Austen Slides

Timeline: born 1774, many letters 1796-1801,

Overview (evolution)

Undressing Mr. Knightley

1) Outer layer:

Northanger Abbey: Catherine says of Henry Tilney: his hat sat so well, and the innumerable capes of his great-coat looked so becomingly important! To be driven by him, next to being dancing with him, was certainly the greatest happiness in the world.

Shoes, riding boots, hessians, gators

Accessories: watch, fob, snuffbox, pins

2) Less formal: Jacket:

Thursday, 15 September 1796:   
Edward and Fly went out yesterday very early in a couple of shooting jackets, and came home like a couple of bad shots, for they killed nothing at all. They are out again to-day, and are not yet returned. Delightful sport! They are just come home, Edward with his two brace, Frank with his two and a half. What amiable young men!

3) Coat (morning or evening)

Figures largely in the letter which has practically generated a new industry: speculation about Austen’s love life:

To Cassandra Austen. Saturday 9 Jan. <1796>  
"..He has but one fault, which time will, I trust, entirely remove it is that his morning coat is a great deal too light. He is a very great admirer of Tom Jones, and therefore wears the same coloured clothes, I imagine, which he did when he was wounded." (p. 3)

Thursday, 16 January 1796:

I look forward with great impatience to [our party at Ashe tomorrow night], as I rather expect to receive an offer from my friend in the course of the evening. I shall refuse him, however, unless he promises to give away his white coat.

4) Breeches and pantaloons: made of buckskin for riding, or wool, or maybe canvas - get slimmer in 19th cent

pantaloons - made popular from military; trousers - later and only for daytime until late teens

5) Waistcoat - stripes, florals, two layers (plain white or buff says Brummel?)

6) Shirt and cravat **(don’t go into detail on shirt here)**

* To Cassandra Austen. Thursday 1 Sept. <1796>

We are very busy making Edward's shirts, and I am proud to say that I am the neatest worker of the party. (p. 10)

7) Possibly underbreeches of linen

Dressing Mrs. Knightley

1) Shift (like man’s shirt)

* This was an absolutely necessary garment, and the closest layer to the skin.
* It was changed as frequently as the owner could afford to.  
  Brandon fire, 1789: Sarah Holmes, servant: 5; Mary Cooper, servant: 4
* La Belle Assemblée, Feb 1806, p. 15:  
  The Ladies Toilette, or Encyclopedia of Beauty  
  Of cleanliness--…A careful attention to the person, frequent ablutions, linen always white, which never betrays the inevitable effect of perspiration and of dust; a skin always smooth and brilliant, garments not soiled by any stain, and which might be taken for the garments of a nymph; a shoe which seems never to have touched the ground; this it is that constitutes cleanliness. To this might likewise be added a scrupulous care to avoid every thing that can indicate functions which undeceive the imagination.
* Lett. 12. p. 21 Sunday, 25 November 1798, To Cassandra (from Steventon)

The Overton Scotchman ["a pedlar carrying fabrics and drapery goods round the countryside for doorstop sales"] has been kind enough to rid me of some of my money, in exchange for six shifts and four pair of stockings. The Irish is not so fine as I would like it; but as I gave as much money for it as I intended, I have no reason to complain. It cost me 3s. 6d. per yard. It is rather finer, however, than our last, and not so harsh a cloth.

2) stockings, held at or above knee by garters:

* To Cassandra Austen. Saturday 9 Jan. <1796>  
  "You say nothing of the silk stockings; I flatter myself, therefore, that Charles has not purchased any, as I cannot very well afford to pay for them; all my money is spent in buying white gloves…”

Unfortunately she was too late for a few days later…

* Thursday, 16 January 1796: What a good-for-nothing fellow Charles is to bespeak the stockings! I hope he will be too hot all the rest of his life for it!

3) Corset, or Stays

* Above the shift
* construction consistent from late 16th to 1780: 2 layers of firm linen with channels sewn in, into which were inserted reeds or later balleen. These layers may or may not have been covered with a more decorative fine layer often of silk.
* These were not luxury items. They were the basic item for support worn by women of all classes, even laboring women.
* Some have argued that stays were not worn at all during the years just before and after 1800. Perhaps on very limited occasions for a few women, but if you look at extant stays you do see a change in their construction which is reflected in the shape of the gowns that is worn over them. You also see a number of stays that use cords instead of baleen for support.
* To Cassandra Austen. Wednesday, 13 September 1813: I learnt from Mrs. Tickars's young lady, to my high amusement, that the stays now are not made to force the bosom up at all; that was a very unbecoming, unnatural fashion.
* Point out busk.

4) Petticoat - in 18th, a decorative skirt, in 19th, an undergown, and later, nearer to what we would call a slip. But what they call a slip is not a petticoat!)

5) Gown - layer over petticoat

Wed. 18 December 1798:  I believe I shall make my new gown like my robe, but the back of the latter is all in a piece with the tail, and will seven yards enable me to copy it in that respect?

(Apparently Cassandra asker her to buy some green floral-patterned fabric….)

Thursday, 18 April 1811: I am sorry to tell you that I am getting very extravagant, and spending all my money, and, what is worse for you, I have been spending yours too; for in a linendraper's shop to which I went for checked muslin, and for which I was obliged to give seven shillings a yard, I was tempted by a pretty-colored muslin, and bought ten yards of it on the chance of your liking it; but at the same time, if it should not suit you, you must not think yourself at all obliged to take it; it is only 3s. 6d. per yard, and I should not in the least mind keeping the whole. In texture it is just what we prefer, but its resemblance to green crewels, I must own, is not great, for the pattern is a small red spot.

We set off immediately after breakfast, and must have reached Grafton House by half-past eleven; but when we entered the shop the whole counter was thronged, and we waited full half an hour before we could be attended to. When we were served, however, I was very well satisfied with my purchases, —my bugle trimming at 2s. 4d. and three pair silk stockings for a little less than 12s. a pair...

5) Outer layers and accessories

Women: spencer, pelisse, cloak, greatcoat

Miss Burton has made me a very pretty little bonnet, and now nothing can satisfy me but I must have a straw hat, of the riding-hat shape, like Mrs. Tilson's; and a young woman in this neighborhood is actually making me one. I am really very shocking, but it will not be dear at a guinea. Our pelisses are 17s. each; she charges only 8s. for the making, but the buttons seem expensive, — are expensive, I might have said, for the fact is plain enough.

6) Shoes, Hats and Accessories

Women: boa, muff, hats, bonnets, caps, parasol, shawl, braces, fans

Wednesday, 9 January 1799: I wore my green shoes last night, and took my white fan with me; I am very glad he [nephew Charles] never threw it into the river.

Tuesday, 8 January 1799: I am not to wear my white satin cap to-night, after all; I am to wear a mamalone [mameluke] cap instead, which Charles Fowle sent to Mary, and which she lends me. It is all the fashion now; worn at the opera, and by Lady Mildmays at Hackwood balls. I hate describing such things, and I dare say you will be able to guess what it is like.

7) Morning:

Saturday, 3 January 1801: As you have by this time received my last letter, it is fit that I should begin another; and I begin with the hope, which is at present uppermost in my mind, that you often wore a white gown in the morning at the time of all the gay parties being with you.

Tuesday, 17 January 1809:

I have pretty well arranged my spring and summer plans of that kind, and mean to wear out my spotted muslin before I go.

Tuesday April 30? 1811: I mean, if I can, to wait for your return before I have my new gown made up, from a notion of their making up to more advantage together; and as I find the muslin is not so wide as it used to be, some contrivance may be necessary. I expect the skirt to require one-half breadth cut in gores, besides two whole breadths.

Monday, 24 May 1813:  I went the day before (Friday) to Layton's as I proposed, and got my mother's gown, — seven yards at 6s. *6d…* Henry and I went to the exhibition in Spring Gardens. It is not thought a good collection, but I was very well pleased, particularly (pray tell Fanny) with a small portrait of Mrs. Bingley, or one excessively like her.

Wednesday, 13 September 1813: Oh, dear me! when I shall ever have done. We did go to Layton and Shear's before breakfast. Very pretty English poplins at 4s. *3d.*; Irish, ditto at *6s.;* more pretty, certainly, — beautiful.

8) Afternoon/carriage/promenade

9) Full

10) Ball

Gillray - 1805 - Matrimonial Harmony - note the pre-wedded woman - short sleeves (afternoon/evening), no cap. Compare to the post-wedded woman, breakfast room long sleeves cap - his cravat and dressing gown 1805-Gillray-Harmony-before-Matrimony.jpg 1805-gillray-matriminial-harmonics.jpg  
Gillray - 1796 - how the new fashion looks on different bodies (a soul without a body, a bod[ice]y without a soul] 1796-short-bodied-gillray-fashion-caricature-sm.jpg  
"The next English publication entirely devoted to fashion [after Nikolaus Wilhelm von Heideloff's Gallery of Fashion, 1794-1803] appeared in 1798. It was entitled the Magazine of Female Fashions of London & Paris, and continued until 1806, the 110 issues being bound into three volumes: 1798-1800; 1801-3; 1804-6" (Alison Adburgham, Women in Print (London: 1972), pp. 207-208). Image from <http://www.davidbrassrarebooks.com/wp-content/plugins/wp-shopping-cart/single_book.php?sbook=790> (also shown on JASNA-VT site  
Evidence for women's drawers? 1803-Boilly-frenchstreet-drawers.jpg