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FASHIONS IN PREGNANCY:
AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CULTURAL INFLUENCES,
1850-1980

By
Rebecca Lou Bailey

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ABSTRACT

FASHIONS IN PREGNANCY: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CULTURAL INFLUENCES, 1850-1980

By

Rebecca Lou Bailey

Medical and fashion advice for pregnant women published in popular literature from 1850 to 1980 are seen as interdependent cultural influences reflecting actual behavior during that time. Conservative and restrictive recommendations in both areas are seen as a legacy of pre-scientific beliefs that permeated all aspects of Victorian culture; of particular significance are those relating the Women's Sphere, which delineated a narrow social role for women, to the even more constricted role assigned women during pregnancy because of superstitions and prudishness. The gradual lifting of such restrictions are traced through the type of clothing available for pregnancy and an analysis of what the clothing tried to accomplish socially for its wearers. Concurrently, advances in medical knowledge slowly changed the body of advice given gravida from information based almost entirely on stereotypic views of women to more objective information empirically gained. However, stereotypes

Rebecca Lou Bailey

and cliches still exist in both the world of fashion and medical advice for pregnancy, and undoubtedly will always persist in some form. Advice given is indicative of culture-wide attitudes which frequently are more solidly rooted in social practice and morality than in science.

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FOREWORD

"Of course, Carol, you know Madeline is--expecting."

There will be no speculation in Carol's mind as to what Madeline is expecting; no errant thoughts of overnight guests, an inheritance from a distant relative, or battered bundles via parcel post clutter her mind. Madeline obviously is in, well, a delicate condition.

How else could our friend deliver the news and be perfectly understood? Madeline could be pregnant. Definition number five, Webster's Dictionary¹, defines pregnant as "exhibiting fertility: teeming." Perhaps that image is a little too sexually active for our friend's social sensibilities. Hence, more oblique references.

Madeline could be "P.G.," which reduces the teeming within her body to an acceptable, "Gidgety" level.

Madeline could be with child, to be Biblical. As was perfectly appropriate in context when used by Matthew and Luke, this directs attention toward the end product, the long-awaited child, and away from the current state of affairs for Mary, or Madeline.

Carol might be told that Madeline is going to have a baby. Carol would know that this did not mean in five years or ten years, but, rather, within nine months.

If Carol and friend were of a clinical bent, then

Madeline might be parturient, gravid or gestating. However, while parturient remains a possibility, gravid sounds terminal and gestating brings to mind rotund, cud-chewing spotted cows.

If Carol and friend were male, then Madeline might be knocked-up; a phrase that chauvinistically removes the attention from Madeline to some libidinous male.

Or, as an elderly gentleman from Lewis County, Kentucky, used to remark², no doubt after long observation of pregnant women's discomfiture under public scrutiny, "She's carrying the pocketbook." Picture Madeline, pocketbook firmly in front of the midsection as a shield or as camouflage, it's hard to say which. Because, as Madeline will discover, even if her friends are oh-so-genteel in conveying the news of her blessed event to each other, nine-tenths of them will stare at her abdomen before they say "hello" the next time they see her. It is as if, during a very public lapse of taste, instead of a diamond, Madeline had inserted a large magnet in her navel and everyone else's eyes were steel worry balls.

The remaining tenth will in no way acknowledge the pregnancy, even if she delivers quintuplets on their doorstep. If Madeline herself makes it a topic for conversation, they will appear uneasy.

But Madeline through history in the United States has had great difficulty in discussing her condition.

Social scientists, historians and feminists, those whom you would expect to have an interest, have been likewise reticent. This work has been done in part to correct that situation as well as understand why it exists.

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(Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company,
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²A personal communication for which I am indebted
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In a recent paper giving an overview of social science attitudes toward women workers, Dorothy Wertz wrote:

Current research seems to be avoiding problems pertaining only or mainly to women, namely maternity leave and child care, partly because attention to these issues reinforces the differences between men and women and also highlights a major stumbling block in most women's wage-earning careers. In order to work for equal opportunity for women it has perhaps seemed necessary to turn away from any topic that could bring up the objection that women's place is in the home.¹

Wertz' comments, published in 1978, underscore the polarization of traditionalists and feminists in the issue of where women belong. They should either be home, which implies caretaking responsibilities for husband and children, or in a career, with no mention made of familial ties or encumbrances. Clearly, this overlooks what may well constitute the majority of working women in America today; those who both work and have families. However, as Wertz notes above, tunnel vision regarding this situation does not begin after the arrival of the child or children, but, rather, before, centering on issues like maternity leave.

Indeed, the whole subject of pregnancy and socially approved activities for the gravida is one that has been

uniformly ignored by researchers in all disciplines. While this situation may currently stem from the perception that the issues would undermine efforts to achieve equal employment status for women, the roots of the problem lie much deeper. Throughout the Nineteenth Century and the Twentieth in America, no aspect of women's life cycle has been treated with such evasiveness, embarrassment, indirectness and outright silence than this entirely normal biological function. There are few synonyms that Americans can use to say "pregnant." The lack of vocabulary is significant. It is a topic that through our history has been discussed either in a clinical manner or through veiled allusions and euphemisms. The phrase "expectant mother," perhaps more than any of the other phrases, implies that this condition has been viewed in our society, like in so many others, as a transitional time period, a sometimes dangerous, life-threatening rite of passage, that must be completed to pass from maidenhood to womanhood.² Frequently this stage involves special treatment for the pregnant individual. Mead and Newton write that no known culture ignores or is totally indifferent to pregnancy.³ Reactions include a sense of responsibility for fetal growth, heightened solicitude toward the pregnant woman, pregnancy as evidence of sexual adequacy, and that pregnancy is a time of vulnerability and debility, shame and reticence.⁴

Primitive non-Western cultures frequently have a

unique dress for the pregnant woman, usually invested with magical, protective properities to keep the woman and baby from harm.⁵ Western society may also have had such dress at a much earlier time, but if so, it seems its heritage was not passed down orally or in writing. That is not to say that Westerners don't have and practice various superstitions regarding pregnancy; they do, clothing just isn't one of them. Many superstitions are medical and of rather recent origin.⁶

Today maternity dress in the United States can be defined as clothing designed to be worn by the pregnant woman. Styles are determined by physiological characteristics as well as tradition.⁷ It probably will have more fullness through the abdomen and bust than a non-maternity garment of the same garment sizing. It may also incorporate expandable features to accomodate the increasing size of the midsection. Maternity clothing is sold in specialty shops or in a separate department within a larger department store carrying ladies' ready-to-wear. The invention of separate dress for maternity wear is generally credited to Lena "Lane" Bryant in 1903.

However, what is available in ready-to-wear for pregnant women, or, at times, the lack of clothing for many activities, has been an efficient regulator of the level of participation in society, especially when coupled with medical advice frequently culturally motivated rather

than empirically supported, that decrees many actions harmful to the mother and fetus.

This study will review the changing fashions in pregnancy for women in the United States from 1850 to 1980. That oft-examined group, middle, uppermiddle class American women, as a people vitally interested in being "in fashion," will once more be under observation in an attempt to fill in a portion of their recorded life-cycles that has been overlooked.

This study will identify and interpret the origin and intent of selected culturally-approved practices during pregnancy, in part revealed through the clothing available for the gravida. The year 1850 has been chosen as the beginning point. Many forces eventually affecting the lives of pregnant women were put into motion near that date; these will be introduced in the next chapter.

Review of Literature

A review of a number of history of costume books on the topic of maternity clothes revealed unexpected evidence. History of costume books are, in fact, nearly barren of any mention of maternity clothing. There was no attempt to randomly select books for study since it became very quickly evident that other sources would have to be used to collect the desired information.

Of the 22 books surveyed,⁸ none listed pregnancy

in the index. When you consider that fashion historians writing of the 1800s forward are most concerned with women's dress, this seems curious. Only one had maternity dress as an entry, a reference to a sacque-fronted Watteau-type gown cited in Payne's History of Costume.⁹ The omission before 1903 is somewhat understandable since pregnancy did not involve the use of a distinctive fashion prior to that time.¹⁰ However, most costume historians make at least brief comment on how the social customs and fashion of an age interact. In the case of the late 1800s, custom and fashion coincided to agree that a whole segment of the female population should be sequestered. Much more trivial and quickly passing quirks of fashion and convention are chronicled. After designer Lane Bryant's invention of 1903, the omission of maternity dress is even more noticeable in costume books. Drawing a parallel between maternity dress and the Bloomer reform costume¹¹ underscores this point (Plate 1). Fashion books routinely reserve space for the Bloomer costume of the 1850s: it came, caused much comment, and disappeared from the fashion picture. The maternity dress came, caused comment (newspapers refused to carry ads for the unseemly garment), and has become an accepted fashion necessity. The two costumes, Bloomer and maternity, have even more in common: both were invented to make women more comfortable; both served as symbols, to a certain extent, of the

Plate 1. Lane Bryant's Tea Gown and the Bloomer Costume. Tea gown redrawn from an illustration (photograph, The Lane Bryant Company); Bloomer redrawn from an illustration in the Illustrated London News (photograph, Culver Pictures).



liberation of women from restrictive social roles; both were originated by middle class women---an unusual place for fashion to begin; both were modifications of existing fashions (the Bloomer modelled after the dresses worn by women recovering from over-tight lacing and also men's suits; the maternity dress after tea gowns); both garments were perfectly respectable when worn in private as originally intended, and hence, were considered outrageous when worn in public. In both cases, 40 years after the introduction of the garment, variations were used as sport clothing by women. While the latter, at first, may seem a coincidental point, closer examination suggests otherwise. Between 1850 and 1890, woman's role in society evolved sufficiently to allow her to be somewhat athletic. One reflection of this was the vogue for cycling bloomers just before the turn of the century (Plate 2). In a very similar way, from 1900 to 1940, the role of the pregnant woman evolved from one of seclusion and relative immobility to a point where she, too, could be somewhat athletic.¹² The qualifier "somewhat" is telling. In 1900 the lady cyclist still did not look one bit athletic with her "well-developed bust" and upholstered hips. By the 1940s the public liked broad-shouldered, well-muscled beauties like Dorothy Lamour, Lana Turner, and Rita Hayworth. And with only a lapse in the 1950s when a universally reactionary mood returned the Victorian-cushioned woman to favor,

Plate 2. Cycling Bloomers, circa 1890, Madame du Gast. Drawn from a photograph (photograph, Radio Times Hulton Picture Library).



slim athletic figures have maintained their popularity as a fashion ideal (Plate 3).

However, in 1940, the pregnant golfer or swimmer did not look athletic; here more an illusion created by the enveloping bulk of her clothing than actual figure characteristics (Plate 4). In the case of both the Victorian cyclist and the pregnant sports participant of a few decades ago, the public accepted the activity, but the inevitable consequence of such participation, a look of physical fitness, had not yet been integrated into the role itself or the fashion silhouette. And indeed, in the case of pregnant women, it would not be until well into the 1970s.

Drawing attention to the inherent similarities of bloomers and maternity garments emphasizes the disparity of treatment at the hands of costume historians. A lingering taint of Victorian reticence regarding mention of pregnancy must exist even among those whose occupation is supposed to be objective description of dress through time. Socially and culturally indoctrinated attitudes seem to have greatly affected emotional detachment on this issue. (See Appendix B for further exploration of possible bias by costume historians against a pregnant appearance.) Therefore, it became imperative to identify where, when, and how repressive proscriptions on the subject of pregnancy and proper behavior for pregnant women might have originated.

**Plate 3. The Neo-Victorian woman of the 1950s:
Marilyn Monroe, circa 1956. Drawn from a photograph
(photograph, Radio Times Hulton Picture Library).**



Plate 4. One of the first maternity swimsuits, 1939.
Redrawn from an illustration in "For Mothers of
To-morrow," Vogue Vol. 93 (June 15, 1939), p. 78.



Two separate sources of information have been identified which document this from 1850 forward.

Popular books and articles written by doctors and by self-credentialled experts about prenatal care reflect what is apt to be practiced by expectant mothers at a given time. Study of proscriptions on diet, exercise, and dress directs a mirror toward changing society and the quality of life of the pregnant woman.

The history of maternity fashions, also derived from books and articles, gives perhaps the clearest view of what the expectant mother was doing, or allowed to do, at any specific time. Clothing functions as a visual symbol of both beliefs and practices. The addition of play and work clothes to the pregnant woman's wardrobe is a vital indicator of great changes in role.

Articles from the late Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries were located by searching The Cumulative Index to Periodicals, 1896-1899 and The Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature, 1900-1980. Key terms such as pregnancy, prenatal care, reform dress, maternity clothes, etc., were used. The precise terms used for a specific year varied due to fashion, mores, and cataloguer; "Motherhood," meaning pregnant, was an important early word, but later lost all relevance. "Maternity Clothes" as a separate listing first appeared in the 1947 Reader's Guide. Articles and books from the mid-Nineteenth Century were discovered through

subject searches on such topics as prenatal care, etiquette, and dress.

Both medical and fashion advice are found in women's magazines, a primary source for this study. Phyllis Tortora wrote of the importance of women's magazines.

Geared as they are to a large population of middle-income women, these magazines reflect and shape the attitudes of middle-class women toward their place in society. Indeed, women's magazines have been a major source of information for and about American women and their roles since the magazines first came into being in the early Nineteenth Century.¹³

Very few scholarly studies have been completed on maternity dress and its implications. (See Appendix C for a summary of this research.) None done in the United States has explored the changes it can document in proper conduct for pregnant women and changing attitudes toward the morality or immorality of revealing a pregnant form for all to see. History of maternity dress has been treated incorrectly and as incidental to major premises. It has been perceived as a stable factor, when actually, as this study will show, the motivation or intent of styles available in this century have varied tremendously in an attempt to reinforce or maintain the widely-held stereotypic views of proper conduct during pregnancy of a given time.

Three researchers have independently reported information that has relevance to this study.

Daniels (1965)¹⁴ and Wilson (1968)¹⁵ both reported that pregnant women would stay home rather than attend an event dressed unattractively or inappropriately. Daniels presented this to her subjects as a hypothetical situation. Wilson asked respondents to recall any such events during their pregnancies. Dowdeswell (1972)¹⁶ and Daniels both found comfort to be the most important factor influencing selection of maternity garments. Attractiveness of garments was valued highly. Daniels found this particularly so for first pregnancies. Dowdeswell's subjects ranked a definitionally-related quality, psychic comfort, next to physical comfort during the third trimester; as pregnancy nears term, clothes are apt to fit poorly, thus making "well being of mind through clothing" more difficult to achieve and at the same time more desirable. Costume, the Journal of the British Costume Society, has published two articles on maternity dress in the Nineteenth Century. Both articles are documentary in nature and attempt to place specific garments within a value system, a socio-economic context, for the time they were worn.¹⁷

There has been no work done linking prenatal medical custom and advice to the clothing worn in a given year by gravida. Yet, the clothing commercially available is an overt symbol of culturally-approved activities.

The following chapters will trace what practices health experts recommended for pregnant women, what the

women wore as they went about their activities, and when the clothing originated that allowed them increasing freedom, the same freedom long allowed other women. To do this, what at first may seem like an incredible array of miscellaneous threads have to be gathered together into one skein. The goal of this study, then, is to recognize those linked threads and make them available for further scrutiny.

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Mead and Newton, op. cit., p. 67.

⁶Refer to Chapters 3 and 4.

⁷See Chapter 9 for a review of the lasting nature shown by maternity wear styles.

⁸The books used were limited to those that presented the information in chronological order. The books also had to present fashion as a continuum, rather than selecting isolated fashions from each century or period. Only one book by each author was included. In the cases where an author had written more than one history of costume, the most comprehensive one in terms of time span was used. Refer to Appendix A for a listing of books used.

⁹Blanche Payne, History of Costume (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), p. 416.

¹⁰See Chapters 8 and 9 for a review of the history of maternity clothing.

¹¹See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the Bloomer costume and its historical and spiritual link to maternity dress.

¹²Refer to Chapters 3 and 4 for a chronological treatment of this subject.

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CHAPTER 2

The Beginning, 1850:

Stereotypes, Catalysts and Mavericks

In the year 1851, Amelia Bloomer, a modest and frail-looking young woman put aside her weighty petticoats and long skirts, donned turkish trousers and a tunic carefully sewn by her dressmaker, and went about her daily business as if nothing extraordinary were happening. Passersby in her small New York town were bewildered and intrigued by the sight.

The same year seven young English artists were signing their works with the letters "PRB," the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Some of their paintings depicted young women in loosely-flowing gowns; a dramatic contrast to the corsetted silhouette of the time. W. Holman Hunt, co-founder of the group,¹ stated their mission: to illustrate themes "connected with the pathetic, the honest, the laudable, the sublime interests of humanity," exemplifying the principle that "Art is Love"² (Plate 7).

Meanwhile, French author Theophile Gautier propounded a counter philosophy, "Art for Art's Sake,"³ based on the "aesthetics" of ancient Greece. As interpreted from Plato and Aristotle, art should not serve as a vehicle for morality; art should be art. What freedom, and yet,

Plate 7. A Pre-Raphaelite Beauty. Drawn from a photograph of Jane Burden by Gabriel Dante Rossetti, July, 1865.



what onerous responsibility for self-discovery this placed on the artist.

"Art is Love" and "Art for Art's Sake" echoed the point-counterpoint lives of women at mid-19th Century. Women as Love embodied the idealized woman of the time; a creature of fragility, a faithful and forgiving wife, a gentle spiritual mother, nurse to the sick, selfless, satisfied with the woman's sphere⁴ (Plate 8). Editor Sarah Hale wrote in the July, 1850, issue of Godey's Ladies Magazine, "we hold the doctrines that women's duties are of a higher and holier nature than man's, inasmuch as to her is consigned the moral power of the world."⁵

Far from this ideal were the women for women's sake. They felt a woman should not be a vehicle for morality alone. A woman should question, explore, learn. Nineteenth Century reformers find a niche here, whether supporters of dress reform, education, or suffrage.

Neither role, mother or reformer, was an easy one. Both set very high, though divergent standards. Indeed, at mid-century the same dichotomy of prescribed roles versus individualism existed to a degree for all Victorians. "Typological thinking" was the accepted mode.

According to it, there are a limited number of fixed unchangeable 'ideas' underlying the observed variability, with the eidos [idea] being the only thing that is fixed and real while the observed variability has no more reality than the shadows on the wall...as it is stated in Plato's allegory. For the typologist, the type (eidos) is real and

Plate 8. The Woman's Sphere. Godey's Lady's Book
Vol. LX (January 1860), title page (photograph,
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources).



the variation an illusion.⁶

Placed within this frame of reference, casually-mouthed phrases take on greater significance. A "typical woman" becomes more than a patronizing statement; it delineates a cultural expectation of behavior from which there can be little variation. It is in this spirit of absolute conformity that the leading American ladies' periodical printed with relief and complacency, "Queen Victoria is a good queen, and what is still better, a good wife and mother."⁷ Surely queening was something she did after the children were tucked in bed for the night, and then at the expense of reading her favorite magazine.

The perceived order and plan of nature in Nineteenth Century America was in apparent harmony with the social system. Yet, within the decade, in 1859, Charles Darwin was to publish On the Origin of Species. His first edition sold out on the day of publication.⁸ The public was clearly eager to hear a different explanation. Darwin's proposed population thinking challenged typology. He declared everything organic unique. A contemporary author, Ernst Mayr, summarizes this concept. "Averages are merely statistical abstractions, only the individuals of which the population are composed have reality."⁹

To all Victorians anxious to make one's way in life Darwin's theories proffered a sweet benediction. The previously impenetrable barriers of social class crumbled

into insignificant, archaic, typological heaps as they read. The implication population thinking had for freedom of personal behavior was even more profound.

Perhaps women who wanted less restrictive dress, an education equal to a man's; who wanted employment outside the house; who wanted to be less literally prisoners of any and all social conventions were not deviants after all. Perhaps they were just exercising their birthright to be unique. The application of population thinking to personal behavior compelled Mary Coolidge to write in 1912, "In other words, sex tradition rather than innate sex character have produced what is called 'feminine' as distinguished from womanly behavior."¹⁰ However, social acceptance of difference roles for women was in part dependent upon how much doctors knew---or accepted---about the functioning of women's bodies. At the end of the 19th Century, many of the most prominent physicians in the United States¹¹ believed that higher education for women would develop the nervous system by diverting needed nourishment from the reproductive organs. Educated females would be "unsexed" as a result fo their studies. Such women, if they could have children, would produce sickly, inferior ones.¹² Another popular view averred that "high cultivation of the intellect implies a corresponding deficiency of the affections."¹³

An extension of this thinking made it imperative

that prospective mothers exercise utmost caution and restrict their activities severely.¹⁴ Proponents of sexual restraint thought nervous excitement in parturient women could cause poor development of the fetus by diverting needed energies. The body was perceived as possessing a certain capacity for living which could not be increased or tampered with without deleterious effect. Such typological attitudes remained in the public mind long after educated people accepted Darwin's theories of evolution.

More moderate voices on the functioning of female physiology were, of course, raised. Dr. George Napheys was perhaps the first American physician to write an informative book for women about their bodies.¹⁵ In 1869 his book was greeted with enthusiasm comparable to that meeting Darwin's publication. Napheys noted, "That the fifth edition and the tenth thousandth of this book should be called for within three months from its first appearance can astonish no one so much as it does the Author."¹⁶ Here again, the public demonstrated overwhelming eagerness to hear a different explanation.

At the same time, physicians and lay reformers began to exhort women to have active bodies. Sheer joy in exertion was seldom discussed. Moral obligation was a far more cogent argument. The Protestant Work Ethic decreed women sinful and slothful who, husband's wealth permitting, allowed servants to perform every task. In

this vein, Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe earnestly implored readers in 1869.

Young girls can seldom be made to realize the value of health and the need of exercise to secure it, so as to feel much interest in walking abroad, when they have no other object. But, if they are brought up to minister to the comfort and enjoyment of themselves and others, by performing domestic duties, they will constantly be interested and cheered in their exercise by the feeling of usefulness and the consciousness of having performed their duty.¹⁷

A second recurring explanation for exercise was to improve the capacity for maternal function. Thomas Nichols wrote "The Curse Removed" in 1850. He felt women were condemned to poor reproductive health by stubborn adherence to sedentary ways in an attempt to be fashionable. Nichols offered a restorative proscription.

Exercise full, and varied, and abundant, is a condition of health. Do our women get it? Not one in a hundred. Imprisoned in school rooms, drilled into proprieties, taught to dawdle in drawing rooms---made to knit, and sew, and embroider, when they should run about the fields, or work in gardens. They exercise in rocking chairs, and get fatigued with a shopping excursion.¹⁸

Mr. Nichols' polemic was among the most socially disruptive. A woman could clean her house and tend her family and be a shining example within the woman's sphere. A woman could perform these tasks with the expectation that, by doing so, she would have healthier, brighter children and still be comfortable within the sphere. But the woman who casts aside knitting and sewing to romp through fields and work (not tend, or minister, or nurture) in the garden is not to

be trusted!

Reform dress, artistic dress, population thinking and proper roles for women in society, the conventional wisdom of the medical profession, and exercise for women seem an unrelated listing. Yet, these disparate fragments from the mid-19th Century coalesced to tremendously affect life for pregnant women in the United States. During the last half of the 19th Century and into the 20th Century, whenever freedoms were gained by women in general, pregnant women did not receive those same freedoms for a period of 25 to 50 years after. Whether freedom meant reform in clothing, expansion of the acceptable working role for women, or activity and exercise permitted by physicians, the lag phase is consistent. Identification of pregnant women with the stereotype of the woman's sphere is a partial answer why. Gregory Stone defines appearance in terms of its effect on social transactions. He feels that it is a more powerful determinant than discourse in delimiting the potentials for an exchange.¹⁹ Pregnant women have been automatically assigned to a role sidcarded for most other women, that women's sole reason for being is nurturing, because of appearance alone and lingering related stereotypes about the condition of pregnancy itself. A few examples make this readily apparent.

Depiction of women as emotional, prime to hysterical outbursts, and as people who must be guarded from physical

and emotional stress was a common characterization for all women one hundred years ago. At the same time, it is an easily recognizable, contemporary folk-portrait of traits in expectant mothers.

Few would still argue against women's right to work. However, the United States government did not declare punitive employment restrictions for pregnant employees discriminatory until 1977.²⁰ Again, a continuation of the woman's sphere into the 20th Century. A frequent argument against pregnant females working was their fragility, lack of stamina, and need for frequent rest periods (another echo of the fair flowers of yesteryear). Yet, a recent study by Erkkola found that the capacity of pregnant women at term for physical labor equal to that of her non-pregnant sisters.²¹

From a fashion standpoint, women, in part, accomplished their escape from the woman's sphere by adopting derivatives of male dress. Obviously, the hoop-skirted gown of the 1850s underwent a more thorough transformation than the gentleman's black frock coat in becoming the ubiquitous he-she business suits of today (Plate 9).

A study by Wood published in 1966 notes that low status groups who wish to rise up the occupational hierarchy may adopt occupational dress similar to the profession to which they aspire.²² Many recent studies have reaffirmed the contribution dress makes to projecting a professional

Plate 9. Fashionable dress, September, 1851.
"Cherry Ripe," Godey's Lady's Book Vol. XLIII
(September, 1851)(photograph, North Carolina
Department of Cultural Resources).



image.²³ Victorian women, it would seem, had a good comprehension of this strategy, and used it to get out of the house. As a quotation published on the title page of an 1892 guide for the well-dressed woman said:

Strive as you will to elevate woman, nevertheless the disability and degradation of her dress, together with that large group of false views of the uses of her being and of her relations to man, symbolized and perpetuated by her dress, will make her striving vain.^{24,25}

For the busy lady in the 1890s, the tailor-made suit was a solution to the dress problem. It simultaneously conveyed the impression of neatness, an active life, and social status, because of its high cost²⁶ (Plate 10).

Holiness of the women's sphere notwithstanding there is a common misconception today of the status Victorians attributed to housekeeping; it was viewed with little regard by both men and women. Although motherhood was placed on a pedestal, the more mundane aspects of house and child care certainly were not. The Beecher sisters, who were displeased with the prevailing attitude, wrote:

To be a nurse of young children, a cook, or a housemaid is regarded as the lowest and last resort of poverty, and one which no woman of culture and position can assume without loss of caste and respectability.²⁷

Even women who enjoyed the view from the pedestal were anxious to free their time for more "important" things like shopping, travel, or church activities. Heavy dresses and layers of petticoats did not accomodate the quickening

Plate 10. Menswear for women: The tailored costume, 1882. Three-piece woolen costume consisting of skirt, jacket and vest. Godey's Lady's Book Vol. CV (December 1882), p. 499, fig. 8 (photograph, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources).



tempo of their lives anymore than it did those bold women who voluntarily chose to join the workforce. However, the pregnant woman could not so easily slip into a tailor-made at the end of the 19th Century and out of the woman's sphere. In an era when concealment of pregnancy was a primary objective, slim-tailored clothing was physiologically precluded.²⁸ One of the acknowledged keys to freedom for women, "professional" clothing, was denied to a segment of the population. Thus, the woman's sphere clung like an all-encompassing shawl, shielding the world from the unsightliness of the pregnant form, and its wearer from the shame of public exposure.

However, rebellious alternatives to the fitted silhouette in fashion in the 19th Century---the Bloomer Costume, Rational Dress, Pre-Raphaelite dress---have been present since the 1850s. They are the direct ancestors of the maternity clothing of the 20th Century. Yet, maternity clothing might never have existed if medical doctors had not simultaneously condemned tight-fitting clothing, the socially-correct garments, while urging the pregnant woman out of doors, into the public eye, for exercise. Clearly, attitudes and dress had to change to resolve this conflict. Chapters 3 and 4 will trace the evolution of medical opinion on how to conduct a proper pregnancy. The remaining chapters will follow developments in dress that made both appearing in public and engaging in medically-promoted activities part of a fashionable pregnancy.

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²⁶"...an excellent costume of three pieces---skirt, waistcoat and coat---lined throughout with silk and of exquisite fit and finish ought to be obtained for seventy-five dollars," Anonymous, The Woman's Book (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 211.

²⁷Catherine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, The American Woman's Home (New York: J. B. Ford and Co., 1869), p. 13.

²⁸Of course, tightlacing was a possibility, but popular literature of the late 1800s is so uniform in condemnation of its dire consequences for expectant mothers for too many of them to have persevered. And besides, to quote Harper's Bazar of September 8, 1900, "tight lacing is out of favor for the present" (Vol. 33 No. 36), p. 1163.

CHAPTER 3

Medical Skill, 1850-1875:

The Dark Ages

My Experience in Babies, Sir!

Oh, you, light-hearted, beauteous maid
 Whose greatest care's to curl and braid,
 Far from life's lesson have you strayed,
 If you ne'er think of babies!
For this alone was woman made,
After her sovereign lord's obeyed,
 To nurse and tend the babies.

And Man, thou noblest work of God!
 Thou, who canst never see the load
 Thy wife sustains through life's rough road,
 With thee and with her babies,
 Go kneel upon they mother's grave
 And think---that every life she gave
 Made her Death's victim or Life's slave;
Then love your wife---and babies!

---Mary Neal, 1854¹

This chapter reviews the level of medical skill in the period 1850 to 1875 relating to pregnancy and childbirth. To state that there was practically no prenatal care in 1850 would be true, but then it must also be stated that there was really no preventive medicine of any sort. Before physician-directed prenatal care could become a desired procedure, it had to hold out some promises of reward. The reward had to be powerful enough to make deeply modest Victorian American women believe that physical examination by an unknown male was not "medical treatment at once

useless, torturing to the mind, and involving great liability to immoralities,"² but rather a necessity.

Two carrots and one whip were extended to women. They were found to be so effective, they have been extended ever since. The largest carrot was, "if you'll do this, you'll have a better pregnancy and labor"; the second, "if you'll do this, you'll be yourself after pregnancy"--- (no humps, bumps, sags, or bags). The whip was, "if you don't do this, your baby will suffer." The same system of bribe and threat has been used equally effectively to promote complete anesthesia during childbirth and childbirth without anesthesia. This situation is by no means unique to the United States. Anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep wrote the following in 1908.

Pregnancy ceremonies, like those of childbirth, include a great many rites---sympathetic or contagious, direct or indirect, dynamistic or animistic---whose purpose is to facilitate delivery and to protect mother and child...against evil forces which may be impersonal or personified. These have been studied repeatedly.³

What is unusual in the United States is the insistence that all practices, past and present, have had sound, scientific basis, and the denial that some might more truthfully be classified as rites of protection, with all the magical connotations that phrase implies. Chapters 3 and 4 will analyze medical advice from 1850 to 1980 to show that much of the advice given has been no less a "fashion" than the clothing the women wore.

Dr. Alexander Skene, looking back in the year 1900 said:

The conception of modern gynecology began about 75 years ago, when obstetricians discovered that woman was more than a mechanism for reproduction, and surgeons became fully aware that they had much to learn regarding her diseases and their treatment.⁴

As 1850 began, not all obstetricians were so enlightened, but as 1875 drew to a close most physicians were in possession of enough necessary skill to make their management of pregnancy seem desirable to women.

The first medical school in America was the University of Pennsylvania Medical Department, founded in Philadelphia in 1765. Its purpose, like that of the other schools that were soon to open, was to offer short courses on specific topics to supplement the medical student's apprenticeship. The idea of a year-round program of study was over a hundred years away. Nonetheless, a diploma from a medical school carried great prestige.

As 1850 began, the medical profession was exclusively male. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell was the one exception (Plate 11). She had received her degree the previous year. The professional interest in women's healthcare was slight in the early 1800s, partly because the perception was that not much could be done. Circa 1852, Dr. Marion Sims became the first American doctor to specialize solely in the treatment of women. At that time, self-trained midwives assisted in childbirth. Many influential women thought midwives as a

Plate 11. Elizabeth Blackwell. Rephotographed
from The Woman's Book (New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1894), p. 45 (photograph, Jack Bailey).

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Most medical schools refused to admit women. Reasons for refusal were primarily based on cultural values. The impossibility of women studying a frank subject like medicine in the presence of men was cited by both sexes. The Female Medical College of Philadelphia was incorporated in 1849; other medical schools operated exclusively for women shortly thereafter. Separate institutions partially solved the problem of proprieties, but absence of women capable of teaching medicine left the dilemma of the male professor. Another argument against women's study was that the women who studied medicine were merely triflers. This attitude was expressed by Hugo Munsterberg at the close of the 19th Century when he wrote sarcastically:

...the woman who studies medicine or natural science, music or paintings, perhaps even law or divinity, can we affront her with the suggestion, which would be an insult to the man, that all her work is so superficial that she will not care for its continuation as soon as she undertakes the duties of a married woman? Or ought we to imply that she is so conceited as to believe that she is able to do what no man would dare hope for himself; that is, to combine the professional duties of the man with the not less complex duties of the woman: She knows that the intensity of her special interest must suffer, and that her work must become a superficial side interest.⁵

With such bias prevalent, women in medicine remained a small minority, and their effect on prenatal care was negligible. Thus, society itself slowed the progress of medical science. Rigid rules of social conduct hampered

both the male doctor's quest for basic knowledge of reproduction and female physiology, and the potential female doctor's entry into the profession itself. William Cobbett, an Englishman who had lived in America for an extended period of time, exemplifies the extreme posture taken by society. In 1829 he addressed such matters in an etiquette book directed to young men in the "upper ranks of life." After having had a "male operator" attend his beloved wife during her last confinement---much against her own wishes--- he laments:

...safety to life is not all. The preservation of life is not to be preferred to everything...Surely, then, the mere chance, the possibility of it [death], ought not to outweigh the mighty considerations on the other side; ought not to overcome that inborn modesty, that sacred reserve as to their persons, which, as I said before, is the charm of charms of the female sex...⁶

Cobbett wanted to stress the seriousness of the situation so that other well-meaning husbands would not be swept aside by the credentials of medical men as opposed to the propriety of a midwife. He concluded that the decrease in real refinement and delicacy in women, to that point that some would willingly seek out the services of a male attendant, was instigated by the doctor. The result of this compromising conduct was a rise in prostitution and illegitimate children.⁷

When J. B. White, Buffalo physicians, conducted an obstetrics class in 1850 in which a live birth was observed

by his students, there was outraged protest from his colleagues and from the public. In the other branches of medicine observation had been accepted medical training practice from the beginning of the 17th Century.⁸ As a consequence, by 1876 all branches of medicine except gynecology were taught through clinical teaching. With a surfeit of healthy female bodies for study, the male doctor's knowledge of the range of normality, the initial stages of disease and that basic female function, pregnancy, was slight.

It is a constant shock to discover how little doctors knew in the mid-1800s. Physicians of the time claimed that medicine had been a valid science since the late 1700s, but, in reality, the lauded scientific method appears rooted in superstition and a hope for discovering miracle cures by random chance. Medical papers frequently seem an odd mingling of sincere desire to improve the patient's health and detached curiosity and lack of personal responsibility for the outcome of medical experimentation. One example that typifies this dichotomy appears in an ovariectomy case⁹ reported by Gaillard Thomas in 1876, "in which four days after the operation eight and a half ounces of milk were transfused into the patient's veins with good results."¹⁰ When another doctor tried the milk cure on both dogs and people, his subjects died. Thomas concluded that the method needed more study; something that by our present

standards should have occurred prior to Thomas' initial transfusion. Yet, Dr. Thomas was not a sadistic and irresponsible practitioner. As professor of obstetrics in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, he was a respected staff member of the second oldest medical school in the United States.

The mortality rate for abdominal cases, whether cesarean deliveries or surgery for other causes, was from 30% to 50% in 1875.¹¹ Since this is five years after Joseph Lister promulgated antiseptic practice, even this alarming percentage is probably lower than it had been previously. The doctor was usually called upon only when all hope, except for divine intervention, had been abandoned. Public lack of confidence forced doctors to deal almost exclusively with mortal illnesses. The general debility of patients when they came under the knife must have been a contributing factor in the high death rate. Evaluation of medical procedures and innovations was a guess at best with these confounding difficulties.

A major medical tenet during this time period was that inflammation of the body was caused by the presence of excess fluids within the body. If this could be properly released, the patient would recover. All of the following cures were employed to this end.¹²

Bloodletting, or venesection, was accepted medical procedure. Bleedings ranged from small ones of six to

eight ounces up to 30 or 40 ounces at a time. The amount of blood to be taken was based on customary volumes or by monitoring the patient's degree of pallor while keeping a strong light on the patient's face.

Leechings were also standard prescription. They were thought, by some, to be less efficacious than venesection because they could not be placed at the site of internal infection. Their application was judged to cause the patient greater pain than bloodletting.

One rationale for removing blood was that if the amount of blood within the body was decreased, there would be less blood rushing to inflame an injured area. No doubt many physicians agreed with Dr. Charles D. Meigs when he said, "It is, I think, a great mistake to say that the loss of blood, even enormous loss, is in any degree injurious to the constitution of the individual."¹³ Many doctors believed that to provoke a state of ptyalism, or massive salivation, would have a similar effect.

The use of sudorific medicines to make the patient sweat also had support. Closely aligned with this is the Hot Regimen, where the invalid was sandwiched in featherbeds to encourage the flow of perspiration.

A general philosophy of medicine was that the body had a regular rhythm. Severe illness was an indication the rhythm had gone awry. Some doctors felt that only administration of a tremendous shock to the body could

jolt it back onto its proper course; the more serious the illness, the more drastic the treatment. How the shock should be delivered and by what method varied with disease and doctor. All of the above were used.

Other doctors agreed with Dr. Alonzo Clark who felt an unhealthy body was in turmoil enough. Calming the system was the solution. If a sedate state reigned, the natural rhythm of the body would reassert itself. Thus, opium was prescribed in incredibly massive, often lethal, doses. Opium was also given in conjunction with other medicines or treatments as a painkiller.

The process of reproduction was not understood. There were three principal theories in the middle 1800s, all controversial.

1. The fetus was somehow a mixture of particles, or molecules, from both father and mother. Since a process whereby such a combination could be accomplished was hard to fathom, the remaining theories were made more credible.

2. The Theory of Animalcules---the child comes from the father. The mother is just an incubator. Leuwenhoek, the man who developed the microscope into a practical tool and the first person to observe sperm, endorsed this explanation.

3. The Ova Theory---the mother is totally responsible for the creation of the child after some unexplainable chain of events triggers the pregnancy. Dr. William Harvey, the

great English physician, believed this to be true.

However, this summary may overly simplify the picture of true confusion that existed. Robert Dale Owen wrote in 1859:

I shall not inquire whether the future human being owes its first existence, as Hippocrates and Galen assert, and Buffon very ingeniously supports, to the union of two life-giving fluids, each a sort of extract of the body of the parent, and composed of organic particles similar to the future offsprings; or whether, as Harvey and Haller teach, the embryo reposes in the ovum until vivified by the seminal fluid, or perhaps only by the aura seminalis; or whether, according to the theories of Leuwenhoeck and Boerhaave, the future man first exists as a spermatic animalcule, for which the ovum becomes merely the nourishing receptacle; or whether, as the ingenious Andry imagines, a vivifying worm be the more correct hypothesis; or whether, finally, as Perault will have it, the embryo beings (too wonderfully organized to be supposed the production of any mere physical phenomenon) must be imagined to come directly from the hands of the Creator, who has filled the universe with these little germs, too minute, indeed, to exercise all the animal functions, but still self-existent, and awaiting only the insinuation of some subtle essence into their microscopic pores, to come forth as human beings. Still less am I inclined to follow Hippocrates and Tertullian in their inquiries whether the soul is merely introduced into the foetus, or pre-exists in the semen, and becomes, as it were, the architect of its future residence, the body; or to attempt a refutation of the hypothesis of the metaphysical naturalist who asserts, (and adduces the infinite indivisibility of matter in support of the assertion) that the actual germs of the whole human race, and of all that are yet to be born, existed in the ovaria of our first mother, Eve.¹⁴

The most significant factor, in terms of the state of medicine, is that Hippocrates' theories are given as much credence as those developed centuries later.

At least two prominent doctors cite the necessity for orgasm if conception is to occur. It is unclear when

Dr. Meigs writes in 1838¹⁵ if this is essential for both partners. Since Meigs didn't commit himself to any of the theories of reproduction noted earlier, this was probably his belief. In 1870, Dr. George Napheys advises readers that "conception is more assured when the two individuals who co-operate in it participate at the same time in the transports of which it is the fruit."¹⁶

Physicians cautiously did not attempt to predict the condition of pregnancy until they could see or hear the baby move.

Menstruation and fertility were also topics for conjecture, speculation and confusion. Dr. Charles Meigs pondered the mysteries of menstruation in 1838:

There is a very prevalent opinion even among our own people, that the presence of a woman with the catamenia [menstruation] is sufficient to cause the putrefaction of meats, the coagulation or souring of milk, and the failure of sauces [sic], etc. While I suppose that such opinions are pure superstitions...¹⁷

But, superstitions having farther-reaching consequences than the threat of curdled sauces urged discretion on the part of young women in this condition. As late as 1894, Dr. J. West Roosevelt counseled:

...it is simply wicked to allow a young girl to continue to study or play when unwell [Victorian euphemism] as when well. The whole of her future happiness may be determined by her care at this time. Let the sacrifice be what it may, her education, her amusements, and her exercise must be directed by the timetable which nature has adopted for her. Never forget that any other schedule of time may result in ruined health.¹⁸

...and the inability to bear children. Today, the rationale behind this is most frequently attributed to Dr. Edward Hammond Clarke's Sex in Education, published in 1874.

Clarke propounded that higher education would have harmful effects on young women's capacity for reproduction. However, his views were simply another application of the then common, popular belief that to overuse any single portion of the body would not only exhaust that portion in time, but lead to deterioration of the whole. Strangely, the female reproductive organs' stress from innumerable pregnancies seem to have been exempt from this litany. However, prior to pregnancy, overdevelopment of either mind or body in women might hamper the ability to conceive. Dr. Ely Van de Warker supported this stance in 1903, when he wrote:

...the woman student is a product of the schools all through her life, and has developed the intellectual at the expense of the physical side of her organization. She has in that degree increased the zone that is responsive to physical suffering and is without the hardened fiber of nerve and muscle that enables her to endure.

and a few pages later...

It is the educated young mothers that show the sad havoc made by maternity; the class that has developed the cerebral faculties at the expense of this supreme hour of a woman's life. It is among this class, that we find the failure of physiological function that results in sterility, in anaemia, in neurasthenia, and hysteria.¹⁹

Dr. Clelia Duel Mosher disparagingly cited an instance of this belief in the early 20th Century:

An English school mistress stated that athletic

women bear only girl children or if they do have sons that they are inferior...Nor would such a statement be worth even passing notice if it had not received such wide publicity both in England and America.²⁰

Given the doctors' rather rudimentary medical knowledge in 1850 and for several decades after, there appears little reason why women would choose them over "ignorant" midwives. But that is to overlook the first promise made to women by doctors that midwives could not counter---a guaranteed less painful labor.

Ether was discovered in October, 1846. Three independent researchers claimed to be the sole originator: Dr. Horace Wells, Dr. Charles Jackson, and Dr. William Morton. Eventually, Dr. Morton's claim was upheld. Sulphuric ether was first used at Massachusetts General Hospital in 1846. Surprisingly, there were many decent people vehemently opposed to its use. Major arguments against it, all "moral," were as follows:²¹

1. Dr. Morton was a dentist. Innuendo wondered what might transpire with female patients unconscious in their dentists' chairs.

2. Orator and reformed drunkard, John Gough, forcefully articulated the idea that ether produced a state of insensibility akin to drunkenness. Hence, in the eyes of the avid supporters of the temperance movement which was sweeping the country, ether was morally reprehensible.

3. Christian ministers claimed that ether violated

the Bible's word. An analogy was drawn with the afflictions of Job; people shouldn't deprive themselves of the opportunity to prove their loyalty to God by enduring santifying pain. Using ether for childbirth was singled out as disobeying Genesis 3:16. Woman was intended to "bring forth children in sorrow."

Ether was first used for childbirth in January, 1847, in Edinburgh, Scotland; in April of the same year in Boston. The argument over its use raged on for over six more years. Then in 1853, the irreproachable Queen Victoria used ether for the birth of her eighth child. The critics were silenced.

Thus, a woman might choose to go to a trained physician for the promise of ether alone, but other promises were also made. Most of these were centered around the idea of fewer problems in pregnancy and labor.

At this time period, there really was no prenatal advice for "early pregnancy" as far as doctors were concerned, because they had no means of detecting it. Therefore, all advice on pregnancy can be taken as directed toward the last half of the second trimester and the third trimester. Gentle exercise, such as walking, and fresh air were promoted by some practitioners to secure an easy labor. Yet, social convention precluded this for the visibly pregnant woman. Unless weather conspired with her to justify the wearing of concealing wraps, she was an inmate in her own house (Plates 12, 13, 14,

Plate 12. Assorted wraps, November, 1843.
Godey's Lady's Book Vol. XXVII (November, 1843),
Fashion plate (photograph, the North Carolina
Department of Cultural Resources).

In Plates 12 through 16, note the steadily slimmer
silhouette for outer garments, ending in 1882 with
one that would have been unwearable during pregnancy.



Plate 13. Wraps, October, 1861. "Novelties for October," Godey's Lady's Book Vol. LXIII (October 1861), p. 332, figs. 1 and 2 (photograph, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources).

"Fig. 1. Walking dress and jacket for the approaching cool weather; the jacket is of a woolen stuff ribbed in diamonds; the trimming astrakan plush."

"Fig. 2. Light walking cloak or mantle of brown cloth, with stripes of velvet, and edged by a fringe."

NOVELTIES FOR OCTOBER.

Fig. 1.

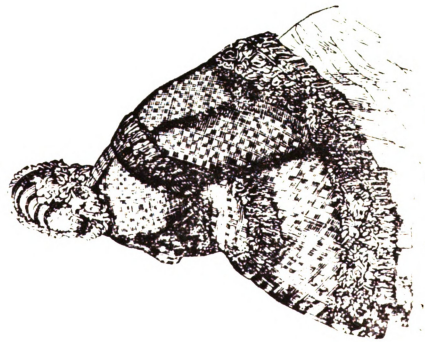


Fig. 2.

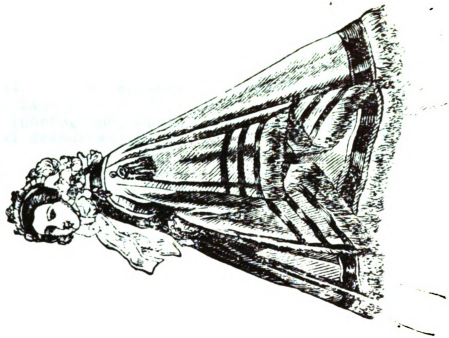


Plate 14. Cloak and walking dress, October, 1878.
Godey's Lady's Book Vol. XCVII (October, 1878), p. 283,
fig. 3 (photograph, North Carolina Department of
Cultural Resources).



15 and 16).

Napheys felt that sexual relations could be continued in moderation throughout the pregnancy. Other authorities opposed intercourse during gestation. They feared that nervous excitation would direct needed energy away from the fetus.²² As the pregnancy neared its term, doctors urged practices that seem bizarre today. The theory behind their prophylactics was that if the woman began labor in a somewhat weakened condition, her body would be less resistant; labor would be faster and easier.

Meigs emphatically stated:

No woman, who has a little common sense, would be willing to march up to such a conflict with the fullest and most brilliant health. She would prefer to be rather delicate than strong, for there is never to be dreaded any lack of power, but only excess of resistance is to be feared.²³

Toward that goal, Meigs recommended several well-timed venesections between the seventh and ninth months. Pregnant women at that stage should also have enemas, since the bowels might be inactive. Diet should be properly regulated. If the woman was agreeable to the doctor's advice, she would eat no meat for the last 30 days of her pregnancy. If she liked meat too much for that sacrifice, she should be convinced to eat it only every other day. This diet would reduce her to a nicely weakened state by the time labor was to begin. Further, the blood of the meat was ritualistically felt to add to the potential for

Plate 15. Walking costumes for ladies, April, 1882.
Godey's Lady's Book Vol. CIV (April 1882), p. 305,
figs. 1, 2 (photograph, North Carolina Department
of Cultural Resources).

"Fig. 1. The cloak...fitting the figure closely to
below the waist in the back...; the front is straight."

"Fig. 2. Basque bodice fitting very tightly..." p. 372.

"Mantles are principally of two shapes, those which
display the figure and the demifitting." Godey's
Lady's Book Vol. CIV (May, 1882), p. 469.



Plate 16. Redingote, September, 1882. Godey's Lady's Book Vol. CV (September, 1882) p. 215, figs. 26, 27 (photograph, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources).

"Front and back view of Paris redingote made of dark bottle green cloth with a vest of cream-color satin.....This as present is thought will be the most popular outdoor garment for autumn and winter." p. 277.



developing abdominal infection.²⁴ A further reason for restricting diet was printed as a helpful hint in the November, 1850, Water Cure Journal.

Many midwives and experienced matrons admit that not to indulge in eating and drinking more than is barely necessary retards the growth of the fetus, and this contributes to the safety of childbirth.²⁵

There was little discussion of complicating physical conditions during pregnancy in the texts of the 1800s. This may have been due to the doctor's lack of involvement in prenatal care and inability to diagnose danger signs.²⁶

Many medical men endorsed the dress reformers' fear that corsetting had deleterious effects on fertility; pressure around the waist pushed all of the organs down on top of the uterus (Plate 17). Persistence in wearing the fashionable dress of the day was mentioned as contributing to miscarriages and general poor health in the mother.

Dr. James Jackson offered a rather unique condemnation of the mania for wearing quantities of false hair. He says in a book published in 1870:

From the congested condition [of the cerebellum] arises, in a great many instances, diseases of the organs or nutrition and excretion; and when a woman becomes pregnant, it either induces or directly tends to induce modifications of the structural or organic conformation of the offspring. It is one of the laws of nature that where habits or methods of life of the female are such as to induce functional disease on herself when she is not in a childbearing state, such habits, when she is in such state, directly tend to produce organic or constitutional disease in the

Plate 17. How corsets cause prolapses. Helen Ecob,
The Well-Dressed Woman (New York: Fowler and Wells Co.,
1892), p. 9, fig. 9 (photograph, Jack Bailey).



offspring. Wearing the hair done up on the back of the head, therefore, has made American women give birth to a great many malformed as well as a great many feebly-organized children.²⁷

A more common affliction of pregnancy than congested cerebellum was crural phlebitis, or milk leg. Physicians were uncertain whether milk stayed in the mammaries or traveled throughout the body. The inflammation of the legs in the later stages of pregnancy was known as milk leg because it appeared about the same time as colostrum in the breasts. Some doctors thought that perhaps it was an overflow into the legs. Milk leg, since it was an inflammation, was feared to lead into childbed fever if not treated. The common cure was to bleed and leech the legs, then blister the skin with a caustic. The final step was for the patient to sit in bed with the legs elevated.

If the woman should develop "late fevers of pregnancy" just prior to labor, she was directed to lie in bed, diet rigorously, have an emetic solution or opium and a venesection to discourage inflammation.²⁸

Delivery practices are generally outside the scope of this study. However, in an era when medical texts scrupulously avoided mention of contraceptive techniques and abortions were referred to in scathing terms, the painful reality of childbirth must have been ever present, coloring feelings toward pregnancy itself. A bleak vista of repeated pregnancies presented itself to the primagravida. It was

not uncommon for a couple to have children every year, or every other year. Queen Victoria, the model for all middle class Victorians, herself had nine children in 20 years. Within this social context, information on delivery is very pertinent to prenatal mental health of the mother. After all, avoidance of pain was what drew many women to doctors initially. Before too long, doctors could provide far more assistance than ether alone, and far more advice.

Delivery, even with the aid of ether, was a horrific event which cultivated women were supposed to endure in stoic silence. Episiotomies were unknown, and damage to the perineum was apparently common. Suturing of the torn muscles and flesh was first attempted in 1870 by Dr. Thomas Emmett. Emmett also pioneered in vaginal reconstruction by plastic surgery. Prior to his work, nature took its course.

Forcep deliveries were common, but not used recklessly or indiscriminately by reputable practitioners. The impression from medical texts is that these deliveries often killed or brain-damaged the infant and were attempted to save the mother's life.

The cesarean operation was known, but almost never performed before the advent of antiseptic technique. The simple reason was that it assured death for the mother. Two options were available to physicians for women whose pelvic conformation precluded normal delivery. The better of the two was to induce labor prematurely around the seventh

month. The patient would probably survive, although hopes for the infant were practically nil. However, this procedure would necessitate prenatal care on the part of the doctor. Such care would have been atypical. Therefore, the doctor was left with a tragic alternative: cephalotomy. This entailed fragmentation and removal of the fetus' skull to allow expulsion of the softer and smaller body. The justification offered for this harrowing procedure was that if it were not done, both mother and child would die in agony. The child was seen as an imperfect being, and the lesser sacrifice in this situation.

The terrors of delivery were minor when compared to the hopes of surviving the infections, childbed fevers, so frequently contracted in the process of giving birth.

Childbed fever is a common name for puerperal fever, septicemia, or peritonitis. It is a serious abdominal infection contracted at the time of delivery due to unsanitary conditions. It was often caused by streptococcus. Cleanliness was by no means an established way of life, even among doctors, in 1850. Well-bred people were encouraged by publications such as Godey's to bathe once a week. But the Saturday Night Bath was far from becoming a cliché. Other than for social nicety, neither physicians nor midwives had reason to wash their hands before attending a delivery. Infection might occur in a number of ways, and the doctor or midwife was unwittingly responsible for most of them.

Physicians had no knowledge of the existence of microbes. The germ theories of Pasteur and Koch were not advanced until the mid-1870s. Thus, doctors would go from a case of erysipelas²⁹ to childbirth without ever washing their hands or changing their clothes. Although retention of the placenta was not felt to be a dire event, doctors preferred that it be removed. The practice was to reach in and take it out if it did not deliver spontaneously. Infection was rampant. Dr. Meigs writes of its grave importance in those days of high birth rates:

The very name of childbed fever is a word of fear; to that degree that smallpox, or yellow fever, when they attack an individual, or break out in a community, excite by the announcement of their onset scarcely greater apprehensiveness for the safety of the patient, or of society, than are aroused by the dreadful name just mentioned.³⁰

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in an article published in 1843, was among the first to suggest that contagion transmitted by the physician might be a cause of infection. His paper received criticism; it could be construed as discrediting the effectiveness of the male practitioner.

The cures for puerperal peritonitis were, without exception, based on rank superstition. The previously described philosophies of reducing inflammation by eliminating body fluids (blood, saliva, sweat), and shocking the system prevailed. A sampling of procedures follows.

Mercury was placed in the mouth or rubbed into the abdomen to induce ptyalism. It was hoped that salivation

would reduce the amount of liquid available to swell the belly.

Because it was considered the nature of newly-delivered women to bleed, large bleedings were considered in harmony with the body's own scheme.

In 1851, Dr. Alonzo Clark advocated completed rest for the intestines. "Locking up the bowels" was accomplished by administering massive quantities of opium.

Dr. John Brennan invented "Brennan's Method" in 1814. This consisted of giving the patient a couple of tablespoons of turpentine orally, and rubbing more into the skin of the abdomen.

Blistering the belly was thought to draw harmful fluids away from the site of infection and onto the surface.

Induction or nausea in cases of childbed fever was desired. To quote Dr. Meigs:

...because the state of the nervous sytem, under nausea, is one to favor a milder or gentler systole of the heart...[which] lessens the force of the vascular injection and so powerfully favors any tendency to resolution of the inflamed areas.³¹

Considering the other treatments given, the patient's nausea probably required little, if any, additional effort. It is testimony to the hardiness of our maternal ancestors that they survived such ministrations.

Acceptance of the discoveries of Lister, Pasteur, and Koch after the mid-1870s quickly brought this era of medicine to a close. Dramatic drops in mortality made

it possible for Dr. Alexander Skene to state confidently in 1900 that

the present methods of cleanliness in surgery have all been brought up to such a high place of perfection that the only question remaining now is shall the subject be handled with or without gloves?³²

So at the end of the period, more promises could be made to the expectant mother who placed herself under a doctor's care. The "big carrot," an easier labor, could be guaranteed by the use of ether. The second "carrot," to be as good as ever after pregnancy, was present in the most basic form. With sterile technique she might survive the delivery. With episiotomy and vaginal reconstruction she might survive in recognizable form. But accompanying these promises had come the whip: clothing restrictions; nostrums on exercise, sexual intercourse, diet and even hair styles had to be obeyed to reap the benefits.

Dr. George Napheys expressed the attitude well for himself and most gynecologists for the next hundred years when he said:

We shall therefore point out those laws which cannot be infringed with impunity, and indicate the diet, exercise, dress and, in general, the conduct most favorable to the mother and child during this critical period, in which the wife occupies, as it were, an intermediate state between health and sickness.³³

A new era in prenatal care was beginning, but it was not necessarily more scientifically sound in many respects than the one that had passed. In accepting the

promises of doctors, women gave up a good deal of personal freedom.

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⁴Alexander J. C. Skene, M. D., "The Status of Gynecology in 1876 and 1900," Transactions of the American Gynecological Society Vol. 25, 1900, pp. 425-438.

⁵Ely Van De Warker, M. D., Woman's Unfitness for Higher Education (New York: The Grafton Press, 1903), pp. 47-48. Van De Warker is quoting from Professor Hugo Munsterberg's book American Traits. Van de Warker was president of the American Gynecological Society, 1900-1901.

⁶William Cobbett, Advice to Young Men, and (Incidentally) to Young Women in the Middle and Highest Ranks of Life (London: Mills, Jowett and Mills, 1829), p. 203.

⁷Cobbett, op. cit., pp. 203-205.

⁸Skene, op. cit., p. 476.

⁹Ovariectomy, or the removal of the ovaries, was to the gynecologist of the 1870s much like the masterpiece of the Medieval craftsman: evidence of virtuosity. Therefore, the ovariectomies seem often to have been performed more to enhance the reputation of the surgeon than because of patient need.

¹⁰Edward Hammond, Henry J. Bigelow, Samuel D. Gross, T. Gaillard Thomas, and J. S. Billings, A Century of American Medicine, 1776-1876 (Philadelphia: Henry C. Lea, 1876), p. 283.

¹¹George J. Engelmann, M.D., "The President's Address," Transactions of the American Gynecological Society, Vol. 25, 1900, p. 3-7, 8.

¹²The writings of Dr. Charles Delucena Meigs were a major source of information. Dr. Meigs was on the staff of Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia. His books on midwifery and diseases of childbirth were two out of the total of approximately 300 books written on gynecology by 1876 (Skene, p. 426). Thus, they represent a significant contribution. Meigs also wrote popular articles occasionally for Godey's. Louis Godey, the publisher, had a reputation for hiring only the most noted writers in the United States.

¹³Charles Delucena Meigs, On the Nature, Signs and Treatment of Childbed Fevers (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1854), p. 233.

¹⁴Robert Dale Owen, Moral Physiology (London: Holyoake and Co., 1859), in David J. Rothman and Sheila M. Rothman (eds.) Birth Control and Morality in 19th Century America: Two Discussions (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1972), p. 35.

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²³Meigs, 1854, op. cit., pp. 227-228.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Attributed to The Water Cure Library in Thomas Low Nichols, The Water Cure Journal Vol. X, No. V, November 1850, p. 173.

²⁶Information from Robert C. Goodlin, Care of the Fetus (New York: Masson Publishing USA, Inc., 1979), p. 27. Goodlin states that the indirect method of blood pressure measurement was popularized in 1875, the end of the period under consideration; however, it was not until 1897 that Vasquez and Nolecourt described eclamptic hypertension. There was still no cure for toxemia in 1980.

²⁷James Cobb Jackson, M.D., American Womanhood: Its Peculiarities and Necessities (Dansville, N.Y.: Austin, Jackson and Co.; New York: Barber, Pratt and Co., 1870, 3rd edition, reprinted by Louisville: Lost Cause Press, 1976), pp. 32-33.

²⁸Meigs, 1854, op. cit., pp. 227-275.

²⁹The female disease, puerperal septicemia, was being connected by some doctors with erysipelas, a disease that struck down all sexes and ages. In time, erysipelas was also known to be an acute strep infection.

³⁰Meigs, 1854, op. cit., p. 35.

³¹Meigs, 1854, op. cit., p. 323.

³²Skene, op. cit., p. 436.

³³Napheys, op. cit., p. 173.

CHAPTER 4

Medical Advice, 1870-1930:

The Renaissance?

"Dear Miss Manners:

Help! I've been pregnant for less than a month, and already I can't handle things. The problem is who to tell when..."

"Gentle Reader:

The proper time is one week before everyone would know without being told. One compelling reason is to shorten the period in which you will be offered patronizing advice...."

---"Miss Manners" by
Judith Martin, 1980¹

The topics occurring consistently in the popular advice literature written for pregnant women from 1870 forward are diet, weight gain, exercise, sexual intercourse, and dress. Dress will be discussed separately in Chapters 8 and 9 because doctors have not been the originators of dress. They have only tended to support the more conservative styles present for maternity wear. The remaining subjects together combine to create a truly ironic picture. While consistently professing the normalcy of pregnancy, the advice given diverges so far from common practice for non-pregnant women the primigravida must have feared her condition truly pathological. That some women would construe pregnancy as a time of illness is inevitable. If Dr. C. D. Meigs comments about it being

an intermediate state between health and sickness were put to music and chanted, dirgelike, at regular intervals throughout this chapter, the appropriate mood would be set. To be pregnant is to be sick, or at least semi-sick. Therefore, it is impossible for women in this condition to do the same things non-pregnant women do. At least, that is what much of the advice that follows seems to be saying. Talcott Parsons identifies an exemption from normal social role responsibilities as an important aspect of the sick role. A doctor serves as the legitimizing agent, making avoidance of duties not only a right, but an obligation of the patient.² In the case of pregnancy the sick role has been performed with a variation. Instead of avoiding duties altogether, the gravida exchanges her old set of responsibilities for a new set. Thus, working outside the home might be forbidden, but gaining no more than two pounds per month during the course of a pregnancy would be a goal enforced with threats of hospitalization.³

From the mid-19th Century forward, proper roles, activities, and morality for women in the United States were evolving. Enforcement and acceptance of the sick role during pregnancy was a regressive tendency, reinforcing a submissive role for women. This becomes more obvious as the scope of things women may do with propriety broadens during the 20th Century. It is here that we first note the lag period in allowed behavior for pregnant and non-pregnant women which was

apparently non-existent prior to the mid-19th Century. The one exception, of course, was being "seen" pregnant, which didn't pretend to have any medical basis.

However, as soon as prenatal care was identified as a proper arena for medical guidance and intervention, an abundance of advice on behavior materialized. A summary of the conduct proposed by Dr. George Napheys in 1869 suggests that excess in eating and drinking are to be avoided; after the sixth month more food is required. Walking is the best exercise. Running, dancing, and carrying heavy weights should be avoided. At the end of pregnancy, the woman should not stand or kneel for long periods, "nor sing in either of these postures."⁴ Journeys should not be taken while pregnant, especially train travel where the rolling of the train might lead to premature labor. As far as bathing goes, "those who have not been accustomed to bathing should not begin this practice during pregnancy."⁵ Naphey's attitude toward sex for pregnant women was relaxed for his time. It was acceptable in moderation, except when menses would normally occur. In addition to these cautions, Napheys spends 11 pages⁶ recounting "documented" cases of maternal impressions marking children physically and mentally. (The disfigurements, he states, were communicated to the child through the medium of the mother's blood.) The conclusion is, of course, to live with caution, avoid unpleasant sights and vexing situations.

The program outlined by Napheys is to predominate, with only minor variations, for the next 40 years. It may

be redundant to state that this parallels a peak in feminist activity in the United States. Women's roles, particularly in terms of active participation in society beyond the hearth, drastically changed during this period. Therefore, the lag phase in permissible activities for pregnant women had its origin about the time Napheys was writing. While socially acceptable behavior for women became more diverse, socially and medically acceptable actions for pregnant women changed relatively little; hence, a 40 year lag.

Moving forward about 20 years in time, another doctor, John M. Keating, wrote a very influential book on pregnancy, Maternity, Infancy and Childhood.⁷ Dr. Keating, whose advice differs marginally from Dr. Napheys, opens with the usual claim that pregnancy is not a disease. He then urges an enema at least once a week after the fourth month.⁸ In his opinion, dancing, the use of the sewing machine, swimming, and horseback riding should be avoided. His argument against these activities, all recent vogues for young women, is an ingenious one aimed at class consciousness and snobbery.

...and yet a good strong healthy woman may work over a washtub doing the hardest kind of laboring work until her term is up. The answer to this is that if the young mother who reads this book is as strong as this woman who has been brought up to hardships, she probably could do the same thing. [Instead, he urges] a brisk walk, especially in the evening before retiring; it will enable her to get a good night's rest, and at the same time she will feel a certain amount of freedom in going out at this hour without the restraints of wearing close-fitting clothes.⁹

Keating also subscribes to the theory of maternal impressions. "A woman," he says, "should avoid all emotions, should lead a life as placid as the most devout follower of Buddha."¹⁰

During the 1890s articles on prenatal care began appearing in popular journals. (They had appeared earlier in sectarian journals such as the Water Cure Journal.) Articles on prenatal marking and maternal impressions are prevalent with a new twist. After chronicle after chronicle of deformed limb because "she saw a hideous beggar," there emerges an emphasis on positive marking. With the Western world in the throes of passion for Greek antiquities, not too surprisingly women are encouraged to look at beautiful works of art, listen to lovely music and study those disciplines in which they would like their unborn child to have an aptitude.¹¹ An unwittingly amusing documentation of the effectiveness of this regimen is cited by Stinson Jarvis in 1895¹² when he exclaims over all of the "Madonna faces" and "Christ faces" that one sees on the common people of Italy, just like in the great Italian paintings that the pregnant women there worship! Unless the artists imported their models from abroad, the real reason for cause and effect are not terribly obscure.

Along with the credence given to prenatal predispositions there was general belief in hereditary madness and alcoholism. Possession of a crazy in the family should prevent any man or woman of good conscience from marrying

and producing a family. Harriott Wicken, daughter of a drunkard and the sensual fictional heroine of a turn of the century novel, is depicted flouting this rule of society with the following predictable result.

She gave him a slow mournful smile...'It is a hopeless idiot, just because it is my child. Aunt Megan told me too late. I will never speak to Aunt Megan again. A woman such as I am---with such terrible possibilities in her love---should not marry.'¹³

Harriott's terrible possibilities lead her inexorably deeper into deceit and degradation, and to the eventual murder of her child and suicide.

Meanwhile, in the German scientific community, three studies were completed that affected the diets of American women as unceasingly in the 20th Century as did the evil power within Harriott Wicken's blood.

The first was by the German obstetrician Prochownick. In 1889 he studied malnourished pregnant rats. His motivation was to develop a diet that could be prescribed to assure smaller newborns for women with dietarily and genetically contracted pelves. He recommended fluid restriction, low caloric intake and high protein for the third trimester. He did not intend his study to have blanket application to all pregnant women. Yet, American physicians did just that; they generalized, applied it to all pregnancies and added the conjecture that such a diet reduced toxemia. Even as late as 1945, a multi-editioned classic textbook authored by the professor of obstetrics at Johns Hopkins University

recommended severe dietary restrictions based on Prochownick's work 56 years earlier.¹⁴

The second study, published in 1903 by Zangemeister, showed that excess salt intake during pregnancy lead to increased fluid accumulation. Doctors feared that retained fluid would cause edema and possibly hypertension. Their remedy was reduced salt intake.¹⁵

The third study, published by Warnekros and Gessner was based on data gathered in Germany during and after World War I. They reported a significant decrease of eclampsia during the war when presumably all gravida were malnourished, and an increase after the war when all were conversely presumed to be well-fed. The Journal of the American Medical Association concluded, in an editorial in 1917,¹⁶ that restriction of fat and meat reduced toxemia in gravida.

At the turn of the century and into the first couple of decades, the rationale behind diet restrictions published in popular literature became a thorough blend of pre-scientific and scientific views. Limited meat intake might be urged by an elderly doctor who had studied Meigs in medical school to weaken the mother and produce an easy labor. Meat restriction might be prescribed by a more up-to-date physician because he had read it might reduce the risk of toxemia and therefore secure an easy pregnancy. And then some doctors, represented here by Homer N. Oliphant, cautioned, "The

expectant mother is breathing for two, eating for two, eliminating for two---in short, she is living for two.¹⁷

Oliphant encouraged "a generous and wholesome diet."¹⁸

Dr. Oliphant's other advice for parturient females was an echo of both Napheys' and Keating's. Women should walk, avoid lifting, the sewing machine and tennis.¹⁹ The latter two, incidentally, are evidence of the latest crazes for young women. "Marital intercourse" was thought to be most harmful during the first and last weeks of pregnancy. Oliphant assumes it will be distasteful to most women anyway.²⁰

In 1910, many doctors still adhered to the belief that intellectual vigor in women was obtained at the expense of mothering capacity. Without challenging the validity of the perception, one independent lady writer snapped, "So what?" Margaretta Tuttle told the readers of Collier's that the child would be better off---or have more opportunities, as she termed it---with artificial lactation and an interesting mother.²¹ Ms. Tuttle was probably not still living in 1972 when two studies supported her. Broverman, et. al. found that daughters of educated working women saw their mothers as more competent persons than did daughters of traditional non-working mothers.²² Tangri found that the professional working woman was a role model for her daughter.²³ However, a number of decades had to pass and a score of medical views had to change before this was a tolerable

conclusion.

An article by Dr. John L. Murkin of the Cornell University Medical College appeared in Good Housekeeping Magazine in 1911. He tried to prorate the number of calories a pregnant woman should consume based on the proportion of the mother's body to the child's body.²⁴ The calorie approach is the one that predominates for the rest of the 20th Century. In popular literature, calorie-counting and pounds gained became all-important, usually divorced from explanation other than vague references to toxemia. A second reason for weight control also made its appearance. The pregnant woman is assured that if she will eat only "x" number of calories and gain "x" number of pounds she will be as youthful and shapely as before her pregnancy. Frequently this is the sole promise made in exchange for compliance. If counting calories could keep one from matronliness and all the stiff black satin that that implied, well, so be it. One would not have to be very vain to give calorie-counting a try.

This, of course, implies a negative societal prejudice against the matronly form. It did exist after the first World War (Plate 18). The fashion implications of this attitude will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Support for marking children in utero continued into 1912. In that year, Ladies Home Journal published two articles on the topic.²⁵

Plate 18. Thin flappers have more fun. Drawn from a photograph by Clarence Bull in Clarence Bull and Raymond Lee, The Faces of Hollywood (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1968), p. 184.



Sarah Mott's writing shows ideas absolutely unchanged from George Napheys' views of 1869. A woman can physically and emotionally mark her child. Ms. Mott declares it imperative during the last few months of pregnancy that women arrange their lives so there is no possibility for injury to the child. The importance of this article is that it presents an alternative reason for the continued cloistering of pregnant women, although no less a Victorian one than the usual explanation of shame.

The other article, by Dr. William Howard, is more progressive. In all probability it resulted from a reading acquaintanceship with psychoanalytic theories. Howard speaks of the "inner self" and "outer self," and of the mother transmitting "psychic poison" to the fetus in times of suppressed rage.

This marked the entry of psychoanalysis into the popular literature on prenatal care. It was to attain a great deal of prominence by the 1940s. The paradox in this is that by the 1940s conventional medical doctors proposed a fairly unrestricted life style for pregnant women, only to be countered by the more restrictive one of the psychiatrists. Once more the woman's sphere advanced.

However, moving back to the second decade of the 20th Century, medical doctors had another great discovery. In 1915 McCollom and Davis were able to formulate a theory of adequate diet based on recently acquired knowledge of those

mysterious substances, vitamins.²⁶ This information gave physicians something else to worry about for their patients' sakes. The pregnant woman must receive the proper amount of vitamins in her diet. A year later, in 1916, Zangemeister published data emphasizing the association between edema, weight gain and preeclampsia. The association suggested to physicians that weight should be restricted. "As late as 1933 obstetricians were recommending antenatal purges with Epsom salts three times weekly."²⁷

A review of prenatal care during the late 'Teens of this century is in order. Roughly 50 years have passed since the publication of Napheys' Physical Life of Woman.

At the beginning of the 1920s, most middle and upper middle class women had male physicians attend them during pregnancy. The advice they received from their practitioners was guaranteed to make their pregnancies and ensuing labors "better"; even the products, the babies, would be more satisfactory specimens if: they restricted salt intake, restricted calorie intake, reduced meat and fat consumption, and took supplementary vitamins; or alternately, they might eat for two (depending on their doctor's predisposition); they should walk, walk, walk, but not engage in any of the newly popular coed sports such as swimming or tennis; they should see no evil lest they mark their children; and refrain from anger, even sublimation of anger, for fear the unborn would arrive with

bestly tempers; they were purged weekly or thrice weekly to keep weight down and fluids from accumulation; they might have sex with caution, but would probably have no interest in it anyway; and above all, their pregnant condition was normal.

Amidst all this punishing advice, what Dr. Woods Hutchinson told his readers of Good Housekeeping in 1914 sounds very contemporary: depart as little as possible from your usual life as long as you feel comfortable, eating whatever you want within the boundaries of good nutrition and,

...while, naturally, the kinds and scope of exercises which can be taken are limited by the physical changes, fears of risk of producing a mishap of any sort by such exertions have really very little to rest upon.²⁸

In the same year another progressive writer, Sarah Comstock, told readers that prepared childbirth was intelligent childbirth; knowing what was going to happen removed most of the dread.²⁹ But the attitudes of Hutchinson and Comstock were atypical of what was written, at least for popular consumption, at the time.

Advice through the 1920s was similar to that of previous years. On the negative side, women were told that they shouldn't eat for two until the last half of pregnancy, and shouldn't run up and down stairs too frequently.³⁰

Proscriptions on sex became more stringent. It was suggested that intercourse be dispensed with the last six weeks to

two months of pregnancy.³¹ This was an effort on the part of the doctors to prevent infection. The hospitals of the time were having an increase in the number of childbed fevers. Since sexual intercourse was seen as an action that might implant the dreaded microbes, forbidding sex was one possible way of controlling contagion.

In the problems-solved category, food cravings were diagnosed as a psychosis in response to the unnatural times by a Freudian admirer.³² Another doctor resonantly announced that science had disproved "marking" of babies.³³

Significantly, the emphasis at this time was still on getting the mother through the delivery. It will be a few more years before too much copy is directed toward the physical condition of the woman post partum. And, in popular literature today the condition of the infant prior to and following birth has yet to receive a fraction of the attention directed toward the mother. The following quotation gives an inkling of both the variability and motives for dietary advice given in the Twenties:

Attempts have been made by restricting the mother's diet along certain lines to keep the size of the baby below the average in the hope of making the birth easier, but the results have not proved satisfactory. Nor is it a feasible scheme to try, as many have done, to make the baby's bones soft by reducing the amount of mineral water in the mother's diet; such treatment may lay the foundation of rickets in the child.

Efforts to control the sex of the unborn child by regulating the mother's diet are, of course, futile.³⁴

With strictures on nearly every aspect of their

lives, some expectant mothers apparently tried to make the sick role work to their own advantage. At least something of that sort must have prompted Dr. Lobenstine to write the following: "Many mothers feel that housework should be given up or reduced during pregnancy. This is not true."³⁵

Although a woman's place was still primarily in the home, the little woman didn't necessarily find housework any more pleasing than her Victorian grandmother.

At the beginning of the Thirties, two doctors' works were published that were to change pregnancy for countless women. Both men have familiar names, but the philosophical connection between the two of them is rarely acknowledged. The first, Sigmund Freud, father of psychoanalysis, wrote that females prefer the passive forms of sexuality. To become women, their zone of sexuality has to be transferred from clitoris to vagina. The woman who pursues intellectual and professional goals has denied her femininity, and, in her neurotic behavior, identifies herself as a male.³⁶ The philosophical tie between Freud and Clarke's Sex in Education is quite evident. A new generation of unsexed "agenes" had just been recognized and labeled.

The second man, Grantly Dick Read, wrote a book titled Natural Childbirth; then quickly followed it with several others. Read blamed society for the pain women felt in childbirth.³⁷ No normal physiological function

should be accompanied by discomfort. This could hardly be termed a new idea. Thomas Nichols, proselytizer for the water cure, had said the same thing 80 years earlier. To thwart civilization, Read continued, a pregnant woman must be prepared for what is to happen. Again, not a revolutionary concept. At least one writer for a ladies' magazine had scooped him by almost 20 years. Read's beliefs quickly became and remained popular to the present. But what didn't survive until 1980 was why Read, humanitarian motives aside, was so anxious for women to view childbirth as a painless occasion. Read's philosophy was both Freudian and Victorian. Contraceptives and keeping up appearances were responsible for the family "so-called" of two children, Read declared. A paltry family of two does not allow the woman to come to full feminine maturity. Only through the birth of many children (and immutable transfer of the zone of sexuality to the vagina) would true women in the style of the grand old ladies of yesteryear develop. As a consequence of limiting conception, the world was losing its greatest force for goodness, true womanhood. The remedy was the return of the seven and eight child family.³⁸

According to Shorter, the plunge in marital fertility in Europe after the 1850s had two roots: the growing sense of personal autonomy in women and the diffusion of contraceptive techniques.³⁹ In view of this, both the Austrian Freud and the Englishman Read come across as dreadfully antifeminist

guardians of True Womanhood; reactionaries anxious to maintain the woman's sphere. Thus, women who were influenced by Read and, indirectly, Freud, sought the latest promise for a better pregnancy and labor. This time it was preparedness and psychoprophylaxis instead of anesthesia. Although the method was a break with the scientific routine, the women who were totally convinced by Read may have been the most traditionally role-oriented. Betty Friedan makes a convincing argument in The Feminine Mystique that during the 1950s and 1960s in America this was the case.⁴⁰

An advice book on pregnancy published in 1933 does an effective job of summarizing popular standards of prenatal care. Dr. Findley notes that there had been a White House Conference on the topic which resolved that no woman should gain more than 25 pounds, all should eat a well-balanced diet with meat intake restricted, none should have sex the first three months or last month of pregnancy, and tub baths should not be taken in the last month for fear of infection. Dr. Findley castigates educated women who in wishing a career sacrifice having children "to the altar of ambition." Poor working women are exempted because their poverty, not idle desire, forces them to work.⁴¹ In all probability, they had more children, too, which made the interpretation possible that motherhood would be their only calling if circumstances were different.

The passage of the Social Security Act in 1935

brought prenatal care to a larger number of women. Thirty-eight states set up prenatal clinics as part of their maternal and child health care programs. The value of care received must have been frequently suspect. As a consultant for the Children's Bureau commented in 1939, the significance of blood pressure was not appreciated by many physicians who cared for pregnant women.⁴² The doctor's largest contribution in prenatal care was probably in recognizing pelvic malformations early enough to plan for restricted diet or cesarean delivery.

An article published midway through 1939 was devoted exclusively to exercises for pregnant women.⁴³ It represented the wave of the future. It is an indictment of the self-centeredness of the 1970s that when exercise articles appeared in that decade the writers somewhat militantly assumed they invented the leg lift.⁴⁴ The difference in the times comes through mainly in the illustrations. The 1939 article shows a drawing of a "pin-up girl" in halter top and culottes briskly exercising on a mat. The 1970s articles use drawings or photographs of women 10 months pregnant (Plate 19).

The next year, the emphasis on fitness continued. In an article entitled "Saving Your Figure,"⁴⁵ women are assured that nobody need sacrifice their figure for their child. The price paid for youthfulness is standing straight and gaining 15 to 20 pounds during pregnancy---a 10-pound

Plate 19. Depicting pregnancy: 1939 versus 1978.
Redrawn from illustrations in Miriam T. Sweeney,
"Your Daily Dozen," Hygeia Vol. 17 (September 1939),
pp. 795-798, 796; and in Judi Thompson, "Expecting---
The Yoga Way," Family Health Vol. 10 (March 1978),
pp. 44-46, 45.



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drop in the desired gain from the previous decade. Readers are assured that if they take care, they, too, will survive looking just like Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy or the Duchess of Kent. The allusion to glamorous role models was a peculiarly 1940s fad which was expressed more fully in articles on maternity clothing. There was an implicit vicariousness in this, but generally it can be seen as a positive step forward in public attitude. After all those years of saying that pregnancy was normal, some women whose charisma quotient was high enough were perceived as capable of enjoying attractive pregnancies.

In keeping with the more healthy perception of the pregnant condition, some sports made it off the "no" list. Golf, dancing and gardening became acceptable,⁴⁶ along with "mild swimming."⁴⁷

During the Forties, the medical profession changed its mind about meat. Suddenly protein from meat became very important. Women were told that too little protein might lead to edema, toxemia, less disease resistance, anemia, insufficient mother's milk, miscarriages and stillbirths.⁴⁸ To complete the reversal in position, women were assured that overwork would not cause miscarriage.⁴⁹ This neatly complemented the national need for war workers.

Prepared parenthood had taken several steps forward. Regular classes for expectant mothers and fathers were being held in cities throughout the country. However, they were

a little more uptight than those today. In Flint, Michigan, separate classes with very similar content were given for mothers and fathers. A representative of the Flint organization explained that they tried to meet together once, but the presence of members of the opposite sex was just too inhibiting.⁵⁰ This is a social indication of two things. First, prepared parenthood was now widely considered to be one way of securing a better pregnancy and delivery. However, preparedness was no longer limited to overcoming fear in the prospective mother; the father was also included. This is the first hint of the vast wave of togetherness that will sweep the country in the Seventies. Second, the two sexes were still not very comfortable when directly confronted with biological functions. A little residue remained of the type of Victorianism that made it improper for male and female medical students to hear lectures together.

A new genre of prenatal advice literature, *Old Wive's Tales*, made its debut in the 1950s. Perhaps it would have been impossible for a whole article on this topic to have been written earlier; doctors had not yet consigned enough of their former "scientific truths" to the province of the old wives.

Articles of this type usually follow a question/answer format, e.g., "Is it true that _____?" "No, that's just an old wive's tale. The truth is _____." While writing of this sort dispenses some useful information,

it also tends to perpetuate erroneous ideas that might otherwise have been completely forgotten.⁵¹

Diet and weight gain continued in importance in the 1950s. Reader's Digest and Ladies Home Journal popularized the mistaken idea that rapid weight gain caused prematurity. Tompkins, et. al. found that the reverse was true. Insufficient weight gain was apt to cause prematurity; a too rapid increase predisposed to toxemia.⁵² About the same time, Wishick urged more flexible parameters for weight gain to avoid placing unnecessary emotional stress on the pregnant woman. He cautioned against weight loss because of possible inadequacies of nutrition.⁵³ However, the popular journals disregarded or were oblivious to such advice. Instead, Ladies Home Journal offered readers "I Dieted During My Second Pregnancy."⁵⁴ Significantly, the author of the article was the Journal's beauty editor, not a famous obstetrician like it would have been a few years earlier. The real-life heroine of the story endured an 800 calorie per day diet while she was pregnant because she didn't have enough will power to lose weight on her own before she became pregnant. With her doctor's help she achieved her goal.

The same lady and doctor in the 1960s probably would have relied on amphetamines. The account of the undoubtedly fictional "pretty, young Mrs. Porter" published in 1963 in the Journal is both disgusting and disquieting.⁵⁵ Mrs. Porter's patronizing doctor tells her that a weight gain

of 15-17 pounds is "normal," when average weight gain is actually much higher. He tells her obese mothers tend to have toxemia, but neglects to tell her that such toxemias are usually benign unless aggravated by an additional excessive increase in weight. Besides, in "Mrs. Porter's" case it is irrelevant. She is 5 feet 2 inches tall and weighs 105 pounds. Since she smokes over half a pack of cigarettes a day she is concerned about having to quit. Her physician informs her that if she limits her smokes to 10 a day, everything will be fine, blatantly ignoring the well-publicized relationship between number of cigarettes smoked and high prematurity rate.⁵⁶ If she has any trouble limiting her smoking, the doctor will give her amphetamines. Likewise, if restricting weight gain to 15 pounds is too difficult, amphetamines, again, will do the trick. He would prefer that she do it on her own, but if that is too difficult.... The doctor's only reservation about the pills is that Mrs. Porter might feel so "peppy" that she might inadvertently "overdo."

It is impossible to know how many Mrs. Porters existed or how many doctors like hers. The attitudes expressed mark the most extreme medical intervention in the course of a normal pregnancy since Dr. Meigs' recommended small bleedings. The trend documented in the preceding articles is frightening: weight gain has been trivialized and almost completely divorced from medical reason, at least as far as how it is presented.

Weight gain is a beauty problem. Any woman who is so weak that she can't deny herself calories while pregnant deserves any amount of fat she retains because she has disobeyed her doctor. The fetus' health does not enter into this type of doctor-patient relationship. The doctor's role, as it appeared in journal articles of this sort, is to make sure his patient will be willowy at the termination of the pregnancy; the patient's role is unquestioning obedience. The most recent article reviewed which suggested pregnancy as a good time to diet was published in 1967.⁵⁷ The element of irrationality present in all articles supporting this extreme posture is revealed at the beginning of this article when the authors total the increase in body weight during pregnancy due to fluid, increased size of body organs and the fetus, arrive at the figure of 20 pounds and then conclude that the ideal weight gain is 16 to 18 pounds.

The implicit encouragement for assumption of the sick role and complete deference to the doctor's directives, even those harsh and unsupported by simple arithmetic like the example above, shows a reactionary trend and a regression in the role assigned to pregnant women during this time period. In some respects a woman pregnant in the 1950s and 1960s had far less control over herself and her life than women pregnant 100 years earlier.

A perception emerges from these articles of the pregnant female as self-centered and devoid of reasoning

ability and will power. This view is further underscored by an article written in 1966 by Virginia Apgar.⁵⁸ Apgar is originator of the Apgar Test for neonate well-being and is known for her lifelong devotion to promoting better fetal health. In this article, however, her approach is rather indirect in meeting that goal. Although Apgar sharply cautioned against the use of appetite suppressants because of possible harm to the baby, she approached weight control from a beauty standpoint. After a few general remarks on the lasting effects of poor diet on the newborn child, she alluded vaguely to "complications" resulting from overweight. Without further explication, Apgar concluded that it is easier to regain your figure if you don't overeat. The remainder of the text offers hints on weight control. The article is typical. Vanity is clearly seen as a more effective tool in controlling behavior than informing readers what medical science thinks will happen if cautions are ignored.

In contrast to the advice published in the Ladies Home Journal and Redbook, a Newsweek article from the mid-1960s summarizes the more moderate, contemporary view also present.⁵⁹ The pregnant woman is urged to avoid drugs, even aspirin. Physical activity is encouraged from the sensible viewpoint of continuing what you're used to rather than blanket proscriptions and endorsements. Sex is allowed until the ninth month, when it is feared that it might cause premature rupture of the membranes, infection, and premature labor.

a 20-pound weight gain is seen as ideal.⁶⁰

Dr. Samuel Meaker's views complete the picture of prenatal care in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Dr. Meaker, as a young doctor, wrote a book on prenatal care in 1927. In 1965, by this time professor emeritus, Dr. Meaker published a second book on the topic. His essential conservatism is obvious, but he has moderated his beliefs on what might be done. His most interesting comments in both books concern sports and travel. In 1965 Meaker writes that tennis, golf, and dancing are acceptable, but bowling, horseback riding, skiing, and swimming are not. Train and plane travel are not injurious; however, automobile trips longer than 100 miles are apt to be so fatiguing as to effect miscarriage. No pregnant woman should be behind the wheel of a car after the seventh month.⁶¹

In contrast, Dr. Meaker's 1927 book outlawed virtually all travel except in case of emergency, said no pregnant woman should drive a car, and found tennis, golf, and dancing all "inadvisable."⁶²

Apparently, he either felt pregnant women were less fragile in 1965 than he did 40 years earlier or that sports and travel were not as strenuous. In either case, it neatly highlights the lag period in accepting activities for women and then, after lengthy passage of time, their acceptance for pregnant women.

Concurrent with the advice in popular journal articles

which encouraged assumption of the sick role, some doctors with an interest in the psychological aspects of pregnancy began promoting it as a period of increased susceptibility to crisis, stress, and anxiety.⁶³ The harmless "mood swings" and flighty emotionalism that past generations had expected in pregnant women suddenly took on a much more sinister aura. Studies cited that defective children were more common after emotionally stressful pregnancies.⁶⁴ Women with more anxiety during pregnancies had more complications in childbirth.⁶⁵ Many psychiatrists felt that symptoms such as vomiting during pregnancy had a psychosomatic origin. Neurosis was the instigator of poor health, not the end product. Coupled with the Freudian concept that career women had failed to accept their femininity, the prescription for a better pregnancy became dependent behavior and retreat into the woman's sphere to reduce anxiety. Articles such as the one written by Reva Rubin in 1967 are doubly devastating.⁶⁶ Rubin detailed at great length how the "career girl" must be obliterated to attain the maternal role. First, it brings to mind the stereotype of the "girl" who works until she has something better to do. Second, it intimates that working and motherhood are mutually exclusive occupations. The spectre rises once more of those much-castigated professional women of the late 1800s whom Edward Clarke termed unsexed females, because their interests betrayed the fact that they were not real women. The pernicious

vigor and longevity of this "old husband's tale" is remarkable. But regardless of what some of the scientific community believed, there were women by the 1960s who thought they should be able to work because they wanted to, even during pregnancy. Forcing such women to quit their jobs might well prove more anxiety-provoking than allowing them to continue. However, the time for that thought had not come. Protection from employment for pregnant women, still unsupported by empirical study, would continue in full force for another decade.

Participation in sports and exercise comes to the forefront in an article published in 1967.⁶⁷ The authors suggest that such activity will contribute to better efficiency in labor and birth and effect a shorter recovery. No studies are cited to support this premise, but that is not unusual in popular literature. This idea, however, still unsupported by controlled study, is one that captures the attention of the publishers and presumably the readers in the decade that follows. Countless articles on exercise to achieve a "better" pregnancy will appear in the sweaty, fitness-conscious Seventies. With a new solution to the pregnancy problem, using diet alone to achieve weight control became passe, for the whole idea of stringent weight control was under attack.

In fact, doctors who wrote for the popular press were showing much less unanimity in defining the ideal gain. A brief article that reviewed current practice in 1969 found

different doctors espousing everything from 18 to 30 pounds as the "absolute" limit for weight increase. In 1970, the National Academy of Science's National Research Committee on Maternal Nutrition recommended 24 pounds, bringing the officially sanctioned ideal back to the figure set in the 1920s. The committee's report suggested a link between high infant mortality and weight gains restricted to 10 to 14 pounds. It also stated that there was no evidence that weight gain alone caused toxemia or that dietary restrictions would in any way reduce its risk.⁶⁸

The effect of the Maternal Nutrition Committee's recommendations was seen quickly in the women's press. McCall's published "Pregnancy: No Time to Diet" in 1971.⁶⁹ The text directly contradicts everything said in the diet articles of the 1950s and 1960s; you should not diet if pregnant and overweight; vitamins do not substitute for food; weight gain without high blood pressure is not a sign of toxemia. However, just how normal a condition pregnancy was considered is still questionable. An article published in 1973 written by Alan Guttmacher, then president of Planned Parenthood, echoes the findings of the Maternal Nutrition Committee. Yet, Dr. Guttmacher can't refrain from passing along a dictatorial edict or two for his readers' edification. The most trivial example, and therefore the most exasperating, was his statement that if weight gain was within acceptable limits, the pregnant woman might allow herself two pats of

butter or fortified margarine a day.⁷⁰ The type of physician who would try to control his patient's lives to the extent that he counts their butter pats betrays two niggling suspicions: (1) pregnancy is rather abnormal; and (2) pregnant women are incapable of overseeing even small details of daily living. These presumptions have been virtual constants throughout the whole period studied for a major segment of advice-givers, male and female.

There are four major trends to guarantee a successful pregnancy in evidence for the remainder of the 1970s. First is a general relaxation by medical doctors of rules and restrictions during pregnancy. Second, exercise is perceived by editors as a topic of paramount importance to readers. Third, a new tone of intimate, chatty frankness about pregnancy appears in the popular press. Fourth, a whole category of back-to-the-earth ideas surface, including a resurgent interest in midwifery as the way to conclude a better pregnancy. Each of the above will receive attention in the following pages.

General recommendations focus on diet, weight gain, drugs, and sex. Travel is no longer considered threatening; hence, it is rarely mentioned. Problems resulting from inadequate weight gain and nutrition receive far more coverage than those related to excessive increase. The link between malnutrition and mental retardation, low birth weight, fetal abnormalities, and decreased infant resistance

to infections are all stressed.⁷¹ Optimal weight gain is usually stated as between 20 and 30 pounds. Recent evidence is cited in one article linking maximal gain to prior weight. Briefly, underweight women should gain a minimum of 30 pounds, overweight women about 16 pounds, and those of normal weight between 20 and 26 pounds.⁷² The shift in beliefs was irrefutably documented when "the less weight gained the better" was classified as a myth in an Old Wives Tales article printed in 1973.⁷³ On a more scholarly level, an article published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology in 1974 concludes that each woman's built-in servo-control mechanism should set the correct amount to gain.⁷⁴

Use of unnecessary drugs received uniform disapproval. Aspirin, coffee, and alcohol should all be avoided. Diet pills were declared bad for the baby.⁷⁵ Salt was finally allowed back on food "to taste" after being banished for nearly 80 years. It was suggested that low sodium intake might actually invite problems.

Whether or not sex should be permitted for the entire pregnancy remained an unanswered question. In the light of sparse and conflicting evidence, most writers said, "well, why not?"⁷⁶ Other authors expanded the sentence to "well, why not---enjoy it!" And in so doing acknowledged that pregnant women might, indeed, have an appreciation for intercourse.⁷⁷ A final piece of advice was a sensible,

updated version of a major Victorian concern. Victorians urged bedrest every month for adolescent girls to safeguard their reproductive organs. While the advice was over-cautious, it was evidence of well-intentioned planning years before pregnancy would occur. Fredelle Maynard began a 1979 article by asserting that the very best pregnancies are those that are managed long before conception through good nutrition and intelligent living.⁷⁸ It is a shame it took the idea of pre-pregnancy planning so long to reappear. It may have had to overcome a sense of egotism in the relatively new gynecological profession that most problems could be resolved during pregnancy in the hands of the right doctor. Or the responsibility may rest with those women who expected their physicians to take complete control of the course of the pregnancy, and so had little sense of personal investment.

Writing on exercise can be divided into two sometimes overlapping categories; exercise undertaken to assume a svelte post-pregnancy figure, and exercise undertaken to make labor and delivery easier. The attitude that allowed the gravida greater latitude in activities was cogently stated by D. H. Stott, who said the goal, after all, in an undisturbed pregnancy was avoidance of interpersonal tension, not absence of physical activity.⁷⁹ Controlled study has not resolved whether exercise is potentially beneficial or detrimental for the fetus. Goodlin cites several recent studies

with conflicting results.⁸⁰ Pomerance, Gluck, and Lynch found none of the following significantly related to maternal physical fitness: length of gestation, pregnancy complications, length of labor in primigravidas, one-minute Apgar scores, infant weight, length or head circumference.⁸¹

In a study of Olympic and first class athletes, Zaharieva found that while the first stage of delivery was prolonged in sportswomen due to rigidity of the uterus and birth canal, the expulsive stage was shorter. Both effects are attributed to exceptional muscle tone. Leading athletes also were found to have more frequent disturbances of the perineum during delivery.⁸²

However, very little of the professional controversy and data leaked into the popular press. Instead, how strenuous the suggested exercise could be was directly related to how pro-feminist the magazine was. Thus, conservative American Home told its pregnant readers to do from 3 to 5 rolls from side to side to tone the abdominal muscles.⁸³ More energy would probably be expended getting down to and back up from the carpet than in the exercise itself. Meanwhile, Ms. challenged its readers: "Who says athletes can't be pregnant? You can---and should---swim, run, jog, row, exercise, cycle, skate, and play tennis, squash, volleyball, soccer, softball, basketball, field hockey..."⁸⁴ The article gives examples of athletes who have competed while pregnant and the opinions of several

sports doctors that athletic women have an easier time from start to finish in pregnancy.

McCall's, meanwhile, walked briskly down the middle of the road wearing sensible shoes. A 1979 article suggested that each woman should do what feels comfortable, but that contact sports, competitive play with accompanying stress, and activities in which you can't be totally in control, such as horseback riding and skin diving, should be avoided.⁸⁵

The new intimacy with which details of pregnancy are discussed in the popular press can be seen as indicative of many things. The characteristic focus for such articles is sex and togetherness. The writing definitely reflects less restrictive medical beliefs and practice. It also coincides with a culture-wide relaxation of sexual prohibitions. Ironically, articles of this genre make the same basic promises of a better pregnancy as all previous solutions. "Expecting--- the Yoga Way"⁸⁶ concludes with perineal exercises and the italicized message "This is the most important exercise a woman can do before, during, and after pregnancy." The author says that not only will these exercises tone up the female sex organs, but they will benefit the nerves and organs of the entire reproductive system, and prevent hemorrhoids and constipation (and, no doubt, dropsy and dyspepsia, as well).

Another identifiable accompanying aspect of this kind of thinking is a sort of narcissistic, voyeuristic journalistic style. A 1977 article published in Redbook

entitled "Sex During Pregnancy: Being in Love With Your Husband, Your Body, Your Baby to Come"⁸⁷ chronicled "case" studies spoken to the reader by the women involved. The anecdotes had little in common except that most concluded with an orgasm. The baby mentioned in the title receives attention mostly as the cause of the rounded belly that the husbands found such a "turn-on." The term "belly" seems to function much like "buttocks" in porn literature; the word itself is supposed to excite the reader. The bulge is a newly-discovered erogenous zone; it even moves, like some incredible, inflatable, motorized marital aid.

Conclusions reached by Frank Trippett in a 1980 Time essay⁸⁸ seem particularly appropriate in explaining the motivation behind articles like the one above. Trippett suggests that the current insatiable market for such revelations are a form of desperate sharing initiated by lonely people craving acceptance. Mass media exposure of such intimate details is leading to a trivialization of personal values. His conclusions are substantiated when a book can begin, absurdly, "...when we become pregnant..."⁸⁹ and continue with drivel like this:

[In prescribing the proper psychological state for the third trimester] Many will feel an almost mystical identification with a primitive feminine principle within them and a closeness with the reproductive, generative elements of the species, and, indeed, of all living organisms.⁹⁰

or...

Men will see her as a full, rich vessel. Some may say that their image of the most beautiful scene in the world is that of a woman eight and a half months pregnant running across an open field.⁹¹

Some may say that, but it is a select few who have had the opportunity to view this feat of genetic engineering--- the Venus of Willendorf crossed with the Queen Elizabeth II sailing at 40 knots through the field daisies.

The very real danger present in this self-indulgence is the danger of bearing children for the parents rather than for themselves. Margaret Mead wrote:

When children are turned into instruments of their parents' well-being, the adults' capacity to devise and maintain a society in which the well-being of all children is protected seems to be diminished.⁹²

In this context the current trend toward salaciousness and self-indulgence may be the most serious and far-reaching one for society.

The final trend noted was conceived through the odd coupling of the 1960s back-to-the-good-earth movement with radical feminism. Suzanne Arms' writing, in her entirely, soddenly serious book about pregnancy and childbirth, shows what happens when the two are joined. Early in the book Arms asserts, "There is no doubt that the history of childbirth can be viewed as a gradual attempt by man to extricate the process of birth from woman and call it his own," and that hospitals are "solely designed for the treatment of disease and disorders."⁹³ Near the end of the text Arms present her version of the better pregnancy.

The young woman is glad she has taken a year's maternity leave from work after Christmas. It has given her time to think, to be alone, to get back into baking bread; time to make baby beds out of wicker baskets and to embroider receiving blankets. She has been able to garden every day.⁹⁴

Such attitudes are patently overloaded with stereotypes and cliches. To assume that doctors had taken control of pregnancy without active encouragement from women is historically absurd; however, it agrees with the male conspiracy theories prevalent in radical feminist literature. Hospitals, as the province of male doctors, are therefore contemptible. They are also impersonal institutions, which conflicts with the second aspect of this trend, earthiness. So the last prescription for the best pregnancy is to leave your exciting, fulfilling job for one year; a period long enough to investigate the joys of motherhood and make wicker baby baskets for an army of infants. The baby should be delivered at home with a midwife or sympathetic female doctor in attendance; standard practice for the educated female radicals of the 1850s. Arms' book ends before she charts what should be done with the baby, the bread, and the vegetable garden after the leave of absence is over. Bathing in rustic motherhood for exactly one calendar year is surely more of an indulgence for the mother than real accommodation and adjustment for the child. That in itself is rather disquieting. Margaret Mead's thoughts on adult self-absorption at the expense of children's well-being

seem equally appropriate here.

A summary of prenatal advice for the period of 1850 to 1980 can be divided into four distinct phases. From 1850 to 1870 practices were really pre-scientific. Prenatal care was unusual. Not much was known about the course of pregnancy. Most advice was based on superstition or an individual's undocumented hunch. Treatments were directed toward making the delivery easier for the mother. To that end the gravida might be kept from eating meat to make the fetus smaller with "softer" bones.

Between 1870 and 1930 scientific progress targeted areas of concern during pregnancy. Advice on proper diet was based on newly-acquired knowledge of vitamins. However, broad application of narrowly-directed studies on prenatal nutrition resulted in continued dietary restrictions. Recognition of a connection between edema and toxemia led to further dietary restrictions and limits on weight gain. Exercise was valued for pregnant women. Walking was typically prescribed. Other sports were allowed about 30 or 40 years after their initial acceptance for other women. Thus, swimming, a turn-of-the-century vogue, became acceptable for pregnant women in the 1940s. Golf, tennis, automobile, train and airplane travel all showed a similar pattern. Most restrictions on activity during this period were based on a perception that it might be injurious. Rarely was activity a matter for objective study. The emergence of Freudian

theories on women and sex roles promoted passivity and submissiveness in women. Parturient women, as quintessential females, should therefore be most passive and most submissive of all. Prepared childbirth was introduced at the close of this period.

The third phase of care, from 1930 to 1970 is basically characterized by refinement of ideas introduced previously. Sometimes this was a result of new evidence that suggested modification of practices. Mostly, however, this period is best viewed as a typical fashion cycle where things changed because that is the nature of fashion. There is no more sense in recommendations on weight gain going from 25 pounds to 20 pounds to 15, and finally 10 pounds with the aid of amphetamines than for hemlines going from below the knee to the crotch in the same time period.

The final period, 1970 to 1980, is as yet transitional. There is a trend to uncomplicate pregnancy; it is probably seen as less a medical crisis period now than at any other time in this century. However, it must be noted that the type of laissez faire pregnancy currently identified as the general, modern way of doing things has been an alternative, although perhaps not a well-supported one, throughout the time studied, from 1850 forward. Today most restrictions on diet, exercise and activity have been eliminated. Yet, even now the amount of data collected on pregnancy is relatively small. The present course of action is not yet irrefutably

the best course of action. Anthropologist Ashley Montagu wrote the following passage in 1949.

Every people of whom we have any knowledge practices both magic and science as activities parallel with the many others which are clearly recognized as belonging to their proper places in either religious or secular life. Sometimes the borderland between magical and scientific activities is somewhat blurred, just as it sometimes is among ourselves...."⁹⁵

Management of pregnancy is a vast "borderland" that has always occupied that hazy, twilight zone between magic and science in our society. While it is impossible to predict exactly what form the prescription for a better pregnancy will take in the future, it is at the same time predictable that actual practices will always reflect their borderland origins.

Nineteenth Century dress reformers were leaders in eliminating the first restriction placed on pregnant women, that they shouldn't appear in public, by providing less constrictive clothing; clothing that could accomodate the contours of pregnancy.

The next three chapters will examine dress reform movements, leading to the eventual development of maternity clothing at the turn of the century.

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CHAPTER 5

Amelia Bloomer:

Searching for Comfort and Dignity

Dress reform, we may vaunt ourselves, is the offspring of our own free land and no other. There have been many attempts at revolutionizing established modes of feminine apparel, since long ago Bloomers, the first 'dual garment' was advocated as an initiatory measure of the system that was to give to woman, long impeded with skirts and stays and false educations and legal nullity and the effects of hereditary helplessness, and the rest of it, her health and her rights.

---Eva Wilder McGlasson, 1894¹

The call for dress reform in the 19th Century came for three reasons: politics, health, and aesthetics. Frequently two or more of these reasons were combined. The following discussion will be limited to the reform of women's clothing in the period from 1850 to 1890.

Reform dress very consciously and willfully set out to oppose and improve fashion. This was a moralistic, crusading effort where people were intellectually enlisted; it is doubtful that anyone has ever said that of fashion itself. Most dress reform movements produced results akin to that of the eight medieval religious crusades to the Holy Lands: fervent followers with little tactical expertise eventually went down in defeat; but, in doing so, new vistas were opened and new experiences gained that affected those

who sat safely at home watching.

Without the clothing reform campaigns maternity dress might never have existed in the 20th Century. Politically-inspired reform ultimately led to a society where women were not housebound, pregnant or otherwise. Health reform efforts, even in reticent Victorian times, frequently talked quite frankly of the harmful effects of restrictive clothing on the expectant mother and fetus. Aesthetic reform provided some of the more pleasing design solutions for costuming the pregnant form.

All through this time period reason was the order of the day, and it was felt that no mountain was too high, no problem too complex, for the mind of man. And "man" was not generally used in the wider generic sense of "mankind," but limited to the biological male. Obviously, independent and thinking women of the time would not agree with this. Hence, the first reason for dress reform---politics. If clothing were more equal for the sexes, more equal in comfort, utility, and function, then, perhaps, politically and socially women could become more equal, too.

Reason led to important scientific discoveries. The excitement of these filtered down to the general populace, if not real understanding. Therefore, science, which pervaded all society, was applied to clothing to make it more "healthy." In a somewhat accurate application of current medical knowledge this became the movement for rational dress (which also

had political overtones).

Aesthetic dress can be viewed as both a reactionary response in the face of scientific and technological advances and a fully justifiable revolt against the less-than-artful fashions they made possible. Machine-made trim was the fabric frosting that oozed and dripped across overdone concoctions of magenta and mauve, carnival cakes created by the allied technology of the embroidery machine, commercially viable by 1834², the sewing machine, invented in 1825 and perfected by Singer in 1851³, and aniline dyes, William Perkins' discovery of 1856 (Plate 20). In reaction to the excess of fashion, wearers of aesthetic dress created their own original types of excess, borrowed design inspirations from nearly all past epochs, gowns with Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance drapery predominating (Plate 21, refer also to Plate 5).

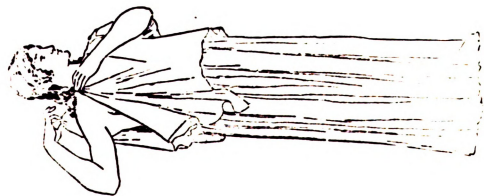
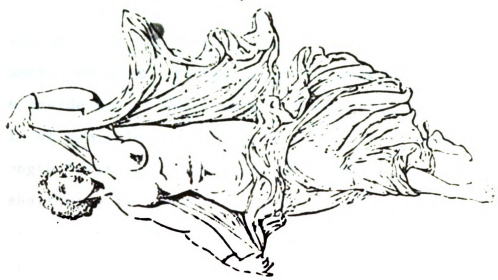
In the year 1850, woman's place was in the home, sheltered from the turmoil of industry by her husband, house, and possessions. This may have been a privileged and pampered life style, but it sometimes proved to be a lonely one as well. As one sympathetic author of an etiquette book wrote:

Remember that the condition of a young bride is often a very solitary one, and that for your sake she has left her parents' roof, and the companionship of her brothers and sisters. If you are a professional man, your wife may have to live in the neighborhood of a large city, where she scarcely knows anyone and without those agreeable domestic occupations, or young associates, among whom she had grown up. Her garden and poultry-yard are hers no longer, and the day passes without the

Plate 20. What man hath overwrought: fashions for
October, 1861. Godey's Lady's Book Vol. LXIII (October
1861) (photograph, North Carolina Department of Cultural
Resources).



Plate 21. Greek drapery. Figure on left: Eva Wilder McGlasson, "The Aesthetics of Dress," The Woman's Book Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 189; figure on right from the House of the Female Dancers, Thomas Hardy Dyer, Pompeii (London: George Bell and Sons, 1875), p. 351 (photographs, Jack Bailey).



light of any smile but yours. You go off, most probably after breakfast, to your business and profession, and do not return till a late dinner, perhaps not even then, if you are much occupied, or have to keep up professional connections.⁴

A woman's clothing of the time was as much a barricade separating her from the rest of the world as was her house. Her garments sheltered to the point of immobilization. From the inside out, a well-dressed woman would have worn a chemise or camisole (bust improvers, optional); drawers; a kneelength "crinoline" petticoat of a stiff material made of horsehair warp and wool weft; four, five, six, or more petticoats; a corset; vests for warmth; and a pad of wool or horsehair at the small of the back, the old-style bustle, to remedy any tendency to sway-back.⁵ The dress was high at the neck, tight across the shoulders and at the waist, with the sleeves set in well below the shoulders so the arms could not be completely raised. Skirts were full and long. Dresses buttoned down the back with innumerable small buttons. Assistance was required in dressing.

In contrast, men's clothing, while somewhat starchy of collar, was relatively comfortable, not easily soiled, and buttoned conveniently down the front (Plate 22). Various ingenious solutions were tried to make the woman's burden a little lighter by eliminating some of the petticoats, but not to change the overall silhouette. For example, in the year 1842 a Lady Aylesbury in England had a down petticoat made to order; it was said to float like a cloud when she

Plate 22. Menswear, circa 1895 (photograph, collection of the author).



moved, but was expensive and not ideal for warm weather.⁶ This piecemeal approach to improving female dress ended with the creation of the Bloomer costume.

In the year 1851 Amelia Janks Bloomer was deputy postmaster of Seneca Falls, New York. She was also the editor and founder of a monthly journal called The Lily, first published two years earlier (Plate 23). The Lily began life as a temperance magazine, but quickly expanded its content to encompass Mrs. Bloomer's wide-ranging reform interests. Women's rights were a major concern of Mrs. Bloomer's, and The Lily gave her a popular platform from which to express her views.

Early in 1851 Mrs. Bloomer was skirmishing in print, via The Lily, with the editor of the Seneca County Courier, an opponent of women's rights. Surprisingly, her opponent had written an editorial in support of Turkish pantaloons for women. He saw their present dress as unhealthy and uncomfortable. At this juncture, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Miller came to Seneca Falls to visit her cousin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Mrs. Miller, by coincidence, had adopted a trouser-styled costume a few months before and was wearing it when she knocked on the Stanton door. After a few days' lapse---time for Mrs. Stanton's dressmaker to whip up a trouser costume---Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Elizabeth Smith Miller together strolled the streets of Seneca Falls dressed in pantaloons a la Turk. Amelia Bloomer, a good friend of

Plate 23. Amelia Bloomer. Drawn from a photograph
(photograph, New York Historical Society).



Stanton's, had no recourse but to pay a call on her dress-maker with appropriate instructions and tell The Lily readers all about it. Otherwise, the chauvinistic Courier editor could claim himself more liberal than she. Thus, Lily subscribers read:

We would have the skirt reaching down to nearly half-way between the knee and the ankle, and not made quite so full as is the present fashion. Underneath this skirt, trousers made moderately full, in fair weather coming down to the ankle (not instep) and there gathered in with an elastic band. The shoes or slippers to suit the occasion. For winter or wet weather the trousers also full, but coming down into a boot, which should rise at least three or four inches above the ankle. This boot should be gracefully sloped at the upper edge and trimmed with fur or fancifully embroidered, according to the taste of the wearer. The material might be cloth, morocco, mooseskin, and so forth, and made waterproof, if desirable⁷ (Plate 24).

At a later date, Mrs. Bloomer let the trousers hang loose at the bottom. Amelia always took great care in selecting beautiful, conservative fabrics for her costumes; black satin was a favorite. After a speaking engagement in 1853, Mrs. Bloomer's costume was described in detail by the New York Tribune. She wore a tunic, knee-length kilt, and pantaloons of dark brown changeable silk. The kilt and pantaloons were trimmed with black velvet. The tunic neckline was open, and Amelia wore a white chemisette decorated with more velvet bands and a diamond stud pin. The sleeves of the gown were full. Underneath were tight undersleeves. Gaiters neatly covered her feet and ankles and black lace mitts her hands. A cherry and black headdress completed the costume.⁸

Plate 24. Variations on the bloomer costume,
redrawn, left to right:

Theodore Stanton and Harriott Stanton, Elizabeth
Cady Stanton (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922);

James Laver, The Concise History of Costume (London:
James and Hudson, 1969), p. 182, fig. 199;

N. Currier, Lithograph (collection of the author);

Gleason's Pictorial (June 14, 1851) rpt. Morris Bishop,
"Mrs. Bloomer's Pantaloons a la Turk," New Yorker
Vol. 16 (June 29, 1940), pp. 39-45, 39.



The initial curiosity the public evinced for the "shorts" quickly turned to hostility. The Bloomer costume created an uproar in press and pulpit. The press tended to mock and denigrate; the pulpit threatened eternal damnation. Deuteronomy XXII:5 was thundered from many lecterns: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God."

Even today, the remembered notoriety of women daring to wear trousers in the 1850s has tended to obscure a major reason the costume was worn. Simply, it eliminated the weight and discomfort of multiple petticoats and voluminous skirts. The infamous bloomers were really a modest solution, literally a stop gap, to what to do with the legs that hung out once the skirt was shortened. Mrs. Bloomer, a rather fragile 5'4" and 100 pounds, liked the costume because of its freedom of movement, ease in dressing (it buttoned down the front), and lighter weight. But the reason she kept wearing it was that it drew crowds to hear her speak about temperance and suffrage. If Mrs. Elizabeth Miller had not come to Seneca Falls dressed as she did, and if Mrs. Dexter C. Bloomer had not perceived its political potential, Bloomer probably would never have worn such a costume. She said so herself.⁹ Amelia Bloomer continued wearing "shorts" until around 1858 or 1859. She stopped for several reasons. Most important, the novelty of the costume had turned to notoriety. It was

now a distraction rather than an attraction at her serious speaking engagements. The other reasons were more personal. In 1854 the Bloomers moved "West" to Council Bluffs, Iowa. The gusty winds from the bluffs whipped her short skirts over her head; a situation the modest Mrs. Bloomer found acutely embarrassing. In addition, the Bloomers had a moderate income. Maintaining a public and a private wardrobe for Amelia was a strain on their finances. Further, like many women, Amelia liked variety. With the invention of the metal hoop in Paris in 1856, long skirts could be worn without all the weight they previously entailed; Bloomer's primary objection to the dress of the day. Finally, Mrs. Bloomer's personality was basically rather shy and retiring, which makes her busy speaking career even more of an act of bravery. Being the focus of all eyes wherever she went for several years was a trial for her. Amelia was ready to retire as a symbol and pursue realization of her reforms with a little more anonymity.

It is historically shortsighted to single out the bloomers of the Bloomer costume as the only, or even the most important contribution made by this dress reform movement of the 1850s. More equal distribution of garment weight, reduction in the number and weight of clothing items, buttons down the front, and general simplification of design that made both dressing and moving easier tasks are the real legacy of this short-lived movement; these will remain the

main goals of the next generation of dress reformers who must, in addition, respond to new innovations in extremism in fashion. Dress reformers in the years after the Bloomer debacle carefully "skirted" any suggestion of trousers and had to look elsewhere for design inspiration.

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CHAPTER 6

Rational Dress:

Searching for Better Health

It is the correct thing to remember that a woman who is pinched in at the waist with tight corsets, throttled around her neck with a tight collar, and cramped as to her feet with tight, high-heeled shoes, will walk about as gracefully as a swan on a turnpike road.

---Florence Marion Hall, 1888¹

A woman can no more be trusted with a corset than a drunkard with a glass of whiskey.

---Helen Gilbert Ecob, 1892²

Dress reform as a health measure was approached from many different perspectives in the 1800s. The Rational Dress supporters of the 1860s, 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s were primarily against. The list of what they were against is rather lengthy, but they seem to have been quite united on their issues. They were less unanimous on what form rational dress should take. A variety of suggestions reveals how diverse in politics, aesthetics, and socio-economic background were the people involved. Unlike the Bloomer movement, which originated and stayed primarily in the liberal, educated, middle class, except when prescribed by them for underlings such as brewery or dairy maids, the rational dress movement crossed all boundaries.

This movement came into being in the wake of the

scientific discoveries that were being proclaimed around the world and the widespread public knowledge, though not necessarily acceptance or understanding of them.

In 1864 Pasteur disproved spontaneous generation, although many people didn't believe it for a long time to come. Dr. Joseph Lister urged antiseptic surgery in 1870, but as discussed in Chapter 3, this also met resistance. In the mid-1870s Pasteur and Koch developed the germ theory and gave microbes to the world. The cultural consequence of these discoveries was fear of contagion and contact with people. In fact, the prudishness of the Victorians has been partly attributed to this fear of contracting an incurable and unspeakable social disease.³ Science provided ever new hope, but was largely helpless in the battle against "germs." Penicillin, the first totally effective cure for syphilis and a host of other infections was not discovered until 1943.⁴

However, science did point helpfully toward cleanliness as a solution to many problems. This was one scientific directive that melded perfectly on the social level with the changing lifestyles and moral climate of the time. The year 1850 marked the beginning of sanitation in large cities. The upwardly mobile were taking Sarah Hale's advice presented in Godey's Ladies Book and bathing once a week. How many times do you suppose Americans in the late 19th Century said, with real Christian conviction, "cleanliness

is next to godliness!" It has a solidly Victorian ring. "Hygiene" became a watchword.

Thus, the journal Good Health editorialized in 1884 that: "Every detail of the home life requires the closest vigilance and care; for disease, like sin, is ever creeping in at most unlooked-for times and places."⁵

Clothing was one aspect of Victorians' lives they could take personal, ever vigilant control of; healthy clothing could protect them from insidious, invisible germs and the sinfulness of Paris fashions. Or, as Dr. Mary Safford-Blake termed it in a rhetorical salvo, "...the styles of dress imposed upon us by the demi-monde fashion-mongers of Paris."⁶

With each passing year from the date the Bloomer Costume flopped, fashions became more outrageous, as if daring someone to come along and do something about it. A number of women took up the challenge for Rational Dress. Their goals, as outlined in the book Dress Reform, edited by Abba Woolson and published in 1874, were not that different from those practical suggestions Amelia Bloomer had hoped to introduce 25 years earlier (Plate 25).

Greater simplicity overall in dress was desired, with much less trimming used. A convenient length in skirts was also a major goal; a length that would make walking easier, and keep itself out of reach of the muck and mire of city streets. Pants were avoided like the plague by all except

Plate 25. Rational dress. Abba Gould Woolson,
Dress Reform (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874)
(photograph, Jack Bailey).



the most radical.⁷ Divided skirts were promoted by some, but not all. In many cases the divided skirt was made so full that it was impossible to tell that it was divided, thereby defeating the purpose of less bulk and greater mobility. Most of the women involved in the Rational Dress movement had no desire for men's clothing. Caroline E. Hastings wrote in 1874, "I believe that about all I envy in man's apparel is the opportunity for pockets which it affords. These I would like,"⁸ This seems like a rather insignificant and forgivable coveting of male raiment. Most rational dressers felt to be more radical would assure a defeat like that suffered by Mrs. Bloomer.

Other demands by the women were for less weight for all clothing and fewer garments. But, at the same time, they desired greater warmth in those articles worn, and more even distribution of garments on the body. As it was, the waist was swathed in multiple layers while the feet might have only thin stockings and slippers. Undergarments were not to exceed seven pounds. Clothing should be suspended from the shoulders. This made use of the natural bony framework of the body and avoided compression of any part. Finally, styles should be easier to take care of, as should fabrics. Rational Dress reformers were emphatically against other fashion offenses for medical reasons. Shoes were felt to be totally inadequate. They were too tight, too thin, and the heels were too high. Heels, which might tower to a

height of two inches, stressed the bones of the foot and threw the body organs out of alignment. Trailing trains were justifiably thought very unhygienic because of the street-sweeping function they performed. Veils were reputed to permanently impair vision and lead to eye diseases. The use of make-up was also discouraged. Besides its social identification with prostitutes and actresses, it seemed to make people sick; lead was one of the components of face whiteners. Only very old-fashioned respectable women who had not given up the ways of their youth wore it---or admitted to it.⁹ The use of hairpieces, too, was attacked on hygienic grounds. Peasant women were the source of the "vermin-ridden" tresses. A common delousing procedure was to bake the hair.¹⁰ After being thus treated, the smell emanating from the luxurious strands might easily be confused with singed chicken feathers. However, the strongest rallying point for reformers was undoubtedly their stand against tight clothing and weight from the waist. Both of these were felt to disorder the internal anatomy and push everything down upon the female reproductive organs. Although most reform texts stop short of talking about prolapsed uteruses, medical books of the time were full of references to them and assorted "propper-upper" prostheses.

Yet, if a Reform Dress tract were to have a single illustration, it would invariably be a cross-section of a female midsection with vital parts hopelessly rearranged

by satanic stays (Plate 26). If the torsos were given heads in the illustrations, quite typically the slave of fashion, whose insides were revealed to be in such confusion, would sport pounds of imported hair, a petulant, fashionable pout, no doubt made poutier through the artifice of the make-up table, and a bold direct stare, like one assumed ladies of ill-repute might employ to zero in on their beaux. Meanwhile, her counterpart, the natural beauty, stood with her heart literally in the right place, her hair dressed with classic Greek calm, lips sweetly parted, and eyes demurely averted: what purported to be a simple medical illustration for the readers' enlightenment was, in fact, a sermon of such weighty moral censure that the fate of the mortal soul depended on interpreting the pictures correctly. To a dedicated reform dresser, tight corsets were a curse that bound their wearers and their unfortunate descendants in an inextricable web of physical decay and degradation.

A woman author of the early 1890s, Helen Ecob, stated many reformers' medical fears of tight corseting when she wrote the following passage:

In the displacement and diseases of the pelvic organs is found the chief cause of woman's ill-health. The average testimony of physicians in general practice is that more than half of their professional business comes from these maladies.... Our insane asylums are largely filled by patients whose mental aberrations have originated in these disorders.¹¹

Engel states that, 'in every one of 30 autopsies

Plate 26. The perils of tightlacing. Helen Gilbert Ecob, The Well-Dressed Woman (New York: Fowler and Wells Co., 1892).

Above: p. 44-45, figs. 13, 14.

Below: p. 175, figs. 48, 49.

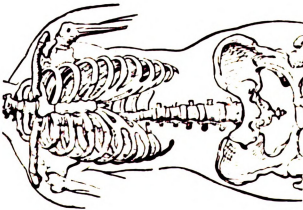
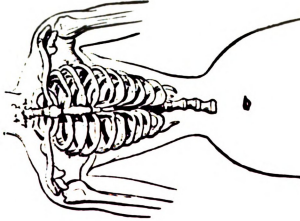
(Photographs, Jack Bailey)



FIG. 49.—Incorrect.



FIG. 48.—Correct.



in which evidence of tight lacing were found, prolapses was evident in some degree, except where adhesion had prevented it.¹²

The science of gynecology is a monument to the folly of woman. The operating table and the surgeon's knife are a disgraceful makeshift of the perverse victim. There is but one remedy and it is surgical--- the knife must be applied to the corset string.¹³

Ecob further asserts that "the necessity for the use of forceps in a large number of cases is due to corset wearing," due to atrophy of abdominal muscles theorized at the time to be responsible for expulsion of the fetus. Furthermore, pain in childbirth itself could be overcome through a "...regimen of exercise and rational dress";¹⁴ and, if fear for personal welfare were not enough, then what of the next generation?

Physicians attribute to the dress of mothers during the antenatal period the fact that many children are deformed from birth. There is not room for the development of the infant body. A puny, diseased physique; a brain of diminished capacity; a fretful, ignoble spirit; these are the gifts of the corseted mother to her helpless posterity.¹⁵

This may lead to the erroneous conclusion that all wearing of corsets was forbidden by reformers. In fact, a majority probably felt that when properly fitted and the body kept in proper tone, a corset could be medically beneficial. About 1860, the "hygienic qualities" of corset styles were considered for the first time.¹⁶ How tight the tight-lacing ever generally became is also a matter of conjecture. Many horror stories of corset bondage exist in old periodic literature, and they undoubtedly shocked

and titillated their avid readers as much then as they do today; a publisher's 100-year triumph. A contemporary Englishwoman, Doris Langley Moore, who has studied 19th Century dresses extensively in this century found the smallest diameter in a gown to be 21 inches, the average 24 inches; a far cry from the 16 or 17 inches that many fashion histories wail about.¹⁷

Dr. James Jackson corroborated this in part when he wrote in 1870 that he had examined

...over 8,000 American women resident in our 20 states of the Republic and their average size of waists, dressed, was 24 1/2 inches; their average weight, 110 pounds; their ages ranging from 19 to 52 years.¹⁸

Jackson, however, allowed a full three inches of this measurement for clothing, reducing the real dimension of the corsetted waist to 20 1/2 inches. The same three inches subtracted from Mrs. Langley's 21 inch dress waists would leave 18 inches; surely a diameter pinched enough to excite most reformers.

Another interesting side note is the opinion expressed by a medical doctor and requoted as late as 1916. Dr. Sargent was sure that if women would stop corsetting themselves their waists would be proportionately larger than men's. This was in part based on the measurements of Greek statues, partly on the premise that since women's hips were proportionately wider than men's, their waists should be, too.¹⁹ But the truly fascinating thing is that

women had been corsetted for so long that medical doctors didn't know, at least this one didn't, what would happen to women's bodies when they were raised without corsets.

How effective were the Rational Dress reformers in changing fashion, making it more healthful? Anna Noyes, a dedicated but somewhat disheartened reformer, summarized their achievements.

At the end of the century the only results we seem to have definitely gained are the final abolition of the hoop skirt, a reduction in the weight of petticoats, and a one-piece undergarment next [to] the skin.²⁰

And some might say that fashion had just gone ahead and done those paltry things on its own. Writing from her vantage point in 1907, it was impossible for Mrs. Noyes to know the impact of dress reform demands on maternity clothing. This specialized American innovation had just been introduced in New York City three or four years earlier; it was hardly the talk of every street corner. However, the impact of reform dress on maternity clothing in the 20th Century was very direct. The demands of reformers for less weight, warmer clothing, suspension of garments from the shoulders, low heels, and, most important, no tight corsets but perhaps a medically beneficial one, became the virtually engraved-in-stone commandments for pregnant women throughout the current century. The list, with every item intact, every Victorian adjective quoted, appears in nearly all advice columns and books that mention maternity clothing from 1900 to

1980. The advice given by Dr. Samuel Meaker to expectant mothers in 1927 is typical, and more succinct than most.

Wear clothing that is simple and warm, and loose enough so that there is no constriction around any part of the body. During the fourth month, get a special maternity corset.²¹

Counsel offered in one of those ubiquitous, anonymously authored pharmaceutical company brochures favored by gynecologists varies little from Meaker, although it was published nearly half a century later. Even the writing style seems vaguely antique.

Dresses should be comfortable and as lightweight as the season will permit. You should not risk chills by dressing too lightly nor become overheated by dressing too warmly....You should invest in good, properly designed undergarments....If you find the need to wear a girdle, consult your doctor before doing so. Your shoes should fit and be strongly made with sturdy, medium heels. Avoid high heels, worn-out shoes or houseslippers which give little support or security in walking.²²

Picture those stout brogans, fit for Miss Marple on a brisk march across the turf to St. Mary Mead. The alternatives are sluttish high heels, slatternly runover heels or slovenly houseslippers.

Such was the power of the reformers in getting the message across, even after 100 years: fashionable clothing is injurious to the unborn. To be frivolously dressed implied a lack of seriousness and dedication to the incubation. To be drab meant you were immolating the flighty, self-centered, size 10, juvenile, fashion-conscious self on the altar of Motherhood, in preparation for the

flight from the ashes---after---as an even drabber size 14 young matron. Maternity clothing became a symbol of requisite renunciation undertaken by the sacred vessel to assure safe passage to woman's annointed sphere of home and family.

Of course, this schema periodically breaks down. The romanticism that sporadically cycles into maternity clothing is a product of the lingering spirit of a totally different group of dress reformers. Rational dressers, beware! A more irrational group of fashions than those of the Pre-Raphaelites would be hard to design. But they did it all for Beauty; Beauty and Art; Art and Love.

A postscript to the Rational Dress Movement: By the 1920s women's legs, arms, and necks were all considered by fashion as suitable for public display. All the reformers' demands had been put into practice. At this juncture, in 1927, an attempt was made to launch a counter-reform movement to cover women back up again. Pope Pius was the author of the effort. He is quoted on the topic of women's dress, his rhetoric a model of perfect Victorian Reformereze.

It is necessary that all who still have a sense of human nobility and dignity, not to mention Christian dignity, should agree and find a means of creating dams against a current so ugly and so ruinous and carrying so many catastrophes with it.²³

His reform was to be achieved by enlisting fathers, husbands, and brothers. They were to tell their little women what they should wear. The religious press in the United

States gave the idea mixed reviews. The popular press just laughed.

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⁴The Wasserman test for detecting syphilis in its early stages was perfected in 1906. There was a partial cure for syphilis by 1909.

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CHAPTER 7

The PreRaphaelite Brothers and Others:

Searching for Individuality

I fancy the Continent takes Pre-Raphaelitism to mean Byrne-Jones and the cult of the Sunflower, Walker Crane's and Kate Greenaway's toy-books, Dresser's designs and Liberty fabrics, Morris wallpapers, and the Arts and Crafts movement, down to the latest Studio artists.

---"The Decadent Poet," 1878¹

...the history of aestheticism is not a part of the history of Pre-Raphaelitism, though it was often thought to be so at the time....

---Timothy Hilton, 1970²

Indeed, it was. And not only on the Continent, but in America as well. The philosophical basis of the two were divergent: Pre-Raphaelitism supported Art is Love; Aestheticism, Art for Art's Sake. But, the people involved had close ties; their personal histories and lifestyles were inseparably entwined. It is artificial and revisionist to declare they had nothing in common. The public, oblivious to the finer distinctions in art theory, drew the correct conclusion. Decade after decade they saw artists and their friends dressed in the same loose, billowy, new, archaic, anarchistic clothes. In fact, portions of the art world dressed in this style for so many years that it finally ceased to be a counter-culture fashion. By the end of the

century aesthetic dress had gained such widespread familiarity and acceptance that even middle-class housewives in the United States thought it the proper dress for receiving lady friends (Plates 27, 28). From there it was just a matter of a few years more before those same housewives were artistically gowned, pregnant, and still receiving callers.

The purpose of this chapter is to show when, where, how, and through whom the influences on the design of artistic dress originated and were passed on. This will be facilitated by grouping people and events back into those rather conventional niches in which you might normally expect to find them. However, it becomes quickly apparent that most of this unconventional cast of artists and associates do not wish to stay categorized.

Artists were not oblivious to the spirit of the age. Science and progress captured their attention at mid-19th Century, too. However, one particularly appealing aspect of the ethic of discovery looked backward in time, instead of forward. People were enthralled by the ongoing excavation of Greco-Roman ruins. To many Victorians, beauty and the Greek Ideal were synonymous. This led to the quantification of ideal proportions of women, a scientific experiment, accompanied by taking the tape to suitable marble relics. Thus, it could be announced with confidence that the classic figure had the following measurements:

Plate 27. Artistic housegowns, circa 1894.
Anonymous, "Dress from a Practical Standpoint,"
pp. 206-248 In The Woman's Book Vol. I (New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 215 (photograph,
Jack Bailey).



Artistic House Gowns.

Plate 28. Medieval wrapper and Elizabethan breakfast sacque, October, 1878, Godey's Lady's Book Vol. XCVII (October, 1878), p. 286, figs. 10-12 (photograph, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources).

Fig. 10.

Fig. 11.

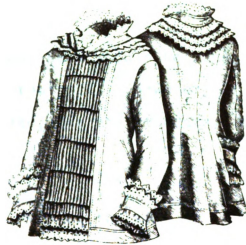


Fig. 12.



5'4-3/4" tall
 32" bust
 24" waist
 9" from armpit to waist

In addition, the arms and neck should be long. The hands and feet should not be too small. However, if a truly queenly figure is desired, the measurements are these:

5'5" tall
 36" bust
 26-1/2" waist
 35" hips
 11-1/2" around the full of the arm
 6-1/2" wrist³

Such an all-encompassing renaissance might never have occurred, or might have been a mere modest one limited to dusty scholars whose joy in life is translating from dessicated scraps of ancient Greek and Latin. However, nature and chance intervened. Mt. Vesuvius erupted in 79 A.D. The Roman cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were packed, intact, for long-term storage for 1,631 years in tons of volcanic ash. And from the rediscovery of these ancient cities the past sprang to vivid life for the multitudes. Around 1710 an Italian peasant discovered old marble while deepening a well. Shortly thereafter Prince d'Elloeuf, the Austrian mayor general of Naples who had a gentleman's penchant for archeology, began excavation. Approximately 30 years later Charles, King of the Two Sicilies, continued the excavation; Herculaneum was declared found. In 1763 Pompeii was rediscovered.⁴

The public was immediately, and expansively, informed

about each and every item recovered. As early as the second decade of the 18th Century massive folios were published detailing every aspect of life in antiquity. The ten-volume work of Bernard de Monfaucon, for example, published in 1719, has illustrations taken from all conceivable archeological evidence.⁵ Monfaucon devotes whole sections to a single god or goddess shown in all available manifestations; symbols associated with each deity are also included.

But, mythology constitutes only a small portion of the contents. Monfaucon attempted to explicate, to recreate, everything for the readers. Volume 3, Part 2 begins with the public baths and the various ladles and jugs used to anoint bathers. From there it moves to marriage customs, showing numerous plates of demure brides and their stalwart spouses. The next major topic is Theater. Precise drawings show stage settings for "comique, tragique, and satyrique" drama, as well as floor plans, elevations, and architectural ornaments used for the theaters themselves. Toward the end of the volume plates show women spinning and weaving, and men engaged in agriculture.

If early books tried to bring ruins and Romans to the people, it was not long before people brought themselves to the ruins. In the 1820s and 1830s Englishmen and women in the Grand Tour visited the digs, among them Queen Victoria. By the 1860s a plethora of guidebooks competed

for selection on booksellers' shelves; as the following quotation shows.

DIALOGUE

(In a bookstore at Naples)

A Traveller (entering): Have you any work on Pompeii?

The Salesman: Yes; we have several. Here, for instance, is Bulwer's "Last Days of Pompeii."

Traveller: Too thoroughly romantic.

Salesman: Well, here are the folios of Mazois.

Traveller: Too heavy.

Salesman: Here's Dumas's "Corricolo."

Traveller: Too light.

Salesman: How would Nicolini's magnificent work suit you?

Traveller: Oh! That's too dear.

Salesman: Here's Commander Aloe's "Guide."

Traveller: That's too dry.

Salesman: Neither dry, nor romantic, nor light, nor heavy! What, then, would you have, sir?

Traveller: A small, portable work; accurate, conscientious, and within everybody's reach.

Salesman: Ah, sir, we have nothing of that kind; besides, it is impossible to get up such a work.

The Author (aside): Who knows? ⁶

The Wonders of Pompeii was written to appeal to the average middle-class tourist. With that avowed aim, to be "within everybody's reach," it incorporated many attitudes of the time, including typological thinking. A discussion

in the text on figures discovered at Pompeii by plaster casting is probably the most striking example of the latter.

Behind her had fallen a woman and a young girl; the elder of the two, the mother, perhaps, was of humble birth, to judge by the size of her ears; on her fingers she had only an iron ring; her left leg lifted and contorted, shows that she, too, suffered; not so much, however, as the noble lady: the poor have less to lose in dying.⁷

Enthusiasm for archeology began to crescendo in the closing decades of the century. Henry Schliemann found Troy in 1882. With a sure sense for the right and proper he dedicated his book about the discovery to Queen Victoria.⁸ In the 1890s whole streets and houses were being uncovered at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Private individuals on all levels of society sent money to help finance the excavations.

Classic fever was an epidemic that raged throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries. It is not at all surprising then that elements of dress borrowed from Greek and Roman statues were never completely out of fashion, especially in the art world, for this whole period. However, they, too, reached a peak of prevalence and popularity in the last 20 years of the 1800s. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the network of friends and lovers that merged it with the Aesthetic movement in England are largely responsible for this.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was an art circle formed by a group of seven young Englishmen in 1848. William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Gabriel

Dante Rossetti, three students at the Royal Academy School, were the primary initiators of the Brotherhood. They perceived glibness, slickness and shallowness in the mainstream of English art, represented by the Royal Academy. They vowed to work in the spirit of the truthful, reverent, religious men who painted before the time of Raphael.⁹ At one of their early meetings the group drew a pyramid containing the names of the world's greatest men. Jesus Christ was listed all alone at the top of the pyramid.¹⁰

The young men's respect for medieval artistic sincerity was later perverted by the renowned art critic John Ruskin because of his own predilections for art. The information Ruskin gave the public about the group stated that they wished to paint like the medieval painters, and that "medievalism" was their primary inspiration.¹¹ This was only partially true for one of the Pre-Raphaelites, Gabriel Dante Rossetti; a review of the group's paintings makes this quite evident. W. Holman Hunt vehemently denied that medievalism was a part of Pre-Raphaelitism that it was "not quattrocentism or antiquarianism in any sense."¹²

However, even if Ruskin's vision of the Pre-Raphaelites did not completely coincide with that of the members, he was nonetheless a strong influence on the style of painting they decided to adopt. Ruskin published a series of books of art criticism, Modern Painters (1843-60). The Brotherhood

was familiar with the first two volumes and agreed with much of his philosophy.

Ruskin was a naturalist who demanded utmost veracity in any art that attempted to deal with nature. He suggested that by going to nature, truth might be revealed. The artist must be non-selective. If he should attempt to be selective, eliminate details, then he was not truly seeing nature, but was bringing mannerisms and pre-conceptions with him. The resulting work would be untruthful.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood vowed they would paint only from nature; if they wanted to paint a goat, then they had to go to the goat---or bring it to them.¹³ They wanted to achieve evenness of light in their paintings, much like sunlight, and in contrast to the strong selective lights and shadows most studio artists used. They would paint everything that was present, every blade of grass; that was reality, not the false reality that vision, selective vision, allowed. Colors should be intense, as nature made them.

Ruskin considered most modern painting immoral. The themes for painting should be moral, uplifting, yes, even religious. This complemented the Brothers' own ideas.

John Everett Millais could hardly bear to finish a conventional painting he had begun once the Brotherhood's goals and ideals were established. Holman Hunt and

Gabriel Dante Rossetti were likewise anxious to begin their new adventure. Both Millais and Hunt had their first Pre-Raphaelite works selected for the Royal Academy exhibition of 1849. Vowing secrecy, the two men inscribed the initials "PRB" after their signatures.¹⁴ A year later the letters were no longer a mystery. The world, in 1850, or at least those portion of it that mattered, knew about Pre-Raphaelitism. The schoolboy secret was out. The reaction was predictable. It was a melodrama staged in two acts, unfolding between the years 1850 and 1852. The critics first shredded the Brothers, then picked up the pieces, patched them back together and praised them. As for the Brothers, their circle tightened while the venomous beasts attacked, led by the Times. When abuse mutated into support, the Brotherhood dissolved, each member going his own way.

In 1852, John Everett Millais and Effie Ruskin, the wife of Pre-Raphaelite supporter John Ruskin, were launching an affair that would result in the annulment of her marriage to Ruskin. Millais married Effie in 1855. By then he was an associate of the Royal Academy; he would eventually become its president and a baronet.¹⁵ His paintings' subject matter became more accessible. Millais, extremely popular and a solid commercial success, was no longer the least bit rebellious.

In 1852, Gabriel Dante Rossetti was living with

and virtually obsessed with a young woman named Elizabeth Siddal. He drew her again and again in medieval clothing. Two years later he was deep into the Legends of King Arthur.

The same year, 1854, W. Holman Hunt set sail for the Holy Land. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, its three original founders following vastly divergent paths, fell apart only a few years after its inception. But somehow, that fact eluded public notice. Pre-Raphaelitism became one of the longest-living defunct art movements in history. Well into the 1920s popular articles about it appeared at fairly regular intervals.

Ironically, the same year Millais, Hunt, and Rossetti abandoned ship, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, the next generation of young friends at Oxford, were reading about the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood for the first time. They could talk of nothing else for days.

In 1847, just two years before the Brotherhood was formed, another Englishman, George Frederick Watts, dreamed of becoming Great Britain's Michelangelo.¹⁶ The Grand Style, High Art, and personal fame and fortune were what he desired. He felt realism and low subjects incredibly common. Watts proved adept at relying on the kindness of strangers to reach his goals; particularly motherly, wealthy women who found his fragile frame, large, dark eyes and poetic locks appealing. He looked, in fact,

rather like an attractively consumptive spaniel.

Mrs. Thoby Prinsep, wife of a distinguished Indian civil servant, retired, was one of the several successive women who took Watts into protective care. But, Sara Prinsep had additional motives for doing so. She was determined to attract a salon of artists to her doorstep, the perfect setting for her to play the role of delightfully unconventional hostess. Watts was the cornerstone, the magnet of her ambition. Hopefully, his celebrity and talent would be great enough to bring others.

Mrs. Prinsep was one of seven individualistic sisters who gowned herself in unique styles years before the existence of "Pre-Raphaelite" dress.

The dress of the sisters was not quite of the fashion of that time, but designed by themselves upon simple lines; it depended upon rich colour and ample folds for its beauty, and was very individual and expensive¹⁷ (Plate 29).

Sara Prinsep's dreams were realized; the rich, famous, literary, and artistic paid regular calls at her house. The salon was a success. Thackeray, Browning, Tennyson, George Eliot, A. C. Swinburne, and Disraeli were all guests. Coutts Lindsay was also among those who came. He later owned the Grosvenor Gallery, showplace for aestheticism. Ruskin was an old friend of the Prinseps. Pre-Raphaelites Millais and Hunt came infrequently, but Rossetti was a regular visitor in the late 1850s. One day in 1857 he brought along an undergraduate admirer from

Plate 29. The Countess Somers. Mary S. Watts,
George Frederick Watts, Vol. I (London: Macmillan
and Co., 1912) (photograph, Jack Bailey).



Portrait of a woman in a long dress

1899

1899-1900

Oxford, Edward Burne-Jones. It was during this visit that the plan originated to paint frescoes in the Union Debating Hall at Oxford. Val Prinsep, Sara's son, Rosetti, Burne-Jones, Swinburne, and William Morris--who had never painted anything up to that point---were all enlisted.¹⁸ Morris and Burne-Jones were, of course, ecstatic to be painting alongside an original Pre-Raphaelite.

G. P. Watts met Ellen Terry at the Prinseps' Little Holland House in 1863. She was a young actress of 15. Watts was 46. The next year they were married. Holman Hunt designed a brown frock for "Nell" to wear for the ceremony. With it she wore an Indian shawl and a quilted white bonnet.¹⁹ The marriage (platonic would be an understatement) was of short duration; it lasted from February, 1864, to June, 1865. Mrs. Prinsap found Ellen Terry's good looks and high spirits an unpleasant intrusion in the household. She felt Terry made emotional demands that diverted Watts' genius from its twin destiny, Great Art and Fame. The marriage was annulled. Terry ran off on tour with Godwin, manager of a theater troupe. She later had his son, Gordon Craig. Watts and Terry saw each other only once after their separation, an accidental meeting in the streets of Brighton.²⁰ However, a number of links were created by Terry's flight to the provinces. Her son, Gordon Craig, grew up to have influential ideas on theatrical staging and costume, and to become the lover of Isadora

Duncan, the ambitious, self-promoting American who danced through Europe in mini-Grecian gowns at the turn of the century.²¹ In the 1870s Godwin designed stage costumes for Constance, Mrs. Oscar Wilde. When Godwin died in the late 1870s his wife married James Whistler, the expatriate American painter.

In the year 1855 this was far ahead in Whistler's future. He was an American in Paris, bent on soaking up culture on the Continent. At that time if one were young, artistic, and inclined to talk to all hours about the higher truths, the conversation would eventually turn to a discussion of Aesthetics. To the delight of all, the formal, philosophical roots of Aestheticism could be traced back to the source, to that constantly pure flowing artesian well, ancient Greece, where the word aisthesis meant perception, or the science of the beautiful, especially pertaining to art. In 1750, Baumgarten, a German philosopher published a book entitled Aesthetica, an adaptation of the Greek word. He questioned whether objects were intrinsically beautiful or only appeared so to people trained to appreciate beauty. The term "aesthetics" next appeared in Paris around 1849. Young critic and poet Theophile Gautier proposed that the study of art, aesthetics, should evaluate art not as a vehicle for morality, but devoid of social meaning, as Art for Art's Sake.²² Given this moral void, his contemporary, Charles Baudelaire, added that

there might, in fact, be a dichotomy between good and evil; that evil should be embraced to experience the full depth of emotion and feeling. Baudelaire's ideas can be traced directly back to Dante Aleghieri. Dante's exposition contained three steps: (1) the more a thing is perfect, the more it feels pleasure and likewise, pain; (2) the will to experience intense feeling will lead one to experience pain as well as pleasure; (3) thus, pain and evil have a positive value in the process of revelation and purification.²³ The combined ideas of Gautier and Baudelaire provided a guideline to a way of creating art, and a way of living. It allowed "complete detachment of the artistic vision from the values imposed on vision by everyday life."²⁴ This was the blessing Whistler had been waiting to hear, because that is how he wanted to paint. The same quotation, paraphrased, is equally effective in delineating a code of conduct: "complete detachment of the artistic, the Aesthetes, from the values imposed on others, the outsiders, the Philistines, in everyday life." In this case the blessing may have been superfluous. As artists, their lives were already unconventional. But, perhaps having a formal theory explain the rightness of it all was balm to any hidden, quivering, vestiges of conventional Victorian rectitude.

An aesthete could be a Pre-Raphaelite, an aspiring Michelangelo, like Watts; a firm believer in Art-for-

Art's Sake; or an art groupie of no particular philosophical persuasion. However, all had one thing in common. Aesthetes prided themselves on having trained their senses to a point where they alone could fully appreciate the truly beautiful in nature and art. In tune with the times, they attempted to elevate taste to a scientific system. Yet, there was still a large measure of smug, Presbyterian electedness about being able to appreciate the right things. The Philistines were incapable of such proper emotions. Therefore, if the Philistines thought something true or beautiful, it was automatically ruled out of the Aesthetic catalog of the true and beautiful. Thus, by default, although they would never have seen it that way, the Aesthetes had to declare "Beautiful!" "True!" when the Philistines declared "Ugly!" "False!" This led to unconventional tastes in women, dress, and, of course, art.²⁵

James McNeill Whistler moved from Paris to London in 1859. He took Art-for-Art's-Sake with him. It freed him of subject matter burdened with heavy emotional content. Whistler could then paint numbered Symphonies, Compositions, and Arrangements. In 1862 he painted his mistress, Joanna Heffernan, in a white gown, a lovely dress that dragged the floor because she wore no hoops.²⁶ It also displayed such oddities of fashion as a raised waistline and sleeves from the days of the Three Musketeers. Joanna's

unbound hair cascaded across one shoulder and down her back. This style of dressing also looked suspiciously like how a lady would have appeared, undressed, 30 years earlier.²⁷ The suggestion of the body's form, the slightly lowered neckline, the hair undone, the obscure and mixed references to clothing of other times and for more private places; it was all so unrespectable, so daring. Heffernan was a Pre-Raphaelite beauty.

The same year another woman, the prototype in the public's mind of how a Pre-Raphaelite beauty should look and dress, died. Elizabeth Siddal, her lover and now husband, Gabriel Dante Rossetti, and A. C. Swinburne had eaten dinner together. Following the meal, Siddal retired to her room. She was found dead, an empty vial of laudanum next to her body.²⁸ Rossetti painted Beata Beatrix in 1863 as a monument to Siddal. She appears, once more, as Dante's Beatrix, in a medieval gown surrounded by as much symbolism as could possibly be included. He may also have painted it to atone for the inattention and unfaithfulness that had gradually replaced the jealous love shown in the early years of their relationship. Within a couple of years, another woman was to receive the same sort of single-minded devotion.

The year that Rossetti and friends painted the Oxford Union, they met another Pre-Raphaelite beauty. Jane Burden, a shop girl, was picked up by Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and

William Morris at the theater one evening. They were stunned by her unconventional beauty. She quickly became a favorite model. Jane had long, thick, wavy hair---the sort of waves marcelled into 1920s bobs through the use of little shark-toothed metal clips. Her large, round eyes were framed by strong brows and an equally strong jawline. Her lips were full; her mouth rather wide. In short, Jane looked much like Miss Siddal, and Whistler's Joanna Heffernan, but nothing like the puckered-up, cupid's bow cuties, eyebrows plucked to thin arches, hair piled in rich and suspect profusion; the typical corsetted beauties of the day. Such subversive good looks would have been wasted, or at least dissipated, by the mode. Thus, they wore the strangest clothes; clothing with elements borrowed from nearly every time but their own. However, an emphasis developed on those periods and places where fabrics were used in an uncut, luxurious sweep, where trims, laces, and ribbons, were made by excruciatingly slow hand processes, where ladies moved like stately, living sculpture to avoid tripping over their own conspicuous consumption of piece goods. The silhouette was unstructured, especially when compared to the marvels of engineering, the scaffolded, buttressed, reinforced, capable-of-withstanding-Hurricane-Carla-with-nary-a-tremor-of-the-flesh fortifications that women of fashion were wearing. Medievalism, the Classic Revival, the Italian Renaissance, the

rediscovery of the Orient, the clothing depicted in 15th, 16th, and 17th Century Dutch and Flemish painting and 17th Century Spanish painting all provided patches and scraps of inspiration for the Pre-Raphaelite look.

William Morris declared, "no dress can be beautiful that is stiff; drapery is essential."²⁹ In increasing numbers, women in the art world dressed the part (Plates 30-35).

In the 1860s Aestheticism was in bud. No matter what their own beliefs on art, artists, their wives, friends and lovers did not look like other people. The men let their hair grow, the women let theirs hang loose. They appreciated things outsiders, the Philistines, could not understand. Thus, Whistler and Rosetti became friends. Even if "what art should be" was a topic they could never resolve, they could still talk for hours about the Oriental pots and prints they were collecting. William Morris and Burne-Jones were busy churning out neo-Gothic decorations for those who admired and could afford them. The "Arts and Crafts Movement" was in its infancy. G. F. Watts had escaped from his marriage to Ellen Terry. A couple of decades later, by then really quite ancient, he married a second young wife, Mary. Together they became active in Morris' Arts and Crafts Movement. Meanwhile, back in the 1860s Rosetti was painting only Jane Morris, again and again. It all might have remained rather English, insular and self-contained, except in 1874 the mouthpiece who

Plates 30, 31. Aesthetic Dress in American, 1892.
Front and back view of a late Victorian-Classic clone.

Plates 30-35 shows a variety of aesthetic fashions.
Drapery is present to some degree in all. Note the
Pompeian and Neo-Gothic furniture used as props.
All from Helen Gilbert Ecob, The Well-Dressed Woman
(New York: Fowler and Wells Co., 1892) (photographs,
Jack Bailey).





Plate 32. Aesthetic dress in America, 1892.
Extensive hand embroidery, raised waistline and
lace cuffs are distinctive style features. Note
the chatelaine with pocket or purse hanging from
the belt.



Plate 33. Aesthetic dress in America, 1892.
This dress is reminiscent of fashions popular
roughly 150 years earlier.



Plate 34. Aesthetic dress in America, 1892.
From the "Pompeiiian" wicker chair, to the fire-
place that resembles the Arch of Constantine,
this garment clearly belongs in a classical
setting.



Plate 35. Aesthetic dress in America, 1892.
The sleeves would look appropriate in the 16th
Century, the dress itself a century earlier,
but the posture remains typical for the 1890s.



trumpeted the Aesthetic cadenza, Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, arrived at Oxford. He wanted to know everyone and pretty well succeeded. Whistler was a particular goal. Perhaps Wilde admired the man's fast wit and acid tongue, qualities Wilde himself had in abundance. However, it is equally possible that he perceived in Whistler's art and philosophy something, that if managed and promoted properly might bring Wilde to the top of the Aesthetic heap, the connoisseur of connoisseurs, former outsider-from-Ireland who could tell the rest of the Aesthetes which hoop they should jump through and tell the Philistines where to go in the most exquisitely droll way imaginable.

Bringing Whistler's ideas into the open was a sure way to provoke confrontation with Ruskin. Ruskin, who had been the Pre-Raphaelite's early supporter because he approved of painting every blade of grass could only look with keen dislike at Whistler's work. In 1877 Coutts Lindsay opened the Grosvenor Gallery. Whistler's paintings were hung beside contemporary French painters. To someone as patriotic as Ruskin, this could only have been an additional insult to the senses. Ruskin wrote a series of scathing public letters, attacking Whistler's style. Whistler sued for libel. The costly trial that followed made Whistler nearly penniless; he had to sell his Oriental collections. Yet, it gave the world, including the United States, a fascinating glimpse into the Aesthetic life.

People wanted to hear, see, and read more, to participate vicariously in Aestheticism. They were soon given many opportunities. It can hardly be a coincidence, then, that the tea gown arrived on the fashion scene in the 1870s in the midst of the publicity surrounding Aestheticism. The gown, which incorporated many Pre-Raphaelite design features, allowed every respectable woman to be a parlor Aesthete, and only her close friends need know (refer to Plates 1, 43, and 47).

In 1880 Burne-Jones painted The Golden Stairs. It depicted a scene of young ladies gowned in a hodgepodge of Classic-Medieval style descending a circular staircase. In engraved format, it received wide distribution and recognition (Plate 36).

Two years later, Oscar Wilde, suitably dressed, was the "advance man" for the American tour of Patience, Gilbert and Sullivan's comedy spoofing the precious ones, the Aesthetes. Hundreds of thousands of the eager unenlightened received firsthand exposure to Aesthetic fashions. Patience closed after an attendance of nearly a million people at authorized performances.³⁰ A year after that, G. F. Watts wrote a rambling lecture "On Taste in Dress" which could be read on both sides of the Atlantic.³¹ Over a decade later, in 1894, an American fashion correspondent noted that art gowns were still retained for home, for afternoon and for special occasions in the evening in the U.S. She

Plate 36. Burne-Jones' The Golden Stairs, an engraved version of the painting (1892), published in Eva Wilder McGlasson, "The Aesthetics of Dress," pp. 181-202 In The Woman's Book Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 192 (photograph, Jack Bailey).

noted, with a tone of disparagement, that there were "those who would have us wear Greek draperies, the Indian ayah's garb, or the wrapper-like dress of the Japanese woman."³² Another author in the same volume promoted a short-skirted business suit (Plate 37).

In Europe, art gowns were generally passé by the mid-1880s, and nearly "everyone" everywhere agreed they were impractical for daytime wear; you could kill yourself trying to hop a trolley (Plate 38). However, there were pockets of resistance, survivals, in artistic circles. In England, Lady Ottoline Morrell, another member of the Oxford set, was described as wearing "window curtaining clothes" by author Henry James at the turn of the century. In Berlin, artists competed to design artistic reform dresses.³³ An art nouveau house dress, posthumous homage to Aubrey Beardsley, was judged worthy of publication (Plate 39). As late as 1911 Edie McNeil, a woman in painter Augustus John's group, wore a medieval-styled gown every day. And in America, pregnant, respectable, middle-class Philistines wore it proudly for tea time.

"Pre-Raphaelite" or "Aesthetic" dress existed prior to 1850. It existed before the Brotherhood was formed and through several philosophical transmutations after its departure. Freedom to wear such clothing was not limited to those who felt painting should be painfully realistic or a vague impression of reality, or grandiosely styled

Plate 37. A no-nonsense alternative to fashion and to aesthetic dress: proposed business suit for women, 1894. Anonymous, "Dress from a Practical Standpoint," pp. 206-248 In The Woman's Book Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 214 (photograph, Jack Bailey).

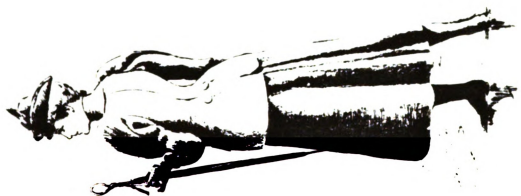


Plate 38. An Aesthetic evening gown, 1903.
Anonymous, "Studio Talk," International Studio
Vol. 19 (1903), pp. 60-F, 64 (photograph, Jack
Bailey).

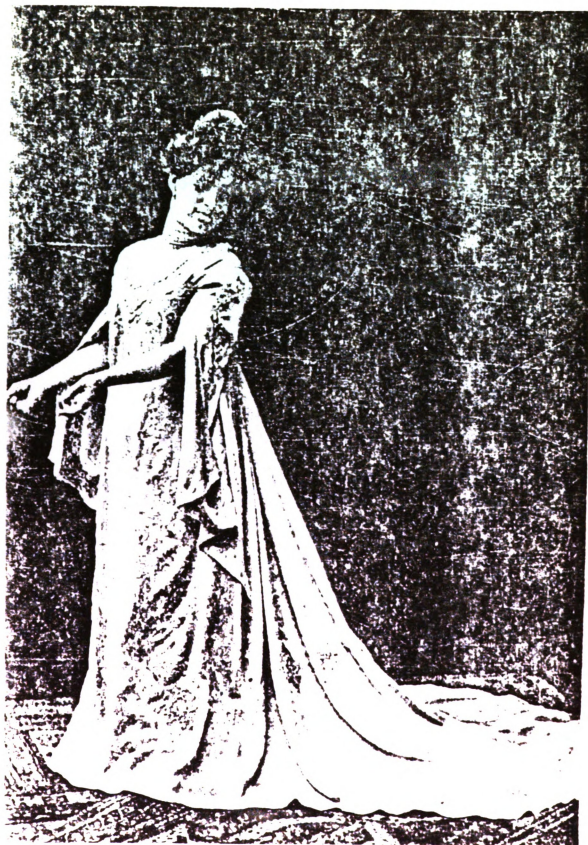


Plate 39. An Art Nouveau house dress, 1903.
Anonymous, "Studio Talk," International Studio
Vol. 19 (1903), pp. 60-F, 60 (photograph, Jack
Bailey).



after past virtuosos. Instead, it appealed to all the friends at mid-19th Century who were fascinated by the rich, simple elegance of classic and medieval drapery, disenchanted by the sartorial and social implications of the machine age, and gifted with a strong streak of non-conformity. Thus, the contemporary standard of dress was replaced by one typifying life at a more leisurely pace. In the end, this meant it was doomed. Life, even for artists and devotees, was no longer leisurely. The double curse of transportation and communication let everyone else in on their private vision, tarnished it with publicity, and, even worse, made it widely popular. Aesthetic dress was abandoned by all except a few hardcore diehards. And, by that segment of the female population who led, sometimes perforce, leisurely lives, and needed loose and nonbinding clothing. It was ideal maternity wear.

Chapter 8 will follow the development of the maternity dress per se, the product of that uneasy union, the menage a quatre, of Rational Dress, Aesthetic Dress, fashion, and medical science in the 20th Century.

REFERENCES

¹Anonymous, "The Lay Figure and Pre-Raphaelitism," International Studio Vol. 4 (1898), p. 70.

²Timothy Hilton, The Pre-Raphaelites (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1970). Hilton traces the spirit of Pre-Raphaelitism to the close of the 19th Century; years past the dissolution of the Brotherhood itself, the point where most chronicles stop. Major source books still extant but not so objective are: W. Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (London: MacMillan and Company, 1905); William Michael Rosetti (ed.) Pre-Raphaelite Diaries and Letters (London: Hurst and Blackett, Ltd., 1900).

Numerous articles were published near the turn of the century in America on Pre-Raphaelitism. The following are of historical interest.

Delmar Harwood Barmer, "Holman Hunt and Pre-Raphaelitism," Nineteenth Century Vol. 102 (October 1927), pp. 546-557.

Clive Bell, "The Pre-Raphaelites," The New Republic Vol. 44 (October 28, 1925), pp. 251-253.

Cecil Fairfield Lavell, "Burne Jones and the Pre-Raphaelites," The Chautauquan Vol. 46 (March 1907), pp. 68-78.

L. March-Phillips, "Pre-Raphaelitism and the Present," Living Age Vol. 249 (June 23, 1906), pp. 738-746.

Russell Sturgis, "The Pre-Raphaelites and their Influence," The Independent Vol. 52 (January 18, 1900), pp. 181-183.

Rho Fisk Zueblin, "Pre-Raphaelites: The Beginnings of the Arts and Crafts Movements," The Chautauquan Vol. 36 (October 1902), pp. 57-61.

With the exception of Clive Bell's broadside, which attributes all ills in English art to the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the articles are uniformly glowing in support of the Brotherhood, its members, and their enduring contributions to the art world.

³Helen Ecob, The Well-Dressed Woman (New York: Fowler and Wells Company, 1892), pp. 191-192.

Dr. Anna M. Galbraith measured different statues. Her perfect proportions are:

5'5" tall
34" bust
25" thigh
29" waist
weight: 138 pounds

From Anna M. Galbraith, Personal Hygiene and Physical Training for Women (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1916), p. 284.

⁴For a thorough history of the rediscovery see Egon Corti, The Destruction and Resurrection of Pompeii and Herculaneum (London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1951).

⁵Bernard de Monfaucon, L' Antiquite Explique et Representee en Figures (Paris: F. Delaulne, 1719) (five volumes; each in two parts and a five volume supplement).

⁶Marc Monnier, The Wonders of Pompeii, translated from the original French (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, n.d.), p. xi, xii. The book talks of "recent excavations" made at Pompeii in 1860.

⁷Ibid., p. 241.

⁸Henry Schliemann, Troja (London: John Murray, 1884, rpt Chicheley: Paul Miret, 1972).

⁹Raffaello Santi or Sanzio, Italian painter and architect, was born in 1483 and died in 1520.

¹⁰Hilton, op. cit., p. 34.

¹¹John Ruskin, Pre-Raphaelitism (New York: John Wiley, 1860, written 1851).

¹²Hunt, op. cit., p. 451. Hunt was anxious to separate not only medievalism, but Gabriel Dante Rossetti, from any association with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Therefore, belief in his pronouncements have to be tempered with the knowledge that they were written in rather embittered and jealous old age "to set the record straight."

¹³The most noted incident of this sort is undoubtedly Holman Hunt's pilgrimage to the Holy Land where he painted "The Scapegoat." To achieve the sort of realism he desired

he tethered a goat---actually, two goats, because the first one died---in the salt marshes of the Dead Sea and then painted it. The goat looks appropriately miserable. Hunt's book is the best source for this story.

¹⁴Hilton, op. cit., pp. 35-40.

¹⁵Hilton, op. cit., pp. 205-206.

¹⁶Ronald Chapman, The Laurel and the Thorn (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1945), p. 37.

¹⁷Mary S. Watts, George Frederick Watts, Vol. I (London: Macmillan and Company, 1912), p. 122.

¹⁸Chapman, op. cit., pp. 59, 68, 76-79, 81-82.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 67.

²⁰Watts, op. cit., p. 221.

²¹Isadora tells all in her autobiography. Isadora Duncan, My Life (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Company, 1927).

²²Walter Hamilton, The Aesthetic Movement in England (London: Reeves and Turner, 1882; rpt. New York: AUS, 1971).

²³For a thorough discussion of medieval beliefs on love see Louis Mumford, The Condition of Man (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944).

²⁴Roger Fry, Vision and Design (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920), p. 10.

²⁵Ibid. Fry adroitly termed this the "Oxford Movement" because most of the people involved were at one time or another at Oxford. This sidesteps the difficulty frequently encountered of confusing the lifestyle with a belief in any specific art philosophy.

For further insight into the Aesthetic life, see the following:

Alison Adbrugham, A Punch History of Manners and Modes (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1961).

John Christian, Symbolists and Decadents (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978).

Nicollette Davis, Two Flamboyant Fathers (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1967). Davis' book is about the circle of artist Augustus John at the end of the movement in the 20th Century.

Caroline Hillbrun (ed.) Lady Ottoline's Album (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976). Hillbrun's book about Lady Ottoline Morrell spans roughly the same period as Davis'.

John Milner, Symbolists and Decadents (London: Studio Vista, 1971).

Robin Spencer, The Aesthetic Movement (London: Studio Vista, 1972).

Ray Watkinson, William Morris as Designer (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1967).

²⁶James McNeill Whistler, The White Girl, also known as Symphony in White Number 1.

²⁷See Blanche Payne, The History of Costume (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), fig. 517, Underwear, 1825-1835, p. 492.

²⁸Hilton, op. cit., p. 179.

²⁹Adburgham, op. cit., p. 134.

³⁰Hamilton, op. cit., p. 40.

³¹G. F. Watts, "On Taste in Dress," The Nineteenth Century, No volume number (January, 1883), pp. 14-18.

³²Eva Wilder McGlasson, "The Aesthetics of Dress," pp. 206-248 In The Woman's Book (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 197.

³³Anonymous, "Studio Talk," (Berlin, Artistic Dress), International Studio, Vol. 19 (1903), pp. 60-F.

CHAPTER 8

An Overview of Maternity Dress:

From Overcoat to Overblouse

Cunnington and Lucas state that from medieval times to 1900, "as for clothes worn during pregnancy, these were usually adaptations of the fashions of the time, perhaps simplified"¹ (Plate 40). During late Gothic and early Renaissance times it seems that almost the reverse was true. Fashion adapted itself to make everyone look pregnant with the aid of yards of fabric and padding.

Payne suggests that in the 1700s there was a sacque-fronted variation of the sacque-back, or Watteau dress, circa 1720, that would have been comfortable during pregnancy. It was proper dress for travel and casual at-home wear² (Plate 40). A garment extant, circa 1770-1775, studied by Bradfield has three sets of bars for hooks at the closure, each making the garment a little looser than the next.³

As the 19th Century began, one source credits the Empress Josephine with the creation of the Empire silhouette to serve as a maternity costume⁴ (Plate 40). This is rather doubtful since Josephine became empress in 1804 and was divorced in 1809 for failure to produce an heir, or indeed, any children at all. Besides, her brief reign came after the introduction of the style. Fischel and Von Boehn

Plate 40. A medieval gown, a sacque-fronted Watteau gown, and an Empire gown.

Medieval gown: drawn from a brass rubbing from Blickling, Norfolk, U.K., reproduced in Phyllis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas, Costume for Births, Marriages and Deaths (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1972), p. 30. The figure originally wore a rosary which was omitted by Cunnington and Lucas so the front of the gown could be seen more clearly,

Sacque-fronted Watteau gown: drawn from a dress of about 1845-50 in the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. Photography published in Naomi E. A. Tarrant "A Maternity Dress of About 1845-50," Costume Number 14 (1980), pp. 117-120, 118.

Empire gown: drawn from a painting by Antoine Jean Gros, Christine Boyer, circa 1800 (photographs, Jack Bailey).



B. BALEY
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attributed the origin of the Empire dress to their own country, England.

The story of its origin is extremely unique. When in 1793 the well-beloved Duchess of York was in an 'interesting condition,' both girls and adult women of fashion went about wearing little cushions under their waistband; they were known in England as 'pads' and in Germany as 'ventres postiches,' this particular fashion was the beginning of the short waist which after 1794 was the general style in England and found its way quickly onto the Continent.⁵

Yet another, writing in 1878, says the "imitation Greek" gown was the product of classic mania induced by the painter Jacques Louis David, virtual dictator of the Committee on Public Education and thus the arts in Napoleon's new republic.⁶ A final author takes the creation of "Empire" styles back before the French Revolution altogether.

The fashions of France were revolutionized in the first pregnancy of Marie Antoinette, an event that took place in 1778. Discarding her bejewelled silks, the Queen put on cambrics, and the court and the townswomen did likewise. But they did more than wear cambrics; they padded their underskirts, and with each succeeding trimester they added to the padding to keep pace with their Queen. They called their costumes 'three months term,' 'half term,' etc., according to the period of the Queen's pregnancy. Every woman, young or old, married or single, was pregnant in appearance.⁷

The closer the date edges back to the discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the more accurate it is apt to be. But, whatever their new origin, Neo-Classic styles would have accommodated pregnancy comfortably compared to the styles that were to predominate for most of the 19th Century.

One author states that by 1830 separate maternity dresses were needed because the prevailing styles were so unsuitable⁸ (Plate 41). Another source suggests that the Victorian era made no provision for a pregnant woman to appear in public.⁹ This is not technically correct; the woman could appear in public as long as it was not discernable that she was pregnant. A variety of methods were employed to conceal the pregnancy. Dr. Bell, in Hints to Mothers published in 1844, suggests wearing whalebone stays instead of steel for the improved health of mother and child.¹⁰

There is evidence that in England from 1845 to 1850 maternity wear was suggested in periodicals by illustrations labeled "suitable for the young mother" or "young married women." Having the illustrated woman hold baby clothes was another clue to the reader. However, nothing more substantive was ever stated. No patterns were given.¹¹ Any maternity clothes that existed at this time were the product of their wearers' ingenuity. But once constructed, they could be covered by a wide variety of fashionable wraps. One such outer garment, the pelisse-mantle, circa 1855, was fingertip length, flaring from shoulder to hip to a circumference sufficient to generously cover a full-hooped skirt.¹² It obviously could cover much more. However, as the hoop disappeared, wraps correspondingly contracted. By the 1880s the most fashionable

Plate 41. Fashions for September, 1843. Godey's Lady's Book Vol. XXVII (September, 1843) (photograph, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources).

"We are glad to find that our plan of making the Plate of Fashions a monitor for the young and lovely is highly approved. We intend it shall teach them how to preserve their health and beauty, how to practice that true economy of which good sense is the basis, and refined taste the ornament; and above all, how to acquire that grace and charm of manner which marks the true lady.

"But in striving to promote all these visible perfections and accomplishment of our sex, we are by no means inclined to neglect those superior excellences which the cultivated mind confers, and the heart, devoted to its duties, makes the highest import to the world. We would impress it on the soul of every fair girl and intelligent woman who reads our pages, that the only sure way of making themselves really lovely and beloved is by doing good and promoting the happiness of others. For these ends it is that woman required to be educated, for ignorant persons cannot promote the improvement of those under their care or influence."

Sarah Hale, "The Editor's Table," Godey's Lady's Book Vol. XXVI (February, 1843), p. 105.



outerwear was so closely fitted it was ill-suited to maternity wear (refer to Plate 16, Chapter 3).

While hoops were worn, they, too, could cover a great deal. Hurlock states that Queen Victoria herself encouraged wearing of crinolines so that pregnant ladies of the court could continue their duties.¹³ As a mother of nine, Queen Victoria must have had some self-interest. And possessing a rather stout and dumpy figure, the crinoline strategy was probably an effective ploy for her. However, continuing the French and English fashion rivalry, popular thought also attributes the use of crinolines to Empress Eugenie of France. Fischel and Von Boehn state this was probably apocryphal.

When, on January 30, 1835, she mounted the throne, wide skirts were being worn; and the statement that she increased the size of the crinoline in order to hide her condition before the Prince Imperial was born does not agree with actual facts, for it was not until later that it attained its largest circumference.¹⁴

Gernsheim, in reference to the late 1860s, says, "Social reformers objected that the wearing of crinoline encouraged concealment of pregnancy, and consequently, infanticide."¹⁵ The conflicting testimony on who was responsible for the practice tends to underscore how widespread it must have been in Europe as well as the United States. And so, it would seem that the first half of the Victorian era may not have been such a sequestered one after all for the pregnant woman; she, like her fictional contemporary,

Scarlett O'Hara, would simply tie her hoops at a higher waistline and carry on.

Gernsheim further noted that in the late 1860s a device called the demi-temps, an anterior bustle, was in fashion. Its purpose was to make the drapery of the skirt hang properly, or, alternately, as an author of the time claimed, to make the wearer look pregnant.¹⁶ No other sources reviewed mentioned this device, so it is difficult to assess its importance to the overall fashion scene.

Around 1870 the hoop collapsed, and as a fashion correspondent for The Queen stated in 1877, "It would be impossible to make closer drapery; the limit has been reached. The modern gown shows the figure in a way which is certainly unsuitable for the ordinary British Matron"¹⁷ (Plate 42). This was truly an unfortunate time in history to be pregnant! The combination of extreme modesty and the fashion of the day made it impossible for the "well-bred" woman to appear in public for a good portion of her pregnancies. A medical doctor, John Keating, suggests among his other advice for pregnant women that they walk at night so they won't worry about being seen in loose clothing. Keating also attributes miscarriages to tight clothing worn in an attempt to conceal pregnancy so social activities might be continued.¹⁸ As Mary Coolidge wrote in 1912 about the woman of the 19th Century:

Though she might look forward with joy to having

Plate 42. Fashions for October, 1878. Godey's
Lady's Book Vol. XCVII (October, 1878), p. 292,
figs. 23-24 (photograph, North Carolina Department
of Cultural Resources).

FIG. 23.

FIG. 24.



a child of her love, the lifelong habits of exaggerated modesty could not be thrown aside, but were rather intensified by the consciousness of her condition. She tried to conceal it as long as she could by corsets and clothing which were injurious, and when it was no longer possible to hide the fact, she stayed indoors like an invalid, venturing out only after nightfall or in a carriage.¹⁹

Coolidge's assertion, supported by Keating, is confirmed by a jacket from 1895 studied by Bradfield. The jacket was adapted for maternity use by the insertion of side lacings; after the "expansion" the bodice measured 27 inches at the waist.²⁰ If inches are subtracted for the room taken by shirtwaist, corset, etc., the actual space allowed to the waist would have been considerably smaller.

Many aspects of women's status in society were changing at the close of the century, and dress and behavior during pregnancy were among those to change radically.²¹

An American, Lane Bryant, is credited with inventing the first maternity dress, a dress designed specifically to be worn by a pregnant woman, in 1903.²² Her "Number 5 Tea Gown" had an adjustable waistline and expandable vertical pleats, but to present day eyes is indistinguishable from "ordinary" tea gowns of the time (refer to Plate 1). From this point in time, advances in the activities allowed pregnant women were mirrored by the clothing available to them. Street clothes were introduced in 1911, maternity party dresses after World War I, and sports clothes about

the time World War II began.²³

While these maternity items were unquestionably more comfortable than the whalebone corsets advocated a hundred years earlier, comfort was not the major issue. The visual design objective for maternity clothing was firmly rooted in Victorian tradition; the wearer should look as "normal" as possible (a term used by many sources, and rampant in popular literature), and great pains must still be taken to prevent immodest disclosure of the pregnancy. As a feature writer for a ladies' magazine said approvingly in 1953 (and who wasn't pregnant in 1953?):

We know a girl who makes short crinoline "petti-slips" to wear under her jackets to keep them looking crisp...another who faces the lower edge of her jackets with horsehair to keep them from clinging.²⁴

When you trace the genesis of maternity clothing, lingering Victorian modesty becomes obvious: robe-like at-home dresses, street clothes to be worn with long jackets or under coats, and finally sports clothing---bermuda shorts and blousy tops. You see the pregnant woman slowly emerging into public life, a somewhat chubby chrysalis cautiously developing into a more social butterfly. The beginnings were most sedentary---a little tea and sympathy among friends---but that way no possibility of disarrangement could exist. Even with the increasing acceptability of being seen to be pregnant today, this attitude has not been totally abandoned. A 1979 Glamour article suggests the

prospective mother buy a swimsuit that "stands crisply away from the body. If you're struggling with your weight, no one will suspect."²⁵ The parallel between this suit and the turn-of-the-century bathing costume is irresistible both in design and the type of participation intended for the wearer. They are both fine for wading in the water or sitting on the sand, but really not intended to become wet (Plate 43).

To summarize, specialized maternity wear seems to have been a 20th Century creation. Prior to this time, the feminine dress of the period was adapted as necessary to accomodate the enlarging figure. During the whole Victorian era concealment of the pregnant condition was a social necessity. When the fashion silhouette changed so that this was nearly impossible the last quarter of the century, the woman simply was not seen in public. In the 20th Century the pregnant woman slowly came out of her "closet," garbed for the first time in garments designed specifically for pregnancy, but also designed with the intent of disguising that fact as much as possible.

Chapter 9 will follow the evolution of purpose in maternity dress in the 20th Century, revealed through the styles, fabrics and activities represented.

Plate 43. Bathing costumes for ladies, 1890
and for pregnant and non-pregnant ladies, 1979.

1890: Godey's Lady's Book Vol. CXXIX (August, 1890)
(photograph, North Carolina Department of Cultural
Resources).

1979: Maternity suit redrawn from an illustration
by Durell Godfrey, Anonymous, "How to Buy a Swimsuit,"
Glamour Vol. 77 (July 1979), p. 106. Bikini swimsuit
purchased by the author, 1978.



Fig. 3

Fig. 1

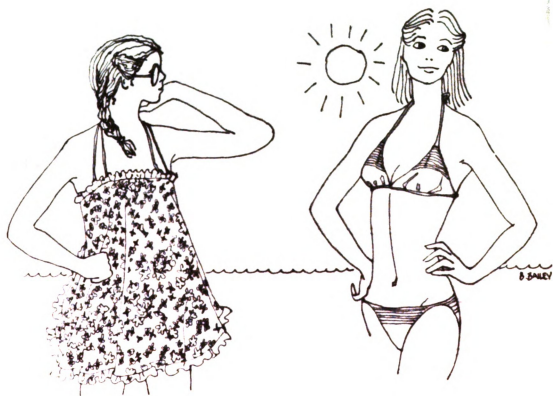
Fig. 5

Fig. 4

Fig. 7

Fig. 6

For Copyright, See Fashion Department.



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³Nancy Bradfield, Costume in Detail (London: George G. Harrap and Company, Ltd., 1968), p. 46.

⁴Anonymous, "Quick History of Maternity Fashions," Vogue Vol. 116 (October 1950), p. 103.

⁵Oscar Fischel and Max Von Boehn, Modes and Manners of the 19th Century, Vol. 1 (London: J. M. Dent and Company, 1909), pp. 99-100.

⁶Mary Eliza Joy Haweis, The Art of Beauty (New York: Harper, 1878), pp. 32-33, 64-65.

⁷Palmer Findley, The Story of Childbirth (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1933), pp. 283-284.

⁸Naomi E. Tarrant, "A Maternity Dress of about 1845-1850," Costume Number 14 (1980), pp. 117-120, 117.

⁹Anonymous, op. cit., p. 103.

¹⁰Thomas Bell, Hints to Mothers, 1844, quoted in Cunnington, op. cit., p. 15.

¹¹Tarrant, loc. cit.

¹²C. Willett Cunnington and Phyllis Cunnington, Handbook of English Costume in the 19th Century (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 455.

¹³Elizabeth G. Hurlock, Psychology of Dress (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1929), p. 108.

¹⁴Fischel, op. cit., Volume III, p. 39.

¹⁵Alison Gernsheim, Fashion and Reality (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 47.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁷C. Willett Cunningham and Phyllis Cunningham The History of Underclothes (London: Michael Joseph, 1951), p. 170.

¹⁸John M. Keating, Maternity, Infancy and Childhood (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1891), pp. 29, 37.

¹⁹Mary Roberts Coolidge, Why Women Are So (New York: Arno Press, 1972, reprint of New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1912), p. 46.

²⁰Bradfield, op. cit., p. 288.

²¹The only known written account of dress worn by an upper middle class Victorian during pregnancy was reported by Zuzanna Shonfield, "The Expectant Victorian," Costume Number 6 (1972), pp. 36-42. Shonfield's article tells of the journal kept by Mrs. Edward Seaton, an Englishwoman living in London, during her pregnancy in 1892. Mrs. Seaton maintained an active social life throughout her pregnancy. Apparently, this was much more acceptable in England and on the Continent than in the United States at that time.

²²Mildred Tate and Oris Glisson, Family Clothing (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1961), p. 143.

²³Ibid., pp. 144-145.

²⁴Nora O'Leary, "Year-Round Maternity Clothes," Ladies Home Journal Vol. 70 (May 1953), pp. 58-59.

²⁵Anonymous, Glamour Vol. 77 (July 1979), p. 106.

CHAPTER 9

Pregnancy In The Popular Press:
Dressing For The 20th Century

Just as a Balinese would seem ever to be concerned about the direction and height of his seat, so the individual in our society, while 'in situation' is constantly oriented to keeping 'physical' signs of sexual capacities concealed. And it is suggested here that these parts of the body when exposed are not a symbol of sexuality merely, but of a laxity of control over the self---evidence of an insufficient harnessing of the self for the gathering.

---Erving Goffman, 1963¹

Maternity clothing in the 20th Century has been designed to perform several contradictory functions. The necessity for many of these tasks lies in the Victorian past. The protruding abdomen of pregnancy is a potent image of sexuality, what a Victorian would view as embarrassing evidence of lack of control. This inspires two types of clothing. The first is concealing and somber, negating the body's testimony. Do nuns have babies? The second is juvenile, suggesting that any roundness observed in the figure is just "baby fat," a harmless adolescent affliction. Or, if the real cause is discerned, then such clothing affirms the innocent naivete of its wearer; an immaculate conception for each and every puffed-sleeved, lambkin-printed Madonna.

The idea that pregnancy is the product of laxity is carried into advice on beauty and hygiene. The woman is told continually not to give up washing her hair, to take especial care with make-up, to take regular baths or showers; in effect, guard against becoming an execrable slob. An article published in 1976² warns the pregnant woman to change clothes often, use a deodorant, and bathe every day---all fairly standard procedures for civilized people. This attitude also comes from very Victorian roots. In "A Few Words About Delicate Women," an 1854 Godey's cautionary, readers are told that women are "delicate" because they want to be spoiled and lazy. To combat this they should cultivate personal cleanliness, exercise in open air, eat good food, and cultivate mental health.³ As seen from the review of medical advice for pregnant women, doctors have frequently felt that a pregnant woman was a "delicate woman"; and so, to follow this reasoning to its conclusion, one prone to laziness, to laxness. Godey's directives have been repeated countless times by advice-givers to pregnant women.

Dr. Joseph B. DeLee, pre-eminent obstetrician in the early 1900s---he was Alice Roosevelt Longworth's physician---indirectly stated the motivation for yet another major function of maternity clothing. Writing in 1913, in the first edition of his Obstetrics, which was eventually to go through over 50 editions, DeLee says,

Certain changes in the body are the necessary consequences of childbirth, and beautify the figure, although some women do not look at it in this light. Such are the rounding of the hip, broadening of the bust, the more mature and matronly appearance. It is natural for some women to put on fat after delivery, and nothing done before, during, or after confinement will prevent it.⁴

Fat. What an ugly word. The opulent flesh that a late Victorian, such as Dr. DeLee, might have seen as contributing to a "fine figure of a woman" was in the world of fashion from World War I on, just ugly poundage. Lillian Russell, woman of ample appetites and proportions, rode her golden bicycle into the sunset to be replaced by Twiggy. Although tastes have mellowed somewhat from Twiggy's sexless, concentration camp girth of the late 1960s, a pregnant woman still cannot approach the current fashion ideal. She is thus stigmatized. A portion of Erving Goffman's discussion of the process of stigmatization is apt.

The stigmatized individual tends to hold the same beliefs about identity that we do.... Yet, he may profess, usually quite correctly, that whatever others profess, they do not really 'accept' him and are not ready to make contact with him on 'equal grounds.' Farther, the standards he has incorporated from the wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failings, inevitably causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he really ought to be. Shame becomes a central possibility arising from the individual's perception of one of his own attributes as being a defiling thing to possess, and one he can readily see himself as not possessing.⁵

Researchers in 1955 found that for a group of college girls, large size in any part of the body except the bust was considered negative. Deviation from the "ideal" figure might

cause anxiety and feelings that attractiveness to men was diminished, regardless of other talents.⁶

In 1961 a study on changing body image during pregnancy reported that subjects saw themselves as in an unnatural condition; their bodies misshapen, ugly, and devalued.⁷

This negative perception can also affect social relationships, if the pregnant woman perceives her clothed figures as less than satisfactory. G. Stanley Hall developed the first questionnaire to examine the relationship between clothing and the development of the sense of self in 1898. He found that being well-dressed made his subjects feel more sociable. Being poorly-dressed made them feel unsociable and self-conscious.⁸

Three researchers published data in 1977 that people wearing in-fashion clothing were judged more sociable than those who didn't.⁹ The fashion implications are very clear. The stigmatized individual, the pregnant woman, believes in the slim fashion ideal as much during her pregnancy as before. She wants to be attractive as much as before. All of the articles printed in the Fashion Section by the Beauty Editor about diet and exercise during pregnancy are proof of this, regardless of what medical basis they may also have. Maternity clothing, until very recently, usually coped with this discrepancy through camouflage. A popular method has been to make some portion of the costume very slim, for instance,

wearing a very tight skirt or pants under the necessarily voluminous jacket or smock top. Another method is usually called "focusing the attention on the upper part of the body"---and away from the embarrassment. This is accomplished in a number of ways, among them weird necklines, strange hats and Bozo the Clown bows at the throat. Caution is advised in the selection of fabrics, too. They should not make one appear larger. Unfortunately, as Klaasen found in 1967¹⁰ modesty in clothing is not related to self-esteem, and modesty has been the major goal of maternity clothing until very recently. A new tactic, anti-camouflage, has been possible only since the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s, which seems to have removed most of the sexual stigma from pregnancy. With that gone, maternity clothing could become more revealing. Clinging knit tee-shirts with B-A-B-Y stamped on the midsection may appear liberated compared to the cloistered tents of yesteryear; however, the revealing quality itself can be construed as the ever-present desire to disassociate oneself from the ghastly stigma of corpulence; a totally unsubtle attempt to say, "Hey! Look Here! It's not fat, it's baby!"

There is a second motive present in flouting pregnancy that also grew from the Sexual Revolution. In the review of medical advice this expressed itself in sappy pregnant woman as sex object and superabundant sacred vessel articles. Consciously or not they are an attempt to rebut the medieval

concept of the dual nature of woman: woman as temptress, woman as sacred mother. Today the requirement is that woman is always temptress. A Victorian doctor, George Napheys, intending to pay a most deferential compliment, wrote as follows: "The young virgin and the new wife have pleased by their grace, spirit, and beauty. The pregnant wife is an object of active benevolence and religious respect."¹¹

In other words, a living shrine. A living shrine does not have a sexy pregnancy. Therefore, revealing clothing is a tool in destroying the old image and presenting the proper new one. Contrary to common beliefs, maternity clothing has been periodically attractive, bright, and cheerful throughout the 20th Century. But it was not slit to the hip until the 1970s, and then, ironically, it was a company called Lady Madonna that did it; named for the very stereotype they were trying to obliterate.

Thrown in with the motivation to conceal, clean up, and reveal pregnancy are efforts to make the clothing healthful, which results in awful, boring, practical stuff; make is professional, which is only accomplished at very high prices; and to make it pretty and fashionable, which has more chance of success. Whenever a designer succeeds in the latter, the press usually trumpets that something "daring" has happened to maternity clothes. In truth, it really means that some perceptive soul has had the insight to update maternity clothes so that they are contemporary

and follow the regular fashion trend. Then, in this cycle of events, "regular" fashion moves on, our innovative maternity designer burns out or loses interest, and maternity fashion turns once more into a warty frog princess, awaiting the next magic kiss.

Keeping all these conflicting forces in mind, the remainder of this chapter will chart their interaction in the 20th Century. Lane Bryant's humble loft apartment and workroom is where the story officially begins. Yet, to understand precisely what Ms. Bryant did when she designed the first maternity dress, circa 1903, it is first necessary to go back about 30 years to the late 1870s. During that decade, when dress bodices were perhaps the tightest, straightest and most confining they had been in centuries, the tea gown appeared. It was loose-fitting, highly feminine and lavishly trimmed. As suggested by the name, it was worn for tea parties, much like a hostess gown might be used today. Dresses with tea gown styling were also worn for dinner and theatre. The tea jacket, a short version of the gown worn with a skirt, was extremely popular at the turn of the century.

In the 1880s two trends solidified in fashion. The first was for very feminine fashions epitomized by the tea gown. This was during the peak of the Aesthetic Movement. Tea gowns often incorporated Aesthetic features such as an empire waist, medieval sleeves and necklines, and classical folds in the skirt drapery. Sixteenth and 17th Century Dutch and

Spanish style collars were also common (Plate 44). The other trend was toward masculine styles for women. Redfern, an English tailor, is credited with introducing the first woman's tailored suit after 1885.

Tea gowns continued to be popular in the 1890s along with a number of other types of house gowns clearly adaptable for use during pregnancy. The bodice of tea gowns was sometimes boned to give support so the dress could be worn without a corset.¹² This would have garnered support from doctors, rational and aesthetic dress reformers, and certainly from the pregnant wearer. Illustrations published in an advice book for women in the mid-1890s includes two suggestions euphemistically captioned "for stout women."¹³ The first shows a young matron with her tea service. She is wearing what had formerly been a basic black dress, but certain alterations have been made. It has a flowered, bias draped insert in the center front that extends from neck to hem. In width, the insert extends from bust point to bust point and tapers out as it goes down so that it spans the pelvic bones (Plate 45). The second dress is worn by a seated woman. She leans back at a rather awkward angle in her chair. Her hands dangle languidly from the chair arms. To judge from her facial expression she either has a terminal case of Classic Calm, or morning sickness. Her gown has empire lines. Tellingly, the dress, which appears to be of a rather soft, shirred fabric, follows a path of 45° from the

Plate 44. A tea gown and an artistic house gown, modeled on a Dutch costume, 1894. Anonymous, "Dress from a Practical Standpoint," pp. 206-248 In The Woman's Book Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), pp. 211, 212 (photograph, Jack Bailey).

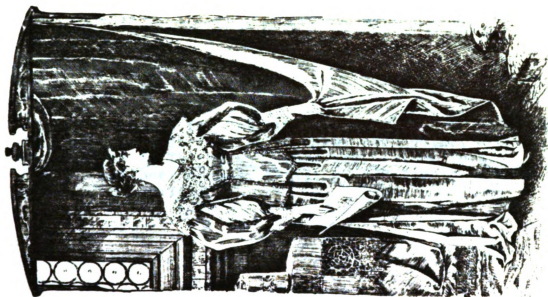
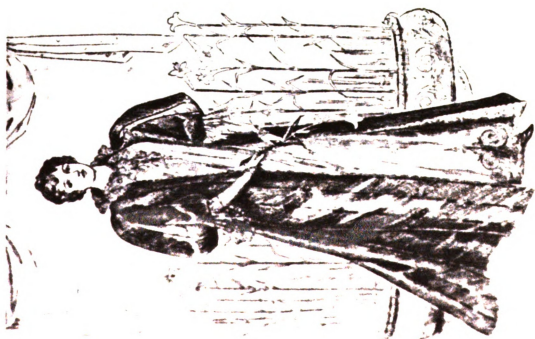
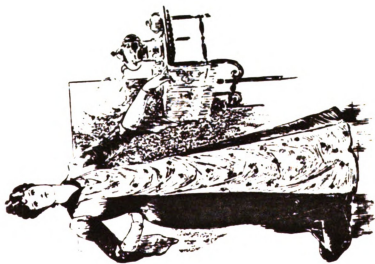
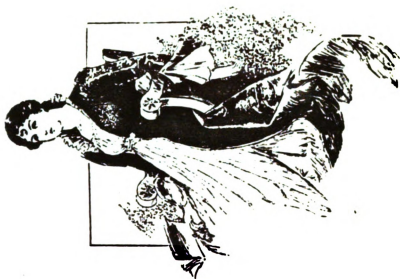


Plate 45. Gowns for "stout" ladies, 1894.
Anonymous, "Dress from a Practical Standpoint,"
pp. 206-248 In The Woman's Book Vol. I (New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 220 (photo-
graph, Jack Bailey).



raised waist to her knees, instead of falling straight down into her lap. The open overdress or coat she wears with it incorporates many Aesthetic features. The overall impression is very artistic, feminine, and pregnant (Plate 45). A dressy wrapper pictured in the September 1890 Lady's Book would have been equally useful (Plate 46).

In the year 1900 Harpers Bazar published many illustrations for cut paper patterns readers might order. A pretty empire cloak in the July 7 issue was noted as being adaptable for use as a tea gown. An accompanying empire negligee, with the addition of longer sleeves, "could be worn with equal propriety at the breakfast table."¹⁴ In October, Harper's pictured a lacy matinee. The matinee was really a hybrid of the tea gown and the tea jacket and performed the same social functions. The one shown has an empire yoke with what looks like a lace jacket falling from the yoke. However, the skirt for the dress is also attached to the yoke under the "jacket"¹⁵ (Plate 47). The next month an empire house gown was featured. Once again it was modeled by a seated young matron with a dangling left hand, her wedding band clearly discernable. Perhaps this small conceit in itself is a broad hint to the readers on how these dresses are intended to be used¹⁶ (Plate 47).

The same year, 1900, Lena "Lane" Bryant was a 20-year-old widow with a one-year-old child. Four years earlier she had immigrated to America from Lithuania, part

Plate 46. A lady's wrapper, September, 1890.
Godey's Lady's Book Vol. CXXI (September, 1890),
p. 176, figs. 10,11 (photograph, North Carolina
Department of Cultural Resources).



Fig. 10

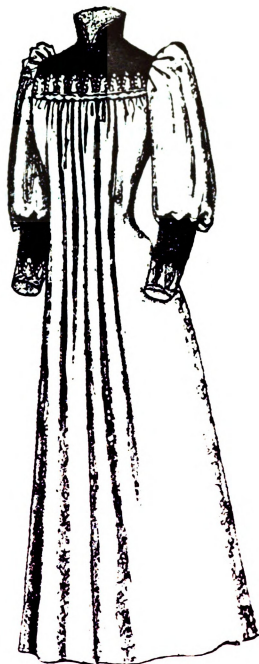


Fig. 11

Plate 47. A matinee and an Empire house gown, 1900.

Tranon matinee: Anonymous, "Cut Paper Patterns,"
Harper's Bazar Vol. XXXIII (October 27, 1900), p. 1645.

Empire house gown: Anonymous, "The Bazar's New
Pattern Sheet" Harper's Bazar Vol XXXIII (November 17,
1900), p. 1833 (photographs, Jack Bailey).



of Czarist Russia. Her passage was paid by relatives who hoped she would marry their son. Lena met him and decided she would rather work in New York City's garment industry. She was adept and quickly earned top pay. Her job ended when she married David Bryant, a jeweler, who before long left her a widow with a baby and a pair of diamond earrings. She pawned the earrings to buy a sewing machine. Bryant's skill quickly made her modest dressmaker's business a success. Then, in 1904, she received an unusual request; a customer said she wanted something practical for entertaining at home while she was pregnant.

Bryant responded by designing a tea gown. The gown had an accordian pleated skirt joined to the bodice with an elastic band, an expandable feature. The customer was very pleased. Word-of-mouth made this garment a much-requested item. Bryant had to enlarge her business as well as open a bank account. She was intimidated by her venture into the marble edifice; her hand shook when she signed "Lena Bryant" to open the account. A bank officer thought she had written "Lane" instead of "Lena." Bryant never corrected the error. The company she founded was called Lane Bryant from that day forward.

In 1909 Bryant married her second husband. His organizational ability turned her small business into a corporation. He and Bryant also had three children in the first four years of their marriage. Lena Bryant was a walking

advertisement for her business. As a busy working woman she did much more than pour tea. She had to design a variety of garments for herself. The next step was logical. The company manufactured streetwear. Business boomed. However, it was not until 1911 that the New York Herald agreed to run an ad for her unmentionable goods. The text read as follows:

It is no longer the fashion nor the practice for expectant mothers to stay in seclusion. Doctors, nurses, and psychologists agree that at this time a woman should think and live as normally as possible. To do this she must go about among other people, she must look like other people.

Lane Bryant has originated maternity apparel in which the expectant mother may feel as other women feel because she looks as other women look.¹⁷

The Lane Bryant shop was mobbed by excited pregnant women; not a single streetwear garment was left on the rack. By the close of the day, the entire inventory had been sold (Plate 48).

The ad was a masterpiece. It presented seclusion during pregnancy as out-of-fashion. To reject streetwear for expectant mothers meant rejecting progress, industry, medical science, being modern; the whole exciting 20th Century. Further, the ad promised to remove the double stigma of pregnancy. Bryant's garments would camouflage the embarrassing sexual condition and restore their wearers to an approximation of the fashion ideal. They would look as other women looked.

An analysis of what Lena Bryant really did shows a strong link to the past and some patterns for the future in the process of maternity wear design. Bryant's fantastic

Plate 48. Lane Bryant's streetwear for pregnant women, 1916. Frontispiece from the 1916 Lane Bryant Catalogue (photograph, Jack Bailey).



Sunshine or Shadow? Which Do You Choose?

Here are two pictures. They are as nearly opposite as two pictures could possibly be.

One of them shows your life the next few months as it may be. The other as it ought to be. Which, dear mother, will you choose?

Will you be the "shut-in" mother? Hiding in darkness and gloom? Thinking only of things that depress?

Or will you be the carefree one? Out in the brightness and sunshine? Out where gloomy thoughts are banished? Out where friends and happiness make every day a day of joy?

You can put yourself in whichever picture you choose. And Oh, how much the choosing means to you! To choose right means a lifetime of health and happiness. To choose wrong may mean a lifetime of regret.

So choose, dear mother, with care. Choose sunshine, not shadow. Choose happiness, not gloom. Choose health, not misery.

Lane Bryant Will Help You

The choice is not easy, we know. Embarrassment tempts you to seek the shadows. False modesty urges you to hide. Pride forces you to unhealthful dress.

But pay no attention to these tempters. Cling to the other, the better way. Do as your doctor will tell you. Continue every normal activity. Lane Bryant has made it easy for you to do so.

We picture in this book a complete line of Lane Bryant Maternity garments. In these you can face the world without embarrassment. You can continue your social activities. You can go out into the health-giving air and sunshine right up to the day of confinement. You can be as proud of your appearance as you ever were in your life.

So study these garments, today. Study their beauty, their style, their marvelous figure-concealing lines, their health-promoting construction.

And then, for your own sake—for your baby's sake—take the first step on the road to health and happiness. Order now, TO DAY, the garments that you need to drive the shadows from your life and to bring the sunshine in.



NOTICE TO THE TRADER

Indicated on our advertisements
indicated the various subjects
indicated in these articles

Entered for mailing as Second-Class
March 10, 1918
Post Office No. 1117, New York, N.Y.

Published by Lane Bryant, Inc., 1117
New York, N.Y.

Changeable Pub.
No. 128, 625
Oct. 27, 1918

sales after placing a most modest, inconspicuous ad points back to the comparable reception that greeted The Physical Life of Woman when Dr. George Napheys published it in 1869. Napheys and Bryant were amazed, even stunned, by the immediate, enormous popularity of their works. Both acted as catalysts in effecting a tremendous change in the defined proprieties of polite society, but they were unconscious catalysts, unknowing bearers of the standard of social behavior. Both thought they were doing something rather daring, on the limits of acceptability, and then found the public agreed with them, and had, in fact, been eagerly waiting for such ideas to be expressed.

Mrs. Bryant's actual contribution to clothing design was slight. After all, her first breakthrough, the maternity tea gown, was a copy of a dress already worn during pregnancy. The style features of the tea gown had remained relatively unchanged from its introduction. Lena Bryant's version was not innovative, but the marketing concept was. The early 1900s were a time when clothing for women diversified as quickly as their activities. Cycling, golfing, motoring, lawn tennis, and skiing all became fashionable amusements; there was proper clothing for each (Plate 49). In a way, pregnancy was another new activity for women; new in that it was a repressed subject that might now be discussed and displayed. Dr. Napheys did a lot to legitimize the topic. It is very understandable, then, that maternity, too, as a

Plate 49. Sports clothes for women at the turn of the Century.

Left to Right:

Alpine Costume: Eva Wilder McGlasson, "The Aesthetics of Dress," pp. 181-202 In The Woman's Book (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 188.

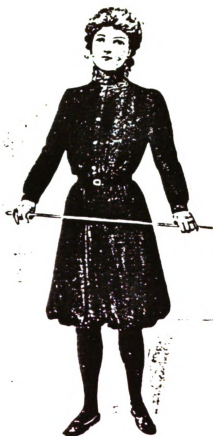
Golf Costume: Anonymous, "Outing Fashions for Autumn Wear," Harper's Bazar Vol. XXXIII (September 8, 1900), p. 1174.

Bicycle Suit: Ibid., p. 1175.

Gymnasium Dress: Anonymous, "The Bazar's New Pattern Sheet," Harper's Bazar Vol. XXXIII (September 15, 1900), p. 1267.

(Photographs, Jack Bailey)





unique avocation, required special clothes.

Features of Lane Bryant's success story were repeated several times in this century. First, the maternity clothing designer is nearly always pregnant herself when the inspiration strikes to begin a business. If the designer is single and/or a man, then they have the option of a pregnant sister, wife, or close friend who needs assistance. Once the company has been established, word-of-mouth accounts for most initial sales. When the press eventually gives the design firm coverage they hail it as daring, unique, and responsible for bringing style---for the very first time---to the captive maternity market. This cyclical performance by the news media tends to reinforce a point that cannot be made too strongly about design in maternity wear: it changes so slowly that a glacier positively frolicks across the countryside in comparison. Thus, from 1903 to 1919 there is substantially no change. In that year an advice book for women published an illustration titled the "Expectant Costume." It shows an afternoon costume, really a matinee. The garment has fine pleats from the shoulder to hem of the jacket. The skirt is attached on elastic to the silk underblouse. An adjustable sash of black moire is tied to one side in front. It is suggested that the garment be made of crepe de chine¹⁸ (Plate 50). It is basically Lane Bryant's Number 5 Tea Gown shortened and with a bigger belt and fancier trim on the cuffs and collar, appearing relatively

Plate 50. An artistic costume for pregnancy, 1919.
William S. Sadler and Lena K. Sadler, The Mother
and Her Child (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1919),
p. 23 (photograph, Jack Bailey).



Fig. 2. The "Expectant" Costume

intact after 16 years. The authors tie it even further to the past with the repeated message that the garment should be "artistic" and of "soft shades of brown, blue, wine or dark green," the colors of Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism of 50 years past.

Regardless of how positively Bryant's ad had stated it the fashion for pregnant women to go about as usual, the authors of this book felt the point needed reinforcing.

It should be within the means of every pregnant woman to have a neat, artistic outdoor costume for social, club, and church occasions. For no reason but illness should an expectant mother shut herself up indoors.

True men and true women hold the very highest esteem for the maternal state, and the opinions of all others matters not; so joyfully go forth to the club, social event, concert, or church; and to do so, you must have a well-designed artistic dress.¹⁹

Apparently, the advice was taken to heart. In 1926 another author wrote that an abundance of skillfully designed house dresses, street dresses, evening gowns and sportswear were available to "indulge every taste"; dress at once comfortable, hygienic, and beautiful. It is added that the knit cotton union suit, a favorite of rational dressers, is the ideal undergarment because it will not bind or constrict any portion of the body. The illustration accompanying the text implausibly shows a cloche-hatted, Art Deco lady, approximately ten feet tall and 100 pounds, judging from the child at her side. Mama elegantly holds her fur-trimmed wrap coat shut with one dainty hand. The fantasy caption

underneath reads, "The expectant mother can now buy clothing that is both healthful and stylish."²⁰ However, she confidently minces down a country road with her daughter, unafraid of criticism (Plate 51).

An article a couple of years later shows an even more liberal attitude. Besides advocating pretty clothes, it suggests that pregnancy is the time to start something new and stimulating---an interior decorating correspondence course, French lessons, social dancing lessons.²¹ The Women's Sphere had appreciably widened from ten years earlier when church and club were listed as the appropriate recreations. It had widened immeasurably from the days, not yet too distant, when pregnant women were protected from "stimulation."

In 1931, the economy was grim and so, it seems, was maternity wear. "Inconspicuous dress" is encouraged instead of the lace, ruffles, and pretty colors advocated in the late 1920s. Clothing should be sane, sanitary, and protect the body from the germ-ridden dust and dirt of the street.²²

An excerpt from a book published in 1933 corroborates the suspicion that maternity design was at low ebb along with the economy. "...the pregnant woman should present as pleasing an appearance as possible. This can be accomplished with little cost. Almost any modern house or street dress can be made acceptable."²³

By 1935, things were looking up. Parent's Magazine printed two patterns for "when a baby is coming." One of

the dresses was for daytime. It featured a surplice blouse and wrap skirt. The other dress was a lacy gown to be worn for tea, dinner, bridge, or theater. It came in two versions. In an amusing Victorian note, the women pictured in the sketch illustrating the designs all gaze reflectively at the Tiny Garments they are holding. Their figures are, as always, impossibly slim, so that any expandable features of the garments remained hypothetical, or at least untested²⁴ (Plate 51).

An article printed the next year confirms that dresses had gotten boring, but that they were becoming less so. Florence Bartlett, the author, wrote:

The 'maternity dress' was a happy innovation; for it was comfortable and more becoming, but the design became so standardized it shouted its purpose. Only recently our American designers have recognized the need for really smart clothes for the mother-to-be.²⁵

After the dull hues of the early 1930s, Bartlett advises touches of bright warm winter colors. Three dresses are illustrated. Two are quite close-fitting, but may be worn with a concealing matching jacket. The third dress wraps and has elaborate white collar and cuffs to distract attention. The design idea of furnishing the dress with a focal point that would, hopefully, divert eyes away from the pregnant body's own center of interest seems to have appeared in the mid-1930s. Prior to this time the dresses aimed to clothe the body comfortably and attractively, but didn't

compete with it (Plate 51).

A 1939 Vogue²⁶ shows several new directions in maternity dressing. Six of the eight garments shown have "sheltering" jackets for "invaluable deception." Fabrics suggested are uniformly crisp and unclinging---linen, pique, firm crepes. In contrast, the dresses through the 1920s had recommended soft, clinging fabrics. One of the "sheltered" garments is a swimsuit. It has a raised waistline, full skirt and below-the-knee length coat; a marginally updated turn-of-the-century rig. Regular swimsuits of this time could be quite brief and revealing. This maternity suit looks like what was being recommended for the stout or older woman (refer to Plate 4). So, the appearance of the suit represents a step forward in sanctioned activities, yet, it takes a rather insulting form for any formerly slim, fashion-conscious person.

A Time magazine article from a decade later hammers home this linkage while referring to the Lane Bryant company. "Its chief stock-in-trade is the legitimate offspring of its maternity wear: clothes for fat women."²⁷ Are these legitimate offspring because pregnant women are fat, or because women are fat after they are pregnant, or both? None of the possible conclusions are very flattering from the standpoint of the fashion ideal. It is a stigmatizing attitude, but a prevalent one for most of this century.

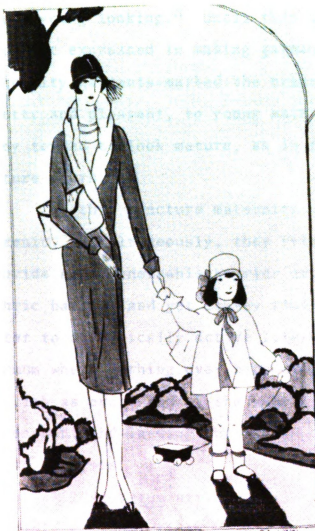
Another 1939 Vogue fashion, an evening gown, provides an additional first. The copy next to this garment declares

Plate 51. An art deco pregnancy, 1926; fitting the form, 1935; distracting attention, 1936.

1926: Redrawn from an illustration in Belle S. Mooney, "A Child is to be Born," Hygeia Vol. 4 (October, 1926), pp. 581-582, 581.

1935: Redrawn from an illustration in Helen Perry Curtis, "When a Baby is Coming," Parent's Magazine Vol. 10 (March, 1935), pp. 32-F, 32.

1936: Redrawn from an illustration in Florence Chase Bartlett, "Dressing for Two," Delineator Vol. 129 (August, 1936), pp. 42-43, 43.



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that the square neck and puffed sleeves make this dress "very young looking." Until this point there had been no interest expressed in making garments "young." After all, maternity garments marked the transition from young wife, pretty and pleasant, to young matron, object of benevolence. They tended to look mature, as in the phrase "a woman of mature years."

At this juncture maternity clothes became schizophrenic. Simultaneously, they tried to reveal and cover; provide an impenetrable barrier around the wearer, a safe fabric barrel, and yet convey fluffy juvenile insouciance; cater to a physically active lifestyle, but one existing in a vacuum where nothing ever becomes disarranged; to be as stylish as ever, and at the same time totally inconspicuous. A constant and lasting tug-of-war developed then between these impulses.

A 1942 Vogue article again shows all of these multiple personalities. The first fashion illustrated is an innovative "country-comfortable" slack suit. It is recommended for around the house. Swimsuits are mentioned as being really glamorous, although none is shown. The drawing at the top of the next page is---a tea gown! It has Cavalier sleeves, shirring at the neckline and a sash tied into a huge, floppy bow; a bustle, in effect, over the abdomen (Plate 52). The concern over absolutely concealing the pregnancy seems to have increased, judging from the

Plate 52. A trendsetting maternity pantsuit and yet another tea gown, 1942. Redrawn from an illustration in Anonymous, "Cool Enough for Two," Vogue Vol. 99 (June 15, 1942), pp. 60, 61.



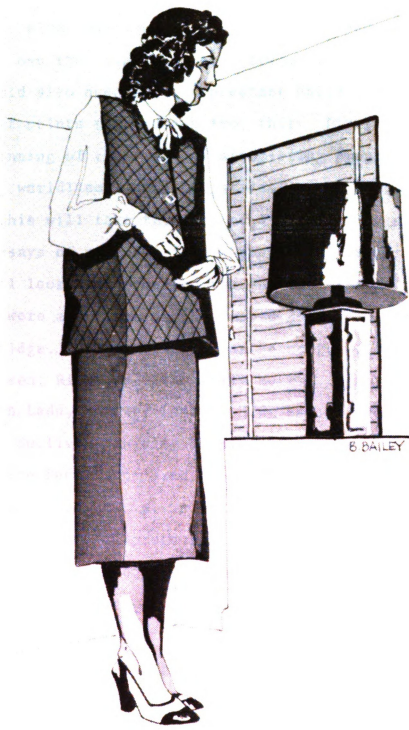
following:

The summer breezes are unfair to pregnant ladies, who can't hide behind muffs or fur coats or anything. Therefore, make sure that all your jackets or redingotes are firmly fastened in front, so the wind can't blow them aside and leave you all undisguised.²⁸

This also points to a recent advance in maternity design, the skirt with a cut-out over the abdomen. This feature, introduced by the Page Boy Company in 1939, made it possible for the skirt to be cut slim because it didn't have to span the hump. The drawback was that the design left no option other than completely covering the stomach with a protective coat, jacket, or blouse (Plate 53). Incidentally, the Page Boy Company followed the typical pattern of "someone-was-pregnant-so-I-designed-for-her-and-now-I'm-a-business-success." This particular company received a lot of press coverage because the women involved, sisters Edna Ravkind and Elsie Frankfort, were very photogenic Texas belles with a flair for publicity and finance. The latter was made palatable, even commendable, in the public's mind since the arena in which they chose to display their unfeminine business instincts was motherhood.²⁹ For all designs, with or without cut-out, stiff fabrics were the rule, even for at-home wear. In the privacy of your dwelling they could take the form of "wild, uninhibited" prints crafted into "peasanty little cotton dresses." This reflects an identification with the sophisticated ones who brought back such things from their sojourns

Plate 53. The 1948 version of the famous Page Boy two-piece costume with the kangaroo skirt, circa 1939, drawn from a photograph in Anonymous, "Fashions, Battle of the Bulge," Time Vol. 52 (September 6, 1948), pp. 80, 82, 80.

This costume is nearly identical to the one designed ten years earlier, in 1939; it's still on the rack in maternity departments today.



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to Honolulu or Acapulco. Indeed, many of Vogue's readers were themselves the sophisticated ones who had discovered on their own that a muu muu made for a 200 pound Hawaiian mama would also accomodate a pregnant haole. There are two important points to be drawn from this. First, this marks the beginning of the trend of associating pregnancy with glamour, worldliness and sophistication. Throughout the decade this will take the form of an increasing number of photo-essays of pregnant famous people, actresses especially, who still look elegant (even though...). The following star mothers were among the names dropped during the 1940s: Kay Aldridge, Lauren Bacall, Joan Bennett, Alice Faye, Mitzi Green, Rita Hayworth, Betty Hutton, Deborah Kerr, Mrs. Alan Ladd, Dorothy Lamour, Hedy Lamarr, Rosalind Russell, Margaret Sullivan, Shirley Temple, Lana Turner, and Loretta Young. The Duchess of Windsor and Mrs. Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy were, of course, in a class by themselves. If they could look wonderful pregnant, then you, too, Mrs. Middle America, could look equally splendid. Unbolt your coat on those 90° days.

The second trend was toward increasing color in maternity clothes. In the late 1930s color was recommended for trim alone. Now, in the mid-1940s whole dresses could be eyestoppers. Although they were intended for private occasions, like the original maternity tea gowns, this, too, would change relatively quickly.

At the same time Vogue also pictured a little puffed-sleeved, aproned Heidi outfit that would have looked better on an 8-year-old (Plate 54). The continuing emphasis on youth may have, in fact, reflected earlier marriage and pregnancies.³⁰ Vogue, during the war years, was full of articles with titles and copy running roughly as follows: "And She's Only Eighteen!" MRS. JOHN SMITH, WIFE OF CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH STATIONED SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE, IS SHOWN HERE DINING AT THE WALDORF ASTORIA WITH FRIENDS. THE SMITHS ARE EXPECTING THEIR FIRST BABY IN JUNE. MRS. SMITH, THE FORMER BITSY MONEYBAGS, IS THE DAUGHTER OF MR. AND MRS. CORNELIUS MONEYBAGS OF NEWPORT AND PALM BEACH. Articles of this sort represent a triple-whammy of youth, sophistication, and wealth. It's no wonder fashions were affected and became less matronly. However, there was no upsurge in pre-teen betrothals, as some of these garments might suggest.

In 1942 people were talking about the "baby boom." For \$20 a very attractive maternity dress could be found. If the budget was more restricted, then making-do was still an alternative. One article suggests putting gussets in the back of dresses with jackets or buying skirts too large, taking them in, then, as necessary, ripping the seams out and adjusting them; both very Victorian, labor intensive concepts.³¹

An article the following year shows that color has come back to maternity dressing. Vogue trills, "with all

Plate 54. Heidi becomes pregnant, 1942. Redrawn from an illustration in Anonymous, "Cool Enough for Two," Vogue Vol. 99 (June 15, 1942), pp. 60-61, 60.



the color you want, very much in current fashion. Here are eight examples---all young, all pretty."³² The pinafore, or jumper, was a fashion innovation, and Vogue showed it in ready-to-wear and also offered readers a pattern for it³³ (Plate 55).

Good Housekeeping Magazine devoted its whole January, 1944, "Fashions" section to maternity clothing.³⁴ The garments in the photographs were modeled by very trim pregnant women, another innovation. But if the title, "You Never Looked Prettier," wasn't enough to clue in the readers, then the first picture showed a lady in a polka dotted dress fussing with a ruffled Tiny Object, a blanket, time-honored Victorian leitmotif. She stands in front of a wall adorned with a picture of an elephant wearing a hat. And, if even that is not enough, the nursery curtains are the same polka-dotted fabric as her dress. She belongs there. She is color-coordinated.

As if regretting this explicitness, the second dress shown takes undisputed honors as the most incredibly bad maternity dress ever created. It goes beyond youthful to infantile masquerading as a blouse and pinafore. Only this isn't a sophisticated Vogue-style jumper, this is a pinafore like the one Dorothy wore in The Wizard of Oz; and Judy Garland looked too old in it at that. The skirt is gathered with candy stripes arranged to meet in a chevron pointing up at the center front. Attached to this, by large, shiny

white buttons, are straps for each shoulder. Attached to each strap is an enormous ruffle. The ruffles are propped up at their perennially jaunty angle by white puffed sleeves. A miniscule Peter Pan collar completes the bodice (Plate 55). Photographs with pregnant live models appear frequently from the mid-1940s forward. In contrast, the drawings in this article and others continue to show an unrealistically attenuated fashion figure. The artists, or editors, just couldn't bear to add a pelvic bulge. There is some canny salesmanship behind this. As drawn, the maternity clothes look just exactly like the other fashions in the magazine. The reader can say to herself, "Now, if I get this, I really won't look any different." It is not truth in advertising, but it probably sold dresses.

It would have been nice to see a photograph illustrating a statement published in 1946. Dee Lowrance wrote, "Nowadays, expectant mothers wear the gamut of fashion. If they want bare midriff bathing suits, slacks or play suits, these are available."³⁵ It is doubtful that a bare-midriff swimsuit has yet been published. However, it's interesting to know they existed in the 1940s.

In 1947 The Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature made "maternity clothes" a separate listing. Previously, references had appeared under a number of headings: Motherhood, Prenatal Care, Clothes, etc. It was a guessing game trying to decide where articles were hidden; euphemistic

Plate 55. Pinafores for pregnancy: the good, the bad, and the ugly; 1943-1944.

1943: Drawn from a photograph by Joffe in Anonymous, "Pinafore While You Wait," Vogue Vol 102 (November 1, 1943), pp. 92, 119, 92.

1944: Drawn from a photograph in Martha Stout (ed.) "Fashions," Good Housekeeping Vol. 118 (January, 1944), pp. 47-51, 48.

The accompanying copy cautions, "...and don't be afraid of ruffles."



E. D. KELLY 1934

titles made it worse. "Maternity Clothes" was a signpost announcing an incorporation of liberalized attitudes. In 1903 Lena Bryant began a business that sent out garments in plain brown wrappers. In 1947 the Page Boy Company staged a style show at the Stork Club in New York City. Maternity clothing had finally become mentionable. As soon as this happened, the topic of what looked best on pregnant women was open for debate. A writer in 1947 suggested that floppy bows and cluttered necklines might not be good design because they made the figure look big everywhere. She thought the pregnant woman should look small where she could. "Paper stiff clothes" are used to cover the problem area.³⁶ This advice shows the very beginning of a transition that may have been made possible by the slim, cut-out skirt. Gradually, the amount of the body that can be shown as slender would increase to the point where the woman is revealed as undeniably pregnant; no paper stiff clothes, no silk shantungs, no weighted jacket bottoms to cloud the line between pregnant and overweight. This will parallel the medical fashion in prenatal care for increasingly restricted weight gain. In both of these ways a stereotypic view of pregnancy, a cultural expectation from the Victorian past equating maternity and a matronly figure, will be abandoned.

A second bit of advice from 1947 was also concerned with figure proportions. Marjorie Marks suggested that as the bottom half of the body got larger, the pregnant woman

might want to sew ruffles into her bra (or wear a life preserver as an undergarment, perhaps?). Needless to say, this particular helpful hint was not repeated.³⁷

Life magazine featured a lovely, pregnant Lauren Bacall in 1948. Said Life, "Mink muffler is worn by Miss Bacall, shown with husband, to further distract eyes from maternal figure."³⁸ Whether the muffler or Humphrey Bogart was intended to be the distractor is ambiguously left up to the reader. The article noted that Bacall "even ventured successfully into shorts," demure Bermudas, and published a picture to prove it. In the world of regular fashion shorts had been popular since the early 1930s.³⁹ The copy stated that Miss Bacall believed that the "figure irregularities" of expectant motherhood should be decorated instead of concealed. This apparently went no further than theory stage. The clothes shown all try very hard to either distract or conceal. However, as a clothing theory it is rather revolutionary; such thoughts were last popular four or five hundred years ago. It will finally be acted upon in the late 1960s.

Two years later, in 1950, playclothes, slacks, and cocktail dresses are all termed "tradition-breaking maternity garments."⁴⁰ The Page Boy Company added shorts to their line in 1949. Maternity shorts had long, full, just-above-the-knee styling; sort of non-elasticized turn-of-the-century gym bloomers. Shorts for the non-pregnant were on their

way to becoming short-shorts.⁴¹ However, this marks the first time that all types of clothing were available as ready-to-wear for the maternity market. The only exception to this is the tee-shirt. This casual male garment was appropriated by women's high fashion around 1948.⁴²

Maternity tee shirts appeared in the 1970s.

A 1952 article shows that dissatisfaction with the cut-out skirt and top, a fresh idea in 1939, is starting to surface. "...an acceptable but blatantly maternal-looking outfit consisting of a box jacket and adjustable skirt" is how Life phrases it.⁴³ The new look in maternity wear is the pyramid or tent jumper. Belted, it is a fair facsimile of Dior's post-War New Look. Unbelted, it is the first dress designed for maternity wear that does not have a waistline high, low, or in the middle. The style gained ground slowly. Four years later in 1956, it is still referred to as a brand new idea in maternity clothes⁴⁴ (Plate 56). The ubiquitous boxy top and slim skirt continued to reign supreme, working toward its 20th anniversary as the queen of maternity clothes.

Clothing had never been stiffer than during the 1950s, perhaps not even in the corsetted 1850s. Fabrics, firm and starchy to begin with, were reinforced and interfaced in every conceivable way.⁴⁵ Pregnant women no longer had to remain in seclusion; they brought it with them like turtles armoured fore and aft.

Plate 56. Dior's "New Look," circa 1947, and the "Tent" for pregnancy, 1952. Dior's "New Look" drawn from a photograph (photograph, Photo Collection Union Grancaise des Arts du Costume).

The Tent: Drawn from a photograph in Anonymous, "Maternity Camouflage," Life Vol. 33 (September 15, 1952), pp. 66-F, 66-67.



Meanwhile, in high fashion in 1957 and 1958, the sack and the trapeze made their respective appearances.⁴⁶ The inspiration for the loose, unbelted sack hit designers Balenciaga and Givenchy simultaneously. Both featured it in their 1957 collections. It was quickly and badly copied. The style nearly died. Then, in 1960 it was revived as the shift, and has been a staple of resorts and beaches ever since. Dior created the trapeze dress in 1958. It flared widely from shoulder to hem, not unlike the unbelted New Look maternity dresses of the early 1950s (Refer to Plates 6 and 56).

Maternity wear designers seemed oblivious to the potential dangers this high fashion trend might hold for them, and kept designing the same old things---until 1963. Then, two events jarred them to attention.

First, stretch fabrics zoomed off the ski slopes and into the lives of middle America to cover more acres of cellulite than anyone previously knew existed. The rear view of the little old lady from Dubuque with her blue hair and pink stretch pants at the super market is one of those unforgettable early 1960s visions that lives on only in memory and somewhere in Florida. Stretch fabrics also filled in the kangaroo cut-out on maternity slacks and skirts quite nicely. The fear of exposure was lessened. Tops could become less opaque and less structured. Clothing no longer had to be refitted and restitched every month or so to maintain an attractive fit: a garment with stretch features

could be worn comfortably to term just like it came from the rack; even a non-maternity garment.

The second event was one that elated and then depressed the maternity industry in melodramatic fashion. Jacqueline Kennedy, the chic, fashionable and altogether queenly wife of the President was pregnant! How was she going to dress? The whole industry held its breath, practically swooning in delighted expectation. Diana Vreeland, Vogue editor and veritable fashion institution herself was so moved by the prospect that she ruminated aloud that if it were possible for women to look chic even though pregnant, maybe they might have more babies.⁴⁷ Who knows, they might even reappear in the pages of Vogue. But Jackie decided to follow Victorian precedent and go into seclusion. And worse, she, like some budget-conscious, thrifty hausfrau, had saved clothes from her last pregnancies. And still worse, she hated tent dresses and two-piece maternity garments. Instead, she liked flare-skirted A-lines and high-waisted empire styles: clothes that "regular" women wore. Jackie didn't need maternity clothes. If she didn't need them, would anyone else want them? Perhaps for this reason, maternity clothes seldom made news for the remainder of the decade.

The year 1970 marked the 20th anniversary of the introduction of the tent. It was time for a new maternity idea. Said Myrna Tarnower, designer for a new maternity

line, "I realized that...maternity fashions...had nothing to do with fashion at all."⁴⁸ The Lady Madonna boutique, a competitor of Tarnower's, opened with a line featuring "soft, even clingy" fabrics. One article published in 1971 about the "new" maternity fashions was illustrated with a drawing of three pregnant girls; one in hot pants, one looking medieval, and the third, a California commune type, in a dress slit high up the side⁴⁹ (Plate 57). The fashion illustration had been reborn after an absence of many years. The women illustrated were ten years younger, obviously pregnant, sexually liberated, and "swinging." The new angle for the maternity market had been discovered. If you've got it, flaunt it! From this point forward the function of some maternity designs was to make the wearer look more pregnant than if she had been wearing a comfortably fitting non-maternity dress. Lady Madonna's star design for fall, 1971, was a long black jersey dress with a circular cut-out over the stomach. A black mesh disk with a bullseye snapped into the cut-out for evening wear.⁵⁰

During the 1940s youthfulness and glamour had been key selling points. With the post-war baby boom and rising birthrate this had been lost in an overwhelming tide of dirty diapers, midnight feedings, and general fatigue. But, with the renewed interest in youth in the 1970s, although they characteristically thought they were emphasizing it for the first time ever, glamour also made a comeback. Firms

vied for celebrity customers. Paula Prentiss, Mia Farrow, Diana Ross, Mrs. Dustin Hoffman, Julie Nixon Eisenhower, and Judy Carter were all named as modeling the products of this or that company. Doctor's advice in clothing, which had always been conservative, became anachronistic. Dr. Arthur Gorbach earnestly advised readers in 1972 not to use garters for their stockings. They could constrict circulation and lead to varicose veins.⁵¹ This was standard advice, and had been since the 19th Century. Dr. Gorbach was opposed to those round, tan, efficient bands of elastic sometimes worn by older ladies. The last time they were seen was in a 1963 junior high study hall. The substitute teacher unwisely bent over with her back to the class, revealing a set of those garters, the top of her stocking, vast expanses of soft fleshy thigh, and thereby lost control of the group for the remainder of the period. Where Dr. Gorbach thought swinging 1970s chicks would obtain such garters is a mystery. Why they would want to is even more obscure.

But, even with the new extroverted solution for maternity clothes, a problem remained: what to do with the professional working woman. Harem pants were strictly for after five. A prescriptive clothing selection book published in 1961 hints through omission that something is wrong. Pregnant women are divided into three categories according to wardrobe inventory. First there is the "suggested wardrobe" which comes with additional garments if one is

active socially or in the community. Second, there is a wardrobe for those employed outside the home, but not active socially or in the community. Finally, there is the wardrobe for those of limited budget---one all-purpose outfit. The ranking is based on social class and economics: white collar, blue collar, or poverty level. The white collar female worker does not have a niche.⁵²

Mademoiselle offered a solution in 1974 when it printed a personal report by their Beauty Editor. The accompanying article show that Mary Berg's wardrobe of husband's shirts and cruise-to-the-tropics peasant tops would only work in artsy working circles.⁵³ Besides, the shirts look like the one Lauren Bacall borrowed from Bogey in 1948 to wear over her shorts; only with the starch missing---nothing new, and definitely not a solution. The same year Ms. magazine grouched that working women had it the worst. Only top price maternity clothes had any style; cheap clothes were childlike.⁵⁴ The latter, incidentally, marks again the slow, enduring nature of maternity design. The super-young Vogue designs of the early 1940s had taken a slow, 30-year escalator ride down to the budget department.

Ebony featured a maternity business pant suit the following year⁵⁵ (Plate 57). It seemed as if the garment had to break very firmly with tradition; have pants instead of a skirt to separate the working middle class woman from the club-woman of previous decades. A Lady Madonna brochure from

the same time period⁵⁶ shows several sophisticated designs. For 50 or 60 dollars apiece, minus the illustrated blouse or sweater, they could be yours. Multiply that price times a five-day week, throw in a spare or two, put shirts under all the jumpers, and it becomes evident that it would have been more cost-effective for many women to quit their jobs and hide at home than pay for this type of professional wardrobe.

Business Week reported in 1978 that half of all pregnant women between the ages of 26 and 34 were working. In contrast, not more than 20 percent of the average maternity customer, aged 18 to 24, five years earlier, had worked.⁵⁷ This brought home to retailers that their buyers were older, employed, and had more money to spend. Not only that, they were willing to spend up to 100 percent more than the "traditional" customer. Such conservative mass-marketers as Sears and J. C. Penney, whose sales account for half of all maternity goods, realized their lines were not very tailored or sophisticated, and were not meeting the needs of the working woman. The trend to employed pregnancy was given official recognition in 1979 when the U.S. Navy and Air Force introduced maternity uniforms. Time magazine quoted Rear Admiral James R. Hogg as saying, "the people in the Navy look on motherhood as being compatible with being a woman."⁵⁸ Amusing as Hogg's governmental doublespeak may seem initially, the real message conveyed is that having a career and being a

mother are not mutually exclusive occupations. It had taken well over a century to achieve such recognition.

In the mid-and late-1970s fashion came to the rescue of the pregnant career woman with nothing to wear. Baggy fashions were worn by everyone. No separate wardrobe was needed (Plate 57). The irony is that at a time when regular fashion amply met the needs of the pregnant woman, the maternity marketers were gearing up for a baby boomlet and increased sales.⁵⁹ The concept behind the tradition-breaking tea gowns for expectant mothers of 1903---pregnant women require separate clothing---has become so culturally indoctrinated that women automatically head for the maternity department, even though they don't need to. Myrna Tarnower of Mater's Market offers the following insight.

...there are some common characteristics in today's pregnant woman. She's generally older, between 30 and 40, in my observation. She's researched the whole process thoroughly and is really excited about this baby. She's planned well.⁶⁰

Apparently, part of planning well and being really excited is buying a new maternity wardrobe to announce the fact. This is a continuation and refinement of the early 1970s' "new idea" of having maternity clothes make the woman look more pregnant. Then, it seems to have been rooted in sexual liberation. In 1980, it was a badge of achievement announcing something that has been carefully budgeted for in inflationary times. A review of maternity clothes in 1980 shows clothes for any activity, including tennis and jogging⁶¹

Plate 57. Maternity dressing in the 1970s: swinging clothes, business pant suit, non-maternity baggy fashions.

Swinging Clothes: Redrawn from an illustration in Anonymous, "Big Mama Goes Couture," McCalls Vol. 99 (November, 1971), p. 33; and drawn from photographs in Anonymous, "Bellies are Beautiful," Time Vol. 97 (May 31, 1971), p. 58.

Business Pant Suit: Drawn from a photograph in Anonymous, "Happy clothes for the 'Lady in Waiting,'" Ebony Vol. 30 (June, 1975), pp. 120-F, p. 121.

Non-Maternity Baggy Fashions: Dress purchased by the author in 1977.

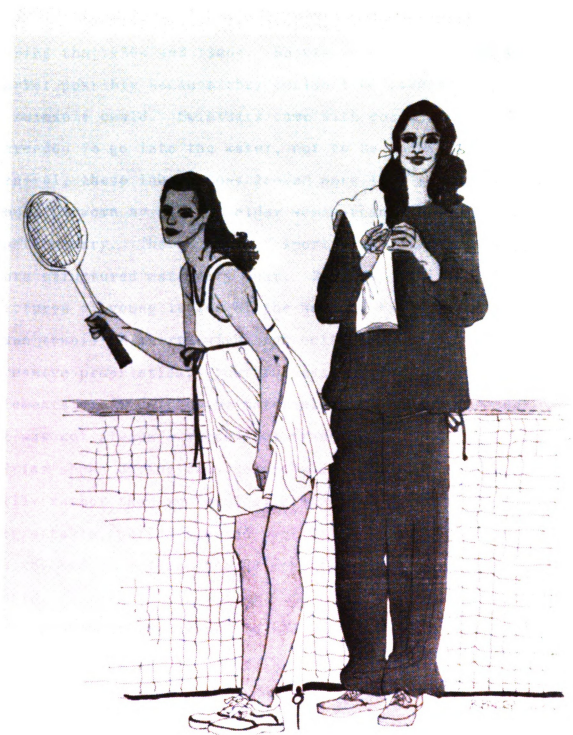




(Plate 58). Maternity clothes could now claim the diversity that had been shown just past the turn of the century in regular women's wear. Yet, McCall's chose to illustrate a February, 1980, article with a photograph recalling Victorian days.⁶² A young woman sits in a claw-footed Classic Revival chair. Her white Greek gown falls in soft gathers from a high waistline. Her left hand rests on the chair arm, wedding band clearly visible. Clearly, she is a lady-in-waiting, but she waits a little less languidly than her Victorian counterpart, the young matron.

In summary, maternity clothes have gone through several transformations since they were introduced at the turn of the century. The first dresses differed little from other dresses of the day. They aimed to be pretty in private and inconspicuous in public. Clothes became drab in the 1930s along with finances. Until the late 1930s maternity clothes were manufactured in the sheer, clinging fabrics used in regular women's wear. Beginning around 1939 only stiff, crisp fabrics are recommended for prenatal wardrobes. This will reach its ultimate, starchy expression in the 1950s. In 1970 new designs suggest that clinging fabrics may be acceptable. Also new in the 1930s was the idea of distracting the viewer's eyes from the pregnancy to some less embarrassing location on the body through outsize design features. This ploy will be unfailingly used until 1970 when some unconventional designers made the belly the focal point.

Plate 58. 1980: Maternity clothes for everywhere.
Drawn from photographs in Lady Madonna Maternity
Boutique, "I Feel Terrific," Spring/Summer (1979).



Maternity swimsuits, slacks, and shorts appeared during the 1930s and 1940s. Shorts were the last on the market possibly because they couldn't be covered up like a swimsuit could. Swimsuits came with coats and were neither intended to go into the water, nor to be uncovered. In general, these innovations looked more like something that would be worn by a stout older woman than a non-pregnant contemporary. The arrival of sportswear coincided with more structured maternity wear. In a way, this recalls pictures of young ladies of the Naughty Nineties playing lawn tennis in shirts with high collars and long skirts to preserve proprieties. Youthfulness and glamour were new elements grafted into the maternal image during the 1940s. It was not always a successful transplant. The juvenile styles shown during this decade made their wearers look silly rather than youthful or glamorous. However, these regrettable, puffed-sleeved confections found a lasting place in the budget market, that elephants' graveyard of the fashion world.

The cut-out skirt, introduced in 1939, ushered in a two-decade reign of maternity tops and skirts. They prevailed until the early 1960s when Jackie Kennedy expressed dislike for them. They have never totally disappeared. The tent dress became popular in the early and mid-1950s. At first glance it appears to predate Dior's trapeze design of 1958. Actually, it is a tardy, unbelted adaptation of the same

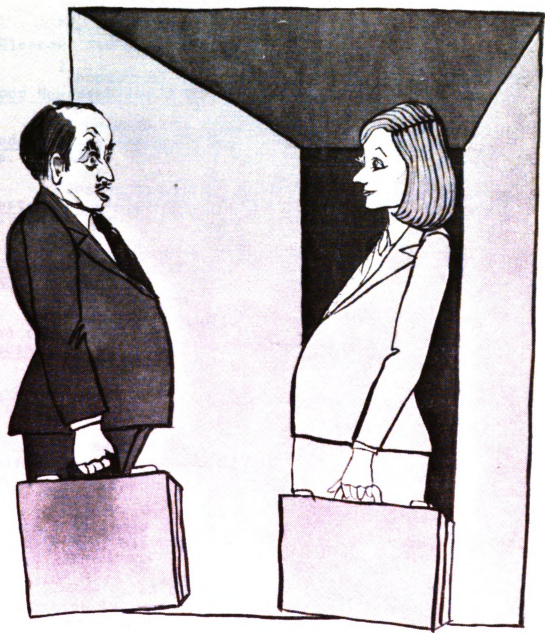
couturier's New Look of a decade earlier. The 1960s provided little innovation in maternity wear. With the ready availability of new birth control methods during that time, perhaps women were more interested in preventing pregnancy than dressing well for it.

The first half of the 1970s introduced sexy, self-conscious maternity wear to the public. By the mid-1970s women were beginning to complain that they could play all day but not work in the clothes being marketed. With the prospect of making more money from professional than casual clothes, manufacturers said they would rise to the challenge. How successful they have been is still open for debate.

The future of maternity wear is also in question. At the current time it coincides with an era where loose-fitting, non-structured garments are a fashion alternative, precluding the need for separate maternity styles. However, habit may keep women marching to the maternity department, or fashion may once again take on forms necessitating special clothing for pregnant women. The pre-eminence of the business suit as the most correct style for the professional woman points in that direction. Unfortunately, the tailored outlines are thought no more suitable for pregnant women now than they were when women first borrowed the suit from men 100 years ago. If anything can be characterized as the villain in the story of maternity wear, it is this suit. Instead of broadening the Women's Sphere, in this suit women left it

altogether for the seductively greener sphere of men. To paraphrase the first Lane Bryant ad, feel as other men feel, because you look as other men look. The suit provides no hint of accomodation other than the tailored skirt that replaces the tailored trousers. It serves as a palpable barrier to pregnant women who want to be in both worlds, or believe there should only be one (Plate 59).

Plate 59. Bad form, Ms. Jones.



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⁵Erving Goffman, Stigma: Notes On The Management of Spoiled Identity (Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 7.

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⁸G. Stanley Hall, "Some Agents of the Early Sense of Self," American Journal of Psychology Vol. 9 (1897-1898), pp. 351-395.

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¹⁰Mary Green Klaasen, Self Esteem and its Relationship to Clothing (M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1967).

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¹⁴Anonymous, "Cut Paper Patterns," Harper's Bazar Vol. 33 (July 7, 1900), pp. 425-426.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 1645.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 1833-1834.

¹⁷As requoted in Tom Mahoney, "Maternity Mart---The Story of Lane Bryant," Reader's Digest Vol. 57 (November 1950), pp. 99-101, p. 100.

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²⁰Belle S. Mooney, "A Child Is To Be Born," Hygeia Vol. 4 #10 (October 1926), pp. 581-582, 581.

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²⁶Anonymous, "For Mothers of Tomorrow," Vogue Vol. 93 (June 15, 1939), pp. 78-80.

²⁷Anonymous, "For the Pregnant and Plump," Time Vol. 49 (February 10, 1947), pp. 84-F.

²⁸Anonymous, "Cool Enough for Two," Vogue Vol. 99 (June 15, 1942), pp. 60-61, 60.

²⁹The most thorough coverage of the Page Boy saga is in Lois Rich-McCoy, Millionairess (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), pp. 96-126, "A Pregnant Pattern."

³⁰An article about the Lane Bryant Company published in 1944 noted that customers ranged from 17 to 40, but the majority were the 19 to 23-year-old wives of servicemen. Although this is no doubt based on sales clerks' impressions, it is helpful in gauging the perceived market. Sue Dolson Hildegard, "What the Well-Dressed Stork Will Wear," Woman's Home Companion Vol. 71 (May 1944), p. 35F.

³¹Beulah France, "Are You Participating in the Baby Boom?" American Home Vol. 28 (August 1942), pp. 44-45.

³²Anonymous, "Baby Talk," Vogue Vol. 102 (November 1, 1943), pp. 90-91, 90.

³³Ibid., p. 92F.

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³⁵Dee Lowrance, "Wardrobe for Waiting," Collier's Vol. 118 (July 13, 1946), pp. 20F, 20.

³⁶Alice S. Morris, "Dressing for Two," Vogue Vol. 109 (June 15, 1947), pp. 76-F.

³⁷Marjorie F. Marks, "Streamlined Motherhood," Hygeia Vol. 25 (August 1947), pp. 624-625.

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³⁹Betty Thornley Stuart, "In Short," Collier's Vol. 93 (February 24, 1934), pp. 20F.

⁴⁰Helen Worden, "Maternity Can Be Chic, My Dear," Collier's Vol. 125 (March 25, 1950), pp. 26-F.

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⁴²Anonymous, "T-Shirts," Life Vol. 24 (June 7, 1948), pp. 103F.

Anonymous, "T-Shirts," Life Vol. 31 (July 16, 1951), pp. 73-74F.

⁴³Anonymous, "Maternity Camouflage," Life Vol. 33 (September 15, 1952), pp. 66F.

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⁴⁵Elizabeth Ramsay, "When You Make a Maternity Dress," Good Housekeeping Vol. 132 (January 1951), p. 150.

⁴⁶Alice Lessing, Rheid Bruer, and Erma Stimson, Sixty Years of Fashion (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1963), pp. 4-5.

⁴⁷Anonymous, "Chic Though Pregnant," Business Week May 4, 1963, p. 32.

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⁴⁸Gerri Hirshey, "Maternity a la Mode," Family Circle, August 5, 1980, p. 2.

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CONCLUSION

A comparison of the phases evident in medical advice and practice from 1850 to 1980 and the purposes of maternity clothing during that same time period show surprising congruity. From 1850 to 1870 prenatal care was practically nonexistent. So were maternity clothes. Between 1870 and 1930 medical science tried to protect the pregnant woman from inadequate diet and injurious activities. The result was a somewhat restricted lifestyle. Clothing during this time also tried to perform healthful, germ-protecting functions. It was engineered to avoid constriction of any part of the body. Generally, hygienic design in clothing was based on rational dress reforms of decades earlier. Artistic elements of maternity dress originated in feminine, Aesthetic fashions. Pregnant women did not have the range of garments available to other women. Sportswear was a significant omission, reflecting conservative recommendations on exercise. From 1930 to 1970 prenatal advice repeated and refined ideas. Diet and allowable weight gain became progressively more limited. Concurrently, sports activities of all sorts became acceptable. In clothing, concealment of pregnancy by camouflaging any compromising outlines was increasingly important. Garments appropriate for most sporting events became available.

Medicine and fashion tried to gain stricter control over appearances, while relaxing control over activities. Nineteen seventy brought a cessation of this tension in both fields. Medical opinion on weight gain and diet became more moderate. The efficacy of letting nature take its course received official support for normal pregnancies. Maternity clothes approximated regular women's wear more closely than they ever had. Thus, the situation in 1980 was that neither watchful medical attention nor maternity clothes were "needed" by the majority of pregnant women as they had been in the past.

Women, however, will undoubtedly continue to take preventative prenatal trips to their obstetricians, just like they will continue wearing maternity clothes. Both have become culturally ingrained psychological comforts, current socially correct things to do, for the middle class women in America today. Whether this is ultimately the proper course of action, right or wrong, is much more a question of proprieties and custom than medicine; it has been so from the beginnings in the mid-19th Century when women's reproductive processes were included in the realm of professional medical care and women began to question the boundaries of the Women's Sphere. From that time forward health care advice for pregnancy has been burdened with many culturally-accepted stereotypes and over-generalizations, a product of the limited fund of scientific knowledge in the last century combined

with a vast store of prejudices. Maternity clothing, too, has been slow to shed its origins. There have been only two basic design ideas since its inception, circa 1903: the two-piece outfit and the all-encompassing one-piece dress. The rapprochement of socially-accepted activities for women and those allowed during pregnancy, and of the diversity of styles, including body-revealing ones, available to non-pregnant versus pregnant women has only recently been accomplished. One could not occur without the other; but, which is cause and which effect would be difficult to establish. In the final analysis, it was changing attitudes, changing fashions in pregnancy, not great leaps forward in empirically gained information, that made both possible.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Books Surveyed for Mention of Pregnancy
or Maternity Wear

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*This is the only book that has "maternity dress" as an index entry.

APPENDIX B

Costume Historians and Negative Reactions
to a Pregnant-Appearing SilhouetteIntroduction

As noted on Page 4 of Chapter 1, a selected group of costume historians nearly unanimously omitted references to pregnancy or maternity garments. This omission seemed too ubiquitous to be an oversight. The following informal survey was undertaken to help reveal the authors' attitude toward a fashion silhouette that simulated pregnancy, women's dress in Western Europe during the late 15th Century. The time under consideration is roughly the last third of that century, when the "pregnant" silhouette seemed to be most flamboyant. The dress was belted high under a tight-fitting bodice. The skirt was generally cartridge-pleated at a raised waistline. Skirt trailing on the ground behind, the wearer gathered the sumptuous fabric up in front to a manageable walking length and rested it on top of the pad on her abdomen (Plate 5).

J. C. Flugel, early 20th Century investigator into the psychology of clothes, wrote the following about clothing of the Renaissance:

There was, indeed, no false modesty about that period; the codpiece worn by men for no less than 50 years is perhaps the most audacious piece of clothing that has ever been invented, while the women

Plate 5. Fifteenth Century Dress. Redrawn from drawings by Hans Holbein published in James Laver, Concise History of Fashion and Costume (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1969), pp. 32-33.



followed suit by endeavoring to produce the appearance of being always pregnant.¹

Methods

The costume books studied were not consistent in their divisions of history, and since the Renaissance came to parts of Europe at different times, women's garments with the same fashion characteristics might be found attributed 30 to 40 years on either side of the selected period. Since the interest was in how the author dealt with the garment and posture, precise dates were relatively unimportant as long as the book's accompanying illustrations verified the costume as the same.

The publication dates of the books sampled ranged from 1923 to 1975. Five authors were published in England, the remaining 21 in the United States. Nine of the books were written by women.

Terms used to describe the appearance of the skirts of women's dresses were noted and then classified. The classifications ranged from no descriptors---in effect, complete omission---to stating that the skirt made the wearer look pregnant. It was also noted if the author specified that the look was fashionable or stylish. Therefore, even if the author had been very sloppy or negligent in describing the costume accurately, if they then remarked on the "fashionability" of the style, this was interpreted to mean that the author could accept

the silhouette as praiseworthy. Descriptive categories were as follows: (1) skirt full and/or long; (2) skirt gathered up with hands or girdle; (3) pads used on abdomen; (4) protruding stomach; (5) appear pregnant; (6) other (unclassifiable comments that were one of a kind and not apt to be repeated---ever!); (7) fashionability; (8) no descriptors.

An attempt was made to categorize the explanations the authors gave for the cause and effects of adoption of the late 15th Century fashion. Here the gamut was from purely physical description to psychological interpretation. Categories were: (1) long skirt influenced posture; (2) maximize female silhouette, differentiate from male; (3) desire to look pregnant; (4) no explanation (See Table 1).

Results

Neither country of publication nor sex of the author seemed to affect the types of descriptors used.

Fourteen of the 22 references described the skirt style as full or long. In eight texts this was the only descriptor. This leaves the reader with very little idea of what the costume was really like. The other "neutral" descriptor, that the skirt was gathered in the hands or by a girdle, was used intermittently, six times in all.

Of the remaining descriptors, it seems like there

TABLE 1: RENAISSANCE DRESS DESCRIPTIONS
IN HISTORY OF COSTUME BOOKS

Publication Dates	Country of Publication	Author Sex	Descriptors of Skirts ^a	Causes of Silhouette ^b
1923	U.S.	M	other ^c	fem/male
1926	U.S.	F	pad, other ^d	
1928	U.S.	M	full	
1938	U.S.	F	full, gather	
1939	England	F	gather	skirt
1943	U.S.	F	full, protrude, other ^e	
1948	U.S.	F	full	
1952	U.S.	M	full	
1954	U.S.	F	full, gather, other ^f	
1956	U.S.	M	full, gather	
1958	U.S.	M	full, other ^g	
1965	England	F	full	
1965	U.S.	F	full	
1966	England	F	<u>pregnant</u>	pregnant
1966	U.S.	M	<u>pad, protrude</u>	fem/male
1967	U.S.	F	full	
1968	U.S.	M	protrude, pregnant	pregnant
1968	England	F	<u>full, gather, protrude</u>	skirt
1969	England	M	full	
1970	U.S.	F	<u>gather, pad, protrude</u>	
1970	U.S.	F,F	full	
1975	U.S.	M,F	<u>pad, protrude</u>	

^aDescriptors of skirts:

Category	Abbreviation
A. skirt full and/or long.....	full
B. skirt gathered up with hands or girdle.....	gather
C. pads used on abdomen.....	pad
D. protruding stomach.....	protrude
E. appear pregnant.....	pregnant
F. other.....	other
G. fashionability.....	descriptors underlined
I. no descriptors	

^bCauses of silhouette:

Category	Abbreviation
A. long skirt influenced posture	
B. maximize female silhouette, differentiate from male	
C. desire to look pregnant	
I. no explanation	

^c"very imaginative accentuation instead of concealment of the form of the body."²

^d"a strange fashion started of giving abnormal development to the front of the figure by means of skirt draperies and a small cushion."⁵

^e"the fact that the ladies' skirts were too long in front caused them to perfect a typical posture, an extreme slouch with the stomach thrust out."⁴

^f[the skirt was so long] "that the wearer developed a peculiar kind of walk."⁵

^g"an exaggerated fullness over the abdomen."⁶

is a barrier removed somewhere between 1958 and 1966 that allows their use. "Pad" is used in 1926, but accompanied by the information that it is a "strange fashion...giving abnormal development to the front" of the body. The pad's specific location is left to the imagination. In 1943, the stomach is "thrust out" to keep the skirt from dragging; an active movement on the part of the wearer not apt to be mistaken for pregnancy in the reader's mind. Three other authors before 1966 gave the peculiar descriptions noted in Table 1. In all, five of the 13 authors from 1923 through 1965 given rather evasive explanations of the silhouette, and none give a description that is self-sufficient without an illustration. This might have been glossed over as merely poor writing if the trend had continued through all books studied; it did not.

Nine authors were included who published between 1966 and 1975. Two said the 15th Century woman looked pregnant. Five of the nine noted that the stomach protruded. Three said that pads were used. Also of importance, six of the nine commented on the stylishness of the costume; no one did in the earlier group.

Of all books studied, only six tried to explain what caused the fashion; why it was worn and looked like it did. Two authors said that it was due to a desire to make the wearer look pregnant. Both of these appeared after 1965.

Lawrence Langner, writing in 1959, provides a partial answer to why the findings are like they are:

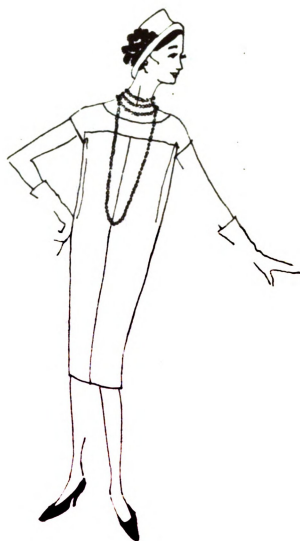
Down through the ages women have felt inferior because of their bulging bodies and have sought to hide their pregnancy...

For many years, maternity clothing manufacturers specialized in making maternity clothes the main object of which was to hide the appearance of pregnancy for as long as possible....As with the women in Botticelli's paintings, pregnancy has taken on a new form of beauty which, during the season of 1957-1958, was briefly expressed in bulging clothing.⁷

Although it would seem that Mr. Langner has less than complete appreciation for "bulging bodies" and "bulging clothing," he does point out that a loose-fitting silhouette was briefly fashionable for all women.

Many factors made the pregnant form increasingly acceptable to American society, but the appearance of the high fashion trapeze and sack in the late 1950s in the midst of a baby boom in the United States must have helped a great deal (Plate 6). At least, those very fashion-conscious people, costume historians, found that a 15th Century skirt that simulated pregnancy could be accurately described after the advent of the trapeze and all those post-war babies, but not before.

Plate 6. The Trapeze and Sack, circa 1957, 1958.
Redrawn from illustrations in Alice Lessing, Rhead
Breur and Erma Stimson, Sixty Years of Fashion
(New York: Fairchild Publications, 1963), pp. 4-5.



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Appendix B

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- ⁵Carolyn G. Bradley, Western World Costume (New York: Appleton-Century Books, Inc., 1954), p. 136.
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APPENDIX C

Thesis Research on Maternity Clothing

The following research has been completed relating maternity clothing to other factors. There is no continuity of problems within this body of literature. Therefore, the information has been placed in chronological order.

Moomaw (1947)¹ attempted to develop some material to be used in selecting maternity under and outer clothing. Limiting factors were seen as physiological needs of pregnancy and availability of suitable clothing. Moomaw hoped that helpful information would become more available to the consumer. There were no federal or state extension publications on maternity clothing at that time.

Kleh (1954)² studied buying practices in relation to maternity wardrobes. She found there was strong interest in personal appearance among pregnant women. The activities of the women in her study, in decreasing order of participation, were home entertaining, church, clubs, movies, swimming, P.T.A., and dancing. Gainful occupation, previous pregnancies, and ability to sew were reputed as having little or no effect on the content or cost of the wardrobe. This seems rather implausible.

Groseclose (1958)³ reviewed the clothing needs and problems of pregnant women through an inventory of types

and numbers of garments owned by subjects, the source of the garments, and costs. It was determined that most garments, except for coats and jackets, were borrowed. She judged the effectiveness of the garments according to comfort, ease of care, adaptability and long-range use. Groseclose also designed experimental garments, basically variations on styles popular at the time.

Daniels (1965)⁴ studied consumer self-awareness of pregnant women regarding maternity wear. She administered a questionnaire to a small group of subjects to ascertain influential and limiting factors in selection of a specific garment. As a group, her subjects ranked comfort (feel and fit) as the most important consideration. However, respondents experiencing their first pregnancy ranked aesthetic factors above comfort. Garment attractiveness was cited as the factor which made the women feel most self-confident. Seventy-three percent of her subjects said they would not attend an event if they didn't have a becoming garment. Since comfort was what they paid for, this probably meant they did stay home occasionally. In a market survey of maternity departments, Daniels found such little girl Easter dress colors as navy and white, pastel yellow and blue, and most popular of all, pink.

Wilson's (1968)⁵ work was strongly influenced by the popularity of Freudian psychology during the 1960s. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this work, this resulted in the belief that to attain the mature feminine role the woman must

sublimate competitive "male" tendencies. The most feminine woman would be most submissive. The renunciation aspect of this process is clearly shown in a lengthy book summary on prenatal care included by Ms. Wilson on page 33. Rosamond Kaufman, author of Checklist for Expectant Mothers (1964), suggests that gravida put away bright dresses; fancy things requiring special care; frivolous hats, jewelry, belts and gloves; fancy underwear, robes and nightgowns; and any clothing that calls attention to the figure. In their place, the pregnant woman should don tailored underwear and night-clothes, sturdy shoes, and two or three "roomy" outfits. It is really quite a vicious list, indicative of an equally intolerant, repressive attitude. It is also a clear product of Victorianism. No staid matron of the 1800s had to cope with a duller wardrobe.

Wilson reported that expressed attitudes toward maternity wear and toward pregnancy were interdependent. The causal agent was not identified. Women who wore maternity garments early in pregnancy in her study expressed more positive attitudes toward the pregnancy than those who wore them later. Quantity of maternity garments also reflected attitudes. Those with fewer than ten garments did not have positive attitudes. However, examination of her questionnaire indicates that many of the questions were strongly biased in support of a Freudian feminine role as the only one showing acceptance of pregnancy. Question 41, for example, states: "I feel more

attractive than usual since I became pregnant." Response choices are yes; yes, in general; uncertain; no, in general; and no. This leaves no option for the woman who is quite sure that she is exactly as attractive as she has always been, no less, no more. The responses pre-suppose the subjects should be going through a change process. If they aren't, it is indicative of pregnancy rejection.

Other portions of the questionnaire seem less value-laden. It is of interest that 95 percent of her respondents reported staying home from activities because their clothing was not suitable. Seventy-two percent reported real difficulty in finding attractive clothes. Her subjects' ambivalent feelings showed when 88 percent of them felt that maternity clothing should conceal pregnancy, yet 95 percent also believed that maternity wear should not try to distract attention from the abdomen.

Wilson reported that few women in her sample had changed their "normal routine of living" due to pregnancy. However, a brief review of her data shows that in fact over half of the working women within the group were no longer employed.

Rivard (1972)⁶ examined factors influencing use of maternity clothes other than necessity due to physical size. She found that career-oriented women wore maternity clothing later. Family-oriented women wore them sooner. Several questions on the questionnaire she administered were ambiguous.

Subjects were supposed to respond to the following questions by marking a Likert-type scale: "A pregnant woman can dress as fashionably as other women"; "I do not enjoy wearing maternity clothes."

Obviously, the respondent might mark such questions negatively because she felt maternity clothes were poorly designed and too costly. Yet she might still have perfectly positive feelings toward her own pregnancy and body image.

Dowdeswell (1972)⁷ sought insight into the function of clothing in adjustive behavior based on the values pregnant women sought to reinforce. She found a significant rank order of inferred clothing values among all subjects, with physical comfort ranked highest and social values ranked lowest. Psychic comfort was ranked second among women in the third trimester. This is somewhat misleading without the explanation that she defined comfort in two ways: (a) physical---seeking well-being of body through clothing; and (b) psychic---seeking well-being of mind through clothing. Social use of clothing was also given two meanings: (a) acceptance---seeking membership with others through elothings; and (b) recognition---seeking leadership of others through clothing.

The historical role of maternity clothes in the fashion world has been linked much more closely in reference to "comfort" than "social use," as defined by Dowdeswell. She did not classify modesty and conformity as values because she felt them to be situationally linked and not consistent and

stable through time. This is a serious oversight. Through history, major goals of maternity clothing have been modesty and conformity. Because of its temporary nature, pregnancy is apt to be a time of continual "situational experiences" not before encountered.

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Appendix C

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