It’s 1793-4-5-6. A young woman get caught up in the new craze

Filled as we are with images of the simpler, less voluminous images of film adaptations

The majority of her letters certainly contain practical talk about clothing but even those numerous examples are woefully short of descriptive details. In headwear, she rarely goes beyond the simple labels of hat, bonnet, or cap, so we cannot know if she wore toques.

The fashion magazines were, of course, the opposite of reticent. They needed to create new fashions and names for them—stay ahead of the social mushrooms! Show you are part of the inner circle! Those names cause us a lot of confusion because they seem to apply to very different items. But, if we want to find the origin of toques, at least as they would have been known in the Austen era, then fashion magazines are the place to start as long as we pay attention to the dates as well.

The 1790s were all about big hair, big hats, and even bigger feathers. Turbans, with their yards of fabric wrapped around bursting curls, had been fashionable for some time, but in 1794 we find an interesting variation: In the May edition of Nikolaus Heideloff’s *Gallery of Fashion* we see a “Head-dress a la Turque.” It is a fez-like cap of red velvet, the lower half wrapped with a silver gauze turban, decorated with a diamond pin and four yellow ostrich feathers.

A similar hat was worn by the Mamelukes, the warrior class that was defeated by Napoleon at the Battle of the Pyramids in 1798. When Mamelukes joined Napoleon as his Imperial Guard and accompanied him back to France, their headwear became a fashion inspiration both there and in England. A few months later, the 18-year-old Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra that she had borrowed a “Mamalouc cap.” As is frustratingly typical, she does not describe it, assuming Cassandra will know what it looks like. Fortunately for us, the Mameluke head-dress remained in vogue for a few years so we can see versions of it, labeled as such, in the 1804 fashion plate “London Head-dresses, No. 73” and the “Ladies Monthly Museum” among others.



Caption: A uniformed Mameluke warrior in his hat and several examples of English adaptations.

This combination of a structured cap and turban begins to evolve in various forms. One French fashion plate shows a rounded cap instead of a flat-top cap but still has the turban-like wrapping. It is labeled a “Coeffure Asiatique.” (Austen-era fashion rule: when you don’t know what to name something, name it something exotic!) In the years after 1802 the word toque starts creeping into the fashion magazine lexicon but is used to describe slightly different objects. In addition to being used to describe a brimless hat wrapped with a turban, the term is applied to a hat that is made with a pouf with an attached headband. Sometimes the toque is made of velvet for outdoor wear, and sometimes there is an evening version, the *Toque Parée*, made of silk, with a headband and one or more additional bands. In England this headband/silk pouf toque shows up made of silver gauze, bearing the name “Egyptian Head-dress.” (And for fun, look closely at the woman in the far back right of Rolinda Sharples’ famous 1818 painting of the *Cloakroom of the Clifton Assembly Rooms*.) Yet a third variation looks more like a modern pillbox hat wrapped closely in fabric. Despite the variation in shapes, they all share one common element: they have no brims. So, we have three distinct variations of this hat: a cylindrical structure wrapped with a turban, a headband with attached pouf, and a covered “pillbox hat,” all labeled as toques.

A picture containing text

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Caption: Top row, left to right: “Coeffure Asiatique” *Les Journals des dames at des modes,* 31 December 1801; “Toques de velours” *Les Journals des dames at des modes,* 5 December 1808; “Toque de Gaze Argent” *Les Journals des dames at des modes,* 31 March 1809. Bottom row: “Toque Parées” *Les Journals des dames at des modes*, April 1810; “Egyptian headdress of silver and pearls” *Ackermann’s Repository of the Arts*,February 1809.

Toques fade away a bit after 1810 but there is a resurgence of interest in 1817.

Even Americans get into the act: a famous 1817 portrait of Dolley Madison by Otis Bass shows her wearing a toque of blue silk covered with tulle and adorned with gold beads.

A picture containing person, indoor

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In 1818 Ackerman’s *Repository of the Arts* increasingly mentions toques in its fashion articles and includes them in its color fashion plates. Most are evening toques, but some, like the towering pea-green satin toque ornamented with flowers, is designed for outdoor wear. A similar style toque is worn by Anya Taylor-Joy in the recent film adaptation of *Emma*.

A picture containing wall, hairpiece, posing

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Caption: Left to right: “Pea-green toque” *Ackermann’s Repository of the Arts*, June 1818; “The Kent toque of embroidered gauze” *Ackermann’s Repository of the Arts*, August 1818; “White satin toque” *Ackermann’s Repository of the Arts*, February 1819; “Black toque with yellow feathers” as worn by Anya Taylor-Joy, *Emma,* 2020, costumes by Alexandra Byrne.

Toques continue to grace the pages of fashion magazines. There are some experiments with odd shapes but the key feature of a hat with no brim, some structure to keep it from flopping over, covered or wrapped with silk (usually white), then ornamented, remains constant. As the 1820s progress, toques, like all fashionable dress, begin to take on prodigious proportions. The band is still apparent but what happens above almost defies gravity.

1828 toque example from Ackermann's Repository of Arts


Caption: “Toque of Parisian gauze” *Ackermmann’s Repository of the Arts*, October 1828.

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London Head Dresses #20, *Fashions of London and Paris*

October 1799

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| A picture containing text  Description automatically generated | London Head Dresses #23, *Fashions of London and Paris*  January 1800  Detail: Is it a turban or a toque? |

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Costume Parisien #256, *Journal des dames et des modes*

1800 (An 9)

Seven examples are labelled “Demi-Capote” (all numbers 1) while number 3 looks very much like a Mameluke cap and is labelled a Demi-Turban. This plate also contains two toquets. A toquet, not to be confused with a toque, is what the English would call a cap, or morning cap: white, lacey, with chin ties.

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A person with a bird on the head  Description automatically generated with low confidence  Coeffure Asiatique, Tunique de Grand Parure  Costume Parisien #353  *Journals des dames et des modes.*  31 December 1801 (An 10) |

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| A picture containing text, several  Description automatically generated | A picture containing linedrawing  Description automatically generated  London Head Dresses #75, *Fashions of London and Paris*  c. 1803 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A picture containing text, person, wearing, old  Description automatically generated  “Wolf’s Teeth” toque for ball gown with tunic  Costume Parisien, *Journal des dames et des modes*  24 February 1803 (An 11), #451  Early(est?) use of the word toque |

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| A picture containing text, posing, set, several  Description automatically generated | A drawing of a person  Description automatically generated with low confidence  London Head Dresses #73, *Fashions of London and Paris, c. 1804, Victoria and Albert Museum*  Center top: Mameluke Cap |

A person wearing a mask

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| A picture containing text, old, picture frame  Description automatically generated | A picture containing text  Description automatically generatedThis soft-crowned chapeau uses the same construction as early toques. Though it is not labelled as such, the general description for the fashions of that month do praise the *toques velours*.  Costume Parisien, *Journal des dames et des modes*  25 January 1805 (An 13) #613 |

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| A person in a red dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A picture containing text, wall, indoor  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress: “An Egyptian head-dress of silver and pearls, one point falling on the left shoulder, finished with a tassel; the hair in loose ringlets.”  Ackermann, *Repository of Arts*  February 1809 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | Silver gauze toque with silk gown.  Costume Parisien “Journal des dames et des modes”  31 March 1809, #965 |

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| A picture containing text, old  Description automatically generated | A picture containing text, person, fabric  Description automatically generated  Hats, bonnets and trimmed (adorned) toques.  Costume Parisiens *Journal des dames et des modes*  April 1810, #1056 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A picture containing text, wall, old  Description automatically generated  (Missing title)  Costume Parisien *Journals des dames et des modes*  April (?) 1813, #1293 |

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| A picture containing text, chest of drawers, fabric  Description automatically generated | A picture containing text  Description automatically generated  1. Toque of silk embroidered in strips/waves/blades  2. Hats and Toques of velvet and satin  3. Hats and Toques of velvet and satin  4. Cornette (lace cap) in gauze-net  Costumes Parisiens, *Journal des dames et des modes*  10 January 1808, #862 |

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| A person sitting in a chair  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A picture containing indoor  Description automatically generated  Madame Houbigant (born Nicole Adéläide Deschamps) by Merry-Joseph Blondel, c. 1807 |

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| A picture containing text  Description automatically generated | “Toque et Redingote à la Polonaise”  Costume Parisien, *Journal des dames et des modes*  25 March 1808, #879  Polonaise in this case refers to the Polish style of an open coat with fur trim. |

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| A page from a book  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A picture containing text  Description automatically generated  The velvet toque is worn with a Polish-style coat with military trim.  “Toque de Velours. Redingote á la Polonnaise”  Costume Parisien, *Journal des dames et des modes*  5 December 1808, #938 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A picture containing text  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress: “Head-dress the *toque à la Rubens*, composed of white lace, and ornamented with feathers and precious stones.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  February 1816 |

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| A person sitting on a chair  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A person wearing a hat  Description automatically generated with low confidence  Opera Dress: “Head-dress the Berlin cap composed of white satin, lower part ornamented with a rich gold band, and the crown a profusion of beautiful short ostrich feathers, disposed with taste and novelty. The Berlin cap is, in our opinion, the most generally becoming head-dress which has been introduced for some seasons.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  April 1816 |
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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A picture containing text, linedrawing  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress: “Head-dress, a cap composed of white satin, finished with a band edged with pearls, and a superb plume of white feathers.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  May 1816 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A person wearing a hat  Description automatically generated with medium confidence  Opera Dress: “Head-dress, *toque à la Berri*; it is a crown of novel form, tastefully ornamented round the top with lilies to correspond with the trimming of the skirt, and a plume, which droop over the face.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  March 1817 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A person wearing a hat  Description automatically generated with low confidence  Evening Dress: “Head-dress the Gloucester turban, composed of white gauze, which is laid on very full; the fulness confined by bands of pearls.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  June 1817 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A picture containing text  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress: “Head-dress, a white crape *toque*, for the form of which we refer to our print: it is elegantly ornamented round the front with chenille, and finished with a diadem of white crape roses. The hair is dressed much on the temples, and much parted in the front.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts.*  January 1818 |

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| A picture containing text, old  Description automatically generated | A picture containing text  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress: “Head-dress *la toque d’Orleans*: it is composed of an intermixture of white satin and British net; it is made a moderate height, and ornamented with a plume of heron’s feathers. The hair is disposed in a few light curls at each side, and the forehead is entirely bare.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  February 1818 |

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| A picture containing text, old  Description automatically generated | A person wearing a hat  Description automatically generated with low confidence  Walking Dress: “Head-dress the *chapeau et toque de Berri*: the *toque* part is composed of lavender-coloured satin, the hat of velvet to correspond; the crown is very low, the brim deep, and turns up all round; a full plume of ostrich feathers is placed so as to fall over to the left side.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  April 1818 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A statue of a person  Description automatically generated with low confidence  Evening Dress: “Head-dress the Cambridge *toque*, composed of British net and pale lemon-coloured satin; it is of moderate height, ornamented round the top of the crown by rolls of pale lemon-coloured satin; a bird of paradise plume is placed on one side.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  April 1818 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A picture containing text  Description automatically generated  Walking Dress: “Head-dress a pea-green satin *toque*, ornamented with flowers.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  June 1818 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A close-up of a person  Description automatically generated with medium confidence  Evening Dress: “Head-dress, a *toque* composed of richly embroidered gauze, ornamented with an elegant plume of white feathers, which are placed so as to fall over on the right side.” Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  June 1818 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A person wearing a crown  Description automatically generated with low confidence  Evening Dress: Head-dress, the Kent *toque* composed of Parisian gauze of a bright gold colour, richly embroidered in small roses. This *toque* is made higher that we have observed them lately, particularly in front; the gauze is laid very full on the fore part of the crown; this fullness is formed into large Spanish puffs by two bands of the same material, which confine it: it is wornwithout any other ornament.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  August 1818 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A person with flowers on the head  Description automatically generated with low confidence  Evening Dress: “Head-dress, a white satin *toque*, made rather high, and ornamented with a bunch of flowers placed at the left side.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  October 1818 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A picture containing text, wall, person  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress: “Head-dress *la toque de Ninon;* it is of a moderate height, and of an elegantly simple form: it is ornamented with a long plume of ostrich feathers, which fall over to the left side, and a butterfly composed of jet, which is places in the centre of the forehead.  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  January 1819 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A picture containing text, old, linedrawing  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress: “The head-dress is a low white satin *toque*, ornamented in front with white roses, which are surmounted by a plume of ostrich feathers: it is tied under the chin by a row of pearls, finished by pearl tassels.” |

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| A person playing a guitar  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A picture containing text, person  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress: “The head-dress is a *toque*, composed of Chinese silk and white net; it is ornamented next the face with a band of Roman pearl.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  March 1819 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with low confidence | A picture containing indoor, wall  Description automatically generated  Evening Dress (Mourning): “Head-dress, a black crape *toque*: a band of black bugles goes round the bottom next to the face; the top part is round; it is ornamented with bugles, scattered irregularly over it: a broad band of bias crape, doubled, goes round the top, and stands out some distance from it; this band is also ornamented with bugles. A crape tassel, edged with bugles, falls on the left side, and a plume of black feathers droops over the tassel.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  March 1820 |

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| A person in a dress  Description automatically generated with medium confidence | A person wearing a hat  Description automatically generated with low confidence  Evening Dress: “Head-dress, a *toque* of tulle and white satin; two rows of pearls are continued all round, above which a twisted rouleau of satin confined by pearls gives richness, and a light ornamental trimming decorates the front: it is edged with four rouleaus, and finished with blond, continued in flutes to the side, where it terminates *en serpent* with pearls: white satin crown. The color of the feathers accords with the dress; they are placed on one side, and appear through the tulle, and fall over the opposite shoulder.”  Ackermann *Repository of Arts*  August 1822 |

From 1819-03-ack: (FFF) “The *toquet* is exactly the form of a child’s cap; it is composed of satin, and ornamented from distance to distance with Spanish puffs of blond or *tulle*: it is bordered by a *ruche* of either material.”

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Ackermann Repository of Arts, August 1817

French Female Fashions: “White crape, gauze, satin, and *tulle* are all in favour for *toques*.Very little alteration has taken place in the form of these head-dresses since I last wrote; they are somewhat higher that the wear then, and wider round the top of the crown. Flowers are the favorite ornament for *toques*, except for court, for which they are generally adorned with feathers and precious stones.”

Ackermann Repository of Arts, September 1817

General Observations on Fashion and Dress: “Though *toques* and turbans are in general estimation, flowers are still much in favour, particularly with youthful *belles*.”

Descriptions

1814 October 20, Parisian Modes, *Morning Chronicle*

“The modists now use a great deal of plain black velvet in bonnets. Some of the bonnets as are in the form of a toque, and of which the front is turned up, have above the turn-up a large and long plume, laid flat from left to right.”

1815 October 21 Parisian Modes, *Morning Chronicle*

“The belles begin to wear toques of white satin; the only ornament is a feather, which bends down below the rim of the touque.”

1817 October The Mirror of Fashion *La Belle Assemblée* (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle*, October 1, 1817)

“Pavillion hat *toque* of white satin, ornamented at the edge with silver, and surmounted by a plume of ostrich feathers.”

1818 January Ackermann (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle*, October 1, 1817)

“Head-dress a white crape *toque,* ornamented round the front with chenille, and finished by a diadem of white crape roses.”

1818 February The Mirror of Fashion *La Belle Assemblée* (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle,* February 27, 1818)

Ladies Dresses: “Hon. Lady Codrington (on her presentation)…Head Dress, a rich gold lama toque, with ostrich plume, and a profusion of diamonds.”

1818 April Mirror of Fashion, Celebration of the Prince-Regent’s Birthday (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle,* April 24, 1818)

Ladies Dresses: “Mrs Keene…Head Dress, a white satin toque, with a plume and brilliants. “Countess Newburgh…Head Dress, a very rich silver toque, elegant plume of feathers, and a profusion of diamonds.”

1819 La Belle Assemblée *Fashions for April* (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle,* April 1, 1819)

English Evening Dress: “Frock of chain gauze, over white satin, finished round the border with a superb trimming *à la Flore;* Swiss *corsage* of white satin; and small white satin fluted *toque* with Minerva plume.”

June 1819 Mirror of Fashion, *La Belle Assemblée* Celebration of the Prince-Regent’s Birthday (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle,* June 18, 1819)

Ladies Dresses: “Mrs. Lane Fox…A toque of blond and pearls, with a superb band and spray of diamonds, and a full plume.”

July 16, 1819 Grand Fancy Dress Ball at Carlton House *Morning Chronicle*

“Marchioness of Winchester…A Danish costume of gold lama, with two pomegranates, with a gold flounce; a red satin skirt opened on the side, trimmed with gold; a black velvet Danish tippet, trimmed with gold and precious stones. Head-dress, a toque of red satin, ornamented with feathers and coloured stones.”

June 1820 Mirror of Fashion *Celebration of the King’s Birthday* (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle* June 16 1820)

“Mrs. Stanley…Head-dress, silver toque, diamonds and feathers.”

July 6, 1821 (repeated July 7) Advertisements *Morning Chronicle*

Text

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1821 July Mirror of Fashion *The King’s Drawing Room* (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle* July 27, 1821)

Ladies Dresses: “Her Royal Highness Princess Augusta…head-dress a toque of silver, with a magnificent plume of ostrich feathers and brilliants.”

1822 Fashions for January *La Belle Assemblée* (reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle* January 1, 1822)

French Parisian Opera Costume “…Toque of black velvet, ornamented with gold *cordon* and tassels, with a superb plume of white ostrich feathers.”