PUTTING ON A GRAVE FACE: THE TRANSITION OF MOURNING DRESS FROM 1900 TO 1920

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PUTTING ON A GRAVE FACE: THE TRANSITION OF
MOURNING DRESS FROM 1900 TO 1920

BY
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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ABSTRACT

Mourning dress during the nineteenth century had prescribed rules that were forced to change in the twentieth century due to societal pressures and changing values about death and mourning. The goal of this study was to examine the changes and the results of those changes in upper and upper-middle class mourning dress in the United States of America during the first quarter of the twentieth century. To do this, two garments believed to be mourning dress from the early twentieth century were examined and compared as a case study. Two questions were researched and answered in this study. How did mourning dress visually and materially change during the first twenty-five years of the twentieth century? Do the garments selected for study reflect those changes? Mourning dress changed visually to align with the trends in non-mourning fashion. Additionally, a wider variety of materials became acceptable as mourning crepe fell out of fashion and mourning etiquette became less formal. Overall, the garments selected for this case study did reflect the visual and material changes.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................................................... iv

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................... v

CHAPTER 1 .......................................................................................................................... 1

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................ 1

CHAPTER 2 .......................................................................................................................... 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ................................................................................................. 3

Fashion History .................................................................................................................. 9

Materials of Mourning ....................................................................................................... 15

Material Culture ............................................................................................................... 18

CHAPTER 3 .......................................................................................................................... 20

METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................... 20

CHAPTER 4 .......................................................................................................................... 24

FINDINGS .......................................................................................................................... 24

The Edwardian Dress ....................................................................................................... 24

Post-War Dress .................................................................................................................. 46

Garment Comparison ....................................................................................................... 65

CHAPTER 5 .......................................................................................................................... 70

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ................................................................................... 70

Questions Answered ......................................................................................................... 72

Limitations ........................................................................................................................ 74

Future research ................................................................................................................. 75

APPENDICES ..................................................................................................................... 77

The Edwardian Dress ....................................................................................................... 77

The Post-War Dress ......................................................................................................... 85

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................... 94
LIST OF FIGURES


Figure 3. A dress from c. 1900. M. A. Robb, *Dress*, 1900-5, C.I.46.72.1a, b, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Boston, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/106412. ..............................11


Figure 6. A dress and jacket by designer Lanvin from 1917. Lanvin, *Dress*, 1917, cotton, 2009.300.8110a, b, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Boston, accessed April 10, 2023,
Figure 7. The front view of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph.
Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.


Figure 11. “

Figure 12.”

Figure 13. A closer view of The Edwardian Dress bodice. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.

Figure 14. Accretion on beads found on the proper left sleeve cuff of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.
Figure 15. Accretion on a bead at the center of a wagon wheel near the collar of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.........................34

Figure 16. Accretion on a bead found on the proper right sleeve cuff of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC..............................35

Figure 17. The crizzled surface of a bead at the center of a wagon wheel on the bib of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC............36

Figure 18. An uncrizzled bead on the bib of The Edwardian Dress near the crizzled bead in fig. 17. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC..........................36


Figure 20. The Floral Dress from 1903 is very similar to The Edwardian Dress. *Mourning dress*, 1903, silk/wool, silk, 2009.300.6441a, b, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Boston, accessed February 16, 2023, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/173462..........................39

Figure 21. The left-side view of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.........................................................39


Figure 26. The left-side view of The Post-War Dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC.

Figure 27. The front view of The Post-War Dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC.
Figure 28. The back view of The Post-War Dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC. ..................................................47

Figure 29. The right-side view of The Post-War Dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC. .................................................................47

Figure 30. The lining of The Post-War Dress is made partially with a net yoke, and the sleeves are only attached to the lining of the dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC. ........................................................................................................51

Figure 31. The front of The Post-War Dress’ bodice when secured with snaps. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC.................................................................52

Figure 32. The front of The Post-War bodice when the apron is not secured by snaps. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC. .........................................................................................52

Figure 33. An up-close view of the mourning crepe on the sleeves of The Post-War Dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, *Mourning dress*, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC.................................................................53

Figure 34. A mourning dress from 1918 uses tucks to add visual interest to an otherwise simple outfit. Unknown artist, in “Seen in the Shops”, *Vogue*, April 1, 1918, 77, accessed April 10, 2023. ............................................................................................54

Figure 35. This mourning dress from 1918 uses two different fabrics to make the garment more interesting. Adolph de Meyer, in “Fashion: War Mourning in

Figure 36. The slash at the center back of The Post-War Dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, Mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC. ........................................................................................................55

Figure 37. A section of the damaged bands on the lining of the apron back. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, Mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC ........................................................................................................56

Figure 38. A comparison of a damaged band and a restored band. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, Mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC. ........................................................................................................56


Figure 41. A second illustration of a French mourning dress from La Mode Illustrée in 1917. Unknown artist, 1917, La Mode Illustrée, accessed March 13, 2023, https://www.agelesspatterns.com/1917_mourning_clothes.htm ..........59
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mourning dress during the nineteenth century had prescribed rules that were forced to change in the twentieth century due to societal pressures and changing values about death and mourning. The goal of this study is to examine the changes and the results of those changes in upper and upper-middle class mourning dress in the United States of America during the first twenty years of the twentieth century. To do this, two garments believed to be mourning dress from the early twentieth century were examined and compared as a case study: a dress from the early 1900s referred to as The Edwardian Dress, and a dress from the late 1910s referred to as The Post-War Dress. Both dresses were worn by women from the Northeastern United States following mourning customs developed by the English. Two questions were researched and answered in this study. How did mourning dress visually and materially change during the first twenty years of the twentieth century? Do the garments selected for study reflect those changes?

Within the study of historical mourning dress little research has been done on the mourning dress and customs between 1900 and 1920. The research on this period has increased over the years, with the primary focus being the experience of widows during the first world war. Formal Victorian style mourning has been considered effectively non-existent after the war and mourning before the war was still considered part of the Victorian tradition
even after Victoria’s death. Additionally, there is an emphasis in the literature towards the English and French mourning experience and dress, and little on American mourning dress and experience. Mourning, in most books and articles focus on mourning’s influence on fashion, with the allure of mourning dress contributing to the development of the little black dress after mourning went out of style.\textsuperscript{1} Additionally, these works examine art and documents rather than extant garments.

The reason this study is being undertaken is to bring some clarity to a period where mourning etiquette was confusing and contradictory, to inform future interpretations of mourning dress in display settings, and to add a body of knowledge to the University of Rhode Island's Historic Textiles and Costume Collection.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Victorian era lasted from 1837 to 1901 and was named for the reign of Queen Victoria of Great Britain. The Edwardian period that followed was named for King Edward VII of Great Britain who ruled from 1901 to 1910. Aside from being well known for the variety of fashionable silhouettes, the Victorian era is well known for its rigid forms of etiquette. The sociocultural norms and ideals of the period are key elements of Victorian culture also called Victorianism. Victorian culture, as defined by Daniel Walker Howe, in this context means “[the] evolving system of beliefs, attitudes, and techniques, transmitted from generation to generation, and finding expression in innumerable activities people learn...” during the period 1838-1901. Overall, the mourning dress of the Edwardian period and after is characterized by a transition away from conspicuous consumption in death and restrictive traditions during the late Victorian period.

Mourning dress is the clothing and accessories (hats, gloves, etc.) one wears during a period of grieving. During Queen Victoria’s reign mourning was codified. There were specific lengths of time one had to mourn a relative (or spouse’s relative) who had died, but friends were not mourned in this manner. There were specific stages of mourning, and during each of those

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3 Howe. p 509
stages there were colors, textures, and jewelry items that were or were not allowed. The duration of the different stages of mourning varied depending on the relation of one to the deceased, as all stages were worn regardless of the closeness to the deceased. Each subsequent stage of mourning was less restrictive as to what one was able to wear. The first stage is called “full” or “deep” mourning which was the period beginning when one was made aware of a relative’s death. This period could last anywhere from a few weeks to a year depending on how the mourner was connected to the deceased. One was required to wear clothing of black crepe or other similarly matte textures, but not rich fabrics like velvet, and one was not permitted to wear jewelry, with some exceptions made for mourning jewelry, because the sobriety of dress was a symbol of the deep sorrow caused by losing a loved one. The second stage of mourning reduced the amount of crepe required and allowed jet jewelry and trimming into the ensemble. The final stage of mourning, half mourning, allowed for velvet, diamonds, pearls, as well as silver and gold.

Some people elected to remain in various stages of mourning longer than what was required for emotional reasons, much like Queen Victoria herself. After the death of Prince Albert in 1861, she remained in mourning

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6 Jalland, Death in the Victorian Family; Morley, Death, Heaven and the Victorians.


dress for the rest of her life. The prolonging of mourning was acceptable, though there was no option to shorten the mourning period if there was an absence of sentiment.\(^9\) There were also situations where one would wear mourning attire to show support for the bereaved, a practice called sympathetic mourning. The most prominent case was after Prince Albert’s Death. When Queen Victoria entered mourning, English social custom required that the rest of the court enter mourning with her. The English royal court dutifully remained in mourning with her until her death forty years later.\(^10\)

True mourning dress was discouraged for those visiting a bereaved friend; it was recommended that one simply don more somber attire out of respect. Interestingly, there were no mourning standards for those who had lost a friend. Mourning was only for those who lost a personal relation or a spouse’s relation, though even second wives were expected to mourn the passing of the parents of the husband’s first wife.\(^11\) Anyone who could afford to mourn with a specific wardrobe would be sure to have the right garments at hand. Those in the upper classes could also afford to buy new and fashionable mourning clothes which still followed the etiquette of sorrow. The lower classes, depending on their income, could sometimes have mourning clothes, but the priority was respectability rather than fashion. Those who could not afford mourning clothes were allowed a reprieve by their peers as putting food on the

\(^9\) Morley, *Death, Heaven and the Victorians*.

\(^10\) Morley.

table to feed one's children was more important than being seen as respectable by upper class individuals.\(^\text{12}\)

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mourning dress was the domain of women. Men in earlier centuries wore mourning dress, but due to the need for men to be in public and other gender roles the practice was eventually reduced to a simple black crepe armband worn on the sleeve of the outermost garment.\(^\text{13}\) For women who did not need to work mourning was elaborate and very expensive because mourning dress encompassed one's whole wardrobe for months or years at a time, depending on the relation to the deceased. The exception to the rule of women's elaborate mourning is the disinclination for very young women and children to wear black mourning during long mourning periods. For young women it was considered unbecoming, and so mourning periods were either shortened or white was substituted for black.\(^\text{14}\) Children in mourning were dressed in white by their families as being dressed in black was considered bad for the health of the young or frail. Due to the technology of the time black dye wasn’t as color fast as modern black dyes. This meant that if one was caught in the rain, skin could be dyed black by their clothing and that dye might be difficult to remove from the skin. Extended contact with those dye chemicals could cause illness.


There is documented evidence of widows becoming ill after wearing their long crepe mourning veils in front of their faces for extended periods of time.\textsuperscript{15}

The Royal Courts of Europe were the only places where mourning was officially required and regulated. These regulations only applied when a member of the court died.\textsuperscript{16} In these situations, an official would release a statement regarding the appropriate fabrics, accessories, and other relevant mourning materials to be used. In all other situations mourning was unofficially regulated by regional or community norms and ladies' magazines such as \textit{Godey’s Lady’s Book} or \textit{The Delineator}. In these magazines people could send letters with fabric samples to advice columnists to ask if that sample of fabric was acceptable for mourning attire, or how one could engage socially with someone while they were in mourning. These magazines also published special articles on the current mourning fashions. \textit{The Delineator}, which was published by sewing pattern brand Butterick from 1873 to 1937, allowed the reader to order garment patterns directly from them, allowing consumers to make appropriate yet fashionable mourning clothing.\textsuperscript{17}

Etiquette requirements began to relax and shorten towards the end of the nineteenth century following calls for reform in the funeral industry, as well as frustrations at the burden of the cost on the poor, and the fact that women

\textsuperscript{15} Jalland, \textit{Death in the Victorian Family}; Morley, \textit{Death, Heaven and the Victorians}.
\textsuperscript{16} Taylor, \textit{Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History}.
were required to mourn more visibly than men. Additionally, the upper and middle classes were beginning to grow uncomfortable with the restrictions mourning put on their social and sartorial life. They were also distressed by the loss of class distinctions due to the nature of deep mourning and its sobriety.

The final blow to mourning culture came during World War I (1914-1918) when casualties were so high that mourning all the deceased sons, husbands, and fathers would have been devastating for war-time morale as well as the productivity required to win a war on that scale. However, the magazines that oversaw and controlled American mourning etiquette continued to be contradictory. Some magazines vocally disavowed mourning during the war, while others continued to publish mourning trends and changes in etiquette despite the war. Additionally, in the spring of 1918 the pandemic known as the Spanish Flu began, causing the deaths of 675,000 Americans according to the CDC. This is compared to the 116,516 American soldiers who died in and out of combat during the war, including American deaths before 1920 in some parts of Russia during the revolution. Ostentatious mourning on the same scale as that in the Victorian era disappeared during the war, and by the 1930s and 1940s mourning was

almost identical to the norms of the present day, where black is worn at the funeral and, for the most part people go on with their lives as best they can with little to no dress signifiers outside of the funeral.\textsuperscript{23}

Fashion History

The first decade of the twentieth century was a time of reinvention. With the deaths of Queen Victoria of England and United States’ President McKinley in 1901, both nations were poised for change. Fashionable


\textsuperscript{23} Morley, \textit{Death, Heaven and the Victorians}. 
silhouettes between 1900 and 1910 shifted with the social changes. The S-bend corset was invented in 1900 and was integral to the Gibson Girl look associated with the 1900s. The corset was constructed so that the bust and torso was pushed forward with the back arched, making the buttocks and hips more pronounced.24 Figure 1 is an example of an S-bend corset sold by Au Bon Marché in 1904.

In the latter half of the decade the forward leaning posture became less pronounced and standing upright once again became fashionable. Additionally, curves could be enhanced by wearing padding or other structural garments for the hips/buttocks or bust under the dress. Petticoats were also necessary for helping skirts stay smooth, clean, and comfortable for cold weather.25 Dresses from the beginning of the 1900s were similar to the dresses of the 1890s but the volume of the sleeve moved from the shoulder and upper arm (also known as the leg of mutton sleeve) to the elbow and wrist.26 (see Figures 2 and 3) Fully bustled skirts had gone out of fashion in the late 1880s and early 1890s, but even into the 1900s padding was still used at the hips to accentuate the smallness of the waist. Skirts of the early 1900s were trumpet shaped with a small train. Women’s bodices and shirts were designed to blouse out in the front, commonly referred to today as the “pigeon breast” look. All had some variety of high neckline, either a high boned-choker

25 Ewing.
26 Ewing.
collar or a stand collar which could be worn with a tie. The skirt silhouette eventually became slimmer around the ankles resulting in the highly fashionable, and impractical, hobble skirt after 1908.

In the 1910s the necklines of garments lowered to below the collarbone, which was new for daytime clothing. The corset changed shape as well, smoothing out the natural shape of the body rather than enhancing or

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27 Ewing.

exaggerating the curves of the bust, waist and hips (see figure 4). The top edge of the corset was also lowered to facilitate the more natural form. This meant that the bust was no longer sufficiently supported and led to the introduction of the bust bodice or brassiere into the everyday wardrobe.\textsuperscript{29} Because the new silhouette aimed for a smooth, natural figure, petticoats were exchanged for slips which allowed for modesty and keeping the outer garments safe from things like sweat and the body’s natural oils without wearing more garments than necessary. The blousing of the previous decade was retained, though to a much subtler extent, with the waistline of garments staying at the natural waist or a few inches above.\textsuperscript{30} Hobble skirts hit their tightest point during the 1910s before World War I resulted in their banishment due to impracticality.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} Ewing.  
\textsuperscript{30} Ewing.  
\textsuperscript{31} Ewing.
Skirts widened from tight hobble skirts to straight or A-line styles when it became clear that World War I would not end quickly, and women needed to take on jobs to help with the war effort. The hems of these skirts also rose to between the ankles and calves rather than to the floor or just above it. The cut of some dresses were compared to extra-long belted tunics with the waistline staying close to the natural waist.


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32 Elizabeth Ewing, “World War One, Then the ’Twenties and the Boyish Figure 1914-1929,” in Dress and Undress (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1978), 122–34.
Layering garments continued to be seen from the early 1910s, though during and after the war the layered look was more often an illusion created by construction techniques.\textsuperscript{33} As with other times of major war, there was a trend towards military and menswear elements in womenswear, this eventually fell out of favor as the war dragged on.\textsuperscript{34}

\footnotesize{Figure 6. A dress and jacket by designer Lanvin from 1917. Lanvin, \textit{Dress}, 1917, cotton, 2009.300.8110a, b, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Boston, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/175135.}

\textsuperscript{33} Ewing.
\textsuperscript{34} Ewing.
Materials of Mourning
Crepe (crape)\textsuperscript{35} was a defining characteristic of mourning dress from before the Victorian era into and after World War I. Because it was viewed as integral, many varieties of crepe were produced to be accessible to almost every class and background.\textsuperscript{36} Despite this, purchasing the materials necessary for mourning placed a large financial burden on many families.\textsuperscript{37} The archetypal mourning crepe is Courtauld crepe or crepe anglaise, produced primarily by the firm Courtauld in England. It was considered the premiere quality mourning crepe and was purchased worldwide.\textsuperscript{38} During the height of popularity for mourning dress, mourning crepe became very profitable due to the silk used for highly finished mourning crepe was low quality and it had a limited lifespan so had to be replaced for subsequent mourning periods. The dyes in mourning crepe spotted when wet by rain and the black faded even when packed away for later use. There were of course ways to refresh the look of one’s old mourning crepe, but mourning goods manufacturers and distributors insisted it was bad luck to keep mourning materials in the house after mourning. This ensured that even if fashion did not dictate new clothes, superstition forced future sales.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{35} Crepe could be spelled either way and there doesn’t seem to be a regional pattern like ‘gray’ vs. ‘grey’. In \textit{Vogue} it is spelled crape, and American magazine \textit{McCall’s} it is spelled crepe.


\textsuperscript{37} Taylor; Jalland, \textit{Death in the Victorian Family}; Morley, \textit{Death, Heaven and the Victorians}.

\textsuperscript{38} Taylor, “The Mourning Dress and Textile Industries.”

In the 1890s mourning crepe began to go out of fashion. It was even discarded by some in the English royal family at Queen Victoria’s funeral in 1901.\textsuperscript{40} Softer sheer fabrics like voile, nun’s veiling and georgette were appropriate and more fashionable choices for mourning rather than the traditional mourning crepe though production of mourning crepe did not end until the 1940s.

While crepe was and is the hallmark of historical mourning dress, it was not the only fabric used during mourning. This was especially in the later stages of mourning, and after the start of World War I. The two most commonly used mourning fabrics outside of mourning crepe were bombazine and paramatta. Bombazine was a twill fabric made with a silk warp and a worsted wool weft. It was used as a base fabric which could then be trimmed with mourning crepe. Bombazet was the cheaper, cotton and worsted blend, version of bombazine and could be used for mourning dress for servants or people of limited means. Paramatta was also a twill, with a cotton warp and worsted wool weft, and had a quality between bombazine and bombazet. It was named after the town in Australia where the wool used in the fabric originated. Other materials that were considered appropriate but were less common included alpaca and cashmere fiber or were fabrics of grosgrain or poplin weaves.\textsuperscript{41} These fibers and fabrics were all appropriate because they did not shine or reflect light. In later stages of mourning fabrics like moiré,

\textsuperscript{40} Taylor, “The Mourning Dress and Textile Industries.”
\textsuperscript{41} Taylor.
which does shine, were acceptable in the form of ribbon and other trimmings.\textsuperscript{42}

The most recognizable mourning trim included jet and jet substitutes like onyx, gutta percha or French jet.\textsuperscript{43} Genuine jet is chemically adjacent to coal; it is created by putting decaying wood in damp conditions under high pressure until it becomes fossilized. The jet mined in Whitby England was one of the finest sources of true jet for about 80 years and employed thousands of artisans and miners to create mourning jewelry before less expensive alternatives became more popular in the late 1880s.\textsuperscript{44} There are several ways to identify jet. When polished, jet will shine rather than sparkle. Additionally, when viewed with magnification one can see the wood vessels or wood texture remaining in the fossilized material. The texture of the surface is the best way to tell the difference between true jet and French jet.\textsuperscript{45} The other two methods of identifying jet are more invasive and damaging, those methods are to heat the material and to test the hardness of it. Jet is approximately a 4 on the Mohs’s hardness scale, therefore, it can be gently scratched against an unglazed ceramic tile to produce a brown scratch or streak. This is not a single identifier though as other materials can leave similar results behind. When


\textsuperscript{43} Onyx is a black stone which polishes to a high shine. Gutta percha is a tree whose latex is used to create a black thermoplastic material.


heated with a small piece of hot metal, like a pin, a piece of jet will produce an odor like coal. This method runs the risk of igniting the jet if the conditions are sufficient.46

Due to the scarcity and expense of true jet, alternatives were developed to create beads, brooches, and other jewelry that could be worn during the mourning period. Black glass (also called French Jet) was an economic alternative to brighten up intentionally sober clothes.47

Material Culture
The garments in this study were examined using material culture methods. What follows is a concise description of the role of material culture methods. Material culture is the study of objects to understand the beliefs of a community or society at a given time. In material culture studies research objects can represent values and norms just as much as writings or other visible behaviors can in other forms of research.48 Examining the intersection between object and idea allows for object interpretation, which is an integral part of building the historical record and displaying objects and curating exhibitions. Material culture also allows a researcher to compare both the cultural contexts of two objects as well as their material aspects rather than comparing just their cultures or their materiality. Finally, material culture allows

46 “How to Identify Jet Stone.”
objects being studied to be both the subject of research and a primary source in that research\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{49} Riello, “The Object of Fashion: Methodological Approaches to the History of Fashion.”
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This research is first and foremost, a study of material culture. Material culture is the study of objects to illustrate the beliefs of a community or society at a given time. In material culture studies research objects can represent values and norms just as much as writings or other visible behaviors can in other forms of research.\(^{50}\)

The methodology for this research is a case study of two artifacts. A case study is a method which results in nuanced data and understanding of complex ideas within its contemporary context.\(^{51}\) A case study on material objects is the most useful because each garment will provide windows of context into the whos, wheres and whys of a mourner’s life. This multifaceted understanding will also allow for some generalization based on the agreed upon public environments of the time. The research is conducted as a case study because the goal of the research is to achieve a deeper understanding of the ways that social and societal changes influenced specific items of clothing people wore during mourning. One cannot evaluate how a garment was worn without being able to evaluate the garment itself; the damage,

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repairs, alterations, or lack thereof all provide data which informs the historical narrative.

The primary data source of this study are two women’s dresses worn in the United States for mourning between 1900 and 1920, the dresses are currently housed in the University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection (URI HTCC). Additionally, issues of *The Delineator, Vogue Magazine, and McCall’s Magazine* were all consulted for their discussion of mourning dress and mourning practices during this time.

Appendices 1 and 2 are from Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim’s book *The Dress Detective* which serves as the instruments for examining and reflecting upon the information collected from The Edwardian Dress and Object 2005.10.08 (“The Post-War Dress”). Appendix 1 looks at the measurable and observable information as well as supporting information. Appendix 2 looks at the researcher’s emotions and reactions to the garment.52

Fleming’s model for artifact analysis was chosen to organize the formal analysis and share the conclusions drawn from the two dresses. Images and articles about mourning from issues of *The Delineator* released between 1899 and 1922 have also been cited to support the analysis and conclusions.53

The sampling method is convenience, with the important factors being: first, that the objects reside on URI’s Kingston Campus; second, that the objects are related to mourning dress; and finally, they were created and worn

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during the first twenty-five years of the twentieth century. The reason for convenience sampling is because remaining on campus conserves time and financial resources for the researcher. There is also the benefit of adding knowledge to a collection that doesn’t have a large amount of research done on individual pieces. Additionally, there are a small number of black crepe dresses in the collection that date to the early twentieth century. The use of black crepe in a garment is one of the few ways to truly know if a garment was worn for mourning or not. The two dresses chosen are 1960.10.03 (“The Edwardian Dress”) and 2005.10.08 (“The Post-War Dress”). These two dresses represent the two units to be compared in this case study.

The Edwardian Dress was accessioned into the URI HTCC during the 1960-’61 school year. It is a two-piece dress made with a silk and wool crepe exterior and French jet beaded embellishments on the bodice, collar, and cuffs. This garment was selected because the silhouette is typical for the turn of the twentieth century and is an example of the type of clothing worn by wealthy women during the second stage of mourning. Additionally, family papers and diaries from the donor’s branch of the family reside in the archives of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS) and were available to be studied.

Not much was known about The Post-War Dress. According to accession information it was “found in the isolation room” during the 2005-06 school year and its specific description is missing from the accession

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paperwork from that year.\textsuperscript{55} Despite the lack of information on this garment the cut of the dress is estimated to be from the 1910s, it is completely black with black crepe on the sleeves, neckline, waist, and skirt of the dress. The Post-War Dress is one of the latest examples of mourning dress in the collection.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The Edwardian Dress

The Edwardian Dress is a woman's dress, made up of a separate bodice and skirt. (See figure 7.) The bodice has a high standup beaded collar with a hook and eye closure at the center back of the neck, with a beaded bib that attaches at the collar and shoulder seams. This bib obscures the center front hook and eye closure, which is boned, and the sides and back are boned as well to smooth the princess seamed bodice. The other feature used to smooth the bodice is the padding just outside the armscye front used to smooth the transition between the bust and flat upper chest. There is a subtle blousing or "pigeon breasted" look which ends at the waist of the bodice which is finished with a bound satin ribbon edge and fastened with a snap. The sleeves are full with a beaded closed band cuff to gather the sleeve into a modest bishop style. The skirt is full length with volume and a slight train at the rear. The skirt closes at the center back with hooks and eyes at the waist and a snap halfway down the skirt opening. There is a hidden pocket near the center back of the skirt. The hem of the skirt features two rows of black satin ribbon ruffles on the outside; inside is a 9" wide band of woven horsehair interfacing to support the volume in the hem of the skirt. A wide braided trim binds the edge of the hem to protect it from abrasions, catching, and dirt. Both the skirt and bodice are made from a sheer crepe fabric, underlined with plain weave black fabrics. This crepe has a low thread count with a fine silk in the warp and a marginally thicker wool weft. The underlining of the bodice is a
black cotton plain weave fabric, and the underlining of the skirt is black silk taffeta.

![Figure 7. The front view of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, Mourning dress, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.](image)

When this dress was initially accessioned in 1960 it was given this description: “Waist and skirt to a dress of an interesting black fabric which appears to have been made by a double cloth process. The waist has a vivid yellow satin vestee which is covered with a black beaded lace. The high collar is also beaded. There are two narrow black satin ruffles around the lower edge of a very full skirt. The skirt is lined with black silk taffeta. The dress was worn in the early 1900s”. Further research was then done by former Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design (TMD) graduate student Beth Eubanks in 1996. In her research it was found that the aforementioned “yellow vestee”
was an alteration and addition to the original dress, presumably to turn it into a costume for another occasion.\textsuperscript{56} The vestee has since been removed and is no longer in the collection. Figures 8 and 9 show possible versions of the vestee. The reason they look so different is because a vestee is similar to a chemisette or dicky, meaning it is a garment worn to simulate a shirt while only


\textsuperscript{56} Beth Eubanks, “1960.10.03 Paper,” 1996.
being a partial shirt or collar.⁵⁷ Both figures are classified as vestees from the early 1900s by the MET. A final theory is that the vestee from the accession document was an underlining applied to the bib, and the language chosen instead of underlining was vestee.

Eubanks also discusses the ornamentation on the bodice, referring to it as jet.⁵⁸ This is a reasonable assumption to make with a mourning dress, though upon further examination for this thesis it was found that the beading was black glass or “French jet”. French jet was a substitute used due to the expense and rarity of natural jet, though is susceptible to environmental conditions which can cause glass disease.⁵⁹ Glass disease occurs when the

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⁵⁸ Eubanks, “1960.10.03 Paper.”
glass is chemically unstable and results in the glass weeping, developing mineral salts on the surface of the glass, and/or thin cracks developing in the glass called “crizzling”. The Edwardian dress shows all these symptoms.

There is currently no definitive chain of custody for The Edwardian Dress before Elizabeth Farnsworth received it from her mother, Alys Matteson, in 1960. However, a family tree was provided by Mrs. Farnsworth of her direct relatives; the personal papers and diaries of those individuals are currently in the archive of the Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS). There was no mention of any garments matching the description of The Edwardian Dress in the relevant papers, but there are several plausible custody chains based on familial connections. The first potential custody chain is the dress was made for Alys Matteson, upon the death of her sister-in-law Amy Matteson who died in 1904/05 (sources differ). The dress was then passed to her daughter, Elizabeth upon her mother’s death. Another option would be that the dress was made for Rosabelle “Belle” Matteson, by her close friend and seamstress Elizabeth Grinnell upon the death of sister-in-law Amy Matteson. This second origin does not explain how the dress came into Mrs. Farnsworth’s care, though it does have the benefit of giving a plausible maker for the dress which the initial theory does not.

The construction of The Edwardian Dress is of good quality and primarily machine sewn. In the large or structural seams like the side seams of

60 O’Hern and McHugh.
the skirt and armholes it makes more sense to use a machine rather than sewing by hand because it is faster and therefore cuts production costs. It also results in a stitch line which is more even and equally as strong as a hand sewn seam. Hand sewing is visible in areas like the hooks and eyes and the snap closure in the back. The bib and crepe front of the bodice are bloused like typical bodices of the time, but the lining of the bodice is fitted snugly to the corseted form as in previous decades. This technique where the bodice closes in the front with an attached overlay to disguise or cover the closure is typical of the late 1800s and early 1900s to make sure bodices always sat correctly. The maker could also achieve this shape by closing the garment down the back. The lining of the bodice is a plain densely woven black cotton of a heavier shirt weight with casings for the baleen boning at the sides and back and a metal stay at the center back of the bodice. This metal stay was used to keep the smooth join between the back of the bodice and the rear of the skirt, which would be lightly padded to create a fashionable silhouette.
The embellishment of this dress could be considered minimal for a normal formal dress, but for a mourning dress worn at dinner or another formal occasion it is decorated in an appropriate manner. Mourning etiquette limited the amount and types of personal ornamentation.\(^{62}\) The bodice of this dress is particularly interesting because of the embellishments and structural materials.

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used to create it. Of particular interest are the beads on the cuffs, collar, and the beaded bib draped across the bodice front. No beaded motifs like the wagon wheel pattern on the Edwardian Dress have been seen on other illustrated or extant garments from the same period. Figures 10, 11, and 12 are illustrated mourning dresses from a 1901 *Delineator* issue. Tucks, bands of fabric and lace are more common decorations for mourning dresses like those seen in *The Delineator*. They all are decorated with tucks and strategic blocking of mourning crepe to improve the design of the dress. These dresses could be made by middle class women without too much expense and would be appropriate for mourning at any stage.63

There is moderate evidence of wear and tear which would require conservation. Where the beaded bib attaches at the shoulder and on the hooks and eyes on the opposite side the threads holding it to the shoulder seam are beginning to fail due to the weight of the beading pulling downward while the garment is hanging in the collection. The bib itself was skillfully stabilized in 1996 by former TMD graduate student Shawn Fisher who mounted the beaded pattern onto black stabletx (a synthetic chiffon used in conservation). Additionally, due to wear and age the threads which the beads in the cuffs and portions of the bib have been exposed and abraded leading to minor losses over time due to handling. This type of wear is normal and is referred to as “inherent vice.” Inherent vice refers to the unavoidable degradation of natural materials over time. This is potentially the cause for the

loss of half the snap closure at the waist of the bodice and several hooks and eyes at the waist of the skirt and the shoulder seam of the bodice. Abrasion, or rubbing, is the primary type of damage to the garment on the inside. The boning casings in the bodice have been abraded to the point where the baleen boning has been exposed. In the interfaced portion of the skirt the side seams have been abraded and exposed the interfacing. There is also wear at the hem of the dress which has resulted in damage to the horsehair braid protecting the hem. The final location which needs conservation on this garment is the beads, particularly the beaded bib. There is chemical buildup on the surface of some of the beads, particularly the ones at the center of the wagon wheels (see figure 13). If it is not removed the damage to the beads

Figure 13. A closer view of The Edwardian Dress bodice. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.
from the chemicals could continue. Despite the areas of damage, this garment is easily displayable and can be handled with minimal risk of damage. This garment can be considered in excellent condition.

This garment is significant because of its connection to a prominent Rhode Island family. It is also significant for its value to the field of conservation. As mentioned previously, the French jet (glass) beads on the bodice of the dress are exhibiting all three symptoms of glass disease. Current research shows that the breakdown of glass occurs when its chemical makeup is unstable. In specific conditions of relative humidity demineralization occurs causing either a residue of mineral salts to develop on the surface of the glass, or it will cause the glass to weep a watery or oily substance. Whether glass will weep or demineralize depends on the pH of the glass’ surface caused by the relative humidity. See figures 14, 15, and 16 for examples of this accretion on The Edwardian Dress. Another symptom of glass disease is known as crizzling. Crizzling is a fine network of cracks in sections or across whole pieces of the glass caused by the embrittlement of the glass due to the chemical destabilization. Once the breakdown of the glass has begun there is no way to completely stop the process. The mineral salts that develop on the glass need to be removed to prevent the exacerbation of conditions ideal for

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the further breakdown of the glass. Luckily these salts are easy to remove with

Figure 14. Accretion on beads found on the proper left sleeve cuff of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.

Figure 15. Accretion on a bead at the center of a wagon wheel near the collar of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.
either deionized water, a 1:1 solution of ethanol and deionized water, or ethanol. Current research is inconclusive as to which method is superior as none have resulted in perfect long-term stabilization of glass. Objects suffering from glass disease may not always be deemed suitable for display as removal of the residue from the surface of the glass may make crizzling and other textural defects more apparent. Figure 17 shows a crizzled bead surface, while figure 18 shows an un-crizzled surface.

Glass Disease is a particularly interesting malady in conservation because there is not yet a cure, or even a guaranteed method of highest success. Regardless, The Edwardian Dress bodice requires the intervention of
a conservator to clean these beads to make sure they do not continue to

Figure 17. The crizzled surface of a bead at the center of a wagon wheel on the bib of The Edwardian Dress. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.

Figure 18. An uncrizzled bead on the bib of The Edwardian Dress near the crizzled bead in fig. 17. Author’s photograph. Creator unknown, *Mourning dress*, 1900-04, silk, wool, and cotton, 1960.10.03, URI HTCC.
degrade and become more brittle over time. One could do a limited experiment and use each of the recommended cleaning solutions on a selection of the beads on the garment to see which is the most effective cleaning agent for this object in particular. If one wanted a more generalizable result however, testing each type of bead for its chemical composition and factoring that into the sample size for each cleaning solution could be an effective method. This would of course need to be a long-term study, as mineral salts and weeping would take time to reaccumulate on the beads surface. Additionally, it could be considered unethical to experiment on and potentially allow damage to an object in such good condition as The Edwardian Dress.
While mourning dress was intended to be sober, it could also be fashionable. A common design choice in fashionable clothes during the 1900s was to use decorative techniques such as tucks, beading, lace, or even outfit composition to draw attention to the bust area, particularly the center front, which allowed the waist to seem smaller in comparison. This could also have the effect of elongating the figure. All the dresses seen in figures 7, 19, 20, and 24 all have this design feature.

The Edwardian Dress is a good example of mourning dress belonging to an upper-middle class woman of the early 1900s. Other examples can be found in the MET’s 2014–15 mourning wear exhibition *Death Becomes Her*, which explored the evolution of men’s and women’s mourning dress from the 1830s to approximately 1915. One example from this exhibition is constructed in a similar way to The Edwardian Dress. 2009.300.6441a, b, which will be referred to as The Floral Dress, (Figure 20) and is dated to 1903.

![Figure 20. The Floral Dress from 1903 is very similar to The Edwardian Dress.](image1)

![Figure 21. The left-side view of The Edwardian Dress.](image2)

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and is made of silk and wool. Much like The Edwardian Dress, it has a high collar, decorative bib, sleeve with volume at the cuff, a bodice with blousing, and a slightly trained skirt. The Floral Dress’s bib is made with a floral lace and that lace is placed throughout the bodice and skirt to add visual interest on top of the crepe body of the dress.

The MET’s gown C.I.37.44.1 (figure 22) is a stunning example of embellishment in later stages of mourning. It is a half mourning dress covered

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with sequins in off white and mauve. It was worn by Queen Alexandra in 1902, one year after the death of Queen Victoria. This dress shows that as mourning progressed the acceptable textiles and embellishments were more varied. Neither off-white nor mauve were appropriate for any stage of mourning before half-mourning. In the second stage and later, pure white was permissible in combination with black and was acceptable as a substitute for black depending on the mourner’s age. Shine in embellishments was also acceptable in later mourning but was more likely to be from jewelry worn with mourning dress than embellishment that was part of the dress. Figure 23 shows an example of embroidered embellishments without luster which was more commonly used on mourning dresses.

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The MET’s dress 2009.300.376a, b is not a mourning dress, but it is a good example of beading being done on garments in the early 1900s. Figure 24 shows the front of a brown velvet ensemble and cropped beaded jacket. This ribbon motif and other natural forms like the flowers on The Floral Dress (figure 25) and the collar of The Edwardian Dress were more common than the angular wagon wheel pattern on the bib of The Edwardian Dress (figure 13).


Both the skirt and bodice are made completely from plain weave black fabrics which were then overlined with a sheer crepe fabric. As mentioned in the description of the dress the crepe overlayer is made with a silk warp and a wool weft. Fabric mixtures in mourning crepe are not unheard of. It is plausible that this silk-wool crepe was used for a cooler time of year, like spring or fall when the temperatures were unpredictable in Rhode Island where the Matteson family lived.

It is unknown why the Edwardian Dress was saved, but the garment being saved for reuse in mourning or to be remade to suit a later fashion is plausible. Even in wealthy areas like Newport, Rhode Island gowns were ordered and remade. It could also be that it was saved for sentimental reasons; the Edwardian Dress could be considered a tangible memory of the deceased. Because the dress once had a yellow vestee, now lost, it is possible that the dress was used later as a costume. Alterations to garments found in historical clothing collections are not limited to size alterations. Sometimes alterations show that the garment was later used as a costume, possibly for a party or theater production.

Because this garment was owned by a member of the Matteson family, it was necessary that this garment portray their status within their Rhode Island community. The Matteson family is well known for their prowess in both

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business and politics. Ashael Matteson was a banker, merchant, and state senator in the mid-1800s. His son Charles Matteson was a lawyer and served as Chief Justice on the Supreme Court of Rhode Island from 1891 to 1900. Charles’ son Archibald was also a prominent lawyer and colonel in the national guard.\textsuperscript{70} The most likely owner of the Edwardian Dress is Archibald’s wife Alys. Because of her husband’s station both in the military and as a lawyer it would be necessary to dress in a respectable manner. This meant that mourning dress would be required as a matter of course and should be fashionable but conservative, and not exceed the family’s financial means.

In the late 1800s families were leaning away from Christianity as an all-encompassing lifestyle, and towards a more scientific and secular everyday life. Living for the present rather than a promised afterlife resulted in a change in perspective regarding attitudes towards death and contributed to society distancing themselves from death and mourning as a process.\textsuperscript{71} Even in 1899, the magazines which doled out mourning etiquette clearly said that mourning could be worn for a variety of reasons including a sense of conformity or to show respect for others, but in the end the decision to wear mourning is based on one’s own feelings.\textsuperscript{72} Interestingly, though United States mourning customs were based on practices in England and France \textit{The Delineator} noted that

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\textsuperscript{70} “Matteson Family Papers,” Rhode Island Historical Society, accessed April 7, 2023, https://www.rihs.org/mssinv/Mss1021.HTM.
\end{flushleft}
Americans stayed in the first stage of mourning dress longer than their European peers.\textsuperscript{73}

During the Edwardian period the public expression of grief remained a tradition held over from the Victorian age. Mourning dress was intended as a form of memorial and sign of respect to the deceased, but also as a visual indicator to society that the wearer and their family had experienced a loss. The whole reason that lusterless black fabrics were used in mourning was to illustrate the dark and dower mood of the wearer.\textsuperscript{74} A period of mourning, particularly for a spouse or parent, could cover at least some of the first annual events without that loved one. Oftentimes these “firsts” are when a bereft person can feel their loss most poignantly.\textsuperscript{75} Mourning dress could also be worn out of respect for the deceased. The Edwardian Dress, presumed to be a second stage mourning dress, is an indicator of the slow return to society and everyday life required by any person touched by a familial death. Once in second mourning women were allowed to engage in informal aspects of society, though married women like Alys Matteson would probably not have removed herself from society because of her husband’s status and her role as a wife.\textsuperscript{76}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{73} “Mourning Fashions and Etiquette,” \textit{The Delineator}, 1900, 822.
\bibitem{74} Taylor, “Mourning Dress 1800-1910”; Morley, “Mourning Dress and Etiquette.”
\bibitem{75} Mette Kjærgaard Nielsen et al., “Looking Beyond the Mean in Grief Trajectories: A Prospective, Population-Based Cohort Study,” \textit{Social Science and Medicine} 232 (July 2019): 460–69.
\bibitem{76} Mrs. Cadwalader Jones, “Social Observances”; Mrs. Frank Learned, “Social Observances,” \textit{The Delineator}, 1900.
\end{thebibliography}
Post-War Dress
Object 2005.10.08 (The Post-War Dress) is a woman’s dress, made to look like a layered outfit. The sleeves are ¾ length, tailored, two-piece sleeves with snaps at the cuff to allow the hands to fit through. The sleeves are connected to a front and back inside yoke of net to create the appearance of an underdress, though there is none. The “overdress” has a sailor style collar with a neckline that exposes the collarbone, and a belt at the natural waist. The skirt of The Post-War Dress is 32” long from the belt (considered the waist) to the hem, which would make the skirt land somewhere between the ankle and midcalf of the wearer. The apron front of the dress starts at the neckline and extends almost to the hem of the overdress. It conceals a center
front closure that uses hooks and eyes above the waist and snaps below. It is attached to the dress on the proper right side and snaps to the dress on the proper left. The back of the dress continues the illusion of the vest with a long back that matches the length of the apron; it is only attached to the shoulder seams of the bodice front and a small part of the net yoke in the center back. The inside of the bodice is lined and attached to the net yoke, which keeps the sleeves with the rest of the dress and hides any lumps that could be caused by the corset and bust bodice or brassiere worn under the dress. There is an internal waistband which is boned and made of canvas to support the skirt and help the dress lay smoothly. There is a woven label for a Miss J Briggs,
located at 120 East 57th St. in New York City attached to the internal waistband. The dress is made of black wool twill and trimmed on the collar, belt, sleeves, apron front and overdress back with black silk mourning crepe. It has a 34” bust measured at the base of the armseye, a 31” waist measured at the belt, and a 33.5” approximate hip measurement. The Post-War Dress is primarily machine sewn with hand sewing used to attach the crepe, closures to the dress, and linings to the apron in the front and back.

The Post-War Dress was found in the isolation room of the URI HTCC and was accessioned in 2005. The isolation room was previously used to store donated items before they were vacuumed and accessioned into the collection. There is no evidence of mold, fungus, or insect damage on the garment which would necessitate the garment be placed in true isolation from other garments. There are no objects within the C&CA files which match the description of the Post-War Dress, so there is no reason to believe that this garment was accessioned before 2005 and simply lost its original accession number. After searching the HTCC accession records for a description or any other information on the garment, it was found that the Post-War Dress had been skipped over in the current accession documentation as well. Instances of garments slipping through cracks is not unheard of in institutions, especially when the management and care of the collection is the responsibility of a single person only working during the academic year, part-time. Additionally, this garment may have been received by the collection during the summer term when no one was working.
Though there is no provenance for this garment, based on the dress shields or sweat pads still attached to the dress and the alignment of the style with fashion plates of the period, the dress can be dated to before 1921. The sweat pads are dated to expire in January 1921. This is about the same time that deodorant first became popular after a clever advertising campaign in 1919, making sweat pads less necessary.77

Some information about where The Post-War Dress was sold, and the woman who may have made it has been found via census records and the history of New York City. The location where Miss J. Briggs sold her dresses was 120 East 57th Street in New York City. This storefront is in Midtown East, New York City, and is only a few blocks east of 5th Avenue and Park Avenue. The building is less than a mile from the 1914 location of Bergdorf Goodman department store and Central Park.78 Additionally, the current building which stands at that location was erected in 1920, just before the mid-20s construction boom which elevated the neighborhood further.79 Because the building where the Post-War Dress was sold was erected in 1920, the dress was most likely sold inside the previous building, or just after the new building

78 “Fight in Fifth Av. in Tailors’ Strike,” New York Times, February 20, 1915, sec. pg. 8; Google Maps, “120 E 57th St · 120 E 57th St, New York, NY 10022,” 120 E 57th St · 120 E 57th St, New York, NY 10022, accessed April 6, 2023, https://www.google.com/maps/place/120+E+57th+St,+New+York,+NY+10022/@40.7617728,-73.9718229,17z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x89c258e5221a61e1:0xb4f6ab153b3607ca!8m2!3d40.7609846!4d-73.9698595!16s%2Fg%2F11c210xg9.
was finished. As for the woman who owned the store and sold the dress, not much is known. This is due to the limited information on the dress’s label. The only J Briggs who listed seamstress as her occupation was Ms. Enna (or possibly Emma) J. Briggs in a 1910 New York Census. She was a widow with two living children renting a home in the Bronx. After 1910 she disappeared from the record, in part because no other seamstress with a similar name appeared in census data, and the census did not ask about children in later censuses.

The workmanship of The Post-War Dress is of high quality. The construction of the garment is particularly clever. 1910s fashion illustrations show that layering skirts, shirts and outerwear, or the appearance of those layers, was typical of an ensemble. However, translating those outfits into real life could cause a great deal of bulk and bunching on places like the shoulders and waist where separate garments might not fit together perfectly. The solution that Miss Briggs came up with was to use sturdy cotton net to form a yoke attached to the lining of the bodice and partially sewn to the outside of the garment, rather than use a traditional lining which would be fully attached to the outside of the garment. Then, the sleeves are set-in to the armscye made of the lining and yoke rather than the armscye of the bodice, as is usual, which is what creates the illusion of a vest or overdress in this garment. Figure 30 shows how the lining and bodice are separate from one another. The apron

attached to the front of the dress has a belt at the waist which appears to weave through the apron to attach it. This is also a clever illusion. The belt which appears to hold the apron is simply a band of crepe and the apron is held on by snaps at the top proper left of the apron and the proper left on the belt. When the apron is unsnapped, it reveals the bodice lining which closes with hook and eyes which alternate orientation above the waist, and snaps below the waist. Figures 31 and 32 show the apron when snapped and unsnapped. The choice to alternate the orientation of the hook and eyes is

Figure 30: The lining of The Post-War Dress is made partially with a net yoke, and the sleeves are only attached to the lining of the dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI
perhaps to reduce the chance that they come undone over the course of the day. This is unusual, so the purchaser of the dress could have made the request or Miss Briggs could have preferred to have bodices close in this way.

Figure 31: The front of The Post-War Dress’ bodice when secured with snaps. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC.

Figure 32: The front of The Post-War bodice when the apron is not secured by snaps. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC.
The ornamentation of The Post-War Dress is limited to the bands of crepe decorating the ends of the sleeves, apron, collar, and hem of the overdress back. These bands are straight and of the same thickness which results in visual harmony. The only location where the crepe bands are not straight is on the sleeves. They can be seen in figure 33. This arrow pattern

Figure 33: An up-close view of the mourning crepe on the sleeves of The Post-War Dress. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, Mourning dress, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI
adds diversity to the design of the crepe used, adding visual interest. Figures 34 and 35 are mourning dresses from 1918 and are decorated with similar chic minimalism. Mourning dress in the ‘10s as a rule relies on the use of textiles and patterning to elevate the outfit rather than embellishment or ornamentation.\textsuperscript{81}

The Post-War Dress is in excellent condition. However, there are locations that need to be conserved if this dress is to maintain its condition. The three major locations of damage are the center back of the dress, the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure34}
\caption{A mourning dress from 1918 uses tucks to add visual interest to an otherwise simple outfit. Unknown artist, in “Seen in the Shops”, \textit{Vogue}, April 1, 1918, 77, accessed April 10, 2023.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure35}
\caption{This mourning dress from 1918 uses two different fabrics to make the garment more interesting. Adolph de Meyer, in “Fashion: War Mourning in Europe and America”, \textit{Vogue}, June 15, 1918, 32 accessed March 13, 2023.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{81} de Meyer, “Fashion: War Mourning in Europe and America.”
lining of the front apron and back apron, and the front of the apron itself. The
damage on the center back of this dress is a few inches below the collar and
looks to be a cut in the fabric rather than damage from wear. It is less than an
inch in length, is perfectly straight and not frayed (see figure 36). To prevent
this damage from getting worse a conservator should take a swatch of black
chiffon, ideally silk, that is a little larger than the cut and place it between the
net yoke and the black twill. The chiffon should be secured to the fabric with
couching stitches perpendicular to the cut to stabilize it, and then secure the
edges of the chiffon to the dress with a herringbone stitch. Chiffon is
recommended because it will not show through to the outside of the fabric as a
matching wool twill would. The lining of the apron back has bands of silk on
the left and right sides and both strips are breaking down, in combination due to shattering of the silk and abrasion. Figure 37 shows an up-close view of the shattered silk. To address this problem there are two approaches. The conservation focused approach would create an overlay with chiffon to prevent further abrasion and catch and contain the silk as it shatters further. (There is no way to stop silk from shattering once it has started.) The restoration focused approach would be to remove the damaged silk altogether and replace it with new black silk to cover the damage from the garment’s history. The restoration approach has been taken to conserve the strips on the apron front of this garment, to great success. Figure 38 shows an untreated band

Figure 37: A section of the damaged bands on the lining of the apron back. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, *Mourning dress*, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI HTCC.

Figure 38: A comparison of a damaged band and a restored band. Author’s photograph. Miss J. Briggs, *Mourning dress*, 1917, wool and silk, 2005.10.08, URI
and a restored band. Neither approach is correct or incorrect, but the restoration approach is seen as more extreme because it removes the original textile and replaces it with a modern one. On the front side of the apron there are small spots of discoloration on the twill, almost as though it were exposed to a liquid or possibly food that damaged the dye in the fabric causing it to fade. In 2019 at an Institute of Conservation Textile Group (ICON) symposium a novel conservation treatment using artists’ pencils, aka colored pencils, to disguise irremovable stains on textiles was presented. This kind of treatment would work well to disguise the discolored spots because redyeing seems excessive and could cause further damage and is definitively irreversible, while using artists’ pencils would minimize the risk of damage to the textile and potentially be reversible, though it has not been proven to be reversible yet.82

There are an indefinite number of extant mourning dresses from the period spanning world war I and after. This is partially because it is impossible to tell if a black dress was worn for mourning if it does not have mourning crepe or the provenance to prove it was used for mourning because different fabrics with crepe-spun yarns could be used for both mourning and regular dress.83 This means that The Post-War Dress is possibly a rare dress. One can tell that it is a mourning dress rather than an early “little black dress” as

popularized by Chanel in the 1920s because it specifically uses mourning crepe in the trimmings of the dress, rather than another type of fabric.

Garment T.50&A.1960 in figure 39 from the Victoria and Albert Museum shows a black dress with "green-black" accents from 1914. Though it is not declared as mourning and has no crepe, it is still possible that it was worn during mourning. This dress is also evidence that black could be worn as a fashion color rather than being exclusively used for mourning. During WWI many women in the UK made the choice to limit clothing purchases to mourning colors to prevent the risk of colorful new clothes going to waste after

being informed of a relative’s death. This dress by Lady Duff-Gordon is also a good example of what could be considered smartness of dress, which was an integral part of mourning publicly during the war. Dressing smart required one to be dressed neatly and involved little ostentation and preferred the mourner to be neither overdressed nor underdressed for the occasion to prevent drawing attention to oneself.

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These two 1917 mourning dresses from French magazine La Mode Illustrée are by far the most similar dresses to the Post-War Dress. Both figures have a similar design to the Post-War Dress, particularly the look of vests in both pieces, and the back flounce in figure 41. The primary differences between these two and the Post-War dress is the sleeve cuffs and the collars of the dresses. Some buttoned shirts, dresses and coats of the period had collars which could produce very different shapes depending on how far up they were buttoned. Figures 40 and 41 could have very similar collars to the Post-War Dress if they were opened to a similar level. Part of the reason the Post-War Dress is similar to the French models is since the beginning of the couture industry with Charles Worth in 1858 and the solidification of Paris as the fashion capitol, American seamstresses have been inspired by and directly copied French garments to be sold to American buyers.

The Post-War Dress appears to date from between 1917 and 1920 based on the closure technique, the position of the waistline of the dress, and the design of the dress itself. The layers of the dress and the shape of the collar are also indicative of the mid to late teens. Other garments in the HTCC dated between 1910 and 1920 have similar closure techniques, particularly the overlapping of layers secured on the princess seam lines to obscure the hook

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and eye or snap closures in the center front. Figure 39 is from earlier in the 1910s and although the belted waist seems to sit at a similar proportion to the Post-War Dress, the belt in figure 39 is much tighter on the body defining the waist more fully and the skirt is more straight fitting than the subtle A-line of the post war dress. This comparison reduces the likelihood that the Post-War Dress is from the early or mid 1910s.

It is difficult to say if this garment is typical or atypical. The construction and design are typical of the late teens. However, the fact that this dress has crepe and therefore was worn in mourning makes it unusual. Looking for sewing patterns and magazine illustrations is the simplest way to find examples of mourning dress from WWI and after. This is not surprising, given that wearing mourning dress was not encouraged for war related deaths, and the illustrations and patterns generally identify themselves as mourning in their captions.

Before World War I mourning dress was discussed in much the same way that seasonal dress was discussed. The primary difference being that there were rules of etiquette to be followed, though rules continued to relax year after year. The ever-present rule of 1910s mourning was to be smartly and rationally dressed with little ostentation. This is why the Post-War Dress is so minimally decorated. The preference was to use varieties of dull fabrics which could contrast with one another, or to use tucks, pleats and other fabric

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88 *Dress*, 1920 1910, 1920 1910, University of Rhode Island Historic Textiles and Costume Collection; *Dress*, 1918, 1918, University of Rhode Island Historic Textiles and Costume Collection.
manipulations to add texture and visual interest. The only exception to the lack of added embellishment is the use of dull jet or black beads and simple embroidery patterns.\(^90\)

The cultural attitude was already shifting towards the opinion that public mourning was inconsiderate to strangers and was an attention seeking behavior that lacked tact.\(^91\) This is the primary reason that the ideal mourning dress was “smart” and only major accessories like bags, shoes and umbrellas needed to be significantly adjusted regarding color and textures. This is compared to the 1880s and ’90s where mourning was an all-encompassing behavior requiring new stationary, handkerchiefs, and other minor accoutrements.\(^92\)

The Post-War dress is a unique piece of clothing for its time. Because the United States entered WWI later in 1917, the nation was aware before entering that there would be a significant death rate among troops and patriotic individuals felt the need to find a temporary alternative to mourning dress to memorialize the war dead. This was exclusively to maintain national morale and interest in the war effort. Eventually it was decided that a black armband with a gold five-pointed star would be the symbol worn by the mothers and wives of dead soldiers, delivered to them upon their request. This armband would be in lieu of mourning dress, and prevent American streets from being filled with women in black as were the streets of England and

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\(^90\) “Fashion: The Requirements of Correct Mourning.”
\(^92\) Morley, “Mourning Dress and Etiquette.”
France. According to US military records 53,402 Americans died “battle deaths”, and 63,114 Americans died for other reasons. While this is vague, it is presumed that “battle deaths” are deaths related directly to combat, (i.e. dying from combat injuries, dying in battle, dead on arrival to medical facilities) whereas the “other deaths” category could cover things like death due to illness, complications in an illness or injury, or accidents.

Because WWI resulted in many deaths in the mid- to late-teens there is much more research on how people dressed to mourn fallen soldiers than the non-war-dead. However, primary documents focused on fashion, particularly Vogue Magazine, were much more inclined to discuss mourning dress than other sources. Any mention of the word mourning almost completely disappeared from The Delineator after 1917. Vogue Magazine is particularly open about mourning fashion. One article from 1918 discussed the differences in etiquette between England and France. This was published before the end of the war, and the article’s author wonders if American mourning tradition will follow along the English tack where mourning dress was absent or the French approach, where mourning dress was still worn but the use of crepe was limited. After the discussion of the trends the article concludes with the sentiment that “True mourning is of the heart, not the garments.” While this sentiment is noble it did not kill off mourning as a tradition. Vogue continued to

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95 “Fashion: War Mourning in Europe and America,” Vogue, June 15, 1918.
96 “Fashion: War Mourning in Europe and America,” 33.
publish articles mentioning mourning trends for those who wanted to continue dressing to match their loss even after the war ended. However, mourning dress during the war began to be viewed as a selfish choice as it was bringing other people into one’s personal grief and failed to glorify the lives of soldiers lost to the war. England and America both encouraged the glorification of the war-dead.97

Garment Comparison

If one uses the Edwardian Dress and its culture as the starting point for comparing the Edwardian Dress to The Post-War Dress, there is a lot of change between them, but a more exponential change than a gradual change. The Edwardian dress and culture are very similar to that of the Victorians. The high collars and sweeping skirts of both periods could stand as a visual example of two cultures with similar ideals and values. As the decade progressed, the values and the clothing aesthetics shifted from the traditions of the nineteenth century into those of the modern era. Mourning etiquette became much more a matter of sentiment than a cultural dictate which was reflected by the greater variety of fabrics considered acceptable for mourning. Perhaps mourning dress would have continued being common well into the ‘20s, if not for World War I, but the horrendous casualties created the need to limit mourning dress to maintain home front morale.

The dating of mourning dresses is always difficult when provenance is limited. This is because mourning is a conservative period of one’s life. In magazines where mourning dress was discussed, from the turn of the century into the 1910s, it was always made clear that dressing in an ostentatious manner was inappropriate while in mourning. Correlating with that is the fact that older people dress in fashions closer to the ones they are comfortable with and therefore their clothing can be more conservative or can seem older than it is. Additionally, older people are less likely to let go of customs that have been abandoned by the youth of the time. The company which produced
the most well-known brand of mourning crepe, Courtauld, manufactured and sold the fabric until the 1940s.98

Because of the drastic differences in provenance for the Edwardian Dress and the Post-War Dress the initial expectation was that they had different socioeconomic origins. However, upon inspection the Post-War Dress was found to have a similar level of high-quality construction details as the Edwardian Dress.

Garments like the Edwardian Dress and the Post-War Dress likely survived for different reasons. The Edwardian Dress potentially survived because it was a pretty dress that was attractively embellished and belonged to a wealthy and well-known family.

It is possible The Post-War Dress was not frequently reworn. This would account for the lack of sweat damage to the pads attached to the armscye of the dress. The lack of wear could be due either to the shortening of the appropriate mourning period or because mourning was beginning to go out of fashion during the war. This would mean that the Post-War Dress was not commonly worn outside of funerals after the war ended.

Part of the reason why so many examples of Victorian mourning dress exist in collections is because Victorian culture required a long period of mourning reflected by the wearing of mourning dress. A person’s wardrobe would thus contain more mourning clothing than periods before and after.99

98 Taylor, “The Mourning Dress and Textile Industries.” As mourning crepe fell out of favor Courtauld made several attempts to innovate the design of mourning crepe. This included the development of ‘forget-me-not crepe’ invented in the 1930s. All efforts were ultimately in vain.

there is more clothing of a particular type, in this case mourning, it is more likely to be saved. Therefore, collections are likely to have more. Additionally, because mourning dress is expensive and can only be worn during mourning, one might hold onto it for future use. This use could be future mourning occasions, to be remade for a costume party, or for use in theatrical productions.

Though there isn’t much research done on why institutions have such a large representation of Victorian, and by extension Edwardian, garments, part of why these garments are so popular could be because of the wide variety of fashionable silhouettes and aesthetics. Additionally, modern clothing simply isn’t made the same way that the Victorians and Edwardians made them in terms of technical design and construction quality. These objects are saved because they are valuable resources for the study of a wide variety of topics beyond simple aesthetic appreciation. The garments could be used to examine the history of labor and the industrial revolution, or garments can be tied to biographical information or art movements. These garments also have pattern construction, hand sewing, and embellishment techniques which students and artists might not otherwise get to see outside of a historical collection.

Survivorship bias is an important element to examine when looking at garments in a collection. Survivorship bias is the tendency to focus on the successes, the surviving examples, rather than considering what garments
may not have survived. What types, sizes, representative classes, or cultures, are missing? What this means for dress history is that garments in larger sizes, which could be remade or resized, or garments worn until they were unwearable, don’t always survive to become part of a museum collection.

Part of the reason that the Post-War dress and other WWI and post-WWI mourning dresses are uncommon is because obvious mourning dress in the United States was discouraged. An editorial in The Ladies' Home Journal explicitly asked readers not to wear mourning crepe so that textile companies would keep all their manufacturers making uniforms and other war-goods instead of pulling some to make mourning fabrics. Another reason for the scarcity is that the importance of mourning dress declined drastically. Where the Edwardians found mourning dress to be a way to respect the dead, the people of the 1910s viewed mourning dress to be an emotional imposition on the living public. This likely kept many people from wearing mourning dress outside of funerals.

The American mourning experience before and during World War I is unique. Initially this was due to not having a monarchy to develop court mourning practices which served as the foundation for the mourning practices popularized by Queen Victoria. This allowed for mourning practices to vary

103 “Fashion: Mourning as It Is Worn,” 78.
regionally and by magazine readership across the United States. When England and France took part in WWI each nation had a choice to make regarding mourning's impact on war time morale. England decided to reject its tradition of mourning dress in favor of a stiff upper lip and cheery patriotism, while France elected to continue wearing mourning, though the needs of the war, like women working in fulltime factory jobs, meant social seclusion was impossible.\(^\text{104}\) When it was clear the United States would join the war effort the decision needed to be made about whether to follow English or French mourning dress practices.\(^\text{105}\) In the end the US seemed to follow the English lead, though as mentioned in the Post-War Dress analysis women who mourned for lost sons and husbands were entitled to wear gold star armbands. It is interesting to consider that though Victorians popularized and set the international standard for how mourning was conducted, the length of time for each stage, and how clothing could or could not be embellished, it was French fashion that influenced the American sartorial expression of mourning because of its extensive power over the fashion industry.


CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The intention of this study was to examine two examples of mourning dress dated between 1900 and 1920 to see how mourning dress changed visually and materially. By looking at the garment’s provenance, contemporary fashion for each garment in primary sources, and cultural events that influenced the garments, further context could be given as to the ‘whys’ of these changes and whether these two garments were typical or atypical of their time.

Both dresses were worn by women from similar socioeconomic backgrounds based on the quality of construction and hand sewn details. In addition, both garments can be considered typical of mourning fashions for their time. The Edwardian Dress features a high collared pigeon-breast style bodice, and slightly trained skirt which was the preferred silhouette of fashionable women at the time. The dress also is made with crepe and French jet, which are typical materials used at the end of mourning during the Victorian era.

The Post-War Dress is typical of late 1910s design because it uses clever construction techniques to make a single garment seem like a layered ensemble. The inclusion of mourning crepe in the dress’s trim makes it for mourning and therefore, uncommon given that mourning dress was not encouraged during World War I.
Questions Answered

The answer to the question of how mourning dress changed visually is simple. Mourning dress changed visually to align with the trends in non-mourning fashion. Waistlines rose and fell, necklines changed, and skirts slimmed and shortened as per the indication of taste making magazines. Additionally, with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, mourning slowly became less restricted and more permissive allowing an increase in permissible materials, like fur which would have been out of the question during Victoria’s lifetime. Despite there being a relaxation of etiquette allowing for more embellished clothing during mourning, mourning dress was more likely to be minimally, or subtly decorated when compared to earlier examples of mourning dress. This is because as a culture, Americans felt that mourning dress was in poor taste if it was more attention-grabbing than non-mourning dress. As everyday garments became simpler, mourning dress had to become simpler as well. This change in the perception of mourning, and the change in fashion tastes is what caused it to change visually.

One might presume that the reason Americans chose to not return to ‘traditional styles’ of mourning dress after World War I was a disdain for the antiquated values of the Victorians, represented by the style of mourning present in the Edwardian Dress. This is only partially correct. Another reason the United States abandoned pre-war mourning practices is due more to distain for the Old World’s (Europe’s) mourning practices which were now

thought of as backwards.\textsuperscript{107} Obviously, this was not a unanimous change in opinion across the entire United States, but after the war a radical decrease in mentions of mourning dress and etiquette occurred where they once were plentiful. With this correlation, one could infer that mourning dress practices were no longer of interest to these magazines’ readers.

The overall change in material for mourning is a change towards greater variety. At the turn of the century, the use of fur of any kind during mourning would have been unthinkable, but in the mid to late teens furs like fox and fisher were acceptable to even the more conservative in society.\textsuperscript{108} English style mourning crepe was also now out of favor, with a preference for softer crepe fabrics instead. Part of this may be due to the rejection of European habits and traditions, and nothing was more traditional than European mourning crepe. Additionally, other styles of crepe were less finished and less stiff.\textsuperscript{109} White collars and cuffs were also the norm outside of deep mourning in the teens, which is another sartorial choice that would be out of the question to mourners in previous decades. Different styles of net and sheer materials like point d’esprit also made their way into further prominence as time progressed, due in part to the changes in fashions. Sheer fabrics were held in much higher esteem than in the previous decade.

There is a distinct change in the fashion tastes between the Edwardian Dress and the Post-War Dress. Though over the top ornamentation was

\textsuperscript{107} Kuhlman, “The War Widows’ Romance: Victory and Loss in the United States.”
\textsuperscript{108} “Fashion: The Requirements of Correct Mourning.”
\textsuperscript{109} Taylor, “The Mourning Dress and Textile Industries.”
discouraged for mourning in both periods, what that meant to each group was
different. For example, the quantity of ruffles acceptable to an early ’00s
person would be excessive and unseemly in the post-war period because
fewer ruffles were seen on normal (non-mourning) outfits. This change in
tastes can be seen when comparing figures 10 and 41. The primary aspects of
mourning which remained constant between the Edwardian and Post-War
Dresses are that the mourners who wore these garments were conservatively
dressed in black which is essentially identical to everyday wear, lusterless
fabrics were the norm, and their ornamentation were limited. These core
principles can also be seen in modern funeral attire.

Limitations
The primary limitation to this research is the sheer level of conflicting
information across sources. Some primary documents, like McCall’s
Magazine, do not mention mourning dress even by their French correspondent
talking about Parisian war-time fashion. If a historian used McCall’s as their
primary source looking into mourning after WWI, they could easily assume that
mourning dress was unimportant regardless of the war. This causes conflicting
information in secondary sources of research. The research article “A Matter
of Individual Opinion and Feeling”, by Lucie Whitmore, shows an extant
example of WWI mourning dress which she declares to be the only known
surviving mourning dress from the war, which this study shows isn’t the
case.\textsuperscript{110} Additionally, two papers which focus on the influence mourning dress

\textsuperscript{110} Whitmore, “‘A Matter of Individual Opinion and Feeling’: The Changing Culture of Mourning
Dress in the First World War.”
had on fashion and a book on WWI widows imply that mourning dress stopped being worn in the US during the war and did not continue yet articles in *Vogue* from 1919 and 1920 discuss mourning dress being worn at public events.\(^{111}\)

The other limitation of this research is that socioeconomic and cultural differences between these two garments were not pursued. This is in part because the Edwardian Dress and Post-War Dress both seem to have been worn by people of similar class and cultural background. With a wider sample of mourning dress more cultural and socioeconomic differences would likely appear.

Future research

There is much room within this period (1900-1920) for further research into mourning dress. It would be interesting to see the cultural impact of the drastic reduction of formalized mourning and mourning dress during World War I. It would also be interesting to see if after the war was over how many people, if any, returned to wearing mourning dress in public after stopping for the war effort; and how many people stopped wearing mourning dress during the war who wore it before the war began. Additionally, there does not seem to be any research comparing mourning customs applied to soldiers and military personnel who died at war versus the customs applied to those who died outside of the war. Finally, it would be interesting to compare mourning

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customs practiced during WWI and WWII to see what customs were retained or changed and if any new customs developed.
The Edwardian Dress

### Essential Question: General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Type of Garment is it? Is the Garment intended for: Male, Female, Unisex</td>
<td>Woman’s Bodice and skirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the main fabrics that have been used to make the garment? Are these fabrics predominantly natural in composition, synthetics or a blend?</td>
<td>Black cotton shirting, black silk/wool sheer crepe, black silk taffeta, black cotton moiré ribbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the dominant colors and/or patterns of the garment?</td>
<td>Dominant color: black No fabric patterns, beaded bib is a spoked wheel pattern, collar has an organic 6-pointed floral/star pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the garment have any labels?</td>
<td>No labels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What decade or general period does the garment belong to?</td>
<td>Early 1900s, minimal bustle, no shoulder poof, slight pigeon breast (very subtle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can the garment be handled safely without causing further damage?</td>
<td>Needs gentle handling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the most unusual or unique aspects of the garment?</td>
<td>Unique crepe texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the collection have any other garments like it either by the same designer or from the same period?</td>
<td>Other mourning dresses/dresses with crepe from other periods, other dresses without crepe from same period, no known designer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Essential Question: Construction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the main components of the garment, such as the bodice, collar, sleeves, skirt.</td>
<td>Bodice: high beaded collar (closed in back) with beaded bib attached at shoulder seams, full length bishop-ish sleeve with bead trim on cuffs, multilayer center front closure, princess style lines on front and back, waist finished with black ribbon and metal snap to close Skirt: full length skirt with volume and slight train in back, complete crepe overlay, center back closure with hooks at waist and snap partway down seam, decent sized hidden pocket in seam near back, two rows of satin ribbon ruffles and horsehair braid at hem, interfacing inside lining at hem 9” deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note the measurements of the garment</td>
<td>Neck circumference: 15.5” Bust: 34” Waist: 28” Hips: ~30” Waist to hem: 43” Sleeve length: 25.5” Cuff circumference: 9”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the structure of the garment emphasize one part of the body?</td>
<td>The protrusion of the bust and rear are highlighted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the garment machine-stitched, handmade or a combination of these methods?</td>
<td>Combination of methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the garment closed or fastened?</td>
<td>Closures are primarily hook and eye, with supplemental snaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any front, side or hidden pockets?</td>
<td>1 pocket hidden in skirt side-back seam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any remarkable features in the construction, such as bias cut, or use of nontraditional materials or structural elements?</td>
<td>Beaded bib not seen in other garments, additionally unsure of role for moiré ribbon as it is longer than a normal waist tape and the ends are damaged so there is no trace evidence about purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Is the fabric selvedge visible in the seams, and has this been incorporated into the cutting or construction of the garment? | Bodice: on cotton shirting at center front, on crepe also at center front  
Skirt: no |
<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the type of construction consistent with the dating of the garment?</td>
<td>Techniques are consistent with the dating of the garment; silhouette may be older due to the nature of mourning dress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Is the garment reinforced in any way, such as padding, boning, metal hoops, or wire reinforcements? | Bodice: Padding to smooth the bust in the underarm hollow above bust, baleen boning in front and side seams, metal bone to smooth transition from bodice to skirt  
Skirt: no |
| Is the garment lined? | Skirt lined, bodice unlined/uses underlining |

**Essential Question: Textiles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the dominant textile or material that has been used? Is it a natural or man-made fiber?</td>
<td>Dominant fiber is silk, then wool, then cotton. Dominant material is silk/wool crepe overlay, then silk taffeta lining, then cotton shirting material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the dominant textile been subjected to a finishing process, such as bleaching, pressing, or glazing?</td>
<td>Unsure? Will need to research more about crepe manufacture. Based on microscope slides fibers do not look like they have been finished like mourning crepe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have any other textiles been used in the garment or in the lining?</td>
<td>Cotton shirting material is underlining for bodice, silk taffeta skirt lining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the garment incorporate a stripe or pattern? Is it woven into the fabric or printed or formed by a different method such as stenciling, painting or manipulation of fabric?</td>
<td>No pattern in the fabric, but the fabric yarns have been twisted in such a way that the crepe ridges are roughly parallel, unsure how this was produced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is there any form of applied decoration such as applique, trim, lace, beading, embroidery, buttons, ruffles, pleated bands, or bows? Are there signs that any such decoration has been removed?

Collar and bib are both beaded, sleeve cuffs have a back-and-forth S shaped trim, there are ruffles on the hem of the skirt.

Has the fabric been reinforced in any way with padding, quilting, interfacing, wires, or boning?

Bodice: boning in side and back seams and at center front to support hook and eyes
Skirt: interfacing at hem to add body to skirt, horsehair braid to protect hem

Has the textile faded or otherwise changed in color with the passage of time?

Horsehair braid possibly went from black to green over time, threads holding beading have turned brown

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**Essential Question: Labels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a maker label? If so, is the label consistent with the designer’s oeuvre and does it offer clues as to dating such as the number or season?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a store label to identify where the garment was purchased? Does this reveal anything about the garment’s history?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any care labels or information about the garment?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any size labels in the garment?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a marking inside the garment that indicates the specific owner of the garment such as an embroidered initial, nametag, or laundry mark?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Essential Question: Use Alteration and Wear**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has the garment been structurally altered in any way?</td>
<td>No noticeable alterations, there is a 2” tuck at center back which could be an alteration to shrink the bodice or could be for future garment ease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where does the garment show wear?</td>
<td>Bodice: bib coming away somewhat at shoulder seam, beading coming loose from deteriorated thread, one side of snap at waist missing, abrasions in boning casing show exposed baleen, damage to the ends of moiré ribbon at waist Skirt: Inside of the skirt at the seams and within the interfaced portion are abraded in spots to show interfacing, hooks and eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the garment soiled or damaged in any way? Have seams ripped, silk split, or fabric decomposed? Is there evidence of insect damage?</td>
<td>See above, No evidence of insect damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the garment been dyed to alter its original color? Have trim or other forms of embellishment been unpicked or removed?</td>
<td>Not dyed, no visible evidence or removed embellishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the styling of the garment conform to the predominant fashions of the period, or does it represent a hybrid, perhaps custom-made for the owner?</td>
<td>This is likely custom made based on ownership. Based on the role of the garment it could be “younger” than it actually is or could be a more conservative design due to older owner/wearer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Essential Question: Supporting Material**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the collection have any provenance records associated with the garment?</td>
<td>Yes, in the filing cabinet in the collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are there any photographs of the garment? | Yes, my photos, on and off mannequin, and micrographs of samples from garment
---|---
Are there any further documents or information about the garment that might indicate the original price of the garment? | Maybe in the Matteson papers? Was unable to find any evidence in the Matteson papers.
Are there any manufacturer, store tags or original packaging associated with the garment? | no
Are there any similar garments by the same designer, or by other designers from the same period in this collection? | Possibly not made by the same person, but likely other garments owned by the same person, other garments from the same period are in the collection

**Essential Question: Sensory Reactions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight: does the garment have stylistic, religious, artistic, or iconic references?</td>
<td>I don’t think so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the garment stylistically consistent with the period from which it came? Does it seem to reflect the influences of that period or diverge from it?</td>
<td>It is potentially a conservative version of the fashion of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch: what is the texture and weight of the cloth or other materials used to construct the garment?</td>
<td>Heavy in terms of total weight, likely for fall or winter, crepe a little scratchy (because wool and high twist?) smooth lining, heavy beading (because it’s glass)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound: would a person wearing this garment make noise?</td>
<td>Lots of rustling, from scroop of skirt and crepe on crepe friction, potentially some sounds from beading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smell: Does the garment smell?</td>
<td>Classic old clothes/old person smell, not quite like mothballs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Essential Question: Personal Reactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What was the impetus to examine this garment? Were you interested in the</td>
<td>Really liked the beading and the shape of the garment, very elegant and related to mourning. Added bonus: famous RI family with access to personal papers nearby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person who wore it, the maker, or some other aspect of its object biography?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you the same gender and size as the person who wore or owned the</td>
<td>Different gender and slightly smaller than original wearer of this garment, the garment would not fit me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garment? Did a person who was bigger or smaller than you wear it? Would</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the garment fit your body?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would it feel on your body? Would it be tight or loose? Would the</td>
<td>This garment would be firmly fitting, with the looseness as aesthetic form, waist would be firm fitting with lots of movement for legs. The garment might be a reminder of emotional pain, or could be a source of emotional pain or discomfort, but not physical pain or discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garment cause discomfort or pain?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you wear this garment if you could? Is the style and color</td>
<td>Style and color very appealing, may make a reproduction in my size someday so I would be able to wear it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appealing to you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the garment or accessory demonstrate a complexity of construction or</td>
<td>Complexity of construction yes, fulfills a social function role but not a utility function role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>element of mastery in the design? Does the dress artifact have a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional component to the design?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the maker want to invoke emotion, status, sexuality, or gender roles</td>
<td>The goal of this garment was to be a symbol of sorrow, with references to gender roles and sexuality read in by a modern viewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with this garment? Does the garment seem to express humor, joy, sorrow,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or fear?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you have an emotional reaction to the garment? Can you identify a personal bias that should be acknowledged in your research?

I really like this garment and want to use it in my thesis, only applicable bias would be because of embellishments this object may not have been worn for mourning and I study it anyway. But at the moment there’s no way to confirm that, all other researcher’s conclusions have been that this is for mourning because of the crepe.

**Essential Question: Contextual information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you were permitted access to the provenance record for the artifact, what does this information reveal about the owner, and their relationship to the garment?</td>
<td>Working on that right now, need to find accession info and look further into Matteson papers. No references to the garment in diaries, but dress was given to collection when Elizabeth was organizing Alys’ estate post-mortem. Theoretically was Alys’ dress so that’s a connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the museum, study or private collection have other garments that are similar, or by the same designer/maker?</td>
<td>Because there are no labels it is unknown if there are other garments by the same maker in the collection, there are other garments owned by the same family/person though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do other museums have similar objects? Can you identify similar objects online in collections of dress?</td>
<td>MET and Boston have similar objects in the collection, most mourning dresses not as heavily embellished as this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have other scholars written about this type of garment or the designer’s work in books or peer-reviewed journals?</td>
<td>Mourning dress has been written about a decent amount from various perspectives peer reviewed and non-peer publications (books and journals)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are there similar garments or related ephemera (advertisements, fashion photographs, packaging, and other print material) available for sale on Etsy, eBay, online vintage retailers, or on auction sites?

| Lots of Victorian mourning stuff on Etsy, less Edwardian but that’s because it’s a slightly less popular topic and not as well-known as Edwardian (sometimes Edwardian things are marketed as Victorian to sell better) |

Are there photographs, paintings, or illustrations of this garment, or of similar garments in books, magazines, museum collections, or online?

| Lots of material in magazines like *The Delineator*, other mourning dresses photographed and put online by museums or small collections |

Has this garment or others like it, been referenced in documents, such as letters, or receipts, or magazines, novels, and other forms of written material?

| Mourning dress has been referenced a bunch in a wide variety of sources because it was such a publicly “private experience”, so far, no reference to this exact garment |

If the maker of this garment is a known designer, what information is available about them? How does this garment fit into their oeuvre? Have there been exhibitions of the designer’s work? Has the designer written an autobiography or been profiled in magazines or journals?

| No known designer |

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The Post-War Dress

**Essential Question: General**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Type of Garment is it? Is the Garment intended for: Male, Female, Unisex</td>
<td>Woman’s dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the main fabrics that have been used to make the garment? Are these fabrics predominantly natural in composition, synthetics or a blend?</td>
<td>Body: black wool Twill Collar and trim: black silk or wool crepe Lining: black silk satin Underside of tabard trim: Silk satin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the dominant colors and/or patterns of the garment?</td>
<td>Solid black material, black crepe accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the garment have any labels?</td>
<td>1 label for Miss J/I Briggs 120 East 57th St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What decade or general period does the garment belong to?</td>
<td>1910s more likely 1920s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can the garment be handled safely without causing further damage?</td>
<td>Yes, it is stable enough to tolerate hanging storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the most unusual or unique aspects of the garment?</td>
<td>False bib front woven into waistband, secured with snaps at neckline and waist, appearance of “vest” overdress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the collection have any other garments like it either by the same designer or from the same period?</td>
<td>Many garments from the same period, no known examples of this designer anywhere else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Essential Question: Construction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the main components of the garment, such as the bodice, collar, sleeves, skirt.</td>
<td>Sailor style collar, faux sleeveless overdress, bib front, skirt slightly flared, full or ¾ length sleeve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Note the measurements of the garment | Bust 34” (bottom of armscye)  
Waist 31”  
Hips 33.5”  
Shoulder to hem 47”  
Waist to hem 32”  
Sleeve length 19.5” |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the structure of the garment emphasize one part of the body?</th>
<th>The framing of the neckline could emphasize the collarbone. Waistband might emphasize waist, but unlikely.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the garment machine-stitched, handmade or a combination of these methods?</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the garment closed or fastened?</td>
<td>Center front closure hook and eyes, flap across the center front secured with snaps. Cuffs closed with snaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any front, side or hidden pockets?</td>
<td>No pockets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any remarkable features in the construction, such as bias cut, or use of nontraditional materials or structural elements?</td>
<td>Netting in the yoke of the lining of the dress bodice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the fabric selvedge visible in the seams, and has this been incorporated into the cutting or construction of the garment?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the type of construction consistent with the dating of the garment?</td>
<td>Very much consistent with the late teens early 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the garment reinforced in any way, such as padding, boning, metal hoops, or wire reinforcements?</td>
<td>Waistband is possibly boned, most likely reinforced with canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the garment lined?</td>
<td>Yes, bodice only lined. To maintain the lay of the garment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Essential Question: Textiles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the dominant textile or material that has been used? Is it a natural or man-made fiber?</td>
<td>Dominant textile is the twill, made of wool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the dominant textile been subjected to a finishing process, such as bleaching, pressing, or glazing?</td>
<td>More research needs to be done into the results of crepe manufacture; crepe is the only that may have experienced any finishing treatments. Mourning crepe was elaborately finished. See Taylor 217-219.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have any other textiles been used in the garment or in the lining?</td>
<td>Yes, crepe trim, lining satin, net, strips of material to cover edges of tabard panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the garment incorporate a stripe or pattern? Is it woven into the fabric or printed or formed by a different method such as stenciling, painting or manipulation of fabric?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there any form of applied decoration such as applique, trim, lace, beading, embroidery, buttons, ruffles, pleated bands, or bows? Are there signs that any such decoration has been removed?</td>
<td>Crepe has been applied on the bottom of the sleeves, on the top and bottom of the tabard, used on the collar and the waistband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the fabric been reinforced in any way with padding, quilting, interfacing, wires, or boning?</td>
<td>The waistband is reinforced with canvas and boning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the textile faded or otherwise changed in color with the passage of time?</td>
<td>Thread, tabard underside strips, and lining fabrics are a little brown rather than black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Essential Question: Labels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a maker label? If so, is the label consistent with the designer’s oeuvre and does it offer clues as to dating such as the number or season?</td>
<td>“Miss J Briggs 120 East 57th St. New York” building built in 1920. Not sure if this is a dressmaker or store label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a store label to identify where the garment was purchased? Does this reveal anything about the garment’s history?</td>
<td>See above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any care labels or information about the garment?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any size labels in the garment?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a marking inside the garment that indicates the specific owner of the garment such as an embroidered initial, nametag, or laundry mark?</td>
<td>No, but sweat pads are dated to expire in 1921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Essential Question: Use Alteration and Wear**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has the garment been structurally altered in any way?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where does the garment show wear?</td>
<td>Black satin binding inside tabard pieces coming away from seams, probably due to age and abrasion. Possibly had hem quickly fixed at some point? Front panel of tabard satin strips possibly replaced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the garment soiled or damaged in any way?</td>
<td>There is a slice in the center back, does not look like a normal split, no evidence of insect damage, some spots on the “tabard” front that seem to be “bleached”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the garment been dyed to alter its original color?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the styling of the garment conform to the predominant fashions of the period, or does it represent a hybrid, perhaps custom-made for the owner?</td>
<td>Could be typical, could be hybrid due to change of shapes between decades?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

89
### Essential Question: Supporting Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the collection have any provenance records associated with the garment?</td>
<td>Garment was found in the isolation room and then accessioned; no other data exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any photographs of the garment?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any further documents or information about the garment that might indicate the original price of the garment?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any manufacturer, store tags or original packaging associated with the garment?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any similar garments by the same designer, or by other designers from the same period in this collection?</td>
<td>Not that anyone is aware</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Essential Question: Sensory Reactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight: does the garment have stylistic, religious, artistic, or iconic references?</td>
<td>Very simple and minimalistic, trim organization could be considered art deco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the garment stylistically consistent with the period from which it came? Does it seem to reflect the influences of that period or diverge from it?</td>
<td>Stylistically the same as the period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch: what is the texture and weight of the cloth or other materials used to construct the garment?</td>
<td>Lightweight garment possibly for warm weather use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound: would a person wearing this garment make noise?</td>
<td>Not a noisy garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smell: Does the garment smell?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Essential Question: Personal Reactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What was the impetus to examine this garment? Were you interested in the person who wore it, the maker, or some other aspect of its object biography?</td>
<td>It’s part of the decade that I need for my thesis, and it’s very pretty and for mourning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you the same gender and size as the person who wore or owned the garment?</td>
<td>I am about the same size as the original wearer of the garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did a person who was bigger or smaller than you wear it? Would the garment fit your body?</td>
<td>The wearer was larger than I am, particularly in the bust, perhaps they were on the stouter side as the sleeves are about the right length for my arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would it feel on your body? Would it be tight or loose? Would the garment cause discomfort or pain?</td>
<td>Moderately loose, not a garment intended to cause pain or discomfort, though it may cause those feelings emotionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you wear this garment if you could? Is the style and color appealing to you?</td>
<td>This does seem like the kind of garment that I would wear. High neckline, black, long and not too tightly fitting are all details I prefer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the garment or accessory demonstrate a complexity of construction or element of mastery in the design?</td>
<td>The waistband illusion is quite clever, and the tabard panel is a good way to hide the center front closure, the sleeves being attached to the lining rather than the outer shell/vest allows for follow through in the tabard illusion, using the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the dress artifact have a functional component to the design?</td>
<td>net is a good way to attach the sleeves without adding bulk or “insulation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the maker want to invoke emotion, status, sexuality, or gender roles with this garment? Does the garment seem to express humor, joy, sorrow, or fear?</td>
<td>Assuming this is a mourning dress, the black and crepe indicate the wearer is mourning. If this is the case the garment is intended to portray loss and sorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have an emotional reaction to the garment? Can you identify a personal bias that should be acknowledged in your research?</td>
<td>No strong emotional reactions, but any bias would come from wanting to editorialize and construct an imaginary narrative for the garment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Essential Question: Contextual information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you were permitted access to the provenance record for the artifact, what does this information reveal about the owner, and their relationship to the garment?</td>
<td>No provenance exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the museum, study or private collection have other garments that are similar, or by the same designer/maker?</td>
<td>Other examples of tabard dresses, no known examples of similar design or maker, other examples of late teens early 20s fashion in the collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do other museums have similar objects? Can you identify similar objects online in collections of dress?</td>
<td>Only a few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have other scholars written about this type of garment or the designer’s work in books or peer-reviewed journals?</td>
<td>Not on mourning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

92
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there similar garments or related ephemera (advertisements, fashion photographs, packaging, and other print material) available for sale on Etsy, eBay, online vintage retailers, or on auction sites?</td>
<td>Yes, but none in as good condition as the postwar dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there photographs, paintings, or illustrations of this garment, or of similar garments in books, magazines, museum collections, or online?</td>
<td>Illustrations from <em>vogue</em> and other fashion magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has this garment or others like it, been referenced in documents, such as letters, or receipts, or magazines, novels, and other forms of written material?</td>
<td>Mourning in the 1920s less fashionable, but still referenced in magazines and done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the maker of this garment is a known designer, what information is available about them? How does this garment fit into their oeuvre? Have there been exhibitions of the designer’s work? Has the designer written an autobiography or been profiled in magazines or journals?</td>
<td>Haven’t found anything on the designer yet. She only exists in 1 census record. Widow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Dress. 1918. University of Rhode Island Historic Textiles and Costume Collection.


Google Maps. “120 E 57th St · 120 E 57th St, New York, NY 10022.” 120 E 57th St · 120 E 57th St, New York, NY 10022. Accessed April 6, 2023. https://www.google.com/maps/place/120+E+57th+St,+New+York,+NY+10022/@40.7617728,-73.9718229,17z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x89c258e5221a61e1:0xb4f6ab153b3607ca!8m2!3d40.7609846!4d-73.9698595!16s%2Fg%2F11c210xg9r.


Mrs. Frank Learned. “Social Observances.” *The Delineator*, 1900.


unknown. Vestee, C.I.40.141.7. ca 1907. Silk. MET.

unkown. Vestee, 2009.300.5360. ca 1905. Linen. MET.


———. “Midsummer Brings New Frocks to Paris.” Vogue, August 1919.