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Dress and Textiles: Historical Context

1 "Clothing, more than any other element in material culture, embodies the values of society's mental image and the standards of reality as it is experienced. It is the obligatory battlefield for the confrontation between change and tradition." (Roche 2000: 197) As a powerful measure of conditions within a society, dress, as expressed in the opening quote, offers an interesting perspective from a historian's point of view. Less obvious, perhaps, is how the messaging behind dress and information contained within it might prove useful to the novelist in constructing and emphasising perspectives on society. Attempting to explore just that, an analysis of the use of dress in the novelistic works of Jane Austen[1] and Frances Burney[2] shall consider how dress is employed by both authors as a materialisation of and lens on social conditions and change in England between 1778 and 1817, the timeframe of both authors' combined publication history. Not only did the novelistic form develop during this period, moving away from epistolary fiction to third-person narrators and innovations such as Austen's free indirect discourse (Spencer 2007: 36), but this was also a period of intense political, commercial, and social change affecting Britain and Europe more broadly, encompassing among other events the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. This article will, therefore, aim to approach Austen's and Burney's novels from the vantage point of literary analysis using the lens of fashion and appearances, while leading with reference to historical context with a focus on social and dress history in Britain at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. The aim is not to suggest that the authors directly reproduced historical events in their texts, but rather to identify moments in which they respond to social circumstances and change within their own and their characters' social context of the English gentry by employing the lens of dress.

2 In the realm of dress, production, trade, and consumption patterns were drastically changing in eighteenth-century Britain. Cotton was on the rise as the fashionable textile of the day and British-made cotton gradually came to replace imported Indian products in the course of the eighteenth century (Rössner 2017: 155) following British import and trade embargoes on finished cotton textiles, known as the "Calico Acts", that were fully in effect by 1721 (Farrell 2016: 269). In addition, all imported silk textiles, garments, and accessories were banned in Britain in 1765 to further protect domestic textile industries, following mercantilist logic (ibid.). Paired with technical innovations, Britain was, therefore, able to increase and diversify domestically produced textile goods: the factory production of silks became more easily possible and widespread following the expiration of Thomas Lombe's patent on silk-throwing machinery in 1732 (Bruland 2004: 135), the production of printed cotton was on the rise from the 1750s onwards (Rössner 2017: 150), and cotton could be produced faster and more easily following the invention of mechanised cotton spinning techniques, such as James Hargreaves' "spinning jenny", Richard Arkwright's "water frame" (both 1760s), and Samuel Crompton's "spinning mule" – a combination of the two earlier machines – that was in use from 1779 (Bruland 2004: 136). From around 1770, manufacturers in Manchester were able to produce cotton cloth that rivalled Indian hand-made textiles in both quality and price (Rössner 2017: 150). While the costs of most other goods were rising, the nominal prices of clothing fell by around

a third between 1770 and 1850, as Voth notes with reference to living standards at the time. Indeed, he points out that household spending on so-called "non-essential items" such as fashionable dress more than doubled in the same time frame (Voth 2004: 283).

3 On the side of consumers, the possession of a greater number of new goods, such as cotton textiles, was influenced by these new levels of availability that answered to consumer desires: "Chapmen, pedlars and hawkers over the course of that century had established oriental cotton textiles as a new decency among the middling sorts and a new want among the labouring poor." (Lemire quoted in Berg 2004: 377). Cotton gowns were, indeed, even worn by female servants and could cost the equivalent of a week's wages, at prices beginning at 6-8s (ibid.). Consumer desires additionally came to be influenced by different means in the second half of the eighteenth century, with the appearance of dedicated fashion journals, the first of which was the French *Le Cabinet des Modes*, first published in 1785 (Weber 2008: 185). Similar journals soon followed elsewhere, for example in Britain where *The Gallery of Fashion*, published from 1794-1803, provided high quality fashion plates that chronicled real contemporary styles, as stressed by the editor Nicolaus Wilhelm von Heideloff (Holland 1988: 42-43). Such fashion journals expanded on earlier modes of communicating and spreading new fashions beyond borders. Whereas fashion dolls had previously been sent to foreign courts, wearing miniatures of current styles that could be viewed or borrowed and copied for a fee (Reinhardt 2006: 38), the advantage of fashion journals lay in their higher circulation. This advantage is not to be overstated, however, as the copies per issue of *The Gallery of Fashion*, for example, never exceeded 450 copies at 7s 6d each (Holland 1988: 44), thus placing the cost of this and similar journals at the lower end of what a gown might cost.

4 Discussions of fashion and fashionability are, therefore, primarily concerned with elite spending, focusing on the aristocracy, gentry, and bourgeoisie as Jones notes: "Economic circumstances determine the ability to display the accessories, the consumer items, which distinguish a particular social or gender identity – whether those are the right clothes […] or the habit of reading the right kind of publications." (Jones 2000: 12) Following Jones' link between fashion and literature, it should be stated that these are also the social classes that Austen and Burney primarily draw from for their novels' characters and social settings. The clothing mentioned in their novels is, therefore, generally speaking the fashionable dress of the elite.

5 A simplified and brief sketch of the process leading to the styles of women's dress that had developed by the beginning of the nineteenth century is offered by Davidson: "The French embraced Anglomania, waistlines rose and dresses turned white and flimsy, ornamented with fripperies borrowed from other times and cultures. Women's heads retreated into bonnets; their bosoms were newly defined and uplifted." (Davidson 2019: 11) As noted with reference to Britain, developments in fashion in France, too, were led by the elite, though this process did, crucially, draw from rural pastoral aesthetics. The above quote notes the conclusion of developments begun in 1783 by the *chemise à la reine*, Marie Antoinette's pastoral muslin dress, that the French queen was shown wearing in a then-scandalous portrait by Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (Ribeiro 2002: 226). The aim of aristocratic interest in pastoral fashion was for simplicity with a focus on a natural and fresh look inspired by shepherdesses and milkmaids, who served as the beauty ideal of the period (Ganey 2007: 49). Boned stays, hoops and paniers were abandoned – and with them the typical female silhouette of the eighteenth century (Reinhardt 2006: 49). This signified the retreat from "the construction of female dress […] which had been used for centuries" (ibid.). Following the French Revolution, however, these styles assumed new connotations and despite their seemingly radical modernity, the era's empire-waist muslin dresses were significantly inspired by the aesthetics of classical antiquity (Davidson 2019: 30). Neo-classicism was the prevalent aesthetic movement of the age,

influenced by allusions to ancient republicanism as part of political transformations (Entwistle 2000: 155), the Grand Tour as part of the typical elite education (depicted in Burney's *Camilla*, for example[3]), and recent excavations at the archaeological sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum (Davidson 2019: 30f.). This influence was seen and articulated in cuts and materials that referenced ancient drapery (Hughes 2006: 189) and were fashionable throughout Europe with varying levels of political and symbolic significance.

6 In their literary reflection, dress and appearances are frequently employed by both Austen and Burney to analyse and communicate a sense of social change in Britain. Across the 40-year span of their combined publication history, the focus and themes primarily seized on naturally developed. Nonetheless, it can be observed that in both Austen's and Burney's novels, proponents of aristocratic culture must inevitably cede to new currents that see the gentry and middle classes, personified in both texts as young British women of middling social standing, come into focus as the protagonists of a culture increasingly allowing for upward social mobility through marriage (Perry 2004: 230f.). While this is perhaps expressed more hesitantly in Burney's first novel *Evelina*, in which the narrative seems to require the heroine's aristocratic father Sir John Belmont to acknowledge her as his daughter before the novel's concluding marriage between Evelina and Lord Orville can take place, it should be pointed out that even here Orville's proposal precedes Evelina's familial reunion (Burney 2002). By the time Austen's *Persuasion* sees the baronet Sir Walter Elliott quite literally driven out of his ancestral home by a new professional class, embodied in the text by the naval Admiral Croft (Drum 2009: 105), for want of money, these processes of social change appear more acceptable and embedded in Austen's and Burney's novels as tropes of female liberation from hereditary authority. That this cannot always be a clear-cut process that is uniquely advantageous for the novels' heroines is clear and shall also be discussed.

7 Circling back to this article's perspective on the texts, dress figures into these conversations of social states and change in the idealisation of simpler styles towards the end of the eighteenth century that visually represent a social shift. In their marriage plots and conflicts, both authors indicate a move away from aristocratic and towards middle-class culture that is congruent with developments of the age (Ribeiro 2002: 7–9). This is also linked to the conjugal family rising in importance in Britain in the eighteenth century in the face of blood relations, as systems of inheritance put women at a decided disadvantage (Perry 2004: 34). These tendencies were reflected in dress, which by the late 1700s was imbued with notions of democracy, simplicity, and the clear differentiation from earlier styles and generations (Chrisman-Campbell 2004: 7).

8 Before this (fashion) historical context, the main focus of this article lies on examining the impact these conditions and developments had on the novels' young female protagonists and, therefore, their dress, with a focus on the way dress and textiles figure into telling Austen's and Burney's heroines' narratives with regards to social tensions and questions of propriety.

The Morals of Dress

9 In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century dress was understood as a means of expressing certain facts about oneself, as a „powerful signifier of self – a visual indication of gender, social position and occupation" (Batchelor 2005: 9). Dress was even conceived of as a "form of language through which meaning was generated by the wearer and read by the observer" (ibid.). This idea was, however, complicated by debates surrounding dress' insufficient powers of expression, which, conversely, amounted to it becoming defined as a means of deception (Wigston Smith 2013: 21f.). When cast in such textual terms, it

is apparent that analysing the literary use of the "language" of dress can serve to open up a further level to texts of the period. As the late eighteenth century is characterised by seminal developments in production and consumer culture and, therefore, the goods possessed and reflected on, this era particularly offers itself up for a joint analysis of literature and dress (Jones 2000: 12). These developments were, further, accompanied by the emergence of an increased print culture that was more widely available than in earlier times: "Having risen gradually from roughly 1800 printed items of all kinds in 1740 to around 3000 items in 1780, English publications suddenly double to 6000 by 1792." (Erickson 1995: 7)

10 The link between text and textiles even extends to the material level, as paper was commonly made of rags at this time and classified by its fibre contents (Taylor 2016: 118; Wigston Smith 2013: 48f.). Wigston Smith notes the material circularity of text and textile by citing examples of contemporary writers reflecting on the fact that women's clothes might return to them in the form of their reading material (ibid.: 52). At the same time, the novel offered women a space to utilise the "language of aesthetics" (Jones 1998: 155), contributing to general opinions on taste which was a central aesthetic category of the time due to aristocratic anxieties to differentiate themselves from the spending middle classes (ibid.: 10) – and one for which women were considered crucial (ibid.: 80). The material tension field that emerges between texts and textiles, therefore, exemplifies the "unpleasantly doubled position" Jones identifies in women acting "as both the surveyor and the surveyed" (ibid.: 84) in the taste discourse of the period. When approached from the angle of literature and dress, this argument can be applied to analyse women as, at once, consumers buying and wearing textiles as clothes, and potentially utilising one and the same textile material to reflect on dress in writing. Though this meta-fictional material dimension of the topic will not be of central importance, as the focus lies on the intra-textual effects of dress, it is nonetheless important to note here to establish the different ways that texts and textiles can relate to each other.

11 With the central aesthetic question of the age of Austen and Burney being: "[H]ow does beauty matter?" (Starr 2011: 78), one might just as well ask: "How does dress matter?" Amid its disparate philosophical movements, such as sentimentalism and libertinism, the eighteenth century's primary attitude to the body was defined by an overall bid for its liberation (Juranek 2019: 35). Within this attitude, there was an understanding of dress as "the body's body and an expression of the soul's disposition." (Roche 2000: 202) In this doubling of surfaces of meaning, the "legible body", which is to say the body as a representation of interior values, becomes twofold and even dress is scrutinised as a reflection of an individual's soul. This places an incredible stress on dress as a moral marker and could make the pitfalls of taste assume a far more threatening dimension if they were taken to signify one's moral condition. It is not just dress or an individual's physical appearance that is judged according to these standards: one's inner life is subject to similar and simultaneous scrutiny. The combination of body and the "body's body" was, consequently, believed to serve as a representation of what lay beneath, extending to one's moral integrity. It is for this reason that a character's gradually deteriorating appearance was a frequent device in narratives of corruption and ill conduct in eighteenth-century literature. (Batchelor 2005: 50)

12 This idea was, of course, not necessarily always taken at face value, as shown in Burney's critical treatment of the trope in *Cecilia*. Here, the philanthropist Mr Albany reveals his past failings to the heroine Cecilia, recounting the story of his ill-treated lover, for whose death he feels responsible. Having not made good on his promise of matrimony, he cast her aside, damning her to a life of sex work and destitution. When he later returns and ruefully takes her in, in a bid to make up for past wrongs, it is *his* guilt and moral failing that is externalised and materialised in her body, as she refuses to speak, to eat, and eventually succumbs to this quiet form of suicide (Burney 1988: 705-708). Contrary to the more common iteration of the „legible

body", Burney subverts the trope, making apparent its misconception and, ultimately, its injustice in proving that the external signs of acute misery are not to be simply read as proof of an individual's own wrong-doings, but can rather point to the guilt of another, as is usually applicable in narratives of "fallen women". Burney thus rejects the idea of morality and women's difficulties existing in a vacuum between the two poles of good and corruption. While the signs of injustice mark the body of Albany's unnamed lover, they are weaponised by the narrative and serve to haunt Albany, who keeps her corpse in his house for an undefined and unsettling length of time, possibly amounting to years: "I kept her loved corpse till my own senses failed me,—it was then only torn from me,—and I have lost all recollection of three years of my existence!" (ibid.: 708) Though this story of female suffering is a problematic prequel to Albany's philanthropy, it suggests a twist on the moral judgment all too frequently passed in readings of the legible body, by relocating criticism from the site of injustice to its perpetrator.

13 There is thus a coexistence of paradoxical ideas: the contemporary trope of the concurrence of appearance and identity, and a critical view of the dangers of appraising appearances and dress in such simple terms. However, "[c]lothes were treated as universal credentials. If you dressed, looked, and walked like a fashionable gentlewoman, more often than not you would be taken for one." (Vickery 2013: 869) Considering the reality of being judged on appearances, the idea of the "legible body" becomes a little clearer, as it connects one's outward presentation to internal truths in an expression of anxieties surrounding dress and duplicity. Such connections between appearance and morals were also an attempt at referring to an imaginary "golden age before fashion and luxury", in which "inner bodies and outer appearances once corresponded". (Ibid.: 864)

14 This critical view of dress and morals is reminiscent of the Medieval use and tradition of the term *luxuria*, which "linked expense and ornamentation, especially in clothing, to excessive bodily appetites and to the generation of lustful desire." (Kovesi 2015: 33) Anxieties about consumption and fashion were embedded in a tradition of alarm at women's sexual desires and self-presentation. When considered in this way, it becomes apparent that fashionable dress was dubious not only for its individual risk of concealment, but also on a wider scale that concerned itself with excess, sexual license, and frivolity in society in general. The idea of dress as a moral indicator was frequently used in this sense and most often concerned with women's shortcomings. The idea of the existence of perfect harmony between an individual woman's internal and external "appearances" was embodied in virtuous literary heroines, whose virtue was not least articulated in their physical beauty (Jones 1998: 1f.). Such a correlation of beauty and virtue, with a simultaneous disdain – and narrative punishment – for the vice of obsession with appearances creates a clear double bind.

15 In this context, the contrast between taste and fashion or superficial luxury becomes central, as good taste was considered an indicator of good morals (Taylor 2016: 123). Berg formulates the contrast between the two concepts as follows: "Taste conveys aesthetically based reason [...]. Fashion, by contrast, is associated with the irrational and impermanent." (Quoted in ibid. 122) While a tasteful appearance in accordance with one's standing was positive, too great a concern with consumption, one's looks, and the pursuit of ephemeral fashion clearly were not. This also intersects with discourses of social and political power, as the correct assumption of markers of taste could serve to benefit "classes as yet without political power, but of considerable cultural influence: the lower gentry and the commercial classes of the middling sort." (Jones 1998: 114) This was all the more significant, as sumptuary legislation had been faded out in Britain by the second half of the eighteenth century, meaning that there were no longer clear visual hierarchies that reinforced political power (Riello/Rublack 2019: 18).

16 Despite economists' arguing in favour of consumption, "the practices and effects of commerce [were] associated with excess, with lack of control – and therefore with the feminine." (Jones 2000: 1) The onus with regards to moral concerns and class tensions linked with dress thus fell on women of the gentry and middling classes. Kowaleski-Wallace echoes this thought and expands on it from a feminist perspective, arguing that "[t]hough it had been necessary to the strong growth of the expanding British economy, the female appetite for goods [...] was also perceived as a sinister force threatening male control and endangering patriarchal order." (Kowaleski-Wallace cited in Miskin 2015: 14) To be a consuming subject – especially to be seen to be one through the display of one's dress – was not a morally neutral act, while *not* consuming was seen in an equally unfavourable light, as it suggested a lack of support for domestic industry and a want of sensibility (Batchelor 2005: 100). It is, then, unsurprising that Batchelor writes that "[r]econciling an appropriate attachment to dress to conceptions of virtuous femininity was to prove one of eighteenth-century literature's most difficult tasks." (Ibid.: 82) Burney addresses the matter in her final novel *The Wanderer*, which is unique among the novels considered in this article, as the heroine Juliet must join the working population for the majority of the text while she flees the terror of the French Revolution and a forced marriage (Burney 1991). As a woman with a genteel education, her skills lend themselves to providing luxury services such as music lessons, millinery, and embroidery, though she fails to make a living from these trades, as her female customers refuse to pay her. In a critical conflict scene, the idea that producers of luxury goods and services are themselves indulgent in luxury by devoting themselves to these callings, is dismantled by Mr Giles Arbe, whose lack of tact continuously unmasks the hypocrisy of the gentry and aristocracy in the novel:

> "Goodness, Mr. Giles!" cried Miss Bydel, "why what are you thinking of? Why you are calling all the ladies to account for not paying this young music-mistress, just as if she were a butcher, or a baker; or some useful tradesman."
> "Well, so she is, Ma'am! so she is, Mrs. Bydel! For if she does not feed your stomachs, she feeds your fancies; which are all no better than starved when you are left to yourselves."
> "Nay, as to that, Mr Giles," said Miss Bydel, "[...] I can't pretend to say I think she should be put upon the same footing with eating and drinking. We can all live well enough without music, and painting, and those things, I hope; but I don't know how we are to live without bread and meat." "Nor she, neither, Mrs. Bydel! and that's the very reason that she wants to be paid." (Burney 1991: 323)

17 This passage is revealing of several injustices that arise from placing the blame for frivolity on the providers of services rather than on consumers. Though the matter at stake here is Juliet's work as a music teacher, the reasoning at play is the same that is applied in the general condemnation of fashionable goods such as dress – which also emerges from the text, as Juliet's other ventures are met with equally resigning results. The "usefulness" of a service is cited as justification for not paying its provider, almost implying a moral advantage in *not* paying them – a hypocritical condemnation of unnecessary luxury while all the while indulging in it. Even when spelled out clearly that the luxury goods and services offered by such professionals are "of your luxury, not his" (ibid.), the ladies fail to take the point. In a quasi-reinforcement of misogynistic narratives about female consumption, Burney nonetheless subverts the trope to some degree by taking the perspective of the providers of services. It is posited that critiques of consumption can be assumed by consuming subjects and become a matter of blaming producers and providers of fashionable goods and services, rather than recognising that they would fail to provide these very services were there no market for them. Moreover, the point is stressed that even though luxurious indulgences such as music lessons or, indeed, fashionable dress are non-essential to the survival of consumers, they are all the more

crucial to the material well-being of the people whose livelihood they constitute. Therefore, the moral approach taken by Miss Bydel and the other ladies rests on a fundamental misconception. If taken further, this point can also be seen to apply to a meta-fictional reflection on Burney's own work as a novelist, citing its entertainment value in the light of her labour and need to provide for herself through it.

18 What Jones identifies as a "clear and established link between conduct manuals and later novels of manners, like Burney and Austen's" (Sutherland 2000: 26) also plays into the authors' representations of consumption and dress in their works, as it is a frequent topic of discussion in such conduct manuals for young women. *The Mirror of the Graces* (1811), an anonymously published conduct book primarily concerned with dress, advises on the choice of fabric and colour of one's gowns:

> Where doubt may be about this or that hue being becoming or genteel (as it is very possible it may neither be the one nor the other), let the puzzled beauty leave both, and array herself in simple white. That primeval hue never offends, and frequently is the most graceful robe that youth and loveliness can wear. (Anonymous 1811: 122)

19 Traditional associations between the colour white and virginal purity are more than implicit in this advice, and their significance is expanded by the contemporary dimension of a new focus on hygiene and cleanliness (Davidson, 2019: 53). Advances in medicine, such as the smallpox inoculation introduced to England in the 1720s by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, were widely accepted and practised in England by the second half of the eighteenth century (Porter, 1995: 37). Coming to replace earlier luxury textiles such as silks, linen and cottons, could, in addition, be washed, making their fashionable white colour an indicator of cleanliness and bodily health as well as good morals (Styles 2013: 79). This creates a link between physical and moral purity, in what Roche terms "a hygiene both social and moral" (Roche 2000: 202). Several other of the manual's statements make this association more obvious still, including a later declaration of modesty as a woman's prime virtue and beauty:

> What is the eloquence of your beauty? – Modesty! What is its first argument? – Modesty! What is its second? – Modesty! What is its third? – Modesty! What is its peroration, the winding up of all its charms, the striking spell that binds the heart of man to her for ever? – Modesty!!!
> Modesty is all in all; for it comprises the beauties of the mind as well as those of the body; and happy is he who finds her. (Anonymous 1811: 137)

20 Conduct manuals such as *The Mirror of the Graces* were part of the process of shaping a new and distinct middle-class that derived its ideals not from mere emulation of its "betters", but through the definition of its own rules that were often rooted in Christianity. However, Moore seeks to "challenge the assumption that progressive attitudes toward issues like women's equality and youthful conduct could not coexist alongside otherwise conservative political or religious beliefs." (Moore 2024: 4). Darby, on the other hand, stresses the conduct book genre's aim of stabilising middle-class identity and femininity focused on domesticity and links these aims to the novel of manners:

> Along with the novel of manners that was coming into its own during this same time, these educational and spiritual treatises molded an image of femininity that made an important contribution to the consolidation of a middle class distinct from both the aristocracy and the working poor, with a particular type of domestic woman at its center. (Darby, 2000: 335–336)

21 In "compris[ing] the virtues of the mind as well as those of the body" (Anonymous 1811: 137), modesty, as stressed in the *Mirror of the Graces*, is the very example of the idea of legible, middle-class female virtue echoed in outward appearance. That this legible appearance is not reduced to a woman's natural physique but, moreover, extends to choices in dress, down to symbolic colours, once more echoes links between dress and morality in the age of Austen and Burney. Austen, for example, employs the system of signs pertaining to white muslin in *Northanger Abbey* when the heroine Catherine Morland goes for a ride in an open carriage with the morally dubious John Thorpe, to which her chaperone Mrs Allen simply notes the danger this might pose to her dress: "Open carriages are nasty things. A clean gown is not five minutes wear in them. You are splashed getting in and getting out; and the wind takes your hair and your bonnet in every direction. I hate an open carriage myself." (Austen 2006a: 105) Though neglectful of her duty to properly warn Catherine of her conduct, Mrs Allen unthinkingly but accurately draws attention to the real threat to Catherine's virtue, which she – not wrongly, as seen in the above quotes from *The Mirror of the Graces* – relates to Catherine's white muslin dress and the potential stain the carriage ride might leave on it and, by extension, her modesty: "By presenting open carriages as the possible site of sexual impropriety, Austen reverses the trope of the closed carriage as a transgressive, sexually liberating space, which appears in so many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century novels." (Miskin 2015: 18) As Miskin notes of white muslin, considering it in reference to the above-cited passages from *The Mirror of the Graces* and *Northanger Abbey*, it was "a dainty and easily stained material" which, in these properties, also stood for a woman's "sexual purity and marriageability" (ibid.: 19). As such it serves as a useful illustrative example for the connection that was drawn between dress and morality – between women's appearances and their deeper virtue – during the era.

22 This observation adds another dimension to the idea of the legible body, in which hygiene is read alongside ideas of morality, modesty, and beauty, with each of the concepts cross-referencing and informing the others. Muslin as a new luxury textile and representation of female modesty, further, offers itself up for appraisal within the tradition of the term *luxuria*, as it seeks to negate the potential of criticism on the grounds of lust by acting as a litmus test of kinds for proper conduct.

23 Though not, strictly speaking, applied with reference to only fashion, Burney's eponymous heroine Cecilia also faces a moral crisis that is indicative of the narrow and often contradictory divides concerning morality: "I know no longer what is kind or what is cruel, nor have I known for some time past right from wrong, nor good from evil." (Burney 1988: 396) Reflecting here on her financial support of the profligate Mr Harrel, such an outcry of moral confusion is remarkable for the eighteenth-century novel's heroine (Doody 1988: 132). The downward spiral involving both her and the Harrels begins when Cecilia, crucially, covers a tailor's bill for Mr Harrel. It is beyond the heroine's comprehension, as the immorality of fashionable spending and financial irresponsibility cannot be made up for by randomised moral designs, such as Cecilia's attempts at improving Mr Harrel, who as a character offers an interesting contrasting perspective on the misogynistic tradition of criticising consumption.[4]

24 Aiming to walk the safe middle ground between fashion and modesty, spending and reticence, conformity and authenticity was no easy feat in the age of Austen and Burney. Originating in writing and replicated therein, ideas about dress and morality were all but omni-present in the discourse of the time and found entrance into women's private sphere through the reading of conduct manuals and novels of manners. Beyond a mere illustrative or depictive function, Austen's and Burney's novels can be read for how they replicate and engage with prevailing notions about dress and morality – especially for how this relates

to the employment of conduct book morality. This is expressed in the authors' analysis of "the intricate rules of propriety" which "work, particularly on women, as an instrument of control, generating a culture of minute surveillance and censure. They in effect mandate hypocrisy, prescribing obsessive attention to appearances." (Meyer Spacks 2000: 525) This situation could be effectively criticised and subverted by the Austen's and Burney's self-aware engagement with moral and social standards, employing them to their own advantage. In this way, the break with face-value traditions that equated appearance with substance becomes a powerful literary and social tool.

Dress and Class Tensions

25 Among the many aspects influencing the tension field of dress at the turn of the nineteenth century, social factors came into play significantly. Not only were styles being borrowed by one social class from another, as seen in the example of pastoral dress, but the social significance of these new fashions was also avidly discussed in the period. Anxieties surrounding the democratising effect of simpler dress abounded, as the wide-spread fear that social difference might no longer be visually apparent emerged (Entwistle 2000: 99). Peck summarises this development as follows: "[…] previously it had been easy to distinguish between the gentry, dressed in patterned silk, and the common folk, in plain wools and [coarse] linens. When everyone could afford and preferred the fashionable, highly decorative patterned cottons, class lines blurred." (Peck quoted in Engelhardt Mathiassen 2017: 55) Public places like pleasure gardens or assemblies are examples of settings for class intersection. Burney, for example, treats such mingling critically in *Evelina*, employing the heroine's naivety to highlight the urban confusion brought on or at least supported by fashionable dress. Having lost her companions, the heroine unwittingly seeks out the assistance and company of two prostitutes who initially appear trustworthy to her due to their fashionable appearance, even making them seem like "two real fine ladies" to her grandmother Mme Duval, who reveals her own lack of taste and understanding in uttering this assessment (Burney 2002: 237). Evelina joins them to escape young men that are following her, posing a realistic sexual threat. That, however, the company of either of these sets of people is equally as compromising and dangerous to the heroine's virtue as the other is commented on by Perry, as she arrives at the conclusion that narratives such as *Evelina* ultimately expressed a preference for women's confinement to the domestic sphere:

> The same elements thus appear again and again: the fear of exposure and being seen; the widespread perception that a single woman alone is potentially anyone and everyone's property; the promiscuous mingling of classes in urban space; the sexualized danger of public places; the difficulty of telling good women from bad women in such circumstances […]. (Perry 2004: 270)

26 The trope of dress as a materialisation of class confusion, as seen in the above quote or in the trope of the maid mistaken for a lady due to her dress, became frequent in literature as a consequence (Ribeiro 2002: 168). This subject area is touched upon by Jane Austen with reference to household servants – though notably through statements made by generally unlikable or ridiculous characters, which requires them to be read more critically than Evelina's horror at the confusion brought on by fashionable dress. This required change in perspective also speaks to the decades lying between Burney's early works and Austen's publications. In *Mansfield Park*, for example, the heroine Fanny Price's aunt Mrs Norris relates an exchange with Mr Rushworth's housekeeper, praising her for recently "turn[ing] away two housemaids for wearing white gowns" (Austen 2005: 123). White muslin gowns were, as has already been mentioned, the fashionable uniform of the age and most women from the middle classes upwards would have owned at

least one (Davidson 2019: 33). By choosing to wear them and trying to participate in the latest fashions, the housemaids appear presumptuous in Mrs Norris' eyes. In addition, the gowns' white colour, which has already been analysed for its cleanliness, might be interpreted as a sign of laxity in their work, antithetical as the colour white is to the physical labour of a housemaid. However, the dismissal of the housemaids over matters of dress reads as rash and harsh, which is underlined by Mrs Norris' overall negative characterisation in the text.

27 The supposed corrupting influence of dress with regards to social difference and servants' subordination is also invoked in Mrs Musgrove's complaint to the heroine Anne Elliot about her daughter-in-law Mary's nursery maid in Austen's *Persuasion*: "I have no very good opinion of Mrs. Charles's nursery-maid: I hear strange stories of her; she is always upon the gad: and from my own knowledge, I can declare, she is such a fine-dressing lady, that she is enough to ruin any servants she comes near." (Austen 2006b: 49) Fashionability comes into play here as a tool of influence, by suggesting that a fine-dressing servant can "ruin" others by suggesting a certain desirable appearance that might intersect too closely with the aesthetics of their employers. Fashion as a facet of luxury and consumption is implicitly referenced, while the exclusivity of luxury becomes subverted in its adoption by servants. As is the case in the example from *Mansfield Park*, however, critical irony comes into play in Austen's novel, precluding the possibility of face-value assessments.

28 Meanwhile, in Burney's *Camilla*, Mrs Mittin, Camilla's milliner (aptly named with allusion to an item of dress) and companion whose influence and temptation lead to ruinous shopping sprees, pins an item's level of fashionability not least on its popular adoption as she criticises Camilla's cap:

> Mrs. Mittin, in a morning visit to Camilla, found out that she had only the same cap for this occasion that she had worn upon every other; and, assuring her it was grown so old-fashioned, that not a lady's maid in Tunbridge would now be seen in it, she offered to pin her up a turban, which should come to next to nothing, yet should be the prettiest, and simplest, and cheapest thing that ever was seen. (Burney 1999: 462)

29 This passage implicitly suggests the "trickle-down-theory" of the fashion cycle, according to which the popular adoption of elite styles led to a concept of fashionability that was defined by demands for constant novelty, so as to ensure visual distinction (Batchelor 2005: 24). Though this theory has been contested as too simplistic (Entwistle 2000: 62f.), it is nonetheless applied by Mrs Mittin as a reason for updating Camilla's dress, seeing as a fashion that is eschewed even by lady's maids must truly be termed out of date. The fashion cycle's characteristics of constant innovation are also cited here, as Camilla's cap is criticised as much for its frequent wear as it is for its actual appearance – and the fear of appearing outdated takes immediate effect, as Camilla passes over money to Mrs Mittin to secure the turban she suggests (Burney 1999: 462). Ironically, the fashionable world must, according to this logic, compete with its servants, which serves to give shape to fears of social instability. *Camilla* is critical about the sartorial overlapping of classes, though less drastically so than *Evelina* had been. However, the fashion system is effectively ridiculed in the narrative in scenes such as this that chronicle the process of Camilla putting herself in debt in order to supposedly compete with the fashion of servants.

30 Elsewhere in *Camilla*, servants are cited as sources on elegant life to similar effect. When Camilla is unsure about attending the master of the ceremonies' ball in Tunbridge Wells, her friend, the rich and independent widow Mrs Arlberry, assuages her doubts as follows:

> Camilla was now still more distressed; and stammered out, that she believed the fewer balls she went to, the better her father would be pleased.
>
> 'Your father, my dear, is a very wise man, and a very good man, and a very excellent preacher: but what does he know of Tunbridge Wells? Certainly not so much as my dairy maid, for she has heard John talk of them; but as to your father, depend upon it, the sole knowledge he has ever obtained, is from some treatise upon its mineral waters; which, very possibly, he can analyse as well as a physician: but for the regulation of a country dance, be assured he will do much better to make you over to Sir Sedley, or to me.' (Ibid.: 415)

31 Here, knowledge gleaned from moral standpoints and formal education is contrasted with knowledge of fashionable society. However, though Mrs Arlberry manages to convince Camilla with this speech, her invocation of the dairy maid as a source of information on fashionable life and events in Tunbridge Wells has a threatening edge that Camilla fails to register. The fact that it is precisely Mrs Arlberry's dairymaid that is mentioned, as opposed to another servant, lends the persuasion an air of moral danger, as "milkmaids and ploughmen were often portrayed as exemplars of a wholesome, natural, and vigorous sexuality" and linked to moralists' fears that the countryside "suffered from promiscuity, illegitimacy, and overpopulation" (Ganey 2007: 42). In this way, Mrs Arlberry actually confirms Camilla's fears and proves her father's disapproval right, though Camilla is unfortunately unable to see through the subtext of her friend's statement. Fashionability, as it was practised by servants was thus often – and potentially unjustly – employed as an indicator of moral tension and is a matter that is treated critically and with nuance in several of Austen's and Burney's novels. Dress in relation to social rank also features in *Pride and Prejudice* in a different context during Elizabeth Bennet's visit to her childhood friend Charlotte, who has recently married Elizabeth's distant cousin and heir to her father's estate, Mr Collins. As the party is to dine with his patroness Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr Collins advises Elizabeth on her dress:

> Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear cousin, about your apparel. Lady Catherine is far from requiring that elegance of dress in us which becomes herself and daughter. I would advise you merely to put on whatever of your clothes is superior to the rest, there is no occasion for anything more. Lady Catherine will not think the worse of you for being simply dressed. She likes to have the distinction of rank preserved. (Austen 2006c: 182)

32 Though Mr Collins' simpering attitude towards Lady Catherine de Bourgh is revealed to be excessive through the text's ironic tone, the question of dressing in a way that is appropriate to one's rank and to the social constellations of an occasion emerges here, alongside the central social conflict of the age, which lay in the rise of the middle classes and their standing in relation to the nobility (Ballaster 2000: 200). This brought with it a process which has been described as a "consumer revolution", in which a greater number of people had access to new fashionable goods as well as the necessary funds for participation in consumer markets (Davidson 2019: 19). This has already been noted with reference to cotton above, as the access to luxury items that had previously been the reserve of the nobility and aristocracy expanded:

> As the modern society of commerce swept away the old agrarian order, it brought with it new sources of status not dependent upon land and blood but money. New social groups – merchants, industrialists, the new middle classes – could afford to purchase, 'above their station', luxury items once exclusive to kinds and nobility. (Entwistle 2000: 98)

33 Lady Catherine de Bourgh as a representative of the old social order, in which members of the aristocracy alone held material and social prestige, is being protected by Mr Collins from the suggestion of social equality through equality in dress. This point also casts the conflict at play in mistresses' condemnation of their servants' dress – as seen above – in the light of the more seminal and epochal changes of the era (Batchelor 2005: 20). Democratising aesthetics and abandoning "time honoured emblems of aristocratic prestige" (Weber 2008: 146), such as hair powder and makeup, tied developments in dress into the social and political changes of the age. This was, naturally, not positively received by those who stood to lose status, and so "[t]he transformation of the cultural sphere into an arena of class aspirations was naturally attended by a high level of snobbish competitiveness" (Jones 1998: 3). Austen reflects this in the fact that the confrontation between Elizabeth Bennet and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, which finally escalates into Lady Catherine's panicked call on Elizabeth as she aims to refute rumours of an engagement between the latter and her nephew Mr Darcy (Austen 2006c: 389), is first presented through the lens of dress. Even before Elizabeth has the opportunity to infringe on Lady Catherine's plans to marry her nephew to her daughter, and thereby keep the sum of their wealth and prestige within the family, the reflection of discourses surrounding social democratisation is present in the question of Elizabeth's dress, which is identified by Mr Collins as a potential social disruptor. The generational conflict inherent in Lady Catherine's desires of maintaining her family's legacy in the face of potential regeneration and change, as embodied by Elizabeth Bennet, is thus first brought to the fore from the perspective of dress.

34 Upward social mobility through advantageous marriage could be a fantasy and the ultimate aim for women in this period (Perry 2004: 230f.), as seen in Mrs Bennet's anxiety to have all her daughters make good matches in *Pride and Prejudice*. When viewed from the perspective of old-moneyed elites the idea of social mobility could be threatening and was disdained, as Lady Catherine, for example, contextualises the idea of Elizabeth and Mr Darcy marrying as the "upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune" (Austen 2006c: 395). Austen depicts Lady Catherine de Bourgh's struggle with Elizabeth Bennet as ludicrously authoritative – only for this exercise of aristocratic power to fall flat in the face of Elizabeth's self-possession and refusal to be cowed: "Whatever my connections may be […] if your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to *you*." (Ibid.) In its ineffective urgency and intensity, Lady Catherine's attack thus belies an underlying insecurity in the continuation of a "pure" family line and the undisturbed grandeur of aristocratic heritage.

35 A similar struggle between the gentry and aristocracy, centred around a proposed match between Cecilia Beverly – who though rich must follow a clause in her uncle's will, according to which her future husband must take her name – and Mortimer Delvile, on whom his parents' hopes of continuing the family line and legacy rest, forms the core of Burney's *Cecilia*. Though written several decades before the publication of *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813, both texts illustrate similar tensions between the world of the age-old gentry and aristocracy and an emerging society of commerce and public life, though comparing the novels reveals a shift in focus. Whereas Elizabeth Bennet's marriage to Mr Darcy can be said to be uniquely advantageous to both her and her family, in addition to the narrative provoking her successful confrontation with hereditary aristocracy in the shape of Lady Catherine, Cecilia's denouement is rather more bitter-sweet, as summarised in the final lines of the novel that reference her "chearful [sic.] resignation" at having lost her fortune and independence as a consequence of marriage (Doody 1988: 144f.). The heroines' inverse changes in fortune exemplify a continuous shift in the standing of lower gentry, such as Cecilia Beverly and Elizabeth Bennet in the face of aristocratic family legacy throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

36 In the case of Cecilia, the clause in her uncle's will poses the greatest obstacle to her happiness, as the prospect of Mortimer Delvile losing his hereditary name and identity is unimaginable to both his parents and himself (Burney 1988: 677). As Mr Delvile is one of her guardians and Cecilia becomes very close to Mrs Delvile, she is a frequent guest of the family – until the growing affection between Cecilia and Mortimer becomes too threatening. The most revealing locale in the novel regarding this generational and class conflict is Delvile Castle, as it embodies the social tensions the novel discusses, as well as serving as a point of identification for Mr Delvile:

> Delvile Castle was situated in a large and woody park, and surrounded by a moat. A draw-bridge which fronted the entrance was every night, by order of Mr. Delvile, with the same care as if still necessary for the preservation of the family, regularly drawn up. Some fortifications still remained entire, and vestiges were every where [sic.] to be traced of more; no taste was shewn [sic.] in the disposition of the grounds, no openings were contrived through the wood for distant views or beautiful objects: the mansion-house was ancient, large and magnificent, but constructed with as little attention to convenience and comfort, as to airiness and elegance; it was dark, heavy and monastic, equally in want of repair and of improvement. The grandeur of its former inhabitants was every where visible, but the decay into which it was falling rendered such remains mere objects for meditation and melancholy; while the evident struggle to support some appearance of its ancient dignity, made the dwelling and all in its vicinity wear an aspect of constraint and austerity. Festivity, joy and pleasure, seemed foreign to the purposes of it's [sic.] construction; silence, solemnity and contemplation were adapted to it only. (Burney 1988: 457)

37 There is a sense of oppression that resonates within the structure's ancestral weight and which a fellow guest at the castle, the aristocratic Lady Honoria Pemberton, who is in the unique position of being able to speak freely, cuttingly, and with ridicule, describes as a "gaol" (ibid.: 506). This "symbol of hereditary aristocracy" (Doody 1988: 140), can, in fact, be read as such in Mortimer's case, as his wishes and personal freedom are severely restricted by the need to live up to the legacy represented by the family's estate. Doody also highlights the importance of this building as an encapsulation and reflection of the social structures Cecilia must struggle against (ibid.: 96). Not only does Delvile Castle's impenetrability reveal itself insistently at full view, but its state of increasing decay belies, as in the case of Lady Catherine de Bourgh's bluster, the underlying and constant erosion that these seemingly indestructible structures (both socially and materially) face. Delvile Castle, therefore, features as a materialisation of social tensions in the way Elizabeth Bennet's dress does in *Pride and Prejudice*. Delvile Castle as a material focus additionally supports the observation that social shifts have progressed further by the time *Pride and Prejudice* was published: though the house is seen to be in steady decay, it is less easily assumed or cast off than the more ephemeral symbol of dress.

38 Delvile Castle is ultimately described as an imposing and uninviting – and, crucially, unfashionable – structure, a fact which is underlined by Mr Delvile's habit of drawing up the drawbridge at night, thereby effectively locking would-be intruders out, and the castle's inhabitants in. This outdated use of ancient defensive structures ironically points out that the futile struggle against greater social mobility can lead to nothing but standstill and decay. The castle is grand but not "elegant" or comfortable and its inhabitants' focus on ancestry has blinded them to the fact that they are proud of decaying remains which can, in effect, serve only as "objects for meditation and melancholy" (Burney, 1988: 457). The introduction of the castle serves to set the scene and lay out the obstacles for the increasing closeness between Cecilia

and Mortimer, which Lady Honoria provokes by suggestive questions.[5] These scenes elaborate on the relationship between the static image of Delvile Castle and the threat of change, as posed by the potential match between Cecilia and Mortimer. This tension is interestingly continually broken and mitigated by Cecilia rushing off to change her dress for dinner and, therefore, herself as she tries to hide her feelings during her stay at the castle. Getting dressed offered brief moments of privacy throughout the day and is seized on by Cecilia for this reason. However, in this context dress can also be read as a pressure valve for the greater transformations to her life and the Delvile family that lie on the horizon.

39 The disturbance of the static nature of Delvile Castle is foreshadowed in Mr Delvile's first appearance in the novel, when he describes himself as "the head of an ancient and honourable house", thereby voicing his arrogant disdain for "people but just rising from dust and obscurity" in reference to Cecilia's other guardians, Mr Briggs and Mr Harrel (ibid.: 187). It is revealed, however, that he has overlooked how worshipping the remains of greatness has actually led him full-circle to becoming a "dust-man" (ibid.: 456) himself, in the words of the miserly yet rich Mr Briggs, which serve to close the circle on this metaphor of arrogance and decay. This cutting depiction of the circularity of distinguishment and obscurity also serves as a memento mori, implicitly citing the Biblical warning: "For you are dust, And to dust you shall return." (Coogan et al. 2018: 24) This unlocks a further level to the imagery of heritage and legacy so frequently cited by Mr Delvile. Locked in on the island created by the moat, Delvile Castle and Mr Delvile stand removed from the rest of the world, stuck in the decaying grandeur of aristocratic culture, and not noticing that this sense of removal is no longer a mark of distinction, but one of standstill in a world that is developing regardless. By focusing on "protecting" Delvile Castle and its legacy, Mr Delvile even reveals himself to be isolated in a system of aristocratic culture, in which "[t]he formation of national aristocracies and the accompanying social centralisation, together with the expansion of courts, now largely fixed in one location […]" (Scott 2022: 105) leaves him and Delvile Castle obsolete. This high level of social criticism in *Cecilia* is identified by Doody as diegetic marks of the "Jacobin" fiction of the age, which attacked established structures (Doody 1988: 147).

40 Austen treats a similar topic of masculine pride at hereditary aristocracy and its materialisation in the family's house almost thirty years later in her final completed novel *Persuasion*. The gap between the two novels, which bridges the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, sees her articulate the topic more drastically. Not only is Sir Walter removed from his family seat due to financial concerns, as noted towards the beginning of this article, but his personal appearance and vanity are much more closely tied to his house than in the case of Mr Delvile. Sir Walter's overblown concern with his family's standing is introduced in the novel's opening lines, that show him to be vainly obsessed with his aristocratic title and relate him studying his own entry in the Baronetage – a book indexing all baronets – revealing he does so often (Austen 2006b: 1f.). This is then related to his personal appearance and vanity in a throwaway comment by Admiral Croft, the naval man who has moved into Kellynch Hall, who remarks: "I have done very little besides sending away some of the large looking-glasses from my dressing-room, which was your father's. […] ––Such a number of looking-glasses! oh Lord! there was no getting away from oneself." (Ibid.: 138) The fruitless and empty vanity of a self-satisfied aristocracy that was criticised by Burney in *Cecilia* is thus, in a sense, personified and expelled by Austen in *Persuasion*.

41 Changes in dress during this era interacted with such broader considerations of social structures and were embedded in a process, in which "informal modes of dressing associated with domestic and rural life were constantly gaining ground in fashionable metropolitan circles, offering an opportunity for plebeian practice to inform elite fashion." (Styles 2013: 94) One of the most obvious examples for how the dress of the people

was adopted is the apron, which became a part of elite fashion in the first half of the eighteenth century (ibid.). While aprons were an integral part of working women's dress due to their protective function, fashionable aprons made with "lace, whitework and silk embroidery" were not used with this purpose in mind and would rather be read as "decorative symbols of elite women's skills as domestic managers" (North 2018: 110). A symbol of feminine labour thus becomes transformed into one of domestic gentility, in line once again with the aims of conduct book morality, while the two iterations of the same item of dress remain incommensurable. The relation between the apron as a necessary part of working women's dress and the apron as a luxurious fashion item is reflected on by Burney in *Camilla*. On their way back from the theatre, Camilla and Miss Dennel meet a woman in simple dress who later reveals herself to be their neighbour, as she removes her seemingly minimal disguise: "'Why what's here to do? Why see, my dear, if I must let you into the secret–you must know–but don't tell it to the world!–I'm a gentlewoman!' She then removed her checked apron, and shewed [sic.] a white muslin one, embroidered and flounced." (Burney 1999: 424) It is a comedic moment, as the visual divide between a working woman and gentlewoman, between disguise and recognition, evidently lies in the details – though these ultimately mean a world of difference with regards to social standing. Styles, too, notes this parallel and simultaneous divide in the dress of the elite and of the people, remarking that the standard items comprising a woman's dress would have been the same across social classes, though differences in material, quality, and cost would be the distinguishing factors (Styles 2013: 31f.), as seen in the above scene from *Camilla*. The apron illustrates how the dress of the people influenced elite styles, adding a further layer to the question of dress and social class.

Conclusion

Both Austen and Burney demonstrate acuity when it comes to responding to social shifts in Britain during the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. When comparing both authors, it becomes apparent that various stages of development in this process can be traced in their works. This becomes especially clear in the treatment and resolution of narrative tension, when similar conflicts arise in the respective authors' novels, as seen, for example, with reference to *Cecilia* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Historical contextualisation has shown the particular significance of dress and fashion in Britain at this time, and aided the literary analysis in showing that dress can serve as a particularly useful lens in assessing British novels of manners of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

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Notes

1 *Sense and Sensibility*, 1811; *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813; *Mansfield Park*, 1814; *Emma*, 1815; *Northanger Abbey*, and *Persuasion*, both 1817 (Southam 2024).
2 *Evelina*, 1778; *Cecilia*, 1782; *Camilla*, 1796; and *The Wanderer*, 1814 (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2024).
3 In the earlier sections of the novel, Clermont, whom their uncle destines to marry his heir, Camilla's sister Eugenia, is on a grand tour of Europe, a traditional part of a privileged young man's education. This is referenced in Volume I, Chapter VIII, for example. (Burney 1999: 119)
4 See Cecilia's regret at her compassion and hope for his improvement in Burney 1988: 296–297.
5 See, for example, her mischievously provocative questioning of Cecilia in Burney 1988: 466–468.

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the rapid and radical changes in the field of fashion around 1800, the article focuses on the relationship between fashion and intergenerational relationships in the novels of Jane Austen and Frances Burney – exemplified by the contrast between a frivolous, fashion-interested mother figure and a down-to-earth daughter figure.

This contrast can be seen, for example, in the change in middle-class values from social status and wealth – and fashion as their materialization – to education and modesty. These processes are analyzed in the novels using the family as a social microcosm through the lens of fashion.

Keywords: Jane Austen, Frances Burney, intergenerational relationship, fashion

Zusammenfassung

Vor dem Hintergrund der schnellen und radikalen Änderungen auf dem Gebiet der Mode um 1800 stellt der Beitrag die Beziehung zwischen Mode und Generationenbeziehungen in den Romanen Jane Austens und Frances Burneys in den Mittelpunkt – exemplarisch im Kontrast zwischen einer frivolen, modeinteressierten Mutterfigur und einer bodenständigen Tochterfigur. Dieser Kontrast lässt sich etwa im Wandel der bürgerlichen Werte von gesellschaftlichem Status und Reichtum – und Mode als deren Materialisierung – hin zu Bildung und Bescheidenheit erkennen. Diese Prozesse werden in den Romanen anhand der Familie als gesellschaftlichem Mikrokosmos durch die Linse der Mode analysiert.

Schlagwörter: Jane Austen, Frances Burney, Generationenbeziehungen , Mode

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