



The Story of Lingerie

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Preface

*L*ingerie is very directly and strongly linked to a women's intimacy. For centuries, men have always believed that lingerie was created with the objective of seduction. There is no question that this aim exists. However, by choosing to put on pretty, seductive underwear, all women develop a slightly self-centred, even narcissistic, behaviour and attitude. In fact, lingerie contributes to a woman's sense of ease with her body and, in this way, she accepts and loves her body better, becoming more confident and showing real assurance. The reason for this is very simple. Surprisingly, even though nobody can see her underwear, it really accentuates a woman's figure and can sometimes shape her body to satisfaction.

Lingerie has too often been treated as an element of seduction. Men themselves created this phenomenon: a woman clad only in her underwear seems infinitely more sensual and sexual than a woman entirely in the nude. One could associate underwear with high heels. The latter have an effect on how a woman walks, making her more attractive, seductive and provocative. When combined with stockings, high heels have a certain charge, and an undeniable fetishist quality, as much for women as for men.

The perception and appreciation of the female form has undergone many radical changes. We could compare, for example, our early 21st century perception, to the 1960s and 1970s. In the sixties, when a woman got married, and even more so when she became a mother, her body was no longer meant to be seductive. Today this attitude is completely outdated and obsolete. In fact, women feel the need to be attractive at all ages, both before and after marriage, and even during their later years. This can be illustrated by the fact that, these days, a grandmother can be a beautiful woman and wish to dress to her best advantage in alluring underwear which enhances her figure. This revolution in customs concerning underwear is linked directly to innovation and technical considerations in the design of undergarments, and is subject to historical events. The history of lingerie deserves to be studied here. Lingerie, as opposed to the world of fashion, is a state of mind. A woman can love lingerie and wish to enhance her figure from the age of 15 to 75! Ready-to-wear fashion is a completely different universe from that of underwear. Clothes are always aimed at a distinct age group: fashion for a 15 year old girl is different from that of a woman of 30. Underwear, meanwhile, is much more a question of attitude and how a woman feels: a larger woman can be happy with her body, accepting herself as she is, and wish to enhance her figure with beautiful underwear. So lingerie should meet all aspirations and suit every kind of woman. As a designer, my work is focused in this direction. In order to design underwear which satisfies many types of woman, I like to observe those around me: my daughter, my assistants and women whom I encounter in the street. I can also be inspired by behaviour I have noticed in films.

Page 4.

Corset by Axforde.

Page 6.

Chantal Thomass, ensemble in white lace.

Autumn/Winter 2001-2002 Collection.

Apart from my entourage, which plays an important role in suggesting new pieces to me, materials also inspire my designs. Textiles are essential. Since lingerie is closest to the female body and in intimate contact, the fabric and lace have to be soft, but this is not the only criterion. Today lingerie has to be comfortable and practical. In fact, although only 30 years ago French women (as opposed to Americans, for example) did not baulk at wearing and hand-washing very fragile undergarments, often lace-trimmed, sometimes needing ironing, today this would no longer be acceptable. Lingerie must be able to withstand machine -washing, be non-iron, and combine comfort (essential) and beauty in each piece. We cannot overlook the development of different textiles in the design and manufacture of underwear. Going beyond materials, colour also plays an important part in lingerie. Black and white are always extremely flattering to the skin. Black (more particularly) can also diminish the defects that we all have. Warm colours (pink, red, raspberry) also help enhance the figure. On the other hand, lingerie in cool colours is harder to work with. Green and blue are beautiful, but are too often reminiscent of swimwear.

Lingerie should be associated with pleasure for a woman. The element of seduction remains, especially with certain undergarments: some of them are fascinating and inevitably inspire attraction. Stockings and suspenders make a woman extremely attractive, even bewitching. Bustiers, waspies and brassieres can be worn under a transparent shirt. The effect of this is bound to be equivocal, ambivalent and extremely fascinating when seen by others, and very flattering for the woman dressed this way.

I can distinguish two types of lingerie. On the one hand, the underwear that one wants to show off (particularly waspies, suspenders and stockings) and on the other hand, underwear just for the woman herself. This last category should be nice to look at but also comfortable. With regard to tights, for example, I particularly like to make attractive, lovely tights so that they can be worn everyday and so that they can maintain, in spite of what they are, an air of seduction when they are removed in the presence of one's lover.

The essence and attitude of lingerie is all in suggestion. Three terms can be applied to lingerie today: elegance, seduction and comfort. These three ideas have to be combined when designing underwear, and any vulgarity has to be ruled out. To avoid this, underwear has to be humorous and fresh.

The world of lingerie affects everybody: women, who are wearing this underwear, as well as men, who believe women were wearing it merely to seduce them. The story of lingerie, as well as its history, deserves some attention.

Chantal Thomass



Introduction

There are already a considerable number of works that have been written on women's underwear. So why produce another one? The idea of this book is to share several facts: on the one hand, the attraction of underwear, the mystery which surrounds it and the fantasies it evokes, and on the other hand, the function of underwear and how it reveals the conditions of women, the development of its place in society and its status regarding men.

Even the term underwear itself brings to mind its function: being underneath, and therefore hidden. There can be numerous types: shaping underwear, revealing underwear, enticing, provocative, prudish or erotic underwear. Women's underwear is erotic without a doubt. From Grecian times to the most modern micro fibre bras, women's underwear has been sensually charged, as much for the woman wearing it as for the man (or woman) who removes it. What is the reason for this amazing power of seduction? The fact that underwear is hidden? And rarely revealed? Perhaps because it is in intimate touch with a woman's body? However, eroticism is not the only matter of interest in women's underwear.

During the development of western clothing, lingerie and corsetry have had a fundamental role. It allows one to structure one's shape, modify the figure and change following the flights of fashion. Underwear itself follows constantly changes with the latest fashion. It is designed using shapes, materials and colours which correspond to the tastes of the time: even if we can say that women's underwear is created in the image of fashion, it is not actually that simple, and shapes, types of undergarments, and the choice of materials and colours very often have a social context.

A woman wears underwear that varies according to her circumstances. From the beginning to the end of her life a woman experiences physical change and changes in her social status, and her underwear reflects this.

It becomes emblematic of the times and of each woman's role in her society and class. In addition to this, throughout life, daily activities require different underwear, such as for sport, a day's work or the evening. The most tantalising underwear is, of course, for love.

Sophisticated underwear with the purpose of seduction had, and continues to have, a symbolic role in western Judeo-Christian society. Whether idolised or demonised, women's underwear symbolises taboos and sexual prohibitions lead to numerous fantasies, erotic ideas and even to fetishism.

Underlying the existence of these fashion objects and erotic dreams is the world of business and industry, whose origins go back in history to linen maids, corset makers and hosiers. The sale and distribution of women's underwear is a well-organised and rapidly expanding machine, dealing with such diverse retailers as chic lingerie outlets, mail-order catalogues and sex shops, where every woman can find what she desires. Advertising is aimed at attracting both men and women with lace, satin and embroidery modelled on voluptuous models.

The world of women's underwear, whether hidden or on display, is a rich one. Underwear was originally designed for hygienic reasons and to enhance intimate parts of a woman's body, but it is now aimed at much more than provoking desire. In particular, during its development over the years, it has shown the progressive liberation of the female body as well as her position in patriarchal western society.

So let us enter this lace-trimmed history whose aim is to inform and titillate the reader. Our studies were based on bibliographical research, but the work does not refer to scientists or experts. The aim of the book is to please and charm the reader.



*Underwear
and fashion*



Lingerie, corsetry and hosiery

Underwear is varied and prolific, whether it is hidden or displayed, discreet or provocative. There are three usual ways to classify this multitude of garments: lingerie, corsetry and hosiery.

Lingerie's main role is that of hygiene. It is positioned between the body and clothes, and it protects the body from outerwear made of less comfortable textiles while it protects the clothes from bodily secretions. Because of this, it is generally made from healthy materials which have varied according to the times. In this way lingerie is really about feminine intimacy and hygiene. In fact, the first linen that was in contact with the female body was used for menstrual flow and is the precursor of our sanitary towels.¹

The term body linen is also used for lingerie. We use this term to talk about certain undergarments such as petticoats, chemises, bloomers, long johns, briefs, vests and slippers.

In families of modest means, or in wartime, certain undergarments have been made from worn out household linen, often old sheets. Materials used for body linen are similar to those used for household linen. Comfort is the first thing they have in common, with cotton being the most popular, as it is soft, light and hygienic. Other materials of all types of luxury are used to make lingerie: linen, silk, relatively light synthetic weaving, such as cloth, satin, jersey, lawn, muslin, percale or net. Sometimes these fabrics are embellished with ornamentation and, very often, with provocative decoration. Because lingerie is not limited to a protective role, it is also an elegant part of clothing. We often see lingerie "coming out on top" as it is revealed or is completely displayed for reasons of seduction, fashion or provocation. It also presents frivolous ornamentations such as lace, embroidery and ribbons. Depending on who is wearing it, colours can vary according to the age, social position, taste, or the effect required by fashion of the wearer. But it is rarely completely revealed as it is associated with nudity, as can be seen in Georges Feydeau's play *Mais n'te promène donc pas toute nue!* ("You are surely not going out completely naked!") where Ventroux takes his wife Clarisse to task when their son sees her in her chemise. "We can see through that like tracing paper!" he says but she, in turn replies that wearing one's daytime chemise is not like being naked.² This episode shows that a woman feels that lingerie covers her while for a man it draws attention to the nudity beneath.

Because of its contact with the skin and its closeness to the female form, lingerie has always been the object of male fantasy, a fact which is judiciously played upon by woman and their lingerie. Catching a glimpse of petticoat frill in the 18th century, as in the 19th century, had an impact on the observer's imagination in the same way that detecting panties or a G-string under a girl's jeans would have today. Lingerie has an erotic charge because it is the closest clothing to the private female form.

Corsetry also plays a part in the world of seduction. This garment is to clothing what a framework is to a building. But this framework is applied to an existing foundation; the female body. The role of corsetry is to shape the body and to impose a fashionable silhouette upon it.



Page 14.

Yaël Landman, ensemble. Autumn/Winter 2003.

Page 16.

Iron pair of stays, first half of the 17th century.
Leloir Fund, Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 2002.2.X.

Page 17.

Nicolas-André Monsiau, *The Lace*, 1796. Engraving,
vignette for the works of Rousseau. 21 x 14 cm.
Maciet Collection, Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

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Page 18 – top.

Body with whalebone, 18th century.

Fabric decorated with flowers.

Leloir Fund, Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 1920.1.1856.

Page 18 – bottom.

Corset. Pink silk, backed with linen, stiffened with whalebone and trimmed with pink silk ribbons. England, c. 1660-70, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Page 19 – top.

Box "The Mexican Corset", 1869.

Musée de la Bonneterie, Troyes.

Page 19 – bottom.

Box "The Mexican Corset", 1869.

Musée de la Bonneterie, Troyes.







Pieces of corsetry were used to transform the three main parts of the body: the waist, bust and hips. The new silhouette was constructed around these three points. In *Les Dessous à travers les âges* (“*Underwear throughout the ages*”), Armand Silvestre describes a “good corset” in the following terms: “the top must be sufficiently widely cut to support the breasts without crushing them, the armholes should be well-formed; the lining of the fabric should be fine, well-inserted and flexible [...] finally, it should follow the lower body and finish on the hips at a firm point of arrival and follow the natural direction of the woman’s side”³. Corsetry enhanced the body’s curves and moulded it into new lines. It made the bust round, uplifted, curvaceous or flattened; the waist could be larger or smaller, non-existent or well-defined; hips could seem slimmer or wider. Corsetry dictated the shapes of fashion and often worked against nature. While lingerie revealed a woman’s private world, corsetry was made to create illusion. Corsetry was what made the woman wearing a certain dress fashionable.

The term ‘corsetry’ includes undergarments such as stays, corsets, girdles, waspies, bustiers, farthingales, panniers and crinolines*.

Corsetry was made of internal bones which compress and control the body. These bones were made from sturdy materials such as whalebone, cane, horsehair, steel and elastic fibres. Originally this underwear was meant to be worn over clothes, then over lingerie, so it would be less obvious that it was made out of more sophisticated fabrics than those used for lingerie. Sometimes pieces of corsetry were matched to the clothing or to certain types of lingerie, such as a petticoat.

In this way one can see that corsetry was more fashionable and followed trends because it is visible (in the Middle Ages particularly, corsetry was worn over the dress) and especially because it moulds the figure.

Because of this, corsetry has been criticised to a much greater extent than lingerie. The supporters of corsetry saw in it a symbol of female morality – a woman’s body being maintained and reflecting her upright behaviour. Doctors, hygienists, and later, feminists, have accused designers and manufacturers of wanting to confine the female body inside a structure which is far from natural and that can damage the body. In spite of this criticism, women have accepted and put up with boning since, for them, it was simply a question of fashion: it was a way of disguising figure faults. The female body has long been considered weak, and extra support was considered necessary. 1932 *Vogue* testified: “Women’s abdominal muscles are notoriously weak and even hard exercise doesn’t keep your figure from spreading if you don’t give it some support”⁴.

In fact, corsetry is a woman’s major ally (if she can bear a little suffering) as it allows her to hide any bad points and accentuate her good points! This is the case of Caroline, Honoré de Balzac’s *Petites Misères de la vie conjugales* (“*The Small Miseries of Married Life*”), who wears her “most deceptive corset”⁵. Finally, like all lingerie, corsetry carried a significant erotic charge, as it accentuates the most emblematic aspects of the female body.

We would not have covered everything if we failed to mention hosiery here. This third family consists of the manufacture, industry and sale of clothing of knitted fabrics including stockings, socks and certain items of lingerie such as briefs or vests. Hosiery is characterised by the weaving technique which is employed when using materials such as wool, cotton, silk, nylon and today, micro fibre.

Hosiery completes the lingerie-corsetry family and has benefited from great technical advances as a result of improvements in trade and the industrialisation of the sector.

Today, the distinction between lingerie, corsetry and hosiery is rarely made as there is often an overlap between the various different domains (underwired bras, support tights, support briefs). The underwear which we wear today is the result of the development of these three families. Their hygienic, supportive and aesthetic qualities interlink in 21st century underwear.



Page 20.

Corset in red satin, yellow leather and whalebone, with a steel hour-glass form, 1883.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Page 21.

Black and white silk slip, muslin stockings with silk and lace. Commercial catalogue, Grands Magasins du Louvre, Paris, Summer 1907.



Page 22 – left.

Combinations. White cotton with Bedfordshire Maltese lace trimming, red sateen corset and steel wire bustle. England, c. 1883-1895, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Page 22 – right.

Underwear. Cotton chemise, whalebone corset of blue silk; crinoline spring steel hoop-frame covered with horsehair, with a braided horsehair frill. England and France, c. 1860-1869, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Page 23.

Corset by Axforde.





How underwear began to allow the silhouette evolve

Each era develops its own aesthetic idea that replaces the previous one. Underwear plays a fundamental role in creating a fashionable silhouette. Changing shape is based on integral points in clothing: shoulders, waist, bust and hips.

In ancient times, a draped form covered the body and outlined one's figure. This was the case in Egypt where underwear did not exist and the body was naked under the tunic. Slaves, dancers and musicians were entirely naked, which marked the difference in status between themselves and their masters who wore translucent tunics. Even though an open tradition existed in classical and Hellenistic Greece concerning clothing and draping, the female form was disguised with straps that flattened the bust and hips. The figure was ruled by androgyny⁶. Hellenistic women appeared completely draped and their femininity disappeared under the panels of their robes. Roman civilisation also fought against curves. In an exclusively male world where women had no role, they were forbidden from showing any specific body characteristics. Certain doctors even proposed treatment to prevent the bust developing too much: Dioscoride⁷ advised applying powdered Naxos stone to the breasts; Pline⁸ suggested scissor-grinder's mud, and Ovid⁹ recommended a poultice of white bread soaked in milk. There is no evidence that these magic potions were effective, but their existence does show a certain disdain for curves and soft shapes as well as a desire to disguise the female form.

In the Middle Ages the figure was slim although the waist was beginning to be defined. During the 14th and 15th centuries it was important to be slender. This was helped by adjusted underwear and, in particular, a surcoat which flattened the breasts, accentuated the curve of the hip and showed off the belly. The end of the Middle Ages was marked by the great Plague epidemics and a round belly and visible belly button were appreciated as a mark of fertility and a sign of promise for a depopulated Europe. The English poet John Gower (1325-1403) mentions this taste for women with a prominent belly in these terms: "Hee seeth hir shape forthwith all / Hir body round, hir middle small."¹⁰

The strict confinement obtained with interior boning which compresses and rules the body is in opposition to these supple clothes of olden times is.

European 16th century clothing is marked by a certain uprightiness influenced by Spain. The farthingale was a garment which was designed to make skirts more voluminous. It was adopted in England in 1550 and it became all the rage in 1590. In Spain, it did not disappear until 1625. The farthingale gave volume to the hips, accentuated the belly and demarcated the curve of the body. Underneath, women wore bloomers which were sometimes "deceptive" (padded) that shaped thighs and buttocks and increased the volume of skirts. The bust was shaped like a funnel, held rigidly by the basque which compressed the waist and opened up towards the shoulders.

In the 17th century, the female bust regained its round shape and was accentuated by stays up to the top of the torso tightly laced to the waist. Around 1670, the bust lengthened as the stays reached further up the front and the back of the waist. In the 18th century stays were worn very early by young girls and they reached even higher up the back. At the end of the 18th century certain women cheated by reverting to false breasts hidden in their stays.

The 18th century saw a definitive end to the farthingale when the fashion for flowing dresses arrived. Panniers shaped the skirts, following rapidly evolving trends. The panniers of 1718 were quite



Page 24.

Albert Wyndham, *The Corset*, c. 1925.

Silver print, 23.6 x 17.5 cm. Private collection.

Page 25.

François Gérard, *Portrait of Juliette Récamier*, 1805.

Oil on canvas, 225 x 148 cm. Musée Carnavalet, Paris.





rounded, and became oval around 1725, remaining this way until 1730. Later, they took on a multitude of forms including the elbow pannier which stretched out a long way to the sides. After 1740, each side of the skirt had a pair of small panniers which gave it a flattened shape from the front and back but a very wide aspect from the front. At the end of the 18th century, panniers were replaced by the bustle worn behind and which improved or enhanced existing curves. From 1770 onwards, there was some contemporary criticism of stays, including from Jean-Jacques Rousseau who advocated a return to simplicity and nature. Other critics, such as Bonnaud in the 1770s *La Dégradation de l'espèce humaine par l'usage du corps à baleine* ("The Degradation of the Human Race by the Use of Stays"), launched real medical and educational "crusades". Nothing could be done: a small waist, large skirt and generous bust remained the flavour of the day. Nevertheless, fashion evolved towards a return of the slim figure, and the pannier gave way to the bustle which, in turn, gradually disappeared. The result of this revolution was a new slender fashion. It started in France, introduced by the "Merveilleuses" ("The Marvels") like M^{me} Récamier and M^{me} Tallien. This long, straight silhouette conquered England following the emigration of Rose Bertin after the French Revolution. With the return of the Greek tunic, the first fashion *revival* in history was recorded. The silhouette was long and straight with a high bust. But this did not mean that underwear disappeared for those who were not built like fashion plates. In 1800 the corset was still necessary to disguise too ample curves: the best-known corset makers were Lacroix and Furet. During the first Empire, the fashion for widely spaced breasts was launched by Louis Hippolyte Leroy and made corset-wearing indispensable. The "Ninon" was padded to give opulence to the body and reached to the waist. It marked a return to the voluptuous and fertile womanhood desired by

Page 26.

Felipe de Llano, *Infante Isabelle Claire Eugénie*, 1584.
Oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Page 27 – left.

The Flagellation of the Initiated and the Dancer,
2nd-beginning of the 1st century BC. Fresco, Villa of
Mysteries, Pompeii.

Page 27 – right.

Picture from the Royal Throne of Tutankhamen representing
the young pharaoh and his wife in a translucent tunic, 18th
dynasty, 1350-1340 BC. Wood, gold, coloured glass,
semi-precious stones. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.







Page 28.

Woman's underwear. Fine linen shift; red silk corset with damask and side hoops, pink striped linen. England, Mid 18th century, c. 1770-1780 and 1778, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Page 29.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Swing*, 1766.

Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm. Wallace Collection, London.

Empire politics. The “divorce corset”, which separated the breasts, appeared in 1816 and followed the trend for wide-apart breasts. The waist returned to its natural place. A romantic woman would have her waist defined by a laced corset; she would wear a flared skirt in a wide bell shape which was supported by a crinoline, and she would have boned, bouffant sleeves. Drop shoulders accentuated by low inserted armholes were popular. The crinoline was really a large bell shape, rounded at the bottom and slightly curved at the back. After 1860 the back became much longer and gave the impression of a large corolla. But after 1868, as a reaction to these excesses, the crinoline was reduced to a simple cone which only appeared behind the costume. Around 1865-1870, silhouettes became less voluminous: the “Parisian bustle” accentuated the curve of the body and allowed the folds of the skirt to be trained behind. The front was very flat due to high corsets restraining the bust. These cramped the waist and gave the figure an hourglass shape. This gave birth to great debates concerning the benefits and disadvantages of corsets¹¹ which in turn led to a far-reaching debate on the injustice of the female condition. Some protagonists, such as Amalia Bloomer (an American journalist), attempted to introduce practical clothing made up of a short tunic worn over trousers, but it was judged to be ridiculous. Female clothing continued to accentuate curves. In the 1880s the front of the silhouette became more and more visible due to corsets with long metallic stiffeners that flattened the belly and



compressed the breasts and hips. The woman of 1880-1905 underwent physical distortion to achieve an “S”-shaped figure. Her chest was pushed out in front while hips and buttocks were pushed out behind. The bust was low, full and with no division between the breasts which made them very obvious, an effect sometimes accentuated by false breasts made of chamois leather, quilted satin or rubber. The Parisian bustle lifted the buttocks and accentuated the curve of the hip. This new curvy silhouette is reflected in Art Nouveau lines.

In the face of this new, sinuous silhouette, new forms of corsets revealing the thorax made their appearance, like those designed by Doctor Franz Glénard and M^{me} Gaches-Sarraute (a corset-maker with a medical background). They supported the abdomen without compressing it and let the chest and diaphragm breathe. This idea was continued by the appearance of Anglo-Saxon anti-corset leagues that aimed at making clothing more practical. Eventually, the authorities in several countries opposed the use of the corset.¹² This fight against the corset (restricting women’s bodies had long been associated with maintaining tradition) was echoed in the English Suffragette movement that campaigned to give women more rights.

The “S” line was less popular after 1907 and simpler silhouettes took over. Figures took on a more Empire shape with high waists, flattened busts and narrow hips, making a woman look like a tube. This

Page 30.

Distribution of panniers from around the world by Mie Margot, in the Paris area, 1735. Engraving, 11.5 x 14 cm. Maciet Collection, Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

Page 31.

Charles Vernier, *Too much and too little*. Print, Charivari, 1855. Musée Galliera, Paris.

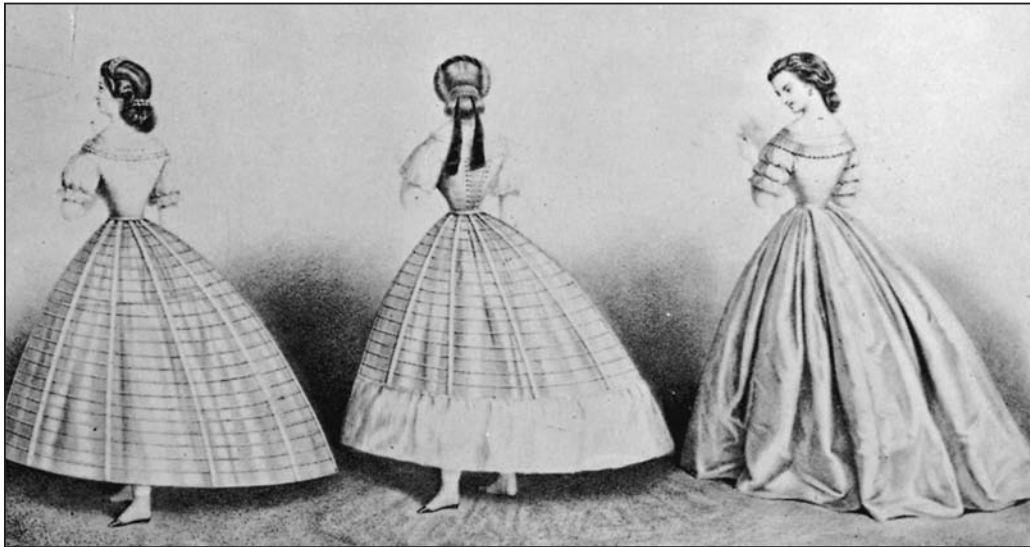


m^{rs}. Martinet 172, r. Rivoli et 41, r. Vivienne.

Lith. Pestouches 26, r. Paradis P^{is} Paris.

UTILITE DE LA CRINOLINE

— C'est ça, ç'a garantis tes filles moi, je me charge de ton chapeau et de ta robe, ça m'a coûté assez cher !...



new fashion marked the end of lacing in order to reduce the waist, but it needed the hips and buttocks to be flattened and thus necessitated wearing a corset low on the hips with a flat, rigid front. The bust was shaped due to the invention of the brassiere (bra)¹³. Slenderness was still all the rage, as confirmed by *Vogue* in 1922: “the pursuit of slimness is one of the chief labours of the modern woman”¹⁴. This liberty of the body was encouraged in shows in which the artists’ bodies performed freely on stage. These shows were very popular and included the Russian Ballet which performed at the Châtelet Theatre in Paris in 1909 and the performances of the dancer Isadora Duncan. The fashion designers Paul Poiret, Madeleine Vionnet and Nicole Groult were aware of these developments and helped suppress sinuous figure shapes. These innovations were taking place at the same time as the new craze for Latin-American dances (such as the Tango and the Charleston) that required freedom of body movement. In addition, the emergence of the middle class with its demand for more functional dress for the purpose of work contributed to simpler shapes. The First World War simplified these shapes even more and ruled out volume.

Nevertheless, only the intrepid and the slimmest abandoned the corset: as for the others, their use of the garment was reduced and indiscernible. Women wore dresses which reached to the knee and did not accentuate bust or waist. In the 1920s, there was no question of having a full bust. Like the Romans, women wore bodices or long bras with no relief which flattened the breasts.

At the end of the decade, curves began to return: the bust was defined and accentuated and had to be supported by boning. Kestos, for example, launched the new idea of the bra as a non-restrictive control garment, because any corsetry that was still worn had to be less restrictive. The human anatomy was beginning to be understood better and corsetry started to follow the natural lines of the body. In Australia, the house of Berlei ordered the first anthropometrical study which was carried out by two Sydney University professors and which defined five types of women showing differing morphology.

Warner made innovations in cup measurements with the sizes A, B, C and D. The “Garçonne” (“Tomboy”) became fashionable at the beginning of the 1930s. Manufacturers tried to respect the diversity of figures by offering a large choice of sizes. The pre-Second World War high bust appeared in 1939 supported by bras and corsets with round and pointed cups. After 1935, padded cups were introduced to enhance small busts and three years later the underwired bra gave the bust more curves. The small waist also made a comeback assisted by the girdle. The woman of 1940 was thin but with rounded hips and a pointed, curvy bust. She had help from a new type of bra with overstitched cups and often reinforced cones. During the 1940s the bust rose with the fashion of the pullover which clung to the torso. In order to have a small waist and flat belly, the waspie was introduced by Marcel Rochas.



Page 33 – top left.

The Thomson American Gage, 1862. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Exhibition Room of Prints, Oa 20, Paris.

Page 33 – top right.

Underskirt with bustle, 1857. “Le Parisien”. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Exhibition Room of Prints, Oa 20, Paris.

Page 33 – bottom.

Farthingale Slip, 1863. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Exhibition Room of Prints, Oa 20.



Page 34.

Crinoline Petticoat, c. 1865. White cotton, wicker frame.

Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 003.75.X.

Page 35.

Underskirt with bustle (also called "crayfish tail"),

1875-80. White stitched cotton.

Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 2003.73.X.



GRANDS MAGASINS DU LOUVRE



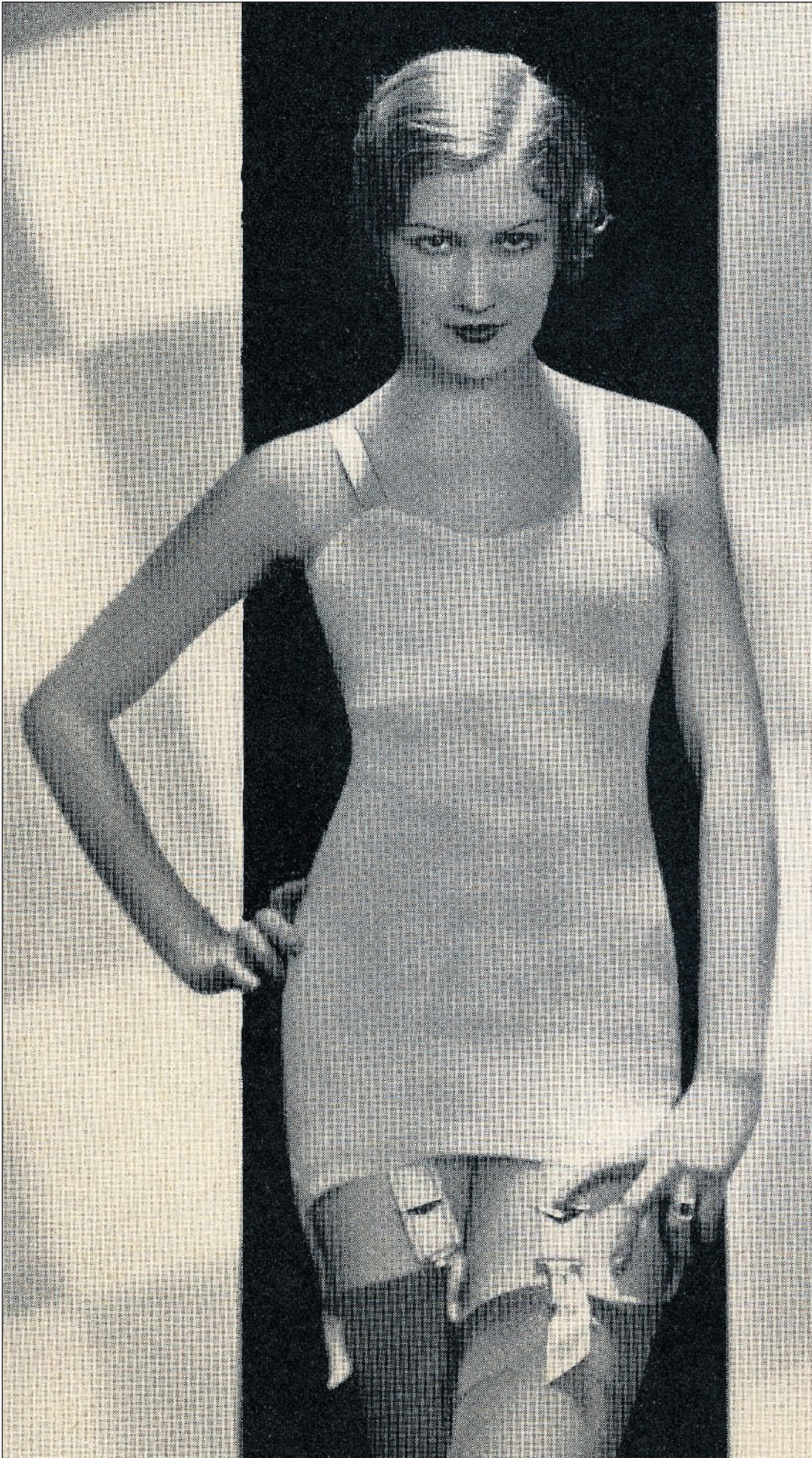
Figurine déposée
Grands Magasins du Louvre.

TOURNURES ET CORSETS

Fig. 603 — **TOURNURE** en nansouk, forme très-élégante, pour robes demi-longues, ornée de trois volants et garnie au bas de deux riches broderies. 33 et 36 fr.

Fig. 604. — **JUPON-TRAINE** indispensable pour robes longues, double jupe à cinq volants; garni de deux broderies très-riches. 49 fr.
Le même, garni de dentelle 39 fr.
Longueur 1m devant, 1m50 derrière.

AVIS TRÈS IMPORTANT. — Afin d'éviter des erreurs ou des retards, nous prions les Dames de vouloir bien mentionner sur leurs commandes : **Comptoir des Tournures et Corsets.**



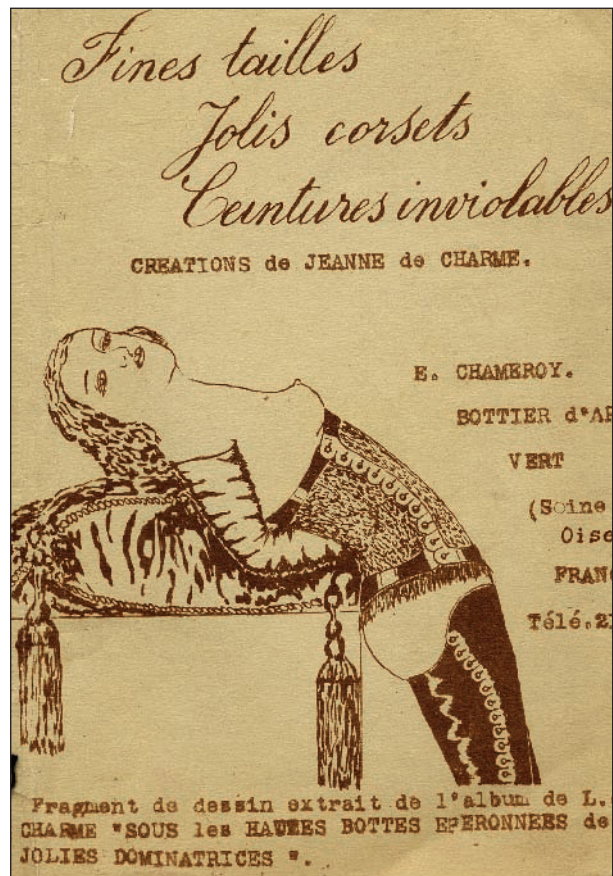
Page 36.

Bustles and Corsets. Illustration from the Winter Fashion album. Commercial catalogues of the Grands Magasins du Louvre, 1876-1877. Musée Galliera, Paris.

Page 37.

Roussel girdle model no. 860, especially designed to reduce the hips and bust.





This was the “New Look” - a silhouette created by Christian Dior in 1947, with full skirts, wasp-waist and a full bust. At the beginning of the 1950s, the figure lengthened, the breasts were high up, the bust was smaller and a flat stomach was accentuated. Corsetry and padding were necessary. Journalists wrote about the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise as well as good corsetry. In 1950 the bust was oversized following the fashion for “zeppelin” or very full breasts and was obtained by wearing an overstitched bra. The image was popularised by actresses such as Anita Ekberg, Gina Lollobrigida, Sophia Loren, Jane Mansfield, Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell. Manufacturers such as Marcel Carlier, Carles Krafft, Jessos, Scandale and Star designed underwired corsetry to enhance the “flower woman”.

In the 1960s the female form followed the changes of the day by being liberated. The fashion was for gamine breasts, narrow hips and extreme slenderness. This glorification of youth was only generalised after 1965 when André Courrèges’ collection showed androgynous shapes and modern woman at ease with her body. Underwear, particularly briefs, followed the line of the body. As a result of the liberation movements of 1968 and Women’s Libbers who burnt their bras, at the end of the 1960s, breasts were emancipated under form-hugging sweaters and Indian tunics: complex underwear sets gave way to almost nothing. The fashion was for leggy, small-breasted women like Jane Birkin or the model Twiggy. After the hippie trend, fashion became more sophisticated and feminine again. There was an obsession with slimming and body-toning to enhance firmness. Gym and aerobics were in vogue. 1980s women exchanged briefs, girdles and corsets for weight-training and hunger. Support came from the inside: women created their own corsets. At the same time breasts became ample and firm. This fashion for a small waist, toned buttocks and ample bust gave a feminine shape that called for underwired bras for those “under endowed by nature”. At the end of the 20th century an ambiguous silhouette began to appear. It was extremely tall and slim, with narrow hips but a generous bust. It can be summed up as a woman who is simultaneously gamine and sensual, an effect which is hard to reproduce and which implies measures from draconian diets to padded bras, if not cosmetic surgery.

Page 38.

Bra shown at the Decorative Arts Exhibition in 1925.
Embroidered feather, lace, cotton cloth and silk satin.
Don Andreeff, Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 1947.49.1.

Page 39.

Front cover of *Jeanne de Charme*, c. 1935.
17 x 12.6 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Page 40.

Damart nightie, feminine underwear.

Page 41.

Wonderbra advertisement.







From Ancient Greece to modern woman: what have they been wearing under their clothes?

*S*ince the ancient Greek and Roman empires, women have been clad in piles of underwear under their clothes. Many garments were used to shape the body as well as to ward off amorous approaches. So let us undress them!

Hellenistic Greek women (1st century BC) were hardly naked under their robes. Once a woman's robe was removed, her body was still draped in a linen tunic. Under this tunic she was wrapped in straps to control her shape: apodesme to support and control the bust, mastodeton which was a narrow red ribbon which encircled the bust for young girls and zona which pulled in and flattened the belly.

Roman women, in turn, were drowned in their underwear. The first undergarment was the cingulum which held back, a dress panel. Once the dress was held back a garter was displayed above the knee. It was completely useless as Roman women did not wear stockings. Nevertheless it was pretty and this garter, which was sometimes decorated with a jewel, was purely for seductive purposes. Under the dress, women wore a knee-length tunic. Under this tunic the woman's body was enveloped in the cestus bodice from below the breasts to the groin. Her hips were bound with zona and thus obliterated. Her chest was held in with bands: taenia or facsia for young girls and for women with fuller figures the leather breast-flattening bra was used. The most common garment, however, was the strophium, a scarf which covered the breasts and supported them without crushing them. Some women wore the sublicatum, which was originally designed for acrobats and actresses and which consisted of a sarong with one panel knotted around the waist and the other between the thighs.

We know there were types of underwear which resembled our present-day briefs and bras, as they are depicted in frescoes and mosaics on Roman villas. The best-known of these is the Sicilian mosaic of the Piazza Armerina (3rd and 4th century). It seems that these pieces of fabric were destined for sports. Nevertheless, these surprising undergarments and the sublicatum marked the end of open clothing. In Rome, the growing popularity of underwear contributed to the removal of shape. At the same time women were removed from the political arena.

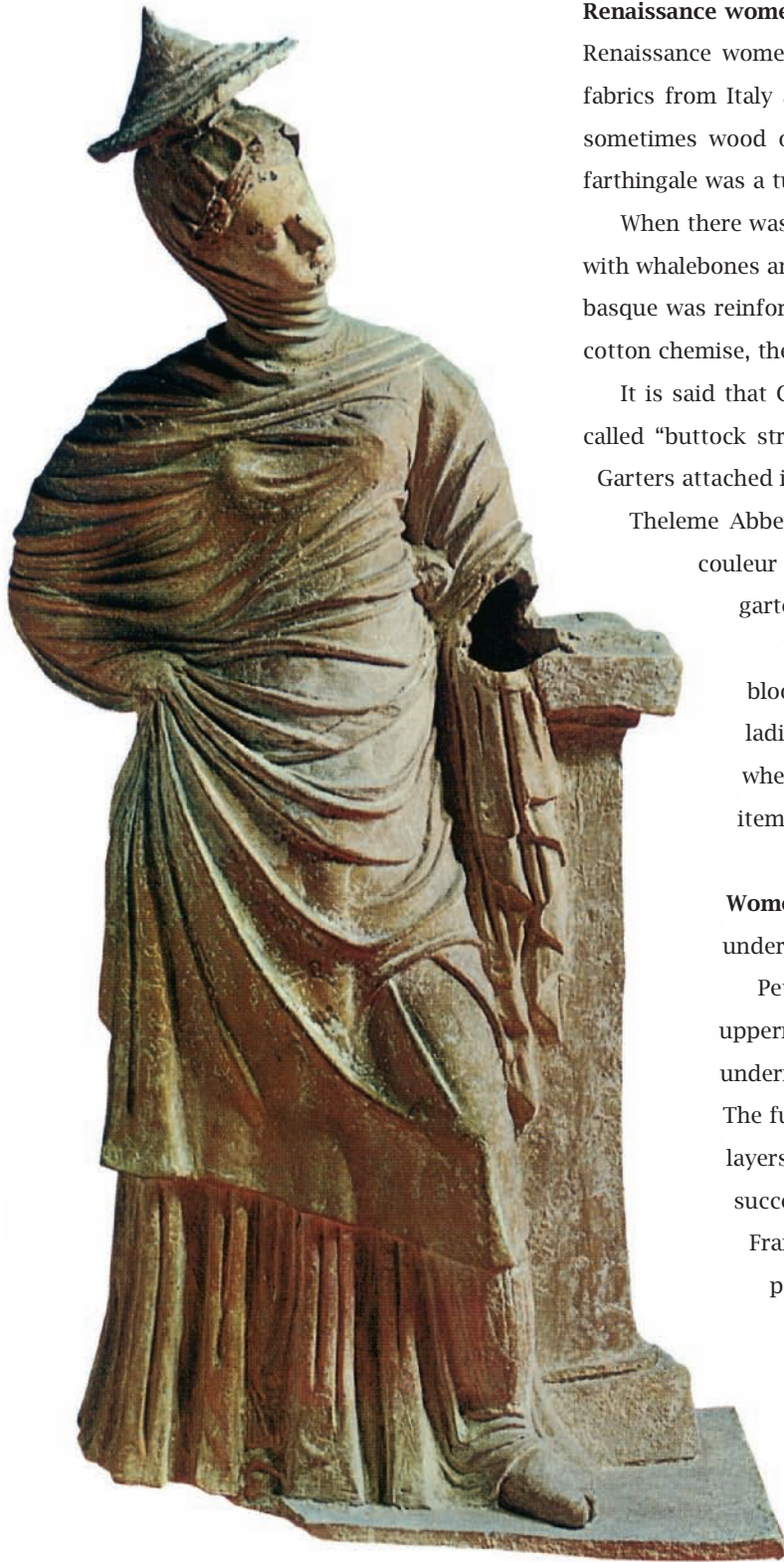
European women in the 15th century

In 15th century Europe, corsetry was worn outside clothing: the surcoat was a waistcoat laced over the dress, which flattened the breasts and enhanced the belly. Under the dress, mediaeval woman wore a band which pulled the waist in. Her bust was confined in the fustian, a bodice laced behind or on the side. The fustian also included another short bodice, a doublet, made of bands which squeezed the chest, and there was also sometimes an under-bodice made of stiffened linen.

In the Cluny and Galliera Museums in Paris, one can observe 15th century iron corsets, but they appear to have been designed for women suffering from deformities. All these garments were worn over the "chainse", the "linen dress" which was the forerunner of the chemise. The chainse was voluminous and wide-sleeved and made out of linen or cotton. Chausses were the forerunner of stockings and were held up by garters which gave them an erotic quality. In the 15th century women were still naked under this underwear. The closed system of underwear began to be generalised in the 16th century.

Page 42.

Chantal Thomass, Catwalk 2004.



Page 44.

Sophoclean woman draped in a himation.
Terracotta figurines, 330-300 BC, from Tanagra,
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Page 45.

Girls in Bikinis. Roman mosaics, 400-300 BC,
Villa de Piazza Armerina.

Renaissance women

Renaissance women wore the farthingale under their dresses which were made of heavy, precious fabrics from Italy and Spain. The farthingale was made of a system of strips, whalebone, wire and sometimes wood or wicker. It rested on the waist and held out the skirt. The alternative to the farthingale was a tube of hardened materials which was placed around the waist under the skirt.

When there was no corselet integral to the dress, a basque was worn. This was a corselet stiffened with whalebones and made of linen or wool reaching as far as the ruff and held in place by a lace. The basque was reinforced by bone, wood or iron busks so it was more rigid. It was worn over a linen or cotton chemise, the hem of which was tucked into the bloomers.

It is said that Catherine de Médicis initiated the wearing of bloomers by women. They were also called “buttock straps” and covered one’s legs from waist to knees and enclosed the female body.

Garters attached it to stockings. Rabelais refers to this in his description of the outfits of the nuns of Theleme Abbey. He says that garters were regarded as jewellery: “Les jaretières estoient de la couleur de leurs bracelets, et comprenoient le genoul au dessus et au dessoubz.”¹⁵ (“The garters were the colour of their bracelets and were above and below the knee”).

Underwear became more confining during the Renaissance. It is possible that bloomers were adopted for reasons of prudishness and hygiene: so bloomers, which ladies chose in luxury fabrics, were designed to be displayed during horse riding or when using the stairs. They were more than a protective garment, becoming a titillating item which enhanced the thighs.

Women in the 18th century no longer wore bloomers and were thus nude once more under their multiple petticoats which they revealed, along with their chemise.

Petticoats were worn under the dress in the French fashion and over the panniers. The uppermost petticoat was always visible and had the function of a skirt. The petticoats underneath were made out of more modest fabrics and were placed under the pannier. The further one “rummages” through these layers, the more intimate the names of these layers become: “modest” is followed by “cheeky” and finally “secret”. The pannier was the successor of the farthingale and had been used in England since 1711, appearing in France in 1718. At first it reserved for rich women, but by 1730, it reached the entire population. The pannier was composed of three circles of wood or wicker hung from the waist by vertical spills or ribbons. Around 1725 the pannier took the form of a waxed canvas petticoat reinforced with five to eight circles of cane, braided steel or whalebones which shaped it into a dome.

For young, elegant women the stays were *de rigueur* and were laced in the front and/or back. The lining was roughly made of linen, but the outside was covered in luxurious fabric. For town, the stays had straps which outlined a square neck-line, whereas the formal court corset had an oval neckline; stays gave a stylised bust and an upright carriage and symbolised the superiority of

aristocratic women over women of the general populace. A woman of modest means had no underwear, and wore a skirt and chemise with a laced corset which pulled in the waist and supported the breasts.

In the 18th century, the chemise became a slightly flared, knee-length tunic, with mid-length sleeves sewn on with straight stitching, and a gusset. There were draw-strings to puff up the sleeves and to vary the width of the neckline, which were particularly helpful when putting it on. It was made of thick fabric to stand up to friction from the stays. Lace edging was added or sewn onto the chemise, the sleeves and the collar and these were visible under the costume. In this way the undergarments were displayed as part of the outerwear.



Once undressed, 18th century women put on a nightgown to go to bed. Nightgowns were getting more complicated: laces, ribbons and lace were added, as well as a little shawl which was thrown over the shoulders when one received visitors, this last because it was usual to receive in one's bed chamber and the chemise was worn later and later into the morning. The only time when one slept naked was on the wedding night, as described by Molière's character Cathos, and not without humour, in *Les Précieuses ridicules*: "[...] le mariage [est] une chose tout à fait choquante. Comment est-ce qu'on peut souffrir la pensée de coucher contre un homme vraiment nu"¹⁶. ("Marriage is a totally shocking thing. How can one endure the thought of sleeping with a completely naked man?"). As a result, there were visible flounces in petticoats and chemises which rendered them more seductive and the garters holding up stockings were sometimes decorated with ribald inscriptions.

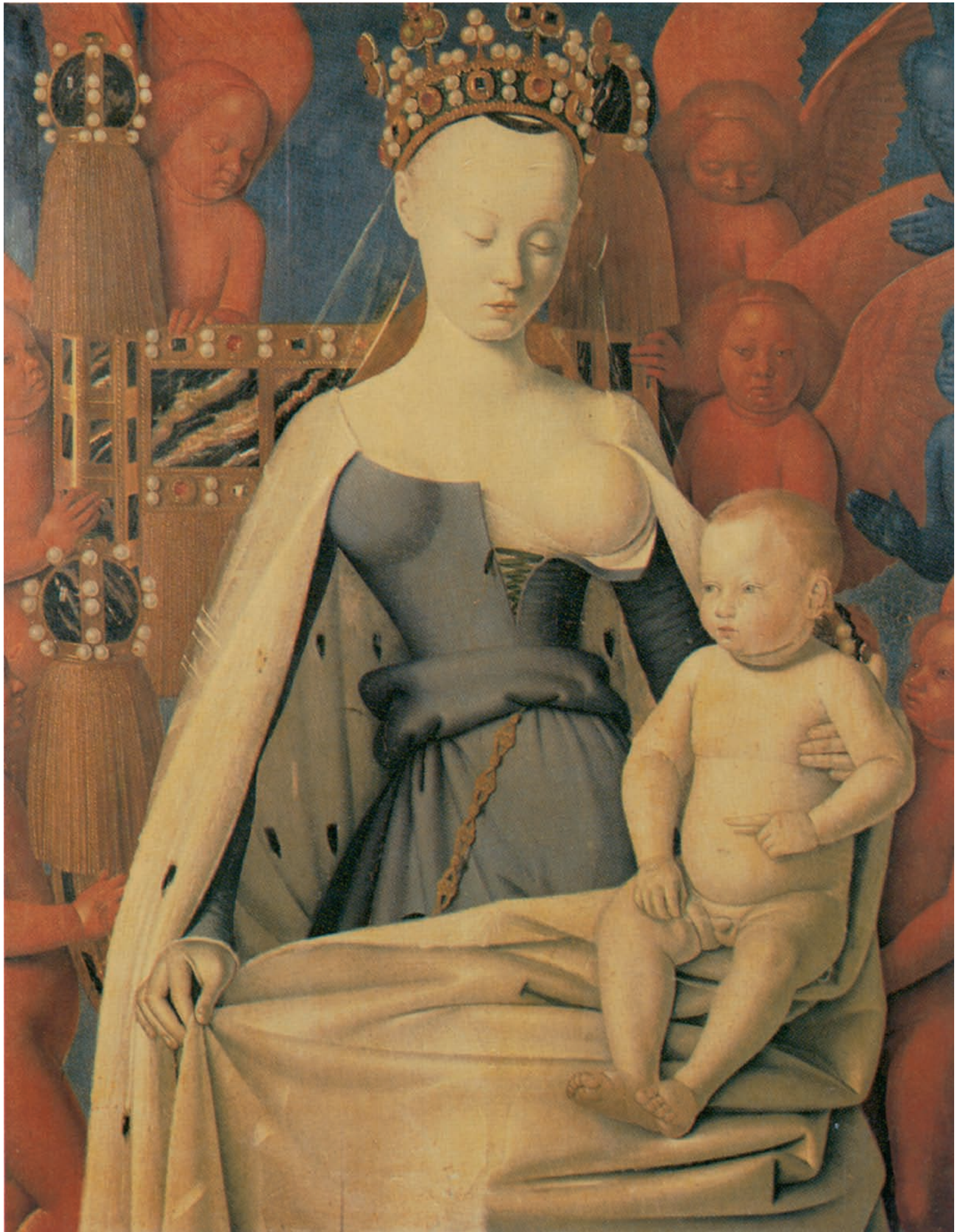
Romantic women had many undergarments. Under their costumes, they wore a high corset with cups to hold the breasts that was long enough to flare over the hips. At shoulder level the corset had large

Page 46.

Jean Fouquet, detail from the Melun diptych featuring *The Virgin and Child Surrounded by Angels*, c.1450-1460. Oil on canvas, 94 x 85 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Antwerp.

Page 47.

Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Maria Louisa de Tassis*, c.1629-1630. Oil on canvas, 129 x 93 cm. Collection of the Princes of Liechtenstein, Vaduz Castle, Liechtenstein.





Page 48.

Nicolas Bernard Lépicier, *Le Lever de Fanchon*, detail, 1773.

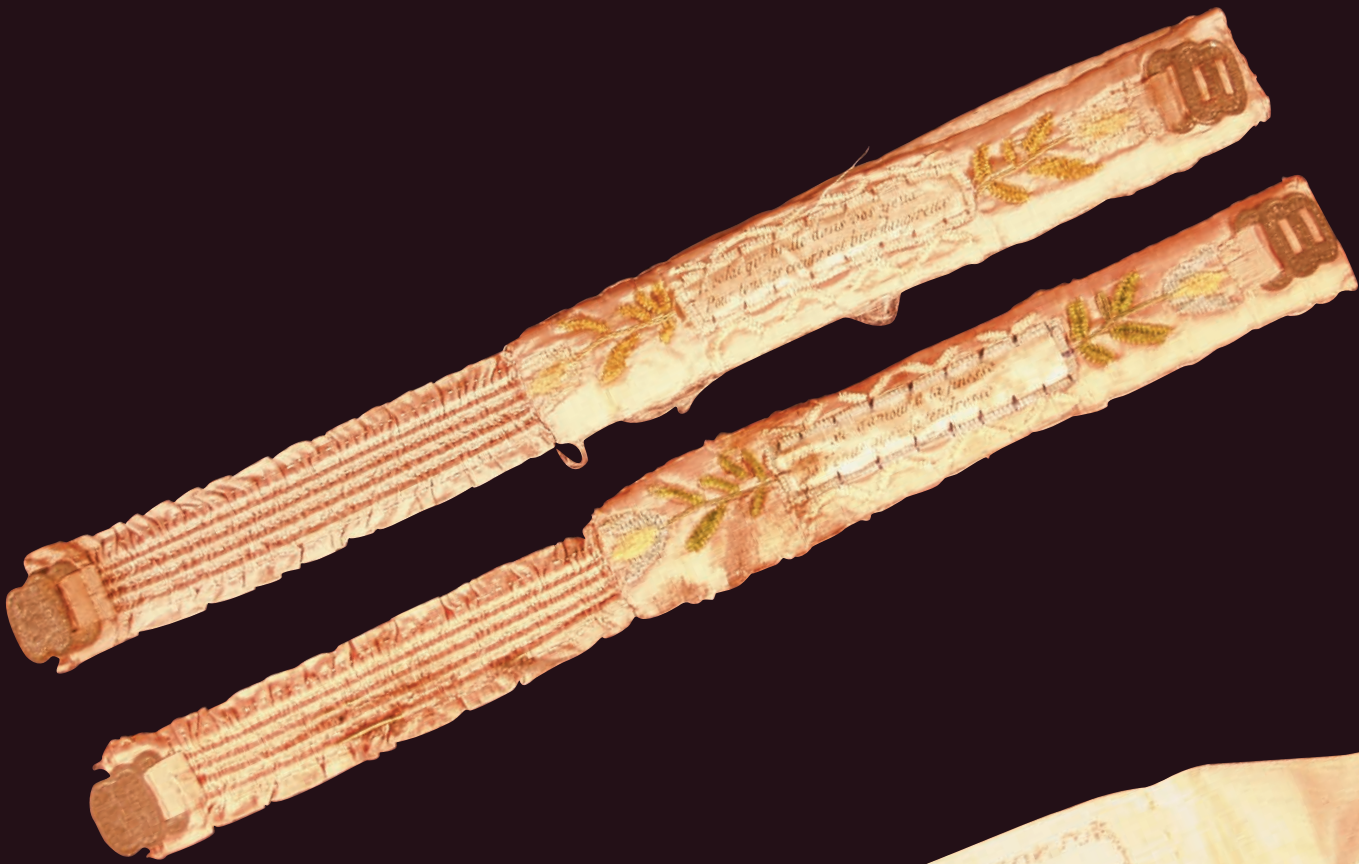
Oil on canvas, 74 x 93 cm. Musée de l'Hôtel Sandelin.

Page 49.

Anonymous drawings showing a woman wearing striped taffeta dress, trimmed with gauze, putting her garter on, letting her leg show. Print, French fashion and costume magazine, 1778-1787, 7th book. Musée Galliera, Paris.







shoulder pads and there was a rigid busk at the waist. For the first time, the waist was pulled in using metallic eyelets through which it was laced¹⁷, and this new lacing system meant that a woman could take off her corset unaided.

Under her corset, the woman of 1815-1840 wore a knee-length chemise which had long sleeves in England, but in France, the sleeves were short and puffed. Around 1835 these sleeves became reduced until they were small and flat. The neckline was wide and gathered and followed the shape of the dress.

After 1825 skirts became bigger and bigger and needed to be supported by an ever-increasing number of petticoats, sometimes up to six or seven petticoats in increasing sizes. The one underneath was flannel whereas the ones on top were cotton and gathered or embroidered. Moreover, the more petticoats a woman wore, the higher her social status. Fewer petticoats became necessary as a result of the introduction of a petticoat made out of a stiff fabric and edged with horse hair, a precursor of the crinoline.

Bloomers had made their reappearance around 1810 and were worn under the skirt. They were very long, split between the legs, gathered at each leg and decorated with lace frills. They were knotted around the waist and the long chemise could be tucked in which puffed out and gave more volume to the skirt. Bloomers became common for the working classes and shocked prudish Victorian England even more. In France, under Louis-Philippe, they were heavily embroidered and were longer than the dress, so they could be seen when the woman moved. They were sometimes held by stirrups decorated with golden buttons. They became more and more popular in the towns, worn by the working class, and only country-dwellers remained unaware of this new trend. Underneath, stockings were held up with garters or, for the first time, with garters attached to the corset, if it was long enough.

Romantic women's costumes were completely closed, and they were hidden under layers of lingerie.

Women in "1900"

At the dawn of the 20th century women were known as "femmes-sirènes" ("mermaids"), and under their dresses they wore a surcoat first, which became popular at the end of the 19th century. This surcoat was modified in 1900 to shape the waist. Around 1908, the over-corset could be worn with bloomers or a petticoat to make either a bloomer set or full-length petticoat.

Underneath there was a long corset with reinforcements to accentuate the curve of the body. It was so tight that it was difficult for women to bend over. Besides the corset's suspenders, there were extra garters worn below the knee. Under the corset there was a long, full chemise which was pulled tight to support the bust. Although bras were exhibited at the Universal exhibition of 1900, they were only effective when worn with a corset, and they were not yet widely-used.

The excess material of the chemise floated around in the bloomers, which in turn were knee-length: they were laced at the waist and split at the crotch. This split was smaller in the ruling classes but remained completely open when worn in the provinces, by the working class or by prostitutes, as mentioned by Emile Zola in *L'Assommoir*, when describing the fight between Gervaise and Virginie: "With renewed vigour, she grabbed Virginie by the waist, bent her over and pushed her face into the cobbles with her rear in the air; and despite their continual movement, managed to lift up her skirts substantially. Underneath she wore bloomers. She reached in through the gap, tore them apart and displayed everything - naked thighs and naked buttocks¹⁸".

In the 1880s, the system worn on the lower back to give volume behind the dress was, at first, a demi-crinoline known as a "fish tail". It later became a long canvas bag held out by hoops. Eventually this was reduced to a small pouch of horse-hair at the small of the back and still later a mere pile of stiffened folds of fabric. After 1890 the bell-shaped skirt only required a small padded cushion at the small of the back which was sewn into the dress lining to enhance the curve of the body.

After 1890 the skirt was supported by petticoats, but there were more and more of them: highly flounced petticoats puffed out the back, and the woman's form was tightly encased by narrow skirts.

By the Art Nouveau period, women were tightly bound by their costume and by their numerous undergarments.



Page 50 – top.

Pair of garters, 18th century. Blue embroidered satin.

Inscription: "The sparkle which shines in your eyes / Is a danger to every heart." Musée Galliera, Paris.

Inv.1998.215.X.

Page 50 – bottom.

Garter, c 1760. Pink satin, inscription "J'envie tonsor".

Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 2003.20.2.

Page 51.

Corset-consealer and large underskirt. Commercial catalogue, Au Printemps, 1906. Musée Galliera, Paris.

Page 52.

Weber, *Dressing*. Print, "mœurs". Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

Page 53.

Corset concealer in mesh and lace.

Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Troyes.









Page 54.

Sport or summer corset, blue with red border.

Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 1920.1.968, and underskirt with bustle (also called "crayfish tail"), 1875-80, stitched white cotton. Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 2003.73.X.

Page 55.

Yva Richard, *Bouclette and her corset*, c. 1925.

Silver print, 17.6 x 13 cm. Private collection, Paris.

It has often been said that **women of the 1920s** benefited from a new freedom, but this was only in appearance. It is true that under the “flapper’s” short dress there was no corset-cover, but there was still a short corset to pull in the waist. It was worn low on the hips, and it held in the top of the thighs. Some women wore a “garter-belt”, even next to the skin. In addition, the bust was diminished with correctors or flatteners which usually came from the United States. The so-called “stylish” dresses were tubular, flared over the hips and needed to be supported by circular boning inspired by that of 18th century panniers.

Under their corsets women wore a new type of combination underwear composed of a bra joined to a narrow petticoat or to short bloomers, which could be split or not.

Eventually, as dresses grew shorter, black, white and flesh-coloured silk stockings became popular, sometimes embroidered with patterns. If a woman felt the cold, she could wear woollen flesh-coloured stockings under the silk ones, but this widened the leg and so was quickly abandoned.

Now let us have a look at the “flapper’s” night attire. In the evening their outfit became more masculine with pajamas becoming popular after the First World War. In fact, pajamas were actually first worn as at-home outfits, as described in *Vogue* in 1924: “Pajamas are now by far the smartest form of negligee.”¹⁹ The new use fitted in with the current taste for Eastern-influenced fashion. Nevertheless, the nightdress was not abandoned, it just became narrower.

If we look for the liberation of women’s clothing in the period between the wars, it is to be found in skirt lengths and the way that legs were consequently revealed.

Elegant women of the 1950s wore waspies to pull in their waists under their Jacques Fath suits or their Christian Dior designer cocktail dresses. Attached to the former was a boned half-cup bra: this was the most popular combination for evening wear. A woman could also choose a bra, a garment which was becoming more widely available. A model with or without straps could be chosen, depending on the occasion.

The chemise had disappeared. In its place, a slip with straps was worn over the pieces of corsetry, and the corsetry was worn right next to the skin.

The waspie was worn with a long, full petticoat in nylon fibre which fluffed out the New Look skirts. Under this petticoat the bloomers gave way to form-fitting briefs.

In this way woman’s underwear finally arrived at a point where it was completely closed, and in sets composed of girdle, bra, briefs and petticoat, which were sometimes matching. Under the petticoat, nylon stockings were worn, held up by garters.

Once she divested herself of her daytime underwear, the New Look fashion plate preferred nightdresses. They could be very long or knee-length. As for pajamas, they were less in vogue.

After the Second World War and during the 1950s, the number of undergarments was reduced and the dichotomy between lingerie and corsetry began to ease off.

“Miss Swinging Sixties” was lightly clad: she wore a great deal less underwear than her mother did, but her body was completely enveloped. Under her A-line dress, young women (this new fashion was aimed at the young: the older generation kept their girdles) wore matching bras and panties, the latter flattening the belly. On certain models, garters were fixed inside the panties.

Other women chose briefs and bras worn with panty-hose.

Underwear was becoming a second skin. This was the idea behind panty-hose or the all-in-one Dim body, for example. In 1958, Mitoufle was the first brand of panty-hose in France, and it was only in 1962 that Dimanche (it became Dim in 1965) invented seamless stockings and, due to the prices they charged, panty-hose became accessible to all.

The 1960s saw the start of the bra and brief combinations that are still worn today and which, despite the limited number of garments, enclose the female body... until the G-string made its appearance in the 1980s.

Page 57 – left and right.

Combination, 1955-1960. Musée Galliera, Paris.

Page 58 – left.

Blue silk pyjamas, silver back, black outline.

Silver lamé trousers. Taken from *Le Goût du Jour* catalogue, 1920.

Page 58 – right.

Excerpt from the Yva Richard catalogue, c. 1920. Stenciled watercolour, 22 x 16 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Page 59.

“Tamara”, bandeau bra and stocking belt.

Wolford, Spring/Summer 2004.



2

Le Soit du Jour

1920



*Pyjama en soie bleue, revers d'argent, silhouettes noires.
Culotte hussarde lamée d'argent.*



"JOLI
RIEN"

YVA RICHARD
8, RUE DU MARCHÉ SAINT-HONORÉ
7, RUE SAINT-HYACINTHE, PARIS. 1^{er} A.
R.C. SEINE 98.703, TÉLÉPH. CENTRAL 00-69









Page 62.

Corset. White ribbed silk embroidered with coloured silk and silver thread in a floral pattern (detail of lower half), English, 1750. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Page 63 – left.

Poster DD. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Troyes.

Page 63 – right.

Embroidered stockings. Galliera Museum, Paris.





Page 64.

Silk stockings 1900 embroidered with a lace pattern.

Page 65.

Pair of embroidered stockings. Galliera Museum, Paris.



winter. In 1891 the Aertex Company began to design women's underwear. In the same year the Viyella brand appeared, produced by William Hollin & Co, with the slogan "Viyella does not shrink"²². These innovations made healthier underwear which was more pleasant to wear. Cotton went hand in hand with the growing trend for natural living. It became a symbol of fresh, pure lingerie and was the favourite underwear material in the 1970s. It is still widely used today combined with Lycra.

Animal materials are used less for underwear these days because they are fragile and difficult to maintain. Since the 16th century solid materials such as horn, ivory or whalebone have been called upon for use in corsetry. They were used for the busks inside basques and for stays. Whalebone was the only material that was flexible enough and which predated steel and elastic. Whales were hunted from the 12th century in the Bay of Biscay (on the Spanish coast), and then, in the 17th century, the whale industry moved to Greenland. In the 18th and 19th centuries leather and suede began to be used for certain corsets for rigidity and decoration. These animal materials made way in the 20th century for steel. The Warner Company launched their "Waterproof Corsets", which were stainless steel corsets that overcame the shortfalls of this metal.

Page 66.

Nicolas Lafresen, also called Lavreince, *Le Lever*.
Charcoal, 28 x 23 cm. Don Georges Heine 1929,
Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris. Inv 26833.

Page 67.

Yva Richard, postcard with unwritten back c. 1925,
14 x 9 cm. Private collection, Paris.





Silk culture came to France relatively late. It was already common in China and India when it arrived in France in the 14th century, at the time when the Papal court moved to Avignon. Silk weavers set up in Avignon to meet the demands of the popes. When the popes returned to Rome, some silk mills stayed in the Uzès region, then opened in Lyon. François Ist primarily encouraged the silk mills in Lyon, then Henri IV continued his work with Olivier de Serre and Laffemas who planted their grounds with mulberry trees, as the mulberry bombyx, more commonly known as the “silkworm” feeds on mulberry leaves. It also secretes a very fine and remarkably supple thread.

Silk insulates very well, is extremely soft to the touch, and is perfect for lingerie. The principal silk fabrics are made in cloth, muslin, taffeta, pongee or crêpe weave. Others are satin, jersey and twill for girdles and corsets. Silk is difficult to wash, however. It is fragile and

expensive which means it is not of interest to clients of modest means. Nevertheless, its softness and shine give an immense power of seduction.

The French silk mills expanded rapidly in the 17th and 18th centuries and provided France a monopoly in terms of fashion. The silk mills in Lyon manufactured all types of undergarments, petticoats, luxurious stockings for ceremonial wear in European courts and brocade exterior of stays.

In the 19th century, the silk mills of Lyon were still appreciated in the same way. It was only when synthetic fibres, which could imitate the shine of silk, were invented that silk was used less for underwear and was limited to luxury lingerie. Until the Second World War, petticoats were made out of silk; corsets were covered in silk satin, and nightclothes were made out of satin, velvet, cretonne, or silk crêpe. Today, silk is still important for designers when they create luxury underwear, and for sexy nightwear such as baby-doll nightdresses.

Wool has always been used, in the countryside especially, for stockings, corsets and petticoats because it is warm. It became popular for underwear again in the 19th century, and was appreciated because it was hard-wearing, supple and especially because of its thermal qualities. For underwear, the main wool fabrics are cloth, serge, jersey and flannel. This last was said to protect against cholera. Bloomers and petticoats were made out of flannel and corsets which were particularly recommended for cycling. As people’s interest in health grew, wool became the hygienists’ favourite material. One of them, Doctor Gustave Jaeger, professor of zoology and physiology at the University of Stuttgart, wrote an essay on health and wool “cures”. It was published in 1878, and he began to manufacture 100% wool clothes in 1884. The “Sanitary woollen corset” was made entirely of wool and was supposed to cure



Page 68.

Stockings Jacques Fath, 1954 with Roger Scemana's *Pince-bas* for Jacques Fath, c.1955. Elastic and strass. Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv.1933.382.6 et 1993.195.2.

Page 69.

Stockings (detail) Jacques Fath, 1954. Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv.1993.382.6.

The Story of Lingerie



Page 70.

Dior Négligé, c. 1960. White lace, pink satin bows (Detail).
Don Martini. Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 20003.77.1A/B.

Page 71 – left.

Ensemble, 1906. Cotton cloth, lace and satin ribbons.
(detail). Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1972.12.1A/B/C.

Page 71 – right.

Combinaison, 1955-60 (detail). Galliera Museum, Paris.

digestive problems and help if one were overweight. One of the merits of wool for Doctor Jaeger was the fact that it was porous. Of course, this idea was refuted by the creators of Aertex and Viyella. A large woollen underwear industry was developing over the whole of Europe. Doctor Jaeger's innovations were promoted in England by Mr Tomalin, the manager of a London department store, while in France, in 1877, Doctor Rasurel introduced a wool and cotton mix which claimed to be more effective. This type of underwear was very successful at first although later wool was passed over in favour of more aerated fabrics. Nevertheless, in 1953, Damart introduced "Thermolactyl" and designed woollen underwear which allowed the skin to breathe. 20th century woman could justifiably claim: "Cold? Me? Never!"

At the beginning of the 20th century **chemical fibres** began to eclipse natural fibres.

Viscose is the name given to cellulose threads and textile fibres which are produced by the viscose process (the material, in a viscous state, is poured onto a drawplate which is then immersed in a tank which coagulates the fibres as soon as they emerge). For continuous thread the name given is rayon-viscose, and for broken thread, bonded fibre viscose. The first rayon thread was invented in 1884 by the Frenchman Hilaire Bernigaud, the Count of Chardonnet²³ who presented his first rayon articles at the Universal Exhibition in 1889. Other chemists were doing the same type of research, particularly in



England where Cross, Bevan and Beadle patented their discoveries in 1892. Rayon was manufactured in England from 1905 and in the United States of America in 1911 due to the support of Courtauld. Rayon was actually only used for clothing after the 1920s, and the most popular rayon fabrics were crêpe, organdie, twill and jersey. Petticoats, slips, bloomers and nightclothes were made out of it. The shine of rayon was appreciated and earned it the name of “artificial silk”. Now all women could afford luxurious-looking underwear at a lower price.

Nylon also brought about great changes. Dupont de Nemours Inc began research into the first synthetic thread in 1927. This research was lead by Doctor Wallace H. Carroters and his team. The first nylon stockings were presented at the New York World Fair in 1937 and they went on sale in 1939 in the United States of America. Nylon arrived in Great Britain in 1940, distributed by British Nylon Spinners Ltd, and became widespread in Europe by 1947 for all types of women’s underwear.

During the Second World War, nylon was strictly reserved for parachutes, and clothing in Europe was rationed. So underwear had to be made out of household linen (this was already the case for modest pre-war families) and women dyed their legs to give the illusion of stockings. After 1949, nylon became very popular and allowed lingerie to be accessible to everyone. It shone like silk, was easy to maintain and was affordable.

Page 72.

Chantal Thomass, *Bas Up*.

Autumn / Winter Collection 2003.

Page 73.

Chantal Thomass, *Plumetis Stockings*.

Autumn / Winter Collection 2003.





At the end of the 20th century laboratories began to create more synthetic fibres, first to make sports underwear which held firm and aerated the body. Sports bras were made of polyamide, elastane or a mix of these fibres. This underwear was made from micro fibres composed of microfilaments and was very light, seamless and often with controlling properties such as Dim control tights.

In addition to synthetic materials, underwear needed elastic materials made from latex or rubber, for example. Once again, this new material was introduced through sportswear. The first corset reinforced with rubber was presented in 1851 at the Universal Exhibition in London, but the first elastic corset (in latex) was only sold in 1911: it was a sports corset. The development of elastic fabrics made of latex posed a major problem, as latex coagulates. It has to be mixed with ammonia to maintain its liquid state. Threads are made out of it and it is then woven (Dunlop improved this process). Elastic progressively replaced boning, steel and lacing. In addition to this, circular knitting machines were being designed to develop girdles which were entirely made of rubber. Latex was knitted into a sort of fabric. It was used by all brands, some of them perfected its usage such as Kestos and Warner who introduced two-way elasticity.

At the end of the 1950s, researchers developed a more versatile fibre: Lycra, which was patented in 1959 by Dupont de Nemours. It had all the properties of rubber without its disadvantages. It was up to four times more resistant, three times lighter, and resistant to abrasion, perspiration and damage from detergents and lotions. Lycra was first used for sportswear such as bathing costumes and bodies, and then was introduced for underwear. It was used in combination with other textiles, usually at a rate of 15 to 40%. It was elastic and followed the shape of the body, as described by *Vogue* in 1968: "Drive, jump, ride, stretch, accelerate into spring with briefer simpler foundations, that you can put on and forget...they look like you, move like you, feel like you."²⁴ Playtex opened in France as a result of its "Cross your heart" model (1969) and also due to the "18-hour girdle" (1971) which had such light elastic fibre that one did not feel one was wearing it.

Finally, lingerie would not have as much charm if it was not **decorated**.

Lace made its appearance in the 16th century. Venetian lace was made on needle-point and Flanders lace on a spindle. The lace was made with white linen threads and was used to trim chemises and bloomers. Flanders and Italy supplied the whole of Europe with lace. To avoid this mass importation, Colbert divested himself of foreign lace makers and set up Crown factories in France: Valenciennes, Chantilly and Alençon were famous for their lace which decorated numerous undergarments. In 1817 the first machine-made lace appeared, developed by the Englishman Mr Heathcoat. It was less hard-wearing but the price was lower and the machine-made lace could imitate that of Valenciennes, Alençon and Puy. It was perfected in 1840 due to a jacquard technique adapted in France to the English production process. It remained popular throughout the 19th century.

After the Second World War, latex and elastane were added to give elasticity. Cadolle underwear in the 1940s was made of "Dentellastex", elastic lace developed by Tiburce Lebas from Calais. Finally the New Look prioritised machine-made lace which was now woven with nylon threads. Today it is made with ribbons and beaded embroidery to decorate bras, briefs and G-strings.

Ornamental embroidery is done with thread: it can be cut-out (broderie anglaise), flat or in relief and it allows all sorts of ideas and decoration. In the 18th century, the outside of stays and the hems of petticoats were embroidered, and today the front of briefs. For a more luxurious effect, embroidery can be in metallic thread, gold, silver or sequins, which make women's underwear, resemble jewellery. At the beginning of the 21st century, underwear is designed to be more and more like jewellery: bras with chain or bead straps, corsets with a sequined or diamante neckline or G-strings made of a triangle of fabric held up with a string like a necklace. Is lingerie becoming jewellery?





Colours

For a long time women's underwear was white, a symbol of chastity, purity and morality. Bright colours were associated with prostitutes, apart from stockings in soft colours like pink, and blue, and patriotic colours which were worn during the French Revolution. In the 19th century elegant women wore grey or black stockings. In *Autre étude de femme* ("Another Study of a Woman"), this is how Honoré de Balzac describes a "respectable woman": "She does not wear bright colours, nor apparent stockings, nor a too-ornate belt-buckle, nor bloomers with embroidered hems which flap around her ankle. You should notice her feet or her shoes [...] and extremely fine cotton stockings or one-colour silk stockings in grey, or laced boots of exquisite simplicity.²⁵" Bright colours and decoration were the reserve of shows and courtesans. Also, the black stockings worn by the French Cancan dancers in Henri de Toulouse Lautrec's paintings carried a certain eroticism and were only sported by cabaret dancers, prostitutes and certain elegant ladies. The falsely prudish society of the 19th century preferred white for lingerie, particularly in England during the Victorian era. Apart from chemises, petticoats and bloomers, it was considered good form to have black or white corsetry but never colours which were considered excessively luxurious by the Baroness of Staff in *Cabinet de toilette*²⁶.

Nevertheless, in the second half of the 19th century, women sometimes dared to wear petticoats and bloomers in yellow or red as worn by Scarlett in *Gone with the Wind*²⁷. Colour was not used in women's underwear until the beginning of the 20th century. Fabrics, decoration and their colours now changed from one season to another. Between 1910 and 1920, pink or sky-blue underwear began to be worn. In 1917, *Vogue* showed corsets in blue satin. The first Petit Bateau briefs were in silky white, pink and occasionally blue cotton. Colours were still pale and soft, evoking ideas of virginity and purity. Blue was the colour associated with the Virgin Mary.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the palette diversified with more pink, yellow, purple and jade green, sometimes decorated with cream-coloured ribbons. For evening, women dared to wear transparent black. Elegant women particularly liked black Milan silk decorated with cream or beige ribbons. In the 1930s pastel colours became popular: flesh, ivory, pale blue or green for underwear and also for nightwear. Dark colours such as red, burgundy or black became popular later in the decade.

In the 1950s black and white were once more the colours of choice, in particular for girdles made of black or white lace and lined in pastel netting. But whiter than white was back, trimmed abundantly with lace, embroidery and ribbons. Nevertheless, new colours were being introduced, such as coffee, turquoise, tea-rose, coral, peach and also delicate prints of flowers and stripes.

In the 1960s colour took over undergarments. "Young" fashion also meant colourful underwear. Unified pastels were displaced by bright, even garish, psychedelic colours and overall prints. Panties were flowered, polka-dotted or striped in fuchsia, orange, turquoise and apple green. On the other hand, in the 1970s, prints were no longer fashionable for underwear but were used in daywear or nightwear. There were numerous striped pajamas or floral nightdresses. Bras, briefs and tights were popular in single, daring colours such as apricot, olive green, coffee, fuchsia and turquoise. Gradually, flesh colour and its derivatives became more widespread in underwear. This development was linked to the new concept of underwear being a second skin and the desire for it to be as discreet as possible.

Page 76.

Yaël Landman, "Funky" model.

Autumn / Winter collection 2003.

Page 78.

Manet, *Nana*, 1877. Oil on canvas, 150 x 116 cm.

Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

Page 79.

Egon Schiele, *Young Woman with Crossed Legs*, 1911.

Pencil and gouache on paper.

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Page 80.

Ensemble, c. 1925. Yellow cotton with mauve and green embroidery. Marot donation, Galliera Museum, Paris.
Inv. 1987.33.3A/B/C.

Page 81.

Princesse Tam-Tam, *Underwear set, red tartan bra and knickers*, before 1995.

Page 82.

Chantal Thomass, *Asymmetric stockings with small bows*.
Autumn/Winter collection 2003.

Page 83.

Chantal Thomass, *Stockings with back lacing*.
Autumn/Winter collection 2003.

Page 84 – top left.

Rigby and Peller, Freya Collection, Autumn / Winter 2002.

Page 84 – top right.

Rigby and Peller, Freya Collection, Autumn/Winter 2002.

Page 84 – bottom left.

Rigby and Peller, Ensemble of bra and knickers, Freya Collection, Autumn/Winter 2002.

Page 84 – bottom right.

Rigby and Peller, Freya Collection, Autumn/Winter 2002.

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Chantal Thomass, catwalk 2004.





The Story of Lingerie









The first stockings and bathing costumes in flesh tones appeared at the dawn of the 19th century, during the Directoire period, because of its extremely transparent dresses. But this change was brief, and white came back in force. Flesh, pink and peach colours became common for stockings around 1925: again, these colours suggested that bare legs were being revealed. Flesh was extremely popular in the 1960s and 1970s, a period when the body was admired and simplicity was the order of the day. Lou's model "filet" ("net") was available in white, but also in chestnut or caramel.

Later, some brands such as Princesse Tam-Tam (1985) introduced decorative patterns like tartan, fruit prints and flowers embroidered with little bows. Some pieces fitted in with the "cocooning" movement, where day and night underwear is so comfortable that it is nice to wear it to stay at home. These patterns were fresh and had a child-woman image. Eventually, in the 1980s, lingerie became more sophisticated and adopted the bright colours normally reserved for prostitutes: red, black and purple lace. Underwear took the upper hand and was eccentric and arrogant. Many women's undergarments became real clothes designed in fashionable colours. Nightdresses were worn as summer dresses, vests took the place of t-shirts and corsets were worn for evening. Celebrities in show business often wore visible, brightly-coloured underwear. They include Annie Lennox (the singer from The Eurythmics), Gwen Stefani and Mylène Farmer. Madonna sang in a green corset edged with black lace and Britney Spears wore a bubble-gum pink G-string over her pants. To sum up, colour is vital in underwear and wants to make a statement. The colourful underwear of today's woman is the underwear of the prostitute of previous generations. It is true that underwear illustrates liberal society, but it is a society which often verges on the vulgar.

Page 86.

Princesse Tam-Tam, Autumn / Winter Collection 2004.

Page 87.

Chantal Thomass, Catwalk 2004.



YVA RICHARD
 8, RUE DU MARCHÉ SAINT-HONORÉ
 7, RUE SAINT-HYACINTHE, PARIS, 1^{er} A^t
 R.C. SEINE 98.703 TÉLÉPH. CENTRAL 00-69

*Underwear
and Society*



Stages of life

Rites of passage

Rites or rituals can be regarded as an ensemble of formalized acts which have a symbolic meaning in a particular society, at a particular moment in time. Rites which may concern individual or collective action are relatively coded. They are often repetitive and carry the notion of transmission to or assimilation into a group. They are highly symbols charged and for those who directly concerned and for those who witness the rites participate at varying levels. Some researchers maintain that society is characterised by a lack of continuity and that rites re-establish social order when it has been damaged at each new step of the biological cycle. This chapter aims to describe clothing practice linked to important moments in one's life: the events of baptism, communion, puberty, marriage and mourning are usually cloaked in various rites where clothing plays an indisputable role.

Baptism

Baptism marks the official arrival of a child into the religious community. This “acceptance of the new-born” into the community exists in all religions, the oldest Western example being the circumcision of Jewish boys eight days after birth. Christianity regards the new-born baby, who is born of an act of love, as being born in a state of original sin and that the baby should, therefore, be “purified” before joining the religious community. The act of baptism consists of immersing its body in holy water while the baby is blessed. Nowadays water is sprinkled on the head of the child being baptised instead of its whole body being submerged, as was the case in the early history of the Church.

In the 18th century, in the reign of Louis 15th, it was traditional to baptise new-borns very simply and put off the baptism ceremony until their first communion, or even wedding. The only garment exclusively used for baptism was a type of holy cap, the “toquet”, a small lace bonnet which was a symbol of childhood and purity and which was placed on the child's head after the unctions. Later, and until the first half of the 20th century, new-born babies were baptised as new-borns, out of fear that they might die and not be recognised by God. Although in previous centuries children were clothed in traditional, regional garb, by the 19th century there was a special robe for baptism. It was a simultaneously solemn and joyous occasion with the baby clad in a very long robe, which was often handed down through the generations. Many of these robes have been passed on in good condition, proving that they were well looked after and considered as precious objects. The robes were made of lawn, cambric, muslin or net and decorated with religious folds, embroidery, drawn-thread work and even lace. The bonnet and bootees matched the robe and, if it was cold, there was an accompanying cape which was as long as the robe itself. Although there are few rites today around the arrival of a new baby, due to less importance being attached to the baptism ceremony, they are replaced to a certain extent by new rites such as children's birthday celebrations.

First Communion

“And now we see Rosa with her head in her hands, suddenly remembering her mother, the village church and her first communion. She felt she had returned to that day when she was so young, smothered in her white dress, and she began to cry... Constance (the young communicant) was seized, surrounded and embraced by the whole household of women... and the child was taken in and completely entered by the God she carried within herself and she set off in the middle of this guard of honour.” In these extracts



Page 88.

Extract from the Yva Richard catalogue, c. 1920.

Aquarelle stencil, 22 x 16 cm. Private Collection, Paris.

Page 90.

Mourning handkerchief in white linen, embroidered with the initials MJ and outlined in black linen. Musée Galliera, Paris. Inv. 2003.76.X. Handkerchief used after mourning in white linen embroidered with mauve silk, beginning of the 20th century, initialled M. Don Agabriel, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1983.41.38.

Page 91.

White linen embroidered handkerchief, with the initial C. (Detail). Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1987.77.2.



from *La Maison Tellier* ("The Tellier House"), Guy de Maupassant describes the importance surrounding the ceremonial aspect of the first communion in the French countryside during the last century.

According to Madeleine Delpierre the rite of the first communion appeared in France at the end of the 16th century and became common in the 18th century. It seems that there was no recourse to a particular outfit at first. In fact, all indications were point towards the body being very clean and

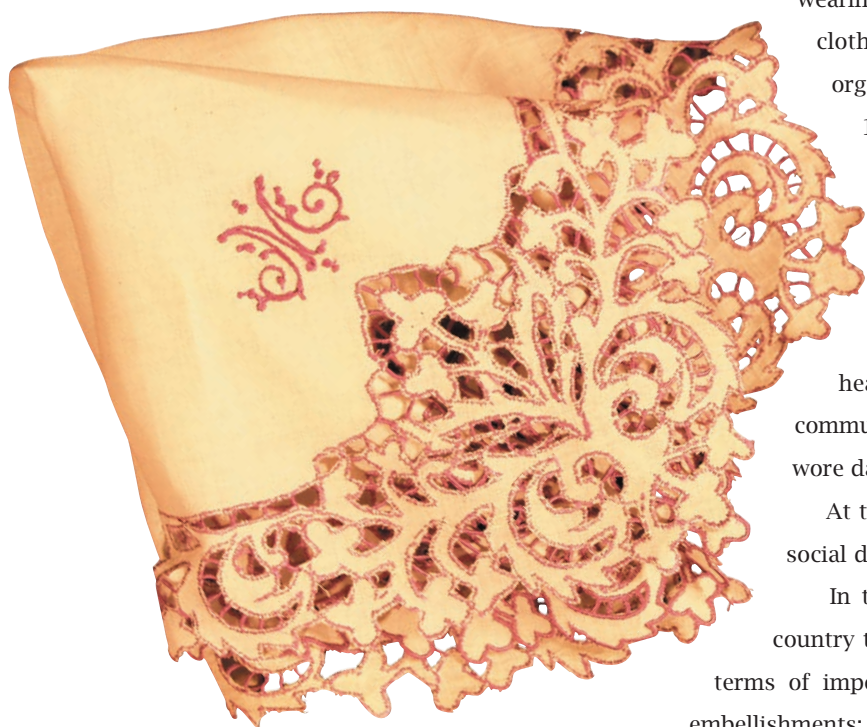
wearing one's best clothes. Thus, the first communion was essentially an occasion for new clothes for children and impoverished families received costumes from charitable organisations. In Coutances, the charity which clothed poor children between 1771 and

1783 for their first communion dressed girls in this way: "a drugget camisole, a white basin skirt, a striped Padua apron, a headdress and cap in pale cloth, a muslin handkerchief and clogs"²⁸. In contrast, in convents where well-brought-up girls spent one or two years preparing for their first communion, the Ursuline order introduced the white canvas robe and headdress from the beginning of the 17th century.

At the end of the century a veil was added as young girls had to cover their heads in Church. In the 19th century, and until the first half of the 20th century, the young communicant wore always a white dress with a veil or headdress, a belt and a purse. Boys wore dark clothes or a seaman's costume and they would wear an armband on their left arm.

At the beginning of the 20th century surplices began to appear which served to underline social differences.

In the 1950s we can see that communion was celebrated with more ceremony in the country than in town. The meal after the service was on a par with the marriage breakfast in terms of importance. The communicant's robe was supposed to be "... simple and devoid of embellishments: The one-colour bodice should be flat or with small pleats, the skirt should be folded like a habit or with flat scallops, and there should be no lace. The matt white of the robe is elegant and its monastic appearance would be spoilt by heavy decoration. A petticoat as long as the robe supports it and holds it out. A fine wool chemise can be worn if it is cold but no woollens or shawl over the robe."²⁹ Today the trend is for both boys and girls to wear the same unadorned white surplice.



From childhood to adolescence

The notion of innocence of childhood has been the mainstay of moralists since the 17th century. They advocate dressing children to suit their activities, whether playing, running or rolling around. Different clothes result from different traditions. The ideas of these moralists began to bear fruit gradually and thus, by the end of the 18th century, even if little girls were dressed like adults, they did not have to wear either panniers or corsets, and the fit of their clothes was easier. In *Histoire Imprévue des Dessous Féminins* (“*The Unexpected History of Women’s Underwear*”), Cecil Saint-Laurent underlines the importance of women’s trousers in the difference between children’s and adults’ clothing during the 19th century. At the beginning of the 19th century, trousers were primarily worn by young girls and women of dubious morals. This was the first time for quite a long period that children’s clothes were distinguished from those of adults. From 1807, little girls wore trousers festooned with lace, as a counterpart to boys’ wide cloth trousers. Trousers were considered perfectly suitable for girls but indecent when worn by their mothers under their dresses. For around thirty years, before the arrival of crinoline and the more generalised wearing of trousers by women, which allowed girls to play easily, became synonymous with childhood. Trousers were the reason that skirts shortened, and they accentuated the difference between children’s and adults’ clothes. In Paris, a young girl stopped wearing trousers once she had her first communion. In the provinces, however, the bourgeoisie wanted to differentiate itself from the lower classes where children become adults very quickly. It therefore kept young girls in trousers until seventeen or eighteen years of age. In these circles, when one was married, one no longer wore trousers. The only exception to the rule is described in *La Mésangère* newspaper in 1824: “Percal trousers are very fashionable at the moment for children, young people and even ladies. In the country they are absolutely necessary. Without this protective garment how can one mount a horse, ride a donkey or sit on a swing?”³⁰

Marriage

The rite of matrimony is simultaneously symbolic, sociological and materialistic. It marks the passage to adulthood. Except in the case of marriages between children, marriage heralds the departure of a young woman from her father’s home to that of her husband’s. During the 19th and 20th centuries this fact was underlined by the jubilant transportation of the bride’s household belongings to her new home.³¹ In the 18th century people generally got married between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. But whatever the age of the bridal couple, there were tremendous wedding preparations. For the middle classes, the wedding outfit was mentioned in the wedding contract and often constituted the major part of the dowry. “Even if the bride is only thirteen, she should have a low décolleté and have her hair dressed, be dressed and made up with beauty spots, exactly as an adult would be.”³² The bride covered her head with a bonnet as the practice of the veil existed under the Consulate. At this time, even though colourful dresses were traditional, some brides began to choose white dresses. For a long time traditional, regional dresses with shawls were worn. White dresses became much more popular at the end of the 19th century, firstly in the towns and later in the countryside, due to the distribution of fashion magazines which tended to standardise the types of outfits worn. Otherwise, the shape of wedding dresses followed the fashion of other clothes of that period, and was accompanied by specific accessories, such as a veil and an orange-blossom headdress during the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century. The materials and decoration were also sumptuous in order to distinguish the dress from other outfits. Underwear was no different from that of other occasions, except that it was finer and better quality.

In the 1950s there was often a civil wedding the day before the religious ceremony, for the civil ceremony the bride would often wear a suit. A great variety of fabrics was used to make the dress for the religious ceremony (satin, moiré, Moroccan silk, slub silk, taffeta, surah silk and all natural and artificial silks). The crinoline skirt was very popular, with a bodice attached to long sleeves which remained separate so that the dress could be transformed into a ball gown by changing the bodice.

Page 92 – top.

Thomas Gainsborough, *Conversation in a Park*, c. 1740.
Oil on canvas, 73 x 68 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Page 92 – bottom.

Handkerchief used directly after mourning. White linen
with mauve embroidery, beginning of 20th century, initial
M. Don Agabriel, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1983.41.38.



Today, marriage is no longer a rite of passage. It is simply to “make official” an act of commitment, which already has existed in many cases. In former times marriage actually gave access to sexuality and to a life shared by two adults. In our times all these steps have been accessible for a long time without the need to be married.

Mourning

In the past mourning was worn by the entire nation for the passing of a king or a member of the court. For six months the nation was not permitted to wear colourful clothes or jewellery. Just before the Revolution, important periods of mourning (those for the death of a mother, father, husband, wife, brother, sister or cousins) lasted at least six months and were divided into three categories: wool, silk and lesser mourning. Other categories of mourning were divided into two periods: black and white. Mourning for a husband lasted the longest, one year and six weeks: “During the first six months, widows wear Saint-Maur raz fabric, a dress with a train held back by a braid attached to the petticoat on one side and which comes out of the pocket. The folds of the dress stop at the front and the back and the two front sections are joined by clips or ribbons. Compère stitching is used, pagoda sleeves and a batiste headdress with wide turn-ups and a batiste neck-scarf with a black crêpe belt, clipped in front, reaches its two points down as far as the hem of the dress. A black crêpe scarf is folded behind; they also wear a large black folded headdress, gloves, shoes and bronze buckles, a muff covered in plain Saint-Maur raz fabric or a crêpe fan. For the other six months they wear black silk with sleeves and decorations in white crêpe and black stone if they so wish. Plain black and white are worn in the last six months, the headdress and sleeves are in gauze brocade and the accessories are either all white or all black.”³³

In the 1950s, the dress code for mourning became a great deal less restrictive. It was recommended not to wear jewellery and to wear black when attending a funeral. The distinctive sign of widowhood, the white head-band, was no longer worn. In fact, during the 20th century, funeral rituals developed in the same way as those of marriage. Compared to the 19th century, the time for suffering was reduced and was certainly no longer part of quasi-official regulations. In its place, freedom to mourn in the way the individual thought best was respected. Outside signs of mourning disappeared; houses were no longer draped in black, and the day-long funeral was no longer compulsory. In fact the ceremony was often reduced to a silent gathering around the grave.

The trousseau and its reflection in Society

In Olga Veschoor’s richly illustrated book, *Les Trousseaux du Temps Jadis*, (“*Trousseaux of Former Times*”) the origin of the trousseau is described. It comes from the old French verb “trouser” which means to “to package”. Thus, the trousseau, which was made up originally by the bride-to-be herself, was a collection of objects which would serve her in her future life as wife and mother. Although there is mention of the trousseau in the 13th century, its moment of glory was really in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. It became associated with all of life’s important stages: birth, leaving home, entering a convent and, of course, marriage.

In the 19th century women were relegated to the private domain of the home, and making a trousseau became simultaneously a female learning ritual and a way of underlining one’s family’s social, and therefore financial, status.

Women’s work

In the education of young girls, the ability to run a good household was extremely important. Girls were introduced to making up a trousseau, an exclusively feminine activity, at a very young age, (around four or five), by learning how to use tools for sewing and embroidery. Children first learned stitches on special pieces of fabric (“marquoirs”) used for practicing. These “marquoirs” showed different

Page 94.

Commercial Catalogue, Grands Magasins du Louvre, Paris, taffeta slip, summer 1906.

Page 95.

Mourning slip. Galliera Museum, Paris.





examples of stitches and embroidery, darning, pleating, button holes, drawn-thread work, gathering and even beaded needlepoint lace.³⁴ During childhood and adolescence, girls would make their future household and personal linen which they would have their whole lives, hence the importance of darning.

There first, very important, stage in making a trousseau was to mark each piece by embroidering the initial of the girl's surname. After the engagement, she would add the initial of her future husband's surname. In general, household linen was marked with both names of the married couple, and only personal linen carried the initials of the husband or the wife. While everyday linen was marked in red with a simple cross, high quality linen was often embroidered in white on white with ornate characters. Marking linen had really practical reasons: the linen was easy to recognise at the laundry. But it also allowed a young woman to demonstrate her skill as a needlewoman. There were many patterns of initials for sale, plus rolling or wood-block stamps and washable ink which meant that one could decorate the linen in a more personalised way. Model pattern styles followed the decorative art trends of their day.³⁵

Although the trousseau was more of a leisure activity for young bourgeois girls who could buy anything they wished for in the shops, it was a necessity in the countryside as it was the only way a young peasant girl could have some new clothes.



The rise and fall of the trousseau

A young girl's trousseau was made with the idea that it would accompany her throughout her whole life. In any case, from the end of the 19th century, changes in production and distribution methods, and in people's traditions and ways of dressing, influenced the way the trousseau was made up. For a long time the bride's trousseau was composed of household and personal linens as well as costumes. The latter were subject to the fast-changing fashions of the 19th century and disappeared at that time. At the beginning of the 20th century there was only household linen (sheets, pillowcases, table cloths, tea towels and towels) and personal linen (day chemises and nightdresses, corset liners, corsets, briefs, petticoats, stockings, collars, cuffs and other trinkets). The number and quality of pieces in the trousseau was a way of underlining the social status of the family. The more fine linen in the trousseau, the higher the social recognition given the family by its peers. In fact, during the 19th century, it was traditional to "exhibit" the future bride's trousseau. This practice has a relatively short life expectancy disappearing at the end of the century, as it was considered at that time to be indecent and shocking. Baronne Staffe spoke of this in 1890 in the following words: "This display of intimate lingerie was awful for the fiancé and more than one fiancée was morally shocked."³⁶ So it was that at the end of the 19th century, at a time when the trousseau was no longer exhibited for prudish reasons, department stores

Page 97.

Laundry Displayer, c. 1900. Cotton embroidered with cotton. Don Bonnefous, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1965.17.10.



took over and displayed underwear for trousseaux for their clientele and showed it in magazines. This relatively reasonable lingerie was also partially responsible for the decline of home-made trousseaux. It was Emile Zola in *Au Bonheur des Dames* who best described the atmosphere found in these new palaces of luxury and excess: “The fabrics were alive ... lace was trembling, moving up and down and concealing the depths of the store in a disturbingly mysterious manner; the very pieces of sheets were thick and square and breathing, sighing their tempting breath; while cardigans moulded themselves more tightly to mannequins, giving them a soul, and a great coat of velvet billowed, supple and warm, as if over flesh shoulders, a beating heart and quivering kidneys.³⁷” These new temples of consumerism had a powerful effect on the housewife: “She flushed with pleasure, this prudish woman who undressed with each new article she picked up, and it rendered her charming and bashful. It was a blond Spanish cravat for thirty francs: she did not want it but the assistant swore that this was the last one and the price was going to go up. After that it was a Chantilly lace veil: a little expensive, fifty francs....Oh my! The lace is just so pretty she kept repeating with a nervous smile. When I am inside there, I could buy the whole shop.³⁸”

Page 98.

Stocking holder, 1900.

Satin. Don Trivier, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 2003.30.2.

The century drew to a close, and the new one would be so characterised by a deep trust in the progress of science and technology that these were thought to be the only elements capable of improving people’s everyday lives. Industrialisation continued and even the weeklies that advised



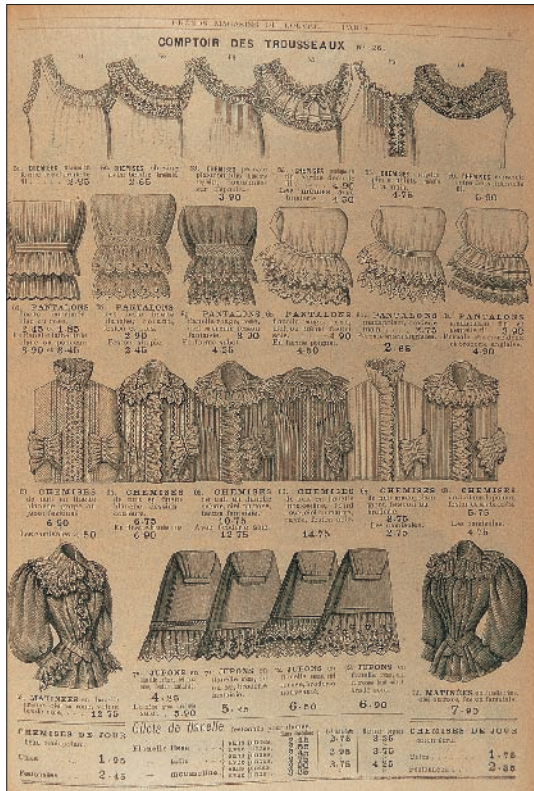
housewives in their domestic tasks and women's work did not hesitate to promote manufactured articles: "In former times young girls made their trousseaux at the heart of their quiet, provincial life....Times have certainly changed; our young people finish studying very late. They add numerous arts and skills to the scientific knowledge of yesteryear, without mentioning sport and travel: what is left for sewing? Nothing, or more or less nothing.³⁹" Similarly, fashion magazines from the beginning of the century all confirm that trousseau linen was being inescapably reduced, both in quantity and size. This is how *Les Modes* magazine summarized the situation in 1926: "What grandmother would have had as meagre a trousseau as ours....scarcely twelve chemises, and so short that they look as if they are made at a discount? What would our wise ancestors say if they had known the price of these scraps of lingerie? They would not believe their ears and would say we were mad. We are wise, it is just our times that are crazy, and that is exactly why we do not pile up a small fortune in our wardrobes. We prefer to renew a part of the contents of the linen cupboard every year than to immobilise a huge amount of money.⁴⁰"

The end of the practice of the trousseau was heralded after the Second World War. The lack of fabric seemed to be the main cause of this loss, but a new age was also coming. This era was based on new technologies and on the feeling that happiness was to be found in an increasingly consumer society. Fashion trends were accelerating, also contributing to the decline of the

Page 99.

Cream linen handkerchief, Second Empire. Don Durozier, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1945.2.2.

The Story of Lingerie



Page 100 – left.

Catalogue "Trousseau Department", at the Bon Marché department store. 15 x 19 cm. Maciet Collection. Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

Page 100 – middle.

Catalogue "The Grands Magasins de Louvre", detail of the trousseau and baby clothes departments. Maciet Collection, Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

Page 100 – right.

Catalogue "Trousseau department", "Grands Magasins" du Louvre, 1903. 21 x 14 cm. Maciet Collection, Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

Page 101.

Corset-concealer, c.1905. Cotton and lace, with pink ribbon. Oberkampf Donation, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1993.103.6.

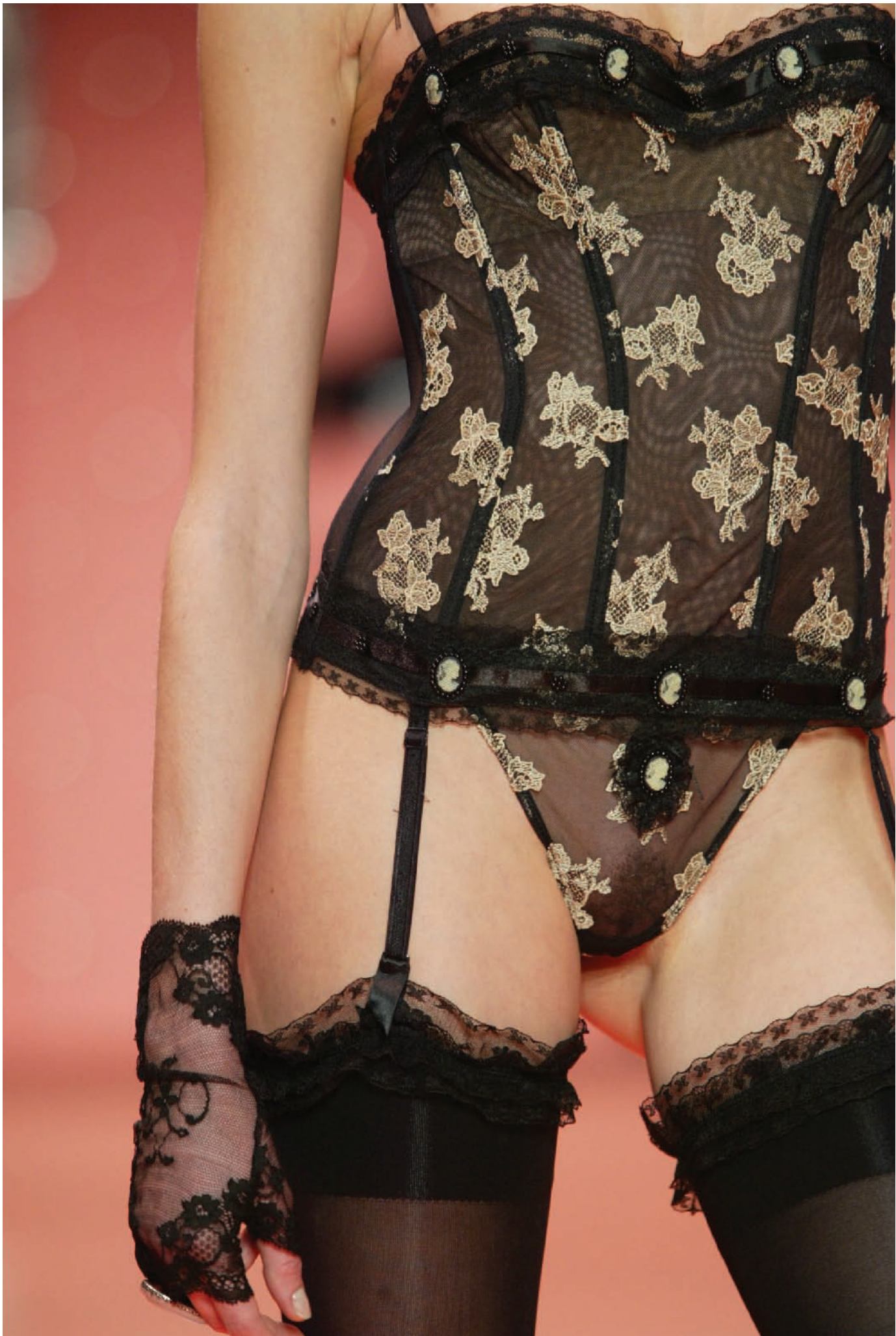


trousseau. Young people were leaving home before marriage, the latter having lost its symbolic value as a major rite of passage. More and more women were working: they no longer had the time or interest to sew and were able to acquire ready-to-wear clothes and underwear which they took pleasure in replacing, not out of necessity but for pleasure. Laundries, and later washing machines, became common: there was no longer the need for the vast quantities of linen required when there was one big washday per year. Fashion magazines of the 1920s and 1930s were true to their times and consecrated fewer pages to making pretty lingerie and more to advice on how to chose and care for it.

Babies also had a trousseau. During pregnancy women used to make the baby's layette with chemises, bibs, pants, nappies, vests, bonnets and dresses which were worn by both sexes until the age of four or five. In the 1950s, hand or machine knitted woollens replaced the delicate linen of previous layettes. Between one year old and three years old, babies wore rompers which consisted of a wide all-in-one outfit which covered the legs and torso of both girls and boys.

The term "wedding basket" dates back to the 18th century when it was traditional to present the gifts from the fiancé to his bride in a basket made of wickerwork. Later this term came to describe the gifts offered during the engagement period, and today everything which is given to the bride and groom. To discover what this basket contained in the 18th century, we can refer to *La Revue de la Mode* of 1902, which, if it is to be believed, talked mainly about lace: "... what can one give? Lace, give lace, it will always be welcome because it can be used in a thousand ways"⁴¹. In fact, the basket contained lace, but also jewels, lengths of fabric, fur and numerous trinkets to adorn the wedding outfit.





Caring for linen

For reasons of hygiene and prudery, body linen became an elegant part of dressing from the 16th century onwards, whenever it might be visible. In the 18th century, body linen was simple and was mainly used as a support for removable lace inserts which were sewn on and could be removed so that the two parts were cleaned separately. The main piece, as in previous centuries, was the chemise, still long, full, white and made of lawn for elegant women and of very thick cloth for the general populace. Linen used to be designed to last a lifetime and its care had a very important role to play. Linen was washed only once or twice a year, which explains the high number of pieces in a trousseau. In the 18th century, a trousseau contained no less than seventy-two chemises. 19th century newspapers and fashion magazines were full of practical tips for housewives, and demand for soap and other products became prolific.

In French villages and the countryside, one can still see the remains of old wash houses. These were places where women gathered and could give advice on a thousand and one ways to achieve a sparkling white wash with as tools only a wash board, soap, running water and hard labour. They were obliterated by the arrival of laundries and other mechanical cleaning methods such as steaming but the nostalgia attached to the tradition is found in a few lines by Guy de Maupassant: “And he suddenly was his mother again as she was during his childhood, on her knees before their front door in Picardy, washing the pile of laundry next to her in the thin stream of water which ran across the garden. He could hear her beating the washboard in the silence of the countryside and her voice shouting, ‘Alfred, bring me some soap.’ And he could smell that same running water and the same mist rising from the watery land and the marsh mud whose unforgettable scent had stayed with him and he found out that very night that his mother had just died.”⁴²

Olga Veschoor, whose book traces the epic history of the trousseau, describes how linen was cared for in the 19th century. Laundering was a matter which involved all female members of the household, from servants to the mistress of the house, during several days. In preparation for the great day, the dirty linen was placed in large bags with cinders to absorb humidity and to prevent mould forming. Accessories were removed from garments as they were more fragile and needed to be cleaned separately. *Le Miroir des Modes* magazine suggested a petticoat pattern to its readers in 1903 which “... is different to the others as the frill can be buttoned to the skirt (which allows it) to be removed from the frill for laundering”.⁴³

The linen was soaped and then left to soak with washing products which were originally home-made and then available ready-made in hardware stores. The next step was to boil the linen on boilers made of wood and later of iron. In the 19th century these two steps were replaced by just one which consisted of putting the linen in an iron steamer. At the wash house, washerwomen knelt on a kneeler to rub the linen on a washboard. They pummelled it and then rinsed it with a lot of water. Then the washing was stretched or hung out to dry. More comfortably well-off families could call on the services of washer women or laundry maids in the period before laundries began to open in the 19th century.

Once the linen was washed and dried it was ironed on big tables with solid or hollow irons made of cast iron or iron. Olga Veschoor describes the different types of irons used in the ironing room: “irons which puff out clothing (a ball of cast iron on the end of a long handle), irons for goffering (with



iron rods) and irons which polished with a bumpy or striated plate for shining clothes. Straw, wood or metal rods were used to goffer headdresses or lace - the fabric was pinched between the rods before ironing".⁴⁴ Other pieces needed slight starching, such as headdresses, bonnets, shirt fronts, collars and cuffs, baptism or communion robes and petticoats. Starching also kept clothes cleaner longer. Linen was cared for until it was completely worn out, hence the importance of knowing how to deal with small tears and mishaps.

Care of raw materials

Cotton and linen share many qualities. They are soft and silky and can be worn in direct contact with the most sensitive of skins. They are very easy to care for and can stand being washed, laundered, ironed and treated for various stains. This ease of care is important in the case of body linen. Because of how it is used, this linen absorbs skin secretions, especially perspiration and so has to be cleaned more frequently than outer clothing.

In contrast to linen and cotton, wool and silk have very good heat retaining qualities. Their fibre conducts heat badly, retaining the latter and so protecting the body more effectively against cold or excessive outside temperatures. Silk is very permeable to air and various gases, and so encourages the skin to breathe and the exchange of gases. In contrast to wool, silk is fine and soft and does not irritate

Page 104.

Dupin, Leclerc, *Elegant Dressmaker on her way to hand over her work*. The Galleries of French Fashion and Costume, 11th book, 1775. Print, Galliera Museum, Paris.

Page 105.

Misery and Vanity or Nothing at All, Museum of the Grottesque n°22. Martinet Bookshop, Paris.



the skin like wool. In addition, it has a beautiful shine and can be embellished with very elegant, intricate decoration. Its disadvantage, however, is how fragile it is when in contact with textile cleaning products. Silk is easily dirtied and stained yet cannot be washed.

It is advisable to send silk articles to a good dry cleaner. Less precious articles can be cleaned at home. White silk should be cleaned in very soapy, lukewarm water with a good quality soap (such as Marseille-type soap). One must not rub the fabric, which leaves white marks and marbling. Once the washing is finished, it must be rinsed thoroughly several times, wrung out inside a clean, dry white cloth, dried flat and ironed on the wrong side when very damp. For coloured silk, first ensure that the colour is fast and then proceed in the same way as for white silk. The last rinse should be done in a mixture of water and vinegar which enhances the colour. Finally, shine can be added to black silk by dipping it briefly in a mix of water and sulphuric acid.⁴⁵

The use of new synthetic fibres became more common in the manufacture of underwear during the 1950s. The most common of these fibres was undoubtedly Nylon, the name of the brand of polyamide invented by the Nemours Company Dupont in 1939. The main characteristics of these new fibres were that they were very hardwearing, wrinklefree and light. From that moment on, lingerie could at last be free machine washed, needed no ironing and would mould itself to all shapes with no sense of constraint or restriction.

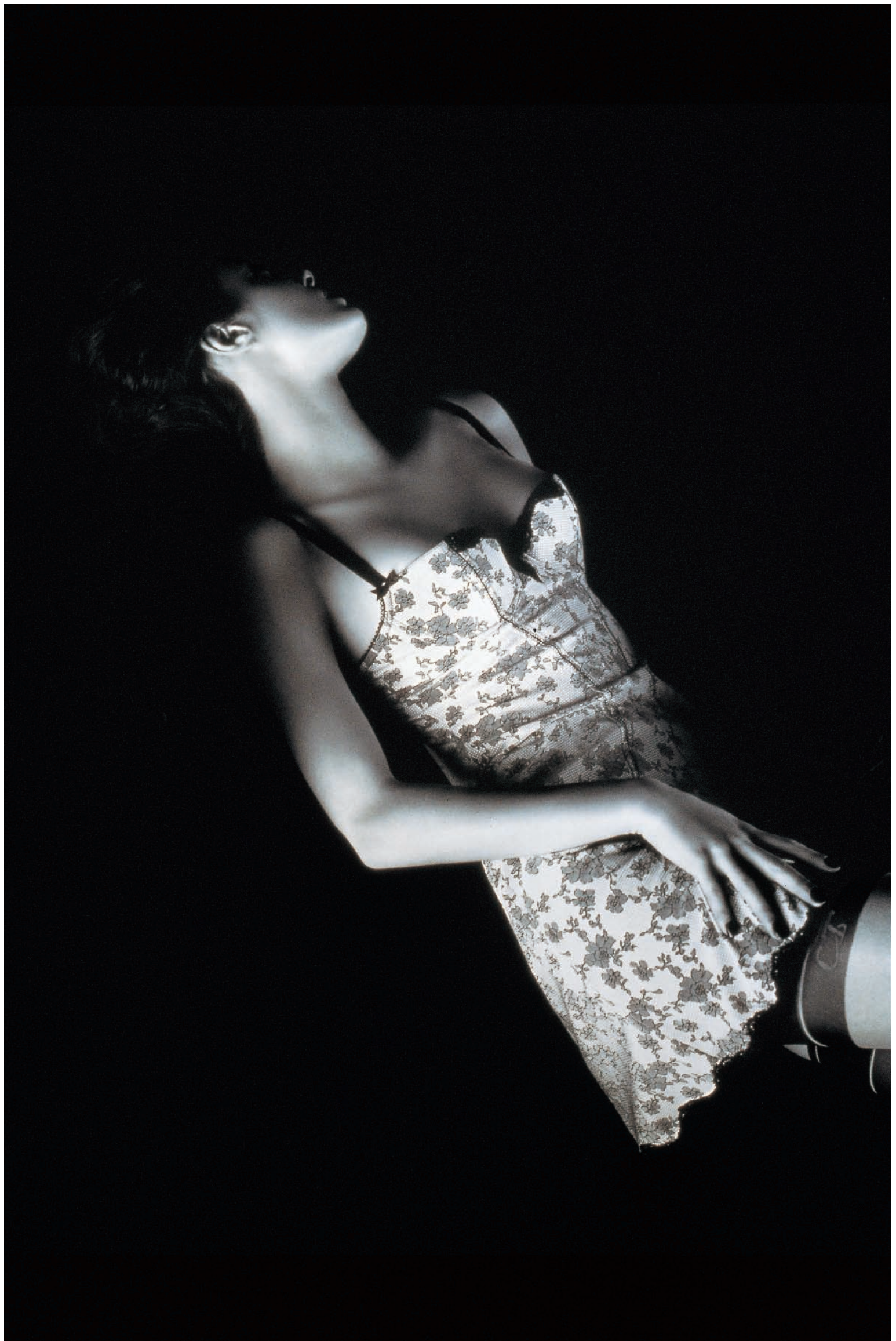
Page 106-107.

Basset, *The economic bathing of the Incredibles*.

Print, "mœurs" series. Musée Carnavalet, Paris.







A Woman's private life and clothing

The nightdress

In ancient times people slept in a shirt, at first the same one they had worn during the day. Later, the cut of each particular type of shirt varied. In the middle ages the nightshirt was abandoned as men and women slept in the nude. Only with the Renaissance did the nightdress or shirt return. And how can the repudiation of the nightshirt for four centuries be explained? According to Cecil Saint Laurent in *Histoire Imprévue des dessous féminins* (“*The Unexpected History of Women's Underwear*”), it was during the Middle Ages that men and women began to be distinguished by their dress. Men wore outfits in two parts (top and bottom) and women wore dresses exclusively. But this aim “became contradictory in the effort of differentiating between the two sexes, as nightshirts were identical for both sexes and men and women looked the same when they went to bed together”.⁴⁶ Attiring oneself with a nightshirt or, conversely, getting between the sheets naked, assumed particular importance at this time: in the first case one was declaring refusal of any amorous pursuit and, in the second, one was clearly proclaiming availability.

In the 13th century women wore either a “camisole” at night (this garment was buttoned up at the back) or a “night coat”, a garment which reached to the hips and, with its folds along the back, resembled the French “casaquin” (a type of smock). The latter could be used as a nightdress or a dressing gown, and it was worn by both bourgeois ladies and their servants. Women also wore nightcaps, of which there were many in their trousseaux. In the following century, the nightdress was buttoned up, laced up and long sleeved, covering the woman from her neck to her feet. At this time men definitively abandoned nightshirts and began wearing pajamas. After the First World War, nightdresses, following underwear fashion in general, were cut straight and were made of light, pastel fabrics, of which pink was the most popular. Even though pajamas were in vogue in the 1930s for home or beach wear, women chose to wear nightdresses after the war and in 1950s. Eventually, in the 1960s, anything was possible, as fashion gained momentum and the changes in lifestyle offered a multitude of choices, from pajamas to baby doll nighties to long nightdresses.

The negligee

Like the nightdress, the negligee was a garment reserved for a woman's private life, although it was worn to be elegant when receiving visitors in her bedroom. It remained popular also through 19th century. In the 17th century, women could stay in their nightdresses until late in the day as they had become used to receiving visitors while still in bed. Sometimes they put a negligee on top of their nightdress. They could receive people in this way, even a stranger, with no embarrassment.

The Story of Lingerie



Page 110.

François Boucher, *The Toilette*, 1742. Oil on canvas, 52.5 x 65.5 cm. Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Madrid.

Page 111.

Jan Steen, *The Morning Dressing*, c.1663.

Oil on wood, 64.7 x 53 cm. Royal Collection, London.

At the end of the 19th century it was customary to wear a negligee only in the presence of one's family or close friends: "At home dressing is particularly interesting. It is not meant to be seen by everyone and is all the more seductive for those who have the privilege of admiring it... One can stay like this all day, except if one is receiving, and honour one's close friends: it is the same if they are present in the dining room, where only family gather, or more or less⁴⁷." The negligee was an equivocal garment which was simultaneously intimate and ostentatious, and it inspired 18th century underwear ending up as lingerie by the beginning of the 20th century. The flounced dress was in vogue around 1720 as outerwear, and had been worn until then as a negligee. It had been reserved for ladies' boudoirs or for expectant mothers who wished to disguise their condition in its ample folds. Adopting a garment which was formerly for private use as outerwear was not allowed by certain people who found such practices shocking. The Princess of Palatine refused admission to any women thus attired because "it is as if one was going to bed", as she declared in a letter on 12th April 1721.⁴⁸

In the 19th century, the negligee was a very ornate garment made of floaty fabrics with a profusion of lace and ribbons. It was worn without a corset and reserved for the morning, for the sick or for menstruating women. In the 20th century, negligees began to become daywear, first worn with family and close friends and then as day dresses, then later as evening dresses.



Page 112.

Anonymous, *Baths and Dressing n° 10*. 18th century.

Print. Carnavalet Museum, Paris.

Page 113.

Anonymous, *Baths and Dressing n° 7*. 18th century.

Print. Carnavalet Museum Paris.









There seems to be no limits to the whims of elegant women when they concern intimate apparel: “... one of these ladies was desirous one day of fine pleated negligees with a muslin coat fastened with a Cluny lace Medici collar, the same as the one in the portrait of Mary of Medici in the Louvre. An artist went to the museum to illustrate the model in the famous painting. The lace was made in Belgium and the client was so delighted with the result that she ordered twelve identical negligees”.⁴⁹

The bedroom and private life

During the Ancien Regime, royal bed chambers were open to members of the court. It is said that Louis XIV even signed royal edicts there. This space was intimate yet accessible and became a favourite subject for artists or illustrators who wished to find the ideal setting for painting the female form in various states of undress, washing and dressing or in love scenes. A huge collection of illustrations exists, especially from the 18th century, depicting views of stays or corsets being unlaced, either by the maid (which was usual as it was impossible to unlace a corset by oneself until 1840 when easy lacing was invented) or by a husband or lover. The action of unlacing could effectively be seen as a metaphor for a woman’s deflowering. He who succeeded in freeing the beauty from her paraphernalia had the final victory! Even when the corset was fastened by hooks and eyes, unfastening it was still an erotically charged action.⁵⁰

Page 114.

The awakening of the laundry workers, c. 1801 (detail).

Engraving, 24.5 x 32 cm.

Maciet Album, Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

Page 115.

Le Bon Genre, “Luxury and Poverty” N° 104, c. 1810.

Engraving, 24 x 29.5 cm.

Maciet Album, Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.





Prudery did not exist between women. An elegant woman was washed, dressed and her hair was dressed by her maid. In addition, she often had some of her friends attend this ritual. If a completely unknown lady appeared when a woman was preparing her toilette, the former would be cordially invited to join the proceedings. Writing under the pen of Guy de Maupassant, an elegant lady praises her maid effusively in the following:

“I was amazed by her capacities. I had never had such service. She dressed me quickly with astonishingly light hands. I never felt her fingers on my skin, and I find nothing more unpleasant than the contact with a maid’s hand. I quickly became extremely lazy as it was so pleasant to let myself be dressed, from head to toe, from my chemise to my gloves, by this tall, shy girl who sometimes blushed and who never spoke. After my bath she rubbed and massaged me while I was half asleep on my daybed: indeed, I considered her as a friend from an inferior class rather than just a servant.”⁵¹

The end of the story reveals that the maid was, in fact, a man dressed as a woman and who had brutally held our elegant lady up to ridicule in her most intimate moments.

Page 116.

Deveria, “Eight o’ clock in the evening” The Hours of the Parisian, c. 1830. Galliera Museum, Paris.

Page 117.

The Grizzettes’ Bedtime, “Le bon Genre”, c. 1830. Private collection.

Page 118.

“The Cushions”, Fashions and Manners of Today, Galliera Museum, Paris.

Page 119.

“A Beautiful Morning”, Fashions and Manners of Today, 1914. Galliera Museum, Paris.

1912

LES COUSSINS

Pl. V.



Georges Legoff.

*Voici l'heure entre toutes si délicate,
Si délicate et précieuse, où l'on goûte
Les minutes qui s'égrenent goutte à goutte
Comme un collier de turquoises et d'agates.*

1914

MODES ET MANIÈRES D'AUJOURD'HUI

Pl. I.



G. BARBIERE 1914

La Belle Matineuse

Je t'ai connue à ton matin, ô belle Matineuse! Souviens-toi....



Page 120.

Nightdress and costume underskirt, commercial catalogue
Au Printemps, 1908. Galliera Museum, Paris.

Page 121.

Négligé by Dior. White lace, pink satin bow, c.1960.

Maritini donation, Galliera Museum, Paris.

Inv. 2003.77.1A/B.



The Story of Lingerie



Page 122 – left.

"Commercial Catalogue of the *Grands Magasins du Louvre, Paris*", *Underdress*, summer 1907.

Galliera Museum, Paris.

Page 122 – right.

Wyndham, *Humorous Photography*,

1st quarter of the 20th century. Private collection, Paris.



Page 123 – left.

Négligé, c. 1950. Private collection, Paris.

Page 123 – right.

Yva Richard, *Combinaison*. Silver print, 18 x 13 cm,
c. 1920. Private collection, Paris.



Underwear according to the season and social status

In the past there were no clothes or underwear specifically designed for various seasons. These were defined rather by the use of different fabrics: taffeta, muslin, lace made with beads for summer; satin, velvet and needle-point lace for winter. From the 18th century, fashion was becoming more and more influential on all social classes in town. Costumes for the populace and for the upper classes thus became more similar. Panniers were as de rigueur for elegant woman as they were for servants or tradeswomen. This could explain why maids were given articles or why they were sold to second-hand merchants. After they were changed slightly, these articles could have a second or even a third life.

Clothing for children

For centuries, new-born babies were wrapped up in cloth which prevented them from moving. This binding was considered necessary to protect the baby and to let its bones grow. When it was unbound, the baby wore a dress over a chemise, petticoats and type of little stiffened corset which supported back and belly. At four or five years old, boys wore knickerbockers like their fathers while little girls wore stays and voluminous petticoats like their mothers.

Moralist ideas that children should be dressed in a way that was specifically adapted for them began to take hold in the 18th century. The recommendations of J.J. Rousseau are of particular note: "Limbs on a growing body should have space in their garments. Nothing should impede their movement or their growth; nothing should be too tight or close and there should be no ties. The French style of dress is impeding and unhealthy for adults and especially damaging for children."⁵²

As well as appropriate clothing, the moralists advised on the importance of sport and games as part of both girls' and boys' education: "... convents and boarding schools serve heavy food but the children frolic a lot and run and play games in the open air and in the gardens. This is preferable to being brought up in their fathers' houses where girls are delicately nurtured, flattered or scolded, always sitting in sight of their mothers in a closed off chamber; they do not dare to get up, walk, speak or sigh and they do not have one moment of freedom for playing, jumping, running, shouting or for embracing life with the natural petulance of their age."⁵³

These recommendations appeared to be short-lived, however, as young girls were once again fastened into corsets and layered petticoats from 1820-1825. They were to adopt the crinoline skirts and bearing of their mothers. It was only in the period between the two wars that children's dress would finally and fundamentally separate from that of adults.

Page 124.

"Parisian Fashion" n°331, *Madame Colas' Lingerie, Rue Vivienne, 47*, Lingerie Boutique. 1833. Private Collection.



Contradictory arguments about trousers for women and the corset

Lingerie is the garment closest to one's body and has always seemed to play a hygienic role. Two undergarments, more than any others, have been the subject of heated debate and have revealed two opposing factions each with ardent defenders and advocates: these garments are trousers for women, often known as bloomers, and the corset.

Trousers or bloomers

On the one hand they were considered moral and protective, especially for young girls and horsewomen, and, on the other hand, they were considered improper and only appropriate for courtesans and dancers. Whether open or closed, trousers have always sparked controversy. Throughout the 19th century doctors recommended that women wear trousers or bloomers for hygiene reasons. But there were many opponents to the idea of trousers for women. "Le Sport" newspaper in 1873: "There could sometimes be a reason for trousers in a woman's wardrobe, but they would not be there for reasons of elegance. They are necessary but never graceful."⁵⁴

In fact, from 1850, the question was not whether or not to wear them, as they had become "indispensable" for some while remaining "unspeakable" for others, but their presence under ample crinoline dress petticoats was self-evident for everyone. Bertall summed up the situation in this way: "it is because of the crinoline and its enormous iron cages.....that it has been necessary to use these little fine linen or cotton sheaths which are supposed to guarantee the function which skirts and petticoats no longer do, as they are positioned too far away."⁵⁵ From then on the issue was centred on the very form of the bloomers, the "open" ones which were slit between the legs or the "closed" ones which were sewn up. The open or closed bloomers became metaphors for the "accessibility, or inaccessibility of the female sex".⁵⁶ Hygiene was the deciding factor in this heated debate. Doctors had their opinions, and they were rather against open bloomers which allowed "air and the numerous germs contained in it to circulate".⁵⁷

At the end of the century there seems to have been a certain freedom of choice as to whether one wore open or closed bloomers. A pattern for bloomers published in *La Mode du Journal* in 1897 gave instructions for making both versions. From then on bloomers were popular with women, and in 1902, when the fashion for tight fitting skirts ruled out any extra padding on the hips, bloomers were not abandoned (an idea which had become unthinkable). Instead they were joined to the petticoat or the slip, thus creating new pieces of lingerie which tended towards simpler shapes and a smaller number of pieces.

The corset

"She was a woman of around thirty-six years of age, heavily built, radiant and a joy to observe. She was breathing with difficulty, violently constrained by her too tight corset: and the pressure of this contraption pushed the fluctuating mass of her voluptuous chest up to her double chin."⁵⁸



Page 126.

Ladies underwear, Linen shift, 1835 and cotton drawers, 1834, England. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Page 127.

Diana Slip, *Slit Drawers*, c. 1935.

Silver Print, 13 x 9.3 cm. Private Collection, Paris.



Page 128.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Woman in corset, Passing Conquest*, 1986. Black Chalk and oil on silk, 104 x 866 cm. Musée des Augustins, Toulouse.

Page 129.

Black corset with blue flowers, 1900. Don Bourdy, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1959.7.4.

Page 130.

Sheet of 16 photographs, Private collection, Paris.

Page 131.

Yva Richard, *Bouclette and her corset*. Silver print, c. 1925, 17,6 x 13 cm. Private collection, Paris.

While writers and artists of the 19th century played on the comic, if not ridiculous aspect of women in corsets, doctors and moralists had been denouncing this garment for a long time. In their opinion it was responsible for the prolapse and constriction of certain organs, broken ribs, miscarriage, dizziness and all sorts of problems. Once again, J.J. Rousseau describes the use of the corset: “Their wives (in Ancient Greece) were unaware of the use of stays with which our wives deform their figures more than they define them... I do not dare to investigate the reasons why women continue to torture themselves in this way: I agree that a drooping breast or a swollen belly is very unattractive in a twenty-year-old, but it is no longer shocking in a thirty-year-old.”⁵⁹

On the eve of the French Revolution, thinking about costume reform had made a good start. The Popular Republican Arts Society issued a pamphlet in 1794 entitled “Considerations on the need for changing French costume” in which it was understood that the revolutionaries were against the use of the corset. It was also obvious that dress should primarily respect hygiene, protect the body without damaging it and respect freedom of movement. Dress should also, however, respect equality between people, making no distinction between status or fortune, and it should therefore be the same for all citizens.

Defenders of the corset cited its role in supporting the body as much as it defined the figure. Despite doctors’ objections, on which much was written after 1850, the corset remained the prerogative of self-respecting women. In fact, it was these women who were the most ardent defenders of the corset. An apologia on wearing the corset, written by a woman, appeared in *La Vraie Mode* in 1899: “Just because doctors have been able to cite all cases of lesions or disease in women as being a result of abuse of the corset, is that a reason to rule out its use?... And how can one blame women for persisting in dressing themselves and their daughters in the garment which best enhances their physical attributes?”⁶⁰ Only children were exempt from the growing hold of the corset at the end of the 19th century. In fact, the amalgamation between high morals and artificial body support would last throughout the 19th century. The corset in a much more flexible form was still used in the 1920s and 1930s. In the April 1921 issue of *Les Modes* magazine it was still put forward that “... the body should be supported, and to do this a corset is indispensable”.⁶¹

In the 19th century there were countless attempts to introduce a more hygienic, less coercive corset. All publicity at the end of the century had this tone. The importance of buying “made to measure” corsets was underlined, since these would allow some women “... to enhance their bust, and others to minimise it. This lady could push back her hips, while this one could pad them out as much as possible...”⁶² All in all everyone could have a fashionable silhouette but in a gentler way than in the past. At the same time, research was being carried out on healthy underwear made from textile blends which touted their hygienic qualities. Flannel petticoats and bloomers were recommended by doctors. Doctor Jaeger was convinced of the beneficial qualities of wool and created the “Sanitary Woollen System”. Doctor Rasurel manufactured underwear from peat cotton mixed with wool fibres.

In the same way the question of hygiene was linked to body hygiene in the 19th century: in newspapers and magazines there were a great many advertisements for hygienic products such as Marseille soap and Eau de Cologne. There were also a huge number of articles propagating health and beauty. In the *Revue de la Mode* in 1898 readers learnt that in winter “... it is beneficial to replace a cold shower with a dip in a cold bath. In addition to this, at least once a month one should take a long hot bath (between one hour and an hour and a quarter) as it is necessary to clean the skin thoroughly and to soften it”.⁶³ In *La Vraie Mode* in 1899, Doctor Verax gave his opinion on the efficiency of lotions which “... play a great role in beauty hygiene... they thus have a role in cleanliness”.⁶⁴









Sports underwear

The growing interest women showed in sport at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century necessitated adapting existing outfits or designing new ones. This was to meet the demands for freedom of movement, while remaining in line with the proper values and morality of the times. Acceptable sports could be gymnastics, swimming, riding or cycling. The garment which would play a very important, and even central, role in trying promoting. The co-existence of physical culture and customs were trousers. These were only witnessed definitively in the mid-14th century when male costume stopped being long and full and became short and fitted. Legs were revealed and were first covered by boots. The covering then became knickerbockers and finally men's trousers. As for women, they would remain in long dresses with their legs hidden under the skirt. This differentiation of dress between the sexes would be more marked at certain moments and less at others, but it would never really be brought into the open until the end of the 19th century.

Horseback riding

At the end of the 18th century in France, more comfortable clothes which allowed greater freedom of movement and which were therefore better adapted to physical activity became common due to the influence of English fashion. At that time, these outfits were restricted to riding habits. This was how French women adopted the riding jacket particular to English horsemen, followed by the tailcoat and then the riding hat. It was Catherine de Medicis, however, who is reputed to have introduced breeches to France, during the Renaissance (modelled on the style of her native country), so that she could mount astride a horse. In any case, the fashion for trousers was not generalised over the next two centuries. And although panniers in the 18th century held dresses far from the body, women did not demand trousers.

For women who rode side-saddle, the essential characteristics of the habit were a long skirt with a matching jacket reaching to just below the hips or a riding jacket which reached to the feet and was modelled on the men's costume. The outfit was finished off by a three-cornered gat (a tricorne) which was smaller and flatter than the male version. Stays were designed which were shorter in front especially for "ladies who ride". But were they wearing anything under the habit? Sometimes they were, and sometimes they were not. It was sometimes invisible briefs under the full skirt, generally knitted in black silk, like those mentioned in the inventory following the death of Mme de Pompadour. There were also many sensational falls chronicled during the 17th and 18th centuries (from horses, donkeys, carriages or when walking), many of them celebrated in prose or verse. Nevertheless, the several attempts at reintroducing bloomers under skirts, doubtless out of fear of these falls, had little success. From the mid-19th century, bloomers or cloth briefs were worn under a skirt of asymmetrical length so that the horsewoman could hide her legs when in the saddle or even mount astride a horse. It was not until the 1920s, however, when mounting astride became the norm for both sexes, that trousers became common.

Cycling

In an article with the title "Trousers for women", which appeared in *Ramage* n°13, Lydia Kamitsis analyses the influence of women's sports on their clothing. Even though horseback riding can accommodate the tradition of side-saddle, where a woman rides with both legs on the same side of the horse, allowing a long skirt to be worn, the same cannot be said of cycling. Indeed, full skirts were caught in the wheels, chain or pedals, and unpredictable weather (gusts of wind) or road conditions (falls, collisions) could lift the skirts. The invention of the bicycle and the growing practice of cycling brought about a new type of garment: zouave pants which were originally part of the oriental military uniform and which were popular at first.

Page 132.

Edgar Degas, *The Star or the Dancer on Stage*,
1879-1881. Pastel on monotype, 58 x 42 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Page 134.

"A Straight Corset, new form of the *Maison de Vertus Sœurs*", *Les Modes*, March 1903.
Galliera Museum, Paris.

Page 135.

Jacques Mauvain, *Their Trousers, how they wear them*,
Jean Fort, publisher, 1923. Private collection, Paris.

JACQUES MAUVAIN

Leurs Pantalons

COMMENT ELLES LES PORTENT

NOUVELLE ÉDITION ENTIÈREMENT REMANIÉE ET AUGMENTÉE DE NOMBREUX INTERVIEWS

ORNÉE DE DIX DESSINS HORS TEXTE DE HÉROUARD



JEAN FORT, ÉDITEUR - 12, Rue de Chabrol - PARIS

1923



These ample trousers fully covered the lower part of the body the same way as a skirt, but they had two legs which meant that one had enough ease of movement for pedalling. From this moment on they became outerwear and were worn with a shirt accessorised by a shirt-front, a tie and a boater or felt hat, were borrowed from masculine attire. Fashion magazines were not really in favour of zouave pants, finding them devoid of elegance, and the latter encountered competition in the form of the separated skirt, later called culottes, or long skirts which covered the trousers underneath completely. Other suggestions were introduced, but without any follow-up.⁶⁵

Trousers had already been introduced for other sports, such as swimming or gymnastics. But the difference was that these sports were practiced in enclosed areas, while cycling, like riding, was practiced in public places which were accessible to everyone (parks, boulevards, paths....). The main difference was size. When trousers were quite visible under a bathing tunic, it was not considered unseemly, as this outfit was confined to the beach. When a rider or cyclist dismounted however, she became a lady walking amongst other ladies and should be dressed appropriately, that is to say without trousers showing. Magazines during this time recognised that it was necessary to wear more suitable clothing for sporting activities, but were still wary in what they suggested: "It is certain that culottes were very practical but did not suit some people and they had a certain cachet that many women did not care to admit to. Skirts were suited to walking but made cycling difficult and a little dangerous: they were not at all suitable for even a slightly lengthy excursion. Today tailors have their work cut out; they have invented many different models with the following common aim: practical trousers for mounting a bicycle which take the form of a skirt when a woman is walking."⁶⁶ As you can see, trousers for cycling were hardly more "tolerated" as an undergarment. They were huge and puffed, did not take on any shape and were nicknamed "a blouse with legs", "dress-trousers", "the separatist", "separate legs", "the androgynous dress" or even the "male dress". Even though they were made out of thick cloth, they still looked like bloomers that a woman had agreed to display. As a result, caricatures and songs proliferated about these cycling trousers. This is why there were so many attempts to disguise cycling trousers, eventually finishing in the triumph of culottes which were similar to women's dress of the time.

Page 136.

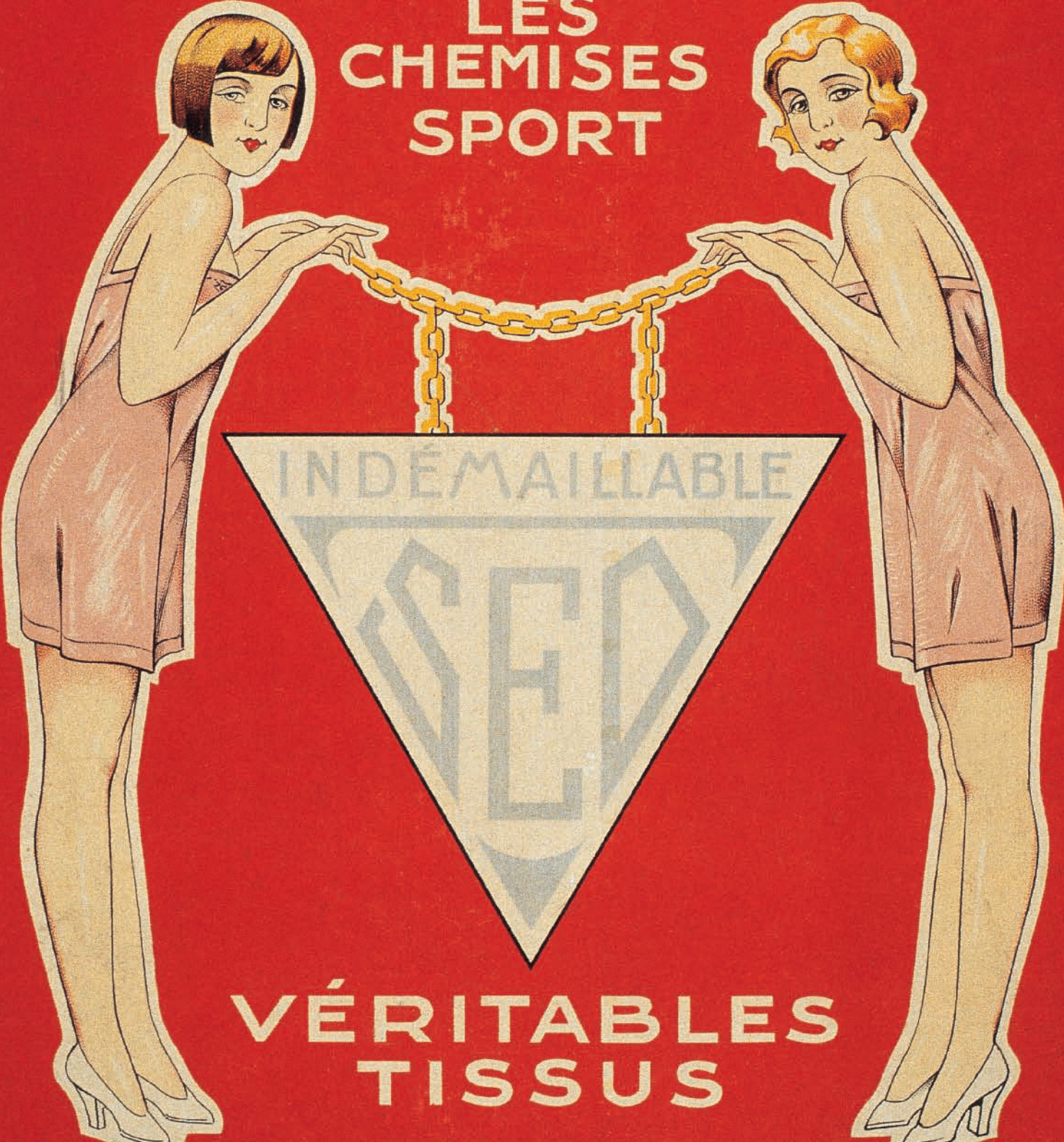
Ostra Publishing, c. 1930. Postcard, blank back,
9 x 14 cm. Private Collection, Paris.

Page 137.

Anonymous, advertisement poster "Underwear sport
shirts, real fabric, Chaîne", c. 1930. 22 x 18 cm.

Forney Library, Paris.

LES SOUS VÊTEMENTS
LES CHEMISES SPORT



INDÉMAILLABLE
VED

VÉRITABLES TISSUS

CHAINED



Swimming

Since ancient times women swam dressed in a simple chemise. This practice continued until the Middle Ages. In the 17th and 18th centuries, court aristocracy much preferred riding to bathing. Bathing was thus relegated to the sick or to the common people.

It was only on the eve of the Revolution that interest grew once more in the enjoyment of water. Men wore long johns or bathed naked, when in the company of men. The few women who ventured into the water at first simply wore a dress which resembled any other dress in their wardrobe, and they could only enter the water once a bell had rung signifying that the men had left the beach. The women wore robes that they only took off at the water's edge and then entered the water with the support of their maids. Once they had finished walking in the water, their maids covered them once more with their robes and accompanied them to their cabins where they were dried and dressed. As for men, they had long had the habit, especially in the country, of swimming in the nude.

Between 1900 and 1940, the swimming costume became shorter and shorter, imitating the trend of underwear. At first it was comprised of a short dress and trousers pulled in at the knee. It then became a one piece garment which grew shorter and skimpier year by year. In 1914, the year that the First World War was declared, women were already showing their shoulders, arms and half their thighs. At this time, jersey was used to manufacture swimming costumes. The colours were different from those used in lingerie: black, white, red and blue were often patterned. In the years that followed, sun worshipping meant that women revealed their bodies to the sun more and more with no thought of modesty. Little girls then began to wear two-pieces swimming costumes and older girls followed suit after 1950 with the introduction of the bikini. Its name was taken from an atoll in the Pacific where a nuclear bomb had been tested. For plump women, however as well as for those who were too thin, the following type of swimsuit was recommended: "...a one-piece...as it shapes and supports the body".⁶⁷ In the lead-in to May 1968, there was a diverse range of swimsuits, from the one piece (with or without legs) to the two-piece and even the monokini. What characterised the female swimmer in the second half of the 20th century was the fact that she would sometimes swim without a stitch on and at other times she could choose from a multitude of swimsuit styles which were revealing to a greater or lesser extent.

Dancers

Perhaps in more than in any other context, trousers or bloomers seemed to find their place under the skirts of dancers. In Ancient Rome, actresses and acrobats wore them. Under Louis XV, there was a ruling that obliged dancers and actors to wear trousers. Even though actors did not see wearing trousers as practical and completely ignored the ruling, dancers followed it to the letter. In fact, using the pretext that bloomers hid all intimate parts of the body from view, female dancers shortened their skirts and, in dances such as the cancan, exposed their legs and bloomers with each movement, to great effect on the male audience. We must not forget that at this time no other women wore bloomers. This undergarment had become necessary for decency's sake and quickly took on strong erotic and sexual connotations. "They were dancing ... The females' thighs were dislocated and they leapt in a flurry of skirts which revealed their underwear. They lifted their legs above their heads with amazing ease and they jiggled their bellies, wriggling their rumps and shaking their breasts and gave off around them an energetic allure of perspiring women."⁶⁸

During the second half of the 19th century, dancers' skirts shortened until they became the "tutu", even if it did reach the knee. In the second half of the 20th century, the tutu became less and less customary. From this time on, dancers wore a leotard and tights. This brought about the invention of two new undergarments: tights which were worn under ski pants before being adopted as street-wear under skirts, and the body, worn both as outer- and under-wear.

Page 138.

Topin, poster, "*Stepy, she is sensational!*",

c. 1970. 86 x 65 cm. Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.



*Eroticism, seduction
and fetishism*



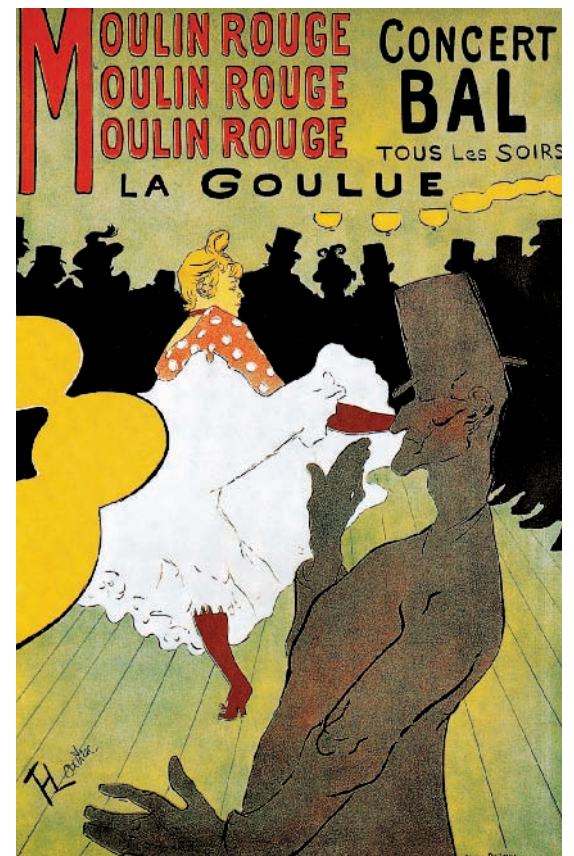
The eroticism of women's underwear

Why does eroticism seem to represent the underlying value of underwear?

Eroticism is "... a marked taste for sexual things ...sensuality."⁶⁹ Catching a glimpse of a woman's underwear greatly affects the one who sees it, as if what is invisible is less important than what is visible. What is left to the imagination inspires the senses, because when everything is displayed with no (false) prudery, there is no journey down the tortuous road from the imagination to reality. In fact, according to Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935), only 350 men out of 1000 were attracted by the entirely naked body of the female, whereas 400 preferred the body semi-clothed and 250 preferred it to remain fully clothed⁷⁰. Therefore, for many men, the semi-clothed body is erotic and an object of fantasy. More than ever, in this game of peek-a-boo, women's underwear has a major role.

When we think back to the ladies of the Ancien Régime in France who revealed their petticoats when riding side-saddle or going up stairs, it is clear that certain women's undergarments were already being displayed. Petticoats had always been the exception in the world of underwear. They were designed to be seen and heard. While other undergarments were simple and modest, petticoats were often decorated and colourful, as they were meant to be seen. The seductive function of the petticoat was to last throughout the 19th century and all efforts were made to attract attention to it. One noticed the rustling first, as it was noticeable to someone listening for it who could then see frills peeking out from under the skirt. Great interest was taken in this, as we can see in detailed descriptions by French fashion journalists and novelists. They used alliterations of "F" to evoke the "frou-frou", or rustling. The discovery of this sound enveloping the object of desire was a part of the eroticism of underwear, as this "man to man" conversation shows: "Take your time to listen to the music of fabrics. This music is at the heart of man's desire, that desire of which one speaks so little or so badly."⁷¹

In fact, man's desire "of which one speaks so badly" (like woman's desire, of which one speaks just as badly) is called upon by all the senses and the first of these is hearing, well before sight or touch. Women's underwear is erotic because it disturbs a man's senses and assumes a secret allure. It is hidden, can be heard and then seen and felt. After a man has heard petticoats, he imagines what they look like and, with a little luck, he is allowed to look at them; when it is finally revealed, underwear is the last barrier between two bodies. Ultimately, appearing in underwear is an ambiguous way of hiding and showing the body as it simultaneously displays and covers it up. This is why strip-tease is so popular, as the show begins with the object of desire being covered up and then progressively revealed. The strip-tease started in Paris, France, in the 19th century with "Yvette's bedtime" but found its name and success in the United States before crossing back over the Atlantic. The strip-tease owed its success to the way layers were removed and then gradually revealed what was hidden underneath, so maintaining a certain suspense for the audience. A young lady removing her clothes went further by making visible something which usually is not. In the Crazy Horse shows, Alain Bernardin uses this same logic by setting up a very complex lighting system which covers the dancers with fishnet stocking patterns that appear and then disappear, making up the stage costumes, revealing underwear (when there is any) and especially revealing the dancers' bodies.



Page 140.

The Dancers of the Crazy Horse.

Page 142.

E. Klemm, *Chair de Lune*, c. 1938.

Diana Slip catalogue, board 1. Private collection, Paris.

Page 143.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Moulin Rouge – La Goulue*, 1891. Coloured lithography (poster), 191 x 115 cm.

Page 144.

Yva Richard, *Ladies' Underwear*, c. 1938.

Silver print, 16 x 11 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Page 145.

Costume-slip circa 1897. Pink taffeta and satin ribbons.

Don Belgerie, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv. 1979.77.1.







Page 146.

Yva Richard, *Postcard with unwritten back*, c. 1920.

14 x 9 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Page 147.

"The Thylda corset, the ideal hygienic corset for Parisian woman", *Les Modes*, December 1907.

Galliera Museum, Paris.

LES MODES



Photo Felix.

LE CORSET THYLDA
22, Place Vendôme. — PARIS

L'idéal corset hygiénique de la Parisienne.



This play of visible and invisible is not only seen in cabaret but also in everyday life. A bra can be visible under a blouse, on purpose or otherwise, and briefs or a G-string can be seen under trousers or spotted at the waistline. Some say there is nothing more erotic than this type of furtive look! Furthermore, a woman can choose to wear a muslin or delicate voile top to a party under which she wears a lace bustier, knowing the effect this will have on men's imagination. Transparency plays a great role in the strategy of hiding and displaying the body, as it can cover physical imperfections and reveal without the shock of complete nudity.

In this way, the eroticism of underwear comes from both its appearance and its link with the imagination and fantasy.

Sight, of course, is a sense which plays a part in the game of sensuality; the observer notes the female form whose lines are enhanced by underwear. The erotic charge of women's underwear is also due to the way it accentuates the femininity of the body. The corsetry of the 19th century, for example, meant not only that the sex sirens of the day could be observed but also that the female body's



characteristics were accentuated. The corset really was the garment which remodelled the body the most by lifting the bust, pulling in the waist and rounding the hips. These are the most sensual parts of the female body and the most symbolic of maternity (breast and hips), and they were systematically accentuated.

The erotic charge of underwear is also based on the way it underlines the natural differences between men and women. Very often in the history of western societies, undergarments which accentuated certain parts of the body were not acceptable as they shocked the sensibilities of the time. Sometime is needed before new things become acceptable, but as soon as “Mrs Average” realises that something is flattering, a new accessory is here to stay! This was the case with bloomers, for example. Legend has it that they were introduced by Catherine de Médicis, who had very slim legs and who used this new garment as a way of showing off her assets. In fact, although they were worn under trousers, the bloomers were often visible and so flattered the shape of the wearer “following the well-known principle that if one tries to hide something it is more effective when hinted at than when revealed”⁷².

Page 149.

Anonymous, Photograph for the *Diana Slip*, c. 1935.

Silver print, 16 x 10 cm. Private collection.



Although bloomers were acceptable in the 16th century, it was difficult for them to remain so during the following centuries. They were considered indecent due to the way they accentuated the anatomy. In the 18th century, bloomers were reserved for dancers and actresses so that their “assets” would not be revealed on stage as a result of a spin or a fall. This stage costume was not worn by any other women. Dutch skaters adopted bloomers at the end of the 18th century for the same reasons as the dancers and actresses, as well as for domestic chores such as climbing a ladder or cleaning windows. In England, little girls and young girls started wearing bloomers for gymnastics. Women who went hunting became progressively interested in bloomers for reasons of hygiene. But the bourgeoisie still associated this undergarment with dancers’ underwear and judged it shameless. Wearing bloomers was very quickly relegated to young girls for gymnastics, to little girls and...to prostitutes. Bloomers went hand in hand with freedom of movement for the body and were, of course, extremely erotic. Nevertheless, in the 1830s bloomers began to take hold once more. The introduction of the crinoline, which held skirts far from the body, meant that bloomers became necessary for reasons of modesty. This under-garment was thought to be extremely sexy in the cabarets that existed at the time of the French can-can. The Moulin Rouge was famous for its dancers who showed off their bloomers, as remembered in Henri Toulouse Lautrec’s paintings. Of course, as bloomers had become the trademark of scandalous dancers for the bourgeoisie (who did, in fact, enjoy the shows) and were the closest garment to a woman’s body, they were all the more attractive and disturbing to many men. Marcel Prevost humorously refers to the impact of bloomers on the male imagination (though in a particular, caustic context): “[...] The poor priest and his pupils were rooted to the spot by the unexpected show. In the bright sunlight over two hundred pairs of young girls’ bloomers were hung out, doubtless the last wash for the convent, and they swung gently, blocking the way. They were hung up by the waistband and so the breeze blew out legs and belly, swinging them back and forth, forwards and backwards, opening and then closing their openings,

Page 150.

Anonymous, *Photograph*, Private collection, Paris.

Page 151.

Atelier Edith Barakovich. Silver print, c. 1930,

16 x 21.5 cm. Private collection.



through which the blue sky could be seen. Sometimes a stronger gust of wind blew against the white washing line and the bloomers shuddered with their legs in the air as if they were trying to get back to their arrangement on the washing line...The bloomers were truly animated and provocative, independent and suggestive ...⁷³"

At the end of the 19th century, bloomers were displayed intentionally during dances such as the can-can and the "chahut" and also on the saucy postcards of the 1890s and the beginning of the 20th century. These showed women displaying elaborate bloomers which enlarged their hips and buttocks.

The erotic element of women's underwear was based on the fact that it was secret and, in this way, it enhanced the female form. But there was also a third sense which played a part in this game of sensuality - touch.

Page 152-153.

Yaël Landman, "*Santino*" model, Autumn / Winter collection 2003.







Underwear is a second skin for a woman. Some writers say that this second skin can be confused with the softness of the female body, as underlined by Emile Zola in *Au Bonheur des dames*, when he described the lingerie section of a department store: “[...] the art of undressing began, an art which was scattered over the vast rooms, as if a crowd of pretty girls had removed their clothes from stand to stand, until they reached the nude satin of their skin”. In this way, the fabrics chosen seemed to evoke the characteristics of the skin in a lover’s dream: soft and sometimes warm. The main material used was silk, for its shine and delicate touch, followed by satin which was fine and soft. Today’s synthetic fabrics, such as Lycra and cotton and synthetic mixes, reproduce these characteristics. The softness of Lycra or silk is pleasant to any man caressing his lover’s underwear, since it is for the woman herself, since contact with these fabrics enhances her femininity. Underwear can be a source of personal satisfaction for a woman. The skin’s contact with these fabrics makes the senses tingle, underwear has as much of an effect on a woman’s libido as on a man’s. The Baronness d’Orchamps, in 1907’s *Tous les Secrets de la femme (All the Secrets of a Woman)* drew attention to this shared tactile pleasure whose softness and warmth reinforce consciousness of femininity and the desire for each other. She recognised that “nothing is equal to the sensual power of a woman’s underwear. When he sees these layers displayed [...] irresistible rapture [...] overtakes a man’s mind”. Its “ingenious filmy folds and its subtle shapes accentuate the mysterious and tempting power of treasures that are so greatly desired that a woman pretends to protect and distance herself”. In *Bréviaire de la femme (The Woman’s Bible)* the Countess of Tramar (1907) is of the same opinion: for her, “the essential importance” of sexy underwear “is the secret part, hidden by layers, the promise of an indiscretion satisfied. A man in love anticipates the trembling caress of silk and the muted intoxicating sound of satin. A shapeless mass of unyielding lingerie is disappointing...disastrous!”

Aware of the sometimes major role of underwear in relationships, some writers have dedicated whole chapters to it in lifestyle manuals in order to draw women’s, and especially newly-weds’, attention to its use. In *The Cult of Chiffon*, the journalist Eric Pritchard demonstrates the clear link between seductive underwear and sexual satisfaction within marriage. In his opinion, failed marriages are due to women being unwilling to wear more seductive lingerie and to adopt a seductive attitude for their husbands. He convinces his readers by stating that “a woman can be the most virtuous of wives but if she is without mystery or flirtatiousness she will have no allure for her husband, who will chase other women”. Tantalising underwear, therefore, is a compliment to one’s husband.

Marguerite d’Aincourt in *Etudes sur le costume féminin (Studies of Female Dress)*, published in 1883, observed that new wives were much too shy – let us not forget that most women were virgins when they got married – to wear tantalising lingerie or negligees in the presence of their husbands, although this type of underwear was supplied with the trousseau. Young women would come to appreciate it indirectly, since they would come to like sex. So underwear was considered necessary to the erotic initiation of a marriage. At the beginning of the 20th century in France, authors of books and articles on beauty and fashion were sometimes very insistent on this subject. They underlined the erotic qualities of lingerie and its role in the act of making love and in the ongoing seduction of one’s husband. Lingerie was presented as being as important as good silverware or as a well-decorated house. Women were not merely meant to be housewives; they were also supposed to be skilful lovers!

It was out of the question for a woman in this “femme fatale” role at the beginning of the 19th century to wear a simple long-sleeved cotton chemise all day, as it would be impossible for a 21st century “femme fatale” to wear pink Petit Bateau briefs (even though they are very popular!) Elegant lingerie is de rigueur although more sophisticated and eccentric than practical! Why is this lingerie so different and what makes it so attractive?

Page 154.

Bustier bra with removable straps “Mystérieux”, creation by Ravage, Autumn / Winter 2003-2004.



Seductive and sexy underwear

The designer for the Léa Lingerie Sexy label says: “The exclusive collection I am showing will dramatically increase your powers of seduction” Interesting! A woman in her underwear has strong powers of seduction, even more so when the underwear she’s wearing is gorgeous lingerie.

This type of underwear is designed specifically for seduction. It has been in existence for many years and it can even be said that the imagination of people in the 19th century lacked for nothing, even when compared to manufacturers and designers of the 21st century.

Sexy lingerie has an important role in the preliminaries of the act of making love as it accentuates the shape and characteristics of the female body. Uplift bras, support stockings and G-strings will always be chosen over non-underwired bras, cotton socks or briefs! Roman women had already understood that they had to underline the difference between the sexes: they wore garters which had no real use since they did not wear stockings. Thus the garter seemed provocative as it indicated the limit beyond which the woman was naked.

If it was seen, one’s objective was in sight! Some 18th century garters were embroidered with amorous words or inscriptions which described their role in the “game of love” – lovers putting their garters back on, a lover taking off her garter, young girls on swings displaying their garters as their petticoats reveal them. Today, garters are sometimes part of the bridal outfit, in a traditional or an erotic way, but most frequently they are part of a stripper’s outfit.

Following the example of the garter, some undergarments have a higher erotic value than others.

The garter has given way to the suspender-belt, which is also considered as very sensual. The suspender-belt first appeared in 1910 and at that time was worn with garters to prevent too much downward pull. Although the rubber, and later elastic, bands of suspender-belts crossed the body, this garment had a role in seduction since, like the garter, it represented the limits of modesty. Its very shape marked the limits of the lower belly and the hips like a bull’s-eye. In addition to this, removing stockings from their suspenders is another delight for the sexual partner during foreplay, as if it were a stage in reaching one’s desired goal. Film stars and cabaret dancers made suspenders popular. Sophia Loren showed hers during a strip-tease in *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (1963), Brigitte Bardot displayed the embroidery of a fuchsia pink ribbon on one in *Viva Maria* (1965), and Nastaja Kinski also showed hers in *Maria’s lovers* (1984). The suspender belt has always been associated with the “femme fatale”, i.e. the temptress, mistress and prostitute.

Until now this accessory has been kept for night time and for intimate and special relationships. But it is now beginning to reappear in everyday fashion as increasing numbers of designers and labels are producing them. Some have chosen to attach suspenders directly to briefs as can be seen in recent collections by the Etam label, for example. This goes back to earlier decades when suspenders were attached to the corset or girdle. But there is this one difference: in the first half of the 20th century suspenders were necessary as tights did not exist. Today, however, choosing to wear suspenders seems truly provocative.

Page 156.

Jacott (after Louis-Frédéric Corréard), *The Wedding Night*.
Print, “mœurs” series. Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

Page 158-159.

Chantal Thomass, Catwalk 2004.

Page 160 – left.

Pair of Garters, 1890. Satin embroidered with pearls.
Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv 2003.80.X.

Page 160 – right.

Anonymous, *Erotic Photograph*, c. 1950, 16 x 10 cm.
Private collection, Paris.

Page 161.

Anonymous, *Erotic Photograph*, c. 1900.







The stockings held up by these suspenders are also highly charged sensually and have been ever since women began showing their legs. In the first place, this is because they accentuate the curve of the legs but also because they draw one's eyes and hands from the feet to the pelvis. Stockings were introduced in the Middle Ages and were, at first, made of wool to keep warm. They gradually acquired notoriety amongst seducers of the 18th century. There were all white stockings, as white as aristocratic skin. Legs lead to the sexual area, while stockings guide a man's eyes up the legs to the suspenders just below this area. Over the centuries, stockings have been made of cotton, then by silk, rayon, nylon and lycra-based mixes. The colours hardly vary. They are black, natural and sometimes colourful or patterned (stripes, fishnet, spotted or embroidered, though this is rare for everyday wear). Stockings for evening, however, are much more original and sophisticated, fishnets being the most popular. Tights took over from stockings in the 1960s and the later disappeared from view, only to become extremely popular again at the end of the 20th century, especially in the form of hold-ups such as "Dim up" by Dim.



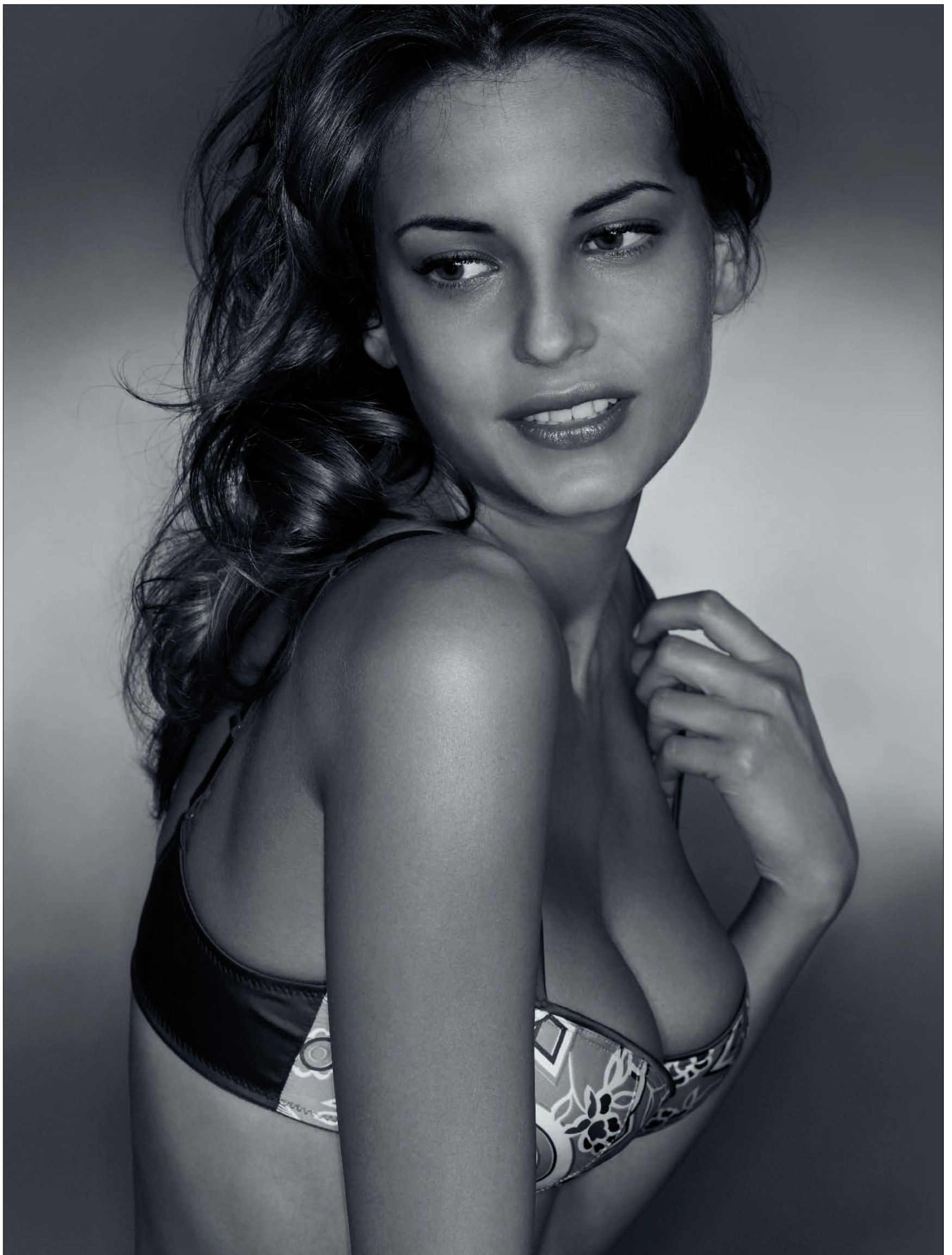


Page 162.

Chantal Thomass, Autumn / Winter 2001-2002

Page 163.

Princesse Tam Tam Collection, Autumn / Winter 2005.





Page 164 – left.

Biederer, n° 836 c. 1925. Postcard with unwritten back, 14 x 9 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Page 164 – right.

Chantal Thomass, Ensemble. Autumn / Winter collection 2001-2002.

Page 165.

"Paradise Lace", stocking belt, Wolford, Spring / Summer 2004.



Nevertheless, tights also have an erotic role to play in terms of underwear. In fact, tights were not considered erotic until the 1980s when they began to be more original and shape the leg with attractive patterns: fishnet, leopard-print, tiger-stripe or zebra-print tights are feline plus there are embroidered tights like those designed by Chantal Thomass or retailed by Wolford. In the world of erotica there are sexier tights which are crotchless and this suddenly renders them very seductive.

Of all highly erotic undergarments, the corset takes pride of place. It was popular with men in the 19th century because it accentuated the fashionable silhouette of the time and, as has already been mentioned, it enhanced attractive curves. This is all very well, but is it as simple as this? The corset was certainly an integral part of the female world and helped to create the impression of a well-developed figure with a small waist, so conforming to a physical ideal. But its role was ambiguous in that it symbolised a certain discipline in the behaviour of the woman wearing one. In fact, wearing a corset was considered intrinsically moral and a necessity for a woman wishing to dress decently. Its stiff boning and the upright carriage of the wearer were meant to illustrate the irreproachable manners of the woman whose curves were accentuated.



The Story of Lingerie



Page 166 – left.

Diana Slip, *Filled Drawers*, c.1935.

Silver print, 23.6 x 16.5 cm. Private Collection, Paris.



Page 166 – right.

Diana Slip, *Lace Drawers*, c. 1935.

Silver print, 11.2 x 16 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Page 167.

Yva Richard, *Extreme Tightening*, c. 1938.

Silver print, 11.5 x 14 cm. Private collection, Paris.



In fact, a woman who went out without a corset, especially in Victorian England, was said to be dressed indecently or to be wearing no “costume” at all. Valérie Steele in *Fashion and Eroticism* (1985)⁷⁴ explains the contradiction perfectly: the corset was simultaneously a sign of high morals and of the female sexual ideal. Women from the bourgeoisie of the 19th century, both in Victorian England and Second Empire France, have long been accused of being prim, even excessively prudish. But, in the second half of the 19th century, the use of erotic underwear and corsetry during sexual relations developed enormously. Authors underlined the importance of the corset in marital life. For example, Gustave Droz in his *Monsieur, Madame et Bébé (Man, Woman and Baby)*, states that sexual happiness is an essential part of marriage and he advocates that husbands dress their wives for a ball. Lacing a woman’s corset seemed to inspire limitless emotions in a man who could observe the waist contracting and the silhouette taking shape under his own hands. In this way the corset allowed the man to shape a woman as he wished. Seen through a woman’s eyes, Valerie Steele states that a corset’s hold makes a woman aware of her body as it is more present and more defined. Wearing a corset means being an adult woman with a sexual role to play in marriage. Some go as far as to say that wearing a corset is extremely pleasurable, and therefore sensual, for a woman.

Page 168.

Chantal Thomass, *Stripped Tights with flower print*.
Autumn / Winter collection 2003.

Page 169.

Chantal Thomass, *Laced Tights*,
Autumn / Winter collection 2003.









Page 170.

Corset by Axfords.

Page 171.

Black Bask, 1955-60. Don Saglio, Galliera Museum, Paris.

Inv. 1993.265.2.

Page 172.

Princesse Tam-Tam, Bra, Autumn / Winter 1997.

Page 173.

Corset created by Axfords.





All these factors which support the advantages and disadvantages of the corset have their characteristics. Although the corset has disappeared from ready-to-wear lingerie lines, it has always been present in the domain of erotic lingerie. For example, in 1930, the house of Diana Slip started a craze for Victorian underwear and called on professionals in the field of corsetry to manufacture pieces for nostalgic clients. The results were black and boned garments which were festooned with ribbons and resembled the corsets of yesteryear's prostitutes and dancers of Montmartre. This infatuation for an outmoded, but highly erotic, fashion marked the years from 1927-1939. The phenomenon can be understood when one considers the simple shapes and colours of this period. The interest in sophisticated corsetry was a counter-reaction to the sobriety of the times. In 1939 the house of Rigby and Peller, which made corsetry to measure, was set up in London. The establishment received the Royal edict in 1952 and still supplies corsetry to international celebrities and, of course, to the British aristocracy. Axfords also designs corsets for special occasions such as weddings or important dates. The corset is still in vogue for certain occasions, especially when one wants to make an impact!

The successor to the corset is called the waspie and was invented in 1946 by Marcel Rochas. For the same reasons as the corset, it was highly charged erotically.

A woman wearing waspie black stockings gives an image of being fully-dressed, as she is clothed from the torso to the groin, and her legs are covered by stockings. At the same time, these outfits give the illusion of nudity as they reveal the body. By doing so, they have an undeniable power of seduction. Moreover, this type of ensemble has been associated with certain memorable dramatic roles such as Liza Minelli's in the musical *Cabaret* (1972) where she wore a particularly tantalizing costume or that of Hanna Schygulla in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978). These famous examples have had a big impact on modern life, to such an extent that all lingerie catalogues have a range of titillating garments which are not reserved for erotica but are accessible to all. The catalogues offer sexy undergarments on offer which are the same design, but the fabrics are transparent with cut-out detail. The bust is almost always uncovered, just supported by underwiring under the breast. In short, there is a structure to the garment but it does not cover anything. There are bustier outfits and boned curacaos and waspies to be worn with other, matching garments found in ordinary stores, such as suspender belts, briefs and G-strings. It is as if women from the 21st century, are following the advice of Mrs Pritchard or M^{me} d'Aincourt to the letter, dressing like a courtesan to spice up their relationships. Chantal Thomass's designs embody this kind of fantasy.

Bras are treated in the same way by fine lingerie manufacturers. The bra was actually introduced in the 1920s, and the bra designed by Caresse Crosby was in no way erotic. Over the years, as it was in contact with a particularly attractive part of the female body, the bra also became a highly erotic garment. Its erotic appeal was due to the new film stars, especially Hollywood stars of the 1950s during the fashion for voluptuous breasts. A bra could enhance bust size and give an unrealistic impression of this erogenous zone, so attracting the curiosity and desire of the opposite sex. In erotic lingerie catalogues, bras had various forms which once more played on what was revealed and what was hidden. There is still a range of bras which have an opening which allow the nipples to protrude. The pages reveal a multitude of options and their appeal varies. Some of the buttons close, others do not close at all. In this case the aim is not to design functional lingerie but to enhance the female body's erogenous zones. This type of lingerie is rarely opaque, and bras have evolved into useless underwiring, a purely decorative element to increase the appeal of a denuded body. This type of bra is now beginning to be seen in traditional stores. For example, Yaël Landman has a range of pieces which reveal the breasts completely, leaving them supported by under wiring and elastic.





Briefs often match bras and they play an essential role in lingerie as they are required to cover the basics. Briefs were originally something naïve and pure: Petit Bateau pants were introduced in 1910 for children and evolved into our modern briefs. 'Petit Bateau' means "Little Boat" in French and this name was chosen as a reference to the children's song which states that little boats have no legs, like underwear. It was originally a hosiery company which was founded in Troyes by a Mr Valton and has been extremely successful. Very quickly, the trend for short underwear caught on for all types. And as "anything children wear, adults always end up wearing",⁷⁵ all manufacturers launched "modern ladies' underwear", following the example of the Rasarel label. This new underwear was nothing more than versions of little girls' briefs. Until this point briefs were rather demure, a symbol of innocence and purity. How did they become so erotic? In the post-war years, briefs, or panties, became more and more common, as did "Y-fronts" for gentlemen. They gradually began to follow the fashion for close-fitting clothes throughout the 1960s. Briefs really accentuated the curve of the buttocks and the outline of the groin. Even though the women's liberation movement castigated underwear for being too typically feminine, briefs began to be perceived as extremely sensual. In the 1980s they became smaller and smaller and were decorated in all sorts of ways. With the sexual partner in mind, they were designed to be taken off quickly which made feminine intimacy seem more accessible. Briefs can be very provocative in sexy underwear lines where, for example, the crotchless version has reappeared. They no longer have the baggy split, as found in 19th century bloomers, or those of 1900: the modern opening allows one to keep the undergarment on during intercourse. In catalogues there are many types, including panties which are split in front with a buttoned flap or in the back, preferably very deeply. These panties do not hide very much; their aim is more to create a sexy, titillating outfit. Other models were introduced during the 1990s such as the "brazilian" or the "tanga" ...these types of panties are extremely high-cut and made with very little fabric, hence their exotic names which, for western men, lasciviously call to mind lingerie worn by women in tropical countries. However, it is often their absence which becomes the object of fantasy. As a result, this type of lingerie is more apparent than ever in catalogues and sex-shop windows.

The latest addition to sexy underwear is the G-string. Introduced during the 1980s, this undergarment has been the object of a real craze at the beginning of the 21st century. Many women wear them on a daily basis under trousers for aesthetic reasons (to avoid unsightly visible panty line) or for seduction (all curves are completely on display). Everyday G-strings are, like Petit Bateau panties, quite plain and made from comfortable fabrics. The seductive G-string, on the other hand, requires a complete bikini wax! It is an extreme variation on the theme of revealing and displaying the body. Some models are based on a "leaf" of fabric, reminiscent of Eve and held up by strings which become one single string on the hips before it disappears between the buttocks. There are also open G-strings which are crotchless like some panties and certainly very inefficient when it comes to covering up! They are efficient in other ways however... The G-string can also have an innovative design like that of the Hunkremöller model, where the black fabric string is attached to other strings above the buttocks. The G-string exposes as much as possible; it is highly decorative and so considered "sexier" than panties.

All these undergarments which have become popular for erotic purposes, have common points concerning the fabrics chosen and the type of decoration used. Underwear has become a way of displaying the female body, with this is its goal: to make sex a coveted and precious jewel and to make the object of desire even more desirable. Colour plays a major role in the history of women's underwear. For a long time immaculate white was the symbol of virginity and hygiene but today underwear is available in all colours.



Page 178.

Chantal Thomass, Catwalk 2004.

Page 179.

Yaël Landman, "Santino" model, Autumn / Winter collection 2003.

Page 180.

Yaël Landman, "Fever" model, Autumn / Winter collection 2003.

Page 181.

Chantal Thomass, Tights *trompe-l'œil* Autumn / Winter 2004.

During the 19th century in particular, elaborate and colourful underwear was associated with women of doubtful virtue. "Decent" women wore white underwear. During the Victorian era in England and the Second Empire in France, however (i.e. during the second half of the 19th century), colourful, decorative and seductive underwear began to be worn although it was considered the prerogative of married women. Women thus began to dress attractively for private moments and for their own pleasure.

Petticoats have already been mentioned and were the first undergarments to show signs of lightheartedness. In fact, during the 18th and 19th century, petticoats were the most decorated undergarments and were very popular. In 1858, an American magazine wrote on this subject that the use of red petticoats had been introduced by Queen Victoria to spice up married life. From then on red petticoats and those in other colours became extremely fashionable. The most famous examples were, of course, those of Scarlett in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. As a result of changing etiquette and guilt-free sexual relationships, colours are no longer symbolic, and the choice of colour is very wide, being dictated by fashion rather than propriety.









However, in the world of sexy underwear, the choice is actually quite limited. Before the 1960s, erotic underwear was always the same colour, often the same as everyday underwear; this can be seen on saucy postcards from the 1900s and 1920s. We can see that white was the predominant colour. There was black underwear, but it was mainly worn by prostitutes or shown on postcards aimed at a fetishist clientele, as we will see later.

In the second half of the 20th century, although the range of colours used for erotic lingerie grew, it was still fairly limited. When one looks at today's specialist lingerie catalogues or consults mail order lingerie website, it becomes clear that the recurring colours are, once again, black and white, with red as an addition. Red symbolises passion and according to science is the first colour to be picked up by the retina. So Queen Victoria's red now has pride of place in sex shops and cabarets. This red is not garnet or burgundy, but is a bright, provocative scarlet. Apart from this vivid touch of colour, with matching nail varnish and lipstick, black is the predominant colour of the world of Eros. It is the black of night and mid of all-consuming passion, and is also the black of sin, as opposed to the white of purity. Black also makes a contrast to and enhances white skin. It is deep and glossy, rarely matte, sophisticated and often transparent. Thin black fabrics are often more transparent than white fabrics, which seems paradoxical at a first glance. The fact is that black absorbs light while white reflects it. This is why so much female underwear is made of black muslin, net, fishnet or lace. Baby doll nighties are often made from transparent fabric so the figure they cover can be clearly observed. In the world of erotic lingerie, the context means that the garments are more for decorating the body than defending its modesty.

Finally, white is very popular colour in this domain. It has long been associated with virginity and makes one think of a young, inexperienced body and innocence, while a formidable woman could be hiding behind it. In some ways, white plays a part in fantasies of deflowering or of child-women and it is therefore quite a different white from that of the everyday white used for underwear. It is extremely luminous and often glossy to accentuate its impact. For dark-skinned women, white plays the same flattering role as black for those with pale skin.

Apart from these three colours, there are others which can be seen as shades of the colours already mentioned: blue, which can be very dark like midnight blue or petrol, and dark pink that is more fuchsia than rose. These last two colours are reminiscent of the interiors of brothels or houses of ill repute: they are hot, violent colours, like certain sexual relationships.

Originality is to be found more in the shape of these garments than in the choice of colour or patterns. Nevertheless, certain prints and sophisticated textile effects have been added to ranges of erotic underwear. The prints are not very varied and mostly create a feline effect as they consist of leopard-print or tiger stripes. Absolutely all of AB Lingerie's range is available in leopard-print: tights, all-in-ones, G-string and bra sets and bodystockings. This again underlines the aggressive and provocative side of sex, portraying the woman as a wild animal and therefore governed by her instincts. While these types of prints allude to animal behaviour, certain textile effects render underwear very sophisticated. This is the case for panties, bras and G-strings in silver or gold lame. Print and textile effects give two versions of the sex act: animal or sophisticated. They are not incompatible, of course!

Colours, printed patterns and visual effects are frequently associated with decoration and so with dressing the body erotically. Lace is especially popular, either for the whole garment, revealing and covering alternately, or as tantalizing trimming. Frills, ribbons, feathers and downy edging turn a woman into a gift to be opened and discovered. In fact, there is a fairly obvious analogy between soft feathers and pubic hair. Erotic underwear plays on the parallel between how the body and the materials feel, as if to create confusion between the object of desire and what is covering her. But at this stage we are already talking about a different type of underwear.

Page 182.

Yaël Landmann, "*Initials*" Model.

Autumn / Winter collection 2003.



Fetishism and women's underwear: from private clubs to the catwalk

Fetishism brings to mind images of sexual eccentricity and deviant attraction to certain items of women's clothing such as stiletto heels, corsets, panties and stockings. Yet fetishist paraphernalia is gradually becoming part of everyday fashion, especially in haute couture collections.

The term fetishism was first employed by the French writer Alfred Binet in his essay called *Le Fétichisme dans l'amour (Fetishism in Love)* which appeared in 1887. The terms were defined by Richard Von Krafft-Ebing as "the association of desire with the image of certain parts of the body or certain female clothing". According to the writer, this pathology is characterised by the fact that the "fetish itself replaces the person as the object of desire" and that intercourse is replaced by fetishist manipulations⁷⁶. For Sigmund Freud "the fetish is the substitute for the woman's (the mother's) phallus which the small boy believed existed and which [...] he does not want to give up [...] for, if the woman finds herself castrated, his own possession of a penis is threatened"⁷⁸. To summarise, fetishism comes from an aversion to the female genitals and the sexual partner is urged to accessorise the woman to turn her into a bearable sex object. Fetishism is the confusion of the parts and the whole and a conviction that all sensuality can be concentrated into one small detail. The fetishist's desire means detachment from an object rarely seen and the transfer of attention to a small piece of fabric hiding the object.

Fetishism, as we speak of it today, seems to have originated in Europe in the 18th century and was distinguished as a sexual phenomenon in the second half of the 19th century. Fetishism came to be at a time (the 18th century) when sexual behaviour was evolving and libertine thinking was encouraging people to explore eroticism more openly. There was a preponderance of visual stimulation, voyeurism and fetishism in male fantasies which were often focused on clothes such as black stockings and suspenders, sexy lingerie, leather and nurses uniforms. Although Freud's theories have been recognised and studied, psychoanalysts today stress their lack of scientific value and prefer to explain these acts with neurological, hormonal or genetic reasons which are limited to the men's physiology⁷⁹. What comes to light is the tendency to become excited by visual stimuli, and this is exactly what fetishist underwear designers play on. There is, in fact, a whole arena of underwear designed for fetishistic clients. Lingerie represents undressing and the materials can be associated with flesh or pubic hair.

Fetishism tends to focus on materials. As far as underwear is concerned, recurring materials are silk and nylon, but after these two fabrics became outdated, designers began to use leather, metal and above all latex. Leather and metal have been used for a long time, as shown in the photographs of Yva Richard, but it is latex that has considerable appeal today. In the 1920s, Yva Richard appeared in a whole series of photographs in which she posed as a dominatrix. She usually modeled a corset similar to those of the second half of the 19th century, or all-in-ones in silky, smooth and shiny materials or leather⁸⁰. Leather was the fetishist's material of choice for a long time, and still is for some. The Atomage label in particular, and its creative director John Sutcliffe, produce leather outfits. Since the beginning of the 20th century, there have also been metal outfits aimed at the sado-masochistic market. Let us not forget that the term sadism was invented by Richard Von Krafft-Ebing in reference to the marquis of Sade and means sexual behaviour where orgasm can only be reached by making



Page 184.
Chantal Thomass, *Tights with detail*,
Autumn / Winter 2004.

Page 185.
Anonymous, *Erotic scene in 18th century costume*,
photograph, c. 1930. Private collection, Paris.

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Page 186 – left.

Yva Richard, *Garcia Dominatrix*, c. 1935.

Silver print, 16.6 x 12 cm. Private collection, Paris



Page 186 – right.

Yva Richard, *Garcia Dominatrix*, c. 1935.

Silver print, 17.6 x 12.6 cm. Private collection, Paris.



Page 187.

Yva Richard, *Une Taille de Guêpe*, c. 1930.

Silver print, 18 x 13 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Page 187.

Biederer Studio, *Photograph*, c. 1935. 14.5 x 11.2 cm.

Private collection, Paris.



Page 188.

Diana Slip, *Filled Drawers*, Silver print, c. 1935,
16 x 11 cm. Private collection, Paris.

Page 189.

Anonymous, *Silver print*, c. 18.4 x 13 cm.
Private collection, Paris.



**LINGERIES
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one's partner suffer. The term masochism was also invented by Richard Von Krafft-Ebing as a reference to the name of Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch and defines a kind of sexual perversion in which a person can only achieve pleasure by subjugating himself to suffering and physical servitude⁸¹. The underwear we can see on postcards from the period 1900-1930 are real suits of armour made of hammered metal adorned by chains. The cards depict what was known as "belles enchaînées" ("beautiful ladies in chains"), showing the submission of prostitutes and the domination of the male – the photos were in fact of women who worked in brothels, and they were to be looked at while the client was waiting. This fascination with metal outfits has existed since the Belle Epoque, a period when jewellers showed their inventive talents by creating bras, suspender belts and certain chastity belts in fine metals covered in precious stones or paste. The most famous piece was a Belle Otero suspender belt manufactured by the house of Boucheron during the time of Napoleon III. During the "Années Folles", metal was worked into points and was more cut-out and aggressive. Today, people's taste for metal is diminishing in favour of details such as chains or covered pieces such as the Michel Coulon's design in the 1990s. His designs turned a woman into a surrealist Japanese manga character. Latex is actually the most fashionable material in this area. It makes the body seem firm in a way that no other material can. All types of underwear exist in a latex version today, from panties to all-in-one outfits. Demask label (Amsterdam) makes vinyl corsets and Sealware and Ectomorph are also latex specialists.

As for colours, the fetishist world is dominated by black. This color is associated with sin and at the same times flatters a woman's body. Black underwear and fetishists owe a great deal of their reputation to Betty Page who was the symbol of black lingerie and "soft-core" sado-masochism in the United States of America in the 1950s. Her career lasted from 1948 to 1957, and she was photographed mainly by Irving Claw, completely dressed in black and in rather provocative poses. It was rare for other colours to be used.

In magazines and on postcards for specialist stores there are certain recurrent garments. In fact, fetishists are not attracted by all underwear (fetishist lingerie is only one part of this phenomenon): they have their favourites.

Of course there is the corset. In this context, and in opposition to its erotic allure, the corset is considered as an instrument of physical and sexual oppression linked to the practice of tightening. The garment is loved by lacing fetishists but, according to Valérie Steele, it has never been a mass fetishist object and only a small number of corset-makers supply the fetishist market. Their corsets are extremely narrow and there are models for both men and women. Corset fetishism also dates from the 19th century, the era when they were common. Certain historians write that 19th century women who laced their corsets very tightly were fetishists as they took pleasure in this. This could be a misinterpretation of fetishists' letters which appeared in English Woman's Domestic Magazine (EDM) between 1867 and 1874 concerning the corset. The letters could indeed be false and the truth of their content dubious. For today's fetishists, corsets mean that the body is disciplined and can be controlled so as to increase sexual pleasure. There is fetishism for "old-fashioned" objects, of which the corset is one, but this practice is merely anecdotal. In the 1930s the corset-maker M^{rs} Kayne, who specialised in "old-style" slimming corsets for men and women also sold silk and satin underwear and briefs, pajamas and even false breasts made of latex. The corset gradually broke out of fetishist circles to gain mass appeal. Today, corsets designed by Axford or BR Création are available to everyone. Fetishism has become an international phenomenon and companies such as Sealwear, Atomage, Ectomorph and Axford share the market. The corset craze outside the fetishists market is partly due to the interest fashion designers have shown in them over the last thirty years.

Another favourite fetishist undergarment is briefs. Originally, trousers were the mark of virility in Western civilisations, but this masculine connotation quickly disappeared as women's trousers



Page 190.

Diana Slip, *Front cover of the "Libertine Lingerie" catalogue*, number 3, May 1935. Private collection, Paris.

Page 191.

E. Klemm, *The Seducer*, Diana Slip catalogue, board 8, c. 1938. Private collection, Paris.

Page 192.

Sports or Summer Corset, blue with red embroidery. Galleria Museum, Paris.

Page 193.

Corset created by Axfords.

became popular in fine, elegant fabrics. Briefs became the object of voyeurism once again. As fetishists are nostalgic for the sensual underwear of the Belle Epoque, certain manufacturers, such as Diana Slip in the 1930s, designed and marketed a large variety of saucy briefs, some of which were inspired by historical pieces, such as the “1905 trousers” for example. There is also a great range of fetishist panties. Leather briefs are sometimes closed with a tiny lock and

are similar to a chastity belt. There are also vinyl panties which can be open or closed and where the crotch is sometimes fringed or padded. There are panties with lace-edged crotch-openings like those at Frederick’s of Hollywood and Ecstasy Lingerie. It is, in fact, panties that most clearly demonstrate the analogy between materials and the body. How panties feel to the touch is often mentioned in erotic literature and, according to Valerie Steele, they could be the origin of fabric fetishism. In addition, the fringes, lace and fur found on panties are evocative of the female sex organ. Panties supply olfactory and tactile stimulation, which render them interesting to the fetishist community. This also explains the way panties are sold in Japan. Certain inventors have gone so far as to make edible panties in strawberry, banana split and other sweet flavours!

Fetishist illustrations often depict women in stockings participating in fetishism. The stockings are always black and make the flesh of the leg firm, uniform and smooth. When silk and nylon were no longer fashionable for stockings, latex took over. The stockings are held up by latex suspenders and are black once again, but a few other colours also appear such as red, turquoise, yellow and fluorescent pink. Real stocking fetishists seem quite rare, although a lot of men admit to a preference for stockings.

We could expect that bras would be mentioned here to complete these descriptions, but they are not really fetish objects, despite the strong sexual connotation of breasts in Western culture.

It is clear that for fetishists, the appeal of the naked body takes second place to underwear which provides additional excitement and which provokes sexual curiosity.

With the sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s there was a rejection of prudery and taboos. Sex became increasingly commercialised while censorship carried much less weight. Perversion was within the grasp of everyone and attracted designers in particular. The appeal of underwear led to a major trend during the last fifteen years, a trend which consists of wearing underwear as outerwear. Fetishist ideas are also to be found on the catwalk. Since the mid-1980s the corset has been a recurring theme. Vivienne Westwood was one of the first designers to have made use of what had once been perverse, erotic clothing. In 1974 she transformed her store into a boutique selling latex, leather and clothes which resembled sado-masochistic outfits. During this period she also wore sado-masochist outfits herself. The fashion world gradually became influenced by violence and perversity to turn a point where we can speak about “terrorist chic” or “porno chic”.





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Pages 194-195.

Chantal Thomass, Catwalk 2004.





Vivienne Westwood was also one of the first designers to bring about the return of the corset. *Vogue* of September 1994 said that her 1985 uplift corset was her greatest design over a period of ten years. Designers loved lacing. And, of course, there is always Jean-Paul Gaultier who springs to mind because of his corset, this time in laced-up rose-coloured satin with cone-shaped cups, designed for Madonna. His 1987 Spring-Summer collection featured numerous corsets, girdles and bras. Jean-Paul Gaultier also created a lot of latex dresses which laced up at the back, a design which had already been used in 1930s pornographic photography. The shapes that designers created at the end of the 20th century are very similar to those at the end of the 19th century. In 1991, Azzedine Alaïa designed tights and corsets in leopard print and in 1992 he introduced red leather and old rose coloured corsets that were very rounded at the hips, but well pulled into the waist. Corsets are also an integral part of the drama of Thierry Mugler's collections. His 1997 "Insect" collection consisted of jewel-like corsets, made of metal and completely covered in diamante. Undergarments, and particularly the corset, are treated like jewellery, both in any haute couture context and in stores where G-strings are sold. The latter often have supporting strings of beads or crystals and there are bras with chain straps such as the "Chiraz" model. Designers have also contributed to this trend. Thierry Mugler was the first and showed bustier and mask outfits (the mask was the outfit's fetishist element) in his 1992 Spring-Summer collection. They were completely embroidered with pearls and red sequins. He also presented the "Cowboy Girl" outfit in the 2002-2003 Autumn-Winter collection where the woman is a dominatrix in a waspie, thigh-high boots and a cowboy hat embroidered with red beads.

All designers have had corsets in their collection: Betsey Johnson and Chantal Thomass plus Christian Lacroix, Valentino and Ungaro in the higher price range. In the 1990s, Karl Lagerfeld made the corset a cornerstone of his work for Chanel, maintaining that the corset was essential for narrow-cut clothes to hang properly. Finally, at the end of the 1990s, the corset was available everywhere; as underwear but also as outerwear, on sale in department stores and catalogues.

Even though feminists are against these undergarments and erotic images of women, designers have continued to create them, as this domain is a mine of inspiration for shape and materials. The boundaries between the sex industry and haute couture plus ready to wear are becoming more and more blurred.

Until the mid-1990s the pieces were fairly "tame", but haute couture later acquired undeniably fetishist and even sado-masochistic overtones. In 1994 Deborah Marquit designed skirts split to the navel and open tops which showed red-lace or fluorescent bras and panties. Thierry Mugler designed metal, leather and latex lingerie and Vivienne Westwood sold fake fur briefs, reminding us of the importance of fabric in fetishism. The 2003-2004 Autumn-Winter collections still follow this trend. Alexander McQueen of Givenchy and Stella McCartney used shiny satin materials for their silk stockings and showed tight-fitting latex skirts and mini-skirts worn like a girdle over muslin dresses. Tom Ford for Yves Saint-Laurent created an extremely sexy woman who is almost nude, in a black lace bra and panties seen through transparent muslin and frothy satin. Latex was also in evidence in the 2003-2004 Autumn-Winter Dior by John Galliano collection. *Le Figaro* of 7 March 2003 spoke of "the popularity of SM" rather than the couture element. On the catwalk, natural, translucent latex skirts were worn over a red G-string or with a vinyl bustier and over these garments were added jersey tunics with straps embroidered in black diamante or roses.

This was an illustration of how fashion began to enjoy itself by adopting fetishist themes. Today, at the beginning of the 20th century, collections flirt with pornography, showing society's voyeuristic, impudent and even perverse qualities.



Economics



La M^{de} de Corsets.

Lingerie manufacturing

For centuries the cut of clothes and the way in which fabrics were assembled meant that the silhouette changed very little. Fabrics were good quality and hard-wearing. A garment could be worn by two or even three generations by letting it out or taking it in, depending on the requirements. “Clothes traders” became common. They trimmed dresses, removed the trim and then trimmed them again. Dresses were the mainstay of an outfit. Body linen, as its name implies, was worn next to the body and had a shorter life expectancy. In the countryside, lingerie manufacture was often a family affair and the linen was made up by the women of the household. This linen might even have been cultivated on the family’s own land, worked by the members of the household and then spun by servants. It was woven in the home or contracted to a weaver in the village. For many years, before the invention of sewing and embroidering machines, convents and orphanages produced the best lingerie. During the periods of the French Directoire and the First Empire, the first lingerie work shops were set up in Paris and in certain provincial villages. Lingerie became a cottage industry. It was after 1860, however, that there was a boom in the lingerie industry in France. A great number of work shops were opened in Paris and in the provinces. The pieces were designed in Paris and provincial workshops manufactured them.

In her work, *Se vêtir au XVIII^e siècle (Dressing in the 18th century)*, Madeleine Delpierre, describes lingerie manufacturing trade and distribution during this era. At the end of the 11th century, the guilds system had been set up and seven centuries later it was still these same guilds which oversaw the various clothing trades. They laid out the exact parameters of the stages of production and training procedures, and everything was tightly controlled. One part manufactured the raw materials and the other manufactured and sold what was produced.

As a result, making a garment could require the intervention of several different participants, depending on the complexity of the materials used and the way the garment was decorated. Weavers manufactured the fabric and those who supplied the French body linen market were mainly situated in Picardie, Anjou and Brittany. Cloth and hemp for everyday petticoats, pannier and stay linings were manufactured in France in Alençon, Mamers and Bolbec. Weaving cotton cloth was developed in France, in the regions of Rouen and Alsace,⁸² after 1740, once cotton arrived from the colonies in the Americas.

Then there were guilds for dressmakers. In this category were linen maids and dressmakers. The linen maids sold the various fabrics used for lingerie (cambric, lawn, hemp and canvas) with trimmings such as lace. They also produced linen: shirts, pockets, layettes and complete trousseaux. This group was apprenticed for four years and then had two years of service before they were qualified as linen maids. In 1725 there were five hundred and fifty-nine qualified linen maids in Paris. The dress-makers, were a special category that was part of the tailoring profession. They were apprenticed for three years and then worked under a mentor for at least another three years before they were qualified. Finally there were “couturiers” who were firstly only qualified to sew the linen maids’ and dress makers’ production. In 1675 they were authorised to make women’s clothes, except for stays and trains, which were the preserve of dressmakers. They also made children’s clothes. In 1782 couturiers were authorised to manufacture stays, corsets and panniers, in competition with dressmakers. Like linen maids, they were apprenticed for three years and then had two years in

Page 198.

Yaël Landman, “Michael” model.

Autumn / Winter collection 2003.

Page 200.

Anonymous, *The Corset Seller*. Print, “mœurs” series.

Musée Carnavalet, Paris.



service. Later, hosiers made pieces which were woven or knitted such as bonnets, stockings, socks, gloves, camisoles and underpants. Finally, fashion companies began to make hats and trimmings as well as palatines, fichus, short capes and mantillas, in fact, all garments which were worn on the head or the shoulders.⁸³

One category made the clothes and another sold them. The latter consisted of “haberdashers” who sold a bit of everything and who can be compared to today’s department stores. They were divided into twenty groups and only a few of them corresponded to clothing: lace, cloth, muslin, silver, gold cloth, ribbon, fringing and button traders.⁸⁴ Second-hand merchants sold clothes that could be worn for a second or even third or fourth time. Some sold unfashionable dresses that had been retrimmed and updated (this was in a period when accessories dictated fashion more than shape) and others found clothes at low prices. In *Tableau de Paris*, Louis-Sébastien Mercier described a second-hand sale: “the lower-middle classes, buyers and excessively thrifty women went there to buy bonnets, dresses, blouses and sheets. They went as far as buying ready-made shoes....This fair seemed to contain the clothes belonging to the woman of an entire region or perhaps the spoils of a whole Amazonian people. There were skirts and puffed blouses and negligees in a pile on the floor for one to choose from ...”⁸⁵

Page 202.

Print from the *Diderot and Alembert Encyclopedia*, 1762.

La Lingère.



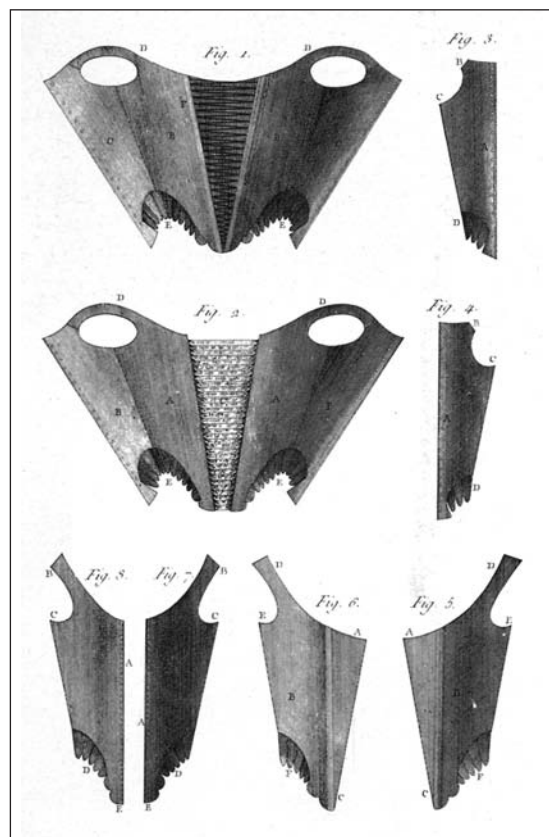
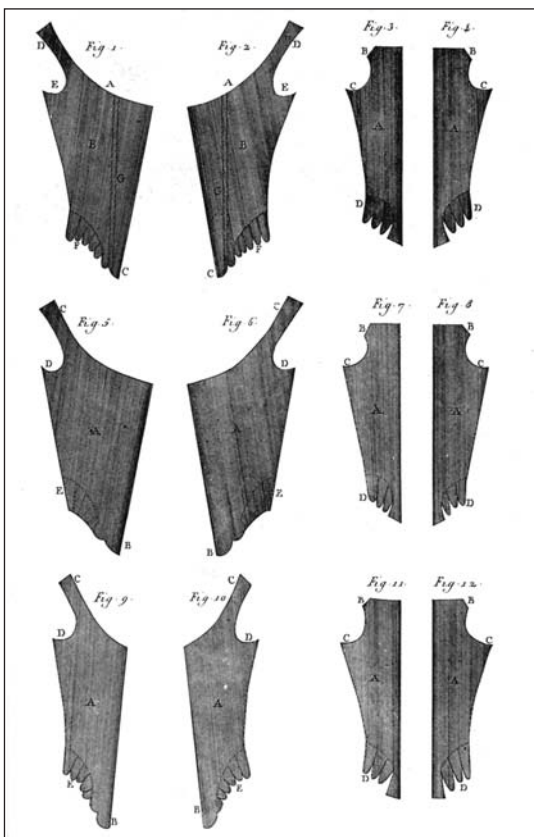
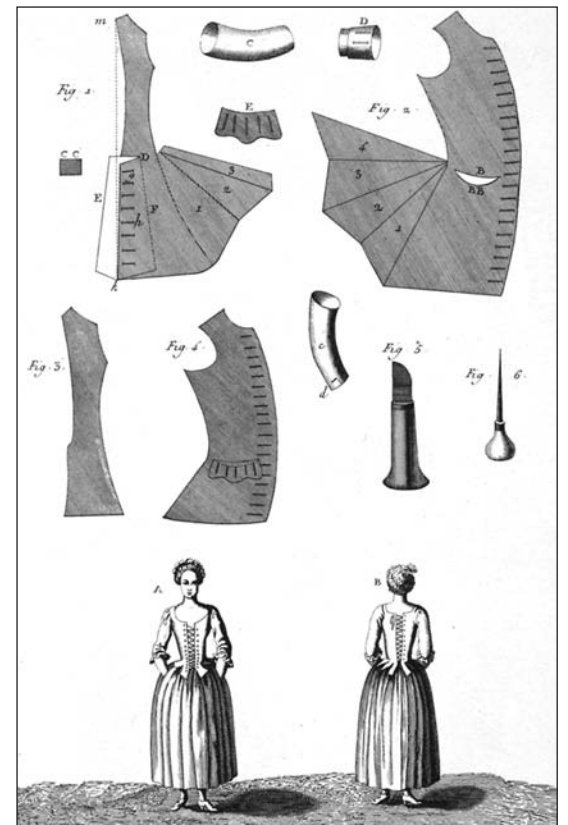
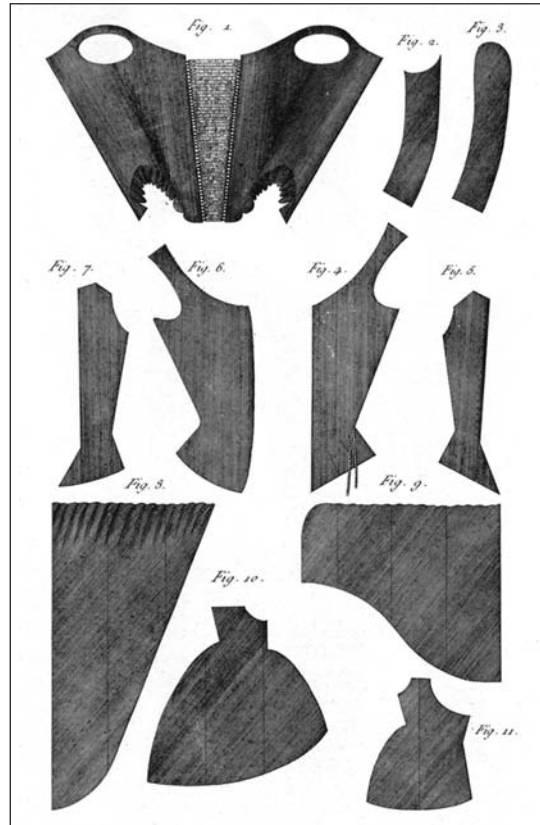
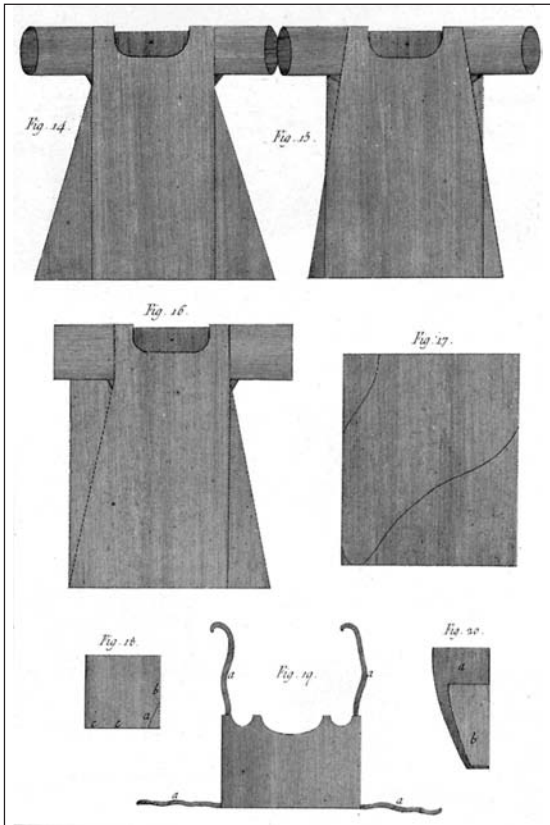
How fashion was distributed

During the Ancien Régime, dolls dressed in the latest fashions of the French court were dispatched across the whole of Europe. This practice had started during the Middle Ages when, in 1391, Queen Isabeau of Bavière sent a doll to her daughter, the Queen of England. As the latter was an adult, the doll had to be a fashion doll. The phenomenon grew over the following centuries and it seemed that wars and even bellicose armies agreed on allowing “fashion carriages” through the lines. In 1785, the first fashion journal with fashion plates appeared. This effectively ended fashion distribution by dolls. The practice was revived in 1945 when the “Théâtre de la Mode” (Fashion Theatre) was launched by the French Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture (The Haute Couture Syndicate). It sent miniature mannequins dressed in the latest designs in an attempt to start up the French post-war luxury industry.

Page 203.

Bach, *The Crinoline Factory: The making of hoops*. Print.

Musée Carnavalet, Paris.



AU LOUVRE — PARIS

CORSETS pour ENFANTS et FILLETTES

30645. Corset anglais pour fillettes, boutonnières à même le tissu, lavage facile. En coutil blanc. 30986.
 5 et 6 ans. **3.90**
 7 et 8 ans. **4.50**
 9 et 10 ans. **5.25**
 12 ans. **5.75**

30738. Corset brassière pour garçons et fillettes de 4 à 12 ans, avec baleinage léger et jarretelles pouvant s'enlever à volonté. 30895 **3.25**

30836. Corset pour fillettes de 14 à 16 ans. En coutil broché. **6.25**

30895. Corset fillette, coutil écri, forme droite avec goussets caoutchouc sur les hanches, évitant toute gêne. 12 et 13 ans. **4.90**
 14-15 ans. **5.90**
 16-17 a. **6.75**
 En batiste blanche, pour 12 et 13 ans. **8.90**

30986. Corset pour fillettes de 12 à 14 ans, en beau coutil écri ou blanc, vraie baleine. **12.50**

30643. H. 0°30. Corset pour fillettes de 10 à 12 ans. En coutil blanc ou écri. **6.90 et 4.90**
 Le même, sans épaulettes, de 12 à 14 ans. **8.90**

30128. Corset pour fillettes coutil écri ou blanc. 7 ans. **2.50**
 8 ans. **2.75**
 10 ans. **3. »**

30194. Corset dernier genre pour jeunes filles de 15 à 17 ans, écri ou blanc. **17.75**

30962. Corset droit et enveloppant des hanches, pour jeunes filles de 16 à 18 ans, goussets caoutchouc sur les hanches évitant toute gêne. En coutil écri ou blanc broché ton sur ton, vraie baleine. **15.50**

30985. Corset droit et long du bas, avec goussets caoutchouc sur les hanches, pour fillettes de 13 à 14 ans. En coutil écri broché rose ou ciel. **7.90**

30195. Corset genre anglais, omoplates baleines boutonné devant, en blanc ou écri. 5 et 6 ans... **4.25**
 7 et 8 ans... **4.90**
 9 à 12 ans... **5.90**

Page 204 – top left.

Fashion Monitor, articles of lingerie, 1845. Engraving, 28 x 19 cm. Maciet Album, Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

Page 204 – top middle.

Page from *The Diderot and Alembert*, 1762 patterns for “à l’anglaise” and “à la française”, open and closed bodices.

Page 204 – top right.

Page from *The Diderot and Alembert Encyclopedia*, 1762. patterns of open and closed bodices, viewed from the front.

Page 204 – bottom left.

Page from *The Diderot and Alembert Encyclopedia*, 1762. Patterns of the front and back of a leotard and vest, a utensil for cutting whalebone, a cutter for the corsets’ eyelets, and images of a woman wearing a corset.

Page 204 – bottom middle.

Page from *The Diderot and Alembert Encyclopedia*, 1762. The “Classic” corset with lacing, also called, “à la duchesse”, and other underwear patterns.

Page 204 – bottom right.

Page from *The Diderot and Alembert Encyclopedia*, 1762. Women’s shirts with the two types of clasp, “à l’anglaise” and “à la française”, muslin mantelet, “amadis” sleeves which button at the wrist.

Page 205.

“Corsets for children and young girls”, *Magasins du Louvre*, Winter 1913-1914. Galliera Museum, Paris.

Complètement Tam-Tam cette Princesse.

Princesse
TAM.TAM
PARIS



The current lingerie market

Since the beginning of the 1990s the lingerie sector has undergone profound changes. The notion of underwear becoming outerwear has become ordinary and has often been presented by designers over the last few years. There has also been an increase in the number of ready-to-wear labels which have invested in underwear and swimwear lines, and in lingerie which has become a bejewelled, accessorised fashion article, including two-in-one lingerie which not only supports the body but also has a beauty role such as moisturising, massage or UV protection. The trade magazine *Dessous Mode International (International Fashion Underwear)* summed up the situation this way January 2004: "People are consuming more; there are more and more innovations and the available range is increasingly accessible with collections becoming even more original. Now every designer has an underwear or a swimwear line. Without a doubt, lingerie has become high fashion and is making the most of the moment by associating itself firmly with the fashion world."⁸⁶

An increasing number of designer labels and luxury brands plus ready to wear labels (H & M, Kookäi, Morgan) and high-street names as well as specialist chain stores (Princesse Tam-Tam, Darjeeling) are now manufacturing and selling lingerie. Christian Dior, which has had a licence to produce lingerie since 1954 and Nina Ricci, who designed her first lingerie line in 1978 were the forerunners of this movement, a movement that is trying to exploit an exponential sales curve in a rapidly expanding market. For certain labels, such as Lacoste, setting up a lingerie line in 2002 was a way of appealing to a younger and more feminine clientele. What ready-to-wear lines really want is to produce a fashion range that is similar to their other products, at attractive prices. And we have seen celebrities from music and cinema launching their own lingerie labels, following the examples of Kylie Minogue, Jennifer Lopez and Elle McPherson. What distinguishes these new arrivals in the lingerie arena from traditional lingerie labels is the relationship between the labels' lingerie products and their ready-to-wear products. John Galliano's first lingerie collection in 2002 showed pieces which had been inspired by newspaper patterns, which were much used in his ready-to-wear designs. Christine Coulin, Nina Ricci's Licensing Director agrees: "At Nina Ricci Lingerie we also find ourselves in a very French, Parisian, feminine and romantic environment. Also, the Riviera print which was successful in the ready-to-wear range, for example, was used as a theme for the lingerie line."⁸⁷ Although the number of new players in the lingerie market seems phenomenal, it is in fact restricted in size: in 2003 these labels represented less than 10% of the market, according to Catherine de Poorter, Lingerie Purchasing Manager at Galeries Lafayette Haussmann, Paris.

Distribution networks

Even though different European countries do not share the same means of distributing lingerie, we can discern certain trends: in general, independent traders are losing ground to large companies. Retailers are tending to offer more luxurious goods to a more selective clientele. The number of brands is increasing, and more and more labels are targetting a particular market group or are deploying niche strategies. We can also differentiate very identifiable brands which have come from ready-to-wear or haute couture labels. Non-specialised distributors such as ready-to-wear brands offer concepts, styles and low prices to young women. And finally, an important aspect is the way that manufacturing and distribution tend to be linked. Many labels sell in their own boutiques, such as Wolford, Dim and Eminence. Other labels in this sector are re-evaluating their position by expanding

Page 206.

Princesse Tam-Tam advertisement, Autumn / Winter 1997.



Page 208.

Advertisement *Corset counter*, 1894,
Galliera Museum, Paris.

Page 209.

Anonymous, Poster "A la Perséphone",
1889. 55 x 43 cm. Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.

their ranges. And department stores want to increase the appeal of their underwear departments to young customers by creating real lingerie environments and new service concepts. Recently, in November 2003, a Parisian department store opened the world's largest lingerie department measuring approximately 2, 600 m².

Lingerie distribution in France is divided between hypermarkets and supermarkets on the one hand (24.9% of total sales in 2001) and specialist chain stores on the other (25% of total sales in 2001). Retailers only have 13.9% of the lingerie market, a drop from the 20.6% of ten years ago. Before, a customer's only choice was between supermarkets selling articles at low prices and lingerie boutiques selling more top of the line garments. Plus, in these boutiques the lingerie was often put in boxes or drawers and the customer had to ask the salesperson to see an article. Lingerie boutiques in France today are an ageing and disappearing breed. They lack the financial wherewithal for communication and marketing on the same level as other brands. It is hard for them to stand up to the competition from specialist chain stores which often open in towns on main thoroughfares. In this lingerie war the strength of retailers is their friendly reception and personal service. Patrice Argain, the national representative of the French Lingerie Federation, speaks about these differences in the following way: "Retailers are often passionate about lingerie and know their product and their profession extremely well. These independent lingerie boutiques often have a soul. They establish a human relationship which is shown by a warm welcome and good advice."⁸⁸ As a final point, selling designer and top-of-the-line products means that retailers have an advantage over their competition. And many retailers have become rich, such as Laure Sokol, a designer with her own label: "with so many franchises it is no longer very advantageous to sell basic products".⁸⁹ Retailers in France continue to lose market share every year and are trying to attract and keep customers. For this reason the CNDL (The French National Committee of Lingerie Retailers) wishes to set up a "French Lingerie" quality charter with a logo which could be displayed by all retailers who guarantee a warm welcome and quality service in line with the charter.⁹⁰

Over the last ten years, lingerie chains and labels such as Etam, Darjeeling and Cannelle have covered most of the market. This is not a phenomenon particular to lingerie. In fact, chain stores have affected all types of trade, most often at the cost of the independent retailer. The example of children's clothing shows this very clearly. Children's clothes were sold mainly by specialised independent companies and then became an integral part of food hypermarkets, supermarkets and franchises such as Jacadi and Sergent Major. Later, they were distributed by women's ready-to-wear labels (Gap, H & M, Zara). According to Marielle Allemand from Carlin International: "Ready-to-wear labels, like lingerie specialists, have filled the gap that existed for middle-of-the-range products at reasonable prices."⁹¹ They have also introduced self-service stores in town centres. Specialist chain stores and ready-to-wear labels have considerable advantages in terms of negotiating stock and worldwide communication, (there are 400 Etam stores with the same communication, window dressing, boutique decoration and atmosphere), and this strengthens brand image for the consumer. As far as supermarkets are concerned, they have just managed to hold onto the market share from previous years and are looking to increase their market share by introducing their own product lines, although well-known national brands such as Playtex, Dim and Scandale are also trying to increase their share. For distribution brands, introducing a lingerie department is part of the policy for product globalisation: customers buying clothes in one outlet can accessorise them without changing stores.

There are also discount stores in the French market such as Valège or Body One. Their communication is based on their low prices as well as on their products. They also have an argument other than price - very frequent updates. There are 250 pieces per season, at a rate of two new models per week. These stores are the direct opposite of lingerie boutiques which insist on advice.





Modèle n° 598. — Pyjama en crêpe-satin vert pour le pantalon, doublure du ton pour la casaque. Broderie de style oriental sur les manches. Volants en forme posés sous découpes donnant l'ampleur en jupe du pantalon.

Création DUPOUY-MAGNIN.

INTIMITÉ. Chemise de nuit en crêpe-satin. Travail de nids d'abeille et points de lingerie autour de l'encolure et sur les manches de forme pingouin.

Création ROUFF.

COQUETTERIE. — Combinaison dessous de robe en crêpe-satin et crêpe georgine Iris A.G.B. Le crêpe georgine Iris A.G.B. forme le soutien-gorge et le volant en forme en bas. Travail de jours en dentelures au bord du crêpe-satin.

Création ROUFF.

L'AURORE. — Combinaison-ijupon en crêpe georgine Iris A.G.B. noir et dentelle ancienne ocrée. Travail de fils de fronces au milieu de la gorgette. Haute ceinture. Panneaux plissés formant la jupe tout autour.

Création PREMET.



Discount stores do not even have changing rooms just in case “customers try on too many garments”, says Marc Seroussi, MD of the Body One label.⁹² However, specialists in the sector estimate that the market is tending towards higher product value and therefore higher prices, which will benefit traditional labels.

Mail order had also lost market share but now has had a new lease of life. In 1985, for the first time, the 3 Suisses company published a catalogue entirely dedicated to lingerie. Since then the market has seen other specialist catalogues that are more responsive to demand and that follow fashion trends more closely than the large catalogues. At the end of 2003, “Edition 1^{ère}” was launched by 3 Suisses, a 52 page catalogue exclusively devoted to lingerie. It had a very modern layout, similar to that of fashion magazines. Magazine-style catalogues are also used by lingerie labels such as Huit which publishes catalogues for each collection, in a large format for retailers and a smaller format for customers. This develops a privileged and more personalised relationship between the customer and the brand.

Buying lingerie online is also growing in popularity. In the United States, sales of clothing online doubled between 1999 and 2000, from 2.9 billion dollars to 5.9 billion dollars. Of all internet users, 60% said they bought clothes online and 40% would do it again. If the online buyer could be typified, he, or rather she, has a high disposable income, is interested in fashion and at ease with new technology. But online buying has also found a male clientele as it provides a discreet way of buying lingerie for wives

Page 210.

Four young women in dressing gowns, combination and pink nightdress, black and beige combination, 1890.

Page from *Art, Taste and Beauty*.

Page 211.

Alfred Choubrac, Poster “Unbreakable Whale Bone Corsets”, c. 1900. 93 x 129 cm.

Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.



Page 212.

Advertising slot "In the corset of Venus", c.1925.

Galliera Museum, Paris. (front side).

Page 213.

Tamagno, Poster "Sous-vêtements Rasurel", c. 1900.

140 x 100 cm. Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.

Page 214.

A. Rapeno, cover of the Corset Counter, commercial catalogue, of the *Grands Magasins du Louvre*, Winter 1913-1914. Galliera museum, Paris.

Page 215.

Théo Matykos, "Wefka" poster, 1919. 135 x 93 cm.

Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.



A vintage advertisement for Louvre Comptoir des Corsets. The illustration shows a woman in a light-colored, sleeveless corset with a lace bodice and a ruffled hem, black stockings, and a matching hat. She stands next to a large, ornate oval mirror that reflects her full figure. The background is a dark wall with a repeating pattern of red roses. The text at the bottom reads "LOUVRE PARIS COMPTOIR DES Corsets" and "Tout PLUS ÉLÉGANT et MEILLEUR MARCHÉ que partout ailleurs". The artist's signature "A. RAFFINO" is visible on the left, and the date "Hiver 1913-1914" is written in the lower right.

A. RAFFINO

Hiver 1913-1914

LOUVRE
PARIS
COMPTOIR DES
Corsets

Tout **PLUS ÉLÉGANT** et **MEILLEUR MARCHÉ** que partout ailleurs

Stew Metzkyff



Wefka
GES. GESCH.
**FEDERN DER
STRUMPF/SOCKEN/
ÄRMEL
U. HANDSCHUHHALTER
ECHT VERSILBERT, FLACH LIEGEND!
ELEGANTER, ANGENEHMER
U. HALTBARER ALS GUMMBAND.
SITZT FEST OH- NE ZU DRÜCKEN!
IN ALLEN EINSCHLÄGIGEN  GESCHÄFTEN ZU HABEN.**

LINGERIE



Créations Martial et Armand
Parure en Supercrêpe A. G. B.



Page 216.

"Lingerie, Martial and Armand creations", *Art, Goût, Beauté*, May 1925. Galliera Museum, Paris.

Page 217.

Anonymous, "Arwa" Poster. c. 1935, 89 x 63 cm.
Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.



and girlfriends. The specialised internet site Rush Collection opened a dedicated lingerie space in April 2003. It offers Lise Charmel, Lejaby, Huit and Barbara, and its choice is expanding as it becomes more top-of-the-line. At present, the articles on offer are from the previous season's collections and are reduced of between 20 and 50 %. The Managing Director, Gilles Raison, however, would like to put more recent models online. The internet user can vary the colour of a product and look at it in 3D, zoom in on it and call up a succession of images.⁹³ Mail order companies are also developing comparable online sales so as to reach more customers, including a clientele younger than traditional catalogue users with higher purchasing power.

Besides traditional distribution networks, lingerie can be bought through underwear parties, along the same lines as the famous "Tupperware parties" which started in the United States in the 1950s. Interest in this method is based on the fact that there is no overheads as there is for a sales outlet. So the prices are, on the average, 30% lower than other outlets. An other advantage is that one can meet the customers and so get their feedback on the products. However, this market is still very limited. According to figures from the French Direct Sales Syndicate, all textiles together represent no more than 3% of their members' turnover. Therefore, work is being undertaken to modernise the outdated image of door-to-door sales. This method is a way for new designers to launch their own labels, although the high competition in this sector means exclusive lines are hard to distribute.

Sex shops were the last bastions of tantalising and sexy lingerie during the 1960s and 1970s, but they are now trying to turn the page on their image as "hard-core" lingerie. Look for example at the German company Beate Uhse whose turnover increased by over 9% in 2002. The company is directing its attention to the rest of Europe and recently opened seven boutiques in the North of France. The new director has revitalised its product image by proposing a more subtle and less aggressive approach, a kind of sex shop for women and couples. This means that the boutiques are much lighter than before with large windows. In fact, they are lingerie shops with a few sex toys as well. As opposed to their former, principally male, clientele the company wants to attract women, especially by using mail order catalogues, for which women represent 40% of the customers.

Motivation to purchase

There are now more than 620 lingerie labels in the world. In 2003, French women bought 60 million bras and spent, on the average, 102 euros (18% of their clothing budget) on lingerie. French women mainly buy daytime underwear and corsetry. The average French woman buys five pairs of briefs and two bras per year. Although England is the prime European market for underwear, with English women spending £114 on lingerie, they tend to buy low-price articles. In France, women tend to buy more luxurious products. It is true that Latin countries like France and Italy have traditionally had a taste for seductive lingerie while Anglo-Saxons required more functional and discreet underwear. In the United States, the market is "dominated by seamless and fairly functional articles....Seduction does not seem to be a priority, whereas a French woman would prefer to buy a product because it is pretty" says Laurence Duchiron at Chantelle. In fact, American women seem to prioritise, in this order: low-price, comfort and well-being.⁹⁴ Although there are still some differences, today it is no longer possible to define consumer behaviour using these kinds of facts and figures. In fact, the current lingerie market is increasingly dominated by women between 15 and 25. In France, this represents the prime buying group, with an annual budget of about 150 euros. It is a clientele that has quite diversified taste and likes to buy novelty pieces which are comfortable and easy-care. These same customers also appreciate more elegant lingerie for evening or private life. This is because in the 1980s lingerie stopped being considered merely functional: it is now a fashion item in itself and buying underwear is perceived by men and women alike as a pleasurable activity. And currently, with the fashion for low-waisted trousers and skimpy tops, lingerie has become a visible accessory. One now expects to match underwear to

Page 218.

Excerpt from the *Revue Rousset* n°1, 1933.
Private collection, Paris.

Page 220.

René Gruau, Press Announcement, "Scandal Stockings",
c. 1950. Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.

Page 221.

Anonymous, Poster, "Now extra supple without having to
compromise", c. 1930. 160 x 120 cm.
Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.

Page 222.

Pierre Brenot, Poster "*Lingerie, Stockings, The sky of
France*". 43 x 32 cm, 1959. Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.

Page 223.

Hervé Morvan, Press announcement, "Scandal", c. 1950.
26.5 x 17 cm. Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.



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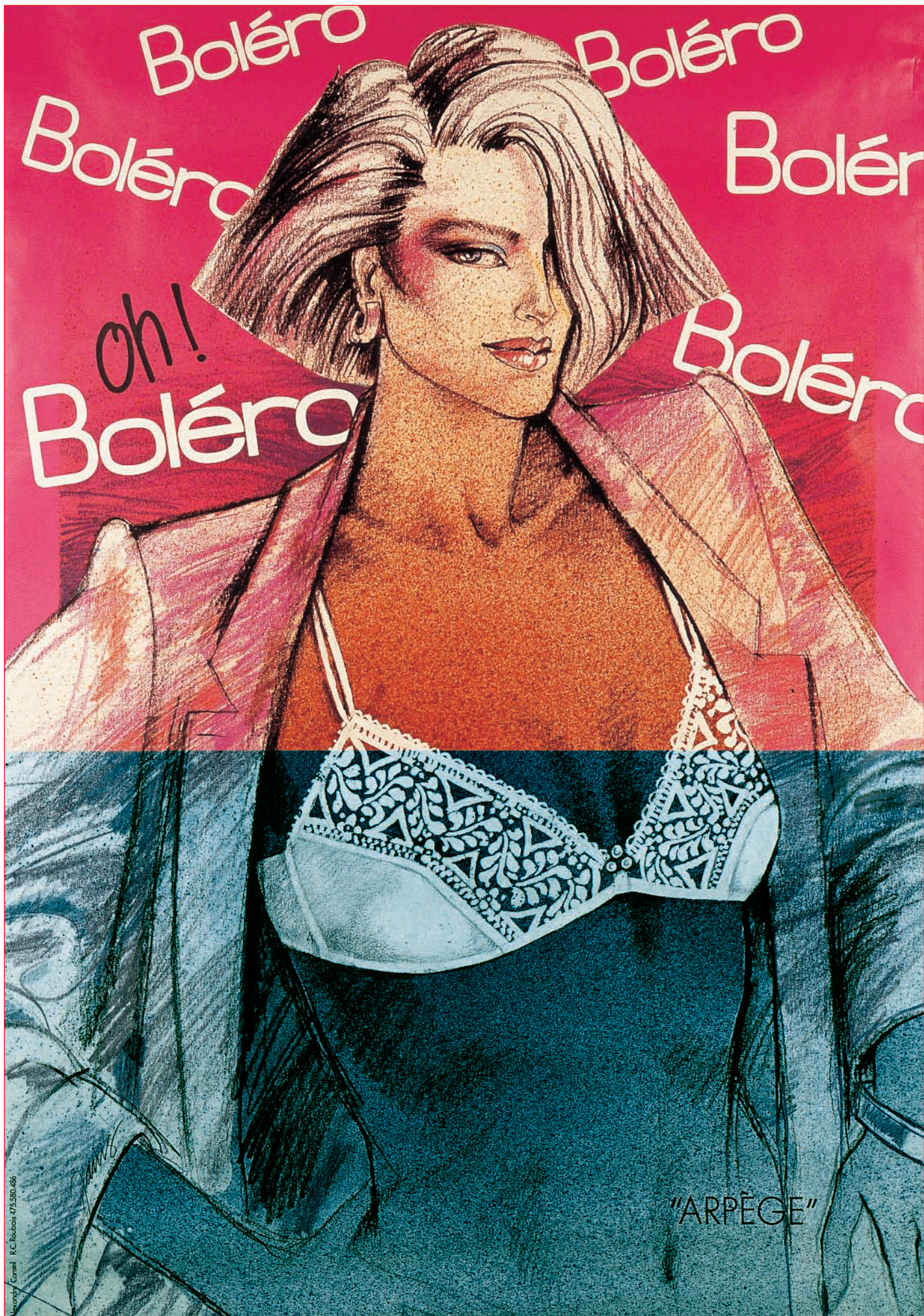
outerwear. This sector has really succeeded in transforming a utilitarian article into a desirable, fashionable must-have.

In the lingerie area, the notion of labels and their guarantee of quality has been very successful. In fact, women claim that this is what first attracted them to their favourite labels. But it is difficult nowadays to talk about consumer behaviour or even loyalty. A woman can very well buy a large number of bottom-of-the-line garments and set aside a certain budget for a few top-of-the-line sets. France is the world's top exporter of lingerie today but its reputation is really based on design and quality. For reasons, competitive French lingerie manufacturers are outsourcing manufacture to countries where labour costs much less than in France: Asia and North Africa.

Communication

Lingerie advertising appeared in 19th century fashion magazines at the end of the publication, and was mainly for corsets. But advertising for undergarments was also "hidden" in texts allowing the authors to draw attention to the merits of these garments. In the 1920s and 1930s, the beautifying aspect of underwear was deemed important and while the garments were not actually presented as ways of obtaining a desirable figure (sport was for that), they were seen as aids for a liberated woman. In the 1940s photography began to compete with drawings, although many lingerie houses stayed loyal to their illustrators (Dior and Gruau, Scandale and Chamos, Lou and Brenot). In the 1950s, Hollywood stars (Jane Russell, Marilyn Monroe, Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner and Elizabeth Taylor) with generous high busts were even better advertisements for the age where the ideal of voluptuous, well-developed curves called for suitable underwear. In the years that followed, women wanted lingerie that was durable and easy-care. These qualities were stressed, especially with the advent of nylon in underwear manufacture. The sixties were a breath of fresh air, dominated by the youth culture. The young were targeted with coloured lingerie shown against a plain background. Lingerie was meant to be discreet: there were triangle bras and low-waisted briefs in flesh-colours. The movements of May 1968 in France and feminism brought lingerie into the line of fire. It was perceived as a symbol of suppression of the female body. A profound crisis in all parts of the business followed. The industry really began to question itself and tried to reach common ground between their products and the new aspirations of young women. Since the 1980s, lingerie has been presented as an integral part of a woman's wardrobe and the industry tries to increase buying by constantly introducing new colours, shapes and decoration as they did for ready-to-wear.

Today lingerie manufacturers budget an average of 8 to 10% of their turnover for advertising, as opposed to 2.5 % for the clothing industry. The media most used are billboards and women's magazines. These days, in an environment of increasingly fierce competition, the various lingerie companies communicate their brand image rather than a single product. They absolutely must differentiate themselves from the growing competition in this sector. Now, although communication is closely linked to seduction, a large role is also played by derision and humour. It is as if a woman can now be sure of, and play with, her powers of seduction. The Authentic Wonderbra campaign had a strong dose of fun and impertinence. The model, Eva Herzigova, displayed her deep cleavage above the caption "*Look me in the eyes*". The "Les Leçons d'Aubade" campaign, to celebrate the label's ten years in the business in 2002, has become a classic of its kind in terms of sensuality and a certain retro style. We see a black and white photo of a skimpily covered sublime body with its head out of the shot. It is the slogan in particular that won over both men and women. Other brands have also tried to play light-heartedly on seduction. Dim, when trying to strengthen its brand image to attract the 15 to 20 age group, came up with the "Seduction is just a game" concept. For the second skin "Body Touch" line, the slogan was "Worse than naked" written above a young woman holding a snake spellbound. As concerns the Barbara label, communication policy changed four years ago to "impertinent" seduction, according to the Managing Director Jean-Jacques



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Bena. He maintains that in such a highly competitive field, only “style, photos and the weight of words” can distinguish one brand from another. Advocating a certain sensuality in the communication policy, Monsieur Bena defends his use of sexuality. In fact, most manufacturers agree on their right, and even the necessity, to show scantily-clad well-developed young women. “It seems normal to me to show a body to sell lingerie. How can I prove the value of my product without showing it on a woman?⁹⁵”, asks Jean-Jacques Bena. In 2003 the BVP (French Bureau for Advertising Standards) asked the Barbara label to remove billboard advertising showing women in underwear with the slogans “Mon banquier me préfère à découvert, allez comprendre” (“My banker prefers me overdrawn. Go figure.”- overdrawn being the same word in French as “uncovered”), and “When someone tells me no, I take off my sweater”, as their slogans were considered as denigrating the image of women.

Advertising goes too far

In 2003 lingerie specialists were called up by the BVP (French Bureau for Advertising Standards) three times for advertising campaigns which degraded women. Of the three labels in question, Sloggi provoked the fiercest reactions with pictures of a scantily-clad woman (in G-strings) clinging onto a bar in front of a man wearing boxing gloves and with the slogan “Be yourself”. Women were portrayed as objects, reduced to a glorified form of prostitution. The BVP is a purely advisory body and has no real power to sanction brands advertising against their judgment, except for television where all advertisements must have a favourable vote from the BVP in order to be broadcast. The almost natural sequence of events was illustrated by the Sloggi scandal when the billboards were only taken down on the date forecast as the end of the campaign. Sloggi had taken no notice of the BVP’s demands, renewed a second and third time, to remove the advertisements. It was a purely commercial decision which correctly aroused moral criticism. In fact, according to Antoine Dumais, Sloggi’s Managing Director: “Sales were three or four times higher than our most optimistic forecast!”⁹⁶ Why was there such uproar over some exposed buttocks while porno chic had been recently promoted by luxury brands in magazine advertisements and film clips, and there are television shows that go even further? Some answer that we are forced to look at billboards in public areas while we have a choice as to whether watch a particular film or buy a specific magazine.

Page 227.

Phillip Foré, “Rosy Bra, Pleasing to the Eye” Poster, 1954.

24 x 50 cm. Bibliothèque Forney, Paris.

Marketing

A label's lines and collections try to meet the different requirements and expectations of a constantly growing market, including young girls buying their very first bras and mature women wishing to maintain their feminine allure.

There are a number of marketing tools that help boutiques promote their products. Sales floor promotions cover all of the visuals present in the sales outlet: signage, fittings and promotional campaigns. In the words of Patrick Robert, the MD of Ideaform, sales floor promotions: "...are the ultimate advertising argument at the moment of purchase. Their role is to finalise and make concrete the design, packaging and advertising work which has been carried out upstream". To do this, they must meet several objectives: store segmentation, information, promotion and creating a store environment which embodies the product. The sales floor must reflect the universe of each brand, differentiating it from other brands so as to create a strong brand image that can reach out to the customer and make her loyal.⁹⁷

Another element which plays a strategic role in a final purchase is the store window. It should incite passers-by to enter the store, so great care should be taken with window dressing. The store window should be renewed frequently and have a theme. It should also offer a glimpse of the products inside without displaying them all, depending on the light available. Chain stores usually have a marketing manager in charge of creating the same message for all the sales outlets. Independent stores sometimes use designers and shop fitters or decorate the store themselves.

A great number of labels have promotional events, especially during certain seasons (e.g. Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Christmas). For the last few years, Boléro has collaborated with artists to produce limited edition objects for their customers who buy a Boléro underwear set. For the summer of 2004, the label produced a vest top displaying a design by the artist Ben which read "if you only knew what I was wearing underneath". It was a free gift with the sale of the "Rêve" set. Other labels offer a third garment free, like Hunkemöller for its April 2004 advertising campaign. A more original approach was that of Galeries Lafayette in 2003. The Parisian store had already shocked sensibilities in a previous campaign by showing Chantal Thomass lingerie on live models in the windows. Now it offered free striptease lessons to promote its lingerie department.

Some current directions for lingerie

The youth market

There are many labels aimed at the youth market, as this group plays an important economic role in the lingerie market today. In fact, the 15 to 24 age group spends on the average of 148.50 euros on underwear per year while the average overall annual purchase is around 100 euros. Young women like to have fun with their underwear, mixing styles to personalise their look and coordinating lingerie with outerwear and accessories, so they tend to renew their lingerie often. Young girls are very receptive to labels with a coordinated line at reasonable prices. There are also numerous labels aimed at the youth market (such as Lulu Castagnette, No Roméo d'Hop Lun, Unno and Réservée aux filles) because "If you take ten labels bought by 25-35 year olds, seven of them have been bought since adolescence" according to Samar Hussami of Variance.⁹⁸ Collections for young women play on their interest in "customising" or "mixing and matching" their lingerie using different colour combinations or different fabrics.

From a distribution point of view, young women favour chain stores like H & M as these brands, are multi-specialised and their market position is low-price fashion. Lingerie has become a separate fashion article and new concepts are regularly introduced in the stores to attract young consumers.⁹⁹ Their great advantage lies in the fact that young girls wish to buy lingerie with ready-to-wear and this is easier if it all belongs to the same label.





Underwear on top

Today women create an outfit around their underwear, which has evolved from something functional, to a fashion accessory and finally to the main component of an outfit on the basis of which all the rest is added. Women play with different pieces, mismatch them, hide and reveal their bodies and show their lingerie. Chantal Thomass, the forerunner in this domain, says: "Lingerie is firstly a state of mind and fashion in itself. You should play with underwear as you would with clothes you can see."¹⁰⁰

Vanina Vespina, a young designer, has been producing collections which blur the lines between lingerie and ready-to-wear since 1996. Lingerie has inspired many designers, such as Hubert Barrère, who excels in the modern art of women's corsetry, Vivienne Westwood, Jean Paul Gaultier and John Galiano, all of whom regularly feature lingerie items or details in their haute-couture or ready-to-wear designs. This is by no means a new phenomenon as fashion designers have been helping themselves to the world of lingerie for the last twenty years.

Technological contributions to lingerie

Manufacturers today want to offer an added value to their lingerie products. The "rebirth of lingerie" which started in the 1980s cannot be disassociated from technological innovations in textiles which have been beneficial to lingerie production. Nylon was introduced to lingerie after World War II and meant that lingerie that was easy-care, light and durable could be manufactured. Then elastane was invented in the 1960s when made underwear more elastic and flexible. The name of the elastane thread was Lycra and it was trademarked by the company Du Pont in Nemours, France. It could stretch to seven times its own length and could be used in small quantities mixed with any other textile. Elastane is behind successful "second skin" clothes and support lingerie and does not compress the body uncomfortably. And at the beginning of the 1990s micro-fibre became popular for minimalist, seamless underwear.

The lingerie and sportswear markets were the first to use so-called "intelligent" clothes. Dim has launched moisturising, slimming and even massage tights. Triumph's "Lotion" line contains a moisturiser using Aloe-Vera micro-encapsulation. This procedure consists of enveloping an active substance with a membrane to make a capsule, and then this capsule is integrated into the textile fibre which gradually diffuses active agents when the fabric is rubbed. Although micro-encapsulation has existed since 1954 in the United States, it is much more recent in France. The first to test it was Hermès which perfumed scarves with the fragrance Calèche in 1996. The problem with micro-encapsulation is that it does not withstand washing very well. "This is a fragile technique as the capsules also diffuse during the wash. Therefore its active effect is limited over time." There are two ways of integrating active agents into a fibre. At the dressing stage, the agent can be introduced by pulverisation over the finished fabric: this is micro-encapsulation as is used in cosmetic textiles. Otherwise, the agent can be added to the fibre at the spinning stage. This is more efficient as diffusion takes place more slowly. Clothes can also be imbued with more of the product using refill cartridges. Manufacturers of sports clothes sell articles which are anti-bacterial¹⁰¹ or which block UV rays. There are considerable fields of application: moisturising, anti-perspiration, support, sun protection, relaxation and antibacterial..¹

Sportswear at the beginning of the 21st century

Despite the fact that the sports lingerie market is still quite modest, sales in this sector are in constant progression. The reason for this seems to be a new awareness of the importance of wearing underwear

Page 230.

Princesse Tam Tam, *Secret Bask*.

Autumn / Winter collection 2003-2004.

Page 232.

Chantal Thomass, Autumn / Winter collection 2001-2002.

Page 233.

Chantal Thomass, Autumn / Winter collection 2001-2002.









adapted to sporting activities. For this trend, France is way behind the United States where “...any woman who does sports buys a special bra”, says Maryline Colette, Sports Lingerie market manager at Decathlon. The existing brands in this market have several sources, such as traditional lingerie labels like Triumph, Arena and Berlei, and sports brands, particularly Adidas, Reebok and Nike, in addition to outdoor sports lines such as Patagonia and Odlo plus medical clothing like Tuasne, Z Concept. These manufacturers do not have the same distribution networks: while general brands distribute in hypermarkets, supermarkets and by mail order, clothing specialists only supply sporting goods stores. Finally, the two biggest sports retailers in France, Décathlon and Go Sport, have launched their own lingerie lines.

These products have to meet customer requirements, which are good support plus comfort. For this reason, sports lingerie is less conditioned by fashion trends which are so important for traditional lingerie articles. In fact, women rarely require coordinated sports lingerie – so rarely that Berlei abandoned its line of matching sports bras and briefs. Even though we are now starting to offer colours other than black, white and grey, says Sarah Clairembault, Women’s Leisure Market Manager for Go Sport “...the products are often the same from year to year”. There is a lot of innovation, however, in the guise of more and more technological textiles being used for sports clothes and consequently for sports underwear. But whether these textiles protect from UV rays, regulate heat or fight against bacteria, first and foremost sports lingerie must be comfortable and offer complete support.

Sexy lingerie

The 1970s were a disgraceful decade for lingerie as only sex shops sold sexy underwear. It is partly because of these sex shops that lingerie began to be popular again, and also because of shows, music halls and the Punk movement which started in London and which reintroduced a panoply of shocking clothes. These included ripped fishnet stockings with suspenders and mini-skirts in PVC or black leather. In the 1980s, sophisticated underwear returned in force with all-in-one articles such as curacaos, boxer shorts, body stockings and other pieces which became popular once more like waspies,

Page 234.

Corset created by Axfords.

Page 235.

Rigby and Peller, Winter 2002.

suspenders and stockings. These combinations were made of luxurious fabrics and in bright colours. Ready-to-wear designers, notably Emmanuelle Khahn and Chantal Thomass, were behind the rebirth of sexy lingerie. Today women long for seductive garments but they also want comfort and well-being. There are two articles which illustrate this perfectly: the push-up bra and the G-string.

Since 1992, following the launch of Wacoal's "push-up" bra, lingerie manufacturers have tried to design cleavage-enhancing bras which do not restrict the body too much. For a decade, manufacturers have used mousse, water, silicone, gel, oil and air-cushions to achieve the desired effect of curves and cleavage.

The current craze for the G-string, a garment with no particular technical qualities, can be explained in several ways. First of all, a G-string is very discreet under tight clothing and leaves no visible panty line. Women chose G-strings at first for this practical aspect, following the example of models who wore them for the catwalk. Even if they are uncomfortable, this does not dissuade women from wearing them. The G-string craze is such that in 2003, 6 out of 10 sales involved this garment. It has traditional, fine and clip versions depending on the shape of the rear. Although G-strings are at their peak of popularity, some people are predicting the return of boxer-style briefs. Chantal Malingrey, the General Administrator of the Salon de la Lingerie de Paris (Paris' Lingerie Trade Fair) maintains that "the fashion for G-strings has at least allowed manufacturers, who used to be obsessed by bras, to become interested in panties". During the last two years, seductive G-strings have become popular. They have artistic decoration like Wacoal's cut-out flower in the back. At Lejaby they are bejewelled and designed (at least partly) to be seen. In fact, the latest trend is to accessorise underwear, and the G-string is used as a setting for real jewellery which can be positioned with sets of adjustable straps or diamante clip-on chains.

A perfect marriage of lingerie and lace: an interview with Olivier Noyon, President of the Board of Noyon Dentelle

In this following interview with Mr Olivier Noyon, the President of the Board of Noyon Dentelle, he shared his opinions on recent developments in lingerie and its close relationship to lace.

— *Can you describe Noyon in a few words?*

— The company was founded by my grandfather in 1919. Today we are the world leader in Leavers machine-lace and crochet (Jacquardtronic and Textronic). We have plants in the major textile countries and large sales division in Asia. We've had sales a division in Japan for 25 years now, and we also have them in Honk Hong and the Chinese Republic as well as in the United States, Italy, England and Poland. In addition, we have sales representatives in about fifty countries. We have a plant in China which mainly produces embroidery. At present we are developing a crochet plant in Sri Lanka. We have never considered developing our Leavers specialisation abroad, however. We employ 600 people in France. The Calais plant consists of 83 qualified Leavers staff and 54 qualified Jacquardtronic and Textronic staff. We employ about forty people in the design studio. Design must be a major asset for French lace manufacturers today as we know it is impossible to compete with the price of Chinese, Turkish, or even Italian manufacturers. So our main selling point and the one that attracts clients is our design. Our prices are higher but it is firstly because of our added design value, and if our competitors are cheaper it is mainly due to the fact that they do not design, they just produce copies.

— *Could you describe how your clientele has evolved over the last twenty years, since sophisticated lingerie became popular once again in the 1980s?*

— Almost 98% of Noyon's work is with the women's lingerie sector, and 2% is with ready-to-wear. In 1980 we already had the same lingerie clients we have today, but Italian and French brands were

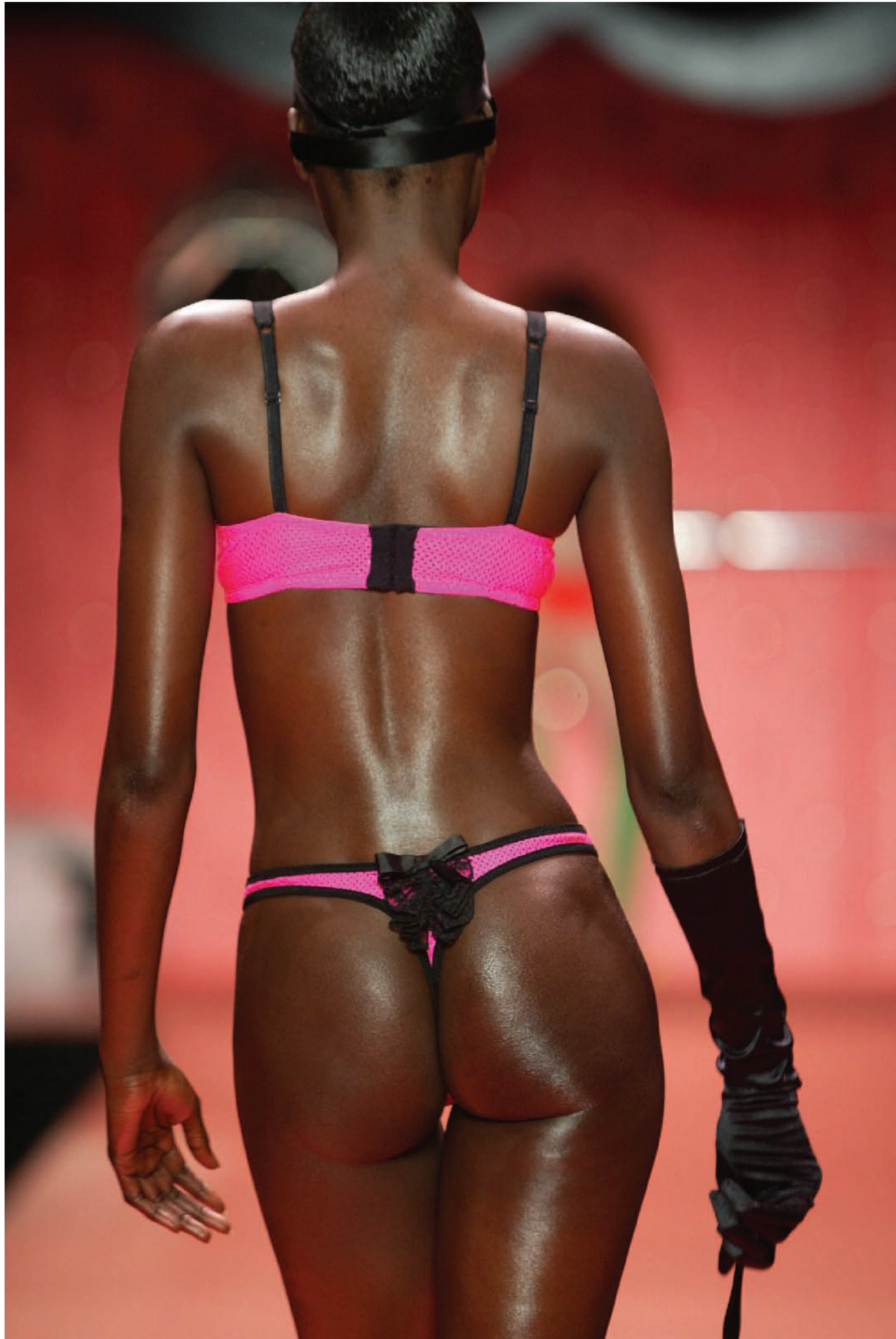
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Chantal Thomass, Catwalk 2004.

Page 238-239.

Yaël Landman, "Vito" model,

Autumn / Winter collection 2003.











much more important. We worked less with the U.S.A. But we did already work with Triumph, Chantelle, Barbara, Simone Pérèle, Lou, Boléro and all the well-known upscale brands.

At that time we said that we worked in lingerie-corsetry and that implied a very particular know-how. Most of our clients were originally in girdles and corsets and later developed lighter lingerie. At first, in the 1980s, this lingerie was not at all aesthetic. A lot of labels like Chantelle, Lise Charmel and Aubade had largely created flattering designs for women. But in no way did we have the same concepts as we have today. If a woman was elegant and wore sophisticated underwear, it was actually to please others, whereas we are experiencing a more narcissistic phenomenon today. Women buy beautiful, fashionable lingerie for their own enjoyment. Also, in the 1980s there was not much colour: we worked in black, white, flesh colours and a little navy blue; it was really very limited. Colour represented perhaps 10% to 15% of production. Over the last twenty-five years we have experienced considerable developments in terms of line. Before, lingerie was designed by corsetry manufacturers. Those companies still exist, but today we are seeing new lines from upscale stores: Victoria's Secret, Marks and Spencer and all the ready-to-wear chain stores such as Zara, H & M, and Etam, as well as designers such as Dior, Givenchy, Gaultier and Galliano. The first group existed in the 1980s, but the trend is much more highly developed today.

— *Do you work with these new clients? Are they aiming at the top-of-the-line?*

— I would say that, of course, we work with everyone. We have seen a concentration of big brands such as Vanity Fair and Sara Lee, each of which has several labels. We have also witnessed expansion with everybody moving into the lingerie sector which seems a profitable niche in terms of both fashion and margins. This has inspired our design because we now create “trendy” lingerie which has a shorter shelf-life. And of course we had to change our working methods as order sizes today are much smaller than they were twenty-five years ago, when the client wanted you to put three techniques into manufacture during the whole year for just one design.

Today it is no longer like that. The client makes an order which has to be delivered within a very short period of time, and sometimes seven or eight machines have to operate on the same design. More machines are needed to deal with orders that, overall, are smaller.

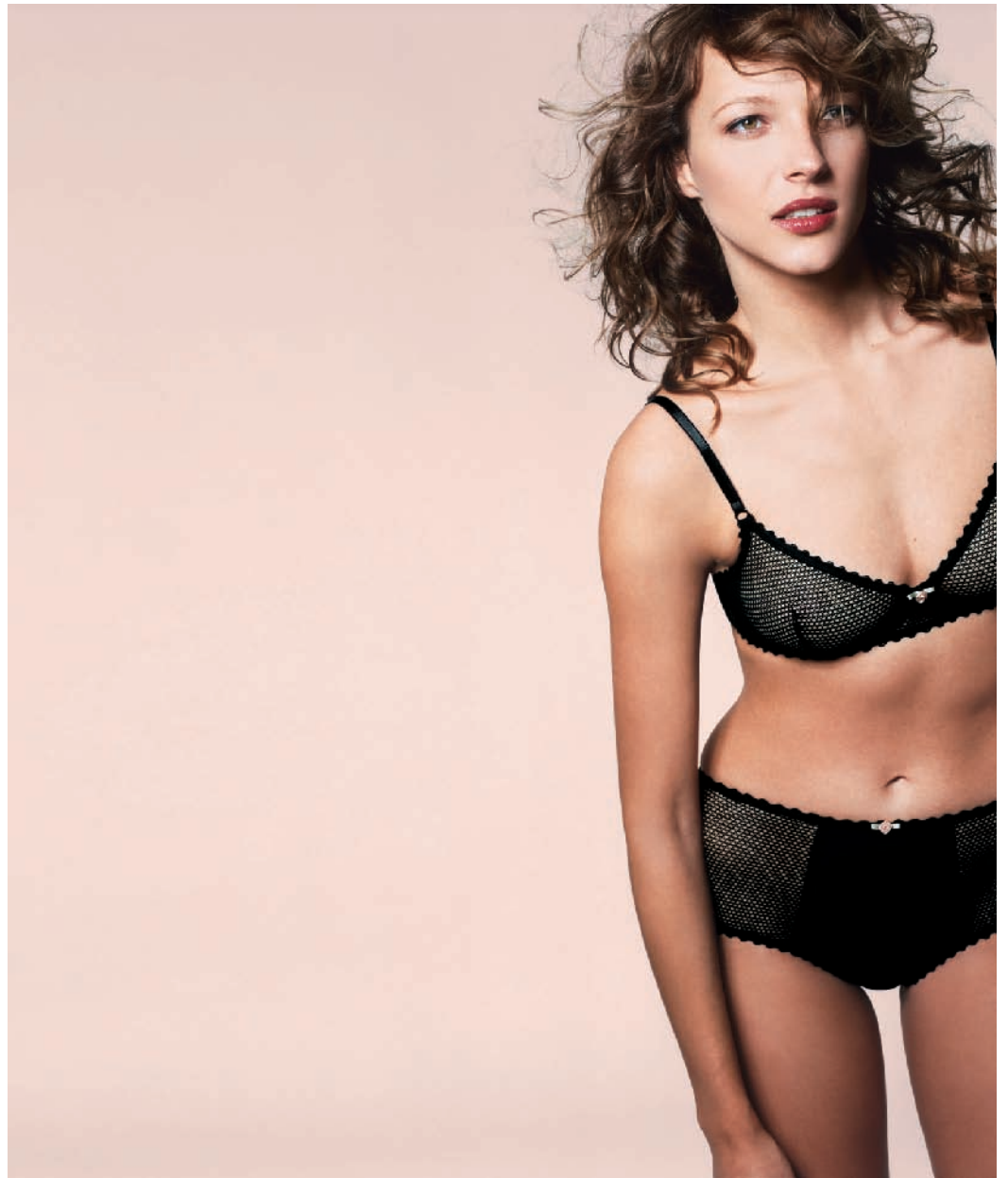
Page 240.

“Maestria” ensemble, corset and panties.

Chantelle creation, Autumn / Winter 2003.

Page 241.

Collection Freya, *bra, panties stocking-suspenders and stockings ensemble.*



Page 242.

Princesse Tam-Tam, *Twiggy*,
Autumn / Winter collection 2003-2004.

Page 243.

Combination from the Jet Set line. Barbara creation,
Autumn / Winter 2003-2004.

Page 244.

Corset created by Axfords.

Page 245.

Corset created by Axfords.

Page 246.

Chantal Thomass, *Catwalk* 2004.

Page 247.

Yaël Landman, "Crystal" model.
Autumn / Winter collection 2003.

The market has become more difficult. The customer is much more demanding as she has access to a fantastic selection: lingerie is available at all distribution outlets, from the supermarket to luxury boutiques. Today, bra prices can vary between 10 euros and 100 euros, and there is a great choice of colour, shape and style. The customer has gained a lot.

— *What role do the annual lingerie trade fairs in Paris and Lyon play?*

— Trade fairs have become very important in terms of bringing professionals together, and they are essential events in the life-cycle of lingerie and raw materials collections. They are no longer as important for making orders, however. Nothing is ever ordered at trade fairs. They have become meeting points like any other, that is to say, like the client visits we make. Trade fairs like Paris and Lyon mean you can meet between 150 and 200 clients in three or four days, an impossible feat otherwise.

Not all the clients work at the same pace. At next September's Lyon fair, we are introducing our winter 2005-2006 collection, while some clients have already started research on summer 2006 and others are still finishing summer 2005.

— *Has this increase in pace created any difficulties for you in terms of response time?*

— No, we are used to planning two years in advance. In addition, our clients require information on











The Story of Lingerie



Page 248 – left.

Rigby and Peller, Fantasy Collection,
flesh-coloured ensemble.

Page 248 – right.

Rigby and Peller, Winter 2002.

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Wonderbra set.

Page 250.

Chantal Thomass, Catwalk 2004.

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Chantal Thomass, *Hautes Boucles*, Autumn / Winter 2004.

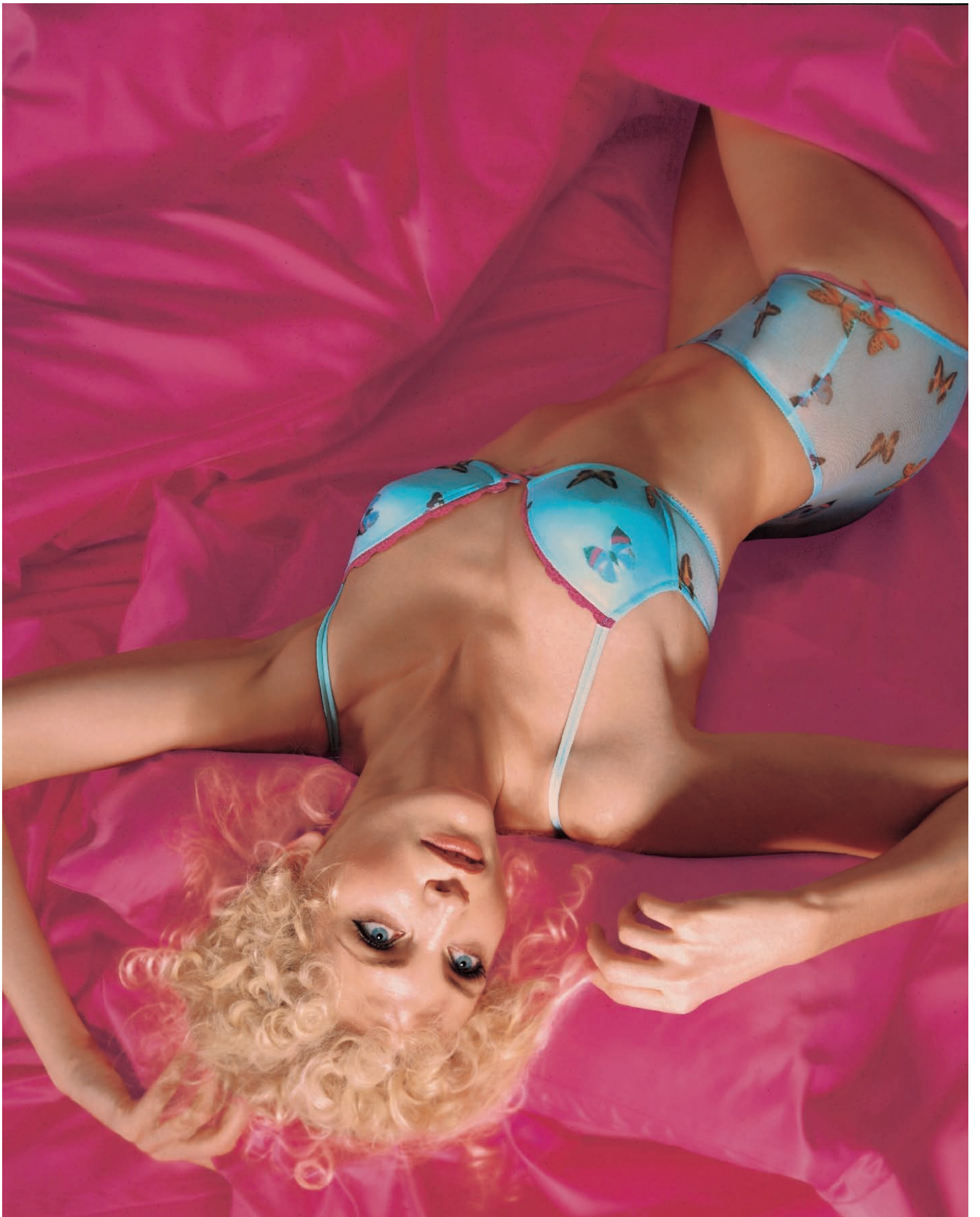
trends as quickly as possible. On the other hand, they take their decisions as late as possible so that they are up-to-date on market demands.

In 2002 Noyon carried out a survey on women and lace lingerie. Today, young girls in the 15 to 24 age groups are spending the most on lingerie. We asked them: are they attracted by sophisticated, elegant underwear? Do they like lace lingerie?

In fact, they were quite receptive to our questions. We were fairly surprised because they said “Lace? Why not!” But what did become very clear about this age group was the importance of the concept of coordinating underwear and outerwear. They buy lingerie because they have a top which requires something special, or they buy the top according to the lingerie they have. This means that they buy more lingerie than older age groups. They are a little reticent concerning lace; however, as they think of it as something their mothers would wear. But if we design different, trendier lace, why not? The idea has not been rejected. Lace is seen as a passage into womanhood. But once they have tried it, women tend to wear it for life.

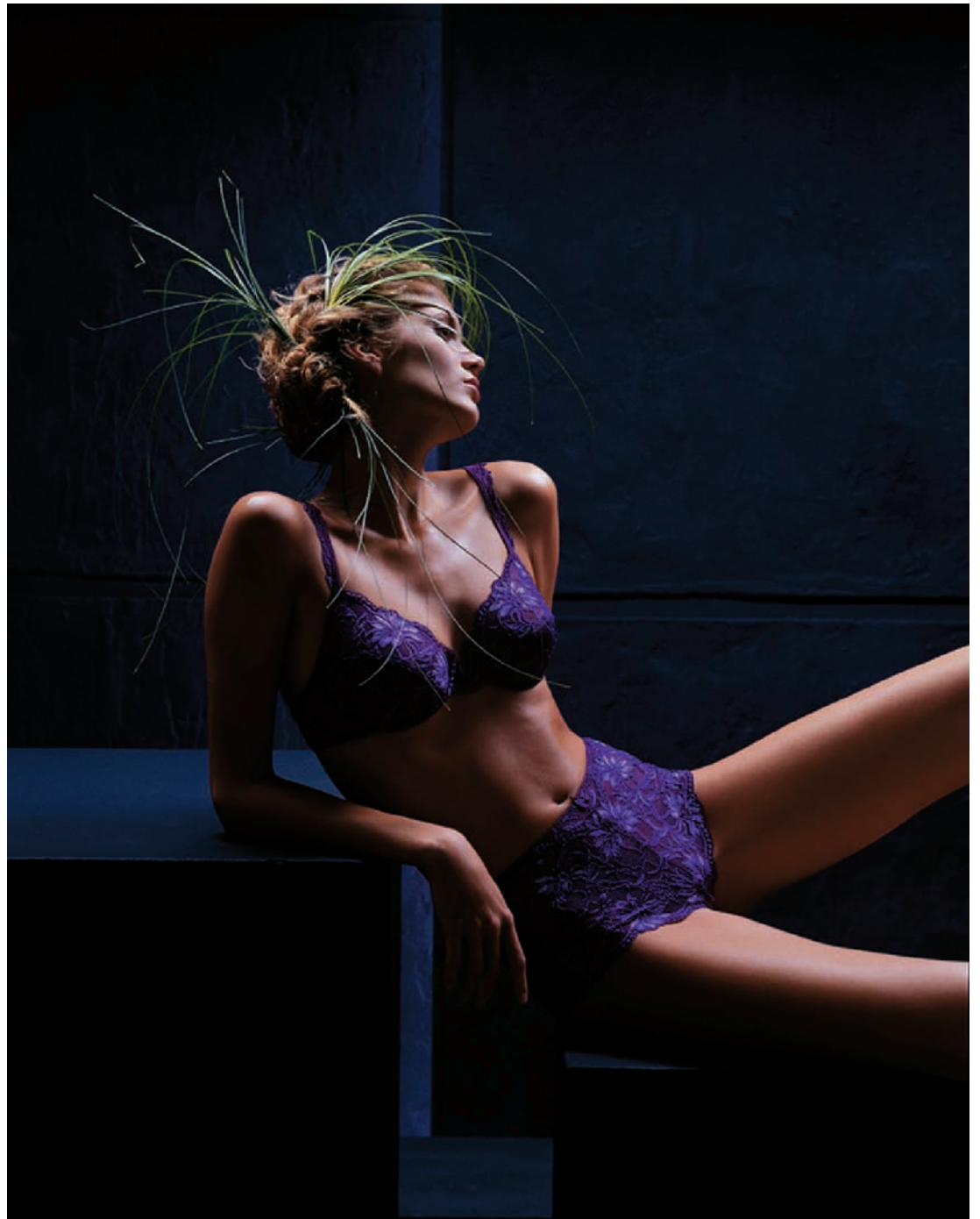
Manufacturers are looking for ways to give added value to their lingerie by using technology. This started with research on very soft, elastic fabrics which used elastane and micro-fibre to create second-skin lingerie which could also shape and firm the body in a flexible way. This research was followed by “intelligent” textiles which massage, protect against UV rays, have anti-bacterial qualities or diffuse perfume or moisturiser. What does this imply for you in terms of research costs and innovation? How far can technological progress go? Would the customer be willing to pay a higher price for these products?

The first manufacturer in Calais to try elastane was Tiburce Lebas, but at that time the trials were useless as they probably arrived on the market too early. We launched elastane in 1983, a time when









the market needed something new. In Calais, 100% of the lace sold used to be stiff lace, now 90% of the lace is elastic! This is a good example of technology coinciding with the market.

Today, intelligent textiles and micro-encapsulations could be very successful, but these phenomena have not really come onto the market fully yet. They are much more than a marketing effect. Customers are very curious and will go and take a look, but there has not been a great influx yet. We are not snowed under with demand for micro-encapsulation either. I recognise that lace is not a good example as it has holes. It is true that the dyeing process is quite restrictive as temperatures rise as high as 190° and the material is crushed and then finished. It is hard for capsules to withstand all of this. But I have heard my colleagues in knitwear and weaving say that they have a lot of demand for intelligent fabrics. The market is interested, but people do not yet say things along the line of "I'll put on my moisturising bra or I'll put on my top that absorbs ultraviolet light."

Page 252.

"Tamarine" ensemble, under wire bra and french knickers.

Chantelle creation, Autumn/Winter 2003.



A few years ago we used to speak a lot about micro fibre. It seems to me to be ideal for lingerie as it is so soft to the touch and can be worn next to the skin.

— *What is the progress on lace made with micro-fibre?*

— There has been a fashion trend for micro-fibre in knitwear and so people are now asking for the same thing in lace. We have made products with micro-fibre on the top, on the outside and on the inside, which seems to me the most intelligent way, as it is in direct contact with the skin. However, the client did not ask for this again which implies that it did not seem beneficial to the consumer. This is the situation as we speak. But innovation is sometimes ahead of us and we may have more requests in five or even ten years.

We have worked a lot on micro-encapsulation, not in response to clients request but because the process interested me. We were working with a cosmetic laboratory but we came across

Page 253.

Chantelle, Winter 2003.

The Story of Lingerie



Pages 254-255.

Chantal Thomass, Catwalk 2004.





technical problems because the capsules did not hold. We wanted to promote cosmetic, comfortable and moisturising aspects. But this type of product comes between well-being and the medical field, and it is not easy to obtain a medical guarantee. At one time we were developing a carbon fibre which would have had anti-static qualities. Static electricity is supposed to cause stress, so to reduce it means going to the source. We called the fibre “anti-stress”, but we never found a laboratory which could prove scientifically that wearing clothes made out of this fibre would really reduce stress.

— *What about soy fibres?*

— We are working with soy fibres and a lot of other natural fibres like corn and also white beech. We have always concentrated a lot of our research on fibres. In our team there is one person whose work consists of looking for new fibres and new effects so that we can then try to industrialise them.

— *How much time is needed between the research and application stages?*

— It is quite fast, around six months.

— *What is the situation for lace manufacturers whose work force is semi and fully skilled and essential to production?*

— French lingerie manufacturers are outsourcing and producing more and more abroad to reduce labour costs. All our clients have relocating more than 80 % of their workshops. The last one in France is Lejaby, and they are in the process of relocating: only 20 % of production will stay in France; the rest is being transferred to the North Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia.

— *Have they asked you to move to be nearer to them?*

— Of course! We have been interested in China and Sri Lanka because of pressure from our clients. For me, the issue has never been to relocate or not, but is much more linked to the fact that all my clients have relocated. In the U.S.A. there is only one manufacturer left, everything is sub-contracted. In Europe there are fewer and fewer manufacturers. In both cases, only the place of relocation varies: it is mainly North Africa, Turkey and Eastern Europe for Europeans, and Mexico, South America and especially China for the U.S.A.

As you see, all our clients have relocated and would prefer their suppliers to be right next to their plants. Personally, I am sceptical: I like our clients but it is not the same thing to move factories with sewing machines as to move factories with looms that each weighs 20 tons.

— *And what about the slogan “Made in France” as a guarantee of quality?*

— I am not certain that many customers look at where things are made. And today, if a customer sees something she likes, at a reasonable price, the “Made in China” label will not stop her.

— *What part of the market share does Leavers have?*

— Leavers is a very particular textile product in that it originally is a purely European invention, that was English to start with and which has the best reputation in France, especially in Calais. Therefore, no one can design and produce Leavers as we do in Calais. If a client wants Leavers, they have to buy French and have the product stamped Dentelle de Calais (Calais Lace).

— *Which brings me to the question, can you tell me about the “Dentelle de Calais” stamp, a concept which brings to mind high quality. What is the origin of the term?*

— “Dentelle de Calais” has to be produced on “Leavers” looms in Calais or Caudry and must follow manufacturing processes linked to the production of Leavers lace. So even the Leavers lace made in Nottingham cannot be called “Dentelle de Calais”. It is the same for the few other Leavers looms scattered around the world. It is a guarantee that justifies the large economic outlay for communication that affects all those people who appreciate beautiful garments that are well made and lovely to wear.

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“Volupté” ensemble. Under wire bra and panties.
Chantelle creation, Autumn / Winter 2003.



Conclusion

In a woman's wardrobe there is no garment that is so symbolic of femininity as underwear. This is why underwear inspires so much desire and so many fantasies and dreams. It is the last step towards divesting a woman of her clothes before achieving total nudity. Western women were imprisoned in corsetry and hidden behind their lingerie for a long time, but today they have much more freedom of movement and freedom of choice in their underwear. Society is much less restrictive now than before. Young girls are no longer obliged to wear white underwear to denote their virginity; red and black are no longer the reserve of prostitutes, and widows are no longer forced to follow colour codes imposed by their circumstances.

While society has gradually done away with restrictive dress codes the textile industry has made great progress leading to the manufacture of more comfortable, more attractive and more practical underwear for modern women. Women have become more emancipated and have gained the right to dress more comfortably, and clothing and sports underwear have played a great role in these changes. Underwear manufacturers have begun to design with body shape, ease of movement and the feel of the fabric in mind. Changing attitudes and militant women's rights movements have also contributed to transforming the image of the female body itself.

Despite these developments, over the last twenty years there has been a return to highly erotic and sophisticated underwear. This type of lingerie means that the body has to adopt a new shape to fit a new sensual, provocative, "tyrannical" fashion. So can we really conclude, like Cecil Saint-Laurent that underwear is destined to disappear¹⁰²? Current fashion does not seem to think so. Women burnt their bras in the 1960s, and yet here they are again wearing complete outfits consisting of suspender belts, stockings, G-strings and other garments. Women's underwear still has a lot of life left in it! It is now up to women to use it as they wish so as not to feel degraded. What used to be considered prostitutes' lingerie is now worn by "Jane Doe." Lingerie has become more and more seductive for a woman's lover and for the woman herself. We can safely say that women's underwear is not going to disappear and we must make sure that the woman wearing it, clothed in her silk and lace does not disappear either, continuing to attract, seduce and feel at ease with her body and herself.

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Tournure in red cotton, 1875-80.

Don Bouteron, Galliera Museum, Paris. Inv; 1957.29.1.

Glossary

1. TECHNICAL AND GENERAL TERMS:

B...

Batiste (also called handkerchief linen)

A fine fabric of sheer bleached linen.

C...

Cretonne

The name comes from Creton, a village in the Eure region of France. Cretonne fabric is a hard-wearing linen or cotton.

D...

Dimity

A common fabric characterized by a linen or hemp warp and a cotton weft in use since the 13th century.

E...

Embroidery

Decorative needlework using thread to form a decorative design on the covers of the material. Embroidered motifs may be flat or raised, openwork, geometric, floral, or animal. Embroidery thread may be linen, cotton, ramie, rayon, silk, wool, or synthetic and metallic filaments sheathed in polyester. Some embroidered designs incorporate pearls and sequins, lace, soutaches, ribbons, and appliqué fabric. Embroidery can be done by hand or by machine.

F...

Filling (also called weft, woof, or pick)

Threads passed perpendicular to the warp thread during the weaving process.

Flannel

A soft and fleecy, loosely woven fabric made from worsted or carded wool.

Fustian

A twill with a cotton weft and a different textile fiber (hemp, linen, or wool) for the warp.

J...

Jersey

Jersey is knit with a single weft yarn, producing uniform stitches on one face. Jersey may be knit from cotton or silk.

L...

Lace

A delicate openwork fabric in which warp and weft threads are indistinguishable. Lace fabric consists of a net ground (mesh) and motifs obtained by interlacing, twisting, looping, or braiding threads. Lace can be made from linen, cotton, ramie, silk, rayon, wool, or metallic and synthetic threads. There are different varieties of lace. Bobbin lace is made by taking threads attached to small bobbins and interlacing them at specific points indicated by pins attached to a backing; Chantilly and Valenciennes are important bobbin lace-making centers. Needle lace, such as the Alençon and Venetian varieties, consists of a network of loops covered in stitches made with the needle; the technique actually comes from the refinement of openwork embroidery. Almost all contemporary lace is machine made. Machine made lace usually imitates traditional motifs and is manufactured in former handmade lace centers, such as Valenciennes and Chantilly.

Lawn

A diaphanous plain weave fabric woven from linen or cotton that is finer than batiste.

Lycra and Lastex

A registered trademark introduced in 1959 after the material was invented in the laboratories of Dupont USA. Lycra is a synthetic fabric with a highly elastic network having the same properties as Lastex. Lastex, an elastic yarn invented in 1942 (the trademark derives from the words latex and elastic), is spun from rubber and is then with natural or artificial textile fibers, hence its elasticity.

M...

Moiré

A finishing technique used on ribbed fabrics after weaving. The fabric width is folded over (selvage on selvage) and subjected to heavy pressure, which crushes the ribs against each other. The result is a flattening of network and nap into a shiny surface. Moiré produces a shimmering pattern with more or less random outlines.

Muslin

A fine, lightweight, lustrous cloth that is usually finished. Muslin can be made from cotton, as well as wool and silk.

N...

Nylon

A registered American trade name created in 1935 from the designation “no run” (meaning will not unravel). Nylon is a synthetic fiber (polyamide) obtained from the chemical interactions of tar by-products. It makes a hard-wearing, elastic, easy care material.

Nylon was developed by Du Pont de Nemours, Inc. Research began in 1927 and was successfully concluded by Dr. Wallace H. Carothers and his team in 1937. The first nylon stockings were displayed at the New York World’s Fair that same year and went on sale in 1939. Nylon arrived in Great Britain in 1940 and was distributed by British Nylon Spinners Ltd. From 1947 nylon was used extensively, producing effects previously only obtained with costly materials.

P...

Plain weave (also called taffeta weave)

A weave with a simple structure in which filling threads alternate moving over and under warp threads. At each pick, one warp thread is successively passed under or floated over. As a result, both faces of a plain weave fabric are identical. Any textile can be woven in a plain weave: linen, cotton, petticoat linen, silk, man-made, and synthetic fibers.

Poplin

A taffeta weave fabric with a silk warp and wool weft. An analogous cotton fabric with a taffeta weave has also come to be called poplin.

R...

Rayon

Because of its sheen rayon received its name from the English and French words for ray. Rayon is produced from man-made (cellulose) fibers to make long filaments, which is a distinctly different yarn from the short staple called spun rayon. Rayon is sometimes called “artificial silk”. Sir Joseph Swan was trying to invent a carbon filaments for light bulbs in 1833 when his wife salvaged the fiber he created and began making crocheted articles. Three chemists named Crown, Bevan, and Beadle later formulated viscose rayon and registered their first patent in 1892. Rayon production began in Great Britain in 1905 and in the United States in 1911, thanks to the support of Samuel Courtauld. Dr. Dreyfus perfected a method for producing acetate rayon, which British Celanese began developing in 1911. Rayon was not actually utilized, however, until after the 1920s.

Ribbon

A narrow band of fabric used for ornament or as a tie. Ribbons may be woven from cotton or silk in plain, silk, or pile weave.

S...

Satin

In a satin weave, filling threads float over multiple warp threads with a step number of several threads from one pick to another. The staggered arrangement of the intersections inhibits the formation of ribs and gives this weave its smooth and lustrous appearance. The effect obtained is therefore different on each face, because one series of threads is more visible than the other. For example, on the dominant weft face of a satin weave with a harness number of five, four warp threads are floated over and one passed under; on the warp face, four weft threads are passed under and one is floated over; the step number may be two or three threads from one pick to another. There are also satin weaves with harness numbers of seven and eight produced according to the same principle.

This weave is suitable for silk, rayon and (especially for lingerie), cotton, or wool.

T...

Taffeta

A silk fabric with a plain weave whose scintillating effects can be obtained by using different colored threads for the warp and filling, which is the origin of the phrase shimmering taffeta.

Twill

In twill weave the filling threads float over several warp threads with a step number of one thread from one pick to another. The intersections of a twill weave therefore form diagonal lines slanting left (S motif) or right (Z motif). The two faces of a twill

fabric differ, because one series of threads is more visible than the other. On the dominant warp face, warp threads float over weft threads; on the weft face, weft threads float over the warp threads. A twill with a harness number of three refers to a twill weave in which three threads are floated over and one thread is passed under during weaving, but there are also twills with harness numbers of four and five. Any textile can be made with a twill weave and varying degrees of brightness and sheen can be obtained thanks to the floats. Twill is the weave used to make jeans.

V...

Voile

A fine sheer fabric with a plain weave woven from cotton, wool, or silk.

W...

Warp

Threads stretched lengthwise parallel to the loom and between which filling threads (weft) are interlaced during the weaving process.

Weave

The method of interlacing warp and weft threads that technically determines the character of a woven fabric.

2. TERMS SPECIFIC TO UNDERWEAR:

B...

Baby doll

A very short nightgown introduced in the 1950s made of sheer fabric, usually nylon, but sometimes silk or cotton.

Bikini

A style of underpants.

Bloomers

Long pants that fall to the ankle, or stop at the calf or thigh. Bloomers come in linen or cotton; later more refined versions were made of silk and decorated with embroidery, lace, and ribbon.

Body Stocking

Borrowed from the leotards worn by dancers and female athletes, the body stocking is a close-fitting article of clothing that adheres to the torso. It is designed to button at the crotch for ease of use. A body stocking may have long or short sleeves and is made of cotton, lace, or synthetic fabrics. It can be worn as an under or outer garment.

Brassiere

Underwear designed to support and enhance the breasts with or without underwiring. Simultaneously items of lingerie and corsetry, brassieres were not commonly worn before the 1920s. Several individuals introduced models of brassieres at the Paris World's Fair in 1900: Samaritaine's *Idéal* and *Mamellia*, Madame Cadolle's *Corselet-gorge* (brassiere), and Madame Gaches-Sarraute's *Sans-gêne* (comfort), *Expansibe* (stretch), plus other models. Hermine Cadolle had actually shown her first brassiere in 1889, but there were problems with the support which had to be worked out. Maison Cadolle's first brassiere was *Bien-Etre* (well-being), which was still attached to a corset in the back. In 1913, Caresse Crosby (a pseudonyme for Mary Phelps Jacob) produced a new type of short brassiere in the United States that separated the breasts. She sold her patent in 1914 to Warner Bros. During the same era, Rosalind Kind (head of the Kestos label) perfected a brassiere consisting of two triangles that crossed in front and back. The term brassiere appeared in the Oxford Dictionary in 1912 but the shortened form "bra" only appeared after 1937. In France, the word *soutien-gorge* (brassiere) entered the dictionary in 1923.

Busk

A strip of wood, horn, or metal (generally steel) used to maintain the rigidity of the corset front. The busk may be freely detachable or integrated into the corset.

Bustle

Padding worn underneath the dress in the back at the level of the lower back and consisting of a half-cage whalebone armature that supported a bum roll (the bulky drapery formed by the rear part of the skirt). The bustle succeeded the crinoline around 1867, then disappeared around 1899. In France it was commonly called a *faux cul* (false rump).

C...

Corset

Although more flexible than the whalebone body, the corset was made from heavy fabric and was stiffened and laced up. It gave shape to the silhouette and the dress by constricting the waist and the stomach and by molding the breasts. It was sometimes highly ornate.

Corset cover

A piece of lingerie worn over the corset in order to conceal it.

Crinoline

The term originally referred to the material used for petticoats worn to support the widening skirts of the 1840s. This rigid fabric was invented in 1840 by Oudinot to stiffen stocks worn by the military. It owes its name to the French word for horsehair (*crin*), from which it is woven. The crinoline or hoop skirt is an underskirt with a cage-like armature made from whalebone or spring steel hoops that women wore to make their dresses billow out.

D...

Dressing gown (also called a robe)

In the 17th century, dressing gown meant something other than the court dress that one could wear at home, other than for receiving guests. It was not yet a lounging robe, except for men. In the 19th century, a woman's dressing gown became the lounging robe known as a negligee. It is generally worn when rising and retiring in order to the nightgown or pajamas and may be made from all sorts of textiles.

F...

Farthingale (*vertugadin* or *vertugade*)

A stiff, bell-shaped petticoat stretched over large iron wires or wooden sticks. Spanish in origin, the farthingale was designed to make the skirt flare. French fashion transformed it into a round bolster positioned at the waist which distributed the fullness of the dress around the body. At the end of the 16th century, the farthingale took yet another form when it became a wheel that extended the skirt.

French panty and pettipants

In France the term panty refers to a control panty with legs, made from an elasticized stretch material. Use of the French panty spread during the 1960s. The form was adapted to lingerie fashions and called pettipants, in which case the legs are loose-fitting and decorated with lace at the ends.

G...

Garter belt

Small accessory item resembling a belt made of rubberized ribbons, belts, or fabric strips (elasticized or not) with four garters for attaching stockings. The garter belt appeared around 1910.

Garters (bands)

Belts or fabric bands (elasticized or not) worn around the legs, above or below the knee, to hold stockings up. Garters bands may be adorned with trimmings such as gold or silver fasteners, gems, and embroidery. Garter straps replaced garter bands in the 1900s.

Garters (straps)

Elasticized strips or rubberized ribbon incorporated into a full girdle or garter belt (and into underpants in some contemporary designs) and with a small clip at the end for holding up stockings that are stretched over the legs. In addition, the garter functions as a tensor near the top, because it creates a straight line up to the corset.

Girdle

An under garment of elasticized material that fits tightly around the waist, hips, and sometimes the upper thighs. The girdle replaced the corset beginning in the 1930s.

Guèpière (also called French cinch, waist-cincher, or waspie)

A type of girdle made from elasticized materials to make the waist look slimmer, invented in 1946 by Marcel Rochas.

M...

Mastodeton

A collection of ribbons tied around the breasts that served as a brassiere in ancient Greece. The term comes from the Greek word for breast (*mastos*).

N...

Negligee

An article of clothing made from fine fabric and worn in the home as loungewear. It was also sometimes used for receiving a few close friends and is especially associated with the 19th century.

Nightgown

Identical to the undershirt, but meant for sleeping. It can have long or short sleeves, or even straps. It is made from the same materials as an undershirt.

P...

Pajamas

The term pajamas comes from the Hindustani word *pay-jamah* meaning leg garment. Pajamas are loose, lightweight garments consisting of a top (jacket) and bottom (pants) intended to be worn as nightclothes. Pajamas have been worn by both sexes since the 1920s, when women adopted a version that was more feminine in cut, patterns, and colors. The term can also refer to a beach outfit.

Pannier (also called hoops or hoop petticoat)

The body of a skirt stiffened with a rigid armature of rush or whalebone was used to give fullness to a dress or a skirt. Hoops come in various shapes (round, oval, etc.).

Petticoat

An article of lingerie. In the beginning a petticoat was a short skirt worn under other skirts. At the end of the 18th century, petticoat referred to the skirt over which the dress opened up. By the late 19th century, the term petticoat was used to mean an article of intimate apparel. Several petticoats could be worn, one on top of another. At first they were made of linen, then cotton, silk, or tulle. The petticoat was worn under panniers and crinolines. In 20th century, the petticoat was used to give volume to a skirt.

S...

Slip

An article of lingerie consisting of a top that usually has straps and a bottom in the form of a skirt. Slips come in various lengths in cotton, silk, rayon, or nylon.

Stay

A small flexible strip used to support articles of corsetry. Stays may be bone, horn, metal (primarily steel), or plastic. The French term for stay is *baleine* (whalebone), because cetacean whalebones were long used for this purpose.

Socks

Articles of clothing made from knitted fabric that cover the feet and lower legs and which can be of variable length. Socks come in wool, cotton, nylon, or fabric blends with spandex.

Stockings

The French term for stockings (*bas*) is short for *bas de chausse*, a close-fitting article of men's clothing that covered the leg from foot to knee. The term still means supple pieces of hosiery that cover the leg and foot. More specifically, women's stockings cover the foot and leg up to the thigh. They may be made of wool, cotton, silk, rayon, or artificial silk.

String bikini

Miniscule panties similar to a G-string, the string bikini consists of a piece of fabric (or other material) over the front and a system of thin cords that leaves buttocks visible from behind.

Strophium

An ancient ancestor of the brassiere, the Roman strophium was a scarf rolled into a sash and wrapped around the bust to support the breasts.

T...

Tights

A very tight-fitting (whence its name) article of clothing made from knitted fabric that covers the body from feet to waist where it is held up by elastic. Tights can be made from wool, cotton, silk, rayon, artificial silk, or nylon.

U...

Underpants (also called pants, panties, briefs, drawers, and unmentionables)

Underwear that covers the lower trunk with two opening for the legs. Underpants are made from a multitude of textiles, including cotton, silk, and nylon, and may be decorated with embroidery, lace, ribbons, or other trim.

Undershirt

An article of lingerie that covers the upper body and varies in length according to the epoch. The undershirt is worn under corsetry items like a second skin. Originally made from linen cloth, it later became more refined in cotton, silk, or nylon, decorated with lace, ribbons, or embroidery.

W...

Whalebone body (*corps à baleine* or *corps*)

An article of corsetry worn from the 16th to 18th centuries that bound the bust by incorporating whalebone stays into a tightly-laced bodice. It was replaced by the corset. The whalebone body was made of heavy-duty fabrics and was often decorated with more costly textiles on the exterior.

Z...

Zona

A Greek foundation garment dating to the 9th century BC, the zona was a large belt designed for young girls to be worn over the hips until marriage.

Notes

- ¹ See chapter 2.1.
- ² Georges Feydeau, *Mais n'te promène donc pas toute nue !*, ("You are surely not going out completely naked!") a one-act comedy, scene II, 1911.
- ³ Armand Silvestre, *Les Dessous à travers les âges*, ("Underwear through the ages") a work from 1914 which was one of the first studies of women's underwear of the beginning of the 20th century. This, and all these other works, were written by men.
- ⁴ Women's abdominal muscles are notoriously weak and even intense exercise does not stop them slackening if they are not supported.
- ⁵ Honoré de Balzac, *Petites misères de la vie conjugale*, ("The small miseries of married life"), 1846.
- All these terms are explained in the glossary.
- ⁶ Cécil de Saint Laurent, *Histoire imprévue des dessous féminins*, ("An improvised history of women's underwear"), 1986.
- ⁷ 1st century Greek doctor and botanist.
- ⁸ Pliny the old (23-79), Roman, naturalist.
- ⁹ Latin poet (43-17).
- ¹⁰ Il vit tout de suite sa silhouette / Son corps rond, sa taille fine : ("He immediately saw her figure/her round body and small waist").
- ¹¹ "The corset controversy" chapter 9 of Valérie Steele's, *Fashion and Eroticism*, New York, 1985.
- ¹² In the U.S.A., Miss Annie Miller increased the number of organisations which wanted more reasonable dress. In 1904, Arabella Kennedy corseted monkeys to show the harmful effect of corsets.
- In 1898 the Russian Public Education Minister, Mr Bogoljewow, forbade young girls to come to school in corsets. In 1902 the Roumanian Public Education Minister, Haret, and in 1904, Bulgaria forbade corsets in state schools in the Chimanov leaflet.
- ¹³ The origins of the bra are much discussed, see glossary and *Corsets et soutiens-gorge*, ("Corsets and bras") by Béatrice Fontanel, Paris, 1992.
- ¹⁴ The quest for a slim body is one of modern woman's main preoccupations.
- ¹⁵ Rabelais, *Gargantua* (book I chapter VI.)
- ¹⁶ Molière, *Les Précieuses ridicules*, ("Precious Ridicule") a one-act play, scene 5.
- ¹⁷ In 1823, the firm Rogers London made the first metal hooks and eyes in London, but the modern version of this innovation was produced in Paris by Daudé and was put into common use in 1828.
- ¹⁸ Emile Zola, *L'Assommoir*, chapter I, 1877.
- ¹⁹ Today pyjamas are far from being elegant at home wear.
- ²⁰ In 1712, the French Oriental India Company lost its privileges and they were taken over in 1719 by the India Company founded by Law.
- ²¹ Madapolam is a rough, heavy cotton cloth.
- ²² Viyella does not shrink. The company overcame a serious crisis in 1911 when laundries became commonplace, proving that the slogan was vulnerable.
- ²³ Hilaire Bernigaud, the Count of Chardonnet (1839-1924), chemist and industrialist.
- ²⁴ Jump, leap, run, stretch, reach for Spring with underwear that is so short and easy that you can put it on and forget about it... straight away... it is made for you, moves like you and is like you.
- ²⁵ Honoré de Balzac, *Autre Etude de femme* in *La Comédie humaine*, ("Another study of woman from *The Human Comedy*") 1842.
- ²⁶ Baronne de Staff, *Le cabinet de toilette*, 1891.
- ²⁷ Margaret Mitchell, *Autant en emporte le vent*, ("Gone with the Wind") 1936.
- ²⁸ Madeleine Delpierre, *Se vêtir au XVIII^e Siècle*, ("How to Dress in the 18th Century") Adam Biro, Paris, 1996, p. 100.
- ²⁹ Madeleine Delpierre, *Se vêtir au XVIII^e Siècle*, ("How to Dress in the 18th Century") Adam Biro, Paris, 1996, p. 100.
- ³⁰ Jacqueline de Pasquier, *Guide de l'Élégance* ("A Guide to Elegance"), Larousse Library, Paris, 1954, pp. 188-189.
- ³¹ See article on "Malleability, polysemy and social change: the example of marriage" in *Rites et Rituels Contemporains* ("Contemporary rites and rituals"), by Martine Segalen, Nathan, Paris, 1998.
- ³² Madeleine Delpierre, *Se vêtir au XVIII^e Siècle* ("How to Dress in the 18th Century"), Adam Biro, Paris, 1996, p. 102.
- ³³ Madeleine Delpierre, *Se vêtir au XVIII^e Siècle* ("How to Dress in the 18th Century"), Adam Biro, Paris, 1996, p. 105.
- ³⁴ Olga Veschoor, *Les Trousseaux du Temps Jadis*, ("Trousseaux from other times") Hatier, C.E.E., 1996, p. 18.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 32-33.
- ³⁶ Quoted in *Les Dessous de la Féminité : Un siècle de lingerie*, ("Feminine Underwear: A century of lingerie") Farid Chenoune, Assouline Press, Paris, 1998, p. 17.
- ³⁷ Emile Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, Fasquelle, Paris, p. 43.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 116.
- ³⁹ *La Femme Chez Elle*, ("Women at home") 1903, p. 237.
- ⁴⁰ *Les Modes*, ("Fashions") February 1926, n° 261, p. 4.
- ⁴¹ *La Revue de la Mode*, ("Fashion Review") January 1902, n° 3, p. 27.
- ⁴² Guy de Maupassant, *La Maison Tellier*, ("The Tellier House") Albin Michel, 1983, pp. 114-115.
- ⁴³ *Le Miroir des Modes*, ("Fashion Mirror") 1903, n° 6, p. 258.
- ⁴⁴ Olga Veschoor, *Les Trousseaux du Temps Jadis*, ("Trousseaux from other times") Hatier, C.E.E., 1996, p. 46.
- ⁴⁵ M.M. Le Fustec, *Matières Premières utilisées en lingerie*, ("Materials used for lingerie") Book I, Eyrolles Press, Paris, 1949.
- ⁴⁶ Cecil Saint-Laurent, *Histoire Imprévue des Dessous Féminins*, ("An improvised history of women's underwear"), Herscher, Singapore, 1988, p.58.
- ⁴⁷ *La Revue de la Mode*, ("Fashion Review") 29th March 1902, n° 13, p. 177.
- ⁴⁸ Madeleine Delpierre, *Se vêtir au XVIII^e Siècle*, ("How to Dress in the 18th Century"), Adam Biro, Paris, 1996, n° 22.
- ⁴⁹ Elisabeth de Gramont, *La Femme et la Robe*, ("Woman and the Dress") La Palatine, Paris, Genève, 1952.
- ⁵⁰ See Farid Chenoune on this subject in *Les Dessous de la Féminité : Un siècle de lingerie*, ("Feminine Underwear: A century of lingerie") Assouline Press, Paris, 1998, p. 32.

- ⁵¹ Guy de Maupassant, *Boule de Suif, Madame Fifi*, (“Tallow ball, Madame Fifi”) Bookking International, Paris, 1993, p. 106.
- ⁵² Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'Education*, (“Emile or education”) Bordas, Paris, 1992, p. 14.
- ⁵³ Ibid, p. 457.
- ⁵⁴ Cité dans Pierre Dufay, *Le Pantalon Féminin*, (“Trousers for Women”) Charles Carrington, Librairie-Editeur, Paris, 1906, pp. 222-223.
- ⁵⁵ Pierre Dufay, *Le Pantalon Féminin*, (“Trousers for women”) Charles Carrington, Librairie-Editeur, Paris, 1906, p.
- ⁵⁶ Farid Chenoune, *Les Dessous de la Feminité : Un siècle de lingerie*, (“Feminine Underwear: A century of lingerie”) Assouline Press, Paris, 1998, p. 22.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 22.
- ⁵⁸ Guy de Maupassant, *La Maison Tellier*, (“The Tellier House”) Albin Michel, 1983, p. 148.
- ⁵⁹ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'Education*, (“Emile or Education”) Bordas, Paris, 1992, p. 458.
- ⁶⁰ *La Vraie Mode*, (“Real Fashion”), *Marchs* 1899, n° 11, p. 163.
- ⁶¹ *Les Modes*, (“Fashions”) April 1921, n° 203, p. 14.
- ⁶² *La Revue de la Mode*, (“Fashion Review”) 4th August 1900, n° 31, p. 243.
- ⁶³ *La Revue de la Mode*, (“Fashion Review”) December 1898, n° 52, p. 620.
- ⁶⁴ *La Vraie Mode*, (“Real fashion”), *March* 1899, n° 10, p. 150.
- ⁶⁵ Lydia Kamitsis, *Le Pantalon féminin*, (“Trousers for Women”) in *Ramage* n° 13, Paris-Sorbonne University Press, Paris, 1999, pp. 58-59.
- ⁶⁶ *La Mode du Journal*, (“Journal Fashions”) April 1897, n° 45, p. 2.
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The Story of Lingerie

Muriel Barbier
Shazia Boucher



What do the thousands of images of bras and panties on perfectly sculpted bodies that we see spread across billboards and magazines say about our society? Many women indulge in lingerie to please men. Yet, since Antiquity, women have always kept lingerie hidden away under outer garments. Thus, lingerie must be more than erotic bait. Authors Muriel Barbier and Shazia Boucher have researched iconography to explore the relationship of lingerie to society, the economy and the corridors of intimacy. They correlate lingerie with emancipation, querying whether it asserts newfound freedoms or simply adjusts to conform to changing social values. The result is a rigorous scientific rationale spiced with a zestly humour. And the tinier lingerie gets, the more scholarly attention the authors believe it deserves.