire that held all of his effects, the servants stole "deux coulottes de soye

⁴¹² Jean Baptiste Joseph Thierry, A la requête de Monsieur le Procureur du Roy ... demandeur et accusateur, Contre Claudine Boursier travaillante pour les perruquiers frisonnières... du grand chatelet deffenderesse et accusé au sujet d'un vol de hardies et effets... 26 February 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 26 febr. 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴¹³ M. Chenon, Je vous prie, Monsieur, de Recevoir la declaration de la nommé de LaHaye au Sujet d'un vol de Linge, hardes, et Effets qui lui a été fait et dont elle accuse la nommée Julye Hyacinthe a qui elle a Laisse la disposition de Sa Chambre pendant un voyage qu'elle a fait a Rouen... 10 June 1760, Archives du Commissaire Chenon, Y 11342, 10 Juin 1769, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ M. Chenon and DeSartine, la Déclaration de La ve. Sorent au Sujet d'un vole de Linge et Effets qui lui ont été faite... 3 May 1760, Archives du Commissaire Chenon, Y 11342, 3 may 1760, Archives Nationales Paris.

[sic]... six chemise garni marquee de differents marques, [et] quelques mouchoirs.”⁴¹⁶

Furthermore, the two servants took the key when they absconded with his clothing, so Galloir had to call a locksmith to get into his home.⁴¹⁷ Unlike those who stole from their lodgings or their place of work, Antoine Lebrun, a ribbon-maker, stole two handkerchiefs from a merchant’s stall and was caught re-selling them.⁴¹⁸

While both men and women were primarily opportunist thieves, stealing from their neighbors, local shop-keepers, employers, and colleagues, women were more likely to steal in large amounts from private homes and the laundry, whereas men more often stole a few items from more places such as taverns, inns, and shops. The gender differences in undergarment theft suggest both the differences in access to underclothes among men and women, and the differences in personal values regarding undergarments.

Female thieves stole undergarments primarily from female-dominated realms and trades to which they had greater access and where they would be less conspicuous, even when stealing large amounts. A quarter of female thieves were young, under twenty-five years old, and over ten percent of female thieves were over forty-five. Most were unmarried or widowed.⁴¹⁹ Like most unmarried wage-earning women, they worked in domestic services, shops, textile trades, and laundry services. Even those thieves who were out of work generally had a background in one of these trades. Therefore, it is not

⁴¹⁶ M. Chenon and DeSartine, la Déclaration du nommé Galloir, au Sujet de deux domestiques qu'il a retirés chez lui, a la sollicitation d'un de ses amis, et qui lui ont volé dans La Malle, plusieurs effets et hardes et linge, et une Somme de 12 Louis... 6 April 1760, Archives du Commissaire Chenon, Y 11342, 6 avril 1760, Archives Nationales Paris.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur P. Antoine Lebrun Rubannier defendeur et accusé, 27 February 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 27 Fevrier 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴¹⁹ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 339.

surprising that, because of the greater presence of women in these realms, women had greater opportunities to steal from them. Many female domestic servants, like Madelaine Francoise Duval D'Estin, stole from their employers, particularly when they had recently lost their positions.⁴²⁰ For example, Marie Anne Renard stole a significant number of undergarments from the Jujeul's armoire. She worked as a domestic for Pierre Jujeul, a fruit seller, and his wife, Françoise, for only fifteen days before being let go. She did not have a place to stay the night she was let go, so the Jujeul's generously allowed her to stay the night. In the morning when the family went into the shop, Renard noticed that the armoire was unlocked. She raided the armoire and absconded with numerous undergarments and linens, including the basket of dirty linens.⁴²¹ Renard had both the access and the opportunity to steal from her employers' armoire. Moreover, neighbors would be less likely to suspect Renard carrying off a basket of what appeared to be a sizeable quantity of laundry, since she had been installed as a servant for the Jujeuls and delivering the laundry could easily have been one of her duties.

Women were also the dominant laundry thieves, as laundry was an industry made up of primarily female workers. Many women within the laundry industry stole from their own customers or from the baskets of their colleagues. Marie Catherine Vincent Gaudat, a laundress, and Marie Nicole Gandat, her sister who worked for the washerwomen running errands and performing petty services, stole two chemises from

⁴²⁰ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi deffendeur et accusateur, Madelaine Francoise Duval D'Estin fe. de Joseph Fromont mt. de Chevaux, elle Revendeuse deffenderesse et accusé, 22 February 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 22 Fevrier 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴²¹ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Marie Anne Renard fille ouvriere en linge deffesse. et accusé, 15 February 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 15 fevr. 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

Marie Catherine's own customers' laundry.⁴²² Elizabeth Jeannot, also a laundress, stole a chemise from her customer's laundry as well, and took the time to pick out the marking before trying to sell it.⁴²³

For a laundress, stealing from the laundry was simple, and opportunities for theft were frequent. Furthermore, the predominance of women in the laundry trade made it easier for women with baskets and bundles of stolen linens to go unnoticed in the act of theft. Witnesses rarely reported seeing women in the act of stealing; rather, women were caught when they tried to sell stolen garments. Women were inconspicuous, stealing from familiar places and giving the appearance of a servant delivering laundry or a laundress carrying her load. Women most likely realized that they would not be as suspect as men carrying large amounts of clothing and undergarments in baskets or bundles, since women were more likely to steal greater quantities of clothing, even entire wardrobes, in a single theft than were their male counterparts. Therefore, female thieves not only stole from the realms they dominated and in which they had more opportunities for theft, but they also exploited female dominance in laundry and service trades to steal less often but in greater quantities than men.

Male thieves, like their female counterparts, likewise stole from the realms they generally frequented, but at a different rate. Over half of male thieves were young men,

⁴²² Linous.

⁴²³ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Elisabeth Jannot fe. de Pierre Lequas, Carrier, elle femme de journée pour les Blanchisseuses, deffenderesse et accusée, 11 August 1764, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10260, 11 Août 1764, Archives Nationales, Paris.

between sixteen and thirty-five years old, the same group who made up most casual laborers, journeymen, and other seasonal workers, as well as male domestic servants.⁴²⁴

Jean Beaumont stole clothing, linen, and other effects from a man's house while he was gone.⁴²⁵ Similarly, Pierre Gabriel Ledien, a tinsmith, broke into the house of the Comte Doria where his wife was the manager and for which she had the keys. He stole clothing and linen including lacy sleeves.⁴²⁶ While some broke into homes, others stole from homes to which they were granted access for work. Nicolas Naudin stole two “chemises de femme” during a “demenagement” at which he worked.⁴²⁷ Other men stole from more public spaces, like Pierre DeMaurier, who stole several handkerchifs which he found along the quay. Witnesses saw Pierre taking handkerchifs from men's pockets and hiding them under his coat. Unfortunately, DeMaurier was not a stealthy thief, and dropped several of the stolen handkerchiefs.⁴²⁸ Both men and women stole from their places of work, but women were more likely to steal from feminine, domestic realms while men were more likely to steal from public places.

III

Throughout the eighteenth century, undergarment production could not keep up with the growing demand, nor could these garments be made cheaply enough for all who

⁴²⁴ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 339.

⁴²⁵ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Jean Beaumont Compagnon Couvrer deffendeur et accusé, 28 August 1764, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10260, 28 Aoust 1764, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴²⁶ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demande. et accusateur, Pierre Gabriel Ledien ferblantier deffendeur et accusé.

⁴²⁷ Moreau and Linous, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur Nicolas Naudin Procureur d'Eau deff. et accusé et Lené Paul, accusé absence coutumax, 16 January 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 16 Janvier 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴²⁸ Moreau and Linous, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Pierre DeMaurier tailleur pour femmes deffendeur et accusé.

desired them. It cost about six *livres* to have a shirt or chemise made, not including the additional four to six *livres* to purchase the cotton, linen, or muslin for the shirt.⁴²⁹ Moreover, it was generally cheaper to purchase a second-hand shirt than to buy the cloth to make a new shirt for oneself. The majority of clothing thieves either needed cash and knew that undergarments were both valuable and easy to re-sell, or they needed garments, which they could not afford even from used-clothing dealers.

For many of the working poor in France, clothing and underclothing comprised a significant portion of their wealth. Clothing, as Roche eloquently observes, “was part of the economy of everyday... Precious and scarce among the poor, clothing was increasingly more than a necessity, and something to covet. It was a relatively convenient means of exchange, whose monetary value constantly grew.”⁴³⁰ Clothing could be used for barter and to pay debts, or sold for cash when necessitated by hardship.⁴³¹ Because the demand for undergarments was continually increasing, undergarments were commonly sold to used-clothing dealers, since the garments were easily resold to the underwear-hungry populace. For those who had few clothes and underclothes to begin with, theft was a way to acquire these highly-sought garments to sell for desperately needed cash.

The used-clothing market was notorious in the eighteenth century for its ill-gotten goods. Many eighteenth-century writers including Berthod and Claude Le Petit satirized and perpetuated the notoriety of the trade, creating the myth of the thieving, deceitful old

⁴²⁹ LeGriz, 27 avril 1772.

⁴³⁰ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 342-343.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 343.

clothes seller who swindled the poor with promises of transformation from base to bliss.⁴³² Others noted the reality of the situation. According to author Nicolas des Essarts, without the second-hand dealers “countless poor citizens would be obliged to go without necessities,” but one must “watch out for the frauds to which this type of clandestine trade lends itself” while police should “prevent these merchant *fripriers* from encouraging theft by purchasing, at rock-bottom prices, articles offered to them by unknown persons.”⁴³³ Additionally, the encyclopedists noted, “lost or stolen items are frequently found in [the *fripriers*’] possession, even though the police and the courts treat them with great severity.”⁴³⁴ The numerous court cases in which clothing thieves were caught selling their stolen wares to used-clothing dealers attest to these claims. Among others, Nicolas Naudin, a young water-carrier, was caught selling two stolen women’s chemises to a *fripier* for desperately needed cash, after an observer found the transaction unusual.⁴³⁵

Clever thieves would sell their stolen hauls to different used-clothes dealers so as not to raise suspicion. For example, Marie Anne Renard, an out of work *lingère* who stole a large collection of clothing from a house, sold pieces to several different used-clothing

⁴³² Berthod, *La Ville De Paris: En Vers Burlesques*, ed. P. L. Jacob, Paris ridicule et burlesque au XVIIIe siècle (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1859), 141-150; Claude Le Petit, *La Chronique scandaleuse ou Paris ridicule*, ed. P. L. Jacob, Paris ridicule et burlesque au XVIIIe siècle (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1859), 24-25.

⁴³³ Essarts.

⁴³⁴ “Crieuses de vieux chapeaux,” in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Spring 2011 Edition), Robert Morrissey (ed)).

⁴³⁵ Moreau and Linous, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur Nicolas Naudin Procureur d'Eau deff. et accusé et Lené Paul, accusé absence coutumax. Linous.

boutiques before her description was put out and a shop-owner recognized her.⁴³⁶ Two of the *fripriers* to whom Marie Anne Renard sold the stolen garments testified against her, listing different sets of garments that they purchased from her. Joseph Caillot, one of the two fripiers, testified that Renard sold clothing to him. She told Caillot that she only had 20 *sols* to her name and needed money to leave Paris. Caillot claimed he saw her later in Paris, and assumed she never made it out of the city. She returned to his shop and sold him "une garniture de dentelles a Simple barbe qu'elle avons sur sa tete, et un gilet d'homme de futiane blanche a boutons de petite diamens blanc enchapes dans de cos" costing at least 9 *livres* 10 *sols* which he gave her. She tried to buy back a gown and petticoat she had previously sold him, but he had already sold them to another customer.⁴³⁷ Reine Marillet, Caillot's wife, also testified against Renard, claiming M. Desormeaux, another fripier, had warned them that a girl of this description had stolen from him.⁴³⁸ Where the used-clothing trade provided the poor with necessities, the poor provided the used-clothing trade with stolen goods to sell cheaply.

Clothing theft was not only a means of acquiring necessary funds, but also a method of appropriation of necessary garments to wear. Many of the poor and working class owned only one set of clothes and few changes of underclothes, but they nevertheless strove to accumulate more underclothes to keep up appearances and standards of personal hygiene. Claudine Boursier, the shop girl who stole Anne Carpe's wardrobe, had appropriated some of Carpe's clothing for her own use, particularly the

⁴³⁶ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Marie Anne Renard fille ouvriere en linge deffesse. et accusé.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

undergarments.⁴³⁹ Specifically, she kept two petticoats and eight chemises. With eight chemises, in addition to what she may have already had, she could change her linen frequently and present a much finer appearance. Similarly, Marie Madeline Philippe, a laundress, wore ill-fitting clothing and undergarments which were too large thus revealing that she had stolen from the laundry.⁴⁴⁰ Unfortunately for Philippe, in her effort to be more presentable, she became less so—those who alerted the authorities about her theft and those who testified against her all commented on her disorderly appearance and ill-fitting clothing. Perpetrators like Phillippe who wore their ill-gotten gains marked themselves as targets of suspicion if their stolen garments did not fit their size or station.

In a period preoccupied with appearances, as Roche has demonstrated, the scrutiny of clothing was integral to daily life, and those whose clothing appeared incongruous with the wearer were easy to spot, particularly poor thieves wearing and selling fine garments. The numerous court cases in which clothing thieves were caught selling their stolen wares to used-clothing dealers attest to these claims. As was the case with Claudine Boursier, who stole Anne Carpe's wardrobe and was caught with Carpe's clothes among her own after trying to sell the men's shirts, many thieves wore some stolen clothes and sold others. These thieves were often denounced by suspicious onlookers and merchants because of the ill-fitting or too fine clothing they wore while selling the other stolen garments. A washerwoman, Catherine Boudé, accused fellow laundress, Marie Madeline Philippe, of selling clothes stolen from the wash to a used

⁴³⁹ Thierry, Anne Carpe fille majeure ouvriere en linge et demeurante a Paris.

⁴⁴⁰ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Marie Madeline Philippe fille Blanchisseuse deffenderesse et accusée, 14 November 1764, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10264, 14 9bre. 1764, Archives Nationales, Paris.

linen dealer. Boudé was suspicious because Philippe was “tres mal vetue et ayant beaucoup de gorge.”⁴⁴¹ The commissaire investigating the case found that Philippe was wearing clothing stolen from the laundry of one woman, while trying to sell garments filched from another’s laundry. Others, like laundress Elizabeth Jeannot, were caught because the garments they were selling to used clothing dealers were too fine. Jeannot was trying to sell a man’s silk shirt with decorative embroidery on the sleeves which was seen as too fine for a poor laundress to have.⁴⁴² Similarly, the out of work *lingère*, Marie Anne Renard, who sold her stolen goods to several *fripriers*, began to arouse suspicion when she sold a fine piece of lace and a vest with diamond buttons to a second-hand clothes dealer.⁴⁴³ Margueritte Lignan, a revendeuse, testified that “étant aubout du pont neuf avec deux particuliers de ses camarades, il est venu une fille paroissant domestique leur propose d'acheter deux serviettes et un casaquin moyennant la somme de vingt sols.”⁴⁴⁴ She and her friends suspected the items were stolen, as they were too fine for a woman who looked like a poor servant, so they had the woman arrested.⁴⁴⁵ Another poorly dressed thief, François Bellegarde, a man with no trade, was caught because he tried to sell silver candlesticks along with some linens and a lace bonnet to a used-goods dealer.⁴⁴⁶ The wife of a fripier, Marie Jeanne Felicité Moreau reported that a man who

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Elisabeth Jannot fe. de Pierre Lequas, Carrier, elle femme de journée pour les Blanchisseuses, deffenderesse et accusée.

⁴⁴³ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Marie Anne Renard fille ouvriere en linge deffesse. et accusé.

⁴⁴⁴ Lenois and Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Genevieve Rousseau fille domestique deffenderesse et accusée, 24 April 1765, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10265, 24 avril 1765, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Moreau and Linous, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Francois Bellegarde sans etat deffendeur et accusé.

was marked with smallpox scars, had two knobs on his nose, and was poorly dressed stole clothing from her husband's shop.⁴⁴⁷ Not only were thieves thus impelled by appearances; so too were thieves condemned by appearances.

IV

Just as the encyclopedists aptly noted the presence of lost and stolen items among the wares of the *fripiers*, their observation that “the police and the courts treat them with great severity” is equally pertinent.⁴⁴⁸ Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the legal strictures against the theft of linen and clothing became stricter as clothing crimes came to be seen as more insidious acts of aggression against growing property rights.⁴⁴⁹ The majority of cases regarding the theft of clothing and undergarments heard at the Châtelet from the mid-eighteenth century and later resulted in the thieves being branded with a V for *voleur*, or thief, on the right shoulder and paying a substantial fine. Despite these severe punitive measures, the theft of clothing and linen, primarily undergarments, increased exponentially over the course of the eighteenth century. Thefts of clothing and linen accounted for 28 percent of cases heard by the judges of the Châtelet (205 out of 733) between 1710 and 1735. Yet between 1760 and 1769, thefts of linen and clothing accounted for 52 percent of cases (919 out of 1,777).⁴⁵⁰ Of the stolen garments in these cases, linens—primarily undergarments, but also

⁴⁴⁷ M. Chenon and DeSartine, Je vous prie, Monsieur, de recevoir la declaration de la fe. Sauvage au Sujet du Vol d'une housse et d'une Redingotte qui lui a été fait par deux particulieres... 9 June 1760, Archives du Commissaire Chenon, Y 11342, 9 Juin 1760, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴⁴⁸ "Crièuses de vieux chapeaux."

⁴⁴⁹ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 333-334.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 337.

household linens— constituted the majority of stolen goods. Moreover, between 1710 and 1735, 205 cases of clothing and linen theft were heard by the judges of the Châtelet, while between 1760 and 1775 over 1100 cases of linen and clothing theft were heard, almost a 500 percent increase.⁴⁵¹ As the demand for undergarments grew, and the value of these coveted garments increased, both accusations and cases of theft increased. These numbers point to the significantly increasing importance of undergarments, not only economically, but also personally. The thefts of these garments were worth the greater risk, while these thefts were simultaneously becoming a greater threat to the social order.

Along with the increase in cases of clothing and undergarment theft tried at the Châtelet, victims and informants became increasingly eager to denounce thefts and to protect personal property, thus contributing to their greater repression. Early in the eighteenth century, victims of theft were not unsympathetic toward clothing thieves and were generally able to reach a settlement. In the second half of the century, however, they showed less pity and demanded sentences of branding with a hot iron and sometimes prison time, often in conjunction with a settlement or fine.⁴⁵² For example, on March 5, 1726, a hôtel groom saw Joseph Dutour, a servant at the hôtel, with a bundle of clothes under his arm. Not wanting to pry, the groom did not question or report Dutour. A few days later, when Dutour stole from another guest from the hôtel, the guest reported him, but did not seek significant punishment for the thief.⁴⁵³ Mid-century, some thieves were still given leniency, particularly when the circumstances or condition of the person

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 340.

⁴⁵³ Dutour, June 1726, Y 10034, Archives nationales, Paris.

accused inspired sympathy. Such was the case with Marie Madeline Philippe, the washerwoman who was caught badly dressed in stolen clothing. Her poor appearance and clear desperation (she had no clothes of her own), mitigated her sentence to a fine of 200 *livres*.⁴⁵⁴ However, in the years preceding the Revolution, thieves were generally dealt with harshly. Marie Anne Renard, the linen worker who stole from her previous employers, was sentenced to five years of prison and branding with the letter V on her right shoulder with a hot iron.⁴⁵⁵ Not only did victims seek greater punishments for thieves, but the courts passed more severe sentences, such as branding and longer prison sentences.

Furthermore, larger numbers of onlookers came forward to denounce thieves and testify against them. Early tolerance was replaced by greater intolerance as the demand for undergarments, and their value, increased. In the case of Anne Carpe and Claudine Boursier, four neighbors and one neighbor's visitor were eager to testify when they heard about the robbery in their building. Etienne Poncet, a cobbler, said that on Tuesday, the 14th of the current month, he returned home to find the inspector in the middle of an inquisition in the house where he lived. Poncet welcomed the inspector into his apartment when the inspector informed him that they were doing an inquisition for a theft of linges and clothing belonging to Mademoiselle Carpe. Poncet told the inspector that he had seen Miss Boursier, whom he knew to be a friend of Miss Carpe's, leaving Miss Carpe's house on the day of the theft. Poncet reported that when he asked Boursier what she was doing,

⁴⁵⁴ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Marie Madeline Philippe fille Blanchisseuse deffenderesse et accusée.

⁴⁵⁵ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Marie Anne Renard fille ouvriere en linge deffesse. et accusé.

she said she was delivering something, but he didn't see her leave anything. He found it strange that she told him not to say he had seen her there. In fact, Poncet was so involved in the inquisition that he went with Carpe and the police commissioner to Boursier's house to look for the stolen items. Another neighbor, Anne Benoist, a *revendeuse de toilette*, said she didn't know that Carpe had been stolen from until she was questioned about it. She was home the afternoon of the theft whitewashing her door, which she had left open. She saw someone whom she recognized as a friend of Carpe's coming downstairs carrying some bundles in her apron. She had seen this woman visiting Carpe several times. While these neighbors saw Boursier with her stolen bundles, others who did not see anything eagerly shared their knowledge with the commissioner. A visitor to the building, Nicolas L'Ecuyer testified that he was calling on the cobbler Poncet in the building when he heard Miss Carpe claiming she had been robbed and telling people to watch out. Poncet told L'Ecuyer he had seen a friend of Miss Carpe's coming down the stairs earlier with a bundle so L'Ecuyer sent for the commissioner. A neighbor, Marie Angelique Foureis heard about the theft from Carpe, who alerted the residents. Foureis testified that she later heard that the stolen items were found at the residence of a friend of Carpe's.⁴⁵⁶

Most victims of undergarment theft were not wealthy or bourgeois, but wage-earners and merchants, often from the same social groups as the thieves themselves. More than half of the victims of theft worked in crafts, shops, and domestic service. One

⁴⁵⁶ Thierry, A la requête de Monsieur le Procureur du Roy ... demandeur et accusateur, Contre Claudine Boursier travaillante pour les perruquiers frisonnières... du grand chatelet deffenderesse et accusé au sujet d'un vol de hardies et effets...

third of victims were business owners including landlords, tavern-keepers, shopkeepers and merchants. Only a few theft victims were successful merchants, wealthy bourgeois, ecclesiastics, and nobles.⁴⁵⁷ As most clothing thefts were crimes of opportunity that took place near the homes and regularly frequented shops and locales of thieves, theft victims were often people like the thieves themselves. For example, Nicolas Dupré, a laborer, was taken to court by Joseph Ficher Flaxmaïe, logeur en garnie, and locksmith, and Pierre Favard, a domestic servant. Dupré was accused of stealing chemises, stockings, collars, culottes, and a pair of ladies' culottes and trying to sell them to a brocanteur. Dupré was charged for his crimes, but the investigation revealed that Favard had first stolen the items which Dupré then stole.⁴⁵⁸

The increase in opportunistic clothing theft provoked fear and intolerance among the working public who were anxious to protect their valuables, particularly the garments which constituted the greater part of their wealth.⁴⁵⁹ Therefore, victims urged greater repression of clothing thefts. Increasing undergarment ownership and undergarments' increasing value among the working population, despite their growing prevalence, led to a greater desire to protect personal belongings. Moreover, the rising demand for undergarments among all levels of people, which contributed to the greater incidence of theft, also contributed to a rising defense of personal property. Both victims and perpetrators of undergarment theft desired and coveted undergarments, leading some to

⁴⁵⁷ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 340.

⁴⁵⁸ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Nicolas Dupré compagnon menuissier deffendeur et accusé, 11 August 1764, Fonds du Chatelet, Y 10260, 11 Aoust 1764, Archives Nationales, Paris.

⁴⁵⁹ Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime*, 341-342.

steal and others to intensely protect their property from neighbors and colleagues by regularly denouncing thieves and encouraging more severe sentences.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the inspectors collected testimonies from numerous eager witnesses; police and judges took, on average, five to ten witness testimonies in cases of clothing theft. The increase in witness zeal was in part due to the expanding ranks of informants, primarily *revendeuses*, who supplied the police with information for a cash reward. These informants secured the arrest of people who came to them to sell stolen goods and drew attention to suspicious persons or articles among other vendors.⁴⁶⁰ Informants were often thieves themselves who had been caught and relieved of a severe punishment in return for information about other thieves. Often poor and desperate like most thieves, informants were eager to testify because of the cash reward they received; their testimonies comprised much of the evidence against thieves, particularly those who sold stolen goods to other *fripiers* and *revendeurs*. Catherine Boude, for example, was a laundress who reported to *Commissaire* Gyt against other washerwomen like Marie Madeline Philippe whom she saw selling stolen laundry to a used-linen dealer. Marie Carre, the laundress from whom Philippe stole, as well as another laundress, a seamstress, and the revendeuse de vieux linge to whom Philippe sold the clothing also testified against Philippe.⁴⁶¹ Genevieve Rousseau, a domestic servant, stole linens from the laundry at the inn where she worked. The linens belonged to a butter merchant from Nanterre who had given her linens to the inkeeper's wife for washing. A

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 335-336.

⁴⁶¹ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Marie Madeline Philippe fille Blanchisseuse deffenderesse et accusée.

group of revendeuses to whom Rousseau offered to sell the stolen goods testified against her. Magdelaine Antoinette Degesnere and her friends la femme Mollebrouche et la fe. Lafosse were approached by Rousseau who wanted to sell the stolen items for twenty sols. However, “que cette particuliere leur paroissent suspecte, elles l'ont fait arrêtées.”⁴⁶² As this group of revendeuses all clearly state that they had Rousseau stopped or arrested, it is likely that at least one of them was an informant.

However, not all who testified were informants: many were citizens who wished to protect personal property and thus the social order. In the case of Marie Jeanne Magniot, a day laborer, and Marie Catherine Mennier, a hairdresser, average people from the building where the theft took place testified. Magniot and Mennier stole a variety of clothing and underclothing, including one particular handkerchief with red flowers on it from the home of Therese LeDuc. A servant in the same building, Marie Francoise Durand, testified that she heard LeDuc in distress and ran up the stairs to find her in her room shouting that her clothing and linens had been stolen. Durand explained that LeDuc had bought several new clothes the day before because she was “curieuse d'avois des hardes propres pour son etat.”⁴⁶³ These new clothes had been stolen. After Durand got LeDuc settled, she heard a lot of noise downstairs. A passerby, Pierre Grognet, who worked nearby, saw la femme Brasieur (who lived in the same building as LeDuc) having an argument in the doorway of a room on the first floor with another woman. The woman looked like un fille de marche and Brassieur was shouting something about stealing.

⁴⁶² Lenois and Moreau.

⁴⁶³ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roy demandeur et accusateur, Marie Jeanne Magniot fe. de Robert Mennier terassier, elle gagne demier, Marie Catherine Mennier ve. de Jaques Nicolas Cossart coiffeuse, elle ouvriere en linge deffenderesses et accusées.

When confronted, Mennier said that, while she wasn't the thief, she was suspicious of her brother in the army because the last time she saw him he had given her a new handkerchief like the one LeDuc described, and he had stolen handkerchiefs before. However, an inquisition turned up many of the stolen clothes at Mennier's home and she relented, admitting that she stole the clothing for her mother to sell.⁴⁶⁴ Thus, neighbors, passersby, and even thieves themselves bore witness in cases to defend personal property.

Other witnesses, like victims, appear to have come forward due to an increasing desire to protect their property due to its high monetary value. Non-informant witnesses like *fripier* Joseph Caillot focused their testimonies on the stolen items and the value of the items—the thief presented him with a petticoat worth three *livres*—suggesting a preoccupation with personal property and its value.⁴⁶⁵ Moreover, non-informant witnesses like shop-girl Marie Noël Nivote and her colleague Brigitte Vanière often emphasized the incongruity of thieves and their stolen goods. These women both stated that the thief, Pierre Gabriel Ledien, “had the air of a servant” who could not afford the packets of fine linen he possessed.⁴⁶⁶ This fixation on the value of stolen goods is indicative of the greater emphasis people were placing on their personal property, as well as a clear sense of the economic value of undergarments. Witnesses denounced thieves in an effort to protect their own property as well as the property of others. By denouncing thieves, witnesses were taking the thieves off the streets and away from their own

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demandeur et accusateur, Marie Anne Renard fille ouvriere en linge deffesse. et accusé.

⁴⁶⁶ Moreau, Le Procureur du Roi demande. et accusateur, Pierre Gabriel Ledien ferblantier deffendeur et accusé.

property. Protecting the valuables of another by denouncing thieves was a way to protect oneself and one's property.

The increasing intolerance of theft by victims and witnesses further emphasizes the growing significance and value of undergarments for all people. Even poor tradespersons (who may have purchased stolen underclothes from a used-clothes dealer) believed these thefts were a greater threat to the social order and personal property by the second half of the century than they did before. Nevertheless, thefts of undergarments continued as a lucrative practice, whether for one's self or for re-sale, due to their ever-increasing demand.

While the economic value of undergarments appears to have been the most common motivation for thefts, thieves may have had other motives as well. It is possible that some stole or picked pockets for the thrill or to see what they could get away with. Others may have desired goods belonging to their friends or neighbors or stolen out of jealousy or revenge. Fetishism may have impelled others to steal, particularly in the case of undergarments which could serve as a proxy for the body.⁴⁶⁷

Regardless of why thieves stole, the act of taking another's undergarments highlights the ways in which undergarments were part of both the public and private realms, as well as the ways these garments contributed to the shaping of these realms. In many cases, individuals clearly viewed their own undergarments as private items, locking them in closets, chests, and armoires, often in their private rooms. Many testimonies by victims emphasize the purported thief's intrusion into this private space to steal these

⁴⁶⁷ Emily S. Apter, *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

garments, making the thefts all the more invasive and scandalous. Thieves often took the garments out of the private realm and into the public to sell. Selling undergarments in the public market was commonplace and not perceived as unseemly or incorrect. Thus, with undergarments, there was a clear distinction between private undergarments for individual use which were kept in one's personal space, and undergarments which were removed from that private space and brought into the public market. In many ways, thieves helped to create these distinctions by taking the underclothes and choosing to use them personally, keeping them in the private realm, or sell them, taking them into the public realm.

By accusing thieves and taking their cases to the courts, individual victims and the public courts helped solidify the private and public conceptions of undergarments. Victims who reported thefts did so to regain their property or its value, and in so doing sought affirmation that the stolen goods were part of their private possessions. When the courts found thieves guilty, they codified these conceptions of undergarments as private, personal goods. Nevertheless, even as private goods, by taking their cases to the public courts, individuals aired their dirty laundry in the public sphere. Individuals, and the many witnesses, all came together to protect their public property through public declarations. Thus, the public conceived of, recognized, and accepted undergarments as private entities and used the courts to publicly enforce these ideas and too help keep undergarments in private domains. While creating boundaries between public and private, undergarments continued to straddle these bounds.

5. CONCLUSION

Eighteenth-century Frenchmen were obsessed with underwear. Undergarments contributed significantly to the clothing economy—they were made and re-made, bought and sold, traded and stolen. Medical professionals emphasized the health benefits of underwear, while public health advocates emphasized the societal benefits of clean underclothes for all. This preoccupation was manifest in the French fashion for undress—a fashion satirized by many a social critic. In his 1792 cartoon, “A French Family,” Thomas Rowlandson mocked the French and their passion for undergarments citing “such precious manners and such indecency” (Figure 5.1).⁴⁶⁸ The main couple in the cartoon, presumably mother and father, dances in the center left. The man wears only a shabby shirt over bare legs—his underwear—while the woman wears a modish Gaulle type dress that resembles underclothes. The woman also appears to wear no shaping undergarments beneath her dress. To the right, a younger couple dances (perhaps brother and sister) dressed much like the main couple. The young woman wears a chemise-like gown tucked up to reveal a matching petticoat. The young man sports a shirt opened at the neck and caleçons. The young child in the front right corner wears a shirt which she lifts to reveal bare legs, an indication of her nakedness underneath. Even the dog dons a chemise. Despite their underwear-as-clothing, the whole family is formally coiffed in fancy wigs and headdresses, indicating that they are dressed for the day, prepared to

⁴⁶⁸ Thomas Rowlandson, *A French Family: 'Such precious manners and such indecency,' scowl the English.*, 5 November 1792, New York Public Library, London.

present themselves to society, rather than simply lounging about at home in their underclothes. Only the musicians, who do not appear to be part of this fashionable family, are fully clothed in breeches, vests, and coats. The artist has presented the family aping the upper classes through their dance, an affectation of fine manners. Yet, despite these “precious manners” as Rowlandson calls them, the satirist is most condemning of the family’s dress, or lack thereof. The “indecentcy” of the fashion for Gaulles and other visible undergarments won great scorn from critics and was fodder for many such satirical cartoons. The fashion for undergarment-like clothing was consistently linked with the scandalous French, demonstrating a keen awareness of the French love for lingerie.



Figure 5.1. Thomas Rowlandson, A French family: “Such precious manners and such indecentcy,” scowl the English, 5 November 1792.

In eighteenth-century France, undergarments traversed the liminal space between private and public. Undergarments lie between the body and one's garb, at the boundary between the private body and public appearance. However, in a century dominated by "undress" fashions, undergarments moved from the hidden and private to the realm of public appearances. As undergarments moved from private to more public, the conflation of undergarments with the body dissipated—clean underwear no longer replaced a clean body. Rather, a clean body and clean undergarments worked together to present a healthy and proper body. The need for both clean undergarments and a clean body led to a resurgence in bathing and new standards in undergarment consumption. If one wanted to be clean and proper, one required clean undergarments daily; if one sought to be fashionable, one needed a large collection of various undergarments, often colorful, patterned, and imported. The consumption of undergarments became both a public and private act. Vendors displayed their wares publicly for private consumers who purchased undergarments based on their own needs as well as cultural standards and expectations. Individuals adapted their underwear to their own purposes in private and to appear as they desired in public. Undergarments were valuable both as cultural commodities and personal goods, as shown by the increasing collections of undergarments and the greater incidence of linen thefts over the course of the century. Underclothes bridged the dichotomies of public and private, personal and popular, domestic and social. Undergarments became unique cultural commodities, the focus of a century-long obsession which conflated polarities and required the renegotiation of social concepts and constructs.

Undergarments, therefore, show us changing concepts of fashion, appearances, the body, and consumption in France—influenced by both social and individual values—as they played out over the long eighteenth century. By synthesizing analyses of fashion, hygiene, economics, and consumption, this study has explored undergarments as fluid cultural objects. Furthermore, by incorporating personal sensibilities about undergarments with social and cultural analyses, this study begins to understand the ways that culture influenced social and material life, and vice versa. As we have seen, individual choices and sensibilities regarding undergarments reveal a changing understanding of the body and its relationship with material goods and society. Emphasizing the individual and bodies in society through the culture of undergarments reveals new concepts of undergarments as they emerged at the edges of dress and society.

Early fascination with visibly clean linen at the edges of dress led to new fashions which increasingly revealed layers of undergarments over the course of the eighteenth century, leading ultimately to garments which themselves resembled undergarments. The *Gaulle* was the culmination of this era of undress, beginning with the open *mantua*, moving into the *déshabille*, and finally resulting in this simple gown which resembled an undergarment and was worn to emphasize its undergarment-like appearance. Over the course of the century, many garments evolved from outer- to under or from under- to outer, while new garments became available. Furthermore, the eighteenth century simultaneously saw increasing gender differentiation in undergarments, and the production of a greater variety of undergarments. Undergarments became more visible,

which encouraged a new variety of gendered forms and styles. Finally, while the visibility of undergarments at the edges of dress made them public goods, undergarments remained quite private, too, as garments worn next to the skin and mostly covered by outerwear, despite their increased visibility. These changes in undergarments led to increased consumption since the new styles allowed people to distinguish themselves with their garments.

By the end of the eighteenth century, undergarment consumption had increased significantly. Both men and women were able to change their undergarments frequently, often on a daily basis, and several times a day for the wealthy. Only the very poorest people of Paris suffered with only one or two shirts by the end of the century, and many had a change of undergarments for every day of the week. Common people's wardrobes increased in both quality and quantity overall, and many working people sported newer types of undergarments, such as caleçons, camisoles, and corsets, often of finer and imported textiles, under their fashionable but functional pantalons and casaquins. With their new collections of several, often finer undergarments, even common people could distinguish themselves in a way that had previously been unavailable to them. Thus, visual distinctions between classes became less distinct, a cause for concern among many social critics, though the lines did not blur as much as critics feared.

Increased undergarment ownership and variety suggest a greater awareness of undergarments. By the end of the eighteenth century, common people were clearly as concerned about their underwear as the nobility, even if they could not accumulate the same quality or quantity. Moreover, and perhaps more significantly, the choice of

undergarments—in style, color, fabric, etc.—which differed greatly among individuals and not just class lines indicates the importance of individual tastes and preferences to overall consumption. As with all garments, both groups and individuals assembled and used undergarments in their own ways, different from the standards of fashion popular among the elite and published in the fashion press. Individuals used their undergarments for a variety of purposes other than dress. Yet, they also assembled their daily garb to reflect their own values and desires: working-class women layered their technicolored and multi-patterned petticoats, and working-class men layered their pants and vests in a unique phenomenon that emphasized the interplay between and creation of under and outer, hidden and revealed, that took place over the course of the eighteenth century.

Significantly, women were the primary consumers of undergarments, both for themselves and their households. For centuries, household linens were associated with women and the domestic realm. Women prepared their trousseaus for marriage which contained the necessary household linens. Women also prepared infant layettes for the births of their children, and often shrouds for family deaths. As undergarments became a household necessity, these garments were included in the trousseaus and layettes. Thus, undergarments became linked to women and domesticity. Yet, as consumerism increased over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women became less likely to make their own linens and more likely to purchase them. By the eighteenth century, women had become the primary household consumers, allowing their personal preferences to dictate their commodity choices. Women bought undergarments for their families based on their own needs as well as to dress according to their own tastes, albeit

influenced by cultural standards and fashion. Moreover, in eighteenth-century families, women accumulated the largest collections of undergarments, as well as the greatest variety of underclothes. Furthermore, underclothing, as part of the material culture of domestic life, was linked with the social and practical lives of households—a family's daily activities and experiences significantly influenced undergarment consumption. In poorer families, women bought only what was necessary, while wealthier women purchased more luxury goods. Additionally, women often remade undergarments for children, patched and repaired the family linens, and made old, worn underclothing into new items, as their families needed. Just as women were the principal household consumers, so too were they in charge of barter, pawning, and sale in times of need. Undergarments could be used as currency, sold for ready cash or traded for goods and services.

Yet, as part of one's visible social life, underclothing was also used to present oneself in a particular way. Many women, even the working poor, wanted to present themselves as fashionable, often turning to second-hand goods to do so. A household's undergarments were not determined simply by individual needs, but also cultural standards and fashion's dictates. Families acquired larger quantities and finer quality underwear as best they could in order to present themselves as fashionable and part of a particular social group. They acquired new styles and undergarments made from imported *Indiennes* to appear fashionable. In fashion centers like Paris and Versailles, undergarments that were not worn directly against the skin, such as corsets, and especially those which were meant to be seen, such as petticoats, were often made of the

colorful, printed textiles that became popular throughout the century. There was an increase in demand for both plain cotton and linen undergarments as well as a rising demand for brightly-colored and patterned undergarments. Furthermore, demand for undergarments was not limited to cities where fashion dominated the scene, as the obsession with linens had quickly spread to rural communities via itinerant merchants and greater mobility among the working classes.

Women were influenced by *marchandes de modes* and linen drapers while shopping for new undergarments, or purchased what was available to them second-hand to best meet cultural standards of appearances. Nevertheless, individuals continued to choose items that fit their personal tastes and preferences, dressing as they felt befitted them and their positions, and choosing garments which appealed to them.

Some historians have suggested that this greater accumulation of undergarments, and thus the greater ability to change undergarments more frequently, reflected an increased desire for cleanliness. However, evidence suggests that the growing ubiquity of undergarments reflected new ideas about propriety, appearances, personal tastes, and economics. Nevertheless, changes in undergarments were also linked to changes in concepts of health and hygiene. Underclothes were no longer required to take on the role of the skin, but instead worked with a healthy body. Undergarments took on a middle role, protecting the body from dirt, grime, and airborne miasmas, but also helping to prevent the spread of bodily secretions. Thus, the eighteenth century saw health advocates emphasize regular bathing and frequent undergarment changes (which required both greater accumulation of underclothes and their regular washing). Undergarments'

new role disassociated them from a purely bodily context, creating a new function which straddled the private body and public body. Combined, bathing and proper use of body linen created the ideals of *santé* and *propreté*. Just as physicians pushed for the resurgence of bathing for hygiene, so, too, did physicians emphasize the need for clean undergarments. The medical advice and discussions about undergarments contributed to the social and cultural emphasis for the propagation of undergarments.

As ideas about health changed and new ideas about cleanliness developed, so too did standards in undergarments change and develop. New minimum undergarments for people at all levels of society reflected new ideas of health and propriety. These standards, which developed over the course of the century; included a daily change of undergarments for one week, along with a small supply of stockings, handkerchiefs, and head coverings. In addition, regular bathing became expected for health and *propreté*. Such standards were created, accepted, and supported by medical professionals and health advocates. In addition to functioning as significant components in the standardization of undergarments, the published discussions regarding undergarments present a public discussion and propagation of particularly private garments. As medical professionals and society began negotiating and establishing the roles and standards of undergarments they brought previously private entities into public discourse.

The market for undergarments in eighteenth-century France presents a distinctive cycle of commodification, de-commodification, and re-commodification. Underclothes were purchased as commodities from shopkeepers and linen drapers, they were taken home and personalized for wear and other uses resulting in de-commodification. When

the consumer had finished with them, the undergarments were often resold as commodities again. This cycle presents the transfer of undergarments between people—from producers to customers to family members to re-sellers to new customers and beyond. It also demonstrates the modes by which undergarments began as both public and private commodities, became private garments, and returned to the public realm for resale.

The second-hand trade in undergarments boomed in the eighteenth century. All persons, impelled by standards of cleanliness, propriety, fashion, and their own values, sought to own a selection of undergarments to serve their needs. For many, the garments did not need to be new to meet their requirements—clean, sturdy undergarments were more important than new, elegant, decorated undergarments. The second-hand trade provided these more functional garments; it also supplied fashion-conscious consumers with stylish garments at a lower cost.

Second-hand dealers not only sold goods to consumers, they also provided a means by which to sell one's used undergarments for much-needed cash. For many of the working poor in France, clothing and underclothing was their only wealth. Because the demand for undergarments was continually increasing, undergarments were commonly sold to used-clothing dealers, since the garments were easily resold to the underwear-hungry populace. Selling undergarments and clothing to a used-clothing dealer, even for a fraction of their cost, was a way to get money for those in need.

Undergarments, both valuable enough for resale and mundane enough that they were unlikely to be discovered, became an ideal target for thieves. Undergarment thefts

allow us to see how the common of people in France accepted and participated in changing sartorial and corporeal habits. Such thefts illuminate the significance of undergarments to individuals who acquired them, either for use or sale. Significantly, both the ease of stealing underclothing and the growing prevalence of linen throughout the eighteenth century resulted in larger numbers of undergarments in circulation and use than of outer clothing. Stolen clothing and undergarments were often sold to used-clothing traders. The theft of clothing as an integral part of eighteenth-century clothing circulation, particularly as part of the used clothing trade, is well-established. Thieves were often caught when they tried to sell off articles they had stolen. The resale of stolen garments was a common phenomenon, and resellers, the *fripeliers*, *revendeurs*, and *brocanteurs*, were notorious for selling stolen goods. For many of these resellers, stolen undergarments became integral to their livelihoods as the demand for undergarments among all classes increased: stolen garments could be bought cheaply—since thieves were often desperate for money—and then sold at a higher price. On the other side of the transaction were those who purchased used undergarments, sometimes to sell yet again, but more often for their own personal use. For thieves in possession of stolen undergarments there were two options: sell them for cash or keep them for personal use. The extent to which stolen underclothes were bought and sold indicates that individuals found these garments necessary to their daily lives, while the theft of undergarments for resale provides a sense of their value, economic and cultural, as well as personal. For many, criminality and the risks inherent in theft were worthwhile either to procure cash or to meet social and cultural standards of appearance.

The theft of undergarments thus became a necessary social evil. Because changing social values emphasized the requirement of several changes of undergarments, and people of all walks of life began adopting new sensibilities about their bodies and undergarments, the demand for undergarments increased exponentially. However, new undergarments were expensive and difficult to acquire for the majority of the people in France. Despite the difficulty in accessing these garments, people felt they were essential and were willing to break the law to obtain them—for some, undergarments were more important than the law. Others, knowing their value, stole them to sell to used-clothing merchants for cash, particularly when they had little recourse to funds to pay for expenses like rent, food, and travel. The demand for undergarments could not be satisfied by undergarment producers, nor could new undergarments be produced and sold at an affordable rate for the average French laborer, resulting in greater incidence of undergarment theft.

This study has presented and analyzed ideas about undergarments and their relationships with the body and society in comparison with social and individual conceptions and uses of undergarments in order to illuminate cultural concepts of outer and under in addition to notions of public and private. Undergarments create, conquer, and reinforce boundaries between the individual and society, between the body and society, between physical bodies and cultural bodies, between concepts of outer and under, and between public and private. However, this is only a small peek into the confluence of public and private life in the eighteenth century. There are many areas to

explore which could not be covered in this study. Future studies might further explore the connections between women and linens, perhaps including a study of undergarments, menstruation, and women's bodies. Other fields of exploration include the significance and implications of shaping and forming bodies, as well as freedom and constraint. Furthermore, just as studies have considered dress and morality, one might examine undress and morality. Undergarments open myriad avenues for further exploring the history of bodies, gender, consumption, health, and more. Further exploration and examination of undergarments will reveal greater depths of cultural and individual experience.

Undergarments remain an integral part of contemporary our daily life today, influenced by standards of cleanliness, respectability, religion, and fashion, as well as by personal tastes, preferences, and needs. Our modern conceptions of undergarments, including shape wear, hygienic layers, sexy lingerie, and even lounge wear stem from the changing concepts of undergarments in the eighteenth century. Just as they did in the eighteenth century, contemporary undergarments reflect cultural norms and individual needs. Shapes and styles of undergarments have changed, but many modern garments were born in the eighteenth century, such as the dressing gown, the camisole, and the corset. Moreover, items such as modern panties developed from eighteenth century caleçons, and present-day brassieres would not exist if it were not for the eighteenth-century brassière. Thus, tracing and exploring the history of undergarments not only provides a significant look into eighteenth-century bodies, but also into contemporary culture and concepts of the dressed and undressed body.

The concept of *Tigersprung* (tiger's leap), according to literary and social critic Walter Benjamin, describes fashion's leap into the past to create an ever-changing present. While modern undergarments may bear little to no resemblance to eighteenth-century garments, their form and function are quite similar. The “whale tail” exposure of a g-string is not unlike the shockingly exposed petticoat; the corset-cum-blouse is not unlike the undergarment-cum-gown of the Gaulle; the saggy pants revealing boxer shorts is not unlike the dandy's unbuttoned vest displaying his shirt and jabot; and the peek of a bra strap at the edge of a blouse is not unlike the peaking edge of chemise at the top of a gown. Underwear has always both adapted to cultural and social changes and altered existing paradigms. It is precisely these adaptations and renegotiations that provide insight into the cultural and individual experience.

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