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Research Paper

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Edwardian Era

The Edwardian period, which lasted from 1901 to 1910 and was named after British monarch Edward VII. World War 1 had a major effect on fashion in fabric restrictions, modifications of style since women took on men's work during the war, and adoption of certain dress types such as sweaters and trench coats used by the military. The wealthiest of the Edwardian era was noted for the excesses, elegance, and strict social standards. With expensive fabrics and trimmings, Edwardian fashion was opulent and formal. They preferred a distinguished, mature appearance. Corsets and long skirts were worn by women. Hats, gloves, and an umbrella were all part of a complete outfit.

In “The Berg Companion to Fashion - Corset”, by Valerie Steele and Colleen Gau, states that “The corset is a garment with a long and controversial history. A rigid bodice, usually incorporating vertical and diagonal boning, and laced together, the corset was designed to shape the female torso to the fashionable silhouette of the period. Corsets have been worn by women in the Western world from the sixteenth century through the early twentieth century, at which point girdles and brassieres replaced them. Men, especially dandies and military officers, have also sometimes worn corsets” (Steele & Gau 1). This quote shows that corsets were popular during that time. A corset is an item of clothing used to keep and shape the body in the required form,

usually in a smaller or larger waist, for aesthetic or medical reasons (either temporarily or permanently) or to support the breasts. In other words, it's to make you look more curved and feel sexier. In “Twentieth-Century Silhouette and Support”, by Jessica Glasscock, states that “The S-curve form imposed on women’s bodies in 1900 was the result of a straight-fronted corset that started lower on the bustline than the corsets had a few years previously. The shape of the corset allowed the bosom to hang low and unarticulated in front while the hips were pushed backwards” (Glasscock 1). The dress figure during that time was the shape of an S. The shape was inspired by a corset, which pushed a woman's breasts forward and her hips back to relieve pressure on the waistline. An S-shaped curve with a full, pouched bodice, high neckline, and flattened front skirt with a rounded hipline in the back characterizes the Edwardian silhouette. Skirts hugged the hips and flared outwards like an upside-down tulip. During this time, the lingerie dress was popular, and it was made of soft, frilly fabric.

In “Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion - UNDERWEAR”, by Grace Evans, states that “Whalebone, inserted into stitched channels, was the most common material for corset construction during the eighteenth century. It continued to form part of high-quality corsetry well into the nineteenth century, although cheaper alternatives were sought. Steel, wood, and cane were all used” (Evans 5). This shows that the most popular and most costly material was whalebone. These busks were mostly intricately decorated and made of wood, ivory, bone, or baleen. Corsets are shown in erotic art and literature. In “Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion - EDWARDIAN DRESS”, by Kate Strasdin, states that “The S- bend actually related to the style of corset worn beneath the layers of chiffon, lace, and cotton”(Strasdin 1). When a corset was worn as a form of undergarment, dresses or tailored suit dresses were worn

by the women. Many that could afford it would choose elegant and luxurious textiles, like silk, satin, cloth, or damask. However, it has been used as an outer-garment corset in many countries' national dress on purpose. Social status, self-discipline, respectability, appearance, youth, and sexual allure were all associated with the corset.

In “Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion - EDWARDIAN DRESS”, by Kate Strasdin, states that “The sway of the body found its most famous devotee in Camille Clifford, the face of the Gibson Girl. The image of the Gibson Girl had first appeared in the 1890s, drawn from the imagination of the graphic artist Charles Dana Gibson. Clifford won \$2000 in a magazine competition launched by Gibson to find the real-life Gibson girl, the corporeal reality of his illustrated fiction” (Strasdin 1). This shows that Clifford was the most well-known model for "Gibson Girl" illustrations. The Gibson Girl style was characterized by her towering coiffure and hourglass figure.

In “Gloves in the Early Twentieth Century: An Accessory After the Fact”, by Susan J Vincent, states that “Amplly clad in long dresses with full sleeves... their grows are mad high to the throat. Their hats, big and opulent, are highly decorated affairs with ribbons and veils...egret or ostrich feathers...their hands rest tightly on umbrellas...”(Vincent 1). This quote shows what they wear at any time, especially gloves. Edwardian women wore lavish gloves made of silk, suede, or leather in the evenings. Evening gloves were more formal in appearance and frequently stretched all the way to a woman's bicep. They would feel naked without a fine pair of gloves. Gloves were the final touch to almost every outfit.

On the other hand, corsets can cause harm or even death. In “The Berg Companion to Fashion - CORSET”, by Valerie Steele and Colleen Gau, states that “the corset was frequently criticized as an “instrument of torture” and a cause of ill health and even death” ((Steele & Gau 1) This quote shows that any movement in your midsection can be restricted by corset preparation. It will constrict the lungs, causing respiratory infections and other lung conditions, as well as your bowels, resulting in constipation. Bruising and rib pain are also possible side effects. In “Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion - UNDERWEAR”, by Grace Evans, states that, “Medical practitioners blamed it for a wide variety of ailments ranging from deformed ribs, bifurcated livers, and reduced lung capacity to cancer and tuberculosis. The pressure exerted on the lower abdomen was also said to cause prolapsed uterus and miscarriage...corsets were the cause of impaired health in a large section of the female population...”(Evans 5). This shows that a corset is dangerous and may be risky to your health. Internal organs are permanently rearranged in corsets, allowing them to work more slowly or break down completely. Also, it states that “ More recently, feminist historians have argued that the nineteenth-century corset was a tool for asserting men’s authority over women, keeping women submissive, immobile, and semi-invalid” (Evans 5). This shows that for most females corset wasn’t their choice, to begin with. It is a weapon for asserting men's dominance over women.

In conclusion, In the 1900s, a lot of people wore corsets, and it's still popular today. Many people like the idea of wearing a form-fitting garment like a corset. Also, it makes them feel elegant, sexy, and beautiful in their own skin.



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