

"TO GO WITH AN UNGLOVED HAND WAS IMPOSSIBLE":
A HISTORY OF GLOVES, HANDS, SEX, WEALTH, AND POWER

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the American Studies Program
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

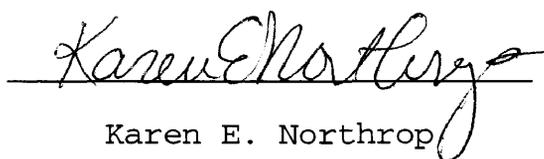
by
Karen E. Northrop

1998

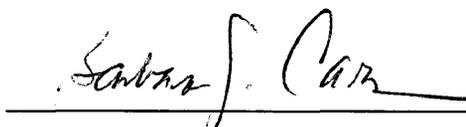
APPROVAL SHEET

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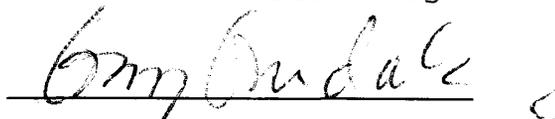

Grey Gundaker

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ABSTRACT

In this study I examine the history of gloves in the United States, focusing particularly on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today, gloves are most often worn for practical purposes. They provide protection from the cold, from the HIV virus, or from the dirt in the garden. Until relatively recently, however, gloves were considered a fashion "must." Etiquette experts argued about proper glove use. Advertisements for all kinds of gloves appeared in fashion magazines. It was considered inappropriate for men and women to touch without the protection of a glove. This thesis explores why gloves were once considered so important and suggests why we do not think of them that way anymore.

In the twentieth century, gloves as fashion accessories are most often considered in connection to women. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, men's gloves were often more elaborate than their feminine counterparts. Only with the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century did men's gloves become much plainer, while women's became more intricate. Observing the changes in men's and women's gloves' size, ornamentation, and material point to changes occurring in American culture more generally, particularly changes relating to notions of gender.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, men's and women's gloves were made locally as well as abroad. In the half century before the American Revolution, advertisements included different kinds of gloves in their lists of imports, and notices appeared about glovers relocating to the colonies. Gloves were especially important because they served significant symbolic functions. Influential members of the community often gave away gloves at their relatives' funerals, for example. Americans inherited some of the associations between gloves, power, and purity that had existed in Europe for centuries. Portraits--I examine many in the thesis--communicated many of these messages by using gloves as props.

Gloves were also connected (and continue to be so, to an extent) to notions of sexuality and chastity. An examination of eighteenth and nineteenth century visual sources and literature, both prescriptive and fiction, suggests that gloves took on sexual as well as gendered meanings. If women were not careful about glove use--if their gloves were not on, clean, and tight--their purity and protection from sexual exploitation were at risk.

By the mid twentieth century, gloves had disappeared almost entirely from men's wardrobes, and were becoming less crucial for women's as well. References to gloves and some of their meanings, however, endure. Gloves--particularly long, white gloves and not to mention shoulder length rubber ones--continue to have sexual overtones, especially among glove fetishists. The fact that gloves as accessories have largely disappeared from late twentieth century culture is remarkable when we consider how indispensable and meaningful they were to people of the past.

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"The cat in gloves catches no mice."

-Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanac
(1746)

To investigate "gloves" on the world-wide-web of 1998 is to enter a world of protective medical gear and specialty boutiques, sports' enthusiasts and fetishists. In the late twentieth century, gloves are supposed to be practical. We use them for protection--from the cold, from the HIV virus, from the dirt in the garden, or from the impact of a baseball. For a small minority, gloves are considered sexual. The meanings and uses of gloves have changed dramatically since 1950, since 1850, since 1650...or have they?

Gloves occasionally appear in our language and in our visual culture. In the "Ace Ventura, Pet Detective" films, Jim Carrey's eccentric character drives his car dangerously, screeches to a halt in an impossibly small parking space, and utters, "Like...a...glove!" A recent music video by the popular group "The Spice Girls" features the young women dancing and singing, one of them wearing the classic little black dress with startlingly blue, wrist-length gloves. She waves her arms while singing, the gloves accenting every

movement. We continue to put maps and car registration cards in glove compartments. We, and particularly journalists writing headlines, use expressions like "the gloves are off," and seem to know what it means. What are we talking about? Do gloves mean anything? If so, what do they mean? What is their history, and what can they tell us?

A person attending a funeral in the seventeenth or eighteenth century might have received a pair of black gloves just for showing up. Wealthier people, in particular, gave gloves away for marriages and for funerals--sometimes just a few pairs, sometimes a hundred. One eighteenth-century man gave away over one thousand pairs of gloves at his wife's funeral. Why did these people do this, and why did they stop?

Gloves, along with flowers, fruits, books, and other objects, appear in eighteenth and nineteenth-century portraits. The painter, of course, chose to put them there. Why? What difference did it make? Often, the sitter holds one glove and wears the other. Why would these wealthy sitters want to be depicted wearing only one?

In 1845, a man about to leave for church could not find one of his gloves. He recorded in his journal that "to go with an ungloved hand was impossible."¹ Other individuals, both actual and fictional, concurred. In the famous nineteenth-century novel, Little Women, tomboy Jo threatened

¹ Theodore Rosengarten, ed. Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1987) 344.

to attend a party without gloves and older sister Meg insisted, "You must have gloves, or I won't go...Gloves are more important than anything else."² Why were gloves so important to these people? Why are they considered so inconsequential and meaningless today? These are the kinds of questions this paper will address.

To truly understand the lives of people who lived long ago, we must understand their physical realities, their daily routines, the kinds of objects with which they interacted, and the way these objects shaped their experiences with the world. The clothes people wore had an impact on their range of motion, and on how they negotiated their bodies through the space around them. Of course, these statements apply to life today, also.

Gloves, in particular, have an enormous impact on a person's interaction with the world. For one reason or another, people have chosen to cover their hands with a hand-shaped form for many centuries. No doubt some of those choices were practical ones, or at least perceived that way. The man quoted above thought he needed to wear his gloves to church for more than one reason. In addition to a perceived need to adhere to the appropriate etiquette of his time, he also felt self-conscious because recent fishing excursions had left his hand mahogany-colored. No doubt the author of an 1815 etiquette book thought she was being practical when

² Louisa May Alcott, Little Women (New York: Barnes and Noble, [1868] 1994) 38.

she suggested that the glove be fastened above the elbow when the arm is "muscular, course, or scraggy."³ So, people used gloves to hide calloused skin, unattractive arms or other flaws, or to protect themselves from the cold or the sun.

But gloves could also be a nuisance. One woman remembered growing up in the 1890s, and recorded that her dress and hat had been uncomfortable, and "so were the tight little kid gloves, worked down my fingers, till I could get my thumb in."⁴ In the late nineteenth century women routinely bought gloves one or two sizes too small--certainly not in the name of practicality. In 1884, Mrs. John Sherwood wrote that black kid mourning gloves were "painfully warm and smutty, disfiguring the hand and soiling the handkerchief and face."⁵ But people wore them anyway. And Miss Manners remembered the days of glove-wearing fondly, and acknowledged how uncomfortable they actually were by commenting, "isn't that better than being comfortable?"⁶ Sometimes gloves were decidedly uncomfortable and impractical.

To explain the history of gloves, we must examine other reasons for glove-wearing. These reasons require speculation on the psychological level, as well consideration of the

³ "The Mirror of the Graces, or, The English Lady's Costume," Early American Imprints, 2nd series 35286, 1815.

⁴ Eleanor Farjeon, cited in Anne Buck, Clothes and the Child: A Handbook of Children's Dress In England, 1500-1900 (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1996) 130.

⁵ Cited in Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas, Costumes for Births, Marriages, and Deaths (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972) 251.

⁶ Cited in Judith Martin, Miss Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior 4th ed. (New York: Atheneum, [1979] 1982) 533.

links between gloves and constructions of class, gender, and sexuality. These veiled meanings--the codes of the glove--have changed over time, but continue to operate in contemporary society. Though we no longer feel obliged to wear gloves when we enter the "public" sphere or attend formal occasions, we do decorate our hands in other ways. Most drugstores sell synthetic nails, and all drugstores sell nail polish, usually reds and pinks. Accessory shops targeted at the teenage consumer carry green, blue, and metallic nail polish, as well as nail polish that glitters. More and more women spend their money on manicures.

When men and women buy gloves today, they have choices--leather, cotton, suede, one size fits all, black, brown, yellow, red, and so on. Most men would not buy pink chenille gloves. Though nail polish is catching on with men, it is not considered fashionable, or even appropriate right now. Why do people make the choices they make about their hands? What message does each choice send?

Our hands convey important information. They are visible to others, and are used to send messages to those we meet. A gold ring on the fourth finger of the left hand means that he's married. A manicure means she does not do considerable manual labor and treats her hands delicately. Hands reveal age. Bitten nails connote anxiety. Soft leather gloves say one thing; big knitted mittens say another.

Hand-coverings, along with all other clothes and adornment, can reveal the values, anxieties, ideas, and understandings of a culture. To study the presentation of the body at a particular time, in a particular place is to enter the conscious and unconscious lives of the people living at that time, in that place. It allows one to better understand the deeply embedded and coded ideological systems of that world. Clothes can be understood as a nonverbal sign system--a way of communicating using the body, fabrics, dyes, and other materials. They are a valuable resource for historians, as well as for scholars from many other disciplines. Gloves warrant special attention because they are displayed on one of the most visible, frequently moving parts of the body. Removing gloves from the realm of the inconsequential is surprisingly revealing.

In this thesis, I want to cover several centuries using a wide, eclectic range of sources. During the eighteenth-century section, I will move fluidly between European and American materials. I do this because American gloves were often literally made in England or France, and the meanings, values, and anxieties connected to them crossed the ocean along with the gloves themselves. Of course, not all English traditions related to gloves became established in America, and I will note differences. In the paper I will use etiquette books, portraiture, prints, literature, magazines,

and newspapers.⁷ Each medium has its advantages and disadvantages. None can reveal how people actually behaved. Literature gives clues to context, use, and meaning. Prescriptive literature provides a window into how certain influential individuals thought everyone should behave with regard to gloves and glove-wearing. Portraits and other visual materials encourage speculation about gloves as a symbol. None of these materials is sufficient in itself. The complexity of gloves, and the richness of their meaning, appear when we cross mediums and embrace a broad range of sources.

Gloves are a mediator between a person and the world. One of the main arguments of my paper is that gloves always protect. Sometimes they shield one from literal dangers and, sometimes, they shield one from abstract, psychological dangers. Gloves provide distance between a person's principal organs of touch and the rawness of their surroundings. They deprive the wearer of intense tactile sensation, and can inhibit manual manipulation. Gloves can be used to separate men from women, and to separate servants from the food they are serving and the people they serve. Gloves are important for how, when, why, and by whom they are used--or not used.

⁷ As may already be clear from the introduction, I do not intend to discuss glove manufacturing or the glove industry at any length. Valerie Cummings did an admirable job of covering these topics in Chapter 1 of her book called (appropriately) Gloves, and the reader should consult that text if desired.

From the start, gloves were intimately connected to ideas of power and wealth. At one time, only royalty and powerful church officials wore gloves. Eventually, the wealthy appropriated them. Still later, gloves became available to the more average person. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, gloves indicated power in the government or church. Lower clergy, for example, could not wear gloves.⁸ Gloves could be a symbol of royal sanction, a pledge of security and fidelity, a symbol of challenge, a gift of honor or courtesy, or a compliment or token of love. Many of these meanings and traditions made their way to British North America in one way or another. To people of this period, gloves embodied a set of concepts and promises (almost) completely foreign to us today.

Men's gloves of the late seventeenth century--made from the skin of a variety of animals--displayed intricate, detailed embroidery, ornate fringes, and sometimes multi-colored, looped ribbons and tassels. The gloves in Figure 1 provide a good example of this type. Dated 1680-1700, they are buff-colored, embroidered with silver gilt thread and accented with a fringe complete with metal coils and tassels.⁹ Men's gloves of this period were usually wrist length and either white, pale buff, or a darker brown. Gloves worn everyday were simpler than their ornate ceremonial

⁸ Katherine Morris Lester and Bess Viola Oerke, Accessories of Dress (Peoria, Illinois: The Manual Arts Press, 1940) 355. This text, though old, is one of the few available that discusses gloves pre-1600.

⁹ Valerie Cumming, Gloves (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1982) 34.

counterparts. They were often plain gauntlets, sometimes with a band of gold or silver braid or a heavy fringe. Whether extravagantly decorated or not, these heavy, impractical hand coverings must have been uncomfortable and awkward to wear. What they did do, though, was make the wearer's movements seem larger, more imposing, and more dramatic than they actually were.

Women's gloves during this period were less elaborate than their masculine cousins. They were elbow-length, available in a variety of colors like pink, blue, green, white, brown, and natural, and decorated with stitched patterns on the backs of the hand and around the fingers. Some, like the glove in the middle of Figure 2, had a tiny silk fringe.

Please look to Figures 3 through 6 to view these types of gloves in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century portraits. Figure 3 is a 1690 portrait of Queen Mary II which displays this royal woman in an elaborate costume which includes earrings, jewelry, a fan--and a prominently placed gloved hand. A portrait of an unknown man painted in 1713 or 1714 pictures a wealthy looking gentleman holding one of his gloves (Figure 4). In Figure 5, the First Earl of Bath, in a 1676 portrait, rests his hand on a pair of gloves. In Lady Byron Frances' 1733 portrait (Figure 6), she tugs on the top of her left glove with her ungloved right hand. Her right glove rests on the table next to her, its fingered portion dangling off the edge.



Figure 1

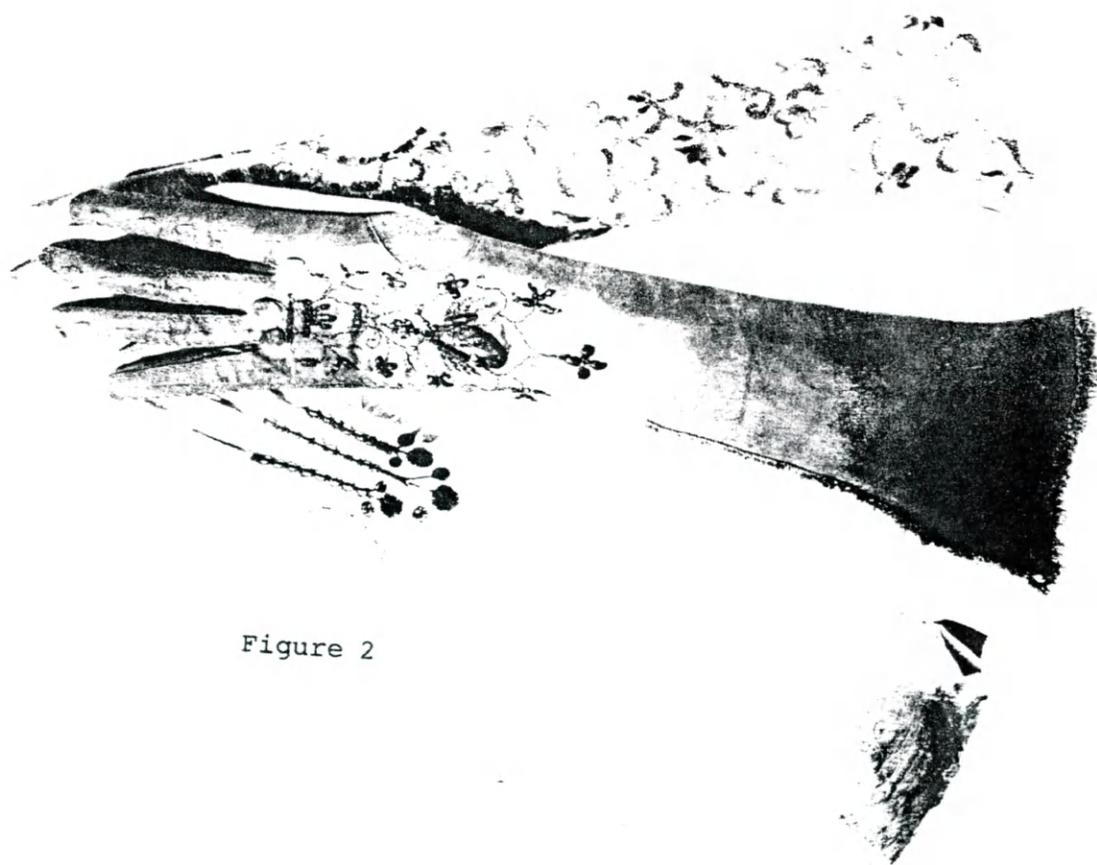


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

A 1696 publication, *The French Perfumer: The Manner of Preparing and Perfuming Gloves*, was one response to a growing and persistent late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century demand for gloves and information about treating gloves. It reminds us that gloves sent messages not only visually, but through scent as well. The experience one had with a glove involved smelling specific, expensive perfumes as well as noting its embroidery or fabric, and the way it was worn and used. This book about perfuming was "compiled for the Publick Good" and for people ("The Fair Sex especially") who "can afford themselves leisure enough to gather Flowers at their Country Seats."¹⁰ It appealed, obviously, to the rich and idle elite. It was translated into English, indicating its appeal to the British and the Americans.

Indeed, fashionable British elites tended to prefer foreign gloves, particularly French, because of France's reputation for producing the finest gloves. Though England tried to protect locally-made gloves by placing restrictions on French imports in 1675 and again in 1744, these attempts met with little success. British importers and exporters interested in the financial benefit of the glove trade continued to buy French gloves and ship them to the American colonies.¹¹

¹⁰ "The French Perfumer: The Manner of Preparing and Perfuming Gloves." London: Printed for Sam Buckley at the Dolphin over against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street, 1696.

¹¹ Cumming 53-54.

By the mid eighteenth century, Americans had access to imported gloves and to gloves manufactured locally. Advertisements in the Pennsylvania and Virginia newspapers informed the public about both kinds. In June, 1742, for example, a notice appeared in the Virginia Gazette which said,

William Keith, of the City of Williamsburg, having lately purchased an ingenious workman in Leather, does hereby give notice to all gentlemen, and others, that they may be supplied with buck-skin breeches, and gloves, made after the neatest fashion, and as cheap as any where else.¹²

In January 1752, the Pennsylvania Gazette announced that a glover from London had begun business in the colonies making gloves and breeches.¹³ In 1760, a group of glovemakers and their families moved from Scotland to what became known as Gloversville, New York. In August 1762, the newspaper gave notice that a "Subscriber has returned from England, and follows his business, that of Skinning, Gloving, and Breeches Making." "Those that are pleased to favour him with their Custom," this notice stated, "may depend on being well used, and with the greatest Dispatch."¹⁴ More and more local glovers appeared in the later part of the eighteenth century.

In a 1761 Pennsylvania Gazette, a woman advertised her silk dying business, claiming that in her care, "silk

¹² The Virginia Gazette, June, 1742.

¹³ Pennsylvania Gazette, January 28, 1752.

¹⁴ Pennsylvania Gazette, August 19, 1762.

stockings, gloves, and camblet cloaks, are scowered, dyed and pressed in the best and neatest manner." The newspaper claims that she "engages to her work as well as it can be done in England, having better tools, and more conveniences for that business, than any other person in America."¹⁵ As these quotations suggest, England always served as the point of comparison--the standard from which provincial craftspeople could easily deviate. The quotations also, however, indicate that people could and did obtain gloves locally. As local technology and skill improved, more and more colonists made this buying choice.

The wealthy usually preferred to import their clothing from Europe. The vast majority of references to gloves in the Virginia and Pennsylvania newspapers involve their status as imported items. The October 10, 1766 issue of the Virginia Gazette has an advertisement proclaiming, "Just imported...A GENTEEL assortment of millinery goods" including accessories like pearl and jet necklaces, ribbons, and "black mittens, French kid and lamb gloves and mittens."¹⁶ A 1770 advertisement reads "Just imported...A neat and genteel assortment of goods" including "mens, womens, boys, and girls coloured and white gloves and mits." In the Pennsylvania Gazette, between 1728-1765, gloves were mentioned 653 times, and most of the references appear in these kinds of

¹⁵ Pennsylvania Gazette, May 21, 1761.

¹⁶ Virginia Gazette, October 10, 1766.

advertisements. The new imports notices appear constantly, and gloves are almost always featured in the list.

It is clear, from an examination of these newspapers, that wealthy people were not the only ones wearing gloves. In June, 1757, a female, Dutch servant ran away from her place of employment wearing leather gloves.¹⁷ A notice appeared in 1761 that a male Irish servant had run away, wearing, among other things, "a pair of grey Worsted Gloves."¹⁸ Also, gloves were included in notices of robberies, indicating that they were valuable enough to steal (and how a minority of individuals got their gloves). One 1758 notice lists a number of objects taken from a Philadelphia home, among them "a Pair of Linen Gloves."¹⁹ And gloves, like most clothes, could be bought second-hand by non-elites. A notice in the Pennsylvania Gazette describes the objects available for purchase at what sounds like an eighteenth-century garage sale; "Mens and Womens Gloves" made the list.²⁰ In January 1763, a notice appeared promising a reward to the person who could return objects lost on the road a couple of months before. The first lost objects listed were "2 pair of Womens Leather Gloves, one Pair purple, and the other white."²¹ It seems that people of all levels of society valued their gloves.

¹⁷ Pennsylvania Gazette, June 30, 1757.

¹⁸ Pennsylvania Gazette, February 5, 1761.

¹⁹ Pennsylvania Gazette, July 6, 1758.

²⁰ Pennsylvania Gazette, October 12, 1758.

²¹ Pennsylvania Gazette, January 20, 1763.

Other than stealing them, finding them, or buying them, how did people acquire their gloves? Much of the time people received their gloves as gifts. Gloves were sometimes bestowed as prizes. A December, 1739 issue of the Virginia Gazette announced a fair in Williamsburg which would include a foot race. The notice promised silver buckles for first place, a pair of shoes for second place, "and a Pair of Gloves to the Third."²²

Gloves could be a gift of love, or even betrothal. A 1674 document titled *Loves Garland - Posies for Rings, Handkerchers, and Gloves: And Such Pretty Tokens That Lovers Send Their Loves* provides examples of poems that can be sent with a small gift, such as a pair of gloves. Introductions to the individual poems include "A posie sent with a pair of gloves shewing what a young man should most respect in his choice," "Another sent with a rich pair of gloves," and "...sent to her pinn'd to the Orange tawny top of a very fair pair of Gloves, of six pence."²³ Gloves, in this way, gained connotations and meanings associated with love and sexuality. I will elaborate on this connection later in my thesis.

Finally, as noted in the introduction, gloves were very often presented as gifts at ceremonial occasions. An English man named Walter Calverley gave 140 pairs of gloves to mourners and servants at his sister's funeral in 1705, and when a maid died in 1744 Calverley "buried her in a handsome

²² Virginia Gazette, December 1739.

²³ "Loves Garland - Posies for Rings, Handkerchers, and Gloves: And Such Pretty Tokens That Lovers Send Their Loves." London: 1674.

manner" and "gave all the women servants gloves."²⁴ This policy of giving gloves to mourners and their servants may provide one explanation of how poorer people (like the runaways mentioned above) obtained gloves. It should be noted, however, that the quality of the glove varied according to the person's social status and closeness to the dead person. The dispersal of gloves reaffirmed a hierarchical community, not an egalitarian one.

The dispersal of gloves indicated not only the guests' position in society, but the position of the dead person and his or her family. The more gloves you gave, and the more expensive they were, the richer you and the family supposedly were. Since this message was important, people sometimes left specific instructions as to who should receive which kind of glove in their wills. For example, as early as 1633 Samuel Fuller, from Plymouth, stated in his will that he wanted his sister's gloves to be worth 12 shillings, Governor Winthrop's and his children's to be 5 shillings, and a more average acquaintance's gloves to be an inexpensive two shillings.²⁵ In terms of sheer quantity, Governor Belcher, at the 1736 Boston funeral of his wife, gave away over one thousand pairs of gloves, and an astounding three thousand pairs of gloves were dispersed at the funeral of Andrew Faneuil.²⁶

²⁴ Quoted in Cunningham 193.

²⁵ Alice Morse Earle, Costume of Colonial Times (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1894) 115.

²⁶ Cummings 34; Earle 117.

Ministers on both sides of the Atlantic collected enormous quantities of gloves over the years for performing not only funerals but also marriages and christenings. According to Bruce Daniels' Puritans at Play, one man acquired 3000 pairs during his thirty years of preaching.²⁷ Ministers were not the only professionals who benefitted from this tradition. When professional undertakers appeared, they raised funeral costs and made greater profit by including in their contracts their responsibility to supply gloves and other favors to the guests.²⁸ The gloves given at ceremonial occasions were not made to fit fashionably; in fact, they sometimes did not fit at all. The fit was not important. The tradition and its meanings were.

In 1764, two notices appeared in the Pennsylvania Gazette which indicated the political, social, and ideological changes occurring in the American colonies. On November 29, 1764, this news item appeared:

We hear from Dorchester, that at several Funerals lately in that Town, the Relations of the Deceased, and others, have followed the new Method now established in Boston: And that those who have been chosen Bearers to the Remains of the Deceased to the Grave, have refused the usual Present of Gloves, to prevent a needless Expence to the surviving relatives.

²⁷ Bruce Daniels, Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) 87.

²⁸ Cunnington 193.

On December 27, 1764, a report stated, "We hear from Elizabeth Town, that...near Fifty Heads of the principal Families in and about that place, entered into an Engagement to retrench the present usual and unnecessary Expences of Funerals and Mourning, as the giving of Scarfs, Gloves and Liquor at Funerals." The article continues, "We hope this frugal practice, which will be a Saving of many Thousands to this Country, may universally prevail." For some reason, people now believed that the tradition of giving gloves was unnecessary and wasteful.

In a similar vein, four years later, individuals in Providence, Rhode Island complained that "luxury and extravagance, in the use of British and foreign manufactures and superfluties," had lately increased, and they called for a boycott on objects like saddles, clocks, foreign-made clothes, and gloves.²⁹ These proclamations, of course, were not necessary enforced, but it is revealing that they were made in the first place. They coincided with political decisions regarding the relationship with Britain, with economic conditions, with changing cultural ideas about appropriate behavior, and with shifting ideological positions regarding human nature and the characteristics of an ideal society.

The tradition of giving gloves at funerals came under attack around the same time that the elaborate, flamboyant nature of seventeenth-century, fancy men's gloves gave way to

²⁹ Virginia Gazette, January 1, 1768.

a simpler form. Men ceased wearing the earlier gauntlet gloves and adopted, instead, gloves like those in Figure 7, which were shorter and plainer. These hand coverings, with only subtle and unobtrusive embroidery if decorated at all, were made from a variety of leathers and were usually natural or light brown in color. Evidence of this transition to plainer, shorter gloves can be found in Figure 8. This particular pair of gloves, dated 1700-1715, are cream-colored, trimmed with silver braid, and embroidered with silver thread. Their style and ornamentation mark a transitional moment in glove-wearing between the longer gauntlets and the short, plain variety already becoming more popular. After 1750, ornate gloves were considered feminine and pretentious. A nineteenth-century advice book for men warned "Don't wear anything that is pretty--What have men to do with pretty things?"³⁰ Here is a marked and dramatic shift in aesthetic preference--and in ideas about manhood.

This shift in men's gloves took place for several reasons. One reason requires examining costume in general during this period. In the mid to late eighteenth century, men's clothing in particular became much simpler, and was characterized increasingly by darker colors and a lack of ostentation. The reason costume changes is difficult to understand, as all stylistic changes are. However, definitions of manhood, what men are doing with their bodies

³⁰ Cited in Jonathan Kasson, Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990) 118.

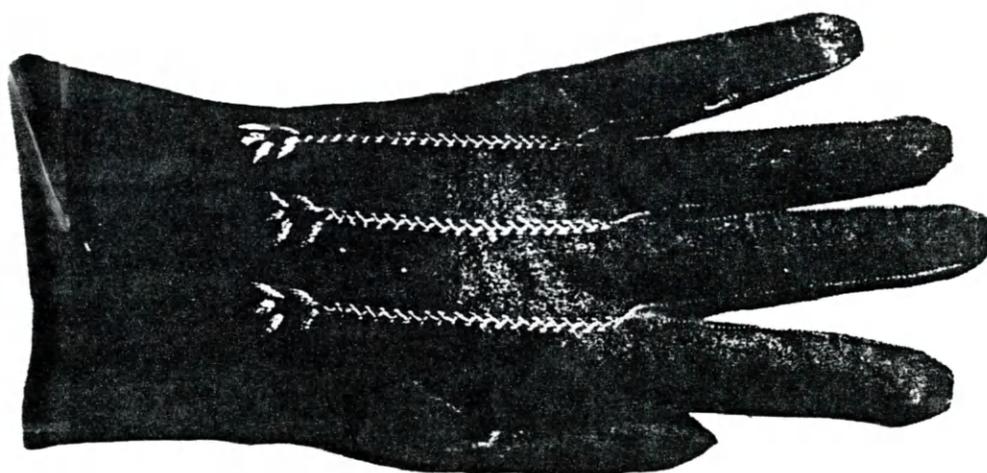


Figure 7

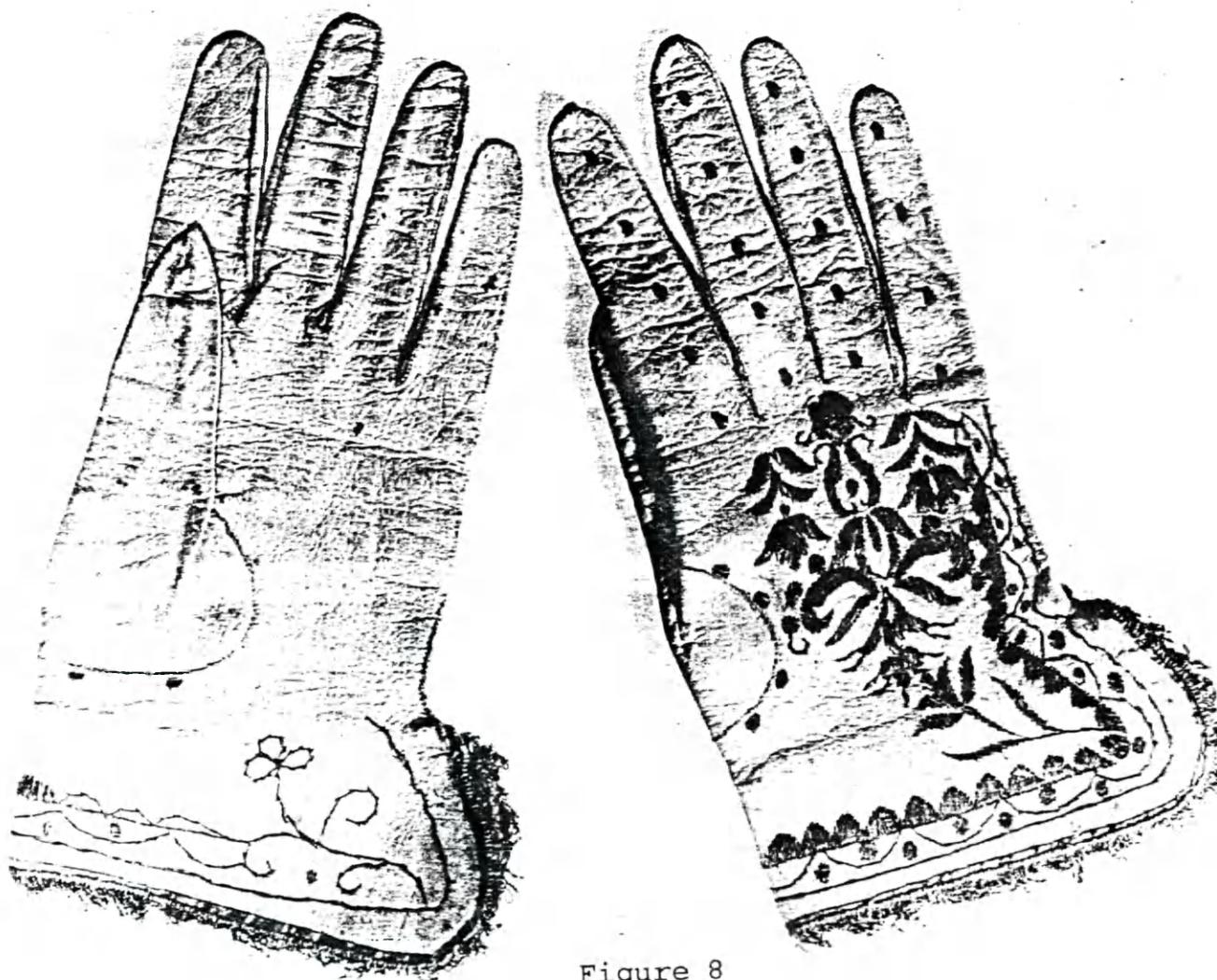


Figure 8

and for what reasons, and how clothing connects to class all have--and always have had--an impact on costume changes.

During this period, clothing traditionally associated exclusively with the elite became accessible to the lower orders. With the decline of the rank-ordered society associated with the early eighteenth century, and the gradual rise of a more fluid, less fixed class system, people of lower status began to realize that even gentility could be purchased and that their hope for change in their social status lay in imitation of the wealthy. Of course, as gloves became more accessible (and technology, consumer demand, and changing cultural ideas worked together to do this) they also became a less potent symbol of status in and of themselves. As the eighteenth century progressed, therefore, gloves became increasingly important for how and when they were used and how they were related to etiquette and manners. Owning the glove might not send the powerful message it once had, but using the glove gracefully and correctly could compensate for gloves' democraticization. Transferring their importance from appearance to use allowed the wealthy to continue using them--and through their use demonstrate their distinctiveness from the lower classes.

Another possible explanation for this shift involves the increasing importance of bodily constraint, especially in public. As the focus shifted from appearance to behavior with the rise of a more slippery class system and decline of the old hierarchy, etiquette experts advised gentlemen and

ladies to exercise additional control over their body movements. Incorrect posture and motion on the street could distinguish the "real" upper-class members from the "fake" individuals seeking to emulate them. The broad physical and emotional range permitted to earlier generations narrowed as the cities grew and a capitalist, industrialized economic system gradually restructured the United States on many levels, including society's codes of behavior. The much plainer gloves, particularly for men, reflect this shift towards understated, restricted refinement and away from flamboyant extremes in dress and social behavior.

Yet, during this same period, women's indoor gloves became more important, and more elaborate. This parallel change suggests growing distinctions between the public and private spheres, as well as the changing role and purpose of women in American society. During this period, women's indoor gloves and mittens were of pale hues and included a broader range of materials than had existed previously. Silk, linen, or cotton instead of leather could make gloves appear thinner, more fragile, softer, and more delicate. Knitted silk gloves and mittens also became more popular at this time. Examples of this range in materials can be found in Figures 9 and 10. The middle and lower mittens in Figure 9 (dated 1720-1755) are silk, and Figure 10 (dated 1730-1765) includes gloves of leather, silk, and knitted silk. The embroidery on these gloves is often floral and organic.

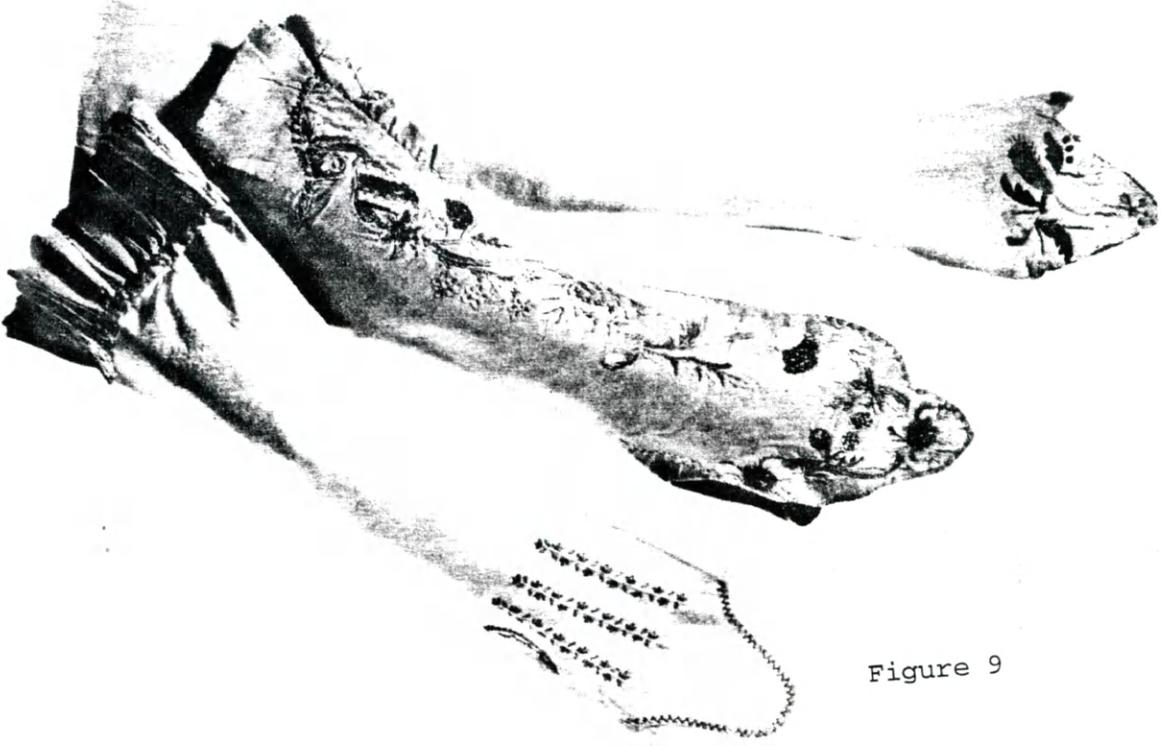


Figure 9

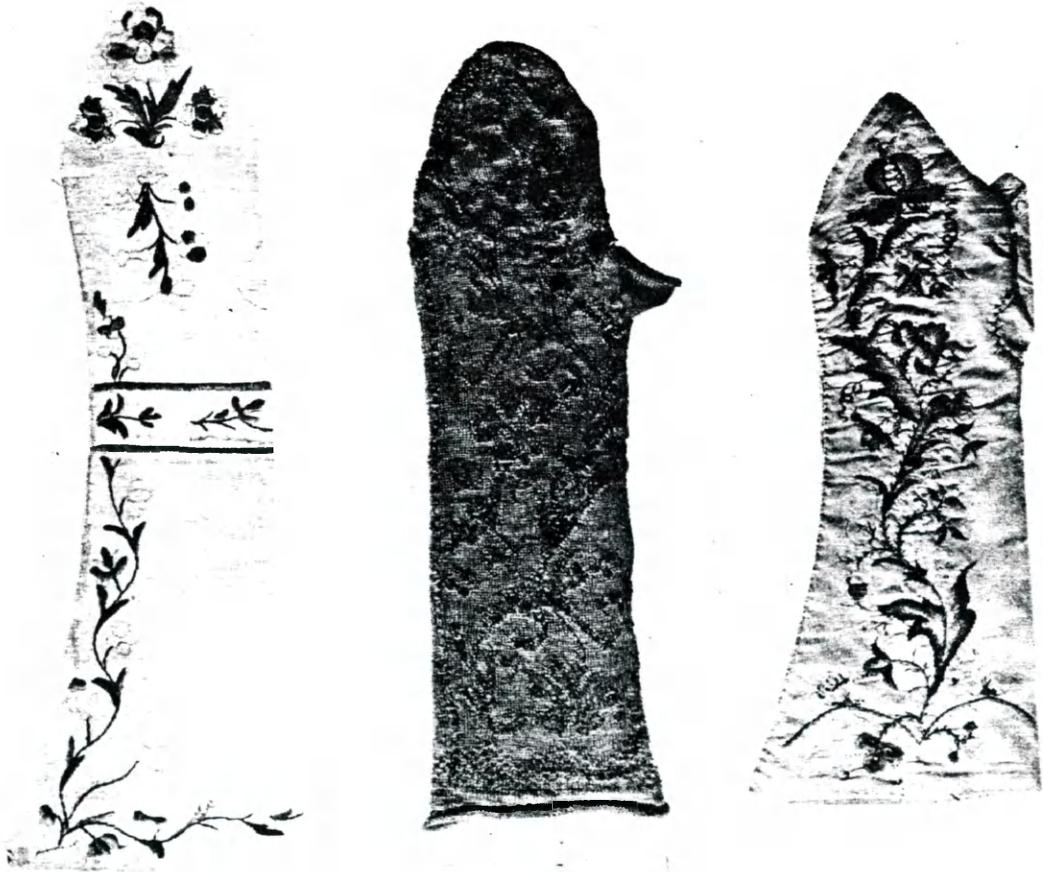


Figure 10

Why were these fancy eighteenth-century gloves the exclusive domain of women? Perhaps one reason is related, as I mentioned, to the growing gulf between public and private life. After all, when a woman entered the public sphere, she too would wear plain, short gloves. Only indoors, in "private," would she slip on her more ornamented gloves or mittens. For men, it was no longer appropriate to reside exclusively in the private sphere, and he therefore did not have in his clothing repertoire the same kind of "private" gloves. It was a male's civic and "manly" duty to primarily exist in and identify with the public sphere, returning to his private haven (presided over by the woman in his life, whether wife, mother, or other) only temporarily. For a man to be idle was unappealing to Americans, but for a woman to be idle was considerably more attractive. To have a wife of leisure became a status symbol. A woman's smooth, white hands and clean, delicately embroidered, beautiful gloves suggested that someone else did the difficult manual labor of the household.

Earlier, I mentioned a portrait of a woman who wears one glove and leaves the other on the table beside her. There are other images like this one that I will point out now. The earliest dates from 1614-1615; it is a portrait of Mary, Lady Scudamore in which the woman wears one plain glove on her right hand, holds the other glove with the gloved hand, and hides the fingers of her ungloved left hand in her linen jacket (Figure 11).

Though this arrangement occurs much more frequently in portraits of female sitters than male sitters, one example of a man partially ungloved does appear in 1723 in a portrait of William Brodnax (Figure 12). Next is a 1733 portrait of Frances, Lady Byron in which the sitter wears a glove on her left hand, tugging it on with her ungloved right hand. The right-handed glove lies on the table to the woman's right, its fingers hanging off the edge (Figure 6). Also note the painting of Miss Eleanor Dixie, completed in 1755, with an almost identical arrangement (Figure 13). Again, the sitter pulls on her left glove with her ungloved right hand, this time clutching the right-handed glove in her right hand.

Several additional paintings with this arrangement appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century. For example, Figure 14 pictures Isabella, Countess of Hertford. This portrait, completed in 1765, portrays the countess with a gloved right hand and ungloved left hand, the left-handed glove circling the right hand. She also holds a fan, gloved fingers at its bottom, ungloved fingers at its top.

American artist John Singleton Copley used the one glove on/one glove off arrangement in several of his paintings--most often on older women. Copley's 1766 portrait of Mrs. Thomas Boylston, for example, depicts the sitter wearing one white mitt and holding the other in the bare hand (Figure 15). A 1767 portrait of Mrs. Robert Hooper, displays the woman wearing a lace mitt on her left hand and holding the other (Figure 16). A 1770 portrait of Mrs. Humphrey

Devereux, has an almost identical arrangement, though this time the sitter is facing in a different direction and her arms rest on a table rather than on her lap (Figure 17).

Copley did paint at least one younger woman with one hand ungloved: Mrs. Nathaniel Allen, in 1763 (Figure 18). He also painted older men with one glove, such as his rendering of Thomas Hancock in 1764-66 (Figure 19). In addition, the portraits of Duncan Stewart and his wife, made in 1767, depict both with one hand gloved, the other ungloved (Figure 20). Another male sitter wearing only one glove is a portrait of George Drummond made in 1780 (Figure 21). The sitter holds a glove in his gloved hand and holds his hat with the ungloved hand.

There are other examples from the nineteenth century. A 1818 portrait of Laure Bro depicts a young woman sitting in a chair, her arms crossed over her stomach (Figure 22). The left hand is gloved, but the right hand is ungloved. The right handed glove seems to be dangling from the gloved hand, though it falls in a hidden, somewhat grotesque manner. A portrait of Mrs. Harris Prendergast, painted in 1838, depicts the sitter wearing her right glove, and holding her left-handed glove in the gloved hand (Figure 23). Her left hand is bare, though she does wear a ring. Finally, The Marchioness of Huntley, painted in 1870, stands with her hands crossed in front of her (Figure 24). Her left hand is gloved, holding the right-handed glove; her right hand is ungloved.



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18

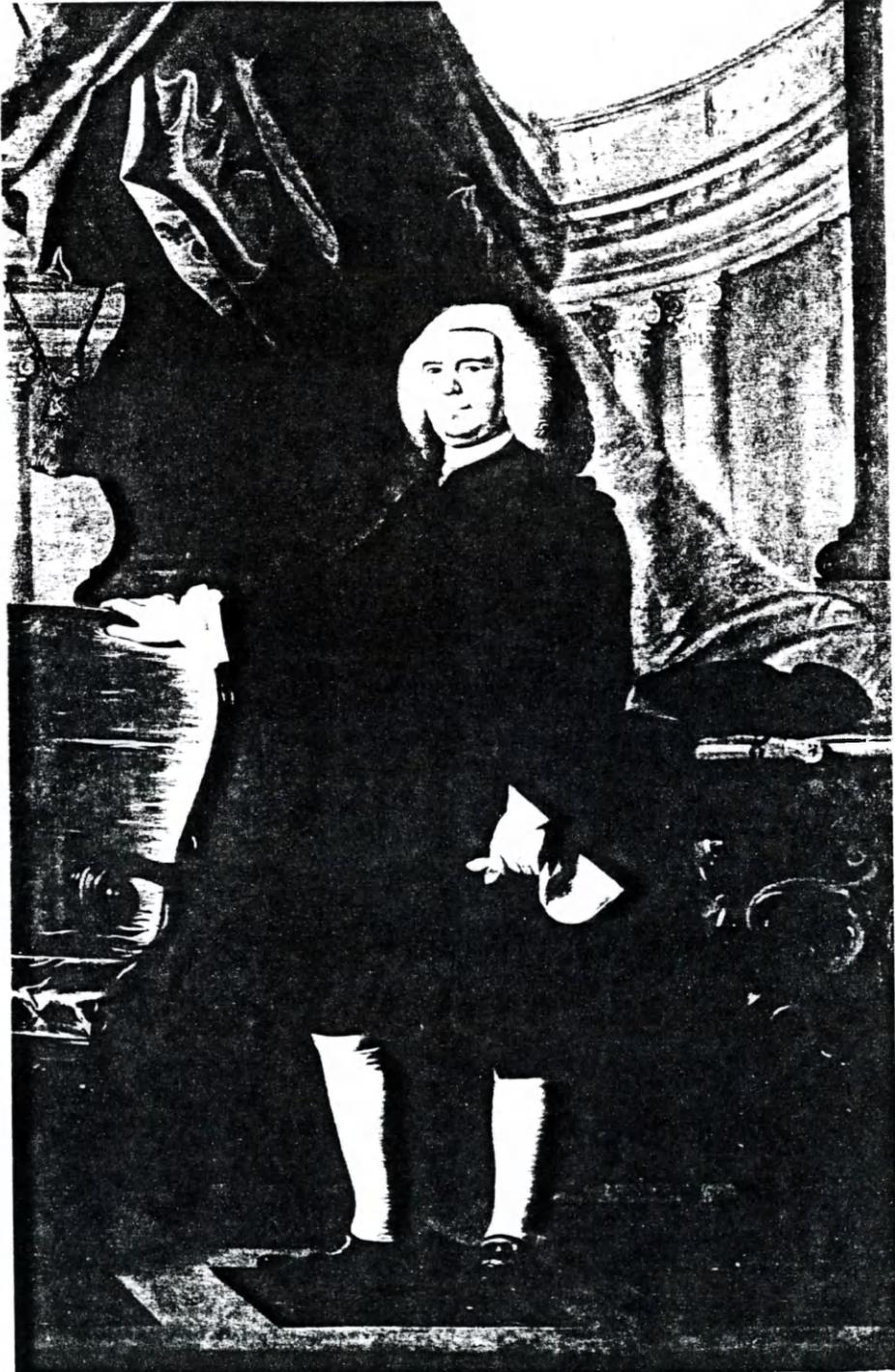


Figure 19

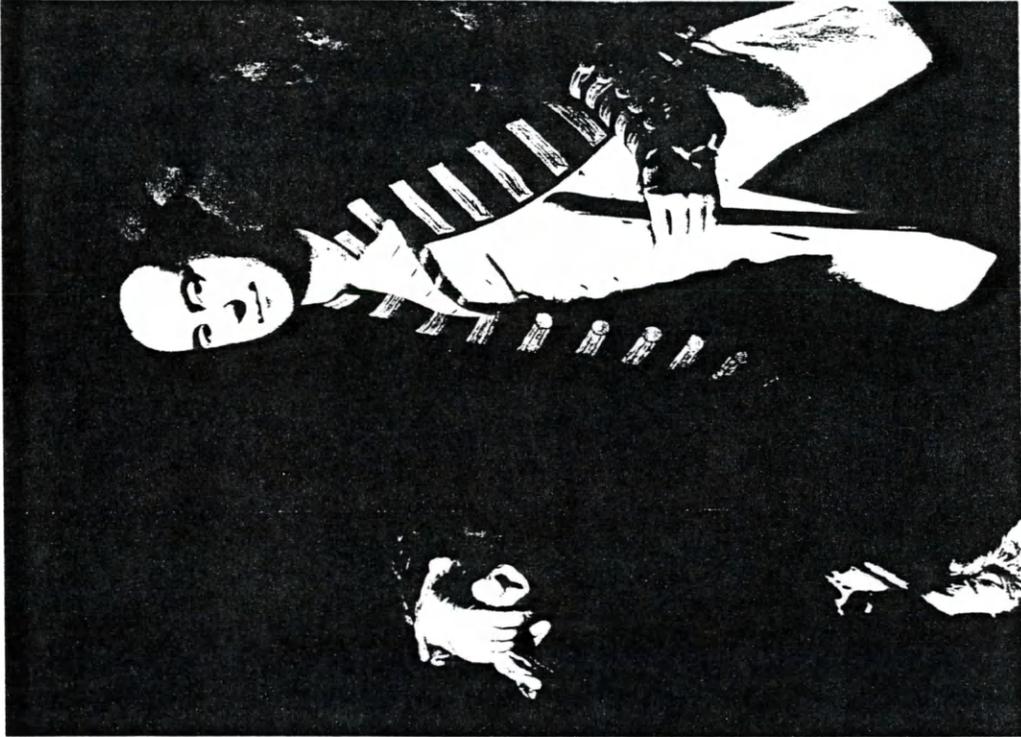


Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24

This one glove on/one glove off arrangement appears often enough to raise questions. It is clearly a convention in portraiture, but why? Traditionally, the removal of gloves was a sign of closeness, trust, vulnerability, and even inferiority. Keeping one's gloves on created distance between people, was a metaphorical barrier, and could indicate superiority. As such, a king's glove displayed in a public place indicated his metaphorical superiority. The gift of a glove, however, suggested that the receiver of the gift was entitled to keep his or her gloves on. This gift was seen, therefore, as a sign of respect and courtesy.

Wearing only one glove allowed these sitters to have the best of both worlds. The viewer of the portrait could be an inferior or a superior, and either way find the appropriate message in the image. This pose was a way to be both aristocratic and approachable, aloof and intimate. Drawing attention to the gloves, traditionally a sign of wealth and power, could be combined with showing off smooth, fair hands that revealed an idle, leisured life. The pose could also bridge the public and private worlds. The sitter might be on her way out, or on his way in. The viewer catches the person in the act of changing roles, and in this way the image communicates two sides of the person's place in the world.

The messages communicated by a particular pose, action, or object do change over time. Look at Figure 25. It is an image of Marilyn Monroe taken from one of her films. She is singing, self-consciously sexy, and she is wearing only one

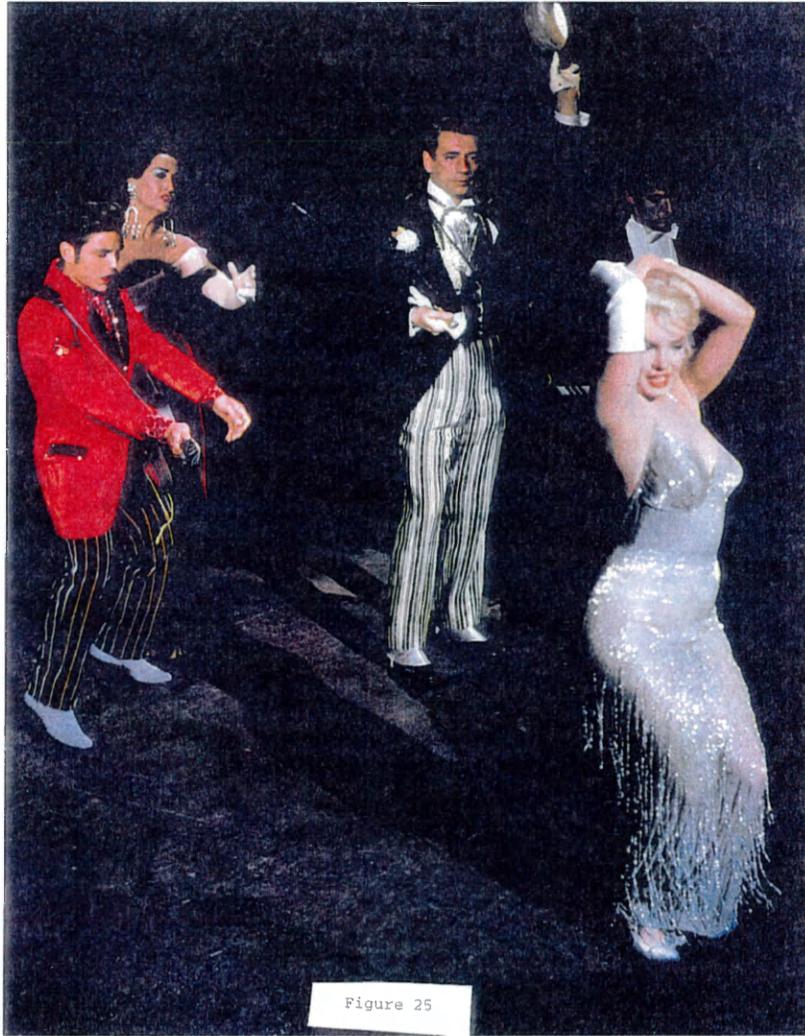


Figure 25

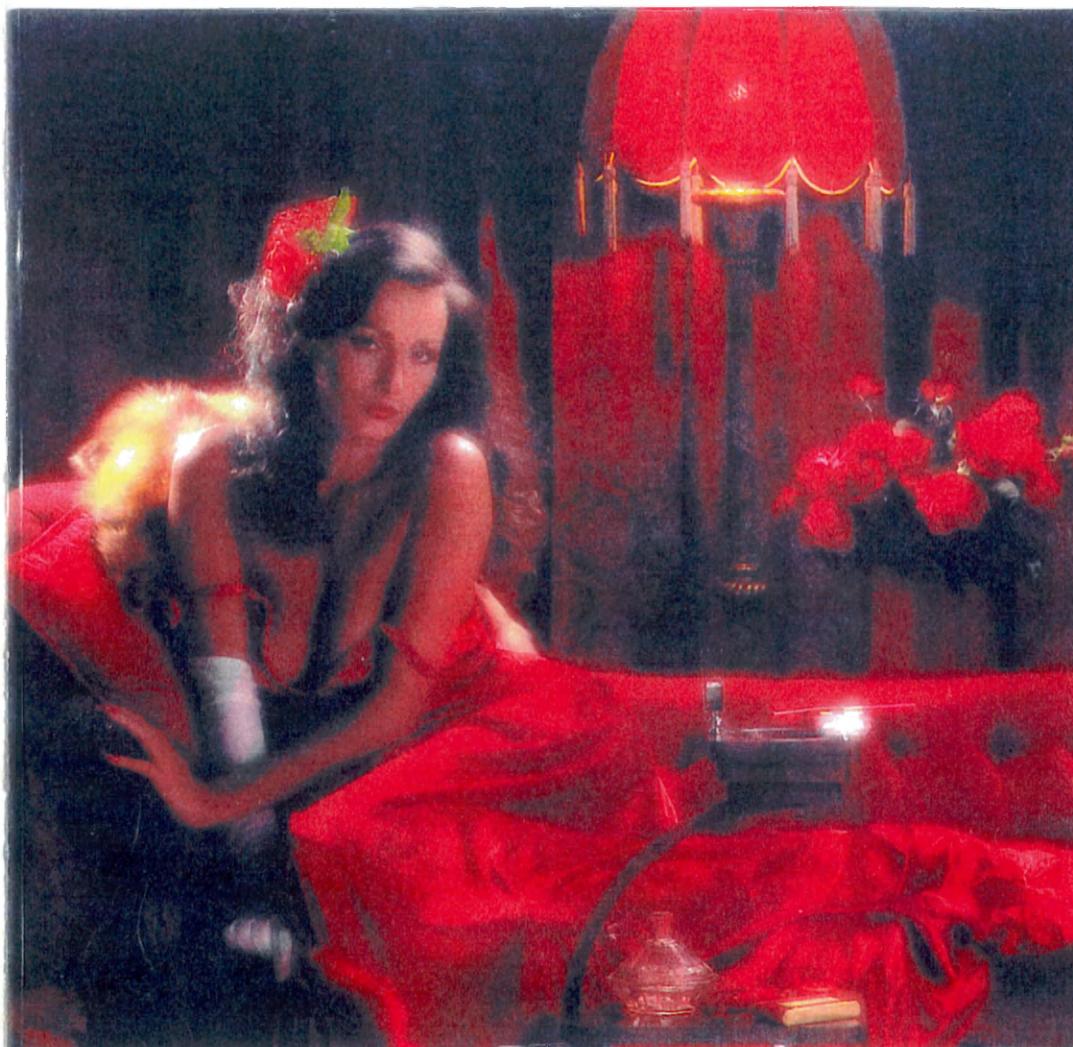


Figure 26

glove. Apparently, she has just removed the other one. Likewise, in the film "Gilda," Rita Hayworth takes off a glove, and hints at the ensuing striptease which could not get past the censors. Next, note Figure 26. Here is a sensual, almost soft-pornographic image, in which everything is scarlet except for the woman's solitary, long, very white glove. Finally, there is the "glove lovers" web page, which caters to glove fetishists and includes stories and photographs of glove erotica. In one hundred short years, what happened? I would argue that gloves have a long history which is subtly but intimately related to sexuality. This argument is the subject of the next section.

I have already noted that gloves were once used as a token of love, and sometimes could even signify betrothal. This connection between gloves, romance, and the potential for loss of purity endured over time, but became more implicit in its manifestations. In the nineteenth century, for example, it was considered acceptable for young girls and older women to wear mits to evening events, but not as acceptable for women of marriageable or child-bearing ages to wear them.³¹ These inconsistent standards of appropriate behavior raise questions about the function of gloves in social settings and their possible sexual meanings, including

³¹ Cumming 65.

their promise of protection from sexual temptation or advances.

Standards of modesty regarding the hands appear often in literature and advice books. For instance, characters from Henry Fielding's The Universal Gallant (1734) declare, "I never gave my hand to any man without a glove," and "the first time a woman's hand should be touched is in church."³² In the nineteenth century, etiquette journals also warned that it was improper to touch a lady's bare hand. Godey's Lady's Book advised readers to put on their formal, long evening gloves in the privacy of their bedrooms, and to keep them on throughout the evening. To take them off would involve "immodest intimacy."³³ Even in the 1940s and 1950s, Emily Post was writing that "A lady never takes off her gloves to shake hands, no matter when or where." There are obvious links in these statements between proper gender roles and glove etiquette, and it can be argued that each statement has sexual overtones. Advice about glove etiquette contains hidden warnings about the dangers bound up with a woman touching a man's flesh--or letting him touch hers.

William Hogarth's set of prints titled "A Harlot's Progress" contribute to a discussion about gloves and sexuality. These prints, which date from 1732, tell the story of a woman's fall from decency to prostitution, sickness, and death (see Figures 27-32). The first print

³² Cited in Cummings 34.

³³ Cited in Valerie Steele, Fetish: Fashion, Sex, and Power (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 134.

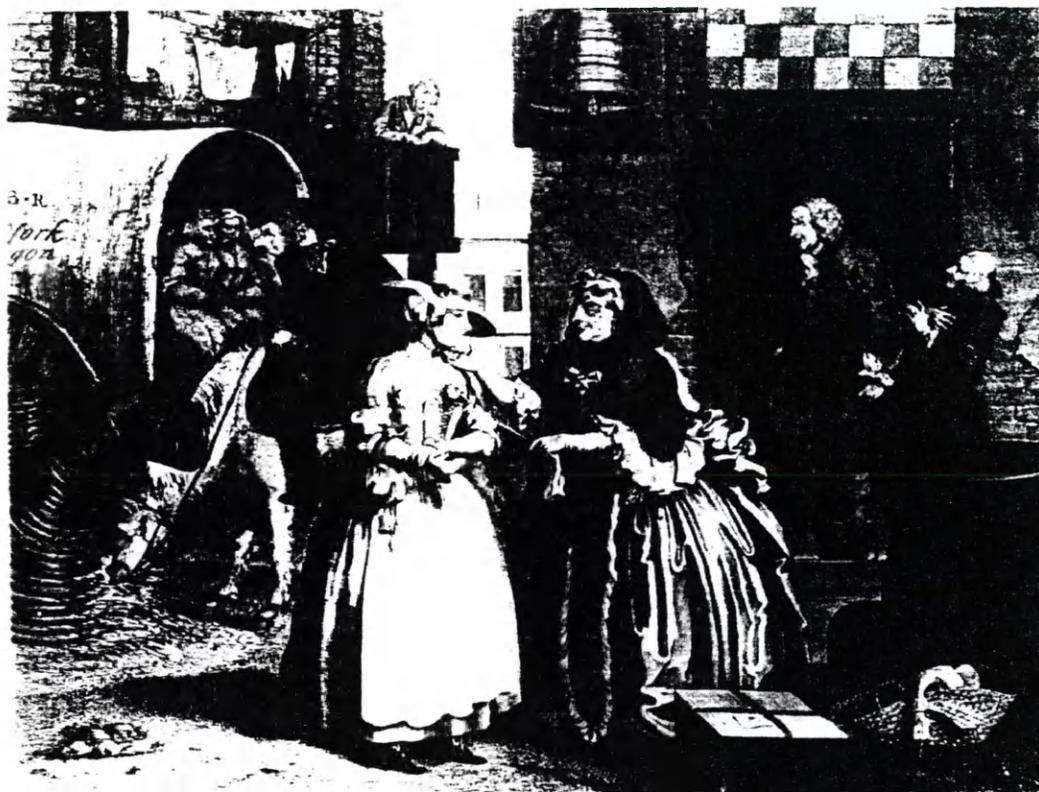


Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32

portrays a young woman being approached by a older woman--the woman who will lure the girl into a life of poverty and prostitution. The older woman reaches out with an ungloved hand and touches the girl's chin with her flesh. In her gloved left hand, the older woman holds the right glove. The gesture is intimate and, in this case, dangerous and aggressive. The fact that the woman has touched the girl with her bare hand signals to the viewer that her intentions may not be admirable. In the next three Hogarth prints, this recently recruited "harlot" falls into a life of poverty and crime. In the fifth print of the series, the young woman has fallen ill. She sits by the fireplace; stockings, mitts, and gloves hang above her. In the final print, the young woman is dead. On a small table next to the casket lies a pair of gloves (perhaps given as a gift at the funeral?). The presence of the gloves in the last two prints are reminders of the civilized, protected life the young woman has left behind. The removal of gloves, beginning with the older woman's gesture in the first image, suggests danger and a lack of restraint, especially with regard to issues of sexuality.

The 1768 British novel The Sentimental Journey, by Laurence Sterne, also includes a long scene featuring gloves and the actions of gloved and ungloved hands. This book is a fictional travel account, written in the first person. The protagonist constantly meets women and falls in love. On one such occasion, he meets a woman who offers him her hand. He

first looks at the hand to see if this action would be appropriate, and notes that "she had a black pair of silk gloves open only at the thumb and two forefingers," so he could accept it "without reserve."³⁴

The rest of the scene chronicles the emotions the traveler experiences as he holds the woman's hand. At one point, "the pulsations of the arteries along my fingers pressing across hers, told her what was passing within me. I fear, in this interval, I must have made some slight efforts towards a closer compression of the hand." Here, he seems to be describing sexual arousal, and acknowledging that he must contain himself or lose the lady's hand. Perhaps he would not have been able to contain himself if the hand had been ungloved. In this scene, hands are the principal form of communication--specifically sensual and sexual communication.

In 1799, Maria Edgeworth wrote a story called "The Limerick Gloves" which makes all kinds of allusions to this connection between gloves and sexuality. Edgeworth tells the story of a young woman named Phoebe who is in love with an Irish glover. The girl's parents keep changing their minds about the respectability of this young man, but all ends happily. At the beginning of the story, Phoebe appears to her parents, ready for church, looking clean and fresh in a new pair of gloves. These gloves are from the glover, Brian O'Neill, of whom the girl's mother does not approve, and the

³⁴ Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, by Mr. Yorick, ed. Gardner D. Stout Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, [1768] 1967) 90.

mother forces her to exchange her pretty new gloves for a pair of over-sized, shabby mittens.

In this situation, it is more important that the pure daughter does not wear gloves given by a potential lover, than she look respectable for church. The gloves have a meaning that the parents do not like. They forbid her to wear the Limerick gloves and so, by extension, forbid a romantic or sexual relationship between the two people involved in the exchange. In response, Phoebe privately lays her gloves smooth and places over them the petals of a rose, thereby indicating her affection for the glover. When the story ends and the couple can be together, "Phoebe appeared in the Limerick gloves, and no perfume ever was so delightful to her lover as the smell of the rose leaves in which they had been kept."³⁵ The gloves Brian gives Phoebe in this story are a symbol of potential love and sexual union. If they are accepted and worn, the couple involved reaches an agreement which has sexual implications.

Another example of this connection between gloves and female purity is the tradition, which survived into the nineteenth century in England, of creating a garland for a girl's (virgin's) funeral procession. This category, ironically, included women who had died in childbirth. (Perhaps it was thought that they had already paid the price for their loss of sexual purity.) One particular garland

³⁵ Maria Edgeworth, "The Limerick Gloves," Tales and Novels (London: Whittaker, 1848) 127.

from the very early nineteenth century contained wood, wire, flowers, and a paper glove with the girl's name on it hanging in the middle. An poem written later in the century reads, "A garland, fresh and faire/of Lilies there was made/in sign of her Virginity/and on her coffin laid."³⁶ Here, a clear connection can be made between the glove in the virgin's funeral garland and sexual purity.

This theme appears in nineteenth-century art as well. In William Holman Hunt's painting "The Awakening Conscience," for instance, a woman rises from her lover's lap, suddenly perceiving the error of her ways--that she is a fallen woman. Nearby is a kid glove that she has dropped. The fallen glove suggests that the man will cast her off like an old glove when she has served her purpose. Scholar Malcolm Warner has said, in reference to the painting, that "kid gloves could not be cleaned, just as the virtue of the fallen woman could never be restored."³⁷ There are undoubtedly other art historical examples similar to this one.

Several scenes in the novel Little Women speak to the symbolic significance of gloves. For example, near the beginning of the novel, Jo and Meg are going to a party. Jo, less concerned with social convention than her older sister, says that her gloves are dirty with lemonade and that she will go without them. She insists, "I don't care what people say!". Meg replies, "You must have gloves, or I won't

³⁶ Cited in Cunningham 140.

³⁷ Cited in Paul Richard, "'The Victorians': Britain in Its Prime," The Washington Post, 16 February 1997: G4

go...Gloves are more important than anything else; you can't dance without them, and if you don't I should be so mortified." Jo's solution is for each sister to wear a clean glove and carry the other. Meg, "whose gloves were a tender point with her" reluctantly agrees to this arrangement.³⁸ In this scene, Meg seems to be talking about more than the gloves. She seems to acknowledge and value the links between gloves and refinement, and between gloves and modesty.

Interestingly, later in the book Meg loses a glove, and it turns out that Mr. Brook--the man who is interested in her romantically--has hidden it in his pocket. Jo's male friend Laurie tells her that he has seen the glove and says, "isn't that romantic?" Jo responds, "No, it's horrid...what would Meg say?" She continues that she is not pleased "at the idea of anybody coming to take Meg away."³⁹ Here, again, the loss of the glove signifies the loss of chastity.

Speaking of the loss of chastity, there is a character in Frank Norris' 1899 novel McTeague named Trina. Trina meets McTeague and they begin a doomed romance and marriage which will end in her murder by her husband. During the beginning of their relationship they attend the opera, and Trina wears new gloves. The opera moves her, she is caught up in it--and in her enthusiasm, her new gloves split.⁴⁰ These gloves seem to function as a sexual metaphor. The way

³⁸ Alcott 38.

³⁹ Alcott 177.

⁴⁰ Frank Norris, McTeague: A Story of San Francisco (New York: Signet, [1899] 1981) 83.

they split suggests the breaking of the hymen associated with the loss of female chastity. Trina is left with ripped fabric in an environment requiring tightly bound, completely concealed hands. Her fate is sealed.

Edith Wharton's Pulitzer Prize Winning The Age of Innocence, published in 1920, contains numerous references to gloves, and further establishes their significance as sexual objects. The novel tells the story of New York elites in the late nineteenth century, and specifically the story of a man named Newland Archer. At the beginning of the book, Newland is engaged to a young innocent named May, but soon falls in love with a worldly, sophisticated woman with a questionable reputation named Ellen Olenska. Early in the story, the Countess Olenska arrives late to a party in her honor, "one hand still ungloved." Yet, she enters "without any appearance of haste or embarrassment."⁴¹ The ungloved hand suggests the danger yet to come--the danger that Newland will love her, and that she, not appropriately protected from him and perhaps more easily tempted herself, might not stop him.

Further into the novel, Ellen and Newland are involved in an intense conversation when Ellen's carriage arrives. Ellen gets ready to leave. Wharton wrote that "her fan and gloves lay on the sofa beside her and she picked them up mechanically." Archer felt that "at any cost he must keep her beside him, and his eyes "fixed on the hand in which she

⁴¹ Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence (New York: Collier Books, [1920] 1986) 60.

held her gloves and fan, as if watching to see if he had the power to make her drop them." Newland then took Ellen's hand and "softly unclasped it, so that the gloves and fan fell on the sofa between them."⁴² Again, the fallen glove suggests the fallen woman. Near the end of the book, the couple is alone after a separation. Newland "bent over, unbuttoned her tight brown glove, and kissed her palm."⁴³ If gloves are a protection against sexual advances and a loose reputation, and the removal of gloves suggests intimacy and vulnerability, the analogy is clear. Newland's action is decidedly erotic.

An article written in the late 1980s called "The Strange Case of the Gloveless Mortician," is about a man who did not wear gloves when he was preparing bodies.⁴⁴ He began to develop breasts and his testicles became smaller because his skin absorbed an estrogen-like compound used in the process. He needed his gloves to preserve his manhood in the same way that women of recent centuries needed their gloves to preserve their womanhood. Perhaps this tale can be seen as a metaphor for incorrect glove use, particularly by women, in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and first half of the twentieth centuries. Until comparatively recently, women's gloves

⁴² Wharton 168.

⁴³ Wharton 285.

⁴⁴ "Continuum: The Strange Case of the Gloveless Mortician" Omni

needed to be on, clean, and tight to avoid any possible implications of eroticism or indecency.

The changing gender ideologies and sexual mores of the twentieth century contributed to the gradual exodus of gloves from the fashions and rituals of everyday life. During the 1920s, the women's magazine Vogue began to advertise nail polish. It became more acceptable for women to smoke, leading to odd juxtapositions of advertisements for gloves and cigarettes in the 1930s (see Figures 33 and 34). It became fashionable for women to wear their nails longer, which created some conflict as to how to fit long nails into regular sized gloves (see Figure 35). Also, on a more practical level, women's work in the home created less and less damage on the hands. To have smooth, uncalloused, clean, white hands no longer indicated, conclusively, that a woman led a leisured life. With the flesh on a person's hands now a more ambiguous indicator of class, protecting it and/or drawing attention to it with gloves became less of an issue.

The glove seemed to experience a kind of revival in the 1950s (not coincidentally, a decade often characterized by adherence to "traditional" gender and sexual norms). One feature in the January 1, 1950 issue of Vogue about fashion in the first half of the twentieth century, for example,

IVORY TIPS
Protect the Lips

Mild as May

MARLBORO
AMERICA'S FINEST CIGARETTE
Created by PHILIP MORRIS & CO. LTD. INC. NEW YORK

IVORY TIPS
Protect the Lips

Mild as May

MARLBORO
AMERICA'S FINEST CIGARETTE
Created by PHILIP MORRIS & CO. LTD. INC. NEW YORK

"There's Style and Wear in Every Pair!"

"There's Style and Wear in Every Pair!"



The Secret of Chic—
"Wear-Right" Gloves
REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE

Style conscious women (and don't say you aren't one) carefully select the correct glove type for each costume—so "Wear-Right" designs gloves with just the right formality . . . with just the right frivolity . . . for daytime and evening frocks.

Figure 33



For the Southlands
"Wear-Right" Gloves
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

That give a cachet of fastidiousness to the woman who is fashion minded. Alluring creations in beautiful, sheer, lacy weaves and smart strings and cords— together with the perennial favorite "Two-Plex" cotton suede—with the French doeskin finish—that gracefully submit to daily washings and retain their shape.

At Your Favorite Shop From Coast to Coast

WIMELBACHER & RICE - MAKERS - NEW YORK - PARIS

Figure 34

ARIS
LAUNCHES
*Fingernail
Gloves**

DESIGNED
BY
MERRY HULL

FOR YOUR LONG
GLAMOROUS
*Peggy
Sage*
NAILS

Newest Glove Sensation! 3-dimensional gloves made by Aris with extra room for those glamorous long nails—the kind you see on thousands of Peggy Sage-groomed hands. Merry Hull designed the glove, with tapering fingertips that give the hands a slim, long look. Smartest combination in town . . . Aris' Fingernail Glove—worn with your fingertips polished in Peggy Sage's glorious spring shades.

*U. S. Patent No. 2,125,673.

(Introduced in New York by Lord & Taylor)

Figure 35

displays a "1910s" woman wearing long gloves and a hat, a "1917" woman wearing gloves, a woman of "1925" smoking a cigarette and ungloved, a "1940s'" woman, also smoking and gloveless and, finally, a woman of 1950 with a "brand new look"--wearing gloves.⁴⁵

Advice about glove wearing continued to appear in prescriptive literature at this time. For instance, in The "Seventeen" Book of Etiquette and Entertaining, teens were told that they could wear their gloves to a table in a restaurant, but then must "take them off as soon as you sit down, lay them on your lap or put them in your bag." The writer continued with language betraying an enduring, emphatic concern about glove-related behavior: "Never, never, never wear gloves at a table. That's a mannerism, not manners."⁴⁶

By the end of the 1960s, however, gloves had fallen into virtual disuse. Perhaps the dramatic shifts that occurred in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s with regard to issues of gender and sexuality may partially explain gloves' disappearance. Symptomatic of this shift was a page in the February 15, 1960 issue of Vogue which spoke of not gloves, but hats. In this short feature, "The Truth about the Hat Situation," the author notes that, "In another generation, we heard 'you're not dressed if you don't wear a hat,' but the obvious truth is that many smart women are now

⁴⁵ "This Half Century" Feature, Vogue 1 January 1950: 86.

⁴⁶ Enid A. Haupt, The "Seventeen" Book of Etiquette and Entertaining (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1963) 84.

beautifully, though hatlessly, dressed, wearing marvellous hair as a substitute."⁴⁷ Similarly, carefully manicured nails had begun to replace gloves. Gloves were no longer necessary, though when they were worn glove etiquette remained important.

In the early 1970s, fashion spreads in *Vogue* briefly revived a style of glove that had all but disappeared for about three hundred years: gloves with fringes. Models appeared with fringed gloves reminiscent of the flamboyant, extravagant men's hand-coverings of yesteryear (see Figures 36 and 37). Once again, gloves sought to enlarge one's body movements rather than minimize them.

In 1979, "Miss Manners" proclaimed: "Miss Manners misses white gloves." Gloves, she stated, would "never again lead the merry, busy, flirtatious life of old." "Properly gloved," Miss Manners wrote, "there was no situation that a lady could not carry off." Perhaps most indicative of gloves' fall from glory was Miss Manners' response to a reader's question about "recycling" cotton gloves: "Cotton gloves may be worn for gardening, baiting fish hooks, or preventing the wearer from scratching chicken pox."⁴⁸ Once

⁴⁷ "The Truth About the Hat Situation," *Vogue* 15 February 1960: 75. Though beyond the parameters of this thesis, the issue of gloves as related to hats is an interesting one. In most of the portraits discussed here, the women are either wearing hats or a hat is included in the painting. Studies of hats and hat-wearing have much in common with this study on gloves. Also, it could be argued that hats and gloves function in similar symbolic ways in some literature, particularly Wharton.

⁴⁸ Martin 533.

Figure 36



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Figure 37

the epitome of elegance, gloves were now used to prevent the scarring of diseased skin.

But it is not as if gloves have disappeared altogether. In the 1998 catalog for "The Vermont Country Story," a company peddling both contemporary and nostalgic merchandise, there is an item for sale called "Sleeping Gloves." These white cotton gloves, sold in pairs of two, are marketed to individuals with cracked, chapped hands. The gloves are created to wear over lotions and creams while a person sleeps. A set of two pairs costs \$9.95. Of course, you can always use the internet to purchase a custom-made, \$200 pair of shoulder length rubber gloves. Or, for winter, any department store offers dozens of choices. There are all kinds of latex gloves for dentists and doctors. Any sporting goods store will serve your sports-related glove needs. Gloves may be more invisible in today's world, but they continue to do cultural work.

And of course, in gloves' absence, hands have become increasingly important to nonverbal communication. Broken fingernails, warts, protruding veins, thumb and pinky rings, men with long nails, men with polished nails, dirt underneath fingernails, long shiny red nails, a gold band... The gloves might be off, but the cultural anxieties and preoccupations with gender, sexuality, and class they helped to communicate remain on the (temporarily?) ungloved flesh and nails of our late twentieth-century hands.. Whether gloves will make a

comeback as a fashion "must" remains unknown. Their revival is contingent upon cultural changes beyond our control and as yet unforeseen.

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