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"To Dress Against Nature and Reason": fashion and transgressive dressing in the mid-to-late eighteenth century British North Atlantic

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“To dress against nature and reason”: Fashion and transgressive dressing in the mid-to-late eighteenth century British North Atlantic

by

Brenna Holly Buchanan

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Rural Agricultural Technological and Environmental History

Program of Study Committee:
John Monroe, Co-major Professor
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The student author and the program of study committee are solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2017

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to a great number of people who have assisted me throughout my life as well as my time as a graduate student. First and foremost, to my Mom, who has provided endless amounts of support and encouragement. Second to my niece, Sarah. The day you were born has been one of the happiest of my life. Third to my mentor, Jana Byars, who first suggested the idea of “cross-dressing,” which became a life of its own.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Deborah Sampson Gannett proves a difficult person for historians to overlook, even if key facts of her life remain unknown.¹ During the American Revolution, she flouted the rules of her time by dressing as a man and enlisting. For seventeen months, in 1782-1783, she lived as “Robert Shurtliff” until her discovery and resulting discharge at West Point on October 25, 1783.² Afterward, she returned to Massachusetts, to the town of Sharon, married in 1785, and in 1792 petitioned the Massachusetts legislature for funds not received during her time in the Continental Army.³ Between March and October of 1802, she publicly lectured on her experience as a soldier in New England and parts of New York, to earn money for her family.⁴ Because of her experience, recognition, and celebration as a female soldier, she represents a taboo character whose actions inspire great curiosity.

Two biographers have told her story. The first, during her lifetime; the second, after she was long dead. With the goal of securing a pension to help her and her husband’s struggling farm, Herman Mann, a printer/publisher/journalist hoped to create a national following for her life and service. Mann’s 1797 biography of Gannett, *The Female Review*, highlighted “The most remarkable feature of the case” which was, “...that during those entire campaigns, while mingling constantly with men, night and day, in all their exercises, through so many months, she maintained her virtue unsullied, so that her sex was not even suspected.”⁵ Despite the focus on

¹ Scholars disagree on the spelling of Gannett’s name. Sources list it as Gannet, Gannett, Sampson, and Samson.

² Alfred Young, *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2004), 5.

³ *Ibid*, 4.

⁴ Judith R. Hiltner, ““Like a Bewildered Star”: Deborah Sampson, Herman Mann, and Address, Delivered with Applause,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 29 (Spring, 1999): 5, accessed January 25, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3886083>.

⁵ John Adams Vinton, “Introduction,” in Herman Mann, *The Female Review: Life of Deborah Sampson: The Female Soldier in the War of Revolution with An Introduction and Notes by John Adams Vinton* (Boston: J.K. Wiggin & WM. Parsons Lunt, 1916), 22-23.

Gannett's time as a soldier, analysis of her clothing is a small portion of the story. The second biographer, Alfred Young, in 2004, told a more detailed story of her life, including one substantially important argument in his epilogue. Even though he believed that Sampson could not be considered a cross-dresser⁶, he conceded that clothing did play an important part in her "masquerade."⁷

While his recognition of the importance of clothing is good, it is problematic that he rejects the term "cross-dresser." Young argues that this more modern word indicates an inner "desire," or compulsion to wear cross-gendered clothing.⁸ Therefore, it does not define Gannett or others like her. For him, Gannett masqueraded as a man because she wanted a different and perhaps even better life and also because she recognized that "performing gender" as a man was the only way she could act on her desire to serve in the military. Therefore, there is no connection to an urge to cross-dress, if it is understood as a symptom of an erotic compulsion or psychological disorder. However, multiple studies on transvestism during the eighteenth century and the early modern era do use the term of cross-dressing to characterize female-to-male transgressions. Modern conceptions should not prevent the utilization of the term. On the surface, this appears to be a disagreement over semantics. But, rejection of the term misrepresents Gannett's wartime, "Amazonian" cross-gendered dressing.

⁶ Young argues that, "She should not be categorized as a "cross-dresser" or "transvestite," modern terms with connotations of a condition or an obsession...Then, it was the only way for a woman to serve in the army, as opposed to serving in an army camp...In Boston, when she put on a uniform to do the soldier's exercise of arms, it made her performances spectacular and lucrative. In dressing like a man to escape, she was like an uncounted number of women in early America for whom such disguise was commonly an act of desperation, not desire," (Young, 317-318).

⁷ Young claims that, "In her masquerades, Sampson clearly mastered the role that clothing plays in performing gender, which, after all, is one of its functions. A uniform made her a man; a dress then made her a woman. Clothes were also indispensable in performing class, that is, moving from one status to another, a different function," (318).

⁸ Ibid, 317.

In the early modern period, popular balladry stated that women acting outside of their gender roles during times of war revealed their patriotism and love of liberty.⁹ As a trans-Atlantic phenomenon, cases appeared in Britain, the European continent, as well as America. There are many different examples of this, from women taking over male responsibilities at shop and home, to female spies, and of course, female soldiers. Historians and biographers use this lens to understand Gannett, transforming her into an example of what made the revolution distinctive and, by extension, of the nation it established.

Thus, this viewpoint fits under the banner of American Exceptionalism.¹⁰ American Exceptionalism is a theme appearing often in United States history, speaking to the unique character of the United States. This approach imagined the United States as having “avoided the class conflicts, revolutionary upheaval, and authoritarian governments of “Europe” and presented to the world an example of liberty for others to emulate.”¹¹ What supports this perspective is the characterization of the American Revolution as a profoundly unique event. Historians who focus on commerce and trade in the Atlantic argue against this approach by indicating that the Revolution was an “Atlantic phenomenon, rather than the creation of the American nation.”¹²

⁹ For more on cases of traditional cross dressing during this period, see: Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women Who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty, and Happiness* (London, United Kingdom: Pandora, 1989); and Dianne Dugaw, “Female Sailors Bold: Transvestite Heroines and the Markets of Gender and Class,” in Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norlina, eds., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ American Exceptionalism is an idea promoted by Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921) The Project Gutenberg eBook. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>.

¹¹ Ian Tyrrell, “American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History,” *The American Historical Review* 96, (Oct., 1991): 1031 accessed January 21, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2164993>.

¹² T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jack P. Greene, “The American Revolution,” in Benjamin, Hall, and Rutherford, *The Atlantic World in the Age of Empire*, 203-206.

Historians of the Atlantic¹³ fall into two distinct categories: those who write from a nation-state perspective, and those who write from a commerce-trade perspective.¹⁴ Early American historian Bernard Bailyn suggests that one cannot understand the Atlantic World by using the nation-state model. Instead, they must use a multi-national angle, and even go beyond the idea of “nations.” Prior studies tempt historians to look at the events of the late-eighteenth century as “inevitable.” According to Bailyn, Atlantic history has helped change this framework. He argues that the beginning of the United States, as well as other independence movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries marked, “not the fulfillment but the demise of

¹³ Other major themes in Atlantic history include geography, the problems of a Euro-centric model of conquest and domination through the fifteenth-nineteenth centuries, and chronology. Leonard Outhwaite's, *The Atlantic: A History of an Ocean* published in 1957, shows one of the first attempts to study the Atlantic Ocean itself. His interpretation of the history of the Atlantic is the use of geographic framework in looking at change over time. He writes about wind and weather, in addition to the movement of people and goods. He argues that the reason that historians did not prominently feature the Atlantic in historic interpretations is due to: the categorical analysis of splitting the world into east and west, thus effectively splitting the Atlantic in half, and the reaffirming the divide between the Old World and the New World (Leonard Outhwaite, *The Atlantic: A History of an Ocean* (Coward-McCann, 1957), 13. He argues that interaction with the sea, especially and particularly the Atlantic Ocean, “has compelled man to develop some of his more important arts and sciences,” and that it functioned as a “highway of culture,” (Ibid, 14-16).

¹⁴ Examples from a modern-nation state perspective include: D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: a geographical perspective on 500 years of history/ v. 1 Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Steven Sarson, *British America, 1500-1800* (Hodder Arnold, 2005); and J.H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). David Armitage in “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, *The British Atlantic World, 1500-* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) describes this approach as “cis-Atlantic history” defining it as the study of “particular places as unique locations within an Atlantic world and seeks to define that uniqueness as the result of the interaction between local particularity and a wider web of connections (and comparison),” (21). Examples from a commerce/trade perspective include: Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Jack P. Greene, “The American Revolution,” in Thomas Benjamin, Timothy D. Hall, David Rutherford, eds., *The Atlantic World in an Age of Empire* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001); Peter A. Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005); Eliza H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf, *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); David Armitage & Michael J. Braddock, eds. *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, 2nd edition (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of The Atlantic World c. 1450 – c. 1850* (Oxford University Press, 2011) and Jack P. Greene, *Creating the British Atlantic: Essay on Transportation, Adaptation, and Continuity* (University of Virginia Press, 2013).

the world that had gone before.”¹⁵ Historians of Colonial America and the Atlantic, T. H. Breen, Jack P. Greene, David Armitage, and Michael Zuckerman agree that a national identity, separate from British or English, did not exist before the war.¹⁶ A focus on Atlantic history opens up a greater understanding of the development of the west as well as the Age of Revolutions. By placing the American colonies in an Atlantic perspective, events such as the American Revolution become clearer as Atlantic events, rather than uniquely national American ones. Therefore, the portrayal of the American Revolution is a key factor in determining the difference between a transnational approach and a national one. The tendency to ascribe Gannett’s behavior to a unique kind of patriotic sentiment is typical of a model of Colonial/Revolutionary history. However, it does not fully address the Atlantic relationships and worldviews, which created an Atlantic consciousness, present in British North America. Without question, many have used Gannett to fuel the exceptionalism narrative of the revolution.

Study of the Atlantic world disassembles American Exceptionalism. Through the framework of an “imagined space,” enterprise and consumerism created a shared cultural environment and community, due to diffusion of items and people across the Atlantic network.¹⁷ Viewing the Atlantic World in this manner, as multiple historians have noted, allows for the idea of the transformation of the Atlantic from a barrier to a bridge.¹⁸ By the eighteenth century, ships

¹⁵ Bernard Bailyn, “Introduction: Reflections on Some Major Themes,” in Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 2.

¹⁶ David Armitage, “The American Revolution in Atlantic Perspective,” in Canny and Morgan, 529 and Michael Zuckerman, “Identity in British America: Unease in Eden,” in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, 157.

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson argues for the idea of imagined communities through his work on nationalism. See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (Verso, 2006); Daniel Maudlin and Bernard L. Herman, *Building the British Atlantic: Spaces, Places, and Material Culture, 1600-1850*, 2016, 4.

¹⁸ The “barrier to bridge” analogy is a common one in the Atlantic World historiography. For example, see: Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Harvard University Press, 2005). In addition, Paul S. Boyer, Clifford E. Clark, Karen Halttunen, Joseph E. Kett, Neal Salisbury, eds. in *The Enduring Vision: History of the American*

traversed the Atlantic more easily and regularly, tightly connecting the metropole and British North America. This Atlantic consciousness was a developed, shared identity that grew over the British North Atlantic. One historian uses the term “Provincial Cosmopolitanism,” and another writes that “The North Atlantic united that empire more than it divided,” for as colonial societies grew and became more distinctive, “they pressed in many ways against the limits of their parochial origins, and expanded into the greater world of Atlantic cosmopolitanism.”¹⁹ This relationship integrated them, despite contrasts of environment, population density, and local differences. The similarities created by the Atlantic-consciousness, often dwarfed divergences, until events, such as the road to revolution, highlighted them. Therefore, similar conditions for cultural norms, helped along by a transmission of material culture, provided a staging ground for shared behaviors.

Properly contextualizing Gannett’s clothing in this way opens up a different conversation about dress and identity. This Atlantic consciousness and community permeated the lives of cross-dressing women. Gannett’s masquerade was possibly inspired or predicated by tales of other heroic women in like circumstances. Stories of other battle heroines, came from across the ocean. One such example is Hannah Snell, a British woman who also disguised herself as a soldier, actively participating in battles across the globe during the early to mid-eighteenth century. Her life was characterized in a book, *The Female Warrior*, first published in the 1750s, and read Atlanticly.²⁰ Gannett’s costume and her performance depended on an Atlantic World context. After her discovery, society grudgingly accepted her, because of her return to skirts and

People, Vol. I: To 1877 8th ed. (Cengage Learning, 2013), 25, uses similar phrasing to discuss cross-cultural relationships and “exchanges” between American Indians and Europeans across the Atlantic.

¹⁹ Bailyn and Denault, 31.

²⁰ *The Female Warrior, or Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell* (London: Printed for H. D. Symonds, 1801).

love of country. Adoption of socially appropriate clothing informs that gender could fluctuate, as long as it remained stable once the transgression was over. Opening up these cases of cross-dressing women to an Atlantic perspective shows that gendered cross-dressing is only a small piece of the cross-dressing puzzle. As fascinating as they are, these instances are only a small portion of “transgressive dressing” in the mid-to-late eighteenth century British North Atlantic.²¹ Study of clothing’s trans-oceanic construction and transmission, its greater availability, its symbolism of gentility and prestige, and its various uses in identity formation and performance, shows that transgressive dressing was a much larger scale, Atlantic phenomenon.

First, because of the trans-Atlantic transmission of fabrics and styles of clothing, one can only view colonial dress effectively through the context of the Atlantic World. The fabrics and materials obtained to create clothes during the eighteenth century came from an Atlantic process. Planters and smaller-scale farmers grew raw materials in British North America which travelled to various ports in the Empire. Processed and assembled, they were made into linen, calamanco, calico, and other types of fabrics and textiles. Historian Robert DuPlessis argues specifically that clothing and cloth were the dominant exports in bringing together commercial centers during the early modern era.²² He also claims that due to cross-cultural flows of materials and specific woven materials, all social and racial groups in the Atlantic world, both free and unfree, changed how they dressed and “...created fashions from specific amalgams of habitus, needs, desires,

²¹ Here, I define the British North Atlantic as the colonial region of New England as well as the metropole. This is because of the climate similarities between the two regions, as well as New England’s difference from the other regions of British North America. The Mid-Atlantic and Southern colonies, by the middle of the eighteenth century, were wealthier, and more heavily populated. However, economically it differed, as it did not produce as much staple crop, and therefore was not *as* dependent upon the metropole as the other regions. New England also imported a large amount of shipping from Britain.

²² Robert S. DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 4.

conventions, rules, and available supplies.”²³ Therefore, physically, clothing represented Atlantic connections.

The effect of these trans-oceanic connections are visible through the study of the “cosmopolitan,” Atlantic city, Boston. By the eighteenth century, Boston had changed significantly since its humble beginnings. Even though it was not the largest city in British North America, its wealth and status made it a powerful trading hub. Its benefits filtered out into the colony of Massachusetts and New England. The port overflowed with enterprise. Commerce moved in and out by land and by sea. The city caught the attention of many who visited it. Its most impressive structure, Long Wharf, a symbol of the British North Atlantic, stuck out deeply into the bay, attracting ships laden with goods. In 1747, Daniel Neal’s *The History of New England*, described it as thus:

At the Bottom of the Bay is a noble Pier, 1800 or 2000 Foot long, with a Row of Warehouses on the North Side, for the Use of Merchants. The Pier runs so far into the Bay that Ships of the greatest Burthen may unlade without the Help of Boats or Lighters. From the Head of the Pier you go up the chief Street of the Town, at the upper End of which is the Town-House or Exchange, a fine Piece of the Building, containing, besides the Walk for the Merchants, the Council Chamber, the House of Commons, and another spacious Room for the Sessions of the Courts of Justice. The Exchange is surrounded with Booksellers Shops, which have a good Trade.²⁴

Neal’s description of mid-eighteenth century Boston provided readers insight into the lifeblood of the Atlantic. Most of his account highlights the thriving activity. At the pier, a large number of ships and warehouses supported the livelihood of the city’s residents. Because of the Atlantic Trade System and its network of stops in the Americas, Europe, and Africa, contemporaries redefined luxury as less finite and more accessible. Beginning in the 1740s colonists experienced

²³ Ibid, 20.

²⁴ Daniel Neal. *The history of New-England: containing an impartial account of the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the country, to the year of Our Lord, ...* 2nd ed. / with many additions by the author, Vols. I & II (London, 1747), *Sabin Americana*. Gale Document Number: CW101793310, Cengage Learning (accessed November 9, 2015).

an ebb and flow of consumables, which increased dramatically during the 1750s and 1770s.²⁵ Between 1700-1774, the aggregate output of materials in Colonial America multiplied almost twelve times over.²⁶ More than any other part of British North America, New England imported the most capital goods from Europe and "...a wide range of processing industries, household manufacturers, and even a few large-scale manufacturing projects emerged before 1770 to supply local and other colonial markets."²⁷ From 1761-1775 New England also imported the most tea out of any colonial region, and built the most ships between 1769-1771.²⁸ Finally, in 1771, New England welcomed in 1,420,119 tons of shipping, exceeding the amount of any other region that year.²⁹ Large amounts of imports arrived in New England weekly, indicating a dependence on Atlantic trade.

In turn, a rising standard of living prompted demand which meant a need for greater industry.³⁰ Increased mechanization and developing technology led to easier and more efficient production of materials and textiles, creating new fabric possibilities for clothing. The First Industrial Revolution saw technological innovations such as the Spinning Jenny in 1764, Crompton's Mule in 1779, and the Fly Shuttle in the 1780s, which made the production of

²⁵ John J. McCusker and Russel R. Menard, "Consumption, the Import Trade, and Domestic Economy," 278 in John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, eds., *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill and London, 1985).

²⁶ Edwin J. Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), ix. He continues with, "At the start of the eighteenth century, the size of the colonial economy was a mere 4 percent of the mother country's; yet on the eve of independence the percentage had risen to over one-third, and the colonies were gaining steadily," (ix).

²⁷ Margaret Ellen Newell, *From Dependency to Independence: Economic Revolution in Colonial New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 4.

²⁸ "Series Z 286-290, 'Value of Commodity Exports and Imports, Earnings, and Values of Slaves Imported into British North American Colonies: 1768 to 1772,'" in *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part 2* (U.S. Department of Commerce, ed. Bureau of the Census, 1975), 1182.

²⁹ "Series Z 213-226, 'Value of Exports to and Imports From England by American Colonies and States: 1697-1791,'" in *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part 2* (U.S. Department of Commerce, ed. Bureau of the Census, 1975), 1176.

³⁰ John J. McCusker and Russel R. Menard, 278.

textiles simpler and more efficient.³¹ The fabric industry expanded far beyond previous markets. Most clothing during the eighteenth century was not ready-to-wear. However, the textiles were processed at British industrial sites, then shipped to the colonies and assembled there. These creations made their way to ports throughout the British North Atlantic, helped along by the growth of British North American cities.

The incorporation of colonial cities like Boston into the Atlantic community meant that the empire benefited due to the commercial relationship between North America and the metropole.³² This benefit and interest only grew as the eighteenth century progressed. The Atlantic economy meant that an “interdependency” grew between those who participated in the British North Atlantic World.³³ Historian Margaret Newell argues that mercantilism classified the colonies as subordinate, due to their status as producers and consumers of British goods.³⁴ So, while the relationship between British North America and Britain tightened, Parliament and the King did not recognize economic equality between the two. The Navigation Acts, originally passed in 1660 to prevent Dutch control over Atlantic trade, were continually renewed throughout the eighteenth century. These were attempts to regulate British-American trade with foreign powers. Between the years of 1730 and 1757, Parliament passed legislation such as the Woolens, Hat, and Molasses Act(s) to restrict some American industries, and in 1763, after the Treaty of Paris, new imperial regulations and systems of taxation affected coastal trade, such as

³¹ Roderick Floyd and Donald McCloskey, *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 20-21.

³² Marc Egnal in *New World Economies: The Growth of the Thirteen Colonies and Early Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) argues that, “the pace of economic development in the colonies reflected the rate of growth in the mother country,” (vi)

³³ James F. Shepard, “British America and the Atlantic Economy,” in Ronald Hoffman, ed. *The Economy of Early America: The Colonial Period, 1763-1790* (Charlottesville: Published for the United States Capital Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1998), 17.

³⁴ Newell, 2.

the Sugar Act.³⁵ These actions created serious problems for the North American/British relationship, resulting in increased conflict during the 1760s and into the 1770s. However, despite the increased number of trade restrictions, and conflicting emotions, British manufactured goods continued to arrive in colonial ports through Atlantic channels.

Thus, consumables - specifically textiles and fashion - indicated a continued North American reliance on British products despite crisis and the road to revolution. The consumption of imported materials made into clothing did not disappear during the revolution. Historian of costume Linda Baumgarten writes that, “Most of the linens exported to America were made in Scotland, Ireland, the northern parts of England, and the northern parts of Continental Europe...The wool textiles that reached the colonies were almost exclusively British products.”³⁶ The popular narrative on clothing during the American Revolution is that many switched to homespun production.³⁷ Before the war, some followed non-importation, making due with what they could produce. However, throughout the conflict, much of the trade between Britain and the colonies halted due to blockade or an outright ban on trading with the enemy. Yet, historian Elizabeth Miles Nuxoll notes that after April 1776, when Congress opened all ports to trade with any foreign power except Britain, “Americans...continue(d) to import British goods through indirect channels...as revolutionary fervor abated...to the great disgust of ardent revolutionaries, imported consumer luxuries were often abundant, especially as the war dragged on.”³⁸ Therefore, even during wartime, channels for importing goods from Britain, allowed for their continual

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002), 78.

³⁷ For more information, see: Michael Zakim, “Sartorial Ideologies: From Homespun to Ready-Made,” *The American Historical Review* 106, (Dec., 2001), accessed January 23, 2017. DOI: 10.2307/2692739.

³⁸ Elizabeth Miles Nuxoll, *Congress and the Munitions Merchants: The Secret Committee of Trade during the American Revolution, 1775-1777*, Ph.D. dissertation (City University of New York, 1985), 7 and 11.

presence in the colonies. Hence, Atlantic trade and an Atlantic consciousness persisted and continued to affect colonists despite upheaval.

Demand for consumables became so high, that many historians label the phenomenon of purchasing and selling the “consumer revolution” or a “cult of commerce.”³⁹ This consumer revolution moved people to display wealth through material possessions. Items in the home or on the body conveyed social status and position. Historians of consumerism Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb argue that through the allure of fashion, consumption filtered down to the lower rungs of the social ladder.⁴⁰ Therefore, pressure to participate in consumerism spread through different classes.⁴¹ Scholars agree that clothing and fashion was a principle tool of wealth emulation.⁴² Through the purchase and display of goods and behaviors, the presence of this consumer revolution changed aspects of identity in the British North Atlantic. A trans-

³⁹ For more on the consumer revolution and the merchandizing of gentility see: Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, eds. *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); John Brewer and Roy Porter, ed., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); Ronald Hoffman and Cary Carson, *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993); Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Eighteenth-Century Consumerism and the Retail Trade From London to the Virginia Frontier*, Ph.D. dissertation (The College of William and Mary, 1993); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760, 2nd ed.* (London: Routledge, 1996); Lawrence B. Glickman, *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); M. Berg and E. Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); Timothy H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), John Benson and Laura Ugolini, eds. *Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society since 1700* (Bodmin, Cornwall: MPG Books Ltd., 2006); John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); John Benson, Jon Stobard, Andrew Hann, and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, 1680-1830* (London: Routledge, 2007); Frank Trentmann, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Woodruff Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800* (London: Routledge, 2012), and Sheryllynne Haggerty, *“Merely for Money?”: Business Culture in the British North Atlantic, 1750-1815* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

⁴⁰ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, 11.

⁴¹ Ibid, 11.

⁴² Ibid, 53.

Atlantic connection formed due to increasing trade between the colonies and Britain, creating a “shared material culture constantly nourished by flows of commodities.”⁴³

This shared culture was visible through descriptions of Boston. Visitors to the city described it as a pseudo-London as some of its features mimicked the look of the metropolis. The previously mentioned Daniel Neal described the physical appeal of Boston as “...the Beauty of the Buildings may compare with most in the City of *London*. The Town is very well paved, and several of the Streets as wide and spacious as can be desired.”⁴⁴ He noted:

The Conversation in this Town is as polite as in most of the Cities and Towns in *England*; many of their Merchants having travelled into *Europe*; and those that stay at home having the Advantage of a free Conversation with Travellers; so that a Gentleman from *London* would almost think himself at home at *Boston*, when he observes the Numbers of People, their Houses, their Furniture, their Tables, their Dress and Conversation, which perhaps is as splendid and showy, as that of the most considerable Tradesmen in *London*.⁴⁵

Here, the description of Boston defines it as an Atlantic city, with shared characteristics to London. It demonstrates the significance of fine goods and manners, all created and sustained through the Atlantic consciousness. The examination of newspapers, which consisted of advertisements for shops and independent artisans further illustrate this. These advertisements contained plentiful information on items offered for sale. Such advertisements further indicated the necessity of possession and display to establish oneself in society. One such example was a notice of sale posted by Jolley Allen, shopkeeper in Boston located, “about Midway between the Governor’s and the Town-House, and almost Opposite the *Heart and Crown*,” items “Just imported from London” were:

⁴³ Ibid; John Styles and Amanda Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America: 1700-1830* (The Yale Center for British Art: Yale University Press, 2006), 1.

⁴⁴ Neal, 226.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 228.

A very large Assortment of English and India GOODS, fit for all Seasons, too many to be enumerated separately in an Advertisement...A good Assortment of Irish Linens, to be sold at a very low Rate...The following ready-made Cloaths to be sold by Wholesale or Retail, viz. Coats, Silk Jackets, Shapes & Cloth ditto; Stocking Breeches of all Sizes and most Colours; Cotton Velvet, Cloth, Thickset, Duroy, Everlastsing & Plush Breeches; Sailors Great Coats, and outside & inside Jackets; checkShirts, Frocks long and wide Trowsers: Scotch Bonnets, and blue mill'd Stockings.⁴⁶

These newspapers and literature produced and read in Boston fostered closer connections to English counterparts across the Atlantic and also indicated both great demand and supply. Residents of Boston depended upon the influx of goods to purchase in order to keep up with Atlantic trends. The heart of commerce in the city needed the trade connections and cultural development delivered by the British North Atlantic.

The travels of merchants across the Atlantic trade network contributed to this extension of cultural values from Britain, creating an “Atlantically” based cultural environment. After the 1750s, desire to keep up with fashion grew due to emigrations of European tailors and artisans as well as “the appearance of clothing patterns pre-printed on lengths of imported clothing in shops and wardrobes throughout the colonial Atlantic.”⁴⁷ This immigration of artisans created Atlantic, cosmopolitan trends in fashion. One historian refers to this as a “metropolitanization,”⁴⁸ Between 1772-1774, over half of English exports and re-exports were textiles, showcasing their importance.⁴⁹ Climate and availability of materials sometimes prevented some style choices. Due to high heat and humidity, gentlemen in the Caribbean and parts of the Southern colonies often preferred a cloth cap to cover the head rather than a wig. In the temperate regions of the

⁴⁶ *Jolley Allen Advertisement*, “Just imported from London, by Jolley Allen, at his shop about midway between the governor’s and the Town-House, and almost opposite the Heart and Crown in Cornhill, Boston. A very large assortment of English and India goods...” (Boston, 1767) *Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale*, Iowa State University, Document Number: CB127197184, accessed Nov. 4, 2015.

⁴⁷ DuPlessis, 230.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 229.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 7-8.

British Atlantic, such as New England, contemporaries mimicked the styles of Britain the most, because the milder climate allowed them to.⁵⁰ Therefore, similarities in desired tastes appeared on both sides of the Atlantic. Trade and colonization influenced the diffusion of fashion plates, the influx of new people, and the transmission of styles. The “language of clothing,”⁵¹ translated through this circulation of fashion channels, mean that an Atlantic identity materialized.

This identity’s endurance and evolution during the eighteenth century meant that systems of colonization only became more advanced. As the century progressed, white Anglo-Americans in the British North Atlantic increasingly relied on ideas of the improvement of nature to more deeply solidify and justify their presence. This resulted in a belief that civilization depended on mastery over the natural world.⁵² For environmental historian’s Carolyn Merchant and William Cronon during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Anglo-New Englanders manipulated and commodified nature.⁵³ William Cronon, demonstrates the falsehood of “wilderness” or nature existing as “apart from humanity” which provides a framework to understand the changing relationship between nature and humanity for eighteenth-century contemporaries.⁵⁴ Enlightened thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, realized that, “the state of nature was an intellectual construction.”⁵⁵ Reasoned thinking prompted the debate of questions such as, “What

⁵⁰ Ibid, 224.

⁵¹ This “language of clothing,” is a term coined by Linda Baumgarten in *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America*, 2002.

⁵² The concept of control over the land and the intellectual construct of nature is a common theme in the historiography in environmental history. This is explored more in Chapter 2.

⁵³ Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harpert Row, 1980); William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1996)

⁵⁴ Cronon, 69.

⁵⁵ Bernadette Bensuade-Vincent and William R. Neriman, eds., *The Artificial and the Natural: An Evolving Polarity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 2.

was the role of God in the universe?” and “What was the natural order of society?”⁵⁶ Shifts from an agricultural to an industrialized society as well as exploration and expansion, changed “man’s view of nature.”⁵⁷ According to historian Susan Gibson, “some were beginning to suggest that there were no clear-cut boundaries between the natural kingdoms and that God was far less involved in the regulation of nature than previously believed.”⁵⁸ The eighteenth century saw a growing interest in classification, with the categories of “natural” and “artificial” used as systems of organization.⁵⁹ All of these ideas contributed to a growing belief that prior understandings of “natural” and “artificial” were now unstable. This instability then bled into other aspects of identity formation.

Using cultural historian Dror Wahrman’s *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth Century England*, it is apparent that the long eighteenth century or the *ancien regime* allowed for gendered play.⁶⁰ Before the concept of “the (inner) self,” society constructed identity externally. Clothes became a large part of this process. By the end of the century, Wahrman argues, categories of identity, such as gender, race, and class became much more rigid. This restricted options for forms of identity available to people in the earlier decades. Wahrman directly points to clothing as “an anchor of personal identity,” and a large part of identification.⁶¹ Therefore, the second consequence of an Atlantic consciousness, dependent upon consumption, was the importance of clothing in simultaneously displaying, interpreting, and re-defining all categories of distinctiveness.

⁵⁶ Susannah Gibson, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?: How Eighteenth-Century Science Disrupted the Natural Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 67.

⁶⁰ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

⁶¹ Ibid, 177.

To make the relationship between clothing and performance clearer, gender theorist Judith Butler and sociologist Erving Goffman show how aspects of identity are performed and thus reinforced through interactions with others.⁶² Scholar Lawrence Langner⁶³ argues that the display function of clothing, usually considered secondary to its function of protecting the body, is the most important, clearly illustrated in the mid-to-late eighteenth century British North Atlantic. Dress was part of performance and self-presentation in creating and maintaining identity within a community.⁶⁴ Worn on the body, clothing functioned as the most recognizable mode of conversation in which all could participate. People attached importance to clothing for defining others, and also in deciphering their intentions. Therefore, clothing helped distinguish and justify differences in a stratified society. The broad availability of clothes led to instances of transgressive dressing, when an individual wore clothing inappropriate to their station. Runaway servants and slaves used clothing to flee capture and start a new life, while transients, vagabonds, and social undesirables dressed to fool others into believing their stories.⁶⁵ The ability to disappear, or reinvent oneself, offered by Colonial America, meant that these types of transgressions occurred more frequently than in Britain. The presence and threat of these cases meant that these signals could be unreliable, leading an anxiety to grow within elite society.

⁶² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Random House, 1959).

⁶³ Lawrence Langner, *The Importance of Wearing Clothes* (Elysium Growth Press, 1959).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ For more see: Stephen J. Bullock, "A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55:2 (April 1998): 231-258; Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; Thomas Kidd, "Passing as a Pastor: Clerical Imposture in the Colonial Atlantic World," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 14 (Summer, 2004), accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rac.2004.14.2.149>.

Genteel uneasiness about the replication of virtue and modesty created concern over the instability of social distinction. To protect these genteel attributes from the undeserving, the refined decided to re-iterate these characteristics through the medium of clothing. Historically, the elite differentiated themselves through their dress. These expressions of gentility differed between the metropole and British North America. The colonies did not have a nobility, merchants and planters held the highest status. However, gentility remained important to protect and preserve. This need for an action of re-definition, prompted the expression and reinterpretation of clothing styles constantly during each decade. Transgressive dressing thus influenced fluctuations in fashionable clothing as a response to prevent non-genteel transgression into genteel social circles during the mid-to-late eighteenth century.⁶⁶ Both inappropriate dressing and the response of genteel intention to correct it affected what society considered natural and artificial. These categories of nature and artifice shifted rapidly during the last half of the eighteenth century, reflected through and symbolized by clothing and dress.

This circular pattern of the control of fashion indicates that prior characterizations of costume in the British North Atlantic during the eighteenth century are incorrect. Historians of costume during this era typically describe fashion occurring in a bell shape.⁶⁷ This is never an

⁶⁶ New uncertainties and fears about transients and strangers meant that punishments needed to be more severe to protect the status quo. Historians of eighteenth-century crime in Britain characterize the era as the time of "The Bloody Code," (Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, New York: Routledge, 1989), xi. British North America copied this harsh system of punishment, where death became the penalty for most offenses (David B. Wolcott and Tom Head, eds. *Crime and Punishment in America* (New York: Facts on File, Inc. of InfoBase Publishing, 2010), vii.

⁶⁷ Examples of historians of costume include: Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (New England: C. Scribner's Sons, 1894) and *Two Centuries of Costume in America* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903); C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston Plays Inc., 1972); Jane Dorner, *Fashion: The Changing Shape of Fashion through the Years* (Boston, MA: Octopus Books, 1974); Elizabeth McClellan, *Historic Dress in America, 1607-1870: Vol. I, 1607-1800* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, reprint 1977); Peter F. Copeland, *Working Dress in Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977); Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979); Edward Maeder, *An Elegant Art: Fashion and Fantasy in the Eighteenth Century: Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection of Costumes and Textiles* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1983); Aileen Ribeiro,

outright argument, but is outlined in the rise and fall of fashionable modes throughout the century. Analyzing the decades between 1750 – 1790s, trends flowed from being modest in the 1750s, luxurious in the 1770s, and simple in the 1780s and 1790s. Also, Wahrman, and some historians of clothing, describe a disconnect in style, separating the 1740s-1770s from the 1780s-1790s. For women, hair became wide and frizzy instead of tall; gowns plainer with lighter fabric. For men, hats replaced wigs and jackets gained significant collars. Arguments usually link this dramatic change in style to the Age of Revolutions, visible through the most significant argumentative study on clothing during the eighteenth century, Kate Haulman's *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century British North America*.⁶⁸ Haulman claims that during the American Revolution, clothing reflected a political commentary on the war. Plainer styles were more masculine, republican, and American, while more feminine, luxurious styles represented Europe. For Haulman, the struggle between the colonists and loyalists in British North America represented the rejection and replacement of luxury with simplicity at the war's end, expressed through clothing.

Despite the popularity of this interpretation, the previously mentioned fluctuations between luxurious, modest, and simple occurred every few years, rather than as transition from one interpretation to the next. Changes occurring in fashion connected directly to contemporary conceptions of natural and artificial. These categories proved to be crucial to how eighteenth-century society understood its surroundings. Understandings of natural and artificial changed due to Atlanticly developed uses of clothing and expressions of dress. Masquerade balls and the

Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); and John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁶⁸ Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

theater functioned as spaces where attendees tolerated actions of transgressive dress.⁶⁹ But, because of the instability of the social environment, if the genteel could not control or anticipate it, it became unnatural and threatening. Therefore, attempts to regulate the categories, and to try and understand them, prompted society to debate nature and artifice through the medium of clothes.

Certain items of clothing or actions of dressing affected how people thought, spoke, and wrote about fashion. For example, even though made of hair, wigs did not contain the hair of the person who wore them, marking them as artificial constructions. However, a man wearing a wig was classified as natural, even though contemporaries knew it was fake, or rather, the identifiable fakeness made it “nature.” Out of the various types of wigs, one proved different from others. The scratch wig, was a small, black or brown “toupee,” which added volume to the existing hair. Unlike other wigs, its makers intended it to look natural and mimic and blend into the hairline. Those who participated in the “language of fashion,” knew that other styles of wigs were not the person’s actual hair. However, because of changing conceptions of artificial and natural, often, critics of the scratch wig described it *as* artificial. Other wigs remained the more natural choice, despite the fact that all wigs were obviously unnatural. The adoption of the scratch wig illustrates how society changed conceptions of the terms artificial and natural. Some critics despised the scratch wig, and yet it remained a popular choice among the working classes. Over time, it made its way into genteel sporting culture, demonstrating that it had transcended classes.⁷⁰ Therefore,

⁶⁹ See: Terry Castle: *The Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986).

⁷⁰ For more on hair and wigs during the eighteenth century see: Mary Brooks Picken, *A Dictionary of Culture and Fashion: Historic and Modern* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1985); Marcia R. Pointon, "Dangerous Excrescences: Wigs, Hair and Masculinity," in *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-century England*, edited by Marcia R. Pointon, 107-140 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Diane Simon. *Hair: Public, Political, Extremely Personal* (New York, New York: Thomas Dunne Books: An Imprint of St. Martin's Press, 2000); Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach. "Big Hair," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 1, Special Issue: Hair

the wig challenged existing categories of class through its classification of naturalness, indicating fluctuations in style. Because of consumerism and the presentation of wealth, conversations about gentility and its replication appeared in print. At the same time, social commentators spoke about the increasing luxuriousness of dress and its poor effect on the modesty of society. These discussions illustrated divisions over the display of civility. Both influenced fashionable styles of the period. Demonstrated through these conversations, actions of transgressive dressing and clothing challenged and redefined the categories of classification, natural and artificial.

Historians of the Atlantic world who focus on trade and economics allow for the contextualization of the American Revolution outside the nation-state model. Taken in context, an Atlantic focus provides the best framework to explore why fashion fluctuated so frequently between the 1740s and the 1790s. It sheds light on the considerations of the categories of natural/artificial in relationship to the environment and the effect of the matured colonial/imperial processes by the mid-to-late eighteenth century. The development of an Atlantic consciousness, fostered through commerce and trade, created shared cultural values and forms of expression in clothing styles. Through dress, contemporaries debated and expressed intersections of identity, exposing how unstable categories, specifically due to an ideologically

(Fall 2004): 79-99, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053629>; Amelia Rauser, "Hair, Authenticity, and the Self-Made Macaroni," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 1, Special Issue: Hair (Fall 2004): 101-118, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053625>; Angela Rosenthal, "Raising Hair," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 1, Special Issue: Hair (Fall 2004): 1-16, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053625>. Lynn Festa, "Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29: 2 (Spring 2005): 47-90, doi: 10.1215/00982601-29-2-47, accessed September 4, 2013; Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang, "Introduction: Thinking about Hair," in *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*, edited by Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang, 3-12 (New York, New York: Berg Publishers, 2008); Louisa Cross, "Fashionable Hair in the Eighteenth Century: Theatricality and Display," in *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*, edited by Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang, 15-26 (New York, New York: Berg Publishers, 2008), Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunnington and P.E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (Bloomsbury Academic; Reissue edition, 2010).

developed imagined community of the British North Atlantic, varied, resulting in socially disturbing behaviors.

DISSERTATION OUTLINE

This dissertation suggests a different conversation about “the language of clothing” in the British North Atlantic. A developing Atlantic consciousness prompted instances of transgressive dressing, creating changes in what people thought was natural and artificial. Therefore, concepts of artificial and natural transformed through costume. Naturalness was attached to ideas of virtue, while unnaturalness had negative connotations of vice. Increased connections in trade and commerce, enlightened thought, industrialization, and urbanization all contributed to altering peoples’ sense of what fit in these two categories, and made both seem disturbingly unstable. Their unstable interpretations resulted in wavering modes of fashion and socially inappropriate dressing. Genteel fears of imitation and an increased mistrust of those who transgressed social boundaries pervaded the discussion of fashion.

Chapter 2 argues that during the eighteenth century, white Americans and Britons believed themselves in control of the natural world.⁷¹ As stewards of the region, those in the British North Atlantic felt a sense of mastery. Atlantic expansion, and intellectually developed sciences pushed these dialogues and influenced categories of classification. Conversations abounded questioning where humans fit into the natural order. Innovations in agriculture and mechanization led to new opinions about human involvement in the production of textiles and clothing. Wider-scale production led to lower prices and greater availability. Gentility became a purchasable commodity, meaning that some could lay claim to a distinction not rightfully theirs. Due to these changes, understandings of natural and artificial fluctuated. Next, they filtered their

⁷¹ Bensusade-Vincent and Neriman, 2.

way into more common modes of expression, such as clothing. Historians describe fashion between the 1740s-1790s as a style bell-curve, with clothing styles transforming from modest, to luxurious, and then simple. Rather than fashion peaking with luxury in the 1770s, it flowed back and forth between polarities. Based on the study of portraiture, I argue that styles changed between these three characterizations much more rapidly, often appearing in a decade simultaneously. These variations are especially visible through the study of portraiture. The work of artist John Singleton Copley shows this through his paintings of New England's most elite. In print culture, essays and publications on clothing included terms such as *monstrous*, *abnormal*, and *artificial* in describing dress. Combined, these sources indicate how people thought, spoke, and wrote about fashion.

Chapter 3 focuses on the social ramifications of fashion, specifically its power to manipulate categories of identity.⁷² As an Atlantic consciousness grew in the metropole and British North America, clothing became one of the fundamental reflectors of social, cultural, political, and economic changes. This chapter argues that two conversations appeared within the print culture of trans-Atlantic exchange, showing concerns over fashion and dress. The first indicated clothing's essentialness in performing gentility, thus provoking genteel fears over its power to obscure people's social differences. The second conversation critiqued the most opulent fashion, rejecting it as artificial, or unnatural. Extremely large hoop skirts, enormous cork rumps, huge buttons, silly wigs, and excessive ornamentation, concerned many. Social commentators worried that fashion might move society away from "natural" characteristics such as modesty, important to the Atlantic identity. Considered together, these dialogues spoke of different concerns about dress, but both expressed social control through attempts to steer the key

⁷² Haulman, Kuchta, and Styles.

expression of gentility and fashion, away from extreme uses. Individuals dressing as they should not, as well ostentatious fashion, struck many commentators as a societally unacceptable misuse of clothing. Clothing then, indicated a blurring of boundaries in society.

Following the theme of the improper use of dress, Chapter 4 examines cases of transgressive dressing through cases of imposture and criminal activities. Wahrman's idea of a more fluid space for gender play allowed identity transgression through clothing. In addition, clothing transgression also occurred over social class lines. This chapter uses Jeffrey Cohen's concept of monster theory to explore how transgressively-dressing individuals reflected societal fears.⁷³ Pretenders and frauds who used clothing in an inauthentic manner crossed these boundaries.⁷⁴ These criminals were especially pervasive in the metropole, as the rapidly growing city with a seedy underbelly provided a staging ground for crime. They represented the possibility of the breakdown of the social order, as well as a threat to gentility itself. Changes caused by Atlantic networks, such as a greater accessibility to clothing, created fears among the social elite. Aforementioned characteristics maintained an environment for transgressive activity, especially within and around newly teeming port cities. Social separation and urbanization cultivated a deep hatred and a mistrust of those outside of genteel circles.⁷⁵ Actions of

⁷³ Jeffrey J. Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁷⁴ For more see: Stephen J. Bullock, "A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55:2 (April 1998): 231-258; Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; Thomas Kidd, "Passing as a Pastor: Clerical Imposture in the Colonial Atlantic World," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 14 (Summer, 2004), accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rac.2004.14.2.149>.

⁷⁵ Keith Krawczynski, *Daily Life in the Colonial City* (The Greenwood Press Daily Life Through History Series, Daily Life in the United States: Santa Barbara, CA, 2013), 104.

transgressive dress, real and imagined, outline how social distinctions and genteel anxiety created, fostered, and sustained an environment for the “language of clothing” to fluctuate.

In the conclusion, I explain how clothing functioned as an important tool for both performing identity and for determining the quality of others. In the pre-modern era, clothing told a story about a person’s identity. Class, social occupation, and gender could all be determined through dress. Wahrman informs that even though clothing became accessible to more people during the eighteenth century, “they (clothes) retained their former power to constitute identity.”⁷⁶ Any idea of the self, or what made someone an individual was “outwardly turned.”⁷⁷ Therefore, clothing was the most important and noticeable trait of forming an expression of identity.

In using an Atlantic frame to understand the changes in clothing during the eighteenth century, it becomes clear that the creation of an Atlantic community infused new products and goods into the everyday lives of people. These items symbolized much more than their face value. In the case of clothing it represented categorizations of identity. Eighteenth-century conceptions of clothing changed because of the Atlantic identity and consciousness present in the British North Atlantic. Trans-Atlantic commerce and trade fostered a closer relationship and communications which only improved as the century drew to a close. The Atlantic-minded consciousness brought changes to Britons on both sides of the ocean. This ethos, rooted in consumerism, created similarities despite the distance. Similarities meant that cases of transgressive dressing were a symptom of an Atlantic identity.

Despite the birth of the United States, an Atlantic identity persisted. But by the beginning of the nineteenth century a hardening of the categories of identity occurred. Just as before, these

⁷⁶ Wahrman, 178.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

reflected outward through clothing. The inner self now becoming more important than the outer expression of identity, clothing became markedly different for both men and women by the year 1800. Forms of dress became much more rigid. Categories of natural and artificial solidified. At that moment, the dispute seems to go away. Instead, nineteenth-century contemporaries focused on the rigidity of categories through biological difference. The conversation between ideas of natural and artificial was one which would end with the eighteenth century, indicating the triumph of the solidification of the categories into opposites.

CHAPTER 2: NATURAL VS. ARTIFICIAL: CHANGING CATEGORIES REFLECTED THROUGH CLOTHING

Developments in science and technology shrunk the Atlantic which increased trade and travel. Among the products exchanged were new clothes, textiles, and commodities to aid hairdressing. Manufactured goods arriving in the colonies represented an advanced ability to commodify nature; the amount of which only increased throughout the course of the eighteenth century. Accompanying these goods and services were new ideas about human's place in the world, including a renegotiation of the relationship with nature. The early modern Atlantic world economy, "grew and strengthened because of synergy between abundant, more accessible natural resources...and more productive and efficient markets."⁷⁸ The British Empire organized more efficiently to process and direct natural resources.⁷⁹ This growth encouraged the movement of new scientific ideas between the metropole and the colonies and vice versa, spreading over the Atlantic empire.⁸⁰ Resulting theories about science and scientific discovery inspired systems which classified nature.⁸¹

Therefore, greater exploration, exploitation of resources from colonial possessions, and the resulting increase in trade and commerce prompted contemporaries of the mid-to-late eighteenth century to wrestle with the idea of the natural. God no longer had jurisdiction over

⁷⁸ John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 57.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 193. Richards goes on to say that "...these new organizations, whether monarchical or private, aggressively sought to increase their wealth, and power by transforming the natural world. More and more persons found a path to power by working within government agencies and private companies that directly and indirectly exploited the natural resources of England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and the British colonies," (193).

⁸⁰ Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7; Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 2.

⁸¹ Susannah Gibson, *Animals, Vegetable, Mineral?: How Eighteenth-Century Science Disrupted the Natural Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

what was natural, humanity did. Many started to equate the necessity of human involvement with making something more perfect, and thus natural. This idea of control over nature extrapolated into the organic state of humanity itself, debating the role of people in making themselves more natural and thus more complete. In other words, civilized society equated perfection and virtue as the most natural characteristics one possessed and identified clothing and manners of dress, due to its centrality in daily life, as the best way to express them. However, these ideas prompted a response which asked: Did the greater involvement of man in expressing these characteristics produce a natural, or ultimately artificial construction? Because of the cultural role of clothing in communicating and reflecting new ideas, uncertainty continued through continual fluctuations in style. Economic, technological, scientific, philosophical developments destabilized traditional customs and beliefs about the division of natural and artificial. These fluctuating categories were reflected through regular variations in fashion.

Scientists and naturalists developed taxonomies in an attempt to possess and know the world. Obsessed by the “natural,” these individuals developed and engaged in sciences of “collection and comparison” such as “botany, zoology, anthropology, and geology,” all of which depended on Europeans interacting with new and diverse species.⁸² Science and imperial expansion would thus go hand in hand, allowing for both insight and control over nature.⁸³ During the eighteenth century, the rise of a culture of “improvement” which promoted “the scientific mastery of nature,” coupled with the power of early British imperialism.⁸⁴ Thus, the idea that some creations of the natural world needed the intervention of people to become more

⁸² Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), xiv-xv.

⁸³ Ibid, xv.

⁸⁴ Ibid; Philip J. Stern and Con Wennerlind, *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 118.

complete and appropriate was born, and new taxonomies, particular scientific phrases and classification became “tools of empire.”⁸⁵ For colonization to be successful, and justified for the common interest, discovery and categorization of nature developed into a major component.⁸⁶ Because the transmission of science followed lines of communication and trade across the Atlantic, it became dependent upon commerce to spread across the ocean.⁸⁷ This meant that the imperial process commodified nature through the establishment and growth of trade networks which “intensified the human exploitation of nature.”⁸⁸ Therefore, nature became creatable as well as purchasable. As a result, contemporaries thought differently about their place in the natural world.

Because of new forms of classification, eighteenth-century Britons re-visited the great chain of being, which argued that humanity had a specific place in the hierarchy of the natural world. Due to the gift of speech and the ability to name thoughts, man, “...brings (this) to all arts and sciences and using (speech and rational thought), all nature is subject to him.”⁸⁹ Further emphasizing this conclusion, one eighteenth-century contemporary argued, “Such is man in the highest degree of earthly perfection. Considered in this point of view, he seems to us so much elevated above the inferior animals.”⁹⁰ Therefore, an enhanced distinction occurred between people and the rest of the natural world.⁹¹ Thus, society slowly rethought the role and

⁸⁵ Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 10-11.

⁸⁶ Drayton, xv.

⁸⁷ Schiebinger, 10-11.

⁸⁸ William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

⁸⁹ Charles Bonnet, *The Contemplation of Nature, Vol. I* (T. Longman in Pater-Noster Row: London, 1766), 65. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale*, Iowa State University Library, 16 Dec.

2016, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=iastu_main&tabID=T001&docId=CW119691207&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 68.

⁹¹ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1996).

relationship of God and man to and in the universe. Enlightened thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau posed new and engaging questions about the role of people in nature. For Rousseau, man had left behind his true self in nature because of the corrupt political systems he had built.⁹² In nature, all society was essentially equal, as there was little to distinguish between others. Therefore, the artificial constructs of humanity such as the state and the church created those distinctions, not nature or even God.

Contemporaries then asked questions surrounding the role of God in dividing the natural kingdoms as well as the regulation of nature.⁹³ Many debated the role of religion, and a small number wondered what else might have created the universe, thus diminishing the power and relevancy of God.⁹⁴ This meant that a persistently growing gap and distinction between science and religion contributed to a “breakdown of perceived order in nature.”⁹⁵ Because of this, naturalists wondered if God “...had not created well-defined boundaries between the kingdoms of nature, was it possible that he had similarly neglected to segregate society?”⁹⁶ These types of questions meant that a previously solidified line between nature and artifice blurred, indicating a possibility of the breakdown of the social dichotomy. The importance of “natural” in driving categorical aspects of eighteenth-century life, resulted in an essentialness to re-stabilize conceptions of nature and artifice.

Because clothing functioned as a direct mirror of societal concerns, and as a physical symbol of the commodification of nature, it became the perfect way to demonstrate control over the natural world, and thus, re-solidify the categories. The study of clothing during the eighteenth

⁹² Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971).

⁹³ Gibson, 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 174-175.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 175.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 175.

century illustrates how these components intertwined to influence changes in style through the three distinct expressions of modesty, luxuriousness, and simplicity. Historians typically characterize trends in fashion in British and British North American society between the 1740s-1790s as occurring in a bell-curve.⁹⁷ This model fashion in the 1740s and 50s as emphasizing prudence; a celebration of heightened British imperial control through increasing extravagance during the 1760s; the peak of refinement during the 1770s, showing a triumph of monarchy and the elite; an expression of republican ideal of virtue through neoclassical dress involving the rejection of elite style during the 1780s; and finally, movement toward styles representative of the nineteenth century during the 1790s such as high collars on men's jackets, the transition to pants, and growing sleeve length for women.

Historians identify an interruption in style between the 1770s and 80s due to the Age of Revolutions. Most argue dramatic changes occurred during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. The North American British colonies achieved their independence in 1783, and the French Revolution began in 1789. These major events changed the structure of power in America and Europe, which did affect clothing and fashion.⁹⁸ Fashion and politics in France linked closely together through the life and influence of Marie Antoinette.⁹⁹ Her rejection of

⁹⁷ The bell-curve interpretation of fashionable style is never an outright argument, but is instead descriptive. For more see: Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (New England: C. Scribner's Sons, 1894) and *Two Centuries of Costume in America* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903); C. Willett and Phillis Cunningham, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston Plays Inc., 1972); Jane Dorner, *Fashion: The Changing Shape of Fashion through the Years* (Boston, MA: Octopus Books, 1974); Elizabeth McClellan, *Historic Dress in America, 1607-1870: Vol. I, 1607-1800* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, reprint 1977); Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979); Edward Maeder, *An Elegant Art: Fashion and Fantasy in the Eighteenth Century: Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection of Costumes and Textiles* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1983); Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁹⁸ For more information, see: Alexander Maxwell, *Patriots Against Fashion: Clothing and Nationalism in Europe's Age of Revolutions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁹⁹ Caroline Weber, *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt & Company 2006).

Bourbon fashion standards and adoption of “simple country-girl outfits” and “undignified, anti-French frocks,” shocked French nobility but also pushed the importance of simplicity in the expression of fashion during the 1770s and 1780s.¹⁰⁰ Other historians of costume describe an implicit rejection of elite and elaborate styles, not only in France but also in England and America during the 1780s and into the 1790s.¹⁰¹

However, these changes were neither immediate, nor inevitable. Rather than a sharp break from the past, fluctuations in design: luxury, modesty, and simplicity represented different interpretations on the role of humans in shaping nature through improvement. Modesty in clothing represented a proper balance. It reflected refinement, but in a restrained manner. Luxurious clothing represented a celebration of refinement, attached to ideas of the necessity of human involvement in creating the most natural display. Lastly, simplicity illustrated a de-emphasized role of clothing in expressing nature, instead placing the burden of doing so upon the natural, physical body. In understanding these three characterizations on a spectrum, luxury evolved in a response to consumption and the importance of refined display, modesty responded by watering down the rise of luxury through re-emphasizing propriety, and simplicity indicated an additional step with attempts to decrease the decoration function of clothing, instead showing the importance of letting the natural body speak more loudly than dress.

These variations in clothing style appeared throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, but rarely did they look the same as they had in the past. New fashionable trends did

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 163.

¹⁰¹ John Styles in *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) argues that economic problems during the last decade of the eighteenth century led to “times of devastating slump and near-famine food prices against a background of general inflation. No group of workers felt the violence of these economic oscillations more than those in the Lancashire cotton industry...Hard times meant that clothes, including best clothes, had to be pawned, sold or simply worn to rags. With starvation imminent, clothing ceased to be an immediate priority,” (325-326).

make their way into the lives of eighteenth-century contemporaries. For example, clothing and hair classified as modest during the 1760s did not exactly mirror modesty during the 1780s. This meant that sometimes characteristics of modesty might bleed over into simplicity. Internal fluctuation within and between each category further indicates additional confusion of what natural looked like. However, characteristic similarities as explained here, materialized throughout the 1750s-1790s, and demonstrated how science affected expressions and interpretations of the “natural.” In looking at fashion plates and prints, magazines, paintings, portraiture, and caricature, it is easy to see alterations in style from earlier decades to the latter.

Conversations on the “naturalness” of fashion occurred through portraiture. Several prominent portrait artists in British Colonial America, some of whom also traveled over to London and Europe to continue their work during the mid-to-late eighteenth century showcase how ideas about nature and artifice both influenced and filtered through dress. This is visible, not only through the clothing, but also through the inclusion of aspects of nature. The natural world functioned as an additional layer of information to showcase the changing ideas about the relationship between people and the natural world. Such artists used here are John Singleton Copley, Charles Wilson Peale, Joseph Blackburn, and Ralph Earl. Copley, the most prominent New England portrait artist painted well-to-do New Englanders between the 1750s-1770s before leaving for England, where he continued painting into the 1780s. Charles Wilson Peale, actively painted in the Mid-Atlantic through the early nineteenth century. Lastly Ralph Earl, Massachusetts artist, produced artwork starting in the 1770s-1790s. Study of the work of these artists shows expressions of appropriate fashion for the genteel.

Luxurious costume had heavy ornamentation, bright colors, and its design often over-enhanced certain characteristics of the body such as hip width for women. For men, this

characterization of clothing included extensive embroidery, elements of ornamentation such as large buttons, and wig-wear. For women to achieve luxury, they often heavily ornamented their body with large, and sometimes gaudy jewelry. These decorations, coupled with hair ribbons, and hair dressed, shaped, and decorated with artificial supplements such as powder or pomatum only created a more ostentatious display of refinement. Also, women's clothing often had more pronounced elements of style such as stomachers and cascading sleeves meant to elongate the body and draw the eye toward the waist. Heavy lace ruffling, bows and frills, and detailed floral fabrics and patterns reflected a belief in the improvement of the human body through ornamentation. Voluminous skirts, heavily cascading sleeves, longer cut coat jackets, all extended the natural body, to complete the illusion of a more perfect form. Copley and Earl depicted luxurious costume in their respective portraits of Rhoda Cranston, wife of reverend Luke Babcock of Newport, Rhode Island (1756-58) [fig. 1] and Mrs. Elijah Boardman (1792) [fig. 2].¹⁰²

In most cases, paintings with expensive and highly ornamented or luxurious clothing included heavily controlled depictions of nature for all subjects. For example, artist's such as Copley often depicted women holding a small vase or arrangement of flowers, positioning their body in such a way to indicate dominion over aspects of nature. This overshadowing of nature through the presence of the human body is visible through the portrait of Mrs. Benjamin

¹⁰² John Singleton Copley, *Miss Rhoda Cranston* (1758) Oil on canvas, 57 ½ in. x 48 in. (146.1 x 121.9 cm) Gift of Mrs. Alan Cunningham, 1978. 27, Courtesy of The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Photograph © The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia; Barbara Neville Parker and Anne Bolling Wheeler, *John Singleton Copley: American Portraits* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1939), 65; Ralph Earl, *Mrs. Elijah Boardman and her Son, William Whiting Boardman* (1796) Oil on canvas. 85 ¼ x 56 ½ in. (216.5 x 143.5 cm.) frame: 91 ¾ x 65 ⅝ x 2 in. (233 x 166.7 x 5.1 cm.) The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California, <http://emuseum.huntington.org/objects/5145/mrs-elijah-boardman-and-her-son-william-whiting-boardman?ctx=c64228eb-5613-42a8-b0dc-9c8d49250493&idx=0>, accessed March 11, 2017, © *Courtesy of the Huntington Art Collections, San Marino, California*; Elizabeth Kornhauser, *Ralph Earl: The Face of the Young Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press/Hartford: The Wadsworth Athenaeum, 1991), 213.

Blackstone, Jr. née Eleanor Phipps (1762-1764) [fig. 3].¹⁰³ Because of ideas about the control of nature, artists painted figures with humanly-constructed or arranged signifiers of nature, such as the “pompon,” upon the hair to decorate it, visible in Blackstone’s portrait. Many pompon’s were either a single flower, or a collection of flowers or greenery shaped into a small orb.¹⁰⁴ These types of additions signified the improvement and beautification of the body through a commodification of nature. Furthermore, the depictions of nature through forests and streams, visible through a small window’s in various portraits continued to indicate the connection between clothing and regulated nature. Artist’s also illustrated this correlation between the improvement of clothing and the control of nature through including examples of human-made creations such as interior space, furniture, books, and letters which dominated the physical space of some paintings. This parallel is visible through the portrait of Woodbury Langdon of Portsmouth, New Hampshire (1767) [fig. 4].¹⁰⁵

Historians describe a transition to simplicity in clothing during the 1780s and 1790s through two factors. First, an embrace of country life in Britain, which influenced colonial portrait artists that studied or perfected their craft in Europe, such as Copley and Earl. Second, an aforementioned rejection of the trappings of elitism born from the Age of Revolutions.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Benjamin Blackstone, Jr., (Eleanor Phipps)* (1762-1764) Oil on canvas. 48 1/8 in. x 37 1/8 in., 122.2375 x 94.2975 cm. Bequest of Herbert L. Pratt (Class of 1895). Courtesy of Amherst College, Mead Art Museum, Amherst, MA, Accession Number: 1945.13. <http://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=all&t=objects&type=all&f=&s=blackstone&record=0>, accessed August 23, 2016, Photograph © Amherst College, Mead Art Museum. and in Parker and Wheeler, 38.

¹⁰⁴ "pompon, n.1". OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/147555?rskey=sQyTx9&result=2&isAdvanced=false> (accessed March 19, 2017).

¹⁰⁵ John Singleton Copley, *Woodbury Langdon* (1767) Oil on canvas, Canvas dimensions: 49 3/4 x 39 1/2 in. (126.37 x 100.33 cm) Framed dimensions: 57 3/4 x 47 1/2 x 3 in. (146.69 x 120.65 x 7.62 cm), Dallas Museum of Art, The Eugene and Margaret McDermott Art Fund, Inc., 1996.70.1.McD, <https://www.dma.org/collection/artwork/john-singleton-copley/woodbury-langdon>, accessed March 8, 2017, Photograph © Dallas Museum of Art.

¹⁰⁶ During the last few decades of the eighteenth century, historian Kate Haulman argues that fashion functioned as a mirror for political ideals. For example, most point to the example of Benjamin Franklin’s appearances in the French Court after the declaration of colonial Independence. During this visit, he wore a fur cap, to represent

Because of clothing's importance in communicating and demonstrating messages, the abandonment of luxurious clothing for plainer garb illustrated this change. The most commonly used examples from the 1770s to the 1780s are the rejection of the wig, and the change in how genteel women styled their hair. In the 1770s, the hair of genteel women was tall, often styled with extremely large or unconventional ornamentation. By the 1780s, scholars describe women's hair as wide and frizzy. This dramatic change re-emphasizes the periodization of the Age of Revolutions and demonstrates the birth of a new, more egalitarian age. Wigs, as a symbol of gentility and refinement, had to go.

However, portraiture shows that gentlemen continued to wear powdered wigs, buckled shoes, and the three-piece suit necessary for gentlemen of the eighteenth century into the 1780s and 90s. The paintings of Connecticut Statesman Oliver Wolcott (1789), New Milford, Connecticut Shopkeeper Elijah Boardman (1789) [fig. 5] and New Milford, Connecticut Farmer and Merchant Colonel William Taylor (1790) show each man wearing a wig, clothing that features characteristically large buttons, frills at the cuffs, and showing each item of their three-piece suits as a different color.¹⁰⁷ Wolcott and Boardman also illustrate statesmanship and

agrarianism as well as the frontier (Baumgarten, 98-99). Many British contemporaries recognized Franklin's intentions stating that, "He rejected wigs not out of principle but because he had a scalp condition that made them uncomfortable. He had worn his fur hat for warmth while crossing the Atlantic, but when he saw that the French took it for a badge of rustic simplicity, he continued to wear it in Paris. Franklin deliberately played into the French notion of America as an untamed wilderness of farmer-philosophers; several French commentators remarked on his resemblance to a farmer." ((Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims: Dress at the Court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). While functioning as a political statement, the wearing of the cap is demonstrative of a commodification of nature, which Franklin utilized to mark a distinction between Britain and the American colonies. However, during Thomas Jefferson's visit to France in 1790, "he purchased embroidered silk waistcoats and many other fine clothing for himself, along with a French fashion publication for his daughter." (Baumgarten, 100) Franklin's and Jefferson's contrasting choices showcase the utilization of clothing as a tool, supported by the commodification of nature. These similar types of fluctuation in dress had been occurring for several decades prior, and were not draped only in ideas of politics. An Atlantic consciousness, which created a greater movement of people and goods, effectively destabilized categories of nature and artifice, as well as those of social class and hierarchy which were not only linked to political events. So, while fashion could and did ultimately symbolize politics, these changes had to do with ideas of nature and its relationship to gentility.

¹⁰⁷ Ralph Earl. *Oliver Wolcott* (1789) in Kornhauser, 147; Ralph Earl, *Elijah Boardman* (1789), Oil on canvas, 83 in. x 51 in, (210.8 x 129.5 cm) Bequest of Susan W. Tyler, 1979. Accession Number: 1979.395. Photograph courtesy of

entrepreneurial-ship, characteristics typically re-emphasized during the period of the New Republic and are thus Americanized. For example, Wolcott sits at his desk, with his left hand placed on a copy of the United States Constitution, as he was involved in its ratification.¹⁰⁸ These examples of luxurious clothing illustrate a continual interest in extremely refined dress throughout the second half of the eighteenth century.

Because of the intense reaction against luxurious clothing, clothiers and the colonists themselves made different style choices to participate in fashion. Modest clothing enhanced the features of the body in a non-extreme manner. To accomplish this, artists sometimes depicted fashion trends popular in the past, such as a peruke, giant wigs worn in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, visible through the portrait of Bostonian Thomas Bulfinch [fig. 6].¹⁰⁹ These stylistic choices in the expression of costume indicate an attempt of the artist, and of the subject of the painting, to retreat to the past in a search to reclaim modesty. In addition to re-interpretations of older fashions, modest clothing usually displayed only one color, or the combination of a principle color, contrasted with another, providing emphasis to the first. Due to modesty's goal of constraint, often the main color of choice was more somber, such as a brown or grey, or a softer color, such as taupe. This is visible through the portrait of John Bours of Newport (1765-70) [fig. 7] and *Portrait of a Lady* (1771) [fig. 8]¹¹⁰ The three-piece suit

the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10830>, accessed March 11, 2017 and Kornhauser, 46-47; Ralph Earl, *Colonel William Taylor* (1790), in Kornhauser, 162.

¹⁰⁸ Kornhauser, 146.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Blackburn, *Thomas Bulfinch* (1756) Oil on Canvas, 76.2 x 66.04 cm. 30 in. x 26 in, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Templeman Coolidge. Accession Number: 45.516, Museum of Fine Arts: Boston, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/thomas-bulfinch-32931>, accessed March 9, 2017, Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and in Frank W. Bayler, *Five Colonial Artists of New England* (Boston: Privately Printed, 1929), 83.

¹¹⁰ John Singleton Copley, *John Bours*, About 1763, Oil on canvas, 50 ¼ in. x 40 1/8 in, Funds from the bequest of Mrs. Hester Newton Wetherel, Accession Number: 1908.7, Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA, <http://vps343.pairvps.com:8080/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/search@/0?t:state:flow=a9991a8c-7a26-4d98-bedf-59d3bff7710f>, accessed August 23, 2016, Image Courtesy of the Worcester Art Museum (MA); John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of a Lady* (1771) Oil on canvas, Frame: 57 7/8 x 47 1/4 x 3 1/8 in. (147 x 120.02 x 7.94 cm). Los

accomplished this through better quality fabrics, but minimal decorative elaborations. For women, modest dress had some elaboration, although nothing that overwhelmed the natural charms of the body. Examples through depictions of women are the virtual absence of jewelry, balanced with moderate decoration to their gowns. Women's gowns placed emphasis on the waist using a cone bodice or cone-shaped corset. This meant a "fitted top on a wide, full-skirted bottom."¹¹¹ While the bodice, "varied in its emphasis or lack of emphasis on the chest...the contrast of a narrow top with a wide skirt continued."¹¹² This shape of the female body, important in modest clothing, indicated an importance in reasonable accentuation.

Inclusions of nature, reflect how contemporaries considered modesty a balanced virtue. Some portraits contained small aspects of nature, while others, completely avoided it. When paintings portrayed modest costume, expressions of nature differed between its absence and its de-emphasized presence. For example, Samuel Mifflin (1777-80) [fig. 9] sits next to an open archway looking out onto a body of water with a ship.¹¹³ In contrast the portraits of Huldah Bradley (1794) [fig. 10a] and her sister, Lucy Bradley (1794) [fig. 10b] show a modest gown with voluminous skirts, umbrella, and a fan, are both women are painted out-of-doors.¹¹⁴ The

Angeles County Museum of Art, <http://collections.lacma.org/node/251662>, Purchased with funds provided by the American Art Council, Anna Bing Arnold, F. Patrick Burns Bequest, Mr. and Mrs. William Preston Harrison Collection, David M. Koetser, Art Museum Council, Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr., The Ahmanson Foundation, Ray Stark and other donors (85.2), accessed March 18, 2017, Photo © Museum Associates/ LACMA; Carrie Rebor, Paul Staiti, Erica E. Hirshler, Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., and Carol Troyen, *John Singleton Copley in America* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 26.

¹¹¹ Baumgarten, 26.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Charles Wilson Peale, *Samuel Mifflin (1777-80)* 49 7/8 in. x 39 3/4 in. (126.4 x 101 cm). Egleston Fund, 1922, Accession Number: 22.153.1, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, accessed September 30, 2016.

<http://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/11718>, Photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹¹⁴ Ralph Earl, *Huldah Bradley (1794)* Oil on canvas, 112.08 x 81.6 cm., 44 1/8 in. x 32 1/8 in., Museum of Fine Arts: Boston, Accession Number: 40.3, Ellen Kellerman Gardner Fund, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/huldah-bradley-32729>, accessed April 5, 2017, Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and in Kornhauser, 198 and 200; Ralph Earl, "Lucy Bradley," (1794), Oil on canvas, 44 1/8 x 31 1/4 in. 112.1 x 79.5 cm framed 52 x 39 5/8 x 3 in. Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. Fund, 41.4, <http://www.dia.org/object-info/dbbe3479-d4cf-432b-9c30-227142e6d029.aspx?position=1>, accessed April 4, 2017, Photograph © Detroit Institute of Arts; Kornhauser, 198 and 201.

Bradley sisters demonstrate an artist's use of the same dress for multiple people, a specific method of painting described later in this chapter. Since modesty involved a harmony between improvement and the absence of human involvement, the portrayal of control of nature in paintings with modest interpretations of clothing, wavered.

Simple clothing, in contrast to modesty, indicated an additional step, removing almost all human involvement in emphasizing the body's natural form. Contemporaries most easily accomplished this through draping fabrics, and a visible abandonment of a corset or bodice. This action of removing clothing's intention in restricting the body placed virtually no emphasis on highlighting its physical features, softening the woman's shape. Simplicity usually meant almost no ornamentation. However, due to confusion about where to draw the line between the categories of natural and artificial meant that some did ornament their person in a slight manner. One such example is the portrait of Mrs. John Stevens, née Judith Sargent [fig. 11] who would eventually marry John Murray, adopting his name to become Judith Sargent Murray (1770-1772).¹¹⁵ This relates to an internal fluctuation within the category related to finding balance of the proper amount of decoration. Because the fluctuation of natural and artificial became so rapid during this period, many in British North America struggled as for how to best properly demonstrate their intended mode of dress.

Instead of painting a wig, an artificial construct which mimicked the body's ability to grow hair, simple costume showed actual tresses, visible through the portrait of Bennington,

¹¹⁵ Copley, John Singleton, *Mrs. John Stevens (Judith Sargent)* (1770) Oil on canvas, Image: 50 x 40 in. (127.0 x 101.6 cm) Frame: 56 1/4 x 46 1/8 in. (142.9 x 117.2 cm) Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, 2000.6, <https://collection.terraamericanart.org/view/objects/asitem/625/1/dateBegin-asc/alphaSort-asc;jsessionid=7E97F922B0EE9F895A6993F329B54B4C?t:state:flow=caa6d5d0-c50b-4ac5-8077-7c8527fe0a8d>, accessed on March 10, 2017, Photograph © Terra Foundation of American Art.

Vermont tavernkeeper Captain Elijah Dewey (1798) [fig. 12].¹¹⁶ Instead of modest clothing for women, which emphasized the hips in an obvious and yet not overdone manner way, simple clothing instead lessened the diversion between hip and torso width. For a softer mode of contrast, some wore a sash around their waist. Simple clothing essentially conveyed that the primary purpose of clothing, which was to protect the body from the elements of nature, was more important than its secondary purpose, to create distinctions between people.¹¹⁷ This is not to say, that contemporaries meant for simple clothing to erase distinctions completely.

Dressing with simplicity was supposed to allow the body to speak for itself, rather than let clothing do all the talking. Therefore, it reflected an intentional decrease in the reliance on clothing to reflecting what was natural. Instead, that was the body's job. Therefore, most portraits that depict simple clothing, featured the subject or painted figure outdoors, or devote a significant portion of the painting to a depiction of nature. This is visible in the portraits of Elizabeth Storer, wife to Boston merchant Isaac Smith (1769) and Mrs. John Greene née Catherine Greene (1769) [fig. 13].¹¹⁸ Instead of the control mechanism of clothing, and therefore humanity emphasizing nature, nature itself, including the human body and the natural world, needed to do so. Women's hair, dressed in a simple manner, fell, mostly unadorned, about the shoulders and falling naturally down the back indicating the idea of untouched or un-styled hair

¹¹⁶ Ralph Earl, *Elijah Dewey (1798)* Oil on canvas, 46 in. x 35 in., Catalog Number: A62, The Bennington Museum, Bennington, Vermont, <http://bennington.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/0C6C7428-7B77-4EF4-8041-234443059555>, accessed March 8, 2017, Photograph © The Bennington Museum; Kornhauser, 222 and 224.

¹¹⁷ The idea of the importance of the secondary function of clothing, to create distinctions, over that of the primary importance of clothing, to protect the body, is the primary argument of Lawrence Langner, *The Importance of Wearing Clothes* (Elysium Growth Press, 1959).

¹¹⁸ John Singleton Copley. *Mrs. Isaac Smith (Elizabeth Storer)* (1769) American Paintings and Sculpture, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, accessed September 5, 2016. <http://www.artgallery.yale.edu>, Photograph © Yale University Art Gallery and Parker and Wheeler, 183-184; John Singleton Copley. *Catherine Greene (1769)* Oil on Canvas, Framed: 145.5 x 121 x 7 cm (57 ¼ in. x 47 5/8 x 2 3/4 in.); Unframed: 125.7 x 101 cm (49 7/16 in. x 39 3/4 in.), The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust 1915.527, <http://clevelandart.org/art/1915.527>, accessed March 11, 2016, Photograph © The Cleveland Museum of Art and in Parker and Wheeler, 91.

as the most appropriate interpretation of natural. These characteristics are visible in the portrait of Mrs. Joseph Mann née Bethia Torrey (1753) [fig. 14].¹¹⁹

Portraiture also indicates artist's attempts to impose a specific model of idealized perfection upon the bodies of multiple individuals. Copley, like many artists, used character blanks, painting a different face on the same body for a number of portraits.¹²⁰ He also created multiple portraits for several different subjects. These contained striking contrasts in clothing style, color schemes, and the inclusion of nature between each "sitting," indicating variations in genteel display. Thus, through the analysis of artwork, various modes of fashion, simultaneously expressed and influenced interpretations of natural and artificial, showing a correlation between the luxury of dress and control of nature.

Copley painted Mrs. Metcalf Bowler, née Anne Fairchild two times. The first in 1758 [fig. 15] and he second in 1763 [fig. 16]. They are strikingly different, illustrating changes in the execution of the most desirable appearance including clothing. The first portrait, marks Bowler's gown as modest.¹²¹ The gown has some embellishment upon the sleeves, as well as designs in the fabric near the waist. In addition, Bowler's gown emphasizes the waist, and she has minor

¹¹⁹ John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Joseph Mann (Bethia Torrey)* (1753) Oil on canvas, 91.44 x 71.75 cm., 36 in x 28 1/4 in., Accession Number: 43.1353, Gift of Frederick H. Metcalf and Holbrook E. Metcalf, Museum of Fine Arts: Boston, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/mrs-joseph-mann-bethia-torrey-32890>, accessed August 22, 2016. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

¹²⁰ Margaretta M. Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 77. Lovell further illustrates this idea of "character blanks" and Copley's use of them through her comparisons of the portraits of Mrs. John Amory (Katherine Green), Mrs. Daniel Hubbard (Mary Greene), and Mrs. John Murray (Lucretia Chandler). Amory and Murray are painted in 1763 while Hubbard is in 1764. All three are posed so that their left hips lean against a stone pedestal, with their left arms draping across it, and right hand grasping the left arm just below the elbow. Hubbard and Murray wear the exact same gown, while Amory's gown is extremely similar, but with more elaborate lace at the sleeves.

¹²¹ John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Metcalf Bowler (Anne Fairchild)* (1758-1759). Oil on canvas. 50 in. x 40 in. (127 x 101.6 cm). Colby Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ellerton M. Jetté, 1982.006, <http://www.colby.edu/museum/?s=mrs.%20metcalf%20bowler&obj=Obj3228?sid=2220&x=687589>, accessed March 11, 2017, Photograph © Colby Museum of Art; Carrie Reborá, Paul Staiti, Erica E. Hirshler, Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., and Carol Troyen, *John Singleton Copley in America* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: New York, 1995), 61.

ornamentations in her hair. Copley also paints her with a complementary colored pink cloth, which she holds in her left hand against her hip. In the second painting, she is recognizable, but all her physical characteristics, the style of the dress, as well as the included props and aspects of the natural world completely differ.¹²² Compared side by side, the second depiction of the gown has more intricate lace around the collar and sleeves as well as an intricately detailed white stomacher on the front of the dress. Her skin is paler and she wears a necklace, earrings, and mobcap. In addition to the clothing, the inclusion of aspects of nature differs between paintings. In the first (1758), Bowler holds a birdcage, with several birds inside, and is depicted entirely out of doors. In the second (1763), she holds a woven chain of flowers, and stands upon a stone balcony or terrace, underneath an orange tapestry or curtain. Both portraits include nature, but there is a distinct correlation to a greater amount, and lessened control in the simpler and first interpretation, with a larger amount of a control of nature, or greater human involvement in the second, more luxurious expression of dress. This contrast in interpretations in five years indicates a wavering opinion in the most appropriate expression of dress to demonstrate gentility, and thus nature.

During the 1760s, Copley used the same blue dress in portraits of multiple women.¹²³ Art historian Margaretta Lovell notes that he uses this dress for the portrait of Mary Turner Sargent, who became Mrs. Daniel Sargent of Gloucester, Massachusetts, marrying into a "...distinguished and prosperous family of Harvard-educated ship owners, trading along the Atlantic coast and in

¹²² John Singleton Copley, *Anne Fairchild Bowler (Mrs. Metcalf Bowler)* (1763) Oil on canvas, Overall: 127.2 x 102.2 cm. (50 1/16 x 40 1/4 in.) Framed: 142.9 x 118.1 x 4.4 cm (56 1/4 x 46 1/2 x 1 3/4 in.) Gift of Louise Alida Livingston, Accession Number: 1968.1.1, Image Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, https://images.nga.gov/en/search/do_quick_search.html?q=%221968.1.1%22, accessed January 9, 2017.

¹²³ For more information, see, "The Empirical Eye: Copley's Women and the Case of the Blue Dress," in Margaretta M. Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

the Caribbean,” as he does for Mrs. Benjamin Pickman, née Mary Toppan.¹²⁴ The three portraits of Mrs. Daniel Sargent, née Mary Turner (1763)[fig. 17a]; Mrs. Benjamin Pickman, née Mary Toppan (1763) [fig. 17b]; and Mercy Otis Warren, wife of merchant and farmer James Warren of Plymouth, Massachusetts (1763) [fig. 17c] show how dress changed in characterization in each of its various depictions.¹²⁵ In each of these three appearances, Copley made alterations to the dress, as well as the overall costume and aspects of nature so that each portrait was distinctive. Because each representation of the dress was different, it illustrated how characterizations of natural varied. Different characterizations of the same dress indicated an attempt to place a natural, perfected mold upon each body. At the same time, the result of each depiction shows an individualized expression of the interpretation of natural, and thus genteel womanhood. Therefore, Copley’s use of this blue dress indicates how manifestations of gentility fluctuated to due to an inability to agree on its visual representation.

The gowns and representations of nature in the portraits of Mrs. Daniel Sargent and Mrs. Benjamin Pickman are very like each other. Both depictions of the dress are luxurious with ribbons, lace, cascading sleeves and have intricately detailed silver embroidery upon the blue fabric, especially noteworthy on the stomacher. However, even though Copley clear uses the same dress, there are distinctions present in the overall costuming of the women, as well as in the

¹²⁴ Ibid, 54 and 74.

¹²⁵ John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Daniel Sargent (Mary Turner) (1763)* Oil on canvas, de Young: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 49 1/2 x 39 1/4 in. (125.7 x 99.7 cm); Frame: 56 x 46 1/8 x 2 in. (142.2 x 117.2 x 5.1 cm), Accession Number: 1979.7.31, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd, <https://art.famsf.org/john-singleton-copley/mrs-daniel-sargent-mary-turner-1979731>, accessed August 23, 2016, Photograph © Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.; John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. James Warren (Mercy Otis) (1763)* Oil on canvas, 126.05 x 100.33 cm., 49 5/8 in. x 39 1/2 in, Accession Number: 31.212, Bequest of Winslow Warren, Museum of Fine Arts: Boston, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/mrs-james-warren-mercy-otis-32409>, accessed August 23, 2016, Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Benjamin Pickman (Mary Toppan) 1763*, Oil on canvas, 127 x 101.6 cm. 50 in. x 40 in., Accession Number: 1966.79.3., Bequest of Edith Malvina K. Wetmore. Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, <http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/8802>, accessed August 23, 2016, Photograph © Yale University Art Gallery; Parker and Wheeler, 20-21, 73, 88, 108, 153-154, 199.

gown itself. Pickman's neck is bare, but she has what was referred to as a "mercury" or "pompon" on the top of her head as an ornamentation.¹²⁶ This pompon was a key item "for gentry production and gentility."¹²⁷ Her hair is also tied back in a bow, emphasizing the previously mentioned bare neck. In contrast, which the stomacher and detailing on the skirt of the dress clearly mark it as the same creation as Pickman, the sleeves are less voluminous, and are made of a different, sheerer material. Copley also added a transparent covering to the dress which drapes over the shoulders. As for the rest of the ensemble Sargent has a white lace collar encircling her throat, secured with a pink ribbon, and some small floral ornaments in her hair. Both portraits also indicate a controlled aspect of nature with references to water. Pickman holds an open umbrella, blocking the included nature from the rest of the painting and Sargent holds a shell in her hand to catch falling water. Pickman and Sargent's portraits indicate a connection between the control of nature and the luxuriousness of dress. The greater "improvement" of nature and also of clothing coincided, but the third portrait featuring the dress indicated a slight disconnect in this ideal, as well as that of the expression of gentility.

Notably, out of the three appearances of the dress, Warren's is the most distinct. In this portrait Copley made a greater attempt to reflect modesty. Mrs. James Warren, known as Mercy Otis Warren, of Barnstable on Cape Cod married James Warren of Plymouth in 1754.¹²⁸ Warren became a satirical writer and critic of imperial policy during the era of the Revolution, and later a historian. Warren's dress has a sheer wrap with floral detail over the shoulders and across the chest, secured on the front of the gown with a bow. Warren also wears a mob cap. Both items of clothing cover exposed parts of the body, the wrap, skin and the cap, hair. Unlike Pickman and

¹²⁶ Lovell, 84.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

Sargent, Warren is much more surrounded by the natural world. However, the angle of her figure isolates a flowering bush, as a present aspect of nature. With a return to modesty, Copley reflects a greater balance between the presence of man and nature. Considering these three depictions, Copley's use of a singular dress model on multiple bodies suggests the belief in a mold of gentility. However, the changing design and expression of style in its various depictions, indicates that this ideal "mold of perfection" rapidly changed.

Another example which highlights the varying interpretations of styles are the multiple portraits of elite Bostonian Nicholas Boylston, which Copley completed during the 1760s and 70s.¹²⁹ Boylston, incredibly wealthy, served as a benefactor for Harvard College, marking him as a member of the genteel class.¹³⁰ In the three portraits that Copley completed, several notable changes in color choice, expressions of style, aspects of nature, and perspective occurred. In the first painting, completed in 1767, Boylston wears a robe of a profound green color with a floral pattern over his visible taupe waistcoat [fig. 18a]. Also, instead of a wig on his head, he wears a rose-colored cloth cap that men wore at home during their leisure time. As essential as wigs were for performing masculinity outside the home, they were not as important inside of it. In addition to his clothing, the tablecloth and drapery add additional color. Lastly, there is water and a ship

¹²⁹ Copley, John Singleton, *Nicholas Boylston* (1767) Oil on canvas, 127.3 x 101.1 cm (50 1/8 x 39 13/16 in.) framed: 145.4 x 120 x 10.2 cm (57 1/4 x 47 1/4 x 4 in.), Object Number: H90, Harvard University Portrait Collection, Bequest of Ward Nicholas Boylston to Harvard College, 1828. Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, MA., <http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/299949?q=nicholas+Boylston>, accessed August 25, 2016, Photograph © President and Fellows of Harvard College; John Singleton Copley, *Nicholas Boylston* (1769) Oil on canvas, 50 1/8 in. x 40 in., Accession Number: 23.504, Museum of Fine Arts: Boston, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/nicholas-boylston-32060>, accessed August 24, 2016, Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.; John Singleton Copley, *Nicholas Boylston* (1773) Oil on canvas, 238.8 x 144.8 cm (94 x 57 in.) framed: 281.9 x 179.1 x 16.5 cm (111 x 70 1/2 x 6 1/2 in.), Object Number: H20, Harvard University Portrait Collection, Painted at the request of the Harvard Corporation, 1773. Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA, <http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/299800?position=1>, accessed August 25, 2016, © Photo by Michael Gould.

¹³⁰ Parker and Wheeler, 43.

in the background, perhaps indicating an involvement of shipping, harkening back to the symbolism of a mastery of the ocean.

In 1769, Copley completed a second portrait, a mere two years after the first [fig. 18b]. In it, he changed the clothing almost entirely. He painted his floral-designed robe a darker brown, his waistcoat a deeper, steely blue, but keeps the cap the same color. The background is similar to the first portrait although the tablecloth, drape and the waterscape are gloomier. The ship in the background is missing, indicating a possible absence of the control of nature. While these are not major, the second portrait is overwhelmingly more somber than the first. Thus, these discussed shifts from the first painting to the second indicate within two years that contemporaries perceived, earthier, more somber tones as much more appropriate than that of brighter colors. A group of art historians argue that, “If the first *Nicholas Boylston* impresses with the sumptuousness of its decorative detail, the second provides a more probing characterization and portrays the Boston merchant as a man of powerful presence and distinction as well as a man of lavish tastes.”¹³¹ In other words, the differences in color enhance Boylston’s presence in the painting, still indicating gentility, although more “lavish(ly).” The transition between the first and second portraits illuminates a change between luxury to modesty, coinciding with a loosening of the control of nature.

Finally, the third portrait of Boylston continually outlines these shifts in the most dynamic way of all [fig. 18c]. In his 1773 portrait, Boylston is in the same position that he was for his other two portraits, except his figure is minimized due to a larger perspective of the room. The most significant differences in the portrait, however, are the extreme changes in color. The third painting is by far the brightest and most visually stunning of the three. Boylston wears the

¹³¹ Rebora, Straiti, Hirshler, Stebbins, and Troyen, 228.

same items of clothing, but the color scheme, except for the cap, is again different. The robes are now a vibrant blue, and the waistcoat a deeper purple. Since more of Boylston is visible, because of the new perspective of this painting, one can tell that his shoes are a vibrant red. The rest of the background, including the chair and the wall, are dark brown, and the rug on the floor has a detailed floral pattern. Overall, due to the gorgeous detailing of the clothing and textiles, the third portrait is an example of luxury. Therefore, within six years, Boylston's paintings showed a transition from luxury to modesty and back to luxury.

These quick transitions between interpretations of style did not only occur through portraiture, but also through fashion plates, an additional tool for learning about popular trends. Women had increased access to early versions of fashion magazines, beginning in the 1770s. These included fashion plates, or illustrations of the in-mode forms of dress. Historians describe the fashion of this decade as the most extreme and luxurious, with elegantly embroidered, brightly colored clothing that over-emphasized and exaggerated features of the body. English fashion plates frequently copied or modeled fashions from Paris demonstrate fluctuations between incredibly ostentatious modes of dress and more moderate expressions of taste. Trade magazines included fashion plates as early as 1667.¹³² For instance the French *La Mercure Galant*, which "introduced straightforward fashion drawings for the enlightenment of readers, naming the shops which could supply the fabrics and trimmings."¹³³ In England, women carried pocket book guides carrying information deemed useful for ladies as well as recipes, song lyrics, dance steps, puzzles, essays, and poems.¹³⁴ They also contained black and white engravings of

¹³² Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 1972.

¹³³ Anne Buck and Harry Matthews, "Pocket Guides to Fashion: Ladies' Pocket Books Published in England: 1760-1830," 35-58, *Costume* 18 (1984), 35.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

“fashionable dress.”¹³⁵ Between 1760 and 1830, there were forty-six types of pocket books for women and by the 1780s and 1790s there were seven different larger publications which offered one and sometimes two engravings of fashion.¹³⁶

A drawing, from *The Lady's Magazine* titled, “A Lady with the Emblems of Spring in the Dress of April 1771,” illustrates a frock with a low neckline and elbow length sleeves.¹³⁷ Gloves cover the exposed skin, and the figure wears a modestly sized hat adorned with ribbons. The dress fits closely to the body, only slightly embellishing the hips. The dress itself is complete with ornamentation of bows as well as frills and drapery. In the 1771 print, “Fashionable Dresses in the Rooms at Weymouth, 1774,” and “A Lady in the newest full Dress. And another in the most fashionable Undress,” published in 1776, the clothing depicted on the figures is much more elaborate.¹³⁸ The background further distinguishes the 1771 print from the 1774 and 1776 depictions. The first print shows the figures against a plain backdrop, while the ladies of 1774 and 1776 are in a room and then an outdoor garden. More interestingly, the 1774 print has three other figures, two women and one man, in the background, overshadowed by the two figures in the foreground. The man faces away from the artist, so only the rear of his hat, wig, coat, and lower extremities are visible. However, the two women wear simpler fashions. It is possible that one is extremely young, a girlish figure, while the hooded woman is of an older age. Therefore, in this single print there is an increased contrast between extremity and modesty, proving that

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 36.

¹³⁷ “A Lady with the Emblems of Spring in the Dress of April, 1771,” *The Ladies Magazine* in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 34.

¹³⁸ “Fashionable Dresses in the Rooms at Weymouth, 1774,” “A Lady in the newest full Dress,” *Unidentified Almanack for Ladies* in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 35.

variations in the appropriateness of styles appeared for other intersections of identity other than gender.

Continuing the theme of fluctuation in dress with “Two Ladies in the Dress of 1779,” everything about the representations of fashion differs from that of three years’ prior.¹³⁹ The women’s hair is not as tall, but wide instead, with long curls tied up and pinned at the neck. The hats are large, dwarfing the figures’ heads, taking away focus from the hair. The clothing is still elaborate and quite detailed, and yet different in design. The gowns are shorter, with more fabric gathering around the waist, and a cork rump to emphasize the derriere. This drawing includes hairstyles which historians typically associate with the 1780s, not the 1770s.

The 1779 print is virtually identical to that of “Two Ladies in the Dress of 1781.”¹⁴⁰ Here the only apparent differences are the lengthening of the sleeves and the heightening of the neckline. However, by “Two Ladies in the Dress of 1782,” and “Two Ladies in the Dress of 1784,” the designs of the overall ensembles are distinct.¹⁴¹ Hats continue to be important, and the hair descends further down the neck, although it is still appropriately styled curled above the shoulders. The skirts have a large hoop and the neckline of the dress is high with ruffling. Therefore, within the span of a few years, expressions of what was fashionable changed, indicating new conceptions of appropriateness.

This instability experienced during the 1780s continues in the study of fashion prints. The 1786 and 1787 prints from ‘Lane’s Ladies Museum’ show a contrast between more luxurious

¹³⁹ “Two Ladies in the Dress of 1779,” *Unidentified Pocket Books for Ladies* in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 37.

¹⁴⁰ “Two Ladies in the Dress of 1781,” *Unidentified Pocket Books for Ladies* in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 37.

¹⁴¹ “Two Ladies in the Dress of 1782,” *Unidentified Pocket Books for Ladies* in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 37; “Two Ladies in the Dress of 1784,” *Unidentified Pocket Books for Ladies* in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 37.

styles as well as modest.¹⁴² Hats continue to grow larger on top of hair which remains curled but with some frizzing, regularly attributed to the 1780s. Moving forward into 1789, it is possible to see that the elegance and frivolity of the 1770s is still present in the most fashionable dress. A print that year, appearing in the London publication of *The Lady's Magazine*, illustrated the decadence and ornamentation of dress, with a higher neckline, long gloves, and a wider hairstyle, although absent of a hat. Thus the 1780s, rather than functioning as a sharp break into transformed and fully unrecognizable fashion, instead showcased a similar pattern as the previous decades, in moving between different expressions of style.

Finally, by the 1790s, historians traditionally recognize the beginning of the federal style of clothing in the United States, which, like the 1780s, markedly different from the prior decades.¹⁴³ Here, women began to adopt jackets, gowns evolved to emphasize an “s” shape for the body, breeches became longer, eventually growing into pants, and styles became more “neoclassical” with higher waistlines.¹⁴⁴ Prints from 1793 collected from “Fashion Drawings” by Edward Burney Grecian-styled, long, flowing gowns with some elaboration.¹⁴⁵ All three of the featured gowns are white, with the women sporting long curled hair and small caps or hats on the head with a single flower or ornamentation. The sleeves are long and the necklines puffy and high.

¹⁴² “Lane’s Ladies Museum,” in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 38; “Fashionable Full Dress of Paris,” *The Lady’s Magazine*, after “Le Cabinet des Modes,” 1789 in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion Through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1971).

¹⁴³ Historian of clothing Kate Haulman describes that fashion during the 1790s operated as “A vehicle through which Americans negotiated who deserved and could handle what kinds of power, fashion served as citizenship’s corset, giving particular shape to the body politic in the early republic.” (Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 219.

¹⁴⁴ Baumgarten, 232 and 234.

¹⁴⁵ “Fashion Drawings by Edward Burney,” in Doris Langley Moore, *Fashion through Fashion Plates: 1771-1970* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.), 43.

By tracing portraiture and fashion plates between the 1750s-1790s, it is apparent that expressions of styles changed within each decade, and varied in connecting with the symbolism of control of nature. Connections are visible between the most luxurious clothing, and the greatest control of nature. Also, simple interpretations of clothing tended to correspond with the inclusion of a greater involvement of nature, which was often “untamed.” This was not the case with each decade, but the varying interpretations indicated both a changing relationship between humans and the environment, and the societal connection of the human-made construction of clothing to the natural environment. Portraits which featured modest interpretations of clothing fluctuated the most. Sometimes modest clothes appeared with a large amount of nature, and other times with none. While portraiture and fashion plates mirrored contemporary ideals about clothing and its connection to the natural, other modes of communication both reflected and stimulated attempts to re-stabilize the boundary between nature and artifice.

Contemporaries considered wigs and the hoop-petticoat as staples of gentility. However, due to changes in the physical construction of these items, both modes of costume raised eyebrows, prompting written opinions of either satire or some praise. An excess of luxury, through refinement in attempting to express a more perfect and thus natural display. Many of these items blurred and transgressed the boundaries between the virtuous and the abominable. These, articles of clothing and the conversations they sparked influenced fashion and illustrated the genteel struggle to clarify the line between natural and artificial.

The hoop-petticoat represented the worst of elite extravagance. During the 1740s, some saw the massive petticoat, exaggerated as unnatural and an abomination unto God. Created to accentuate certain characteristics of the female body, it backfired. The hoop skirt became part of a larger conversation about clothing’s relationship to nature and God. Early critiques of it

included “The Force of Women’s Magick: or, The great Virtue of Hoop-Petticoats,” published in 1720.¹⁴⁶ In it, the author outlines the argument for the petticoats unnaturalness. Not only did he outline the trouble with the hoop-petticoat, he also attacked clothing in general “...*Fashion* ought to authorize *no* Dress, which outrages *common sense*; confounds *all Proportion*; and is, in the Nature and Reason of Things, *incongruous* and *immoral*.”¹⁴⁷ He outlines the importance of clothing to define societal rank, summarizing that:

In the mean while; It is absolutely necessary, that All who are *in* the Fashion, should be at the *Top* of it? At the *Top* of the *Fashion*, when they are at, or very near the *Bottom* in *Rank* and *Fortune*? Is it fit, that every *little* Gentlemen’s, or *only* Tradesmen’s *Wife* or *Daughter* should presume to dress against *Nature* and *Reason* against *Proportion*, *Congruity*, and *Common Sense*, as much as a *Duchess* or a *Countess*?¹⁴⁸

The author is careful to note that, “These, and all other *Ladies of Quality*, especially of *great Quality* have, no doubt, (as I hinted before) a *Privilege* to *contravene*, or *go beyond* Reason, and Nature...”¹⁴⁹ In other words, it was imperative to control social ranking through dress. Only the genteel, because of their social position, had the ability to “dress against Nature and Reason.” Therefore, control of nature rested firmly within the hands of the elite, to be able to define it as they would. Because of this belief, social commentators in London debated the appropriateness of the hoop-petticoat. They feared both a non-genteel intrusion into genteel expressions of dress, as well as concerns about the loss of modesty.

In 1745, two publications take up the matter of the petticoat’s propriety. The first, *The Enormous Abomination of the Hoop-Petticoat*, was an attack on the petticoat; and the second,

¹⁴⁶ “The Force of Women’s Magick: Or, The great Virtue of Hoop-Petticoats,” in *The City and Country’s Calamity: Or, Ninety-Nine Plagues of an Empty Purse* (Stanford: W. Thompson and T. Bailey, 1720), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale*, Iowa State University Library. Document Number: CW111373465.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 16.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 22.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

The Hoop-Petticoat Vindicated, in Answer to The Enormous Abomination of the Hoop-Petticoat; a rebuttal and defense of it.¹⁵⁰ Because of the licentiousness of the subject matter, both authors defended their character as well as discussing the hoop-petticoat. The first author, known as A.W. esq. made sure to inform his reader that neither his age, conservative principles, nor any hatred of women shaped his opinion, thus highlighting his claim of an untarnished critique.¹⁵¹

In his commentary on fashion, A. W. noted only a few modifications in the first half of the eighteenth century. He mentioned minor variations with the breadth of the hat and some alterations to sleeves, shirts, and coat pockets with men's clothing.¹⁵² Therefore, an item of clothing such as the hoop-petticoat was too extravagant after several decades of little change. Since its inception, the author found the hoop-petticoat grotesque. For example, "As to the *Ladies*, the chief new Invention in my time, if not the *only* considerable one is the Hoop-Petticoat. A Dress which even in its *original institution* was sufficiently absurd; and greatly disgusted the Men, however, it might please the women."¹⁵³ A. W. believed fashion overwhelmingly silly, so much so that he concluded the hoop-petticoat would disappear after a short time. However, he and others:

...all found (themselves) mistaken: the *Hoop* stood its ground; and has continued to this very Day. For *many Years*, however, it was a little *modest* and *restrain'd* within some *reasonable compass*, and so to a degree *tolerable*. But *of late*, within these two twice – months, or there-about, it has spread itself to so *enormous a circumference*, that there is *no enduring* it any longer.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ A. W. Esq, *The Enormous Abomination of the Hoop-Petticoat, as The Fashion Now is, And has been For about these Two Years Fully Display'd: In some Reflexions upon it, Humbly offer'd to the Consideration of BOTH SEXES; especially the FEMALE* (London, 1745) *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Iowa State University Library. Document Number: CW125273910.; Jack Lovelass, *The Hoop-Petticoat Vindicated, in Answer to The Enormous Abomination of the Hoop-Petticoat* (London, 1745) *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Iowa State University Library, accessed September 18, 2016.

¹⁵¹ Despite his comment in women, he says: "Tis true indeed, I always wished the DEAR CREATURES *a little* more sense; or rather wish'd they would *make more use* of that *sufficient* share of *understanding*, which Nature has given them," (4).

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 6-7.

As long as the petticoat exemplified modesty, it was tolerable. However, for the author, because it had crossed, or transgressed that boundary of decency due to its size and overemphasis of the natural aspects of the body, it became unnatural. So much so that:

The very sight of these *cursed Hoops* is enough to *turn one's Stomach*. Besides the *Trust* they give to *Others*; they must needs be extremely *inconsistent*, and sometimes *painful* to *Those* who wear them. Many hundreds, I doubt not have got their *Deaths* by them, I pass over the *vast foolish Expense* of so much *Silk* and other costly *Materials*, three times more than is *necessary*, or *convenient*; only to cover such a huge *Extent* of *Canvas*, or stripped *Linen* and *Whalebone*: which *huge Extent* is *in itself* beyond measure *ridiculous*.¹⁵⁵

Because the garment went beyond the constraints of reason, not only because of size but also because of cost, it became insufferable.

Others, however, did not share this opinion. The same year, Jack Lovelass took issue with A. W., arguing that hoop-petticoats was just as “unnatural” as other favorite types of clothing. He outlined this with:

You first assert, it is contrary to the Law of Reason and Nature upon account of its unnatural Disproportion. Pray who besides you and your Divine ever thought of the natural Proportions of Dress? If the Ladies must follow Nature, they must go naked; for Nature gave them no Cloaths: And if it be criminal to disguise or conceal their Features, their Cloaths ought to be made to cover closely every Limb: If this be the case, Petticoats and *Hoops*, great Coats and Jack-Boots, are all equally forbidden by the Law of Nature.¹⁵⁶

Here Lovelass indicated the problematic boundaries of natural, pushed along by the petticoat. It would not be an option for these “Ladies” to “go naked.” However, to be completely natural would be not to wear any clothing at all. Since the first authors’ complaints are that the hoop-petticoat unnaturally extended the hips far out from the parameters of the body, Lovelass argued

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 7.

¹⁵⁶ Lovelass, 11.

that the only way to rectify this was to make clothing tight to the body, thus disqualifying other items of clothing considered more modest. He continues with “That they (the hoop-petticoat) are not contrary to the Law of Reason, which is the Law of God written upon the Heart of Man, I have already proved, since they have nothing either moral or immoral in them, but are in the Nature of Things entirely indifferent.”¹⁵⁷ Lovelass concludes his arguments by contrasting fashion staples of men to that of the hoop-petticoat. He closes with:

I have now consider'd all the Arguments your Friend the Clergyman has made use of, in which, in the Heat of his Zeal, he has endeavor'd to prove that the wearing of a large *Hoop* is sinful, unjustifiable, and altogether inconsistent with the Genius, Spirit, and Temper of the Christian Religion, and shall only now add, that he has advanced nothing New, nothing that has not before been urg'd against our Sex for wearing the Peruke, and shaving the Beard; which for a long Time were condemn'd by the Clergy, as an Affront upon Nature, and a Proof of the greatest Degree of Pride and Folly.¹⁵⁸

Lovelass refers to the seventeenth century, when the Church made similar arguments about men going beardless and wearing wigs, underlining that someone always complains. Thus, the hoop-petticoat functioned as a symbol, blurring the lines between nature and artifice. However, it was not the only component of costume that did so.

By the 1790s, it is apparent that similar conversations about natural and artificial aspects of clothing continued to occur. Walter Vaughn, Physician in Rochester, England argued that “the common mode of clothing not only alters the natural Form of our Bodies, but also produces Inability, Disease, and Death...”¹⁵⁹ He also claimed that “Refinement teaches men to dislike every Thing, natural, fits them only to disguise, and disqualifies them for assuming with a manly

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 15.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 18.

¹⁵⁹ Walter Vaughn, *An Essay, Philosophical and Medical, concerning Modern Clothing* (Rochester: Printed by W. Gillman, 1792), 6: *Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale*, Iowa State University Library, Document Number: CW108813490, accessed January 10, 2017.

and a liberal Air that character which alone is truly great.”¹⁶⁰ In other words, the rejection of “natural” clothing, which meant either the wearing of one fabric or clothes with limited processing, prevented men from being virtuous and truly English. Also, clothing could hurt the body in a variety of ways if it were, “fashioned and adopted as to compensate for supposed Defects or to supply and augment imaginary Beauties...(and)...When it is made of improper Materials through necessity, as for the Sake of Ornament.”¹⁶¹ Clothing as an artificial construct could cause damage to a person, therefore becoming harmful to nature. Furthermore:

If Clothing be so made by the Artist and so put on by the Wearer as to lessen or conceal supposed Defects and Blemishes; or to increase or add imaginary Beauties, it is plain that the object of both Artist and Wearer is either to have them so small as to compress, or so large as by retaining a certain Quantity of Wadding to fill up Hollows, and this to render the Proportions are symmetry of the Body apparently real and natural.¹⁶²

Here, there is an apparent connection to hairdressing and physiognomy. This author found fault with tailors and “artist(s)” envisioning or designing clothing which would disguise “supposed Defects and Blemishes” going against nature. This idea contrasts with earlier opinions that human intervention could improve the health of the hair and other areas of the body. Overly large or too small clothing could negatively affect the human form. Sleeves to the elbow, the traditional length of women’s sleeves during the eighteenth century, could be bad for the health. Not avoiding fashion choice could lead to, “Appearance altogether disagreeable, ghastly and unnatural.”¹⁶³

Writing on wigs, the author argued that, “Nay, the Head of Man is thickly clothed with Hair by Nature; and if the early Fashion of ornamenting the Head had not denigrated into the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 30.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 33.

¹⁶² Ibid, 34-35.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 39.

Habit of wearing a Hat, I am mistaken if the Hair alone had not been found sufficient to keep our Heads warm.”¹⁶⁴ Thus, a wig, or an additional covering, would cause harm as, “The head naturally has a small indication to the earth; by the weight of coverings it becomes depressed; this is an additional reason for abolishing coverings of the head in the dress of children.”¹⁶⁵ By the end of the century, wigs and clothing had become dangerous for the health, and therefore, could no longer be conceived of, in any way as natural.

Hairdressing manuals debated the natural/artificial divide.¹⁶⁶ They described hairdressing as a marriage between science and art. Even though hairstyling manuals often contained the word “art” in the title, hairdressers and contemporaries viewed hairdressing through the lens of science, because they understood hair first, through its biology. Through this understanding of science, hairdressers had the ability to manipulate hair into an art form. Hairdresser Peter Gilchrist’s manual, *A Treatise on the Hair*, published in London in 1752 first describes the scientific properties of hair as an “obnoxious fluid” sent by the heat of the brain:

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 93.

¹⁶⁵ George Nicholson, *On clothing* (Manchester, 1797), 5: *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Iowa State University Library, Document Number: CB126089224, accessed October 20, 2016.

¹⁶⁶ For more on hair and wigs during the eighteenth century see: Mary Brooks Picken, *A Dictionary of Culture and Fashion: Historic and Modern* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1985); Marcia R. Pointon, "Dangerous Excrescences: Wigs, Hair and Masculinity," in *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-century England*, edited by Marcia R. Pointon, 107-140 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Diane Simon. *Hair: Public, Political, Extremely Personal* (New York, New York: Thomas Dunne Books: An Imprint of St. Martin's Press, 2000); Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach. "Big Hair," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 1, Special Issue: Hair (Fall 2004): 79-99, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053629>; Amelia Rauser. "Hair, Authenticity, and the Self-Made Macaroni," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 1, Special Issue: Hair (Fall 2004): 101-118, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053625>; Angela Rosenthal, "Raising Hair," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 1, Special Issue: Hair (Fall 2004): 1-16, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053625>. Lynn Festa, "Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29: 2 (Spring 2005): 47-90, doi: 10.1215/00982601-29-2-47, accessed September 4, 2013; Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang, "Introduction: Thinking about Hair," in *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*, edited by Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang, 3-12 (New York, New York: Berg Publishers, 2008); Louisa Cross. "Fashionable Hair in the Eighteenth Century: Theatricality and Display," in *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*, edited by Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang, 15-26 (New York, New York: Berg Publishers, 2008), Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunnington and P.E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (Bloomsbury Academic; Reissue edition, 2010).

...hairs, are afterwards nourished or destroyed in proportion to the quantity of juices, or excess of heat, in the brain; for sometimes, by a great fire there, they will all be wasted and consumed, and so the matter cease where they were produced; which is the cause of baldness.¹⁶⁷

Certain manuals noted the importance for hairdressers to know pseudosciences such as physiognomy to correct the imbalances in an individual's face. For a face and head to be natural, the hair had to complement but also remedy the person's shortcomings. To be natural was to fit into a particular mold, but the process to become natural was individualized.

Gilchrist's manual stated that the best way to change an individual was to modify the head or "To metamorphose the body, it was proper to begin with the head."¹⁶⁸ Additives of false hair needed to blend seamlessly with the person's head, or, "To dress the Hair smooth behind with the addition of False Hair."¹⁶⁹ Therefore, a hairdresser needed to comb false hair into the natural growth.¹⁷⁰ Here there are several indications, first, the recognition of the importance of hair in transforming an individual. Second, that for "improvement" to be successful, adding in artificial components needed to be done in as complete in a manner as possible. Thus, in the 1750s, for women, it was necessary for the artificial component of the hair to not overtake the natural. Men, of course, wore wigs, which society accepted as inherently unnatural.

By the 1780s, hairdressers believed that the life experience of hair affected its overall health, and thus natural state. In 1780, William Moore, described Ladies Hair-Dresser and Perfumer, wrote *The Art of Hairdressing, and Making it Grow Fast, Together. With a plain and easy Method of presenting it; with Several useful Recipes &c.* For example, "If you observe,

¹⁶⁷ Peter Gilchrist. *A Treatise on the Hair. By Peter Gilchrist, Hairdresser* (London, 1752), 2. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Iowa State University Library, Document Number: CW115879016, accessed 23 September 2015.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 30.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

among the generality of mankind, you will find that the genteel sort of people are grey the soonest, because of their too great Care, which might be done with the same Cleanliness, if they followed the above Rules.”¹⁷¹ Moore wrote two guides, one for men and one for women. He argued against the use of hot irons as bad for the hair, drying up its natural “juices.”¹⁷² However, it was important for hairdressers to try and make up for natural defects when dressing the hair.¹⁷³ If the hair was thin, the hairdresser prescribed: “artificial curls, braids, tetes, and cushions and (to) use a proper technique to make them look very natural.”¹⁷⁴ The hair of children, Moore argued, had to be consistently trained and cut at appropriately scheduled times. The sentiment of the changeability of hair over time repeats in the section on wigmaking in Diderot’s and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, titled “The Wigmaker’s Art in the 18th Century.”¹⁷⁵

James Stewart echoed that the addition of artificial additives to hair made it more natural, in *Plococosmos: or, the Whole Art of Hair-Dressing* in 1781. He argued that humans in their natural form, were in fact, ill-constructed and not natural at all. He claimed that “Our heads are very ill constructed by the Author of our being; we are, therefore, to have them now modelled, on the outside by the midwife, and within by the philosopher.”¹⁷⁶ For wig making, it was

¹⁷¹ William Moore, *The Art of Hairdressing, and Making It Grow Fast, Together, with a plain and easy Method of preserving it; with Several Useful Recipes, &c.* (Bath: J. Salmon, 1780), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Iowa State University Library. 25 September 2015, 12.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁷⁵ J. Stevens Cox, ed., Denis Diderot, *The Wigmaker's Art in the 18th Century: Translation of the Section on Wigmaking in the 3rd Edition (1776) of the Encyclopedie, of Denis Diderot and Jean D'Alembert*, Hairdressers' Registration Council, 1965.

¹⁷⁶ James Stewart, *Plococosmos: or the Whole Art of Hairdressing, &c. or the WHOLE ART OF HAIRDRESSING; Wherein is Contained, Ample Rules for the Young Artizan, More Particularly for Ladies Women, VALETS, &c. &c. AS WELL AS Directions for Persons to dress their own Hair; Also Ample and wholesome Rules to preserve the Hair. The Hair completely analyzed, as to its Growth, Nature, Colour &c. and all and every Article used in the Hair, on the Head, Face, &c. as FALSE HAIR, PERFUMERY, COSMETICS, &c. clearly analyzed and examined; with a History of the HAIR and HEAD DRESS, from the earliest AGES to the present Time, particularly as they have appeared upon the English State for these last Two Hundred Years; with Strictures on the present Performers belonging to each Theatre. The Plan of this work requiring it, there are also complete Rules for the Management of Children and Education of Youth; and excellent Rules for the Preservation of the Health and Happiness of age; being a Guide*

important not to wear child's hair. Furthermore, chestnut hair was considered the best quality for wig-making with hues of chestnut, light-chestnut, and Auburn. Biologically, the hair on a person from Northern Europe was superior to that of someone from the south. Also, an individual who was morally bankrupt, such as a prostitute, would have dry hair, making it impossible to use. Wigmakers always preferred women's hair, and those who lived in the country had the best tresses of all.¹⁷⁷ Peasant or country women would always wear caps and "do not powder it, and rarely expose it to the air which makes it dry."¹⁷⁸ The healthier the hair, the more natural. However, because of fluctuating ideas of nature, the ideas about the appropriate of improvement varied. This meant that the more "artificial" the hair, the more natural. Hairdressing during the 1780s unearthed a paradox, in which, the wealthy would improve their hair through additives such as powders and grease, but for wigs, the healthiest and therefore the most desirable hair was the least tampered with, grown on the heads of the non-genteel.

Lastly, Alexander Stewart's, *The Art of Hair Dressing, or, the Gentleman's Director* published in 1788, dictated in its introduction that hair functioned as "the test of national taste and refinement."¹⁷⁹ Frequently, commentators on clothing and hairdressing remarked on differences between styles. These were categorized as English styles that reflected modesty, and ostentatious French fashions. This difference in interpretations coincided with ideas of nature and artifice. Typically, English styles were characterized as natural while French were artificial. Stewart recognized the artificiality of the addition of a toupee to the natural hair. He instructed that after applying it that there must be a visible separation between the two, so that

through the Seven Ages of Man: The whole interspersed with Moral Thoughts, being necessary for all Families. By James Stewart. With an elegant FRONTSPICE, and other COPPER-PLATES. (London, 1782), 10. Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, Document Number: CW106139936.

¹⁷⁷ Cox, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Stewart, 1.

contemporaries could recognize the difference between natural hair and the toupee. It was also important to implement additives to the hair such as various powders and pomatums, meaning that hair was not natural on its own.¹⁸⁰ One highly prized pomatum in the manual, described as, “a very excellent one,” made of rosemary, bear grease and oil of Jessamine, showcased the commodification of achieving a natural and thus genteel look.¹⁸¹ This idea of the improvement of hair, frequently appears within the manuals, indicating fluctuating ideas about what made something natural, creating rational arguments for contemporaries to adopt.

Because of the trans-Atlantic network of trade, as well as greater connections between urban and rural areas, the manuals prove the diffusion of fashionable style, as one hairstylist stated:

Thus for we may conclude that this Directory is intended for those who live in the Country, and have not the opportunity of getting a Hair-Dresser, or perhaps a servant that can do it without being taught, when they may send for one of those Instructors, that will teach them as well as any one, and at a small Price, and if they do not resort to any public Place to see Fashions, they may have cushions sent to them in the Fashion continually, for a trifling Expense, and they may have Prints of the Modes of Dress at any Time.¹⁸²

Even if those who purchased these manuals did not have direct access to public places to see the most current fashions with ease, they had the ability to see them through print, brought about by Atlantic exchange. The examination of these manuals as well as discussion on hair, illustrates the ebb and flow of fashionable tresses between the 1750s-1790s.

Historians and scholars who study eighteenth-century hairstyles tend to characterize them in a bell-curve, as they do clothing. For women, the 1740s and 50s featured more modest styles. These became more elaborate during the 1760s, often featuring a small amount of height above

¹⁸⁰ Gilchrist, 14.

¹⁸¹ Moore, 13-14.

¹⁸² Ibid, 23.

the scalp as well as some adornments. By the 1770s, hair styles reached “dizzying heights.”¹⁸³ Hair was a frequent target of satire during this decade, with drawings of women with fruit, birdcages, and even model ships adorning a mountain of powdered locks. Such wigs also existed in reality, for example, Marie Antoinette. By the 1780s, hair became broad and frizzy and finally during the 1790s, some hair curled about the face with several locks cascading down the neck and falling over the shoulders. By the 1740s, larger perukes of the seventeenth century, which cascaded down the shoulders, had gone out of style.¹⁸⁴ For men, during the eighteenth century, wig wear proved essential. Without a wig, men lacked the necessary ability to establish themselves as a proper man.¹⁸⁵ Wigs demonstrated a connection between commodification and masculinity. To be a man within the social order, one had to display participation in consumption through wig-wear. An undeniable inseparability existed during the eighteenth century between masculinity and the donning of the wig.¹⁸⁶ These social and physical process of having a wig on one’s head synchronized so tightly together that knocking off or removing a wig could threaten one’s manhood.¹⁸⁷

Popular writing on wigs voiced societal concerns about their necessity and critiqued their appearance. For example, one author known as “An English Perriwig Maker,” saw the peruke as against nature in his 1767 publication, *A Dissertation Upon Head Dress*, because it did not cover

¹⁸³ This phrase is used in several different studies on hair and costume during the eighteenth century. See: Angela Rosenthal, “Raising Hair,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 1, Special Issue: Hair (Fall 2004): 1-16, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053625>; Caroline Weber, *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* (Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 111.

¹⁸⁴ The 1740s is the decade which historians of hair and costume point to for the adoption of smaller wigs which became more available and stratified.

¹⁸⁵ Marcia R. Pointon, “Dangerous Excrescences: Wigs, Hair and Masculinity,” in *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-century England*, edited by Marcia R. Pointon, 107-140 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 110.

¹⁸⁶ Lynn Festa, “Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29: 2 (Spring 2005): 47-90, accessed September 4, 2013 doi: 10.1215/00982601-29-2-47.

¹⁸⁷ Festa and Pointon.

the neck. He argued that natural hair behaved in a natural or authentic manner by flowing down the neck and while a wig fraudulently attempted to do the same, it would ultimately fail due to stiffness and artificial construction.¹⁸⁸ Besides this, he frequently debated within his writing what was natural for the human head. For example, he makes reference to one particular stylist who believed that:

...perhaps men would be equipped with some things that resembled monkey's tails, buck's horns, or anything else that creation might exhibit to their view, and by this means such a set of monsters would spring up in the human race as never entered the brains of all the poets even from Homer until now...¹⁸⁹

Even though hairstyles provided by wigs mimicked nature, they were not in fact of nature, and therefore became artificial or monstrous. One such writer argued that perukes were not a natural method of dressing because, "Indeed after one part of the hair is distorted and the other conceded (which nature never intended) the mischief done on one head, is copied to put upon another: this some may call following nature; but with no great propriety."¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the mass replication of wig styles did not make them an acceptable and natural mode of dress.

The same pamphlet described the relationship between hair in contrast to other ornamentations of the body. The author began with:

I think I have a right to consider Perukes in a different light to that which any other ornament or part of dress can be placed in; because other ornaments are quite precariously so, and in their nature changeable at will, and coverers of shame may not be an improper name for our convenient parts of raiment.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ *An English Periwig-Maker, A Dissertation Upon Head Dress; Together with a Brief Vindication of High Coloured Hair, And of those Ladies on whom it grows: The whole submitted to the Connoisseurs in Taste, Whether Antient (sic.) or Modern, of what Nation of Kingdom foever (sic.)* (London: J. Williams, 1767), 5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 15.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 3.

Here this author clearly defined differences between hair and the rest of costume. Hair functioned as an ornament which could be styled and dyed, but also fixed, making it the most natural symbol of all. However, the author ideally viewed certain types of peruke and wig-making as fundamentally against nature.

He also believed that English sensibility defined what was appropriately natural and what was not. For example, "...as an Englishman of common sense, I have a right to reject modes where nature, ease, and gracefulness, is not duly attended to."¹⁹² English sensibility should prevent people from dressing too ridiculously. For this writer, the peruke, so distorted and manipulated went against nature. Bag wigs especially contorted the natural position of the hair, the author of *A Moral Lecture on Heads* noted, "...the man thrusting his head into a bush, but on drawing it back again, he took the bush with it..."¹⁹³ Here again, is an allegory of nature, although meant to insult the "natural" appearance of a wig, rather than complement it. Hair, of course, was supposed to be neatly combed and refined, whereas a bush was notorious for being wild and unkempt.

On wigs, the aforementioned James Stewart wrote that:

As the perukes become more common, their shape and forms altered. Hence we hear of the clerical the physical, and the huge tie peruke for the man of the law, the brigadier or major for the army and navy, as also the tremendous fox ear, or cluster of temple curls, with a pig-tail behind. The merchant, the man of business and of letters were distinguished by the grave full bottom, or more moderate tie, neatly curled; the tradesmen by the shug bob, or natty scratch, the country gentleman, by the natural fly and hunting peruke. All conditions of men were distinguished by the cut of the wig, and none more so than the coachman, who wore his, as there does some to this day, in imitation of the curled hair of a waterdog.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Ibid, 15.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 30.

¹⁹⁴ Stewart, 203-204.

Out of all the types of wigs, one stood out from the rest, mentioned here as the “natty scratch,” or another name for the scratch wig. Unlike other wigs, the scratch wig was intended to mimic and look like someone’s real hair. Contemporaries described it as small and “mean looking.” It was poorly made, often stretched or pasted together over its frame rather than stitched with care. In its early emergence, wig-makers developed the scratch wig for tradesmen. It was usually dark in color, black or brown, and if applied to the head improperly, could look quite silly, resulting in critical commentary. *The Gentleman's and London Magazine* in 1741 described it as, "The Scratch, or the Blood's Skull-Covering, is comb'd over the forehead, untoupeed, to imitate a head of hair; because those gentlemen love to have everything natural about them."¹⁹⁵ Other characterizations included:

A short, natural looking wig resembling the wearer's own shockylocks, just large enough to cover the baldness. Much worn by tradesmen in the 18th century...A smooth scratch wig was one in which the hair was dressed smoothly and tidily. When the hair was in a disheveled condition the wig was said to be a rough scratch.¹⁹⁶

Additional names included scratch bob, black scratch, brown scratch, smooth scratch, and rough scratch,¹⁹⁷ "A bob-wig, sometimes with one curl, covering only the back part of the head, the natural hair being brushed up over it in front,"¹⁹⁸ a "Kind of wig that covers only part of the head,"¹⁹⁹ "...a small undress wig, which was especially popular with the lower classes because it was relatively inexpensive,"²⁰⁰ and "...a rather haphazard arrangement designed to resemble real

¹⁹⁵ "A Dissertation upon the order of Perriwigs, with an exploration of Mr. Hogarth's print of the Episcopal, and Aldermannic," *The Gentleman's and London Magazine for May, 1762*, Contained in Volume XXXI. Dublin: John Exshaw, 1772, available on Google Books, accessed September 21, 2015, <https://books.google.com/books?id=xPA5QAAMAAJ>, 260.

¹⁹⁶ Cox, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Hairdressing and Wigmaking*, 136.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Cumming, C.W. Cunnington and P.E. Cunnington, 180-81.

¹⁹⁹ Picken, 375.

²⁰⁰ Corson, 282.

hair worn by farmers and outdoor laborers.”²⁰¹ Contemporaries perceived the scratch wig as copying the natural hair the most, knew about the poor quality of the wig, and understood that it could look humorous if not applied correctly. As an “undress” wig, it was inferior to other types of wigs and considered less formal. These various opinions lead to the assumption of the wig as different and even laughable to eighteenth-century society. In the 1773 edition of London's, *The Town and Country Magazine* a piece appeared titled, "An English Macaroni in Paris," remarked:

We suppose it will be admitted that the last age of the wig is, after all, the most contemptibly in point of fashion - the scratch-wig - the lineal descendant, however, of that whit has for want of any better designation, been called by a writer in the "Quarterly" the George-the-Fourthian Peruke. Lest we should seem indecent, we may quote this high conservative author, who speaks of it as "an upstart sham among wigs, hideous, artificial, and gentish looking; its painful little curls haunt us. We scarcely ever see that type now in its full original humor, but bad is the best; it seems at first though very odd that barbers cannot make a decent imitation of a head of hair." From this descended, we say, the scratch-wig, whose highest ambition consists in being like the natural hair; its aim is to make age look youthful, and to give to the baldness of Cicero and Caesar the beauty, if not of flowing locks, the reverse of the prophetic condemnation in the adornment of well set hair.²⁰²

Here the author described the wig with some of the most demeaning language. Despite popularity, the wig received considerable ridicule. Instead of the scratch wig functioning as natural, the essay marked it as artificial. While the wig was intended to look like the natural hair, in the opinion of these critics, it failed to do so, meaning that it became artificial. Those who lived in the eighteenth-century British North Atlantic knew and understood the artificiality of head coverings. Contemporaries knew that a wig was either human or animal hair, not belonging to the person who wore it. That knowledge thus dictated that an artificial apparatus functioned as a socially practiced behavior. A wig meant to look like the hair of the owner, blending into the

²⁰¹ Festa, 59.

²⁰² "A Gossip on Wigs: And the Wigs of Westminster Abbey," *The Leisure Hour, Issue 1*, 61-63, No. 410, January 4, 1876, available on Google Books, accessed on October 5, 2015.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=vjEFAAAAQAAJ>, 62.

hairline, ultimately went against these parameters. This awareness highlighted the contrast and paradox of the scratch wig.

Despite this belief, commentators continued to discuss the scratch wig over the latter decades of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. By the 1790s, it filtered its way up into British genteel riding culture. Thomas Rowlandson's 1809 satirical cartoon titled, "Game Wigs," included the scratch wig ("Black Scratch") [fig. 19] as one of the styles preferred by hunting and the outdoor activity of gentlemen.²⁰³ Thus the scratch wig, through the categories of natural and artificial, completely transcended social boundaries. Because society changed its opinion of the naturalness of the wig rapidly between the 1740s and 1790s, the scratch wig illustrates how categories of nature and artifice fluctuated during this time. Therefore, because of the blurring of this dichotomy, the binary between genteel and non-genteel also became unstable.

It is visible then, between 1740-1790, that conceptions of nature and artifice frequently alternated. Within every decade, social commentators debated with each other upon the "naturalness" of certain items of clothing. Did accentuating features of the body through clothing make something more natural? Was wearing a wig truly natural? Was the human body innately flawed, and if so, was it the job of man to improve it through hairdressing and clothing? These were questions which illustrated transgression of the most basic categories of analysis. This brought instability to the lives of those involved, who tried ardently to create a sense of what was happening through the debate of these categories in the primary mode of expression, costume.

²⁰³ "Game Wigs," Plate 1: 45-46 in Caleb Quizem, Thomas Rowlandson, G. M Woodward, Henry William Bunbury, Clara S Peck, and John McE. Bowman, *Annals of Sporting* (London, 1809: Published by Thomas Tegg) Received electronically through Transylvania Library Special Collections, Clara Peck Natural History Collection, Transylvania University Library, Lexington, KY, Call Number: NC1479.R8 A4 1809 c. 2, Photograph © Transylvania Library Special Collections.

In the eighteenth century British North Atlantic, white Anglo-Americans and Britons felt a power over the natural world. Centuries of precedent, as well as a mastery of the Atlantic Ocean, dictated this control. The imperial process and colonization meant interaction with new species of the natural world. Improvements in agriculture and mechanization meant a greater output of production. These changes caused contemporaries to question their place in the natural order and hierarchy. Thus, these factors came together to prompt fluctuations in considerations of the natural and the artificial. As Trans-oceanic and Atlantic travel increased communications and commerce, science helped also commodify nature. Part of this commodification process, took place through textiles, because of new types of fabrics specially available through Atlantic colonization. The medium of clothing, a language in which all members of society could participate, allowed for the expression and manipulation of these ideas.

CHAPTER 3: THE NATURALNESS OF SOCIETY AND GENTILITY THROUGH CLOTHING

During the second half of the eighteenth century in the British North Atlantic, technological innovation and the desire to perfect nature through human intervention, led humans to feel a reinvigorated sense of mastery over the natural world. This ideal led to a gendered amalgam in which the natural had to be helped into place. Faith in this control destabilized the dichotomy of natural and artificial, described in Chapter 2. This re-conceptualized relationship with nature led directly to a greater ability to produce and purchase. Material goods became much more available through the consumer revolution, which was a direct consequence of Atlantic trade. A greater availability of items, important in the display of refinement, meant that gentility became commodified. This created two separate issues. The first, due to this new ability to purchase a better social standing, and the second was the over-emphasis on the display of refinement. The effect of buying gentility to essentially become genteel produced the consequence of a loss of former methods of social distinction. Insistence on exhibition related to a perceived correlation in which a greater, more ornamented presentation of belongings resulted in an increased possession of gentility. Both outcomes of gentility's commodification changed its perception. Traditionally, the social elite attached characteristics of modesty and virtue to gentility, viewing themselves as its sole possessors. Because of gentility's newfound commodification, it lost these associations. Modesty, an important aspect of English gentility, depended upon an absence of ostentatious display. Without it, social commentators began to identify the presentation of refinement as vain and too luxurious.

Gentility is an essential quality of superiority possessed by the English upper class, expressed through outward expressions and mannerisms of grace, refinement, sensibility, and

thus superiority.²⁰⁴ Details such as correct posture, manner of walking, how to dance, and how to speak, as well as conditions one's home and one's person all came together to demonstrate genteel display.²⁰⁵ By following these mannerisms, the social elite participated in the performance of gentility. The concept of performance is the portrayal of oneself to fit into societal roles through behavior and actions.²⁰⁶ This performance, due to its necessity, became continuous, always open to criticism.²⁰⁷ Through repeated behaviors, the genteel identified themselves as virtuous, and modest.²⁰⁸ This language of gentility took a different form in British North America than in the metropole. The colonies had no noble class, and because of their function in supporting the empire, the most affluent members were usually involved in some sort of trade or commerce, such as merchants or planters. In addition, easier access and greater availability of land meant that its ownership also formed a large part in establishing gentility.

Colonial American cities created an environment which prompted a greater necessity to display gentility. In 1760, the population of the British North American colonies was 72, 881, while 4.6% of the population lived in urban areas.²⁰⁹ Despite only have a small amount of the overall population, Boston, with 15, 631²¹⁰ residents and other larger cities had economic and cultural power in British Colonial America. Cities, the direct receivers of Atlantic material,

²⁰⁴ Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 312.

²⁰⁵ Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), xiv.

²⁰⁶ Judith Butler's argument of performativity shows a relationship between performance and the reaffirmation of gender roles. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1959), indicates a common belief that contemporaries could identify pretenders of gentility. He concludes that an authentic performance of identity is inherently flawed and imperfect. This connects with eighteenth century frauds and pretenders, society truly felt did not have the necessary breeding to replicate a genteel performance with ease. Instead, they would carefully not make any errors, thus creating a performance too perfect, and thus artificial. Finally, Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). illustrates how a greater availability of clothing only allowed more people to participate in what he identifies as a space for gender play during the long eighteenth century.

²⁰⁷ Bushman, xiv.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Thomas L. Purvis, *Colonial America to 1763* (Facts on File, Inc. 1999), 220.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

created conditions which allowed a greater visibility of new social stratifications. Historian Gary Nash noted that living closely together among diverse types of people produced heightened perceptions of differences through social status.²¹¹ Gentility became the founding principle of dissimilarity between peoples. The social hierarchy in urban America was as follows: first, the economic elite (merchants, planters, and entrepreneurs), followed by professionals (doctors, lawyers, and clergymen), Artisans, free unskilled laborers, apprentices and hired servants, indentured servants, and lastly slaves.²¹² Free people of color fell into the non-genteel, as did many of the newer immigrants, such as the Scots, Irish, and Germans. Artisans and those lower on the social scale qualified as non-genteel. All this stratification depended upon the ability to display gentility.

To successfully illustrate gentility, one needed to also possess modesty. An essay, originally penned in 1768, was included in a 1788 edition of *The American Museum, or Universal Magazine* which explained the characteristic as, "...that virtue which keeps us from expecting, as a right, the esteem and veneration which our good qualities seem to deserve...founded on humility."²¹³ Modesty gave a positive tone to all other characteristics and charms. In its absence, "...the philosopher is a cynic, and the orator nothing but a vain babbler."²¹⁴ Therefore, modesty functioned as the key component of politeness and refinement. It allowed for civilized speech, behavior, and thus expression. The essay closed with remarking that "It is necessary everywhere, and at all times; nothing can excuse the want of it – Without it

²¹¹ Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), x.

²¹² Ibid, xii.

²¹³ "The Visitant," *The American Museum, or, Universal Magazine: containing, essays on agriculture-commerce-manufactures-politics-morals: sketches* Vol. IV (Philadelphia, 1788): 393, *Sabin Americana*, Iowa State University, accessed on March 12, 2017.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 395.

even our good qualities become odious, and virtue is nothing but a name.”²¹⁵ Thus, society observed the necessity of a modest expression of behavior through its function as a component of conduct. Armed with this knowledge, the genteel ensured the preservation of this characteristic through continual education and presentation.

The elite prescribed and learned proper gentility through guidebooks and manuals, which taught the correct way to behave. Philip Dormer Stanhope, in his, *Principles of Politeness, and knowing the world*, published in Philadelphia in 1778 counseled, “A young man ought to be able to come into a room and address the company, without the least embarrassment.”²¹⁶ He accomplished this this through observation and copying “the manners of better people, and (conforming) to their customs with care and attention.”²¹⁷ For without “good-breeding,” other qualifications “...will be imperfect, unadorned, and to a certain degree unavailing.”²¹⁸ Stanhope links the importance of clothing in performance describing the following:

There are few young fellows but what display some character or other in this shape. Some would be though fearless and brave: these wear a black cravat, a short coat and waistcoat, an uncommon long sword hanging up to their knees, a large hat fiercely cocked and are *flush* all over. Others affect to be country squires: these will go about in buck-skin breeches, brown frocks, and great oaken cudgels in their hands, slouched hats, with their hair undressed and tucked up under them to an enourmous size, and imitate grooms...so well externally, that there is not the least doubt of their resembling them as well internally. Others, again, paint and powder themselves so much, and dress so sinically, as leads us to suppose they are only women in boy’s cloaths. Now a sensible man carefully avoids all this, or any other affectation. He dresses as fashionably and well as persons of the best families and best sense: if he exceeds them, he is a coxcomb: if he dresses worse, he is unpardonable.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *Principles of Politeness, and knowing the world* (Philadelphia, 1778): 69, *Sabin Americana*. Iowa State University, accessed on February 17, 2017.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 10.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 13.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 19.

Stanhope here identified the role of clothing in expressing character. To be a sensible man, one needed to dress in a manner which made his social standing clear, but was not excessive. For instance, the most modern style, good fabrics, but without an excessive amount of adornment. Clothing was one of the first indicators of sensibility, modesty, and therefore gentility. The performance of good breeding only became possible through wearing the correct clothing. Dress is paramount because society understood its importance in self-presentation.²²⁰ A 1714 publication, Bernard Mandeville's, *The Fable of the Bees* contained a variety of anecdotes, information, and advice on modern life, reflecting cultural behaviors and beliefs. On clothing, Mandeville wrote:

...the World has long since decided the Matter: handsome Apparel is a main point, fine Feathers make fine Birds, and People where they are no known, are generally honour'd according to their Cloaths and other Accoutrements they have about them; from the richness of them we judge their Wealth, and by their ordering of them we guess at their Understanding.²²¹

This belief showcases the importance of fine clothing. The expression "fine Feathers make fine Birds," indicates for society, clothing reflected the possessor's status of gentility. The cultural notion that appropriate apparel made someone genteel, prevailed. Society also judged the economic status of the person, based on the fineness and luxury of their clothing.

A 1772 essay, published in Philadelphia by William Mentz titled, *The Miraculous Power of Clothes, and Dignity of the Taylors, Being an Essay on the Words, Clothes Make Men* followed the hypothetical case of a respectable man, wearing "mean attire."²²² The term "mean attire" suggests either out-of-style or unkempt clothing. He lived an honest life to prove his

²²⁰ Goffman and Wahrman.

²²¹ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (London: J. Roberts, 1714): 103, accessed at the American Antiquarian Society, August 4, 2015.

²²² William Mentz. *The Miraculous Power of Clothes, and Dignity of the Taylors, Being an Essay on the Words, Clothes Make Men* (Philadelphia, 1772), accessed from the American Antiquarian Society, August 5, 2015.

worth, facing roadblocks along the way. Because of his dress, when he arrived at a social gathering, his acquaintances did not recognize him, servants mistrusted his efforts, and he was ultimately mistaken for a beggar and denied entry. Here, his character and status had no merit. However, those present at the event, including the servants, bent over backwards to accommodate a second individual, described as “a gilded fop,” who they “admired” because he dressed in imitation of the French mode.”²²³ In this case, ostentatious, luxurious clothing identified with French styles, functioned as the access point into spheres of gentility.

Even though that gilded fop’s “heart is malicious” and “he has not learnt the least thing that would help his country or himself,” he received a warm welcome.²²⁴ Mentz concluded that the simple man deserved to be forgot, remarking “Simpleton! Why had he not better clothes and less merit?...Let us but change the clothes, and we shall find the world very equitable.”²²⁵ All this was due to an understanding that, “Our manners are beyond all doubt, in some measure influenced by our dress.”²²⁶ Those at the top of the social scale knew that clothing, “...helped solidify and maintain their status. Those with less money recognized that clothes were valuable tools, as well. Having the right clothing could give them more options in life.”²²⁷ Greater access to the “tool” of clothing, and the possibilities that it could grant meant possible replication of refinement and good breeding.

Mandeville and Mentz demonstrated that in the self-presentation of status, clothing often outweighed any other indicator. These cultural conceptions and beliefs about clothing illustrated a deep understanding of its transformative ability. Clothing ultimately told a story, which

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid, 232.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid, 228.

²²⁷ Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002), 139.

contemporaries read for relevant information. Not only did certain contemporaries know that clothing could influence behaviors, but they also knew of the possibility for some to wear clothing not appropriate for their social status. This created an anxiety amongst the genteel, who started to recognize the new ability of the rest of society to perform gentility. Traditionally, only rich people had the ability to afford good clothes, but because of an increase in trans-Atlantic trade, participation in consumerism in Colonial America became more inclusive.

There was no fashion industry in the Americas during the seventeenth century. Fashions made on the continent travelled to the colonies slowly, if at all, due to longer sailing times and a lack of prosperity. In addition, strict Calvinist principles dictated a focus on clothing that promoted the appearance of a pious character. Such fashions included, “plain brown or black woolens, neatened by freshly laundered collar bands and cuffs.”²²⁸ In England, by the middle of the century, there was already a long tradition of practicing “distinctively Puritan dress.”²²⁹ Sumptuary laws prevented the lower classes from dressing in a refined manner. By the eighteenth century, these laws remained on the books, but courts virtually did not enforce them.²³⁰ In 1634, a Massachusetts law forbade the everyday wearing of newer fashions, long hair, “laces, girdles, and hatbands made of silver, gold, or silk.”²³¹ Another, two years later outlawed the manufacture and sale of lace, as well as any clothing with lace.²³² These types of items, which emphasized embellishment and decoration, symbolized status as a member of the

²²⁸ Jane Dorner, *Fashion: The Changing Shape of Fashion Through the Years* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1974), 22.

²²⁹ Leora Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions: Everyday Life and Politics in Britain, North America, and France* (University of California Press, 1959), 59.

²³⁰ This ideal of societal enforcement of what people could and should wear outlines the work of various historians of costume for the eighteenth century. See: Styles, Haulman, Wahrman, etc.

²³¹ Kathleen A. Staples and Madelyn Shaw. *Clothing through American History: The British Colonial Era* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing, 2013), 43.

²³² *Ibid.*

upper classes. Without a legal system to keep the systems of display and wealth in check, the weight of supervision fell to society.²³³ Therefore, those in the British North Atlantic constantly struggled between believing they could judge a person by what they wore and recognizing that some wore clothing that they should not.²³⁴

Because of this recognized paradox, the genteel decided that the best way to restabilize social categories was through commenting on expressions of clothing. In doing so, they both defended and attempted to reclaim the most natural components of gentility and Englishness, modesty and virtue. In this era, richer, better quality fabrics and patterns became financially available to a wider variety of people. The genteel wanted clothing to help divide people into 4categories. However, this greater availability of fabrics and textiles, which became clothing, led to a blending of distinctions. Historians of dress describe members of the working-class, or a non-genteel mimicking of elite style, what they call a trickle-down effect of fashion.²³⁵ Despite social commentators knowing its current unreliability, elites continued to depend upon clothing's prior centrality in emphasizing the genteel/non-genteel divide. Thus, discussion, rooted in the intent of social control, emerged as the chosen method to reaffirm the now unbalanced divisions.

A trans-Atlantic discourse formed, highlighting how the problems of the loss of modesty and the act of dressing against one's social station went directly against nature: first, through a loss of propriety and the second, through a false and underserved sense of entitlement. Overly-luxurious clothing and excessive ornamentation led to a perversion of the expression, and thus the intended meaning, of gentility. A non-genteel person wearing socially inappropriate clothing, to pass as someone other than themselves, led to a multi-faceted sense of panic. Authors aimed to

²³³ See Footnote 230.

²³⁴ Baumgarten, 112.

²³⁵ This is one of the primary arguments in John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

soothe anxieties about passing as well as placate disgust over excessively ornamented displays of fashion. They reminded readers about the superiority of the genteel body due to its inherent natural charms. If the non-genteel dressed above their station, they would look silly doing so, highlighting the genteel's exclusive ability to look appropriate in refined clothing. Most of these writers hoped for a return to more acceptably virtuous, English interpretations of dress, with strict distinctions between the genteel and non-genteel. This desire prompted harsh characterizations of those who dressed too extravagantly, which writers hoped would convince the fashionably curious to avoid overdoing it.

One of the ways that commentators attempted to dissuade from over-refinement in dress was through demonstrating the connections between a loss of propriety and character flaws. A satirical anecdote in an essay in a 1745 edition of the London publication, *The Guardian* outlines how fashion begins to overtake intellect in establishing one's self in polite society. The author writes that:

THERE was formerly an absurd Notion among the Men of Letters, that to establish themselves in the Character of Wits, it was absolutely necessary to show a Contempt of Dress. This injudicious Affectation of their flatten'd all their Conversation, took of the Force of every Expression, and incapacitated a Female Audience from giving Attention to any thing they said. While the Man of Dress catches their Eyes as well as Ears, and at every ludicrous Turn obtains a Laugh of Applause by way of Compliment.²³⁶

To establish oneself in society, being modest "Men of Letters" no longer sufficed. If gentlemen wished to gain the attention and admiration of Ladies, they must transform into "Man of Dress." The author mocked this notion, highlighting how Men of Dress received negative attention, through the form of laughter, rather than admiration.

²³⁶ *The Guardian* (London, January 1, 1745), 254-257, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=33936548&site=ehost-live&ppid=divp256>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 5, 2015.

He outlined how the most ridiculous fashion trends predominantly appear in women's clothing.

While the Men have contented themselves with the Retrenchment of the Hat, or the various Scallop of the Pocket; the Ladies have sunk the Head-dress, inclosed themselves in the Circumference of the Hoop-Petticoat; Furbelows and Flounces have been disposed of at will, the Stays have been lower'd behind, for the better displaying the Beauties of the Neck; not to mention the various rolling of the Sleeve, and those other nice Circumstances of Dress upon which every Lady employs her Fancy at Pleasure.²³⁷

Fashion was a vice, and morally, physically, and intellectually weaker people were more likely to fall victim to vice. Women were understood to be the weaker sex and thus, clearly, more likely to wear ridiculous fashion. Both historically and ahistorically, women are equated with nature, while men are with culture.²³⁸ Because women's bodies are associated with nature, they must be controlled.²³⁹

The hoop-petticoat was one of the clothing items causing contemporaries to rethink the binary of natural and artificial. As a fashionable item, the hoop-petticoat demonstrated both the warping of a "natural" representation of clothing and a perversion of gentility. The new ease of purchasing gentility prompted its commodification, giving it its new meaning. Consumption and its display, transgressed both social and natural boundaries. This recognized blurring of categories meant that for some, showcasing wealth opposed virtue.²⁴⁰ Once the display of

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?," 68-87, in M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974). Ortner answers her question "Why is Woman Seen as Closer to Nature?" with three separate points. These are: " (1) woman's body and its functions, more involved more of the time with "species life," seem to place her closer to nature, in contrast to man's physiology, which frees him more completely to take up the projects of culture; (2) woman's body and its functions place her in social roles that in turn are considered to be at a lower order of the cultural process than man's; and (3) woman's traditional social roles, imposed because of her body and its functions, in turn give her a different *psychic structure*, which, like her physiological nature and her social roles, is seen as being close to nature," (73-74).

²³⁹ Ibid, 72.

²⁴⁰ Baumgarten; Styles, 181.

refinement became too ostentatious, virtue disappeared. Thus, gentility separated from modesty, morphing refinement into an unnatural and artificial construct.

Every step of dressing involved commerce, heavily dependent on the commodification of nature and the display of gentility and privilege. Textiles, clothing, and fashion stimulated demand and therefore, production.²⁴¹ Fabrics traveled quickly, meaning that items stored in London or Liverpool warehouses appeared in the colonies as “fast as a ship was able to make the voyage.”²⁴² Letters sent across the Atlantic indicated that “colonists wanted clothes of quality and the newest fashion.”²⁴³ Because colonists saw themselves as English, and co-creators in an Atlantic consciousness, they wanted to look the part, recognizing London as the most fashionable place in the British Empire. Merchants and relatives located in Britain chose textiles and clothing to send to the colonies, “setting American styles,” meaning the affluent, or the genteel had initial control over the appearance and interpretation of fashion.²⁴⁴ These contacts suggested that colonists could dress in quality British goods and materials.²⁴⁵ Once the textiles arrived, they became clothing through mantua-makers, tailors, shoemakers, seamstresses, staymakers, weavers, milliners, or the colonists themselves. In British North America, various influences came together to create fashion.

Fashion flowed across the Atlantic, originating in France, moving through London, and then outward to the colonies.²⁴⁶ These fashions spread by way of plates and images in selected publications such as the London periodical, *The Ladies Magazine*, which detailed the favorite

²⁴¹ Styles, 11; Cary Carson, “The Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America: Why Demand?,” in Cary Carson, ed. *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (United States Capitol Historical Society 1994), 488.

²⁴² Baumgarten, 76.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 94.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England* (Holmes & Meier, 1979), 33.

fashions of the season. Shopkeepers and dressmakers also displayed small figurines, referred to as “babys,” similar to contemporary mannequins, which wore the in-style fashions.²⁴⁷ These fashion prints and dolls educated the colonial elite through providing a model of what to wear. The mobility of these information mechanisms allowed fashion to diffuse far away from the urban seaports, moving into the countryside and even to the frontier.²⁴⁸ Most genteel residents in Britain and British North America lived in the country or rural areas. Due to the importance of clothing in establishing gentility, fashion needed to move into the interior. Restrictions of climate did mean that some fashions enjoyed by those in New England, like wigs or heavy woolens, did not appear as frequently in the Southern colonies. However, when possible, most attempted to follow the current fashion modes anyway.

The existence of fashion plates, dolls, and hairdressing manuals indicated that contemporaries kept up with fashion, as a part of an Atlantic identity in British North America. Merchants advertised items of clothing along with other types of luxury items in weekly papers. One such advertisement, issued by Boston shopkeeper Joseph Peirce featured imports from England and Scotland. Types of items included, “Flannels, Calamancoes, Velvets, Corduroy, Irish Linens, Callicoes, Muslins, and Silk...”²⁴⁹ Another notice from peruke-maker Simeon Thayer, located in Providence, Rhode Island, advertised “the following Sorts of Wigs, viz. Bag, Paste, Brigadier, Scratch, Dress, and Tye Wigs...”²⁵⁰ Mr. Thayer promised “the best and newest Fashion” due to his new London peruke-maker companion, a Mr. Michael Cummings, who

²⁴⁷ Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (New England: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1894), 321-322.

²⁴⁸ Taylor, 311.

²⁴⁹ "Joseph Peirce," Broadside (Boston: Mills and Hicks, 1773), Call Number: XH.90C.8, Rare Book Department, Boston Public Library, accessed July 20, 2015.

²⁵⁰ *The Providence Gazette; and Country Journal*, IS 53, V. II, p. 4, October, 22, 1763, SQN: 1056AFA33171F5CF, *Readex/America’s Historical Newspapers*, The American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA, accessed August 5, 2015.

“undertakes to cut and dress Gentlemen and Ladies Hair, not only in after and the neatest and newest Manner and Mode, as practiced in London; but also to the full Content and Satisfaction of such Gentlemen and Ladies...”²⁵¹ Considered together, these types of notices, for both goods and services, indicate that the appearance of gentility was purchasable.

The procurement of gentility and its display was part of the “refinement of America,” and a “polite society.” These processes sustained themselves through the performance of genteel appearance and behaviors.²⁵² Historian Richard Bushman describes some of these as “speech, dress, body carriage, and manners.”²⁵³ Since the eighteenth century was a period of conspicuous consumption due to a consumer revolution, the genteel as well as the non-genteel become more attached to material goods as a way of attaining refinement. To perform refinement and respectability, one needed to live in a nice home, engage in rituals such as polite conversation, and most importantly, wear fashionable clothing. Gentility depended on the replication and re-enforcement of these mannerisms for its continuation. Because of the importance of consumption in performing gentility, and the need for the performance to continually repeat, these behaviors often occurred in the public sphere, ensuring their noticeability.

A revolution in consumerism during the eighteenth century illustrated clothing’s increased availability and role in performing gentility. Participating in this “cult of commerce” was a large component of being British, which benefited the social status, role, and finances of merchants across the empire.²⁵⁴ Purchasing power rose, which some historians associate with a

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, xii-xiii.

²⁵³ Ibid, xii.

²⁵⁴ Sheryllynne Haggerty, *‘Merely for Money?’: Business Culture in the British Atlantic, 1750-1815* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 235.

developing middle class.²⁵⁵ Christina Hodge argues that the middle class allowed for the normalization of genteel values.²⁵⁶ Sources indicate that those in the middle developed the financial means to participate in consumption.²⁵⁷ This allowed for the display of refinement, allowing them access to genteel circles, especially in the colonies.²⁵⁸ While a middling group of people did participate in consumerism, these “traders, professionals, (and) entrepreneurs” joined the ranks of the genteel because of their status as some of the wealthiest members of society, especially in the region of New England.²⁵⁹

However, because of the greater availability of materials and the increased necessity to display refinement, gentility came under attack as immodest, leading to a backlash. Social commentators noted a rise in the consideration of excessive ornamentation upon dress as “fashionable.” While luxury in clothing grew, so did attempts to restrain it, or express gentility in a different manner. Therefore, throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, gentility’s appearance altered. Between 1750 and 1800, there were certain fashionable staples for genteel men and women’s clothing. For men, this was the three-piece suit which featured a jacket/coat, waistcoat/vest, and breeches.²⁶⁰ To complete the costume, men also wore buckled shoes, stockings, and a wig. Women wore a gown with an exposed internal petticoat, often with a visible stomacher and sometimes a mob cap, hair covering, or a hat. To be modest, these items of clothing needed to reflect gentility through fine fabric and quality and through minor, not

²⁵⁵ McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, 11 and 53. Historians define the development of this middling group during the mid-eighteenth century, which happily participated in copying “the manners of its betters, fashioning self in ever more colorful and elaborate ways, celebrating consumer fads, etc,” (T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 79).

²⁵⁶ Christina J. Hodge, *Consumerism and the Emergence of the Middle Class in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 8.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 16.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁵⁹ Bushman, xiii.

²⁶⁰ C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston Plays Inc., 1972), 183-186.

ostentatious, ornamentation. These genteel staples indicated the most fundamental differences between refined and non-genteel clothing, the focus on fashion over function. Those who worked with their hands needed clothing which would not hinder their work. The genteel, who constructed much of their time around leisure, did not have to worry about this, meaning that they could wear clothing that restricted movement.

Traditionally working people had worn clothes that were “simpler, looser, and more functional in design.”²⁶¹ Historically they were without any embellishments such as button holes, ruffles, bows and lace, and were often homespun from coarser fabrics of inferior quality.²⁶² Other significant differences included how while gentlemen wore breeches, working-class or laboring men wore trousers as they provided greater ease in movement.²⁶³ Working women generally did not wear a hoop, the fabric of her dress was simple, without the floral embellishments of colonial ladies, and their gowns were shorter, also to provide greater movement.²⁶⁴ However, the pervasiveness of consumption in the daily lives of those in British North America meant that working-people started to ignore the fashion vs. function divide. Wigs, are a great example of this change. By the 1740s, they became available to almost all Anglo-American men, stratifying into different styles for various professions.²⁶⁵ Wigmaker’s accommodation to a larger group of men, shows how the need to buy and performance gentility affected all. The continual reliance on wigs to demonstrate masculinity persisted throughout the last half of the eighteenth century.

²⁶¹ Peter F. Copeland, *Working Dress in Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), xiii.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, xiv.

²⁶⁵ Historians of hair and costume identify wigs shrinking and size and becoming more available during the 1740s.

Even during the road to the American Revolution, clothing continued in communicating social position and identity. Though importation became more expensive and items scarcer during the war, colonists kept accepting foreign goods due to a continuing desire to perform gentility as well as control the clothing of others.²⁶⁶ In Williamsburg, Virginia, “So important were inexpensive British woolens and linens to southern planters that some were loath to do without them, even in the face of growing hostility with Britain.”²⁶⁷ During the war, there were some shortages of imported goods, but by April 1776, “a policy of open ports and unrestricted foreign trade...(which) lasted until mid-1778,” brought items in from France directly to New England or indirectly through the West Indies, although trade with Britain became illegal.²⁶⁸ After the wars’ end in 1783, American trade with Britain, “show(s) a sharp increase in imports into the new United States in 1784 to meet pent-up demand, but...fell off over the rest of the 1780s to lower levels that had existed in the early 1770s...by the early 1790s, imports from Britain had reached about the same absolute levels as before the war...”²⁶⁹ The level of desire for luxury goods fluctuated, with visible interest during the war but a decrease after. Therefore, even a period of wartime did not de-emphasize interest in foreign goods and imports due to their importance in constructing a genteel performance in British North America.

During the war, the consumer environment provided by this “revolution” in goods gave colonists a language that made personal, consumable choices into political statements.²⁷⁰ The action of the non-importation of British goods during the 1760s and 70s, allowed “the American

²⁶⁶ Baumgarten, 22.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 95.

²⁶⁸ James F. Shepherd, “British America and the Atlantic Economy,” in Ronald Hoffman, John J. McCusker, Russell R. Menard, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *The Economy of Early America, The Revolutionary Period, 1763-1790* (The University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, 1988), 19.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 26.

²⁷⁰ T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

people to reinvent an entire political culture.”²⁷¹ This argument of T. H. Breen has considerable merit, as non-importation or non-consumption of items such as tea and sugar illustrated the shift from a personal choice to a political statement. However, many colonists decided not to participate in non-importation. Political loyalties and choice/necessity led many to continue to desire imported goods provided by the British Atlantic. Data indicates a continued reliance on imported, British goods leading up to the years of revolution. Even though consumption developed into a political course for revolt, it was not universal. Rather, a reliance on imported luxury items, and thus a need to display gentility or virtue continued.

The above adoption of cultural values, growth of trade, and the importance of consumption created a virtually unrecognizable New England compared to its seventeenth-century version. It did not take long for the seeds of commercialism and regional markets to grow from the maritime economy and spread inland.²⁷² Even though Puritan roots remained behind, contemporaries enthusiastically embraced trade and commerce. Because of these changes, during the eighteenth century, cities in colonial America transformed from small, primitive villages to prosperous cities with sophisticated systems of self-care.²⁷³ Immigrants and the impoverished swarmed into urban areas. Between the years 1630 to 1780, the population of the colony of Massachusetts increased by 200,000 people.²⁷⁴ As port cities grew in distinction and power, development into the frontier slowed down.²⁷⁵ Commerce increased the standard of

²⁷¹ Ibid, xvii.

²⁷² Daniel Vickers, *Farmers & Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina, 1994), 8.

²⁷³ Ibid, 353.

²⁷⁴ “Series Z 1-19, ‘Estimated Population of American Colonies: 1610-1780,’” in *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part 2* (U.S. Department of Commerce, ed. Bureau of the Census, 1975), 1168.

²⁷⁵ Vickers, 258.

living, highlighting the social and fiscal divide between the genteel and non-genteel within cities such as Boston.²⁷⁶

Although colonial cities were full of promise, their physical structure emphasized social distinction.²⁷⁷ Many Bostonians without property lived behind shops where they worked, or in taverns and rented rooms, pushing the poor to live in hybrid commercial and residential neighborhoods.²⁷⁸ Thus, the more affluent areas of the city contrasted against the poorest living spaces, emphasizing the differences between the two. Those of higher social status tended to live in the surrounding communities of Roxbury, Cambridge, or Milton.²⁷⁹ Genteel homes within Boston decorated the south and west ends.²⁸⁰ This separation of neighborhoods and private space created a genteel mistrust of those outside of their circles.²⁸¹ The wealthy held all of the important government and town positions, “entry into which was conditioned by commercial achievement and family background.”²⁸² Even though mobile laborers made the economy of Boston viable and functional, they did not own a permanent residence or substantial property, and therefore did not have much representation.

²⁷⁶ Claudia Durst Johnson, *Daily Life in Colonial New England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 199. Johnson also writes, "The taming of the New England frontier and establishment of European civilization meant that the majority of residents were not spending most of their time bating back the wilderness and just struggling to survive from day to day. There were more well-established roads and better means of transportation. Civilization brought a sufficient abundance of services and commodities, earlier available only to the rich that people of modest means had had to spend many hours and much labor to provide for them. The services of tailors, furniture makers, stone masons, and apothecaries, for example, could be used by the person of average means. On the intellectual front, there were printers of books and newspapers, and better-educated school teachers," (199-200).

²⁷⁷ Keith Krawczynski, *Daily Life in the Colonial City* (The Greenwood Press Daily Life Through History Series, Daily Life in the United States: Santa Barbara, CA, 2013), 104.

²⁷⁸ James A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 22 (January, 1965), 85, accessed February 11, 2016, doi: 10.2307/1920768.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 86.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

²⁸¹ Krawczynski, 104.

²⁸² Henretta, 90.

During the 1750s and 60s, growing numbers of urban poor crowded into urban seaports and sometimes depended on assistance from almshouses.²⁸³ Boston doubled per capita expenditures on poor relief between 1740-1760, and doubled it again by 1775.²⁸⁴ Growing numbers of poor residents packed ever more tightly into certain areas of the city, sharply contrasting the spacious homes and splendid gardens of the refined.²⁸⁵ Cities could be unfriendly for the urban poor as genteel contemporaries in British society ridiculed the poor for a “lack of social graces.”²⁸⁶ The performance of gentility privileged the elite with awareness of how they appeared to others, meaning that amongst the genteel, their social status became even more crucial in the public sphere.²⁸⁷

All of these factors, increased consumption, the perversion of gentility, and the knowledge of passing aided through dress exposed concerns over transgressions to social boundaries. There is a whole body of literature about class panic, and most historians on costume during the eighteenth century highlight this ideal.²⁸⁸ During the eighteenth century, social commentary stressed that the genteel must follow modest dress. If readers followed this advice, they would discover pretenders. An anecdote in the London publication of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, later printed in a 1752 edition of *The Boston Evening Post*, stressed that “it must be confessed worthy

²⁸³ Taylor, 307.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 307-308.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 308.

²⁸⁶ Kirstin Olsen, *Daily Life in 18th-Century England* (Westport, CT: The Greenwood Press, 1999), 16.

²⁸⁷ Bushman, xiv.

²⁸⁸ For more see: Stephen J. Bullock, "A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55:2 (April 1998): 231-258; Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the "Lower Sort": Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the "Lower Sort": Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; Thomas Kidd, "Passing as a Pastor: Clerical Imposture in the Colonial Atlantic World," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 14 (Summer, 2004), accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rac.2004.14.2.149>.

of our attention, to consider how we may preserve a just decorum in dress, and avoid everything but may bring upon ourselves the imputation of indecency, singularity, or profuseness.”²⁸⁹ Such intentions cautioned people to look out for those who had not *earned* their clothing. By earned, they meant being born to the correct layer of society. To counteract this, the magazine offered this advice: “Of a promiscuous use of fine clothes be countenanced, who, that is really deserving of our reverence, can be distinguished from the prostrate and base born miscreant, that lies in wait to deceive under the guise of a noble garb.”²⁹⁰ Commentators asked serious questions, such as how to protect daughters, women, and the weaker minded from ill-intentioned charlatans, disguised in genteel clothing.

This fear and anxiety led to a belief in the need for social control involving the restriction or regulation of dress. The sentiment reflecting the problem of passing and imposture is also visible in a hairdressing manual featured in Chapter 2. James Stewart’s publication, *Plocacosmos* noted that:

So motley a thing is good company that many people, without birth, rank, and merit, intrude into it, by their own forwardness, and others get into it, by the protection of some considerable person, in this fashionable good company. The best manners, and the purest language are most unquestionably to be learned; for they establish, and gave the *ton* (the latest fashion), to both what are called language and manners...²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ *The Boston Evening Post*, March 16, 1752, *Newsbank/Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers*, accessed July 16, 2015, Document Number: 108EBF9B64080F60.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ James Stewart, *Plocacosmos: or the Whole Art of Hairdressing, &c. or the WHOLE ART OF HAIRDRESSING; Wherein is Contained, Ample Rules for the Young Artizan, More Particularly for Ladies Women, VALETS, &c. &c. AS WELL AS Directions for Persons to dress their own Hair; Also Ample and wholesome Rules to preserve the Hair. The Hair completely analyzed, as to its Growth, Nature, Colour &c. and all and every Article used in the Hair, on the Head, Face, &c. as FALSE HAIR, PERFUMERY, COSMETICS, &c. clearly analyzed and examined; with a History of the HAIR and HEAD DRESS, from the earliest AGES to the present Time, particularly as they have appeared upon the English State for these last Two Hundred Years; with Strictures on the present Performers belonging to each Theatre. The Plan of this work requiring it, there are also complete Rules for the Management of Children and Education of Youth; and excellent Rules for the Preservation of the Health and Happiness of age; being a Guide through the Seven Ages of Man: The whole interspersed with Moral Thoughts, being necessary for all Families. By James Stewart. With an elegant FRONTSPICE, and other COPPER-PLATES.* (London, 1782). Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, Document Number: CW106139936.

This manual, published in 1781, illustrates an awareness of “many people” penetrating rings of genteel society. Here, an understood belief dictated that the non-deserving could learn and therefore possibly replicate genteel mannerisms. Therefore, it became more and more necessary for the genteel to protect their societal position.

The re-emphasis of the superiority of the genteel became a chosen method of defense in the re-clarification of social division. This model of natural and biological supremacy re-iterated ideas about the transcendence of the genteel body, which immodest fashion choices could not overwhelm. For example, a 1775 essay in the *Westminster Magazine* described that:

A handsome woman and a genteel man may wear and do anything with impunity in the Circle of Fashion; but how very absurd do these garments look, when hung upon a little black crooked woman; or on a fat, short squash of a fellow, who with a waist to his coat below his rump, and a hat not so big as his hand, looks like a Jack-Pudding come to entertain the world with the absurdities of the Wardrobe!²⁹²

Here the genteel are described as inherently different than the nongenteel. The nongenteel body, which was naturally crooked, bent, and misshapen prevented the proper wearing and thus effect of fine clothing. The genteel body, more natural, virtuous, and touched by modesty, allowed for an appreciation of any visible pleasantness of clothing, despite whether commentators agreed on its appropriateness. This anecdote and others like it illustrated the relationship between dress and the body. However, because of fluctuating categories of natural and artificial, society started to question the justification of the genteel/non-genteel hierarchy. Clothing specifically aided in the deconstruction of this dichotomy. Not only did the visual effect of clothing blur normal distinctions, but its physical composition did as well. For example, some fabrics, such as cheaper

²⁹² "Momus: or, The Laughing Philosopher, Number XXIX," *Westminster Magazine or, The Pantheon of Taste* (April 1, 1775): 177, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=33973987&site=ehostlive&ppid=divp17>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 4, 2015.

wools clothed slaves, as well as poor Anglo-Americans meaning that the physical properties of clothing erased distinctions between societal groups that were usually clear.²⁹³ Because clothing contributed to these unstable categorizations of identity, its policing and control, as well as a re-emphasis on the role of modesty in gentility, grew more necessary than ever.

Because of modesty's importance as a feature of gentility, its absence led to a war on clothing's new, more luxurious direction first noted during the 1740s with commentary on the hoop-petticoat. Publications highlighted the necessity of dressing according to one's station. This sentiment is further echoed in "Thoughts upon Dress," a 1775 essay in *Lady's Magazine; or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* described:

People should always consider their *situation and fortune*. Persons of rank may take liberties in dress, that others would be highly condemned for : they are above the reach of insults from the vulgar, who are sure to affront every one they dare, whom they see dressed in any thing which they cannot even ape : and I have known people, even of very large fortune, who were in *trade*, laughed at by those who were equally ridiculous in respect to their own dress, but looked upon themselves as privileged, I suppose, from possessing an equal share of arrogance, self-sufficiency, and assurance, as birth and fortune...I must not forget the present ridiculous mode of dress amongst our fantastical females, I mean that detestable and filthy fashion of wearing a load of false hair, and added to that an equal quantity of wool, which is mattered together by an infinite quantity of grease and powder, which, in spite of the elegant appearance of this composition of filth, cannot fail of *creating* some *lively* ideas to a squeamish stomach, which, I fear, often turns out to the disadvantage of the wearer. But yet they still persist in this enormous folly, in spite of the daily detestation, which is expressed by the very men before whom they endeavor to appear amiable.²⁹⁴

Here there are several items of note. First, the essay reminds its readers to always consider situation and fortune: to assess one's place in the social hierarchy when dressing. Second, the higher an individual's rank, the more they could ignore these suggestions. This connects to

²⁹³ Baumgarten, 82.

²⁹⁴ "Mrs. T---ss's Advice to Her Daughter, Letter II. Thoughts on Dress," *Lady's Magazine; or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, Appropriated Solely to Their Use & Amusement* (July 1, 1775): 350, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=359 9256 9&site=ehostlive&ppid=divp0014>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 3, 2015.

earlier assertions of the ability of the genteel to wear whatever they would like. Possession of a versatility in fashion came from not only the natural superiority of the genteel body, but also because the refined believed themselves above ridicule, as the top-ranking members of society. Next, the passage indicates an attempt to describe differences between the traditionally genteel and newly able participators in consumption, or those involved in trade. Tradesmen, an example of new money, especially in the region of New England, benefitted greatly from the increased consumption of the eighteenth century. Because of foundational ideas about what made a person genteel, many grew uncomfortable about the presence of the newly refined. Finally, the essay comments on the trend of false hair, and the pomatums and powders used to make the head and hair more fashionable and presentable. These actions indicated a lack of modesty in clothing. Because of its perceived disregard for modesty, mothers warned their daughters about keeping to their station, staying away from “filthy fashion.”²⁹⁵

Due to their recognized positionality as the weaker sex, women particularly needed to stay away from fashion. Therefore, women received criticism for their attempts in fashion often. One such critique on the over-ornamentation of the female body appeared as an essay, published in 1760, titled “Of Female Ornaments.” It indicated how when “the fair sex,” ornamented themselves to achieve a modest display, they often went too far. For example:

Women have supposed that art might aid nature, and that their charms might derive new lustre from such assistance: In this they are not mistaken: ornaments employed with skill, display beauty to the best advantage; but they seem in general to abuse the succor they borrow from art... When they have found that a little ornament improved their beauty, they concluded, that by multiplying those ornaments, they should still, more and more, augment their charms. In consequence of this mistaken opinion, they have loaded themselves with ornaments of all sorts: besides jewels and embroidery, ribbands, lace, furbelows, and pinking, have been lavishly spread over all parts of their dress: even flowers and feathers; nay, all productions of nature; have either been disposed or imitated in different parts of their attire. Silks of all colours are made up with a profusion carried

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

to great excess, and to prevent it requires as much silk to rove two ladies, as to hang a salloon.²⁹⁶

Thus, the commodification of nature and the ability to display it led to an excessive abundance of genteel beauty, and therefore the absence of modesty. Because of this assumption, the author argued that "...the charms of their person are entirely buried under this encumbered apparel...disguises the regularity of their features, and their shape is totally hidden within a vast circumference of drapery: so that in short, properly speaking, the whole woman is lost, and we see nothing left but the fantastic frippery of her attire."²⁹⁷ Due to the destabilization of nature/artifice, contemporaries tried to reaffirm gentility through display and therefore, consequently took away from their own naturalness. The quest to display gentility through correcting social imbalances thus became misguided. The author finishes with:

It would be well, if women would have more confidence in their native charms, and less in those little stratagems of lust. All these petty graces, which they put on at their looking-glasses, are inconsiderable in comparison to those with which nature has endowed them. All those ornaments in which they are so curious, do not augment their power of attraction, and often destroys it. Jewels, embroidery, and rich silks, add nothing to their beauty; they only serve to distract our attention, and render her more disagreeable, who has no native attractive...It is a pity that women will not be sensible, that nature has been at the expence of adorning them, and scarce left them any thing to improve. Let them rely on the methods of pleasing, which they derive from nature, and they will find those means the surest...In this age a general magnificence confound the one with the other, in external appearance; but manners, language, and sentiment, will always establish real distinctions, which can never be destroyed.²⁹⁸

Here again, is a rejection of baubles and ornaments, described as artificial and thus more appropriate for the morally corrupt. Sensibility and an over-excess of display did not go hand in

²⁹⁶ "Of Female Ornaments," *Grand Magazine of Universal Intelligence & Monthly Chronicle of Our Own Times*, (London: October 1, 1760): 501, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=34862409&site=ehostlive&ppid=divp19>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 3, 2015.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 501.

hand. Women instead needed to rely on their natural graces. However, as convincing as some may have found this argument it continually appeared for the next twenty to thirty years, emphasizing that it did not immediately take.

The importance of modesty reappeared in a 1771 essay in the London publication *Town & Country Magazine*, titled, "Of Propriety with regard to dress," reiterating the importance of displaying modesty through clothing.²⁹⁹ Within it, the author included several comments to highlight how inappropriate dressing occurred throughout all designations of society. The first reads:

"Old D-----n, who thrusts his *wrinkled front* into every public place, who thinks he can never appear like a gentleman without lace or embroidery, and who strains his few locks, all grey ones, into a despicable queue, most assuredly dresses with a striking impropriety. By wearing plain cloaths, and by covering his half-bald head with a decent wig, he would gain that respect which is due to age, and which is generally paid to people advanced in years whenever they appear, if they do not discover a violent propensity to *look young*."³⁰⁰

In addition, the author remarks upon a Mrs. B-----l who:

...carries her furrowed face to any spot dedicated to gaiety, is an exquisite *companion* to the above-mentioned old gentleman, as she makes herself full as ridiculous by her lofty disregard of propriety. The staring quantity of crimson ribbons about her head and neck, and her immense cap, *Olympus high*, sufficiently prove her passion for *juvenility*, and at the same time extort the severest raillery from every girl before whom she assumes airs and graces, which render her more alarmingly ridiculous. And yet Mrs. B-----l is an enviable creature with all her frightfulness: for she has so comfortable a share of vanity, that she really thinks herself the object of universal admiration, tho she, by disfiguring herself, in order to appear in an alluring light, is universally despised, and very frequently affronted.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ "On Propriety with Regard to Dress," *Town & Country Magazine, or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction & Entertainment* (April 1, 1771): 203-204, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=33921944&site=ehostlive&ppid=divp39>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 3, 2015.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

In the first anecdote, the author describes the man in non-flattering terms. He is an elderly gentleman, whose characterization of having a “wrinkled front” adds a sourness to his demeanor. However, his desire to always wear lace and embroidery made him even more disagreeable. The presence of such additives to his appearance demonstrates a belief in an over-emphasis of dress. In addition, he managed to squeeze what little hair he has into a queue, causing him to look reprehensible. As an older person, the author believed that he deserves respect, but will not receive it simply because of his dress. His overzealousness in keeping up with fashion caused him to forget his place.

As “an exquisite companion” a woman accompanying him, also followed the ridiculousness of fashions. By deciding to wear her hair decorated with ribbons, a cap, and dressed high upon the head, she engaged in over-the-top fashion she lost all propriety. The author also noted an interesting paradox in the woman’s appearance. Through his eyes, the woman appeared unsightly and ridiculous, but she believed that she looks refined. So, while she possessed great confidence, her clothing disfigured her natural shape, causing those who observe her to feel repelled. Anecdotes such as these indicated an importance to dress correctly and again, modestly. Another essay in the *Hibernian Magazine* in 1777 dedicated to “propriety in dress” noted that:

Propriety in dress requires that it should be suited to the shape, condition, and age of the persons. All disproportion should be avoided; it is contrary to propriety, and consists either in an excess of neatness, which is the error of vanity and self-love, or in too much negligence, the fault of lazy and idle persons, who are naturally slovenly and dirty...Conform to the fashion, and avoid the two extremes of affectation and negligence; be not the first to follow, nor the last to forsake it; retrench the luxury of dress, and reduce it within the bounds of moderation; this will impress an idea of your virtue and good sense.³⁰²

³⁰² “Of Propriety in Person and Dress,” *Hibernian Magazine, Or, Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge* (Edinburgh: April 1, 1777): 221-223, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=33127307&site=ehost-live&ppid=divp6>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 2, 2015.

Here again, the editors of the magazine provided the same advice. Contemporaries acknowledged an unclear, fuzzy line of distinction between natural and artificial, or genteel and non-genteel. Contemporaries must be careful of being too neat and then being in “negligence.” Incorrect approaches to achieving propriety in dress included trying too hard and not trying at all. Similar advice appeared in the aforementioned “Thoughts on Dress” in the *Lady’s Magazine; or Entertaining Companion*. It instructed readers to:

...never be the first in the fashion, and when you do conform to it, let it be in the most moderate degree; and, even in this, much depends; first, on the situation a person is placed in ; secondly, their fortune ; and thirdly, their own persons are to be considered : for a beautiful woman will not be so much condemned for entering into the extravagancy of fashion, as a plain or deformed women would be. But the essential point in dress is to consider what is really and truly becoming...In a woman, it is certainly allowable to ornament her person, especially if she is young and handsome. A judicious choice in dress sets off her personal charms: but in a plain or deformed woman, it is more than *ridiculous* it is *disgustful*; it shews a weakness that is unpardonable...Even those who are allowed to be proper objects for dress, should be particularly careful in the *choice* of their ornaments; never to wear any thing in imitation of things of value, such as *shining* ornaments, which are daily purchased by the vulgar, as false stones, bugles, &c, and also too great a variety of colours; leave these to strolling players, and to women whose *trade* it is to catch the eye; they are the allurements and trappings of a harlot.³⁰³

The essay emphasized the importance of modesty and moderate styles in dress. Here again, the argument that fashion should follow the physical characteristics reappeared. It also reaffirmed the idea or belief of the superiority of the genteel body.

So, while commentators noted that ornamentations in fashion improved the overall countenance and charms of the female form, they faulted women for going too far in creating representations of nature for new appearances. This disconnect lay in the foundations of the natural and its relationship to the genteel body. Contemporaries needed to reflect modesty in

³⁰³ "Mrs. T---ss's Advice to Her Daughter, Letter II. Thoughts on Dress," 1775, 350.

dress, but someone with fortune had the option of greater selectivity in what they wore. Although the writer uses the terms of “beautiful” and “plain” or “deformed,” they were merely euphemisms for genteel and non-genteel. Compared to the non-genteel body, the genteel was more perfect and therefore beautiful. This quest in policing dress to reclaim and extract gentility from its over-commodified state led to changes in fashion and its display. However, without a clear definition of where the line between natural and artificial lay, writers critiqued women’s efforts through genteel attempts to correct the “problem.”

These blurred boundaries between natural and artificial, which bled into genteel costuming, created new forms of satire in print and drawing. Some felt these new styles, and those who wore them (characters such as Macaronis³⁰⁴) were over the top and sensational. Still, others believed ostentatious dress represented French sentiments, not English. These types of figures, who satirists characterized as fops and dandies had influence that “was so far-reaching that the extravagances of their dress were even adopted by young lawyers and doctors.”³⁰⁵

Several prints produced during the 1760s and 70s illustrated these changes. Well-known satirical London printer Matthew Darly, made collections of what he called “caricatures and characters.” These included displays of fashion, which he and others found amusing. His 1777 print, “Fruit Stall,” [fig. 20] shows the side profile of a woman hosting a fruity still-life in her hair.³⁰⁶ Melons act as the rolls of the hair, pears and bunches decorate the sides and a large pineapple basket of peaches crests at the top. Another print from 1777, titled “The Flower

³⁰⁴ Amelia Rauser, “Hair, Authenticity, and the Self-Made Macaroni,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 1, Special Issue: Hair (Fall 2004), accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053630>, writes that Macaroni’s were, “Named for the pasta dish that rich young Grand Tourists brought back from their sojourns in Rome, the Macaroni was known in the 1760s as an elite figure marked by the cultivation of European travel.” (101)

³⁰⁵ Jane Dorner, *Fashion: The Changing Shape of Fashion through the Years* (Boston, MA: Octopus Books, 1974), 83-84.

³⁰⁶ Matthew Darly, “Fruit Stall,” Illustration (London, 1777) From the British Museum Collection Online, Museum Number: J,5.123, accessed March 27, 2016, © Trustees of the British Museum.

Garden” [fig. 21] shows the side profile of a woman with a massive coiffure and a plotted garden on the crest of the head.³⁰⁷ The south end of the garden sports a small gate and a gentleman visitor while the north a gazebo. Large rose and flower vines ornament the rest of the hair. Such prints indicated the amusing character that extreme styles of hairdressing gained by the latter half of the eighteenth century. Here artists used nature to illustrate a created, artificial construct of false hair promoting gentility. The commodification of nature thus supported the commodification of gentility, prompting an over-abundance of “refined” display.

An essay titled, the “Genteel Disease,” appearing in a 1781 London publication of *Town & Country Magazine*, specifically spoke on this overindulgence of refinement.³⁰⁸ A symptom of this disease was a “genteel mania” in which people dressed in a manner above their position.³⁰⁹ This “mania” permeated all areas of society. The essay further remarked that the disease blurred distinctions and “promot(ed) a leveling principle.”³¹⁰ The “genteel disease” caused ordinary people to forget their place. Without modesty, gentility became unanchored, losing all propriety. It morphed into a fad, thus prompting those unworthy to participate. As a result:

To do the genteel thing, to wear a genteel thing, a genteel method of education, a genteel way of becoming either a knave or bankrupt, has ruined as many once worthy families as a plague or a civil war, and rooted out of this country more real virtues, than can be replanted for many centuries.³¹¹

The author suggests that gentility is not a “real virtue,” emphasizing a separation between the two characteristics, identifying the first as a social evil. Gentility, which had swayed too much

³⁰⁷ Matthew Darly, “The Flower Garden,” Illustration (London, 1777) From the British Museum Collection Online, Museum Number: J,5.124, accessed March 27, 2016. © Trustees of the British Museum.

³⁰⁸ “Genteel Disease,” *Town & Country Magazine, or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction & Entertainment* (April 1, 1781): 202-203, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=33469628&site=ehostlive&ppid=divp36>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 3, 2015.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 203.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*.

³¹¹ *Ibid*, 202.

toward luxury and debauchery, could destroy families. Without modesty, gentility became destructive and unnatural, thus artificial and empty. The loss of modesty directly connected to the newfound ability to acquire gentility, prompting the loss of its naturalness. A re-emphasis upon modesty could make gentility natural again. A modest character firmly rested on displaying virtue and sense through a moderate pursuit of fashion.³¹² Because of this recognition, modesty needed to be returned to the genteel through the control of clothing.³¹³

Therefore, those who contracted the “genteel disease” through its most defining symptom, clothing, received growing jibes and hostility. They detracted from the mission of retrieving modesty for the genteel by promoting its commodification and its presence as a fad. An anecdote in the *Boston Magazine* on October 1, 1783, titled “Fashion’s the word!” described, “the many awkward fantastical and ridiculous figures, I daily observe in the streets of this great metropolis (Boston) of both sexes, give me no great reason to imagine good sense, propriety, and discernment...”³¹⁴ In it, the author followed some different women, remarking on their appearance as follows:

I met a young lady a few days ago, not taller than myself, that is, in other words, under four feet ten inches, with a hoop as wide, if not wider, than she was high; my readers need not be informed she was a preposterous figure. The same morning I followed another lady with her hair hanging near half way down her back, and so plastered with pomatum and powder, as to be in the view of every discerning man, both ridiculous and disgusting. A third lady I met, not long afterwards, in Cornhill, with her face painted too plainly not to be discovered at first sight, and her demeanour too affected not to be taken notice of, even on passing by. In short, the many awkward fantastical and ridiculous figures, I daily observe in the streets of this great metropolis, of both sexes, give me no great reason to imagine, good-sense, propriety, and discernment, have the smallest share in setting, off the persons, or adjusting the dress of either ladies or gentlemen, in the

³¹² John Brewer and Roy Porter, ed. *Consumption and the World of Goods* (Routledge: London, 1993), 49.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ “Fashion’s the Word! *Boston Magazine* (October 1, 1783): 8-9

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=32752346&site=ehost-live&ppid=divp16>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 3, 2015.

present day, but the goddess Fashion, is indiscriminately worshipped by all parties, both young old and, without distinction...³¹⁵

Here are several different characters, who by participating in fashionable trends, became spectacles and are described as “fantastical and ridiculous.” The first woman’s dress disfigures the natural proportions of her body so much that the author describes her as particularly unsightly. The second woman placed so many additives in her hair, that she also appeared frightful, all in the pursuit of a natural look. Finally, the third women properly followed fashion, thus achieving modesty. Despite the presence of the last example, the “genteel disease” clearly spread throughout the city of Boston.

The ability of certain items or rituals to affect social boundaries formed a large part of the problem that commentators had with the “genteel disease.” Literature and commentary noted how particular items of costume changed and then reflected a person’s diminished capacity. As apparent from the above anecdote, the hoop-petticoat and hair were some of these.³¹⁶ George Alexander Stevens and Edward Beetham’s *Lecture on Heads* toured various cities and towns in Britain, also appearing as publications for consumption. They lampooned the transformative power of wigs, and head coverings, mocking the relationship between social stratification and

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ For more on eighteenth-century hair and hairdressing see: Richard Corson, *Fashions in Hair: The First Five Thousand Years*, 1965; Joyce Asser, *Historic Hairdressing*, 1966; Ann Charles and Roger DeAnfrasio, *The History of Hair*, 1970; James Stevens Cox, *The Story of Wigs through the ages: from 3400 BC to 1974 AD*, 1974; Mary Brooks Picken, *A Dictionary of Culture and Fashion*, 1985; Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*, 1993; Diane Simon, *Hair: Public, Political, Extremely Personal*, 2000; *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Volume 38, No. 1, Fall 2004, Special Issue: Hair, Angela Rosenthal, "Raising Hair," Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach, "Big Hair," and Amelia Rauser, "Hair, Authenticity, and the Self-Made Macaroni,"; Lynn Festa, "Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29: 2 (Spring 2005): 47-90, accessed September 9, 2014; Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang, *Hair: Styling, Culture, and Fashion*, 2008 and Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunnington and P.E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History*, 2010.

clothing.³¹⁷ Stevens remarked that “Wigs, as well as *books*, are furniture for the head, and both wigs, and *books*, are sometimes equally voluminous.”³¹⁸ A collection of pamphlets detailing the “lives” of characters such as “Tom the Brainless” and “Dick Hairbrain” penned by John Trumbull and published in New Haven, Connecticut in 1775, titled, *The Progress of Dulness*, showcased how a preoccupation with fashion could actually change the intellect of a person.³¹⁹

The practice of overornamenting the hair, detracted from the people who did it. In discussing the use of feathers in headdresses, an essay in a 1775 London publication commented:

So, because some very beautiful and elegant women have plumed themselves on this dress, we see every Citizen’s wife and daughter feathered out in a like style: nay, the very servants pursue the Fashion ; and I am not told, that the wings of Geese, which used to be kept to dust the house, are converted into ornaments for the heads of the Cooks and the House-maids. It is amazing how an innovation in the mode of Dress can occasion such extraordinary and extravagant demands for the different commodities.³²⁰

Again, the terminology of “beautiful and elegant” referenced those of the genteel class. The author notes how even servants sought to place the feathers of birds in their hair to keep up with fashion. The ridiculousness of this trend receives emphasis through the transformation of goose feathers from once dusting the house to now appearing on the heads of “cooks” and

³¹⁷ Stevens, George Alexander. *A Lecture on Heads, with Additions, By Mr. Pilon, As delivered by Mr. Charles Lewes. To which is added, an Essay on Satire, with Forty-Seven Heads by Nesbit, From Designs by Thurston* (London: T. Bensley, 1802): 7, Google Books. <https://books.google.com/books?id=ZadbAAAQAAJ>, accessed September 30, 2015.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ John Trumbull, *The progress of dullness, part second: or An essay on the life and character of Dick Hairbrain, of finical memory; being an astronomical calendar, calculated for the meridian of New-York, north latitude, 41°. West longitude 72° 30’; but which may serve without material error, for any of the neighboring climates: containing, among other curious and surprising particulars Dick’s soliloquy on a college-life – a description of a country-fop – receipt to make a gentleman, with the fop’s creed and exposition of the Scriptures – Dick’s gradual progress from a clown to a coxcomb – his travels, gallantry, and opinion of the ladies – his peripaetia and catastrophe, with the moral and application of the whole. Published for the universal benefit of mankind* (New Haven, CT: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1773), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale Document Number: CW112112229, Iowa State University Library, accessed August 6, 2015.

³²⁰ “Momus: or, The Laughing Philosopher, Number XXIX,” *Westminster Magazine or, The Pantheon of Taste* (April 1, 1775): 177, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9h&AN=33973987&site=ehostlive&ppid=divp17>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 4, 2015.

“housemaids.” Critiques continually demonstrated the power of clothing and fashion trends to blur social boundaries.

Men’s hair also received criticism in addition to women’s. The eighteenth-century man wore a wig. Wigs in themselves changed substantially over the second half of the eighteenth century. By the 1740s, they became smaller and more accessible to all, so much so that, “all except the lowest classes wore wigs of some kind.”³²¹ As an important component of masculinity and of genteel costume overall, gentlemen had contracts with wigmakers to make sure they remained in fashion.³²² Because wigs, like other items of clothing, became more available during the eighteenth century, they eroded social distinctions. Wigmakers harvested the hair of women, not of the male wig-wearer, to make the wig. Therefore, wigs physically represented the blurring of contrasts between people, thus contributing to the flimsiness of social boundaries.³²³

As an essential part of the overall costume for eighteenth-century Anglo-American and British men, wigs composed a large part of the performance of modesty and gentility. Hair differs from other parts of the body, as people can sculpt and remove it without causing irreparable harm. Hair functioned as a bridge between nature and culture, becoming critical in “self-fashioning performance.”³²⁴ Because hair grows from the body, ultimately produced by nature, but shaped by cultural ideas, the idea of a bridge demonstrates how hair helps connect and illustrate these fluctuating constructs of nature and artifice functioned as a social expression. Hairdressers understood their role in shaping hair through a fusion of art and science, thus connecting nature and culture together, described in Chapter 2. The wig, as a culturally

³²¹ Riberio, 128.

³²² Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America: Gender and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2011), 62; Dorner, 48.

³²³ Lynn Festa, "Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29: 2 (Spring 2005): 47-90, accessed September 9, 2014.

³²⁴ Powell and Roach, "Big Hair," 83.

recognized artificial construct, only added an additional layer of complexity to the understanding of hair.

During its popularity, the wig traversed genteel boundaries. Commentary on the scratch wig, introduced in Chapter 2, appeared during the latter half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. It became popular due to its representation of a return to modesty. Contemporaries consistently connected it to an English identity. *The Town and Country Magazine* in 1773 claimed in “An English Macaroni at Paris,” that “An English man may assure himself, that he will be better looked upon in a scratch wig and a riding-frock, than by *outréing* the Parisian fashions...”³²⁵ Fashion from the continent, which contemporaries systemically identified as too luxurious, had corrupted the gentility. Gentry and high ranking members of society also wore the wig. Listed under “Domestic Intelligence” in *The Gentleman’s and London Magazine* in 1779, the Lord Chancellor, although not named, “was pressed in Long Acre, as he was walking, buttoned up, as usual in his old nasty grey frock, slouched hat, and scratch-wig.”³²⁶ Therefore, the use of the scratch wig, already debated upon due to its unique positionality within the nature/artifice dichotomy, transcended up into the genteel classes by the 1770s.

Initially, contemporaries did not associate the scratch wig with gentility. For example, a piece written for London’s, *Town and Country Magazine* in 1776, titled “An Extraordinary Character,” told the tale of a Sir George Contrast whose “French valet de Chambre is supposed to be one of the best striseurs in Europe, nevertheless he shaves himself and has his brown scratch wig, unacquainted with power, combed out by a two-penny barber, as the French have no

³²⁵ “An English Macaroni at Paris,” *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment. For May, 1773*. Contained in *Volume V for 1773* (London: A. Hamilton, 1773): 261 available on Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=VbsPAAAAQAAJ> accessed on September 1, 2015.

³²⁶ “Domestic Intelligence,” *The Gentleman’s and London Magazine for July, 1779* (London, 1779): 436, Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=2voRAAAAYAAJ>, accessed October 5, 2015, <https://books.google.com/books?id=2voRAAAAYAAJ>, 436.

idea of bob wigs.”³²⁷ In this example, even though this gentleman has access to a Frenchman to take care of his grooming needs, he instead opts to wear the scratch wig, indicating a genteel embrace of it. Thus, the genteel adoption of the scratch wig indicates not only the ability of certain items of clothing to transgress social boundaries, but also the redefinition of nature due to the successful attempt to reclaim gentility as their own. By claiming the scratch wig for themselves, the “naturalness” attached to the wig, thus also adhered to gentility. In 1785, Abigail Adams who was accompanying her husband, John Adams the ambassador to Britain, in London, wrote home to her son, John Quincy. In her letter dated Wednesday, July 20, she described the behavior of King George III in that “He shaves himself also, as he asserts, and sometimes wears his *scratch Wig* to the Levee, so much for His Majesty.”³²⁸

By the 1790s in America, even though some new fashions emerged along with the birth of the United States, gentility expressed through clothing still had an important place in society. It continued to reinforce “the established order,” although it “dropped to a lower level and separated the middle class from the workers and marginal people.”³²⁹ Arguments about gentility and its overly emphasized presence in American society continued to rage during the decade as part of the “competing versions of republicanism...mapped onto positions concerning the French Revolution and the conflict between France and England.”³³⁰ Refinement in America continued with the use of costume, but the genteel instead used it in a republican society, which “held out the hope of elevation from ordinary existence into an exalted society of superior beings. That

³²⁷ "Character of Sir George Contrast. An Oddity." *The Gentleman's and London Magazine, For August, 1776* (London, 1776): 504, Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=gKBQAAMAAJ>, accessed on September 22, 2015.

³²⁸ "Letter from Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams," July 20, 1785, *Adams Family Correspondence, Volume VI*, The Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-04-06-02-0072>, accessed March 5, 2017.

³²⁹ Bushman, xv.

³³⁰ Haulman, 223.

promise and hope, rooted in the memory of a forbidden old regime, gave gentility its strength.”³³¹ Therefore, with the new position of the United States in relationship to Britain and the rest of the Atlantic community, clothing continued to function as a principle expression of gentility and prestige, whose appropriateness was debated into the early years of the new republic.

All in all, conversations in print, appearing between the decades of the 1750s-1790s, indicated the importance of clothing in society. Because of its greater availability, clothing as an indicator of status became unreliable. Defunct sumptuary laws, which no longer policed the border of what people could wear, meant that it fell to society to correct this problem through some form of reinforcement. The best way to do this was to identify the most natural components of gentility and Englishness and defend it by commenting on expressions of clothing. These two conversations in print media revolved around the preservation of modesty and virtue, ideals fully attached to the genteel. Contemporaries were never clear on where the line between natural and artificial lay, so, in the eye of social commentators, they always overstepped and overcorrected. This meant that reactions to over-ornamentation and to fashion in general, continued to progress, despite attempts to stop it. An obsession with rescuing modesty and infusing it back into gentility appears consistently throughout the decades. The absence of modesty, and its disconnection from gentility specifically evolved from the development of an Atlantic consciousness, which had already unmoored the balance and categories of nature and artifice. Through the defense of the categories, both the genteel and the non-genteel initiated the destabilization of social divisions, generally justified through the stability of natural and artificial.

³³¹ Bushman, xix.

CHAPTER 4: MONSTROUS EXAMPLES OF TRANSGRESSIVE DRESSING

Newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides were common in the public sphere throughout the British North Atlantic between 1750-1800. Notices and warnings concerning strangers, strollers, transients, vagabonds, and villains abounded. These shadowy deceivers pretended their way right into the homes of the genteel, causing great concern. Masqueraders used dress to disguise themselves and their intentions. Ideas presented in Chapters 2 and 3 illustrate the great fluctuation of styles in clothing which directly correlated with conflicting ideas about what made something natural and artificial. Throughout the eighteenth century increasing numbers of unmoored people migrated to and from urban and rural areas. These newcomers came without their pasts, and they too were able to construct new identities prompting increased anxiety. These fears and unreliability in identity directly stemmed from cases of individuals who purposefully dressed to trick and deceive. These manifestations, specific examples of transgressive dressing, symbolized an unnatural, social monster for the eighteenth-century British North Atlantic. Each case represented the consequences of the commodification of gentility through the normalization of refined dress. The greater availability of clothing meant that its representation became unreliable. However, the genteel continued to have faith in their ability to identify a non-genteel imposter.³³² Therefore, to safeguard and protect gentility's former reliability, they attempted to control fashionable trends, and police the behavior of the non-genteel.

³³² For more see: Stephen J. Bullock, "A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55:2 (April 1998): 231-258; Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; Thomas Kidd, "Passing as a Pastor: Clerical Imposture in the Colonial Atlantic World," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 14 (Summer, 2004), accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rac.2004.14.2.149>.

Because of the complexity of genteel performance, the refined believed that, in the end, only they had the ability to illustrate refinement correctly. This belief was so powerful that it trumped the understanding of clothing's newfound unreliability in communicating social cues. The genteel gained overconfidence in their ability to spot a fake, often preventing them from immediately seeing social cues and indicators of deception. Therefore, their inflated sense of superiority prevented the most principle conceptions about themselves and their distinctiveness, from working. This paradox, coupled with the knowledge that they could never catch or visualize all pretenders, meant that a cycle of anxiety and fear became continuous. The genteel constructed strangers, liars, pretenders, and imposters into amorphous ideas as wolves in sheep's clothing. The temporary elation of capture and punishment directly led to increased feelings of concern, creating a pattern. Transgressive dressers only contributed to the further unreliability of clothing. Runaways, imposters, frauds, and strangers, through their performances, only plausible due to the medium of dress, represented the destabilization of gentility, and thus nature.

An example of a dangerous stranger appeared in an advertisement posted out of Ipswich, Massachusetts in the *Essex Gazette* on Nov. 22, 1769. It warned of an individual, who called himself Dr. John Jones. In its entirety, the advertisement read:

These are to desire the Youth of this Land to beware to lying in Bed and sleeping with a *certain filthy Vagrant*, who, by all Account, has destroyed the Health, if not the Reputation, of a Number of hopeful young Men, (sometime since in the County of Hampshire, and more lately in the County of Essex, where he has been strolling about for these seven or eight Months last past) and commuting to them the *venereal Disease*, which he attempts, by unnatural and detestable Practices, why they are in a deep Sleep, so that he may impart the destructive Venom before they are enough awake to make proper Resistance.

He calls himself *Dr. John Jones*, says he has owned Land, and lived at *Westfield, Granville, &c.* pretends to be a Preacher, and to have been a settled Minister, --- sometimes wears a black calamanco Gown, and a ministerial Band---a blue serge Cloak, with a black cloth Cape to ---a black strait-bodied Coat---and sometimes a plaid Gown, lined with red Baize---of late, a gray Wig, and a gross Number of Rings on his Fingers.

He has a Blemish in one of his Eyes, and a deep Gash in his Head, which he says he received in the Time of War, from an Indian's Tomahawk, at the Westward: Pretends he is craz'd at Times, occasioned, as he says, by a young Woman: dying in Love for him. He makes and sings, off a Hand, Songs on Various Subjects; and many are so impertinent as to give him *Money* for his doggrel Stuff. It is said he had a good Deal of Money given him for singing at the last Concord Court, and the last Court at Newbury-Port. He was at *Salem* in the Time of the sitting of the Superior Court, the present Month.³³³

The advertisement contains quite a few layers: the importance of geographic location and physical migration, clothing, and behavior. Dr. Jones roamed between the counties of Hampshire and Essex in Massachusetts. Hampshire County is in the western half of the former colony, home to the towns of Amherst and Northampton. Almost 150 miles to the east lies Essex County, north of Boston, home to Salem, Marblehead, and of course, Ipswich. This distance between destinations marks Dr. Jones as a transient person who wandered around internally in Massachusetts. The advertisement describes him as “strolling.” Strolling, in an eighteenth-century context referred to someone who was, “wandering, roving, itinerant,” or also, “an actor of a low class, who wanders about the county, giving performances in temporary buildings or hired rooms.”³³⁴ Contemporaries viewed strolling as a dangerous activity, not only because of the acting, since actors were understood as “undesirables” during the eighteenth century, but because of the threat that wandering presented to those who lived throughout British North America.

The late eighteenth century saw an increase in migration for several reasons. Because of the prosperity of larger cities such as Boston, individuals moved from rural villages to seek work. The geographic distribution of people and access to anonymity in British North America

³³³ *Essex Gazette*, November 28, 1769, *Newsbank/Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 1089D3290E6AC3F0 (accessed September 9, 2014).

³³⁴ "strolling, adj." OED Online. December 2016. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/191771?rskey=ITUS1a&result=2> (accessed February 22, 2017).

meant that some could meander back and forth between communities, without firmly rooting down.³³⁵ By the eighteenth century, Massachusetts farming families with multiple sons knew that all but the eldest had to leave and settle elsewhere.³³⁶ A greater population then contributed to a “process of migration, resettlement, stability of residence, and re-migration”³³⁷ Greater populations of urban poor, as well as wanderers, only grew after the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War. One historian describes this process as: “Just as one theory in the Middle Ages held that haystacks generated mice spontaneously, so the process of urbanization appears to have created poor people.”³³⁸ Their increasing numbers, many of whom individually needed assistance through almshouses, created a threat to those of a high social standing. The genteel could not know the intentions of transients. This fear only grew with the occurrence of cases such as Dr. Jones.

Dr. Jones wore expensive clothing to fool people into trusting him. The newspaper’s characterization paints him as well-dressed, suggesting someone in the upper echelons of society. All three of types of fabrics on his person listed were woolens.³³⁹ Since Britain had almost sole control over the wool production and manufacturing, they were almost exclusively made in

³³⁵ Many scholars of Colonial America agree that due to the vastness of Colonial America, the frontier, and the inconsistency of communications, that for many, it became easier to blend in or invent new personas in different places. For example, see: Thomas Kidd.

³³⁶ Philip J. Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), 258.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Billy G. Smith, “Poverty and Economic Marginality in Eighteenth-Century America,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 132 (March, 1988): 87, accessed February 11, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3143826>, 87.

³³⁹ Serge was, “a woollen fabric...extensively used for clothing and for other purposes.” (“serge, n.”. OED Online. December 2016. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/176415?redirectedFrom=serge> (accessed February 22, 2017). Calamanco was, “A woollen stuff...much used in the 18th century.” (“calamanco, n.”. OED Online. December 2016. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/26141?redirectedFrom=calamanco> (accessed February 22, 2017). Baize, was, “A coarse woollen stuff...in used as a clothing material...” (“baize, n.”. OED Online. December 2016. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/14749?rskey=KJOedo&result=1> (accessed February 22, 2017).

Britain, and shipped across the Atlantic. The rest of his ensemble characterizes him as wealthy or as a member of high society. Despite his elegant appearance, the advertisement warned that Dr. Jones was an imposter. Therefore, he symbolized the epitome of a charlatan, which is what contemporaries in the mid-to-late eighteenth century British North Atlantic feared. This only becomes clearer in looking at the rest of his physical appearance, and his actions.

He also appears to be a serial liar. A series of imperial wars during the early-to-mid eighteenth century, including the Seven Years War, had dumped a significant number of incapacitated or alcoholic former soldiers as well as war widows, orphans, and cripples into urban centers, contributing to the transiency problem.³⁴⁰ Jones claims that he received his physical wounds during wartime, marking him as possibly one of these individuals. The advertisement implies the improbability of these claims, so there is no certainty on whether Jones was telling the truth. The accusations leveled against him show his untrustworthiness. He survived on falsehoods, making money by spilling tales about a lost love and publicly singing, first, in Concord and then in Newbury-port. Middlesex County is to the southwest of Essex and is home to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Harvard College, just across the Charles River from Boston. The oddities and quirks of Dr. Jones are thus only further highlighted, with the accusations of predatory behavior to young men.

Masquerading as a genteel member of society, Jones used clothing to get what he wanted from young men and to gain access to a more refined manner of life. The word “ministerial” refers to his actions of pretending to “...be a Preacher, and to have been a settled minister.”³⁴¹ Ministers and Preachers promoted morality, modesty, and virtue. Due to the Puritan foundations

³⁴⁰ Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (Penguin Books, 2001), 308.

³⁴¹ *Essex Gazette*, November 28, 1769, *Newsbank/Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 1089D3290E6AC3F0, accessed September 9, 2014.

of society as well as the First Great Awakening just fifteen-twenty years prior, members of Anglo-British North American society revered and respected them. More than likely, Dr. Jones used this disguise to gain the good graces of those he wished to prey upon. All in all, Jones functions as the perfect allegory to illustrate some of the extreme types of individuals which posed a clear threat to polite society. The genteel knew that others like Dr. Jones also presented a risk. Jones made his way back and forth between western and eastern Massachusetts, demonstrating the existence of transiency. Dr. Jones and others similar to him destabilized performance of gentility. This pronounced dependency on the display of decadence thus created an unreliability in formerly used methods of socially identifying members of society.

This behavior marked Dr. Jones as a potential sodomite and an individual to fear. Good Bostonians still considered sodomy a capital crime with ties to “corruption, commerce, and foreign influence.”³⁴² The provincial courts did not frequently prosecute for sodomy, but the curious could read about arrests over acts of sodomy in London and on the European continent.³⁴³ As part of a trans-Atlantic communication system, the people in British North America knew and were interested in current events across the pond. Therefore, Bostonians knew of campaigns in Europe, “to rid its cities of inns and houses where men gathered for sex with each other. These notices spoke of molly house raids and executions for sodomy,” describing the participants as “vile Wretches,” “vile Persons,” and “horrid Company.”³⁴⁴ Therefore, Jones’ description as a sodomite alone, indicated a person with vile, unnatural

³⁴² Thomas A. Foster, “Antimasonic Satire, Sodomy, and Eighteenth-Century Masculinity in the “Boston Evening-Post,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (January, 2003): 171-184, accessed February 22, 2017, DOI: 10.2307/3491500, 173. Molly houses functioned as spaces where men would have sex with other men dressed as women.

³⁴³ *Ibid*, 174.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

intentions. These changes, prompted an unnatural use of clothing, thus creating a “social monster.”

The use of Jeffrey Cohen’s framework of monster theory allows for an understanding individuals like Jones and Price, their relation to society, and what made them so “monstrous.”³⁴⁵ Cohen identifies seven different theses in his introduction on what makes a monster. These are: “The Monster’s Body is a Cultural Body,” “The Monster Always Escapes,” “The Monster is the Harbinger of Category Crisis,” “The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference,” “The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible,” “Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire,” and “The Monster Stands at the Threshold of...Becoming.”³⁴⁶ These theses indicate how the monster is an invented cultural entity, which relates to broader concepts of the naturalness and appropriateness of being. The monster showed where boundaries were, and often operated as a shadowy figure.

The term “social monster,” originated from a biographical account of London swindler, Charles Price. During the late 1780s, Price defrauded several banks by using a variety of disguises, one of which was known as “Old Patch.” [fig. 22] For the disguise of “Old Patch,” Price equipped himself with an eye patch, hat, and cane to appear older and more decrepit. His biographer titled the story of Price’s deception, *Memoirs of a Social Monster*.³⁴⁷ Despite this use, contemporaries did not frequently use the word monster during the eighteenth century, except to

³⁴⁵ Jeffrey J. Cohen, ed. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

³⁴⁶ Cohen, 4-20.

³⁴⁷ *Memoirs of A Social Monster; The History of Charles Price, Otherwise Bolingbroke, otherwise Johnson, otherwise Parks, otherwise Wigmore, otherwise Brank, otherwise Wilmott, otherwise Williams, otherwise Schutz, otherwise Trevors, otherwise Polton, otherwise Taylor, otherwise Powell, &c. &c. &c. and commonly called OLD PATCH. Containing an accurate Account of the astonishing FRAUD and ingenious FORGERIES of that truly GREAT MAN, On the GOVERNOR and COMPANY of the BANK of ENGLAND for a Series of Six Years. Including A faithful Detail of his DEVICES and DEPREDATIONS on SOCIETY for a Period of Fifty-five Years*, (London: G. Kearsley, at Johnson's Head, in Fleet Street, 1786), *Eighteenth Century Collections*, Iowa State University, Gale Document Number: CW104029794 accessed on August 22, 2015. Image Courtesy of Cengage Learning, Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

describe a monstrous birth or an unsightly sea-creature. However, monstrosity as a theoretical concept helps us understand these transgressions and the genteel anxieties that they provoked. By using Cohen's theory as a framework, it is apparent how transgressive dressers functioned as representational monsters to people in the eighteenth-century British North Atlantic.³⁴⁸

Because of the normalization of refinement due to the consumer revolution of the eighteenth-century, gentility itself, became perverted. Seen in Chapter 3, this perversion of gentility, achieved through cases of the non-genteel dressing up outside of their social station, led to a fear of passing. The genteel viewed passing as an affront to nature. Those who pretended to be someone that they were not, represented a warping of boundaries and also affected justification methods that allowed the genteel to exhibit their superior positionality. The presence of these fears of passing, prompted discourse through modes of print. For instance, an anecdote on the front page of the March 6, 1750, edition of the *Boston Gazette*, titled "A Modern Character," stated:

Of all Evils that disturb and Interrupt the Peace of Civil Society, there is scarce any one comparable to a public cheat and Impostor. Men who make it their – study to deceive the World by Fair Appearances and a shew of Honesty, are of all the most detestable. Their flattering Words and Insinuations are so many beauteous Flowers, which they strew in the Way to cover their...Snares; in order to deceive...³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ In addition to monster theory, the previously presented framework of Dror Wahrman also helps indicate how incidents of transgressive dress showcased great fluctuations in identity. The manipulability of gender on stage and masquerades indicated spaces for play. This flexibility also allowed for the mutability of other aspects of identity. Thus, it became more difficult to visually characterize a person. This idea is applied to runaways, runaway advertisements, and clothing in Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the "Lower Sort": Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991), 124-159, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>; David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56 (April, 1999), 243-272, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2674119>. Prude argues that clothing served as a great part of runaway advertisements due to the visual culture of the eighteenth century. In addition, he says that clothing and descriptions of runaways were how the genteel shaped perceptions of the non-genteel. Waldstreicher argues that runaway slaves should also be considered confidence men, and notes the importance of clothing in the entire process of passing.

³⁴⁹ "A Modern Character," *Boston Gazette*, March 6, 1750, *Newsbank/Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 10444EE9FA24DCC6, accessed July 16, 2015.

Due to its location on the front page, this sentiment indicated that the editors of the *Gazette* felt it crucial for their readers to know. The title and content of “A Modern Character” suggests a recent phenomenon of a social environment which was no longer navigable through previously reliable visual cues. The modern character specifically studied up to learn the mannerisms and ways of the genteel to defraud the public. After doing so, he used them through performance thus disguising himself, covering his intent to trap others. A modern character represented genteel fears over the insincerity of others and the replication of gentility through dress.

The bulk of transgressive dressing cases came from transient populations. By this era, more and more people left home, without land to fall back on, prompting an increase in transiency throughout Massachusetts.³⁵⁰ A greater internal movement of individuals within the colony and the region meant a fluctuating population. Because of the self-sustaining population of New England by the eighteenth century, the majority of this group did not migrate trans-oceanically, and any population growth from Europe was small.³⁵¹ These transients were poor, or members of the laboring-class in Massachusetts, found in both the more populated eastern counties along the seaboard and the frontier counties to the west.³⁵² Increased migration to and from towns made residents uneasy over greater numbers of poor people during the eighteenth century.³⁵³ As a result of these new groups of transients and the have-nots, towns abandoned

³⁵⁰ Douglas Lamar Jones, “The Strolling Poor: Transiency in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts,” *Journal of Social History* 8 (Spring 1975): 29, accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3786714>.

³⁵¹ David H. Flaherty, “Crime and Social Control in Provincial Massachusetts,” *The Historical Journal* 24, (June 1981): 343, accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2638790>. In addition, “Massachusetts itself attracted proportionately fewer immigrants than the other major colonies and almost no transported British convicts. Between 1713 and 1740 some immigration of Scots-Irish, English, and Huguenots occurred, but on the whole both provincial and local leaders managed to maintain homogeneity and stability in the population.” (344)

³⁵² Jones, 29.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

their traditional responsibilities of providing relief due to the increased financial burden.³⁵⁴ Residents were forced to "...gradually assume a greater proportion of the duties of care and control and become more involved with the transient population."³⁵⁵ As a direct consequence, a more complicated relationship between the two groups developed along with a greater awareness between the genteel and non-genteel evolved. Nowhere was this more visible than the city of Boston because it "encountered poverty earlier, more continuously, and with the most severity of any seaport dwellers during the eighteenth century."³⁵⁶

Because of its character as the largest city and seaport in northern British America, Boston became a popular destination for "in-migration."³⁵⁷ There were five clear reasons which prompted strangers to Boston: to secure work and acquire training, to meet other like-minded people or relatives, to hide, to resettle, and to find assistance and relief.³⁵⁸ Another historian remarks that instead of functioning as a "Yankee utopia" tensions between classes and a culture of elitism contributed to the "progress of inequality" during the eighteenth century.³⁵⁹ Boston's prestige created more opportunities than other cities, seaports, and towns in New England, which meant that it had "...more potential customers, patrons, and allies; more work possibilities; denser networks of information; (and) more chances to book ship passage."³⁶⁰ As a seaport, the Atlantic activity made it dependent upon seasonal labor which meant repetitive cycles of laborers.³⁶¹ These members of the non-genteel classes contributed to growing populations within

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Smith, 89.

³⁵⁷ Cornelia H. Dayton and Sharon V. Salinger, *Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 87.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 165-166.

³⁵⁹ G. B. Warden, "Inequality and Instability in Eighteenth-Century Boston: A Reappraisal," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6 (Spring, 1976): 587, accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/202533>.

³⁶⁰ Dayton and Salinger, 87.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

cities. However, not every poor individual within the colony fit into one of these useful professions; those who did not were categorized as idle, and therefore purposeless, leaving greater confusion as to their usefulness and even questions about their intentions. Confusion and questions in many cases led to fear, meaning that transient populations often received less than a warm welcome by the establishment in Boston and other parts of the region.

Because of the mobilization of individuals, including the greater movement into urban areas, it became more common to live amongst strangers. This was an incredibly dramatic change from previous centuries, where most did not travel more than several miles from their birthplace. A greater fluidity of people contributed to a destabilization of identity, as it was performable like never before. Then, it became even more necessary to develop better systems of identification. Pamphlets and broadsides meant, to prevent “deceiving the Young and Innocent of both Sexes,” with titles such as “The Cheats of London Exposed: or, The Frauds and Tricks of the Town laid Open to Both Sexes. Being a warning-piece against the iniquitous practices of that metropolis...” appeared in a multitude of locations to warn the public.³⁶² These forms of print media justified the fear of unknown persons through suggesting that they presented a threat to

³⁶² Richard King, *The new cheats of London exposed; or, the frauds and tricks of the town laid open to both sexes. Being a warning-piece against the iniquitous practices of that metropolis. Containing a new and clear Discovery of all the various Cheats, Frauds, Villainies, Artifices, Tricks, Seductions, Stratagems, Impositions and Deceptions, which are daily practised in London, by Bawds Bullies Duffers Fortune Tellers Footpads Gamblers Gossips Hangers-on Highwaymen House-Breakers J[o]lts Intelligencers Jew Delauiters Insolvents Kidnappers Lottery-Office-Keepers Mock Auctioners Money Droppers Ring Droppers Pimps Pretended Friends Procurers Pr[o]scuresses Pickpockets Quacks Receivers of stolen Goods Spungers Sharpers Swindlers Smugglers Shop-Lifters Street-Robbers Trappers way-layers Waggon-Hunters Whores, &c. &c. &c. Interspersed With Useful Reflections and Admonitions, salutary Hints and Observations, whereby Rogues and Cheats are not only exposed, but may be avoided, by the Instructions herein contained. The whole laid down in so plain and easy a Manner, as to enable the most innocent Country People to be completely on their Guard how to avoid the base Villainies of those vile and abandoned Wretches, who live by Robbery, and deceiving the Young and Innocent of both Sexes. Written from experience and observation, by Richard King, Esq. Author of The New London Spy, also published by Mr. Hogg. Embellished with emblematical copper-plates, entirely new.* (London, 1780). Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Document Number: CW105180547, accessed July 25, 2015; "The History of a Stroller." *Weekly Miscellany; or, Agreeable & Instructive Entertainer* (January 8, 1774): 321, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h9&AN=33306964&site=ehost-live&ppid=divp1>, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 6, 2015.

the innocent, both men and women. The goal of these types of media was to educate the public on the vast and wide variety of tricks to avoid and attempt to detect.

Many of these individuals functioned as early forms of confidence men, able to invent and perform new identities due to the anonymity offered by British North America, which terrified people.³⁶³ Contemporaries of the second half of the eighteenth century viewed these types of people as outsiders. This classification labeled them as threats to society who had no place among the genteel. Because of their shapeless potential, society feared their possible ability to threaten the hierarchy through their perversion of gentility. The idea of the confidence man is typically associated with the nineteenth century, showcasing the vices of the city. Confidence men materialized in sync with the rise of the city, characterized as full of vice and immorality. Parents feared the loss of their children to charlatans and frauds who might deter them from a virtuous path. Visible through eighteenth-century sources, similar threats, often described as “villains” lived in colonial cities, roaming to and from rural communities. With their fancy clothing and impressive persona, villains depended on their outward portrayal and adoption of genteel mannerisms to fool others.

Residents of smaller towns in New England knew each other, and thus when new people came through their communities, they observed behavior.³⁶⁴ This meant that “it was difficult to conceal illegal or even suspicious activity for very long.”³⁶⁵ However, as described in Chapter 3, Boston’s physical layout, which separated the genteel from the non-genteel, encouraged social

³⁶³ Generally, the idea of the confidence man has historiographical roots in the nineteenth century. For more information on the confidence man and the American city, please see, Karen Haltunnen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). However, Stephen Bullock argues for the case of referring to Tom Bell as a confidence man, due to his ability to take advantage of “the gaps and contradictions within prevailing cultural ideals and practices,” (233).

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

divisions. The proximity of different social groups led to daily interaction. Therefore, the non-genteel gained knowledge of customs and luxuries not intended for them. This window of visibility thus inspired opportunity to penetrate polite circles prompting the genteel to protect their mannerisms and tools of refinement. Thus, through their very presence, a greater number of urban poor and transient people revealed the consequences of a trans-Atlantic consciousness. More significant trade and commerce made gentility purchasable, destabilizing it. With these new problems, Boston, the colony/state of Massachusetts, and New England looked to find ways to correct them.

Transgressive dressers were strangers, confidence men, liars, and imposters. Strangers were typically unknown to the area that they appeared in, allowing them to benefit from anonymity. Confidence men pretended to be family, neighbors, preachers or anything else that would let them insinuate themselves into the lives of their victims. Some gained so much notoriety they could not continue their charades for long, forcing them to decamp and take their charade elsewhere. Lastly, imposters falsified backstories to gain trust. These types of monstrous figures caused panic, fear, and overwhelming concern to those living in British North America. Fears became so significant, because the behavior of transgressive dressers was ultimately unnatural. The affront against nature came from the assertion to behaviors and customs that did not belong to the person in question, provided through the tool of clothing. Because contemporaries considered their behavior as unnatural, transgressive dressers in themselves were unnatural. Within all the cases, individuals demonstrated their understanding of the transformative power of clothing. Most used clothing directly in their masquerade, marking its importance in fear of the unknown, threatening polite society.

One such example of transgressing dressing is a case of a “stranger,” visible in the July 27, 1741, edition of *The Boston Weekly Post-Boy*.³⁶⁶ The following advertisement marked as news described a woman originating from Philadelphia, currently in Boston, as a “stranger,” “strolling,” and “confident.”³⁶⁷ These terms indicated her position as both an experienced and unknown figure in the city. Boston, as the largest city in New England, did offer the ability to blend in, despite its small population. The idea of being “practiced” has importance. The genteel knew that their mannerisms could be learned through practice and performed in an inauthentic manner. The piece indicates she willfully preyed on a family, waiting for them to leave their home so she could seize property from an open window. Those who witnessed her crime informed the Justice of the Peace, indicating the role of community observation in social control. The advertisement describes her with “a Bundle under her arm, whose Talk and Actions gave great Ground of Suspicion that she could not be out upon a good Account.”³⁶⁸ Upon search of her things, the authorities discovered clothing, “which some present knew who was the Owner of.”³⁶⁹ Clothing played a crucial role in deceptive transgressions, both as the object stolen and the costume that permitted their function.³⁷⁰ Most importantly, she had lodged with the family, worshipped with them, and portrayed herself as a devout and Godly person. The author of the advertisement who included her possibly pretended piety more than likely intended to warn about the depths of deception that some might take. After her examination, she received her

³⁶⁶ “Boston,” *The Boston Weekly Post-Boy*, July 27, 1741, *NewsBank/Readex, America’s Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 1089CBEBF614DD28, accessed on August 5, 2015.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ Theft of cloth and clothing items such as men’s pumps, a beaver skin hat and a “double silk gown a black silk apron & scarf,” are a few of the many examples visible in Court cases from *Records of the Proceedings of Isaac Mansfield Esq. one of His Majesty’s Justices of the Peace for the County of Essex in the Province of Mass. Bay in New England, 1762-1764* and *Records of the Court of General Sessions for Worcester, May 13, 1731-1737*, The Houghton Library, Harvard University and the Hathitrust Library Online, accessed July 24, 2015.

punishment, spending time in the local jail. The Watch, a group of individuals who patrolled the city, “kept her secure according to Order the remainder of the Night, and when they left the Watch-House in the Morning, they lock’d her in till the Justice was ready to examine into the Truth of the Affair.”³⁷¹ Her discovery and capture indicate how the genteel believed they could protect themselves.

The December 1, 1769, edition of the *Providence Gazette*, reported that one O’Neal, Irishman, traveled through New England.³⁷² His status as Irish marked him as a social undesirable, suggesting a possibility of bias. Authorities discovered him with, “two fine Holland Shirts...likewise a Pair of Stockings...and (he) wears a light mixed Serge Coat and Breeches, striped Cotton Waistcoat, a checkered Silk and Cotton Ditto, a red knit Worsted Ditto, and a dark cut Wig.” An Irishman was assumed to be fundamentally inferior, and usually poor, so when the authorities discovered him carrying good clothes they assumed he was a thief. The case of O’Neal shows an automatic impartiality towards the non-genteel. Despite this characterization, it is more than likely that O’Neal actually was a thief who used clothing to perform a different identity than who he actually was. The rest of the description, which marks his transient behavior from Boston to Providence, notes how he “has changed his Dress since he left Providence.”³⁷³ This action indicates an understanding that changing clothing could help solidify a new disguise.

We see this pattern, in which criminals used clothes in inauthentic performance throughout New England. *The Connecticut Journal*, on December 1, 1769, detailed the account

³⁷¹ “Boston,” *The Boston Weekly Post-Boy*, July 27, 1741, *NewsBank/Readex, America’s Historical Newspapers*. Document Number: 1089CBEBF614DD28, accessed on August 5, 2015.

³⁷² *The Providence Gazette*, December 1, 1769, *Newsbank/Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers*, Doc No. 1056AEDB1C145CF8, accessed September 9, 2014.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

of a “strolling vagabondly Fellow,” who pretended his way to Boston.³⁷⁴ Upon his arrival, he presented himself in this strolling manner, dressed and in the character of a Beggar, claiming to be a Danish subject who had left home ten years prior.³⁷⁵ To gain the sympathy of a family, he told them how he had lost his fingers on one hand through a random injury, and the other by falling into a fire.³⁷⁶ Because of his physical handicap, and the dress that made him appear harmless, the family opened their genteel home in a good part of time to him. He did not want to overplay his hand, so he urged the family to let him retire for the night alone, lest he bother them.³⁷⁷ His seeming harmlessness convinced the family to take him before the kitchen fire, in a literal opening of hearth and home to this stranger. Therefore, this family, with great virtue and kindness, found themselves taken advantage.

Not long after they left the Fellow alone, the family returned to the fireplace to discover that, “he, with several Articles of Value, was soon found to be missing.”³⁷⁸ Quickly figuring out the deception, the head of the family, described as the “true Owner” of the property, pursued “the Thief” finding and overtaking him at “a Tavern about a Mile distant.”³⁷⁹ At the tavern, the Fellow had seemingly shed his old persona, and now appeared in a “merry Mood, (where) he was offering his new Assortment upon Sale to the highest Bidder...”³⁸⁰ The owner outsmarted the “Thief,” now referred to as a “Criminal,” and bound him for “convenient Escortment about seven Miles in a retrograde March to a civil Magistrate.”³⁸¹

³⁷⁴ *The Connecticut Journal, and New-Haven Post-Boy*, December 1, 1769. Newsbank/Readex, America’s Historical Newspapers. Doc. Number: 1034DBB0A8142EDE. The Boston Public Library, accessed July 25, 2015.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

However, “the reluctant Villain,” probably already knowing what might come next, instead offered his apprehender a deal. In exchange for receiving punishment presently, instead of in the future, he “voluntarily stripp(ed) himself” and “receiv’d upon the Spot seven hearty Lashes, with a good sturdy Horse Whip warmly apply’d which he tamely submitted to, and endured with all the Patience and Fortitude which his own Circumstances and the Nature of the Thing would well admit of.”³⁸² After said punishment, which satisfied both the owner and the “villain,” the owner released him to find new lodging elsewhere. The advertisement closes in warning the public that this Fellow is “worthy of their special Notice and Regard.”³⁸³

The account traced the town’s opinion of the man as it develops. At first, the advertisement describes his as a “strolling vagabondly Fellow.” Although this is not a term of endearment, it is without outright malice. However, once he revealed his intentions and true self, he became “a Thief,” “Criminal,” and then “Villain.” Therefore, the clothing of a strolling beggar, accompanied with mannerisms and a backstory, created a persona that while initially suspicious, quickly soothed the anxieties that the family might have had. Also, the fellow took advantage of an overly-hospitable family, only increasing the despicableness of his character. Although having initially fooled the family, once they understood his intended purpose, they quickly acted and revealed him for what he truly was.

Sometimes, defrauded individuals became so distressed that they posted advertisements themselves within newspapers, and because the person who swindled them disappeared so completely, they could not report the said offenses to the proper authorities. In July 1773, the *Essex Gazette* published out of Salem, Massachusetts published a similar advertisement looking

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid.

for a “Stranger,” penned by Abigail Bond.³⁸⁴ Bond wrote that the man in question, named Thomas Willcox, “may have since changed his name.”³⁸⁵ Two weeks prior, he had arrived at her home, claiming that he had lately arrived on a ship from Marblehead originating from London. Thus, he would have had to travel approximately 15 or so miles from Marblehead to Salem. Also, with a studied air, he claimed to have been her husband’s nephew, with her husband currently away at sea. He provided a great number of details, so much so to convince her that he was who he claimed to be. She lent him money as well as “a Pair of silver Shoe Buckles and a Pair of silver Knee Buckles.”³⁸⁶ Two days later, Willcox left on a hired horse; Bond never saw him again.

Willcox wore, “a Seaman’s blue short Jacket, a striped red and white swanskin under Jacket, blue broad-cloth Breeches, blue ribb’d Stockings, and wore the abovementioned shoe and knee Buckles which are marked S.B.”³⁸⁷ No doubt the buckles belonged to Bond’s husband. Poor Bond closed with, “Whoever will take him up, or give Information where he may be found, so that he may be brought to Justice, shall be handsomely rewarded for their Trouble. He has been seen upon the Road going Eastward.”³⁸⁸ Pretending from London to Marblehead provided him with the ability to invent a persona.

Inventing personas became a particularly useful tool for those who wished for admiration and good fortune. One such case was that of an imposter minister, details of which the *Boston Post-Boy* published on November 15, 1773.³⁸⁹ The anecdote titled, “Beware of Imposters” began

³⁸⁴ *Essex Gazette*, June 29, 1773, *Newsbank/Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 1089D24A5323C3D8, accessed August 6, 2015.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ “Beware of Imposters,” *Boston Post-Boy*, November 8, 1773, *Newsbank/Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 108D834E2303B6F0, accessed May 15, 2015.

exploring the condition of how society became distracted by a refined presentation. The authors asked, “How often do Men assume a fictitious Character, and thereby impose upon the Public?”³⁹⁰ The writer focused on ranking villains who cheat the public, marking with disgust those who mimicked “the sacerdotal Office.”³⁹¹ After this identification of villains who “invade(d) that sacred Office, to the great Dishonor of Religion and the Scandal of the Office they assume” the writer specifically points to a “Youth” who was pretending into the parish.³⁹²

This youth, or imposter, travelled across the northern colonies, impressing those he preached to by providing false credentials as “a licensed Candidate of the New-York Presbytery.”³⁹³ As he moved about the northern colonies, he “captivated his Audience to an uncommon Degree.”³⁹⁴ After preaching in New-London, an actual member of the New-York Presbytery knew that he was false and was “determined to see him and detect him in his Villainy.”³⁹⁵ The piece frequently refers to the young man’s as acting with “Impudence and Wickedness.” The man who discovered him informed the youth that he had heard of his travels all the way to Providence. The youth confessed and “promised he would not be guilty of the like again.”³⁹⁶ However, he rode forty miles away to New-Milford, located near the Western border of Connecticut with New York, “before he assumed the same Character, in the Manner he had done before, and preached a public Lecture notwithstanding his Confession and Promise...and accordingly preached upon the Sabbath both Parts of the Day, to the great Admiration of his Hearers.”³⁹⁷ It was not until he revealed his plans to meet a Dr. Rogers and Mr. M. Wathers,

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

along with others, in New-Haven to pursue a degree at Yale College, but then did not show up at the college's next commencement, upon which attendees discovered his fraud.³⁹⁸

Colonial Americans trusted the clergy, so when Dr. Jones and this youth masqueraded as a minister, colonists found it particularly threatening. Men of the church represented truth and sincerity, more so than any other profession. Those who engaged in clerical imposture attempted to lay claim to tools of refinement and cultural practices not belonging to them "...to gain access to the power claimed by the dominant "thinking class."³⁹⁹ Tom Bell, probably the most famous of these characters in British North America, made his way through the colonies spinning tales and impersonating other people.⁴⁰⁰ He often posed as a minister, one of his personas among his tool-kit of "confidence games."⁴⁰¹ Bell represented colonial fears because he frequently adopted mannerisms and clothing of the genteel "to cross class boundaries and gain access to the treasures of the wealthy."⁴⁰² His knowledge of ancient languages and philosophical thought – study traditionally restricted to the genteel – allowed him to access elite circles.⁴⁰³ Passing as a pastor emphasized the greater ability to manipulate identity through the anonymity offered by the Atlantic economy.⁴⁰⁴

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Kidd, 150.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rac.2004.14.2.149>.

⁴⁰⁰ The case of Tom Bell is covered extremely well in Bullock's, "A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man," In it, Bullock notes three extremely important guidelines, which further bolster the importance of clothing and presentation in that of the eighteenth-century trickster. First, that much of what Bell accomplished in his criminal career and how he presented himself closely aligned with the concept of a "confidence man." Second, that "Clothes were both the object of many of his thefts and how he projected the persona of a gentleman," (239), reaffirming the importance of clothes in the overall scheme and crime, and third, that the fact that a genteel persona "could be counterfeited," (247).

⁴⁰¹ Kidd, 161.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 149.

These connections of using genteel mannerisms through performance are present in the newspaper reported sightings of Tom Bell. For example, a notice placed in *The Boston Evening Post* on June 8, 1741, described some of his “stratagems.” The advertisement in full read:

Newport, June 3. *Tom Bell* was Put ashore here out of the *New London* vessel the beginning of last week. He made a grand Figure in a variety of rich Cloaths' nevertheless he was known and discover'd in a few Days, and so prevented from playing off any Stratagems. Monday the Town Council warn'd him out of Town. Yesterday he went to the other End of the Island. A few Hours after he was gone, the vessel arriv'd in which he pretended to expect a wife and considerable Effects, but without either. He would have pass'd by the Name of *Wentworth*, but conducted himself in so foolish a Manner, that 'tis surprizing he has been able to carry on such Schemes as are told of him.⁴⁰⁵

This notice indicated the effect of Tom Bell’s clothing on those in Newport. His “rich Cloaths” projected gentility. However, before he could carry out any of his traditional schemes, those in town discovered him, thus warning him out. This reaction placed an emphasis on the imperfection of his ruse, demonstrating the genteel’s confidence to expose imposture. However, the ad closes with a re-emphasis on the belief that he behaved in so ridiculous a manner, he could never prevail. However, the fact that he did prevail and continued his “games,” even if only for a short time, reveals the extent of exaggeration in this confidence.

Because of his notoriety, and his threat to good-standing, moral, and genteel families, New Englanders’ continued to track Tom Bell’s movement in other cities in the North American colonies. In the March 7, 1743, edition of *The Boston-Evening Post* an advertisement of news from Philadelphia said the following:

Philadelphia, Feb. 10. Thursday Night last, the notorious TOM BELL, arriv'd in this City from Maryland; he pretended to be a Son of Mr. Livingston's in New York, that he had been cast-away, taken, &c. But being suspected, he was sent for by the Mayor. At first he deny'd himself to be Bell; but the Mayor happening to remember him, having some

⁴⁰⁵ *The Boston Evening Post*, June 8, 1741. Newsbank/Readex, America’s Historical Newspapers. Doc. Number: 1089C95E2194B5D0, The Boston Public Library, accessed July 25, 2015.

Years since committed him to Sussex-Gaol for Forgery; he at length acknowledg'd himself to be the Person and was committed to Prison for want of Security.⁴⁰⁶

Here again, Tom Bell illustrated the propensity of certain individuals in pretending to have completely alternate characters. However, the advertisement included how contemporaries had the ability to recognize Bell, no matter his pretense, and thus cast him into jail to protect the public. To re-emphasize, to protect the respectable, it became necessary to lock away those who presented inauthentic and unnatural modes of refinement. Not as many confidence men and women, or villains and strollers in British North America achieved the level of notoriety as Tom Bell, but many different schemes took place under the watchful eye of residents and the justice system.

Notorious thieves often made a point to change their appearance to prevent discovery. Again, dress was the easiest and most believable way of accomplishing this. The April 6, 1765, edition of *The Providence Gazette; and Country Journal* described the theft of clothing by a crafty individual.⁴⁰⁷ The characterization of a "Villain," again is like previous advertisements, indicating unnatural behavior, full of vice and ill intent (it is unclear whether this individual, claiming the name of John Jones, is Dr. Jones, who appeared in the *Essex Gazette* four years later). Regardless, Jones went by Michael Henly, his false persona. Jones/Henly, the transient, travelled from Providence to Lime, Connecticut, to Portsmouth, New Hampshire and Newport, Rhode Island, defrauding two established, genteel members of society, on his journey. He more than likely recognized Captain Joseph Olney of Providence and Captain Andrews of New-Jersey as good targets for thievery. As officers in the military, they had wealth and respect from the

⁴⁰⁶ *The Boston Evening Post*, March 7, 1743. Newsbank/Readex, America's Historical Newspapers. Doc. Number: 1089C9B7A2671160. The Boston Public Library, accessed July 25, 2015.

⁴⁰⁷ *The Providence Gazette; and Country Journal*, April 6, 1765. Newsbank/Readex, America's Historical Newspapers. Document Number: 1056AE8CEF76297A, accessed August 5, 2015.

community. As a thief, he took “a valuable Horse, with a Saddle and Bridle” as when captured, he was wearing “a Suit of Capt. Andrews’s Clothes.”⁴⁰⁸ Jones/Henly imitated Tom Bell, continually reoffending despite capture and release. Those he defrauded quickly discovered, “vigorously pursued” and then “escorted (him) hither...lodged in his Majesty’s Gaol.”⁴⁰⁹

The March 28, 1772, edition of *The Providence Gazette* included an anecdote partially titled, “...a Caution to the Unwary.”⁴¹⁰ Almost three months prior, a “transient Person” referred to by the name of “Hoosuck” had traveled into New-Providence and “pretended that he had been pressed on board a Man of War.”⁴¹¹ Thus, once he appeared on the doorstep of Lemuel Levingsworth, described as an “honest Countryman” he explained how he had made a narrow escape, but in doing so had abandoned all of his possessions.⁴¹² Because of this, he was in “Want of Victuals, Cloaths, and Money.”⁴¹³ He attempted to reassure Levingsworth claiming that he was a person of means who had “a good Estate in this Town” and also had the acquaintance of others of wealth like him, who would repay Levingsworth “every Expense which might be incurred.”⁴¹⁴ Levingsworth fell for the charade and went with him in the direction of Providence. Once they reached Lebanon together, he sent Levingsworth in the direction of a Benoni Pearce Esq. of Providence, who supposedly was the brother.⁴¹⁵ Carrying a letter from “Hoosuck,” Levingsworth expected to receive payment from Pearce. The advertisement is not clear on the next turn of events, but somehow Levingsworth discovered that he had cheated him, acting as an

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ *The Providence Gazette; and Country Journal*, March 28, 1772, *Newsbank/Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 1056AF929713EF66, accessed September 12, 2014.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

Imposter. Therefore, all Levingsworth “had to compensate the Loss of Sixteen Pounds Lawful Money, including all the Cash he possessed of, was the imaginary Satisfaction of having done a Deed of Charity to a distressed Seaman.”⁴¹⁶

After abandoning Levingsworth in Lebanon, he traveled to New-Marlborough, providing “a similar Story” and presenting himself as Mr. Pearce to an Amos Smith.⁴¹⁷ His tale of impressment so enchanted Mr. Smith that he lodged him for three weeks, providing not only entertainment, but also “a new Beaver Hat, and sundry other Articles of Apparel, to considerable Value.”⁴¹⁸ He also lent Pearce a horse, for travelling to Providence. This time, instead of travelling with Smith alone, Pearce “pretend(ed) that he was afraid of being taken by some of the Ship’s Crew, whom he supposed were in Pursuit of him.”⁴¹⁹ To counteract this, he hired an acquaintance of Mr. Smith, known as Spencer, who lived in the town of Suffield, to join them for the journey, “promising him Three Shillings Sterling per Day, and to pay all his Expenses.”⁴²⁰ The company of three arrived a few days later in Johnston, at the residence of Richard Eddy, Esq. Shortly afterward, he informed Smith and Spencer on the necessity of keeping “his Arrival a Secret, (thus) he prevailed on them to leave their Horses, and to come into Town on Foot, charging them not to discover themselves to his Brother (the aforementioned Benoni Pearce) till the Morning; his Mother being a weakly Woman, it might overcome her, as they all supposed him to be dead.”⁴²¹ While Smith and Spencer decided to follow Pearce’s instructions to the letter, Pearce secretly “bargained” away the company’s horses which they had left behind at the

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

home of Eddy.⁴²² However, a neighbor women interrupted Pearce's plan, who instead, "pretend(ed) Business at one of the Neighbour's, (and) he borrowed a small Sum of Money of the Landlord, which he said he should have immediate Occasion for."⁴²³ He then abandoned his entire company, hiring a Mr. Reuben King to take him back to Providence, where he stayed for the night, leaving the next day.⁴²⁴

After this description, "the Caution to the Unwary" revealed that the man was actually John Lloyd, "a notorious Villain," and offered the following physical description of him: "He is a tall-square built Man, wears a Cap or Wig, has a Film over his Right-Eye, and is the Son of a certain Gipsej, who many Years deceived the Simple with her Sorceries...and left this Son of Vulcan behind; to support himself in an idle Life, with other Sorts of Enchantments than hers."⁴²⁵ The advertisement thus ended with a clear warning: "The Public are cautioned to beware of Persons with one Eye, and that an evil One."⁴²⁶ This piece carried similar overtones as earlier advertisements warning the public about transient pretenders. Hoosuck or Pearce or Lloyd used various personas to fool others. In the beginning, he appeared harmless and extremely desperate. He then hooked several individuals, stealing not only their possessions but also their dignity. Like others, this notice described him as practiced at his craft and rotten to the core. Lastly, clothing functioned as a significant part of his masquerade, and no doubt the gifts of expensive clothing from Mr. Smith only aided him in the continued deceptions of other unsuspecting individuals.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

In addition to these colonial confidence men and women, who used clothing of their gender, but of a different profession or class to complete their venture, more stereotypical types of cross-dressing also occurred. Their contributions illustrated an additional dynamic in how clothing could manipulate external cues for identity. In Bristol County, Massachusetts in March 1778, a woman "transient" brought before the court cited for wearing "Men's Apparel," which included a "Coat, a Waistcoat, and a pair of Breeches," and ordered to pay a fine.⁴²⁷ During the eighteenth century, freedom for a woman, even one of the working-class, was restricted. Women did not have the means to travel on their own as their social and legal status depended upon their attachment to a man. For women travelling alone, the way was dangerous, and they were vulnerable to violence, especially sexual violence. Therefore, some chose to adopt the clothing of men for greater modes of freedom. For this woman, it is possible that she hoped to find a better life for herself, whether that was through simply being able to travel more freely or even create a new life is unclear. Men's clothing allowed for greater ease to do this than women's. It is also probable that she might have been another woman like Deborah Sampson Gannett, interested in enlisting to fight as a soldier in the revolution. Whatever the case, transience, was a gendered crime. Of all the cases discussed, only two are women. Therefore it is possible to believe that contemporaries did not consider women as threatening as men, and so their crimes may have been missed or overlooked.

This belief may have contributed to a particular case, remarked on in the August 28, 1749 edition of a Boston newspaper, *The Independent Advertiser*.⁴²⁸ Marked as news from New York, the notice detailed that:

⁴²⁷ Bristol County Court of General Sessions, March term 1778, Page 15. Massachusetts Judicial Archives, Boston, Massachusetts, accessed July 28, 2015.

⁴²⁸ *The Independent Advertiser*, August 28, 1749, *Newsbank/Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 14B7B46431635750, accessed August 4, 2015.

Within a few Days past we have heard of several Robberies committed on Boats going up and down the North River, by Persons unknown; and Yesterday about One o'Clock, a Man dressed in Woman's Cloaths, was taken up in this City on Suspicion, and committed to Goal: He had been to Church in the Forenoon, in his Woman's Habit, which was neat and good; but in his Bundle was his Man's Cloaths very poor and mean; On his being apprehended, he pretended that he came from the Mannor of Philipsbourg, and disguised himself there on a Wager: But 'tis conjectured that he will turn out on a Wager one of those Robbers.⁴²⁹

Again, it is possible that the man intended to disguise himself so thoroughly as not to look suspicious. He may have believed that he would attract less attention in women's attire than in men's, although, clearly, without success. Most importantly, he carried with him in his belongings a set of men's clothing. The set of men's clothing indicated intent to switch back to gender-appropriate attire later. In comparison to the women's clothing it was less elegant and older. This suggests theft of more refined women's clothing. Thus, gender played a major role in transgressive dressing during the eighteenth century. Women, believed weaker and more susceptible to being fooled as well as being attacked, needed greater protection from imposters and frauds. This same assumption could also contribute to an over-looking of women committing crimes, unless they did something strange like wearing clothing inappropriate for their gender. Clothing thus factored significantly in the gendered ideal of crime, transiency, and monstrosity during the period.

A habitual thief, Isaac Frasier, repeatedly caught during the 1760s wrote a lengthy confession of his life in 1768, detailing how he stole clothing and other items all over New England.⁴³⁰ Originally from and born in Rhode Island, Frasier engaged in a continuous cycle of

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ *A brief account of the life, and abominable thefts, of the notorious Isaac Frasier, who was executed at Fairfield, Sept. 7th, 1768, penned from his own mouth, and signed by him, a few days before his execution* (New London, Connecticut: Timothy Green, 1768), *Early American Imprints*, Record Number: 0F2FD4BCD9150158, accessed on August 8, 2015.

theft and capture, escaping from “gaols” all over the region. For example, from the shop of Faneuil in Cambridge, Massachusetts he nabbed "a suit of old cloaths." In Great Barrington he took from Doctor Whiting, "a coat, vest, a pair of knee-buckles, & a pair of Stockings." From a Taylor's shop in Roxbury he stole "an old suit of cloaths, and a little out of the town, I broke a hatter's shop..." He frequently traveled to Worcester and all over New England, traveling from a multitude of locations. Study of Frasier’s career continually highlights the importance of clothing for the pretense of gentility and the practice of imposture.

To protect themselves from strangers, confidence men, and imposters, Colonial Americans both created new systems of control, as well as continually depended on older methods. During the 1760s, Boston hired several different city residents to walk-about town and the wharves “to warn Strangers out.”⁴³¹ These “warner’s” sought and targeted strangers informing them that they, “did not have the legal inhabitancy in Boston and...that the town was not liable to relieve the stranger should he or she become indignant...”⁴³² This type of warning system was distinct to New England, growing out of English settlement and poor laws.⁴³³ Warnings specifically focused on those perceived as non-useful or even threatening to society. If a person could perform a functional role, such as a laborer, they could stay.⁴³⁴ However, if the warner’s decided that the individual in question was a “common beggar, stroller, or vagabond,” then they could be “taken up” by an official of justice like a “night watchman” and then “carried before a justice of peace, convicted of a misdemeanor, and committed to a short stint of labor at the workhouse.”⁴³⁵ Thus a system developed to correct the problem of too many idle people.

⁴³¹ Dayton and Salinger, 1.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

Idleness, spawned concerns about intentions toward others. While the warning system aided in removing potential threats, many still felt that the public needed additional “warnings” of their own.

The criminal justice system in the British North Atlantic evolved to correct and reaffirm the social separation of the upper and lower classes.⁴³⁶ From 1688-1815, the English “Bloody Code,” punished a number of crimes with physical violence or death.⁴³⁷ Because of increasing amounts of luxury due to trade, which filtered into the British North Atlantic, this course of punishment developed due to the presence of “new forms of wealth” that “a regular police force” could not protect.⁴³⁸ Therefore, the intention of this harsh system was to protect “new forms of property.”⁴³⁹ The increased importance in genteel display, which developed due to the growth of a trans-Atlantic consciousness, meant that the genteel depended upon an excessive amount of valuable material items. While many of these items had significant monetary value, their representational value of gentility was worth even more. This increased meaning of gentility, which the upper classes had fused into material items, meant that they felt a greater necessity to protect their property and person from theft. Therefore, during the eighteenth century in British North America, the prosecution of crimes looked differently from the previous century.

The Puritans had vigorously pursued the punishment of moral offences, but by the eighteenth century, crimes of morality faded in importance.⁴⁴⁰ In Massachusetts property crimes increased, “perhaps doubling their seventeenth-century percentage of the total case load.”⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁶ David B. Wolcott and Tom Head, eds. *Crime and Punishment in America* (New York: Facts on File, Inc. of InfoBase Publishing, 2010), vii.

⁴³⁷ Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, New York: Routledge, 1989), xi.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid*, xi.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, xii.

⁴⁴⁰ Douglas Greenberg, “Crime, Law Enforcement, and Social Control in Colonial America,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 26: 293-325 (Oct., 1982): 304-305, accessed February 22, 2017, DOI: 10.2307/844939.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*, 305

Poorer men with virtually no property or material wealth formed the bulk of defendants before the court.⁴⁴² A large number of property-less men who appeared before the court indicates the specific targeting of migrant, seasonal, poor, or transient populations. Because property-holders associated transients and the poor with theft and dishonesty, and newspapers frequently reported on strangers, liars, and imposters, people believed these unmoored or unknowable populations needed regulation. A switch from a more greatly emphasized prosecution of moral crimes to that of property, then indicates that the policing of transient behavior as a form of social control. To fully accomplish this and limit the presence of disruptive and inappropriate behavior, Massachusetts had a significant number of “law enforcers” including justices of the peace as well as town constables and sheriffs for each county.⁴⁴³ The system did well in limiting behavior deemed inappropriate and disruptive.⁴⁴⁴

Runaway servant advertisements illustrated this system of social control, and their runaway advertisements indicated the use of transgressive dressing. Discussed in Chapter 3, urban environments and an increased ability to replicate gentility altered the relationship between different social classes. During the eighteenth century, masters frequently posted notes in newspapers and broadsides when their servants abandoned their term of service. Within them, phrasing such as “pass” and “pretend” emphasized deception. Daniel Oliver, Puke-Maker in Boston reported in the September 18, 1752, edition of the *Boston Post-Boy* that his apprentice, “a Servant Lad named John Maylam” had run away. Oliver described him as wearing a wig, with a scar on his forehead and that he “had on a Fly Cloth colour’d Coat and Breeches, a blew (sic.)

⁴⁴² Ibid, 304-305.

⁴⁴³ Ibid, 349-350.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid, 306.

Jacket, and grey ribb'd Stockings.”⁴⁴⁵ In a sub note, Oliver warned the public that, “He is an artful Fellow, & may deceive those that apprehend him, but may be discover'd, upon search, by a Scar upon one of his Thighs, occasion'd by the Bite of a Dog, - He has been lately seen travelling the Southern Road from Boston,” thus indicating an example of transiency.⁴⁴⁶ An elusive New-York runaway travelled on the “New-England Road” wearing “an old green Jacket, was in Company with a Man in a Sailor's dress, and it supposed to be gone towards Boston, or New-London.”⁴⁴⁷ The author of the advertisement assumed that he “will perhaps change his Name.”⁴⁴⁸ Authors included detailed descriptions of clothing as they hoped that some might recognize their servants for their possible return. Indentured servants were under the control of their masters for an extended period and many newly immigrated individuals newly became indentured servants, under the care of a native-Anglo family.⁴⁴⁹ One way that colonial authorities tried to deal with the problem of undesirables such as the “poor, idle, dissolute, or orphaned children” was to place them, as well as people of color, into indentured servitude.⁴⁵⁰ Any servant who ran away or committed crimes faced longer work than their original term of service in addition to receiving punishment from a court upon their capture.⁴⁵¹ When indentured servants did not obey their masters, they became criminals, like the strangers that Colonial Americans feared.

⁴⁴⁵ *Boston Post-Boy*, September 18, 1752, *Newsbank/Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 108D80FABA9200D8, accessed August 29, 2014.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ *Boston Gazette*, September 6, 1764, *Newsbank/Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, Document Number: 105B58B01F854F1B, accessed September 9, 2014.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ Flaherty, 349.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

After punishment, many of these captured thieves, liars, strangers, and imposters remained in jail. Despite the system that colonists constructed to contain threats, these dangerous individuals sometimes escaped. This cycle of jailbreaks indicates additional societal fears, of the possible inability to contain the criminal threat. The *Boston News-Letter* described a jailbreak in its August 2, 1772, edition.⁴⁵² The prisoners who escaped were confined “in the two lower Apartments, which were deemed the strongest of any in the Prison.”⁴⁵³ With ingenuity and the help of tools, they made their way through the floor and into a passage under the building. Several individuals then assisted in their concealment. Another jailbreak in Worcester a few days before October 25, 1778, described the dress of two men.⁴⁵⁴ The description of the thieves of this jailbreak, as well as those who assisted in concealing them, again shows the importance of clothing in continued flight. The inability to contain prisoners, meant that there were criminals everywhere. People who were not what they said were nearly impossible to control.

Throughout the war years of 1775-1783, advertisements of runaways, pretenders, strangers, and acts of disruptive - and even violent - behavior contemporaries associated with them continually appeared in newspapers. Even though the country was at war, fears about the replication of gentility did not cease. The same beliefs that had led colonists to distrust strangers, led them to hate Boston’s occupation between 1768-1770, specifically the Quartering Act.⁴⁵⁵ Various imperial policies led to a “succession of ragtag strangers,” making their way through colonial towns and cities.⁴⁵⁶ High rates of desertion contributed to a larger number of unknown

⁴⁵² "Boston, August 27," *Boston News-Letter*, August 22, 1772. Newsbank/Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers, Document Number: 104453D2B014426A, accessed August 5, 2014.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Isaiah Thomas, "Two hundred dollars reward," Worcester, MA: Isaiah Thomas, 1778, The American Antiquarian Society, accessed August 6, 2015.

⁴⁵⁵ Dayton and Salinger, 165.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

people throughout British North America. One historian estimates that 20-35% of the approximately 250,000 members of the Continental army and the militia deserted.⁴⁵⁷ The sexual violence ascribed to soldiers increased fears.⁴⁵⁸ Broadsides and newspapers publicized these acts, and those “committed on those of unquestionable innocence, such as the very young, or those which were especially heinous” received particular attention.⁴⁵⁹ Because of this, “Americans virulently condemned the British soldiers (and their Hessian mercenaries) for sexual attacks on Patriot women.”⁴⁶⁰ These attacks came from the military occupation of the colonies during the rebellion, “where soldiers used their military authority to force women into sexually vulnerable situations.”⁴⁶¹ Throughout the war years of 1775-1783, advertisements of runaways and pretenders continually appeared in newspapers. Even though the country was at war, fears about strangers did not cease.

Strangers, vagabonds, and transient populations continued to affect the former colonies during the mid-1780s and through the 1790s. Visible in print media, after the wars end, warnings to the community about strangers continued. *The Connecticut Courant* on April 3, 1786, stated:

Whereas strangers and transient persons for some time past have been, and now are almost coming constantly into this town...by which many idle unknown person have, and soon more will, unless seasonably prevented, gain an inhabitancy in said town; the bad consequences of which the inhabitants already too sensibly feel. This are therefore to notify all person who shall convene the laws aforesaid by hiding, harbouring, or otherwise entertaining any stranger or transient person, (not being already a legal inhabitant of said town) that they may depend on being immediately prosecuted with the strictest severity of the laws of this state in such case provided.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁷ Robert Fantina, *Desertion and the American Soldier, 1776-2006* (Algora Publishing, 2006), 11.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Merrill D. Smith, ed. *The World of the American Revolution: A Daily Life Encyclopedia* Vol. II (Greenwood Press, 2015), 452.

⁴⁶⁰ Sharon Block, “Rape in the American Revolution: Process, Reaction, and Public Re-Creation,” in Elizabeth D. Heinemen, ed. *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 26.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 27.

⁴⁶² *The Connecticut Courant, and Weekly Intelligencer*, April 3, 1786, *Newsbank/Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers*, Doc No. 1056B1DA2E031C63, accessed August 6, 2015.

Also, a notice appeared in *The Norwich Packet or, The Country Journal* on September 7, 1786, which dictated that for the towns of Norwich, on behalf of Thomas Fanning, Jared Trace, Caleb Huntington, Eben'r Huntington, and Zabdiel Rogers the Town Selectmen that:

That if any person, or persons shall contrary to the intent of this ACT, entertain or hire any stranger or transient person, except he or they shall first give security, to the acceptance of the said Authority and Selectmen, that such town shall not be burthened and charged by him or them; which security such Authority and Selectman may take or refuse at their discretion; he or they so entertaining, or hiring or letting any house or land to such stranger or transient person, shall forfeit and pay to the treasurer of such town, the sum of *ten shillings per week*, for every week he or they shall harbor, entertain, hire, or let such estate to such person.⁴⁶³

The ending of the war and the foundation of a new republic did not mean the end of threats or the beginning of egalitarianism. Communities and the genteel still feared the threat of strangers and what havoc they might wreak upon their livelihoods. During the 1790s, migrants continued to make their way into the city of Boston, leaving the countryside behind.⁴⁶⁴ The official system of issuing warnings did not end until 1794.⁴⁶⁵

Overall, social undesirables, villains, strollers, and imposters specifically demonstrated the fragility of the social hierarchy. A trans-Atlantic system fueled by commerce and trade normalized gentility. This led to the de-stabilization of social separations through categorizations of identity. Also, by the eighteenth century, a self-sustaining colonial population found that many of its inhabitants became unmoored, without land or property to fall back on. These individuals, displaced by war and social uncertainty, made their way between town and country, looking for work or new opportunity. Many of them turned to crime or dishonest behavior, transforming into

⁴⁶³ *The Norwich Packet or, The Country Journal*, September 7, 1786. From Newsbank/Readex, America's Historical Newspapers, Document Number: 10A53BD5AB0C7260, accessed August 6, 2015.

⁴⁶⁴ Smith, 92.

⁴⁶⁵ Dayton and Salinger, 167.

the “social monster.” Clothing became a path for the confidence man or woman, to freedom or a new life. The transgressive dresser functioned as an allegorical monster, reminding the genteel of the instability formerly stable social categories of genteel and non-genteel, prompting an effort to correct them. A warning out system and print media in New England demonstrated a societal desire to root out the threats and educate the public. Despite the success of these endeavors, jailbreaks reminded contemporaries of what they already knew. No matter how easily they might spot a fake, they could not contain, nor anticipate, the monster.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In 1794, I. Norman published a short book from his home in Boston at no. 75 Newbury Street, the fashionable side of town.⁴⁶⁶ Its title, *The World Turned Upside Down or the Comical Metamorphosis: A Work entirely dedicated to excite Laughter in Grown Persons and promote Morality in the Young ones of both Sexes* reflected its humorous premise. The format of the book contained several lessons. These lessons underlined the importance of maintaining sensibility and rejecting foolishness. The illustrations, meant to aid the audience, further emphasized the ridiculousness of “the world turned upside down.” Each of the stories provided a moral, intended to educate young people on the necessity of turning away from “ambition, arrogance, and pride,” to preserve the restrained ideals of gentility.⁴⁶⁷ The consequences of not following this advice was a complete reversal of the social order.

Several of these tales, through the accompanying illustrations, show this “reversal” through a switch in the appropriate clothing between societal opposites. For example, “Tale XIV. A Servant Maid turned Mistress; her former Mistress drudging in the Kitchen,” explored the possibility of the reversed roles. The offered Moral of the tale was, “Ye fair-ones ne’er be arrogant; Be of this tale observant; Misfortune may your bliss transplant; And each become a servant.”⁴⁶⁸ The author illustrated the tale with an accompanying image, which shows two figures that represent a duality [fig. 23].⁴⁶⁹ The first, depicts an ugly servant girl wearing clothing

⁴⁶⁶ *The World Turned Upside Down or The comical metamorphoses: A work entirely calculated to excite laughter in grown persons and promote morality in the young ones of both sexes: Decorated with 34 copper plates curiously*, (Boston: I. Norman, 1794), accessed at the American Antiquarian Society, August 12, 2015.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 2.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 29-30.

⁴⁶⁹ “A Servant Maid turned Mistress,” in *The World Turned Upside Down or The comical metamorphoses: A work entirely calculated to excite laughter in grown persons and promote morality in the young ones of both sexes: Decorated with 34 copper plates curiously*, (Boston: I. Norman, 1794), 31, accessed August 12, 2015. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

inappropriate to her station. The second, the actual mistress of the household, was forced to wear the dress of her servant. The plate intentionally portrays the girl as looking ridiculous dressed in the garb of her mistress, to illustrate the ludicrousness of this switch. The artist used dress to demonstrate the social shift, emphasizing the recognition of dress as a symbol of transformational change.

A similar type of clothing switch happened through a gendered role swap in “Tale XV: The Wife acting the Soldier; the Husband spinning and nursing the Child,” which showed a married couple in completely reversed gendered divisions of labor as well as clothing [fig. 24].⁴⁷⁰ The wife who stood near the right side of the image wore pants and a military outfit complete with a sword and a rifle. The husband wore a dress and is clearly the inferior, seated with an infant on his lap. The moral of this tale reads: “Hence learn your sep’rate paths to keep, And live by reason’s rules; For censure seldom is asleep, And all must laugh at fools.”⁴⁷¹ Here again, the plates use clothing as a tool to demonstrate a reversal of social roles.

Finally, “Tale XXVIII. A Fool of Fashion,”⁴⁷² speaks directly to the role of clothing, as follows:

From Hyde-park corner to the
 ‘Change,
 What oddities we see!
 Some folks from dress to dress will range
 And follow novelty:

Not only follow, but make known

⁴⁷⁰ “The Wife acting the Soldier,” in *The World Turned Upside Down or The comical metamorphoses: A work entirely calculated to excite laughter in grown persons and promote morality in the young ones of both sexes: Decorated with 34 copper plates curiously*, (Boston: I. Norman, 1794), 33, accessed August 12, 2015. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid, 32.

⁴⁷² “A Fool of Fashion,” in *The World Turned Upside Down or The comical metamorphoses: A work entirely calculated to excite laughter in grown persons and promote morality in the young ones of both sexes: Decorated with 34 copper plates curiously*, (Boston: I. Norman, 1794), 59, accessed August 12, 2015. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Such modes as make us stare;
Nor is this vice in men alone,
But rages in the fair.

Oh, how absurd their head-dress is!
Why hide a lovely face?
Pity indeed from whims as these,
Shou'd beauty's form disgrace!

This fop, so open to our jokes,
So vacant in his mind,
Won't wear his cloaths like other folks,
They button most behind:

The park, the op'ra ball and play,
He'll in this dress be at;
Nor thinks that wiser people say,
“ ‘Tis laughter makes us fat:”

But puff'd with affectation's tricks,
A dupe to his own whim,
Can't clearly see that either sex,
Makes but a laugh at him.

MORAL.

Extremes of fashion still avoid,
Lest virtue slip her clew;
Which aping such has oft destroy'd
In male and female too.⁴⁷³

The detailed illustration was of a satirical image of a fop, dressed extravagantly, with wig and sword [fig. 25]. He looked admiringly at his reflection in the mirror, pleased with his appearance. This gentleman, became a fool specifically because of his overindulgence in popular trends. The “Extremes of fashion” made him into an insufferable idiot, and transforming him into a Narcissus-like character. This notion highlighted the performativity of clothing. Genteel society performed gentility on a daily basis during the eighteenth-century.⁴⁷⁴ Its performance was

⁴⁷³ Ibid, 42.

⁴⁷⁴ For more on performance see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1959).

essential, because the action of performing reinforced gentility's characterization, and demonstrated its necessity in high society. As the most importance component of this performance, fashion expressed the existence of gentility within a person. However, commentators recognized a fine line between performing and over-performing. Becoming a "fool" or a "slave" to fashion, only prompted the continual development of its over-luxuriousness.

Rather than disappearing at the end of the century, the "Fool of Fashion" continued to symbolize the dangers of the "genteel disease." Because current trends grew in extravagance during much of the latter half of the eighteenth century, the necessity to display of gentility increased. It then lost its moorings in modesty due to its resulting excessiveness as well as the non-genteel pursuit to attain it. *The World Turned Upside Down* thus recognized that an excess of fashion, related to a loss of decency and virtue, figured in the destruction of both men and women. Rather than a new idea, brought about by a rejection of elitism at the end of the century, social commentary marked this opinion present as early as 1745. These arguments about the loss of virtue and nature, through the excess and foolishness of over-ornamentation, focused on clothing.

The authors of *The World Turned Upside Down* chose clothing as a signifier of the consequences of modesty's loss, because of its recognized transformative ability and importance in performance. Dress contained lessons, stories, and morals that reflected tropes, rules, and beliefs to learn and understand. Clothing's communicative state sent messages with ease. People of the eighteenth century relied heavily on exterior cues to understand an individual's identity as well as their intentions. A quick look at a person's attire told all the information necessary to craft a background for every individual. Therefore, one cannot overstate the importance of

clothing as a language. The type of fabrics, attention to detail, items chosen, and craftsmanship came together to provide a mini-biography of the person in question. During this time, “clothes made the man (or woman)” more than any other societal behavior or attribute. By the 1790s, dress continued to be a messaging board of political and cultural attitudes read through the “language of clothing.”

Before this period, sumptuary laws in England prevented certain classes from wearing fabrics and items of clothing deemed inappropriate to their station. These laws, greatly enforced, stopped the laboring classes from wearing items such as lace and gold and silver embellishments.⁴⁷⁵ They remained on the books during the eighteenth century, though generally ignored, especially in the colonies. The genteel classes depended upon these assumptions to isolate finer dress, which they believed belonged to them. More luxurious fabrics and styles which promoted fashion over function illustrated an expression of gentility. Most importantly, genteel style encouraged all the sensibilities of refinement. Contemporaries considered gentility, through the presence of modesty and virtue, a natural state of being, belonging to the social elite. Furthermore, genteel clothing reflected the refined interpretation of nature, while non-genteel clothing expressed its absence. However, during the middle of the eighteenth century, this mode of social separation began to shift. The increasing trans-Atlantic activity between the colonies and the metropole brought an excess of goods and services and in doing so created new conceptions of the relationship between humanity and the natural world.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, ships traversed the Atlantic to reach their destination at a much quicker rate, allowing new cargo to arrive every day in colonial port cities. Aboard these ships, were products that defined the lives of colonial Americans. A reciprocal

⁴⁷⁵ Kathleen A. Staples and Madelyn Shaw, *Clothing through American History: The British Colonial Era* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Press, 2013), 43.

relationship between the metropole and the colonists meant that raw materials would leave British America and Britain would send back manufactured or completed items. There were some items which British America produced themselves, which other parts of the Atlantic world consumed. Therefore, as timber, tobacco, fish, whale oil, and pig-iron made its way eastward across the North Atlantic, manufactured products such as textiles and Atlanticly circulated print material like magazines, and other publications traveled westward to the colonies. Between the years 1700 to 1774, the aggregate output in Colonial America multiplied almost twelve times.⁴⁷⁶ In 1700, the economy was 4% of Britain's, but by 1774, it reached over one-third of its size.⁴⁷⁷ While British North America exported a vast amount of materials, the number of items it imported was also high. Such numbers indicated the necessity and the reliance on Atlanticly produced materials, and their use created a developed trans-oceanic consciousness. A shared material culture united those in the British Atlantic, so that cultural similarity often dwarfed their differences.

All this Atlantic trade and commerce solidified the belief in a mastery of nature. Through their interaction with alien forms of life and indigenous populations during the colonization process, Britons and Anglo-Americans altered and shaped their environment. Colonization introduced Europeans to new plants, animals, and minerals, spurring a re-conceptualization of the natural world. They evolved brand-new classification systems to accommodate the new imperial worldview. These rating systems, which relied on the terms "natural" and "artificial" to define the natural world helped justify the imperial process by suggesting that Europeans could

⁴⁷⁶ Edwin J. Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), ix.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

ultimately improve the landscape.⁴⁷⁸ Europeans and Anglo-Americans then extrapolated this “language of improvement” to focus on themselves.

By the mid-eighteenth century, many colonial towns and villages had been settled for nearly or close to one-hundred years. Their colonial success across the globe led Britons and Anglo-Americans to believe they had transcended their old egalitarian relationship with nature.⁴⁷⁹ The development of this “mastery” over the natural world, fueled by the realization of nature as an intellectual construct⁴⁸⁰, prompted enlightened contemporaries to ask questions about humanity’s relationship to the animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms.⁴⁸¹ Questions filtered their way into discussions throughout print media and the public sphere illustrating a mindset where contemporaries believed humans could be both separate from nature as well as able to create it. These realizations prompted debate and had the immediate effect of making the categories of natural and artificial less dependable, resulting in instability. Because an understanding of nature and artifice was so important in how contemporaries defined the world around them, as well as themselves, society could not tolerate any instability. Therefore, the reaction was to make the dichotomy more defined and thus more controllable.

The mastery of nature and the increase in the movement of goods came together in a manner which commodified nature. Colonization exploited natural resources because the colonies existed to support the empire and thus the metropole. Those who settled in North America did so for a variety of reasons, but usually, the wealthiest became involved in either

⁴⁷⁸ Susannah Gibson, *Animals, Vegetable, Mineral?: How Eighteenth-Century Science Disrupted the Natural Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 67.

⁴⁷⁹ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harpert Row, 1980).

⁴⁸⁰ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1996).

⁴⁸¹ Gibson, 5.

agriculture or trade again emphasizing the commodification of nature.⁴⁸² In the New England colonies of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, agriculture occurred at a smaller rate, compared to the Mid-Atlantic and Southern regions. Some describe New England farming efforts as, “produc(ing) more grains and stones, the latter more easily and abundant than the former.”⁴⁸³ While most people in New England were involved in some form of farming, generally it was family-oriented with fewer laborers. In the mid-Atlantic and southern colonies, and into the Caribbean one could find larger enterprises, such as wheat, tobacco, indigo, rice, and sugar. However, New England did sport a thriving internalized cod fishery as well as timber to create masts for ships out of pine, as well as tar and turpentine.⁴⁸⁴ Also, the region had smaller-scale manufacturing as well as “sugar refining, rum distilling, and flour milling.”⁴⁸⁵ Because of its lesser dependence on agriculture, New England became more trade and market-oriented in the Atlantic economy. Thus, merchants became some of the most affluent in the region while in the southern colonies such as Virginia and South Carolina planters filled this social position. Men involved in shipping and commerce lived across New England cities and towns, such as Marblehead, Providence, and of course, Boston. Because of the presence of trade, shipping, and commodities, seaports had high numbers of genteel populations.

The genteel in British North America controlled fashion through consumerism. Because of the increased ability to produce materials, through better industrial technologies, Britons gained the capacity to create goods in greater quantities than ever before more efficiently. One of the main items which benefitted from this increase in technology was textiles. In British North

⁴⁸² Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 3.

⁴⁸³ John J. McCusker & Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 93.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

America, free and unfree laborers harvested raw goods, shipped across the Atlantic to create manufactured materials. Not all raw products for textiles came from British America. Britain had an almost exclusive monopoly on the supply and production of wool. Because of the dependency upon an Atlantic economy in the British colonial system, fabrics and thus clothing became heavily influenced by Atlantic styles making the construction and the “language of clothing” an Atlantic one.⁴⁸⁶

Mantua-makers, tailors, milliners, peruke-makers, cobblers, etc. all helped to turn raw materials into beautiful works of art. Colonials had access to very few items that came ready-made; examples of which are shoes and stockings, or “undress” wear.⁴⁸⁷ Many in the colonies created clothing of their own, usually referred to as homespun, or through purchasing fabrics and textiles. A more regular availability of textiles meant increased access to clothing and those who participated in the newly mobilized movement of consumption excitedly bought them.

The trans-Atlantic movement and newfound necessity of these items created what historians call a consumer revolution.⁴⁸⁸ This revolution in consumerism involved a greater

⁴⁸⁶ “The language of clothing” is a term coined by Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002).

⁴⁸⁷ Staples and Shaw, 121-132.

⁴⁸⁸ For more on the consumer revolution see: Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, eds. *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); John Brewer and Roy Porter, ed., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); Ronald Hoffman and Cary Carson, *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993); Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Eighteenth-Century Consumerism and the Retail Trade From London to the Virginia Frontier*, Ph.D. dissertation (The College of William and Mary, 1993); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760, 2nd ed.* (London: Routledge, 1996); Lawrence B. Glickman, *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); M. Berg and E. Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Timothy Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); John Benson and Laura Ugolini, eds. *Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society since 1700* (Bodmin, Cornwall: MPG Books Ltd., 2006); John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); John Benson, Jon Stobard, Andrew Hann, and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, 1680-1830* (London:

number of people consuming more available and plentiful items. Because of this surge of new items, Anglo-Americans and Britons during the eighteenth century experienced a normalization of consumption, unlike anything that their parents and grandparents had experienced. More engaged in consumerism than had before, including a growing middle class. The presence and the availability of luxury items elevated the standard of living and display of wealth and prestige grew in importance categories of identity became less stable just as “natural” and “artificial” did. Dror Wahrman’s study on the self and gender play during the eighteenth century illustrates the instability of these categories.⁴⁸⁹ Through its commodification, “nature,” linked to modesty and virtue, and “artifice,” to abomination and vice, became unstable due to the ability to reproduce refinement.

Contemporaries linked gentility with sensibility, modesty, and virtue; all believed to be inherently natural characteristics. The genteel as naturally superior could exercise great flexibility in what they wore. However, because of more available clothing, the non-genteel continually tried to dress above their station, creating instability in social identification and classification. Because the genteel and contemporaries understood the importance of clothing in performing gentility, combined with individuals wearing inappropriate clothing, they knew that dress itself needed protection. Essays frequently appeared in publications across the British North Atlantic detailing the transformative power of clothes. These pamphlets and essays indicated a genteel belief that clothing often functioned as the tool allowing individuals access into polite circles.

Routledge, 2007); Frank Trentmann, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Woodruff Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800* (London: Routledge, 2012), and Sherylynn Haggerty, *‘Merely for Money?’: Business Culture in the British North Atlantic, 1750-1815* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

⁴⁸⁹ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Because of the importance of clothing in creating categories of identification and performance, genteel contemporaries continued to rely on it to emphasize degrees of separation and counter instability. Due to its greater availability, the targeting of dress to solve the imbalance of categories of identity became problematic. Therefore, while the genteel tried to control clothing and fashion, to re-emphasize characteristics of modesty and virtue, they were unable to do so. This instability of categories and the struggle to steady them is visible throughout changes in fashion, certain items of costume, and conversations on current modes.

Study of portraiture, items of clothing, conversations in print culture involving clothes, as well as inappropriate dressing, came together to show how dress transgressively blurred these boundaries of nature and social classification, despite genteel attempts to stabilize them through clothing. This contrasts with the traditional characterization of the bell-curve of fashion during the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁹⁰ The artwork of John Singleton Copley, Charles Wilson Peale, and Ralph Earl, show how instead of the bell-curve of fashion, styles instead wavered between three different interpretations between 1750-1800. These were modesty, luxury, and simplicity. While new styles and interpretations appeared in these decades, expressions of modesty, luxury, and simplicity each had similar executions no matter in what

⁴⁹⁰ Examples of historians of costume include: Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (New England: C. Scribner's Sons, 1894) and *Two Centuries of Costume in America* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903); C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston Plays Inc., 1972); Jane Dorner, *Fashion: The Changing Shape of Fashion through the Years* (Boston, MA: Octopus Books, 1974); Elizabeth McClellan, *Historic Dress in America, 1607-1870: Vol. I, 1607-1800* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, reprint 1977); Peter F. Copeland, *Working Dress in Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977); Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979); Edward Maeder, *An Elegant Art: Fashion and Fantasy in the Eighteenth Century: Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection of Costumes and Textiles* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1983); Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); David Kutcha, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity* (University of California Press, 2002); Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

decade they might materialize. Not only this but in each decade, these expressions appeared simultaneously. However, modest interpretations occurring in different decades never completely mirrored each other but instead shared similar characterizations. The appearance of these three forms of design at the same time demonstrated an alternating belief in the appropriateness of dress. Dress, of course, visually reflected the expressions of virtue and gentility.

Examples of Copley's work indicate how manifestations of gentility, through characteristics like modesty changed within two to five years. Between 1767-1772, three portraits of wealthy Bostonian Nicholas Boylston demonstrate changes through color schemes and varying aspects of nature. Similar changes occur through two portraits of Mrs. Metcalf Bowler, painted first in the late 1750s and then in the early 1760s. Copley used a model of a specific blue dress on some different women. This implies an ideal of a mold of gentility. In the depictions of the dress in 1763, the physical style and ornamentation of the dress altered, revealing that this "mold of gentility" became individualized. These fluctuations in the depiction of clothing, visible through Copley's artwork, shows that ideas on appropriateness changed quickly.

Not only did expressions of clothing change in the portraiture of Copley, Peale, and Earle, but indications of what was natural also did. Throughout each decade, typically the more ornamented and luxurious the clothing of the subject, the more controlled the included aspects of nature. Simple expressions of clothing tended to appear in portraits which included more "uncontrolled" aspects of nature. The relationship between the "natural" and gentility becomes more apparent through the relationship between clothing and aspects of nature present in the portraits. Modest interpretations often sat in the middle between the two extremes of luxury and

simplicity; thereby, expressing varying interpretations between control of nature and clothing. Therefore, portraiture indicated a correlation between “improved” clothing and enhanced nature, both which represented either an increased or decreased role in humans making something better, more perfect, and thus more natural. This pattern was not applicable in all cases but demonstrates a fluctuation in expressions of clothing styles and the natural.

Several items of clothing such as the hoop-petticoat and the scratch wig showcased how ideas of modesty and virtue ebbed and flowed. During the 1740s, the hoop-petticoat prompted a line of conversation involving its appropriateness. Because of its large size, and “abnormal” proportions, one critic found it grotesque. Its overly grandiose circumference unnaturally inhibited movement and exaggerated the body’s contours, making it unnatural. Contemporaries connected this unnaturalness with the items over-luxuriousness, thrust into fashionable style due to refinement. Over-refinement meant that somehow, gentility had become unbalanced. Issues with the hoop-petticoat prompted a recognition of the problems affecting gentility. Due to an overabundance of the display of wealth, a described “genteel disease” grew within society. Too much luxury meant an abandonment of the natural characteristics, sensibility, modesty, and virtue, and an excess of vice, abomination, and the unnatural. To thus reclaim gentility’s modest origins, and restrict it only to the genteel, it had to become “natural” again.

The study of hairdressing also indicates the significance of reinforcing this dichotomy of natural and artificial.⁴⁹¹ Eighteenth-century hair-dressing manuals, available trans-Atlantically,

⁴⁹¹ For more on eighteenth century hair and wigs see: Richard Corson, *Fashions in Hair: The First Five Thousand Years*, 1965; Joyce Asser, *Historic Hairdressing*, 1966; Ann Charles and Roger DeAnfrasio, *The History of Hair*, 1970; James Stevens Cox, *The Story of Wigs through the ages: from 3400 BC to 1974 AD*, 1974; Mary Brooks Picken, *A Dictionary of Culture and Fashion*, 1985; Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*, 1993; Diane Simon, *Hair: Public, Political, Extremely Personal*, 2000; *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Volume 38, No. 1, Fall 2004, Special Issue: Hair, Angela Rosenthal, "Raising Hair," Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach, "Big Hair," and Amelia Rauser, "Hair, Authenticity, and the Self-Made Macaroni,"; Lynn Festa, "Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century," 2005; Geraldine

showed the close relationship between science and art, through the process of dressing the hair. Manuals described hair by its scientific properties first, focusing on its biology, explaining how the human body produced hair. A focus on science through biology indicated differences between groups of people, underlining the supremacy of white, Anglo-Britons. Thus, wigmakers preferred the hair of northern Europeans. While genteel contemporaries wanted to emphasize differences between themselves and other groups, they also wanted to de-emphasize differences within their ranks, to strengthen their claims of uniqueness and dominance. Therefore, recognized differences within genteel populations needed correction. To accomplish erasing errors and differences, hairdressers used a branch of pseudoscience, physiognomy, which claimed that inquisitors could identify character through physical features. Manuals dictated the necessity for hairdressers to know physiognomy to correct the imbalances in a person's face and their head to fit them into a standard, and most importantly natural, genteel mold. This instructional method of correcting the face indicated a belief in the imperfection of the human body. To be natural, and therefore more perfect, the face, head, and hair needed assistance. Therefore, the intervention of people transforming the science of the body into art, improved and brought out those characteristics of modesty and virtue, necessary to express gentility for the reaffirmation of the social hierarchy and the separation between genteel and non-genteel.

Wigs contributed to the transgression of the distinctions between natural/artificial and genteel/non-genteel. Earlier in the century mostly only the wealthy wore the larger and much grander perukes, which dwarfed the face and head. By the 1740s, contemporaries linked particular styles of wigs to certain professions.⁴⁹² The greater availability of wigs stemming from

Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang, *Hair: Styling, Culture, and Fashion*, 2008 and Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunnington and P.E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History*, 2010.

⁴⁹² This is the decade where historians of wigs and hair consistently identify as the "professionalization" and introduction of smaller wigs.

the consumer revolution meant a blurring between social categories, indicated through the adoption of the scratch wig. This result indicated that social distinctions were not as visible, prompting people to think they needed more policing of clothing to tell everyone apart. Wigs had then abandoned their primary responsibility of emphasizing the line between classes, and therefore were no longer reliable.

On the one hand, the ability to wear a wig symbolized a man's capability to participate in consumerism and thus purchase and aspire to gentility. On the other, wigs also became central in the expression of Anglo-manhood. Thus, the commodification of gentility through wigs was also a greater commodification of masculinity. Wigs became crucial in the display of masculinity.⁴⁹³ However, dependence upon wigs to perform these aspects of identity meant a blurring of the categories of natural and artificial. The hair forming a wig did not belong to the person who wore it. Therefore, society recognized wigs as an artificial construct. However, despite this recognition, it functioned as a "natural" expression of gentility and masculinity. A wide variety of wigs emphasized this metamorphosis of an artificial item into a symbol of naturalness. However, one wig challenged this adoption of artificial into natural.

Description of the scratch wig highlighted its natural appearance. Like a modern toupee, wearers combed or blended the wig into their real hair. This marked a difference from other wigs, which traditionally sat on top of the head, physically disconnected from the wearer. The introduction, popularity, and commentary on the scratch wig further created instability in ideas of nature and artifice. In response, some described it as artificial, simply because of its difference from other wigs. The eventual genteel adoption of the scratch wig indicated an attempt to reclaim gentility. Despite its heavy satirization, the scratch wig's physical property of a "natural look"

⁴⁹³ Lynn Festa, "Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29: 2 (Spring 2005): 47-90, doi: 10.1215/00982601-29-2-47, accessed September 4, 2013.

eventually allowed for the attachment of modesty. The genteel, on a quest to return modesty to gentility, thus adopted the wig as their own, for outdoor sport and riding culture.

The genteel continued attempts to bring clothing back to its modest, English origins, even though they understood the recent unreliability of dress. Born into the correct layer of society, with good breeding, the genteel believed themselves as the sole intended possessors of this trait.⁴⁹⁴ The genteel body was virtuous, and the most natural, meaning that non-genteel attempts to perform gentility through wearing refined clothing would only fall short. Despite this apparent knowledge, contemporaries continued to target clothing as a means of reestablishing social distinction. Therefore, it became necessary to control clothing through social commentary, which advised the genteel to dress more modestly. The greater availability of clothing meant that social commentators had trouble agreeing on what modesty looked like, creating instability in clothing styles. The genteel believed that only they had the ability to correctly, authentically, and naturally perform modesty and virtue. At the same time, even though the genteel had confidence in their capacity to recognize inauthentic performances of gentility, the presence of individuals throughout British North America, who successfully fooled with the use of false personas, cast doubt on the ability to spot a fake. Because of the recognized ability of clothing to transform a person, the genteel knew that the undeserving had access to the tools needed to perform refinement and sensibility through the adoption and practice of refined mannerisms.

Transgressive dressing brought these fears of the genteel to life. Those who wore clothing inappropriate to their social position threatened the elite. Because of the destabilization of the division between nature and artifice, social categories also blurred. With a recognized blurring of social categories, through the commodification of gentility, the genteel found themselves in a

⁴⁹⁴ Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), xv.

place of defending what they believed belonged only to them. Those who transgressively dressed were physical representations of these fears. Actions of transgressive dressing created “social monsters.” Society viewed these monsters as threatening because they reminded the genteel of the increased destabilization of the social hierarchy.

Transient populations in British North America created discomfort and anxiety due to the inability to know the intentions of others. Unlike previous centuries, people more commonly lived amongst strangers, rather than those they already knew. A more mobile population and a greater presence of strangers prompted a greater necessity to observe and control the behavior and actions of others.⁴⁹⁵ By the eighteenth century, the Anglo population of British North America was mostly self-sustaining.⁴⁹⁶ In New England, where land was scarce, a family that had multiple sons forced the younger to leave and find a livelihood elsewhere. Also, imperial wars throughout the early and mid-eighteenth century produced many urban poor, including war widows, orphans, and decrepit soldiers who swarmed to port-cities looking for relief.⁴⁹⁷ Even though the structure of colonial cities created a physical separation between the living quarters of the urban poor and the genteel, residents could not ignore the greater numbers of transient people. As the urban poor grew in number between the 1750s-1770s, the city of Boston contributed more finances to provide relief.⁴⁹⁸ In 1771, tax records indicated that the top ten

⁴⁹⁵ Douglas Lamar Jones, “The Strolling Poor: Transiency in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts,” *Journal of Social History* 8 (Spring 1975), accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3786714>; David H. Flaherty, “Crime and Social Control in Provincial Massachusetts,” *The Historical Journal* 24, (June 1981), accessed February 22, 2017; Cornelia H. Dayton and Sharon V. Salinger, *Robert Love’s Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Douglas Greenberg, “Crime, Law Enforcement, and Social Control in Colonial America,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 26 (Oct., 1982), accessed February 22, 2017, DOI: 10.2307/844939; Thomas Kidd, “Passing as a Pastor: Clerical Imposture in the Colonial Atlantic World,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 14 (Summer, 2004), accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rac.2004.14.2.149>.

⁴⁹⁶ Perkins, 2.

⁴⁹⁷ Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 308.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 307-308.

percent of Bostonians, based upon wealth, owned 60 percent of the property, while the bottom 30 percent held nothing at all.⁴⁹⁹ The city helped those in need to a certain extent, but if strangers and vagabonds within the city appeared to have no purpose, they immediately became untrustworthy, and city officials warned them out. The presence of this removal system showed the presence of genteel fears through the need to control non-genteel populations.

Runaway advertisements printed in colonial newspapers also indicated methods of social control. Many of these advertisements mentioned the runaways' ability to disguise themselves and their ill-intent. The ads included a description of clothing because contemporaries understood that dress influenced the reception of servants by other people. Contemporaries continually considered clothing a luxury item, despite its greater availability. They believed that those who read their advertisements could identify their servants through their dress, even though they understood clothing as newly unreliable. These ads also often included locations where the master believed the servant might travel to, demonstrating a knowledge of transiency. The mobility in Colonial America provided anonymity and thus staging ground to invent entirely new personas.

Those tagged as "strangers," "vagabonds," and "strollers," frequently traveled into New England towns and cities. Some had nefarious purposes, about which newspapers continually included warnings. Many pretended to be ministers to gain the admiration of townspeople. Others masqueraded as war veterans or spun sad histories to garner sympathy. In all cases, clothing functioned as an important method of their overall masquerade and deception. These individuals often stole "fine" clothing to wear for fooling others. Some became extremely

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

notorious, so much so that other historians have dubbed them as “colonial confidence men.”⁵⁰⁰ It is not only newspaper advertisements which indicated the presence of these individuals, but also the development of a criminal justice system meant to punish them.

To deal with these threats and instances of transgressive dressing, authorities in New England shifted the focus of the criminal justice system, from moral to property. This change reflected the newfound importance of protecting material goods. Newspaper ads indicated that not only did transgressive dressers threaten gentility by replicating it, but also did so by the theft of material possessions needed to perform it. Residents of New England cities and towns became extremely watchful and on the lookout for strange behavior to protect their belongings, as well as themselves.

Through their need to correct gentility, the genteel increased emphasis on the policing of clothing, thus contributing to the cycle of destabilizing the categories. Despite their attempts to contain the “social monsters,” the unnatural abominations of transgressive dressing, their success became hollow. Even though the advertisements and notices indicated that society discovered many transgressive dressers, their very presence only added more fear. Contemporaries knew that for each transgressive dresser that they unveiled, an unknowable number continued to operate in a supportive, identity-fluid environment. The realization that “wolves in sheep’s clothing” could appear in several packages only increased the concern.

Thus, a trans-Atlantic worldview developed in British North America. Colonial Americans saw themselves as English, and ultimately as members of a larger British imperial culture and economy. By the 1740s, a greater sophistication in traversing the Atlantic meant that the ocean transformed from a barrier into a bridge. Before this, for nearly a century, Anglo-

⁵⁰⁰ Stephen J. Bullock, "A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55:2 (April, 1998): 231-258, accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2674383>.

Americans clustered close together in communities to deal with their proximity to the cruel and unforgiving wilderness. Because of the ability to more quickly cross the ocean, trips became faster and happened more often. Upon these ships were consumable items, more easily produced due to improving technologies in Europe and natural resources from colonization. The presence of consumables on a larger scale created a commodification of nature, allowing gentility to become purchasable. Categories of identity were destabilized through the eighteenth-century Atlantic. Because nature effectively became commodified, what was natural and artificial fluctuated. Due to the ability to purchase gentility and perform it, the genteel, the keepers of the natural characteristics of modesty and politeness, found that their justification came into question. Thus, the fluctuation of these categories played out in conversations about clothing, filtering through society. The greater presence of clothing and its unreliability prompted these destabilizations. Finally, because of the recognized importance of clothing, the genteel continued to rely on it to control society, even though they knew it was no longer reliable. As a product of the changing environment, transgressive dressers exemplified this unreliability.

Therefore, these fluctuations and conversations continued throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, even during the Age of Revolutions. By the nineteenth century, categories of identity had solidified, what was natural and artificial firmly expressed itself as distinctive from the other. For example, long pants for men replaced knee breeches for almost all occasions, the frock coat sported a higher collar, and wigs were replaced by hats.⁵⁰¹ Women, wore fitted gowns with lower waistlines and fuller skirts.⁵⁰² All in all, stability in methods of classification had arrived in the new United States. Clothing, however, continued to be a major medium and language to inform on societal concerns and changes throughout the modern era.

⁵⁰¹ Baumgarten, 219.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

APPENDIX: CHAPTER ILLUSTRATIONS



Copley, John Singleton. *Miss Rhoda Cranston*. 1758. Oil on canvas. 57 ½ in. x 48 in. 146. 1 x 121.9 cm. Gift of Mrs. Alan Cunningham, 1978. 27. Courtesy of The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia. <http://embark2.eservices.virginia.edu/Obj95?sid=62&x=3809> Photograph © The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia.

Figure 1: Cranston's gown illustrates luxury during the 1750s. This amount of heavy ornamentation, including the cascading sleeves, white stomacher decorated with bows, earrings, and hair ribbons, is more typically associated with the 1770s. The portrait also shows a controlled amount of nature, as Cranston holds a small arrangement of flowers.



Earl, Ralph. *Mrs. Elijah Boardman and her Son, William Whiting Boardman*. 1796. Oil on canvas. 85 1/4 x 56 1/2 in. (216.5 x 143.5 cm.) frame: 91 3/4 x 65 5/8 x 2 in. (233 x 166.7 x 5.1 cm.) Gift of the Virginia Steele Scott Foundation. The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California. <http://emuseum.huntington.org/objects/5145/mrs-elijah-boardman-and-her-son-william-whiting-boardman?ctx=c64228eb-5613-42a8-b0dc-9c8d49250493&idx=0>. Accessed March 11, 2017. © *Courtesy of the Huntington Art Collections, San Marino, California.*

Figure 2: Boardman's dress, although markedly different in appearance than that of earlier styles, falls under the classification of luxurious. The gown has many elaborations and Boardman has a large amount of ornamentation in her hair.



Copley, John Singleton. *Mrs. Benjamin Blackstone, Jr., (Eleanor Phipps)*. 1762-1764. Oil on Canvas. 48 1/8 in. x 37 1/8 in. 122.2375 x 94.2975 cm. Bequest of Herbert L. Pratt (Class of 1895). Courtesy of Amherst College, Mead Art Museum, Amherst, MA. Accession Number: 1945.13. <http://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=all&t=objects&type=all&f=&s=blackstone&record=0>. Accessed August 23, 2016. Photograph © Amherst College, Mead Art Museum.

Figure 3: Blackstone's dress has extensive detailing and multiple types of fabric. The posturing of her body, coupled with the small amount of controlled nature in the painting, indicate a relationship between luxury and the idea of a more natural look.



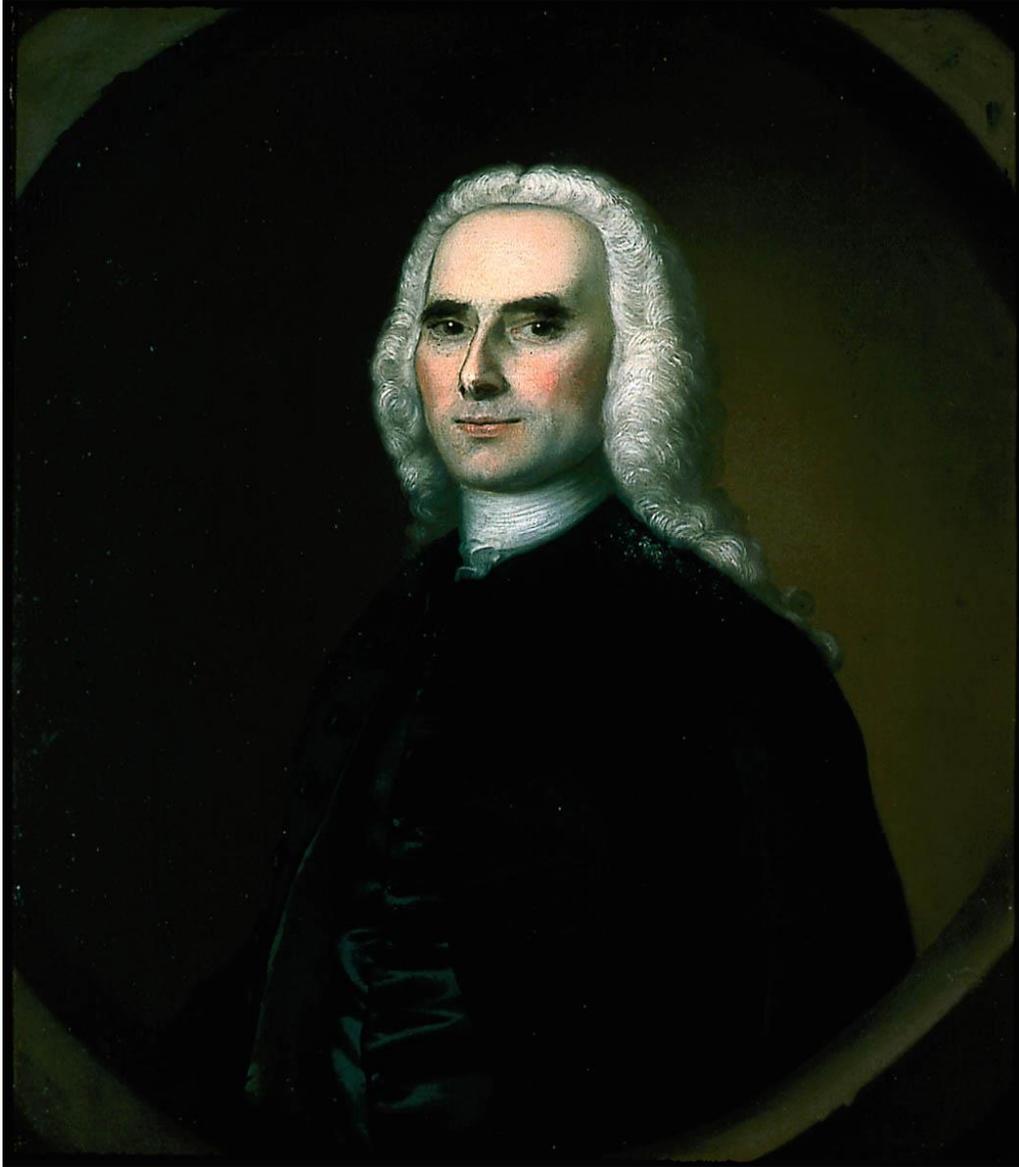
Copley, John Singleton. *Woodbury Langdon*. 1767. Oil on canvas. Canvas dimensions: 49 3/4 × 39 1/2 in. (126.37 × 100.33 cm) Framed dimensions: 57 3/4 × 47 1/2 × 3 in. (146.69 × 120.65 × 7.62 cm). Dallas Museum of Art, The Eugene and Margaret McDermott Art Fund, Inc., 1996.70.1.McD. <https://www.dma.org/collection/artwork/john-singleton-copley/woodbury-langdon>. Accessed March 8, 2017. Photograph © Dallas Museum of Art

Figure 4: The portrait of Woodbury Langdon demonstrates luxury, through the bold colors and heavy ornamentation. The golden embroidery, large gold buttons, and sleeve ruffles. He also wears a heavily powdered gray wig. The components of nature included are minor; controlled and broken-up through the use of the pillar.



Earl, Ralph. *Elijah Boardman*. 1789. Oil on Canvas. 83 in. x 51 in. (210.8 x 129.5 cm)
 Bequest of Susan W. Tyler, 1979. Accession Number: 1979.395. Photograph
 courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/10830>. Accessed March 11,
 2017.

Figure 5: Boardman's three-piece suit illustrates luxury because each component of the suit is a different color and overall his costume has large, ornamental elements.



Blackburn, Joseph. *Thomas Bulfinch*. 1756. Oil on canvas. 76.2 x 66.04 cm. 30 in. x 26 in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Templeman Coolidge. Accession Number: 45.516. Museum of Fine Arts: Boston. <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/thomas-bulfinch-32931>. Accessed March 9, 2017. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 6: Bulfinch's clothing illustrates an expression of modest style during the 1750s. His jacket and vest are a dark, somber color, and he wears an older styled long wig. Modesty is the characteristic most associated with this decade.



John Singleton Copley. *John Bours*. About 1763. Oil on canvas. 50 ¼ in. x 40 1/8 in. Funds from the bequest of Mrs. Hester Newton Wetherel. Accession Number: 1908.7. Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA. <http://vps343.pairvps.com:8080/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/search@/0?t:state:flow=a9991a8c-7a26-4d98-bedf-59d3bff7710f>. Accessed August 23, 2016. Image Courtesy of the Worcester Art Museum (MA).

Figure 7: Bours' clothing illustrates modesty in the 1760s. His jacket, vest, and breeches are all the same muddish brown color. His ensemble has moderate ornamentation with the ruffling at the sleeves. There is a small amount of nature in the background, but it is almost invisible, because of the darkness of the overall portrait.



Copley, John Singleton. *Portrait of a Lady*. 1771. Oil on canvas. Frame: $57 \frac{7}{8} \times 47 \frac{1}{4} \times 3 \frac{1}{8}$ in. ($147 \times 120.02 \times 7.94$ cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art. <http://collections.lacma.org/node/251662>. Purchased with funds provided by the American Art Council, Anna Bing Arnold, F. Patrick Burns Bequest, Mr. and Mrs. William Preston Harrison Collection, David M. Koetser, Art Museum Council, Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr., The Ahmanson Foundation, Ray Stark and other donors (85.2). Accessed March 18, 2017. Photo © Museum Associates/ LACMA.

Figure 8: *Portrait of a Lady* indicates a modest interpretation of fashion due to the minor elaborations to the gown, as well as its more neutral color of taupe.



Peale, Charles Wilson. *Samuel Mifflin*. 1777-80. Oil on canvas. 49 7/8 in. x 39 3/4 in. (126.4 x 101 cm). Egleston Fund, 1922. Accession Number: 22.153.1. Photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. <http://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/11718>. Accessed September 6, 2016.

Figure 9: Mifflin's clothing of a three-piece suit, all in one shade of brown, with slight ruffling at the cuffs and large buttons marks his clothing as modest.



Earl, Ralph. *Huldah Bradley*. 1794. Oil on canvas. 112.08 x 81.6 cm. 44 1/8 in. x 32 1/8 in. Museum of Fine Arts: Boston. Accession Number: 40.3. Ellen Kelloran Gardner Fund. <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/huldah-bradley-32729>. Accessed April 5, 2017. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 10a: Bradley's gown symbolizes modesty during the 1790s. The style differs from the 1750s, but the mild colors and ornamentation mark it as such.



Earl, Ralph. "Lucy Bradley." 1794. Oil on canvas. 44 1/8 x 31 1/4 in. 112.1 x 79.5 cm framed 52 x 39 5/8 x 3 in. Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. Fund, 41.4. <http://www.dia.org/object-info/dbbe3479-d4cf-432b-9c30-227142e6d029.aspx?position=1>. Accessed April 4, 2017. Photograph © Detroit Institute of Arts.

Figure 10b: Earl painted the Bradley sisters in the same gown, illustrating the idea of a mold of genteel perfection. The dress illustrates modesty due to its minor elaboration, the collar, and emphasis on accentuating the natural contours of the body. Both of the women's hair is unornamented.



Copley, John Singleton. *Mrs. John Stevens (Judith Sargent)*. 1770. Oil on canvas. Image: 50 x 40 in. (127.0 x 101.6 cm). Frame: 56 1/4 x 46 1/8 in. (142.9 x 117.2 cm) *Terra Foundation for American Art*, Daniel J. Terra Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, 2000.6. <https://collection.terraamericanart.org/view/objects/asitem/625/1/dateBegin-asc/alphaSort-asc;jsessionid=7E97F922B0EE9F895A6993F329B54B4C?t:state:flow=caa6d5d0-c50b-4ac5-8077-7c8527fe0a8d>. Accessed on March 10, 2017. Photography © Terra Foundation of American Art.

Figure 11: Steven's gown illustrates simplicity due to the draping fabrics and virtually no ornamentation. Her costume demonstrates a difference in the expression of simplicity compared to the 1760s as her hair is dressed with some additives.



Earl, Ralph. *Elijah Dewey*. 1798. Oil on canvas. 46 in. x 35 in. Catalog Number: A62. The Bennington Museum, Bennington, Vermont. <http://bennington.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/0C6C7428-7B77-4EF4-8041-234443059555>. Accessed March 8, 2017. Photograph © The Bennington Museum.

Figure 12: Dewey's costume falls under simplicity due to its virtual absence of ornamentation, in addition to the lack of a wig.



Copley, John Singleton. *Catherine Greene*. 1769. Oil on Canvas. Framed: 145.5 x 121 x 7 cm (57 ¼ in. x 47 5/8 x 2 ¾ in.); Unframed: 125.7 x 101 cm (49 7/16 in. x 39 ¾ in.) The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust 1915.527. <http://clevelandart.org/art/1915.527>. Accessed March 11, 2016. Photograph © The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Figure 13: Greene's dress uses draping fabrics to allow the natural contours of the body to show through.



Copley, John Singleton. *Mrs. Joseph Mann (Bethia Torrey)*. 1753. Oil on canvas. 91.44 x 71.75 cm. 36 in x 28 1/4 in. Accession Number: 43.1353. Gift of Frederick H. Metcalf and Holbrook E. Metcalf. Museum of Fine Arts: Boston. <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/mrs-joseph-mann-bethia-torrey-32890>. Accessed August 22, 2016. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 14: Mann's gown represents simple clothing due the use of draping fabrics. Mann's portrait features a large amount of nature, illustrating the correlation between an abundance of nature and more simple clothing.



Copley, John Singleton. *Mrs. Metcalf Bowler (Anne Fairchild)*. 1758-1759. Oil on canvas. 50 in. x 40 in. 127 x 101.6 cm. Colby Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ellerton M. Jetté, 1982.006. <http://www.colby.edu/museum/?s=mrs.%20metcalf%20bowler&obj=Obj3228?sid=2220&x=687589>. Accessed March 11, 2017. Photograph © Colby Museum of Art.

Figure 15: Pictured here is the first of two portraits of Mrs. Metcalf Bowler by Copley. This portrait shows an example of modest dress for women during the 1750s. Bowler's hair is loose and unadorned. Her neckline is bare and the few ornamentations are the sleeves and the pink cloth. Her neck is bare and she wears no earrings. The waist is slightly emphasized, also characteristic of modest styles.



Copley, John Singleton. *Anne Fairchild Bowler (Mrs. Metcalf Bowler)*. 1763. Oil on canvas. Overall: 127.2 x 102.2 cm. (50 1/16 x 40 1/4 in.) Framed: 142.9 x 118.1 x 4.4 cm (56 1/4 x 46 1/2 x 1 3/4 in.) Gift of Louise Alida Livingston. Accession Number: 1968.1.1. Image Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington. https://images.nga.gov/en/search/do_quick_search.html?q=%221968.1.1%22. Accessed January 9, 2017.

Figure 16: The second portrait of Bowler exemplifies luxurious style, and nearly everything about the portrait has changed. Bowler wears a similarly colored dress, but its shape and expression are completely different. Her gown flares out much more at the waist, widening the hips. The embroidery around the color and the sleeves are greatly detailed and the gown now has a white stomacher with several bows. Bowler also wears a necklace and a mob cap on her head.



Copley, John Singleton. *Mrs. Daniel Sargent (Mary Turner)*. 1763. Oil on canvas. de Young: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. 49 1/2 x 39 1/4 in. (125.7 x 99.7 cm); Frame: 56 x 46 1/8 x 2 in. (142.2 x 117.2 x 5.1 cm). Accession Number: 1979.7.31. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd. <https://art.famsf.org/john-singleton-copley/mrs-daniel-sargent-mary-turner-1979731>. Accessed August 23, 2016. Photograph © Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Figure 17a: This portrait is one of the three times that Copley painted this blue dress. See Margareta Lovell and Chapter 2 for more information.



Copley, John Singleton. *Mrs. Benjamin Pickman (Mary Toppan)*. 1763. Oil on canvas. 127 x 101.6 cm. 50 in. x 40 in. Accession Number: 1966.79.3. Bequest of Edith Malvina K. Wetmore. Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery. <http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/8802>. Accessed August 23, 2016. Photograph © Yale University Art Gallery.

Figure 17b: This is another example of Copley's use of the blue dress. See Margaretta Lovell and Chapter 2 for more information.



Copley, John Singleton. *Mrs. James Warren (Mercy Otis)*. 1763. Oil on canvas. 126.05 x 100.33 cm. 49 5/8 in. x 39 1/2 in. Accession Number: 31.212. Bequest of Winslow Warren. Museum of Fine Arts: Boston. <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/mrs-james-warren-mercy-otis-32409>. Accessed August 23, 2016. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 17c: This is one more representation of the blue dress. See Margareta Lovell and Chapter 2 for more information.



Copley, John Singleton. *Nicholas Boylston*. 1767. Oil on canvas. 127.3 x 101.1 cm (50 1/8 x 39 13/16 in.) framed: 145.4 x 120 x 10.2 cm (57 1/4 x 47 1/4 x 4 in.) Object Number: H90. Harvard University Portrait Collection, Bequest of Ward Nicholas Boylston to Harvard College, 1828. Harvard Art Museums. Cambridge, MA.
<http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/299949?q=nicholas+Boylston>.
 Accessed August 25, 2016. Photograph © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Figure 18a: The first portrait of Boylston illustrates luxury. See Chapter 2 for more information.



Copley, John Singleton. *Nicholas Boylston*. 1769. Oil on canvas. 50 1/8 in. x 40 in.
 Accession Number: 23.504. Bequest of David P. Kimball. Museum of Fine Arts: Boston.
<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/nicholas-boylston-32060>. Accessed August 24,
 2016. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 18b: The second portrait of Boylston illustrates modesty. See Chapter 2 for more information.



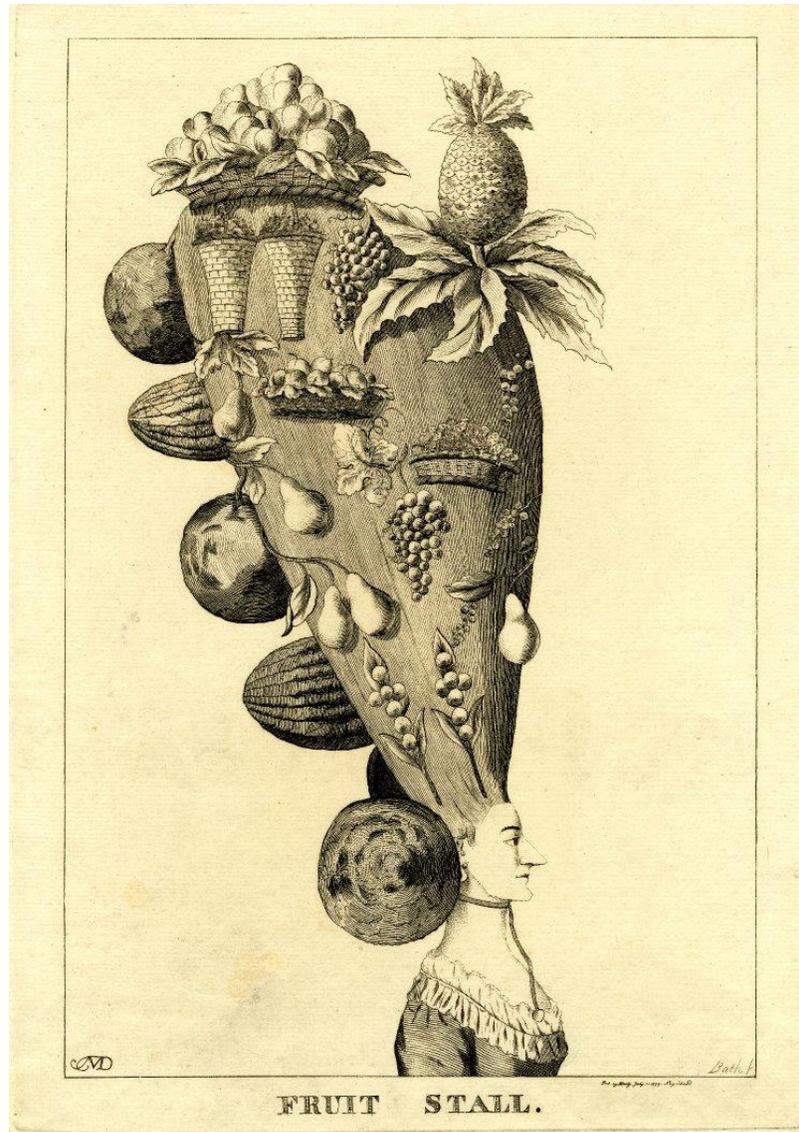
Copley, John Singleton. *Nicholas Boylston*. 1773. Oil on canvas. 238.8 x 144.8 cm (94 x 57 in.) framed: 281.9 x 179.1 x 16.5 cm (111 x 70 1/2 x 6 1/2 in.) Object Number: H20. Harvard University Portrait Collection, Painted at the request of the Harvard Corporation, 1773. Harvard Art Museums. Cambridge, MA. <http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/299800?position=1>. Accessed August 25, 2016. © Photo by Michael Gould.

Figure 18c: The third portrait of Boylston is a return to luxury. See Chapter 2 for more information.



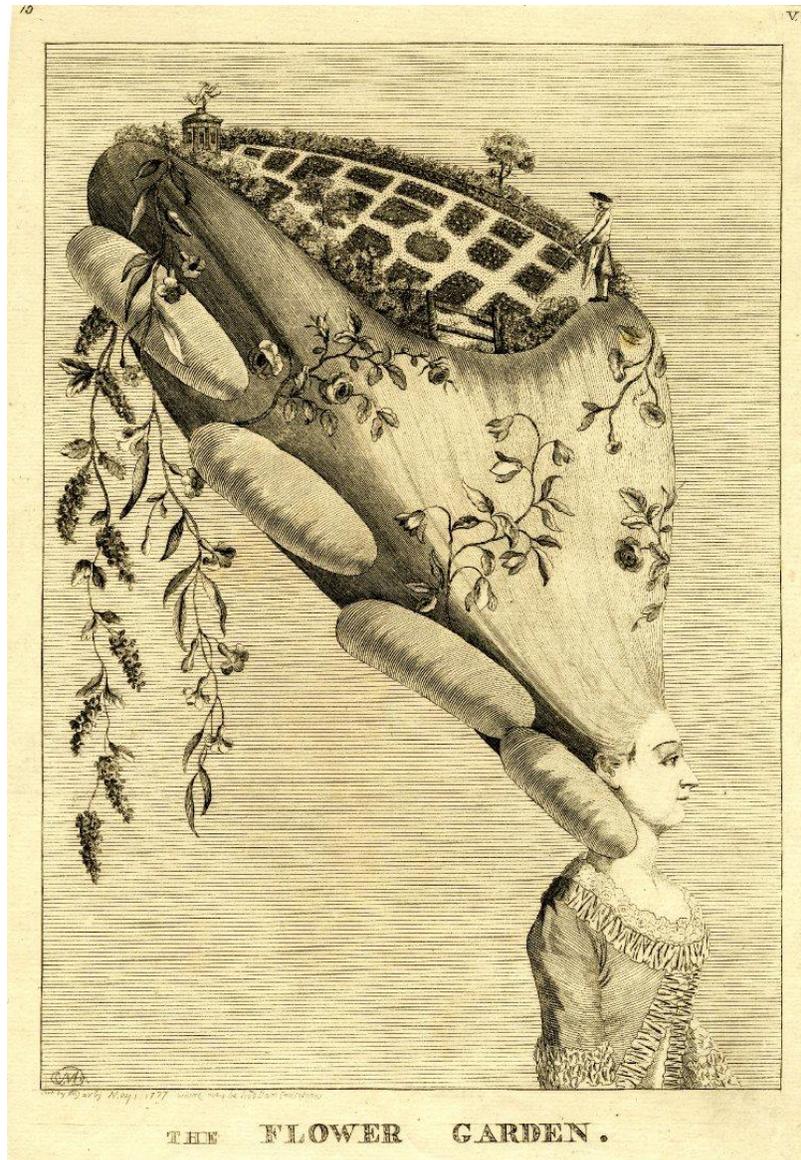
“Game Wigs.” Plate 1. 45-46. In Quizem, Caleb, Thomas Rowlandson, G. M Woodward, Henry William Bunbury, Clara S Peck, and John McE Bowman. *Annals of Sporting*. London, 1809: Published by Thomas Tegg. Received electronically through Transylvania Library Special Collections, Clara Peck Natural History Collection, Transylvania University Library, Lexington, KY. Call Number: NC1479.R8 A4 1809 c. 2. Photograph © Transylvania Library Special Collections.

Figure 19: The scratch wig, or “Black Scratch” is the first figure in the second row.



Daly, Matthew. "Fruit Stall." Illustration. London, 1777. From the British Museum Collection Online. Museum Number: J,5.123. Accessed March 27, 2016. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 20: "Fruit Stall" is one of many images that satirizes hairstyles during the eighteenth century. See Chapter 3 for more information.



Darby, Matthew. "The Flower Garden." Illustration. London, 1777. From the British Museum Collection Online. Museum Number: J.5.124. Accessed March 27, 2016. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 21: Like "Fruit Stall," "The Flower Garden" is also a satirical image. See Chapter 3 for more information.



“Portrait of Charles Price, His Parsonic disguise, The disguise in which he negotiated the Forged Bank Notes.” *Memoirs of A Social Monster; The History of Charles Price, Otherwise Bolingbroke, otherwise Johnson, otherwise Parks, otherwise Wigmore, otherwise Brank, otherwise Wilmott, otherwise Williams, otherwise Schutz, otherwise Trevors, otherwise Polton, otherwise Taylor, otherwise Powell, &c. &c. &c. and commonly called OLD PATCH. Containing an accurate Account of the astonishing FRAUD and ingenious FORGERIES of that truly GREAT MAN, On the GOVERNOR and COMPANY of the BANK of ENGLAND for a Series of Six Years. Including A faithful Detail of his DEVICES and DEPREDATIONS on SOCIETY for a Period of Fifty-five Years.* London: G. Kearsley, 1786. 2. Gale Document Number: CW104029794. Cengage Learning. Iowa State University. Accessed August 22, 2015. Image Courtesy of Cengage Learning, Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

Figure 22: This image illustrates the variety of disguises that Price used to commit crimes. See Chapter 4 for more information.



“A Servant Maid turned Mistress.” In *The World Turned Upside Down or The comical metamorphoses: A work entirely calculated to excite laughter in grown persons and promote morality in the young ones of both sexes: Decorated with 34 copper plates curiously*. Boston: I. Norman, 1794. 31. Accessed August 12, 2015. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 23: This image illustrates a reversal of class roles.



“The Wife acting the Soldier.” In *The World Turned Upside Down or The comical metamorphoses: A work entirely calculated to excite laughter in grown persons and promote morality in the young ones of both sexes: Decorated with 34 copper plates curiously*. Boston: I. Norman, 1794. 33. Accessed August 12, 2015. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 24: This image illustrates a reversal of gendered roles.



“A Fool of Fashion.” In *The World Turned Upside Down or The comical metamorphoses: A work entirely calculated to excite laughter in grown persons and promote morality in the young ones of both sexes: Decorated with 34 copper plates curiously*. Boston: I. Norman, 1794. 59. Accessed August 12, 2015. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 25: This image showcases the dangers of fashion. See Chapter 5 for more information.

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Shop-Lifters Street-Robbers Trappers way-layers Waggon-Hunters Whores, &c. &c. &c. Interspersed With Useful Reflections and Admonitions, salutary Hints and Observations, whereby Rogues and Cheats are not only exposed, but may be avoided, by the Instructions herein contained. The whole laid down in so plain and easy a Manner, as to enable the most innocent Country People to be completely on their Guard how to avoid the base Villainies of those vile and abandoned Wretches, who live by Robbery, and deceiving the Young and Innocent of both Sexes. Written from experience and observation, by Richard King, Esq. Author of The New London Spy, also published by Mr. Hogg. Embellished with emblematical copper-plates, entirely new. London, 1780. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Document Number: CW105180547. Accessed July 25, 2015.

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