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**Cut Construction and Conservation: Ethical Issues with the
Highly Interventive Treatment of Costume**

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Abstract

International conservation standards promote the invisibility of the conservator's work in the biography of objects but the active treatment of objects often makes this impossible. Items of costume held in museums are particularly prone to these ethical dilemmas and demonstrate how current conservation techniques require that the conservator's work become an active part of each object's history. The conservation of costume can be challenging due to particular features of costume common to most collections. Fashion's aesthetic role means that the visual nature of costume is especially important. As well the historic methods of consumption that result in alterations to a piece of costume over, what could be, a very long period of time presents a particular ethical dilemma about what period of an object's history should be prioritised during treatment. Context is especially important for making these decisions in an ethical manner. The conservator must engage with other museum professionals to determine how the objects are consumed by museum visitors and what role the object plays in the exhibit and the collection before a potentially reconstructive treatment is judged appropriate. Conservators and museum professionals must also accept that reconstructive treatments change the innate nature of the object and that it will be affected by its time as a part of a museum collection.

Keywords: costume, conservation, reconstruction, museum, dress, sleeve

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Contents

Abstract.....	i
Keywords.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Figures.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Physicality of Costume.....	2
1.3 Mounting, Mannequins and “People”	2
1.4 The Aesthetic Role of Costume	3
1.5 The Historical Role of Alterations	4
1.6 The language of Reconstructive Treatments	5
1.7 Defining “the Museum Context”	6
1.8 Summary	7
Chapter 2: Glasgow Museums	
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Summary of Glasgow Museums	9
2.3 Theories and Guidelines	10
2.4 Past and Present Strategies for Interpretation	11
2.5 The System of Rotating Exhibits	12
2.6 Visitor Consumption of Exhibits	13
2.7 Other Museum Professionals	14
2.8 Summary	15
Chapter 3: Literature Review	
3.1 Introduction	16
3.2 Theory based Sources	16
3.3 Examples of Previous Treatments	18
3.4 Treatment Justifications	23
3.5 Current Ethical Codes	25
3.6 Summary	27
Chapter 4: First Object Case study	
4.1 Introduction	28
4.2 The object	28
4.3 Condition Report	29
4.3.1 Structural Issues	29
4.3.2 Fading	30
4.3.3 Sleeves	31
4.4 Treatment Proposal	31
4.4.1 Structural Issues	31
4.4.2 Fading	32
4.4.3 Sleeves	32
4.6 Summary	34
Chapter 5: Second Object Case study	
5.1 Introduction	35

5.2 The object	35
5.3 Curatorial notes and existing documentation	36
5.4 Condition Report	36
5.4.1 Staining and Soiling	36
5.4.2 Structural Issues: Bodice	38
5.4.3 Structural Issues: Skirt	39
5.5 Treatment Proposal	41
5.5.1 Staining and Soiling	41
5.5.2 Structural Issues: Bodice	43
5.5.3 Structural Issues: Skirt	46
5.6 Role of Interpretation for this Object	46
5.6.1 Bodice reconstruction	46
5.6.2 Mounting	48
5.7 Summary	51

Chapter 6: Conclusion 53

Appendix A: E.1977.96.14 Condition Report	56
Appendix B: E.1977.96.14 Conservation Record Card	58
Appendix C: E.1977.96.14 Conservation Report	60
Appendix D: E.1977.96.14 Object Catalogue Entry	70
Appendix E: E.1977.96.14 Object Record	71
Appendix F: E.1932.51.k Object Catalogue Entry	75
Appendix G: E.1932.51.k Condition Report	76
Appendix H: E.1932.51.k Object Record	77
Bibliography	79
Further Reading	82

List of Figures

Figures 1 and 2: Front (left) and back (right) of object 1932.15.k. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

Figure 3: Damage at the proper right armseye. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

Figure 4: stitch holes from stitching that was used to control and distribute the bodice fullness. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author

Figure 5: Left, and example of sleeve scale and shape that may have been in evidence as part of E.1932.15.k. Right, a sketch demonstrating the cartridge pleating method.

Figure 6: soiling and damage to the back hem of the skirt. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

Figure 7: soiling and damage to the proper right shoulder. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

Figure 8: staining surrounding a floral motif on the back of the proper right shoulder. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

Figure 9: The centre back seam of the bodice. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

Figure 10: damage and splitting of the centre front skirt panel just below the waistband. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

Figure 11: Data from solubility tests made undertaken on the object in 1987. See Appendix B for a copy of the original Conservation Record Card.

Figure 12: Diagram of lapped seam techniques. The centre back seam of the object was sewn similarly to the upper diagram. Image from Baumgarten, Linda, *Costume Close-Up: Clothing Construction and Pattern 1750-1790*. Hollywood: Costume and Fashion Press, 1999, 39.

Figure 14: This image shows the stitch marks on the bodice hem. They appear to be the result of prick stitches penetrating from the outside hem through all layers to the inside. See diagram below for a potential waist construction using this technique. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

Figure 13: Image of the method for fastening an apron-front dress. Image from Bradford, Nancy. *Costume in Detail: 1730-1930*. Hollywood: Costume and Fashion Press, 1968.

Figure 15: This diagram represents a potential waist construction method. The red lines are stitches constructing the skirt and bodice separately while the green line represents the prick stitching attaching the two elements together.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

It can be argued that clothing of the past offers the closest link to historic individuals. One cannot get any physically closer to a person, save for their physical remains, than through the clothing that they wore. As well, costume offers a universally understood experience – that of wearing clothes. The topic of costume, therefore, is of interest not only to the visitors to museums through the appeal that items of dress offer, but it is also of interest to museums since costume has a special interest that allows for easy engagement between object and viewer. Costume remains a popular topic for display on the part of both the museum visitor and the museum itself. However, costume as material culture offers some challenges to the conservator: notably, the generally delicate nature of textile-based objects and the propensity for alterations to have been made to costume, often during a time when the materials were more expensive than the labour to create the object. In addition to preparing pieces of costume for the rigours of display, the conservator must contend with a certain expectation that pieces of costume have a whole, and aesthetically pleasing appearance. This is tied not only to the necessity for ensuring that visitors can “read” pieces of costume that may appear foreign to them, but also to the historical importance of aesthetics that has been, and is, one of the main driving factors in the creation and consumption of costume. The importance of visual appeal runs contrary to the spirit of current ethics in conservation that define an ethical treatment as involving minimal intervention and deliberately not valuing aesthetics over the physical need of preservation. This contradiction has resulted in a variation in opinion over what constitutes an appropriate treatment both in current practices and, of course, over time during the development of the conservation profession. In to explore this topic, published literature will be reviewed to determine current practices and ethical codes. As well, two examples of costume in the Glasgow Museums will show the types of challenges that a conservator would be faced with when treating costume. The role of the objects in Glasgow Museums will be explored as well as how this role can affect the treatment of costume. This paper is intended to examine and engage with the balance of ethical considerations for the integrity of the object, preservation, and presentation

of objects that a conservator is faced with when treating costume in the context of the museum.

1.2 The Physicality of Costume

There are generally two aspects of the treatment of costume. The first is focussed on the physical aspect of this category of object. Costume remains an object, a “thing”, to whose physical preservation needs the conservator responds. This is familiar ground for the conservator as this is something that all textile objects have in common. At this basic level there are already ethical considerations that are not particular to the treatment of costume. Cleaning potentially evidential stains, for example, or the selection of support fabrics can open up the conservator to some ethical dilemmas. These are relatively common in general practice however, and not specific to the treatment of costume. In addition costume adds a layer of complexity to this process as costume objects are often multi-layered as well as three-dimensional. It can be broadly stated that Western women’s costume up until the mid-twentieth century relied heavily upon structural foundation garments that gave costume its three-dimensional shape. Costume from this period needs careful physical support of the correct strength but also the correct shape, based upon historical silhouettes and the information from the object itself. Although understanding the physical needs of an object is not unfamiliar to textile conservators, the three-dimensional nature of costume makes display on a mannequin one of the best methods for presenting the object as it was originally manifested in society while at the same time can generally place this category of object under a significant amount of stress either from the effects of gravity while on display or the intense amount of handling necessary during the mounting process. The nature of costume as a multi-layer, three-dimensional object adds particular challenges in a run-of-the-mill, support and display treatment for a museum.

1.3 Mounting, Mannequins and “People”

Mounting and display is an integral part of this process and usually is more complex than supporting the physical needs of the object. In the case of historic women’s dress, the form that the mount takes is directly related to the silhouette of the costume.

Additionally, in the museum environment there are other factors such as the message of the exhibit and necessary collaboration with curators and exhibit designers. Mannequins and the presentation aspect of mounts are vehicles for messages both intended and unintended. The aesthetics of the mannequins is also important and recent experimentation with the colour of mannequins has produced mixed results. There is justified concern about how representative mannequins may or may not be and this is especially important when viewing mannequins as “something approximating people”¹. This relates to costume’s special role as a link to individuals of the past.

1.4 The Aesthetic Role of Costume

The second aspect of treatment engages with the aesthetic aspect of the nature of costume. Fashion history studies have until recently relied upon purely the visual qualities of costume. Sophie Woodward critiques this reliance by saying

The post-Barthesian emphasis on semiotic decoding has dominated accounts of Western fashion and clothing. . . wherein understandings of clothing centre upon fashion’s communicative capacities. However, often the clothing—ostensibly the subject matter of such accounts—remains a ghostly presence. . .²

While Woodward’s turn towards the materiality of costume is interesting from the point of view of the conservator already focussed on this aspect of the object, her critique emphasizes how important the visual aspects of costume are. Not only are the aesthetics of dress generally an important consideration, it is of particular importance when displaying costume to members of the public who might have little knowledge of costume history. In order to display costume in a manner that the casual visitor can glean some understanding with a glance, the museum has to minimize the amount of explanation necessary to understand the basic form and function of the garment. Naomi Tarrant notes that visitors to the costume displays of National Museum’s Scotland ‘on the whole visitors like to see a basically chronological display of clothes.’³ She speculates that this allows visitors who wished, could see an example of dress from a particular period of interest, especially as most members of the public are

¹ Valerie Cumming, ‘Understanding Fashion History’, (London: Batsford, 2004), 68.

² Sophie Woodward, ‘Looking Good: Feeling Right - Aesthetics of the Self,’ in *Clothing as Material Culture*, ed. Susanne Kuchler and Daniel Miller (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 21-39.

³ Naomi Tarrant, ‘The Development of Costume’, (London: Routledge, 1996), 152.

either unaware or without sufficient interest in accessing objects not on display.⁴ With this understanding of the interaction between the museum visitor and the object, the conservator's treatment may be influenced by the nature of this interaction. This could result in the treatment involving tasks that result in promoting the characteristics of the individual object that helps it to fit into a chronology of costume rather than highlighting those aspects that make the object unique or promote its object biography.

1.5 The Historical Role of Alterations

An important aspect of nature of costume, especially historic costume, is the role of alterations in the consumption of the clothing of the past. It is interesting to consider the fact that, for much of the period represented by costume collections, the materials for clothing were often more expensive than the labour to make them up.⁵ For this reason it is often found that scraps of fabric were sewn together so that the larger area they make up could be integrated into the garment. Termed 'piecing' these irregular seams are often highly visible. This is important evidence for a culture of consumption that greatly valued textiles and clothing. For the same reason, clothing is often altered for different wearers. It could be argued that historic costume is more likely to have been altered at some point during its use than not altered. This can, however, pose a problem for textile conservators. Alterations may need to be removed for physical reasons whereby they are detrimental to the preservation of the object. It is also common to find that current museum professionals and conservators may wish to remove alterations for other reasons. It is usually the case that interest lies more heavily with older objects; the more distant the time period, the greater the appeal.⁶ By default a piece of costume in its unaltered state represents an earlier time period than its altered state. It is true that earlier on in the development of the conservation profession, conservators found reason to 'reset' objects back to their earliest state. There are numerous examples of 18th century dresses altered for fancy dress or otherwise in the 19th and even 20th centuries that conservators chose to, essentially,

⁴ Tarrant, 152.

⁵ John Styles, *Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 15.

⁶ Judith Doré, "The Conservation of Two Eighteenth-Century English Court Mantuas," *Studies in Conservation* 23, no. 1 (February 1978), 4.

alter again to more closely resemble their original form (see section 3.3). This can be considered unethical for two reasons. The first is that it is difficult to make a final judgement upon what period of the object's history is more valued. It can be argued however that by carefully examining the context of the object, like what it represents within a collection, is a method for creating a legitimate statement about what period of history is valued the most about that object. This evaluation is only relevant for the present period. The environment and situation may change in the future. The second reason is that it is usually impossible for the conservator to 'reset' the object back to the exact form it once held, prior to the alteration. Inevitably some of the information contained in the physical manifestation of the alteration is lost. Conservation work of this type is better framed as another alteration made to the object. This is often contrary to the nature of conservation work that attempts to remain as unobtrusive as possible while also making it possible to clearly identify what stitches and materials are the results of conservation treatments (see section 3.5). Treatments that reset previous alterations run contrary to this inclination towards less intervention. Again some perspective on the greater context of conservation work can create a justification for this type of treatment. It is something of a fallacy to believe that the system for treating and preserving costume, or any object for that matter, in a museum environment can become an 'invisible' period of that object's biographical history. The very fact that objects are preserved in this manner alters the direction of that object's existence. Occasionally de-accessioned objects continue to exist under new ownership after being housed by a museum. This places that period in the museum in a greater context as part of the continuing biography of the object. It is easy for museum professionals to see the museum as the final stage in that object's history (and as the museum controls the dissemination of that history this perception can be promoted) but this is not always the case. With this context in mind, it is not difficult to acknowledge that objects are always physically affected by being preserved in a museum and that this is not necessarily a negative aspect of conservation treatments; rather the logical result of the current museum system.

1.6 The language of Reconstructive Treatments

There are a variety of words to describe the conservation techniques under discussion here. A paper by Renée Dancause of the Canadian Conservation Institute discusses

some of these terms in great detail. Reconstruction, reproduction, replication, re-creation and restoration all share similar characteristics in the context of textile conservation literature. The term reconstruction could have two meanings. The first meaning is relatively simple and refers to copying an object.⁷ A secondary meaning is slightly more complex and means to ‘re-establish the original relationship between pieces.’⁸ Reproduction, replication and re-creation are synonymous with the first definition of reconstruction.⁹ Restoration has a more complex meaning especially in the context of textile conservation. Restorative treatments share some characteristics with the second definition of reconstruction described above in that they often contain a step during the treatment process where pieces of an object are reassembled. Restorative techniques are often also defined by placing higher value on aesthetic concerns than purely on the preservation of the object. While the other adjectives may operate within the boundaries of conservation, restoration can step beyond them. Conservators often define themselves by the rejection of restorative treatments in favour of a minimalist approach to treatments.¹⁰ In choosing a term to describe the types of treatment under discussion here, the term reconstruction is most useful for its broad definition. It is in this context that it will be used here, to represent those treatments, or those aspects of treatments that can border upon greater intervention for justifiable aesthetic or contextual reasons.

1.7 Defining “the Museum Context”

The “museum context” is a concept that I will reference throughout this work and that requires some explanation. Generally speaking, museums are the most prolific mechanism for the preservation and exhibition of material culture in the West. Just as costume offers particular challenges to the conservator, the conservation of costume in the context of a museum, adds specific and unique challenges and opportunities. In order to discuss how the context of such museums influences conservation decisions, it is useful to create a definition of what a museum is and how they function in order

⁷R. Dancause, ‘Reconstruction, Reproduction, Replication, Re-Creation: Synonyms in the costume history and textile conservation literature? A matter of perspective’, *Textile Specialty Group Postprints*, 16 (2006), 44.

⁸. Dancause, 43.

⁹ Dancause, 44.

¹⁰ M. Brooks et al., ‘Restoration and Conservation: Issues for textile conservators’, in *Restoration: Is it acceptable?* (*British Museum Occasional Paper 99*), (London: British Museum Press, 1994) 103.

for the “museum context” to add a useful dimension to the discussions here as well as to the object case studies. While the objects are drawn from an existing museum’s collection, and therefore have an associated context, the theoretical discussions that are a part of the case studies are not made in the context of the Glasgow museum’s collection. Instead the discussion will be framed by a rather fictitious “museum context”. This frees the discussion from the specifics of one museum and allows for a generalization of context that is more widely applicable. As well, since the author is not, nor has ever been, a conservator employed by Glasgow museums, the author’s perspective is therefore external to the museum as well. It is felt that a generic museum context is a more useful tool for the theoretical analysis taking place here than a specific context based on an existing museum.

For the purposes of this work, the museum context that the two object case studies will be placed in, will represent what a large museum would typically contain. A large institution is assumed since generally only large institutions can afford the types of highly interventive treatment under discussion here. With this characteristic established, this fictitious museum would also employ various other museum professionals directly involved in the process of putting on an exhibit. As well, this large institution would have the staff available for marketing and promotional endeavours. This aspect of the typical museum is not one that would ideally wield a great amount of influence when it came to the decisions surrounding what was to be displayed and what messages were to be given however marketing and promotion is a reality that essentially helps to keep the museum’s doors open and the collection adequately cared for.

1.8 Summary

Costume offers particular challenges to the conservator. The physical nature of costume is generally three-dimensional and multi-layered, both characteristics that make it difficult to properly support the objects during storage, treatment, and display. Historically costume usually has a complex history due to the common occurrence of alterations. These alterations force the conservator to make judgements of the value of individual periods of the objects history in order to treat the object and continue the normal functions of the museum. International conservation standards promote the invisibility of the conservator’s work in the biography of objects but the active

treatment of objects often makes this impossible. Items of costume held in museums are particularly prone to these ethical dilemmas and demonstrate how current conservation techniques require that the conservator's work become an active part of each object's history.

Chapter 2: Glasgow Museums

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is designed to describe and establish the context for the decisions made about the treatment of objects from the Glasgow Museums collection. These objects are examined in chapter 4 and chapter 5. This chapter looks at the broader context of the Glasgow Museums organization at both a theoretical level, by examining their philosophies and guidelines, as well as a physical level by describing the physical resources and space typically used to put on an exhibit focusing on costume. Another very important aspect to examine is the personnel resources available to the museum. Again this examination takes place at the theoretical level by describing the influence of other museum professionals on conservation decisions, as well as at a more practical level by looking at personnel available to undertake the conservation work as well as the physical activities associated with assembling an exhibit.

2.2 Summary of Glasgow Museums

Glasgow Museums is a subset of the municipal organization Glasgow Life. Glasgow Life groups together municipal services that includes sports arenas, libraries, city-run arts and music programs and museums. As part of Glasgow Life, Glasgow Museums uses their Vision Statement and, at its core, functions to serve the local community. Glasgow Museums consists of a system of museums that cover a wide range of topics from historic sites, to history-oriented museum, modern art, and, in the case of the recently opened Riverside Museum, a combination of these things. The sites that make up Glasgow Museums include: the Scotland Street School, the People's Palace, St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, Provands Lordship, the Burrell Collection, the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the Riverside Museum, the Gallery of Modern Art and the Open Museum.¹¹ The Open Museum is not a physical space but rather a travelling collection of objects, museum personnel, and physical resources used to travel out into the community. The objects that make up the Open Museum serve as a handling collection.

¹¹ Glasgow Museums, 'Our Museums', *Glasgow Life* (<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/our-museums/Pages/home.aspx>). June 8th, 2012.

2.3 Theories and Guidelines

As was mentioned above, Glasgow Museums uses the Glasgow Life vision statement as their over-arching corporate document.¹² The main statement is “to inspire Glasgow’s citizens and visitors to lead richer and more active lives through culture and sport.”¹³ The statement to enrich the lives of residents and visitors is very general however the specific focus on the Glasgow area is not. This statement is intended to guide all of Glasgow Life and so needs to be non specific however as a result this statement gives little specific guidance for working practices in Glasgow Museums. For more specific guidelines, Glasgow Museums staff look to Museums Association guidelines, and, in the case of conservators, Guidelines from the Institute of Conservation for specific working practices.¹⁴ Glasgow Museums itself is an accredited organization and their published accreditation reports offer some insight into the guiding practices of the organization. This particular year’s report (which was the most recent report publically available) is for the year 2007/2008. When reporting on conservation projects for this period the report highlights the outreach efforts put on by Glasgow museums in the form of the treatment of two objects in the public view.¹⁵ This demonstrates that Glasgow Museums has a nuanced view of the role of conservation in museums. It demonstrates the educational value of conservation for the public as well as the more technical and typical usage of conservation for the preservation and protection of the collection. The report also lists a series of projects and tasks undertaken by the conservation staff. These tasks are mostly part of collections care and consist of surveys and condition reporting however there is a note about upcoming conservation treatments in preparation for future exhibits.¹⁶ While this report does not highlight technical details of the ongoing conservation work in Glasgow Museums, the theories and practices alluded to do appear to meet current standards and their treatments would be expected to meet current accepted theory and practice.

¹² Conversation with Rebecca Quinton, June 20, 2012

¹³ Glasgow Museums, 'Glasgow Life Vision Statement', *Glasgow Life*, (<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/about-us/Pages/Glasgow-Life-Vision-Statement.aspx>). June 8th, 2012.

¹⁴ Conversation with Rebecca Quinton, June 20, 2012

¹⁵ Glasgow Museums, 'Annual Accreditation Report 2007/08,' *Glasgow Life*, (<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/publications/online-publications/Pages/Accreditation-and-Benchmarking-Reports.aspx>) June 18, 2012, 47.

¹⁶ Glasgow Museums, 'Annual Accreditation Report 2007/08,' 48.

2.4 Past and Present Strategies for Interpretation

The recent opening of the new Riverside Museum offers a chance to examine the theories and guidelines employed by Glasgow museums when designing new exhibits. Glasgow Museums published an Interpretation Strategy and Plan document on their website that outlines, essentially, what they wished to accomplish with their new exhibits. Their objectives were listed as:

- “1. To develop displays and interpretation that are accessible and socially inclusive
2. To ensure that the most significant and popular objects from the transport and related social history collections, works of art and natural history specimens are on display
3. To ensure a high quality of interpretation that will stimulate interest in objects, reflect the variety of ways in which people learn and meet the needs of target audiences
4. To develop displays that reflect Glasgow Museums commitment to research and evaluation
5. To create and maintain responsive, flexible displays which can change in line with the interests and needs of the museum’s stakeholders and audiences
6. To deliver displays that are flexible, cost effective and sustainable
7. To develop external and internal displays and interpretation that exploit the potential and history of, the SV Glenlee, landscape and the Riverside location
8. To develop displays which allow greater numbers of objects to be displayed in a cost effective way
9. To provide facilities that enable further exploration of the collection”¹⁷

These objectives highlight a few conflicts that conservators would be forced to navigate during this project. From an essentialist perspective, any display of objects is potentially detrimental to their longevity, so of course these objectives work contrary to this. However this is not really a pragmatic viewpoint to take and runs contrary to the very reason for museums. From a more nuanced perspective, the goals of making the exhibit “accessible” and “socially inclusive” most likely would affect conservation work in partnership with the exhibit design. For example, the specific positioning of mannequins for display so that visitors of all ages and abilities can view the objects may affect the support offered by the mannequins and require input and an adjustment of the treatment on the part of the conservator. The second objective stated

¹⁷ Glasgow Museums, ‘Interpretation and Strategy Plan,’ *Glasgow Life*, (<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/our-museums/riverside-museum/Documents/Riverside%20Project%20Documents/HLF%20Stage%20%20Documents/GM2%20Appendix%20Interpretation%20Strategy%20and%20Plan.pdf>), June 18, 2012, 2.

above again relates to the essentialist question of display. The significance and popularity of objects does not take into account their condition however they are very important from the perspective of exhibit design and the everyday function of the museum. Again a more nuanced perspective on the part of the conservator is necessary here. A balance must be struck between the role of the conservator as advocate for the object, and the role of the conservator as a museum employee invested in the dissemination of material culture to the public through the medium of museums.¹⁸ Finally objective number eight is an obvious conflict that arises in most work of this nature. The conflict between cost and preservation is a constant one and requires the same balancing act of the role of the conservator as advocate for the object in the museum environment. These objectives show that Glasgow museum's interpretation objectives do not explicitly state the conservation concerns that continually arise with museum work. However the wording of their objectives allow the conservator to navigate between the needs of the museum and the ethics of the conservation profession.

2.5 The System of Rotating Exhibits

Glasgow Museums has a combination of permanent and temporary exhibits on display across all the sites that make up the organization. Current practice in Glasgow Museums limits the display of textiles and costume to a maximum of six months.¹⁹ This aligns with current conservation standards that limit the object's exposure to light and the physical stress of display. This results in limiting the display of costume to temporary exhibits alone. However new concerns about the affects of dust and soiling on objects on open display have arisen since the last costume-focused exhibit *A Dress to Die For* took place in 2006. Discussion with Rebecca Quinton, curator of European costume and textiles underlined how limiting this combination of a temporary display and the need for extensive protection, ideally in the form of exhibit cases, is for the museum.²⁰ Not only is the cost of adequate cases limiting but so are

¹⁸ Daniel Kushel, "AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice" (American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1994), <http://www.conservation-us.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&PageID=858&E:\ColdFusion9\verity\Data\dummy.txt>. 4.

¹⁹ Conversation with Rebecca Quinton, June 20, 2012.

²⁰ Conversation with Rebecca Quinton, June 20, 2012.

storage concerns for the cases after the exhibit is complete.²¹ Currently Glasgow Museums has not been able to accommodate the conservation needs of costume in the context of a temporary exhibit. This is an unfortunate situation for the people that Glasgow Museums is designed to serve who are unable to see the objects in the collection on display. An argument could be made that in this case, Glasgow Museums is failing to meet the ethical guidelines that state that conservators must do their utmost to accommodate the social needs for the objects in their care.²²

2.6 Visitor Consumption of Exhibits

For the purposes of this discussion, the term “visitor consumption” refers to the manner in which visitors to Glasgow Museums view the objects on display, what messages they receive and how they receive them. Through discussion with Rebecca Quinton, there seems to be two levels at which exhibits are designed to convey messages. This message is conveyed through multiple mediums, and they range from the wall colour and ambience of the exhibit gallery, to the design of the interpretation panels, to, and most pertinently for this discussion, the objects and how they are displayed. The two levels at which visitors can generally be seen to consume exhibits is either through visual means, textual means, or a combination of both. The interplay between the visual and text-based interpretation of objects is directly related to the conservation of costume particularly when treating objects in a manner that greatly affects their aesthetic value. As was outlined in section 1.4, costume presents particular challenges in this regard. From the curator’s perspective, messages about the history of objects is directly related to their display.²³ For example, the addition of accessories that may or may not be related to the main object of display can send messages to the visual-based viewer. If those accessories are unrelated to the main garment, this may send the message that the whole outfit has a particular provenience that is not technically the case. Limitations on word count for text panels has a corresponding limitation on what types of information is displayed for the textual visitor. Glasgow Museums, for example, limits the word count on individual object labels to thirty to seventy words. In this case, the same assumption could be made by

²¹ Conversation with Rebecca Quinton, June 20, 2012.

²² See ethical codes in section 3.5.

²³ Conversation with Rebecca Quinton, June 20, 2012.

both types of visitor that the objects are related historically when they are not. This interplay between visual and text-based information becomes more nuanced when a highly interventive treatment greatly influences the aesthetics of a particular object. With significant limitations on how much text a visitor can be expected to read during an exhibit, the complex issues of conservation work rarely makes it onto the interpretation panels. More often than not the conservator must rely on the aesthetics of treatment to display pertinent information to the interested visitor.

2.7 Other Museum Professionals

Conservators collaborate with many other museum professionals in order to create a successful exhibition. Other professionals have priorities that are quite different from those of the conservator. Not all of the following museum professionals will be present at every museum and involved in every conservation project however for the purposes of creating this, somewhat arbitrary, “museum context”, it is useful to examine their roles. Curators and exhibit designers are both involved with the presentation of the message of the object. This message can be manifested in many ways such as the style and colour of mannequins, mannequin poses, placement of mannequins as well as the environment of the exhibit space such as wall colour. Their input can directly impact the conservator’s work when considering the visual impact of the object. Curators are focused on the historical research associated with the object. Their role is an important one since they have the highly specialized knowledge necessary to safely evaluate the impact a treatment may have on the role and message of the object.

As has been seen the conservator must collaborate with the curator when considering the messages that individual objects are intended to convey, as well as exhibit designers for the visual aspect of costume within the context of an exhibit. The perspectives of the curator and conservator as both interrelated and, at times, contrary to one another. The conservator cares for the physical nature of the object however the ultimate goal for the preservation is so that the object will survive for future study of both its tangible and intangible nature.

2.8 Summary

Glasgow Museums provides a typical example of a museum in the west. Their theories and guidelines are consistent with current museum practices and museum association standards. This is reflected in their interpretation strategies that, while serving the vision statement of Glasgow Life, allow for the balancing act that a conservator must play between being an advocate for the object's preservation and allowing the object to serve the community. The system of temporary exhibits and the methods for communicating messages to the visitor further reflect the conflicts inherent in the treatment of costume.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This section is intended to briefly review currently available sources that discuss the major issue associated with the highly interventive treatment of costume. The sources selected range from very general ethical codes used by major conservation organization worldwide, to specific published examples of past treatments. An additional section discusses those sources that specifically make note of the justifications for treatments, or aspects of treatments that some conservators might consider to be unethical.

3.2 Theory based Sources

Literature published on the topic of the reconstructive treatment of costume consists of two types. The first are discussions of theory and the second are treatment reports. Treatment reports also contain theory as they are examples of that theory applied. Additionally, some contain deliberate discussions of theory and the philosophy behind conservations. In general, texts focusing solely on the theory of conservation and material culture explore these topics in a much deeper way than in treatment reports. These sources represent the basis for examining and evaluating subsequent treatments and will be examined here first.

A major source that compares the issues of restoration and conservation is *Restoration and Conservation: Issues for textile conservators* by M. Brooks et al. This article examines the relationship and argues for the interconnectedness of the concepts of conservation and restoration.²⁴ The authors begin by examining the theory that supports the statement that “restoration and conservation are... totally opposed ideals”.²⁵ One of the criticisms of restoration is based upon the current value placed of minimal intervention. Once minimal intervention is understood as an ideal, restorative treatments that are often based upon aesthetic concerns become no longer appropriate.

²⁴Mary M Brooks et al., “Restoration and Conservation - Issues for Conservators: A Textile Conservation Perspective,” in *Restoration: Is it acceptable? (British Museum Occasional Paper 99)* (London: British Museum Press, 1994), 104.

²⁵ Brooks, et al. 1994, 103.

The authors note that physical objects cannot be separated from its visual image.²⁶ This is true irrespective of the public display, or lack thereof, of the object. They continue saying, “there is an element of the subjective in both conservation and restoration treatments”.²⁷ During treatment the conservator’s actions are affected either directly or indirectly by the visual appearance of the object yet “historically, restorers are less likely to carry out detailed analysis of a textile or provide documentation of their treatments”²⁸, both activities that are characteristic of conservators today. The key to navigating the relationship between conservation and restoration is to engage in discussion between conservators and curators about the details of the treatment. The authors continue with a few examples where conservation and restoration are combined to create an effective treatment. The perspective of this article is quite useful for this work due to its evaluation of the philosophy behind both conservation and restoration. It will be useful to refer back to during the evaluation of published treatments.

Chronologically, the next theory based source is the article *Textiles as Multiple and Competing Histories* by Dinah Eastop. This article examines the use of textiles as historic documents with, as the title suggests, multiple histories that can compete with one another. The article focuses on examples where this competition is evident. One example, that of a military coatee, clearly displays this as the coatee was worn at different times by opposing combatants.²⁹ The conservators and curators are responsible for the interpretation of the object and must, during treatment, place value upon these competing histories through the potentially competing phases of treatment – especially where evidence in the form of stains or other physical evidence is detrimental to the physical state of the object. An interventive treatment “in turn creates and thus becomes its [the object’s] history”.³⁰ This article is a useful examination of the multiple messages that are commonly embodied by objects.

Artefacts and the Meaning of Things is an anthropological article that examines the meaning behind material culture in an abstract way. The author

²⁶ Brooks, et al. 1994, 106.

²⁷ Brooks, et al. 1994, 107.

²⁸ Brooks, et al. 1994, 107.

²⁹ Dinah Eastop, ‘Textiles as Multiple and Competing Histories,’ in *Textiles Revealed*, ed. Mary M Brooks (London: Archetype Publications, 2000), 22.

³⁰ Eastop 2000, 26.

discusses how objects and their meanings can act as a form of communication.³¹ Additionally, the author notes how objects can become the physical embodiment of what is meaningful and in that way, may become difficult to process and encounter in everyday life.³² There is no explicit discussion of how this theory applies to textile conservation however it is certainly applicable to the discussion surrounding how specific aspects of textiles are valued and why.

In the same vein as *Objects as Multiple and Competing Histories*, Eastop has written another article *The Biography of Objects: A tool for analysing an object's significance*. Just as the title says, Eastop explores a model known as an object biography in order to promote a deeper understanding of the object. An object's biography is continually evolving and Eastop states that to correctly understand the meaning behind an object it is necessary "to take account of an object's dynamic social environment as well as its dynamic physical environment".³³ This evolution and dynamism does not exclude the conservator and their work. Treatment of the object is an additional period in the object's biography. The context presented by this article is a helpful tool for analysing treatments and placing the treatments in a context that allows a new perspective on whether a treatment is conservation, restoration, or a combination of both and to what degree.

3.3 Examples of Previous Treatments

The section following will examine the second group of sources. These sources are mainly published treatment reports that contain various treatments where significant, reconstruction, re-creation, replication, or restoration takes place. The application of these terms varies depending on the author's perspective but all the treatments contain some level of complexity and require some speculation on the part of the conservator.

The first source discussed here was published in 1995 but the treatment it details originally took place in the early 1970's and is the earliest published treatment of those collected here. *A Retrospective of 1973 Conservation Treatment on a Mughal*

³¹ D. Miller, 'Artefacts and the Meaning of Things', in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, T. Ingold ed., (London: Routledge, 2002), 401.

³² Miller 2002, 397

³³ D. Eastop, 'The Biography of Objects: A tool for analysing and object's significance', in *International Workshop on Flexible Materials in Asian Collections: Exchange of approaches to conservation, presentation and use*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2003, 100.

Court Robe with the Pigment-Painted Poppy Flower Pattern describes the challenges of treating a painted textile. The robe is eventually completely disassembled in order to consolidate the painted decoration with the pieces of the object under tension.³⁴ This consolidation was undertaken in order that the robe would then be able to withstand wet cleaning.³⁵ The disassembling is an extreme treatment and the author acknowledges this. And yet the necessity of the wet cleaning was not discussed in the paper even after the selection of a consolidating agent restricted the wet cleaning to a solution made up of only water without any additives.³⁶ Surface cleaning is undertaken before the wet cleaning and is also acknowledged to be particularly successful giving another incentive to re-consider the necessity of wet cleaning and the required disassembling.³⁷ The painted decoration may have required consolidating on its own merits however this is not how it is presented in the paper. In the paper the consolidation is framed as intrinsically linked to the wet cleaning process as the author acknowledges that the consolidant was not to be removed to save the object from the rigours of another stressful stage of treatment.³⁸ While the author does not go on to evaluate the treatment in terms of effectiveness for the long term preservation of the object, nor in the light of changed ethics 22 years later, this article serves as an example of a highly interventive treatment where the nature of the decoration and the three-dimensional form of the object were the motivating factors for a highly interventive treatment.

The next source is *The Conservation of two Eighteenth-Century English Court Mantuas* by Judith Doré. This paper was published in 1978 and contains the details of the highly interventive treatment of two gowns. Both gowns were altered for fancy dress in the 19th or early 20th centuries and the goal of the treatments were to reconstruct the gowns as they might have originally been at some point their history during the eighteenth century.³⁹ Once again the early date of this paper helps to indicate the changing attitudes in conservation. Additionally, this treatment is revisited in 2006 and documented in the article *Re-evaluation and Retreatment: The*

³⁴ Nobuko Kajitani, "A Retrospective of 1973 Conservation Treatment on a Mughal Court Robe with the Pigment-Painted Poppy Flower Pattern," in *The Conservation of 18th-Century Painted Silk Dress*, ed. C. Paulocik and S. Flaherty (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 118–129.

³⁵ Kajitani 1995, 121.

³⁶ Kajitani 1995, 121.

³⁷ Kajitani 1995, 123.

³⁸ Kajitani 1995, 121.

³⁹ J. Doré, 'The Conservation of Two Eighteenth-Century Court Mantuas', *Studies in Conservation*, 23, no.1 (1978), 4.

reconservation and remounting of an English court mantua which will be discussed later.

The next article is written by the eminent Janet Arnold on the topic of another eighteenth century gown that had been altered much later on. The perspective that Arnold writes from is interesting since she is a costume historian and not a conservator. Her role is clearly defined in the article when she leaves the actual conservation work to a conservator. Her role is to provide the information necessary to revert this gown back to its earlier state. Her attitude towards the object throughout the article is from the perspective of the tailor, even referring to achieving the correct 'fit'.⁴⁰ This article, like those previously discussed, is a reflection of the attitude taken towards objects. Interestingly the tone of the article treats the object as if it is a living piece and not a sanctified artifact.

The next article marks a new trend in conservation literature. *Investigation, Engineering and Conservation Combined: The reconstruction of a seventeenth century dress* by Teresa Knutson is a similar treatment to those discussed above since it deals with a piece of costume and details a highly interventive reconstruction treatments. It differs in tone from what we have previously seen and begins immediately with a justification for the treatment.⁴¹ The treatment is comparable in the level of detail however the potential for re-treatments is more highly valued in the conservation techniques selected. At the same time as this shift in values is evidenced, a lining and lace that "were at least a century newer than the dress fabric" were removed since "removing them did not present ethical problems".⁴² If one used the object biographies model to examine this object, these trimmings certainly would present an ethical dilemma. Clearly, through the examination of this article, the accepted form for conservation techniques has changed but is still developing.

The next article *A Tale of Two Tapestries: Considerations of restoration, de-restoration and re-restoration*, published only 4 years later displays additional signs of development. The article discusses the treatment of two tapestries with particular attention to the decision whether or not to retain previous repairs. Some repairs on one

⁴⁰ Janet Arnold, 'A Sack Gown from the Haddington Collection at the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh', *Studies in Conservation*, 25, no.1 (1980), 26.

⁴¹ T. Knutson, 'Investigation, Engineering, and Conservation Combined: The reconstruction of a seventeenth century dress', in *Textile Specialty Group Postprints*, American Institute for Conservation 19th Annual Meeting, Albuquerque, NM, (Washington DC: AIC, 1991), 27.

⁴² Knutson 1991, 29.

of the tapestries are kept despite the visual disturbance. This article marks the further progression in conservation techniques.

An Innovative Method for Mounting the Sixteenth-Century Doublet and Trunk-Hose Worn by Don Gazia de' Medici by Janet Arnold and Mary W. Bulgarella is a treatment report that concerns an archaeological textile. This varies from all of the previously examined sources in that regard. The paper still demonstrates how the physical evidence of an object is considered to be valuable. In the caption for one of the photos, it notes that some ties on the trunk-hose are "still tied together".⁴³ This feature is noteworthy due to the understanding that those ties were tied together while the object was still functioning in its culture of origin. Evidence such as this begins to become important although it is not clear if the knot was deliberately retained during treatment.

The next source is *Making the Most of Mounts: Expanding the role of display mounts in the preservation and interpretation of historic textiles*. This source uses case studies and discussion of theory to further understand how mounts contribute to our interpretation of objects. The article examines the consequences of treatments that rely on the addition of the mount for success. Interestingly, the author explains that with the addition of a mount for treatment, the mount and the objects can become intrinsically linked which may be problematic for both practical and ideological reasons. The author also examines some problems with the addition of mounts, most notably that "the mount creates an impression of the physical form and/or interpretation of the object that is later found to be inappropriate/incorrect".⁴⁴ The author counters this with the statement that "the interpretation of an object, in whatever form, can only reflect current knowledge and thinking".⁴⁵ This is the only appropriate attitude to take when evaluating the treatment described here and others.

The author of the article *Diffusion touristique: le traitement d'une robe en taffetas de soie, exposition au bureau touristique, concours de robes, bal costumé* takes an interesting approach to the treatment of alterations. A more recent alteration is removed to reconstruct the nineteenth century ball gown in its original form. The

⁴³ J. Arnold, & M. W. Bulgarella, 'An Innovative Method for Mounting the Sixteenth-Century Doublet and Trunk-Hose Worn by Don Gazia de' Medici', *Costume: The journal of the costume society*, 30 (1996), 48.

⁴⁴ A. Lister, 'Making the Most of Mounts: Expanding the role of display mounts in the preservation and interpretation of historic textiles', in *Fabric of an Exhibition: An interdisciplinary approach preprints*, Ottawa, Ontario Canada: North American Textile Conservation Conference, 1997, 147.

⁴⁵ Lister 1997, 147.

fabric from the alteration is then used to infill areas of loss in the back of the bertha. This was decided because the alteration fabric was quite robust and precisely matched the fabric of the gown. The specifics of the treatment were not explained in the article however this approach and attitude towards the object is unique among the sources examined here.

Re-evaluation and Retreatment: The re-conservation and remounting of an English court mantua examines the re-treatment of one of the gowns treated by Doré in 1978. The paper spends quite a bit of time examining the decisions taken during the original treatment and how they have proved unsatisfactory in the long term. Additionally the paper examines the challenges of the new treatment especially in light of the recent changes in the field of conservation. This source is further evidence of the change in thought processes in the conservation field.

Treatment analysis can also be undertaken through encounters with local collections and conservators. It may be possible, for example, to examine the focus of Janet Arnold's 1980 article *A Sack Gown from the Haddington Collection at the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh* assuming, of course, that the object still remains in Edinburgh these 30 years later. As well, the vast majority of collections are not represented in published literature and treatments such as those detailed in the sources above most certainly take place and are recorded in object files alone. In consultation with curators and conservators at institution such as Glasgow Museums may reveal additional objects that have undergone treatments similar to those discussed above. Depending on the details contained in treatment reports and object records it may be possible to examine the decisions made during the treatment process. Interviews with conservators are also valuable while pursuing this type of research. Ideally the conservator would be one of the most informative sources of information about the specific justifications for treatment decisions. They might also have access to more information such as that in personal files or lab books that might not be contained in the object record. Additionally the current perspective of the conservator, while looking back on past treatments, would add yet another perspective on the decisions taken during treatment. The combination of all these sources, the object record, the object, and the conservator responsible for the treatment can all contribute to the discussion surrounding the role of restoration in conservation.

3.4 Treatment Justifications

In publishes literature it is unusual to find report of treatments undertaken that justify the use of reconstructive techniques fully. There are a few of these cases and they offer insight into the decisions making processes as well as perspectives on the work of the conservator from various perspectives.

Two articles published in *Studies in Conservation* published 28 years apart offers the opportunity to view changes in policy and practice at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The first article, *The Conservation of Two Eighteenth-Century English Court Mantuas* by Judith Doré records the acquisition and treatment of two objects titled respectively the Cowdray dress and the Christie dress. The second article *Re-evaluation and Retreatment: The reconstruction and remounting of an English court mantua* by Marion Kite and Albertina Cogram recounts the treatment of one of the dresses from the first article, the Christie dress. In general terms, the 1978 article describes the treatment in terms that are occasionally simplistic. Compared to the later article, the justification for certain actions is based upon the simple concept that older is better. This is not to say that the 2006 article changes its perception of was is valued, rather the 2006 article presents this perspective in a manner that acknowledges the complex roles that costume plays in the museum context. For example in the 2006 article, the Christie dress is not displayed with accessories that would most certainly have been worn with the dress such as detachable sleeve flounces. This is because the museum had defined the specific role for this object as an example of Rocco design through the embroidered decoration. The Christie dress is displayed and presented in this manner in the gallery. The authors of the 2006 article comment upon this decision by saying, “if the Christie dress is revisited again, with a different remit to remount and display it in the manner it was worn, with lace and accessories as on previous occasions, the dress will require unmounting and further handling.”⁴⁶ This issue is presented by the authors as a problematic aspect of the treatment of this object that is not easily remedied. The ethical treatment of this object includes reducing the handling as much as possible in order to protect the object from further damage. However in order to direct the goals of treatment, the role of the object must be clearly defined and, in this case, the role defined is one that does not allow the object

⁴⁶ Marion Kite and Albertina Cogram, “Re-evaluation and Retreatment: The reconstruction and remounting of an English court mantua,” *Studies in Conservation* 51, no. 2 (2006): 120.

to be displayed as an item of dress with accessories. The authors of the 2006 article are correct in stating that it is probable that this role will change in the future as pieces of costume are usually used to convey a message about clothing and how it was worn in the past since this is one of the essential roles of costume. In this case there is conflict between preservation efforts and the many messages that an item of costume can represent.

Another example that highlights the increasingly complex understanding of the role that costume plays can be found when discussing the decision to return the dress to its earliest configuration. In the 1978 article, it is stated that it is the policy of the Victoria and Albert Museum that objects be generally returned to their earliest configuration if at all possible.⁴⁷ This statement is further explained by a couple of examples of how original seams are determined to be of importance however there is no real justification behind this stated policy. As well the policy is generally applied to all objects in the collection. In the 2006 article, there is a similar amount of importance applied to the earlier, 1740's date for this dress. However in this case it is justified on an individual level for this object alone. Additionally the authors state that there is sufficient evidence to achieve the desired configuration of the 1740's date. This is not clearly stated in the 1978 article though it is assumed to be the case. While the same conclusions are drawn 28 years later, it is evident that a more complex thought process was behind the stated importance of the earliest date.

An additional source that represents how thought about the role and message of costume has developed and gained complexity over time is the article *Re-evaluation of the Conservation of the Othery Cope* by Ann French. The goal of this paper is to present a case where previous conservation work undertaken by the author is scrutinized some years later and the reasons for why the treatment undertaken was not ideal are examined. The object in question has a lengthy object biography beginning as a late fifteenth or early sixteenth century ecclesiastical robe and was later transformed into an alter cloth.⁴⁸ The cope was conserved in order that it might be displayed in the visitor's centre at Glastonbury Abbey.⁴⁹ Conservation work began by removing previous lining and repairs and unfolding certain areas that had been folded

⁴⁷ Dore 1978, 4.

⁴⁸ Ann French, "A Re-Evaluation of the Conservation of the Othery Cope," in *Mind the Gap! Structural and aesthetic options for the treatment of textiles*, ed. Alison Fairhurst (London: ICON Textile Group, 2009), 32-33.

⁴⁹ French 2009, 32.

back for display.⁵⁰ Discussions between the client and the conservator resulted in the stated desire to make the object more easily read by the non-specialist visitor.⁵¹ To that end, the conservator unstitched and reorganized the cope into a close approximation of its original composition as a garment.⁵² Further, the conservator undertook some embroidery on areas of visible support fabric in order to visually indicate the continuation of embroidery patterns.⁵³

French takes some time to examine how well the treatment has served the object in its context at the historic site. She notes that the previous treatment entirely discounts the value of the cope's later history.⁵⁴ As well the conservation treatment now represents a significant part of the object's history and is not even an approximation of a "natural activity".⁵⁵ The author makes a good point that digital imaging technology has advanced to the point the visual interpretation options are now available that were not possible when the original treatment was undertaken however, as the author correctly states, "regret for what was unavailable would be inappropriate."⁵⁶ French ends her article with many questions including "To what extent could it [the cope] now be re-interpreted to meet a different context where loss is seen to be unimportant?" and "how much was the conservation approach chosen a reflection of the conservator and the curator?"⁵⁷ But most tellingly French asks "how much of the treatment of the Othery Cope/Altar Frontal was done to satisfy its long-term welfare and how much to enable a subjective interpretation at a given moment?"⁵⁸ This of course is the key question when treating objects like costume that rely so heavily on their visual nature and complex histories for their meaning.

3.5 Current Ethical Codes

Ethical codes represent the standard to which conservators measure their work. They are important not only in their role as a working tool but also as a means by which to define conservation as a profession. This work essentially concerns itself with the

⁵⁰ French 2009, 35.

⁵¹ French 2009, 35.

⁵² French 2009, 35.

⁵³ French 2009, 36.

⁵⁴ French 2009, 37.

⁵⁵ French 2009, 37.

⁵⁶ French 2009, 37.

⁵⁷ French 2009, 37.

⁵⁸ French 2009, 37.

ethics of the treatment of costume but attempts to do so in a manner that is practical and pragmatic. Ethical codes are therefore an important method for examining the issues discussed here.

In this section ethical codes from three major professional organizations will be examined. They are the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works publication *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice*, the Canadian Association for Conservation's *Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice*, and The Institute for Conservation's *Professional Guidelines*.

All three documents offer similar perspectives. Some which are more relevant to the discussion taking place in this work than others. One point that is raised in two of the three documents is the social use of objects. This is most directly understood in relation of ethnographic objects that may still have use and significance for contemporary indigenous cultures. Western costume plays this role somewhat in its presentation to the public through the medium of museums. Costume has been a popular topic for display since the creation of museums and some argument could be made that the display of costume in museums is an important aspect of the current social use of these objects. The CAC document states that. "It is the responsibility of the conservation professional, acting alone or with others, to strive constantly to maintain a balance between the need in society to use a cultural property, and to ensure the preservation of the cultural property."⁵⁹ ICON guidelines state that, "The conservator-Restorer, in collaboration with other professional colleagues involved with cultural heritage shall take into account the requirements of its social use while preserving the cultural heritage."⁶⁰ Both of these statements acknowledge that this is an ambiguous aspect of conservation. CAC uses the word "balance" and ICON the phrase "take into account" neither of which makes concrete statements. It is up to the conservator to evaluate and make judgements based upon the individual objects' needs.

An important concept that appears in all three codes is the concept of minimal intervention. The CAC document states this the most clearly by saying "the conservation professional shall respect the integrity of the cultural property by endeavouring to preserve its material composition and culturally significant qualities

⁵⁹ CAC, 'Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice', (<http://www.cac-accr.ca/publications>), June 27, 2012, 5.

⁶⁰ CAC, 'Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice', 2.

through minimal intervention.”⁶¹ The AIC document does not clearly state this concept although it appears in the specific guidelines for practice, for example, when taking samples “only the minimum required should be removed.”⁶² ICON states that conservators should “limit the treatment to only that which is necessary” but does not qualify in what way the treatment should be deemed necessary.⁶³ Again these statement allow for an individual judgement based on the needs of the object whether physical or cultural.

3.6 Summary

A clear paradigm shift occurs in the published literature surrounding the treatment of costume. Sources that review past treatments are rare but a valuable tool to illustrate this paradigm shift. Current ethical guidelines and codes of practice illustrate some major concepts, namely the concept of minimal interventions, which guide current conservation practices.

⁶¹ CAC , 'Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice', 8.

⁶² Daniel Kushel, 'AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice' (<http://www.conservation-us.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&PageID=858&E:\ColdFusion9\verity\Data\dummy.txt>), June 27, 2012, 8.

⁶³ ICON 'AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice', 2.

Chapter 4: First Object Case study

4.1 Introduction

This case study is intended to illustrate the practical, ethical issues encountered by a textile conservator during highly interventive treatment of costume. The focus of the following discussions is on those aspects of treatment that are of particular importance for the discussion of this topic. This object (catalogue number 1932.51.k) was chosen because it is missing its sleeves and is incomplete. The object also has a significant amount of historical and curatorial information about the original wearer and the original wearer's family.

4.2 The Object

This object is a woman's dress dated from 1825-1830.⁶⁴ It is made of a yellow silk printed with a small scale, polychrome, floral design. The skirt is full and it both pleated and gathered into the waistband. The fullness over the bodice is gathered in the front waist and the shoulders. The shoulders are also decorated with self fabric epaulettes. Small sleeves extend from the armseye with a slit over the top of the arm extending through the hem of the sleeve. See Figures 1 and 2 for full views of the



object. The sleeves are decorated with piping and an edging of cream silk that extenuates the points of the sleeves made by the slits.

Figures 1 and 2: Front (left) and back (right) of object 1932.15.k. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

⁶⁴ See Appendix F; Object Catalogue.

4.3 Condition Report

This condition report is composed based upon both the documentary evidence from museum files as well as a physical examination of the object.

4.3.1 Structural Issues

In general the main fabric of the dress is delicate but flexible. The fabric has some damage along the seams, in particular the front proper right armscye.



Figure 3: Damage at the proper right armscye. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

This damage is evidence for the general delicacy of the fabric. Along the seam lines of the bodice the threads are distorted and misaligned from the stress of the seams. Areas that are particularly delicate are the centre front of the waistband and the armcyes

There is evidence of stitches used to control and distribute the fullness of the gathers over the bust. The threads are no longer in evidence but the grain of the fabric has been misaligned and distorted.



Figure 4: stitch holes from stitching that was used to control and distribute the bodice fullness. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

The short sleeves are lined in silk net that is very degraded. The structure of the net is extremely fragile and there are large tears throughout.

There is a small hole at the front proper left of the hem.

The V neckline had been roughly folded over and stitching there was badly worked and is putting some strain on the neckline.

4.3.2 Fading

There is significant fading throughout the front of the skirt and bodice. The fading is extensive covering the majority of the front of the object (see Figure 4, above). The light damage most likely contributes to the general delicacy of the silk.

4.3.3 Sleeves

With consultation with Rebecca Quinton it becomes clear that there may be missing under sleeves. Fashion from this period of the nineteenth century was marked by large “gigot” sleeves.⁶⁵ Their absence from this object becomes clear when it is placed in the context of fashion from this period where large sleeve are a major characteristic. There are stitch holes on the inside armscye that indicate that some sort of alteration had taken place. It is possible that the under sleeves had been removed at some point in the object’s history.

4.4 Treatment Proposal

This treatment is proposed as a method that would allow this object to be displayed to the public in one of the galleries of the Glasgow Museums system.

4.4.1 Structural issues

The hole at the right armscye and the hole at the hem can be treated with a simple stitched support. Dyed silk habotai would adequately support the dress’s main silk fabric.

The very delicate silk net in the sleeves it best protected by and overlay. Since this area is rarely seen, the importance of maintaining the original visual aspect of this area is less important. Dyed silk crepe line stitched into the sleeve with additional support stitches worked though the support fabric and the net would protect the net from future abrasion and make the object safer for handling.

The stitching at the neckline may need to be removed but it was not possible to determine if the stitching unduly stressed the object without placing it on a mannequin. This was not possible at the time the object was examined. The role of the stitching in the construction of the object is somewhat unclear and advice should be sought from the curator in this case to determine the importance of these stitches to the history of the object and its alterations.

⁶⁵ Nancy Bradford, *Costume in Detail*, (Hollywood: Costume and Fashion Press, 1997), 86.

4.4.2 Fading

The extensive fading offers quite a challenge. There is no accepted conservation technique to restore the strength of the original dyes. Repainting or filling in the fabric itself would be an irreversible technique. A printed, semi-sheer over lay may be of some use in this case however the extremely small scale of the print would be both difficult to replicate and difficult to position over the object. Digital printing may help to create an accurate replication of the fabric's print however the print may have variations in it depending on the production processes used to create the fabric that could reduce the efficacy of the digital printing technology.

The impact of the fading on the ability of the object to be displayed is an issue that must be carefully discussed with the curator before any attempt to restore the visual impact of the object is undertaken. Display methods might be used that do not require the fading to be treated. For example, the object could be displayed with the back facing the viewer but the object could still display messages about the history of the family it originated from as well as fashion and history of the period.

4.4.3 Sleeves

The lack of under sleeves offer another challenge and an opportunity to explore how this object can better serve the museum and the community in Glasgow. For, as was seen in section 1.5, the current social role of these objects can be defined as being available to the community though display and other methods of access. There is no additional information about what the original sleeves, if they existed, looked like. But research provided by the curator can provide the conservator with some options for construction methods and materials used in period.

When regarding the issues surrounding the treatment of the sleeves, a careful balance between historical accuracy and preservation of the object must be struck. Of course historical accuracy is an important consideration for the messages that Glasgow Museums would wish to send. But sleeves of this period reached such large proportions that they could even require internal support.⁶⁶ This structure would clearly place stress upon the shoulder and armscye area, an area already delicate and

⁶⁶ McCord Museum, 'Form and Fashion: Nineteenth-Century Montreal Dress', (Montreal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992), 22.

showing signs of damage. One method that may be suggested by a costume historian is cartridge pleating.⁶⁷ This method allows for a large amount of fabric to be pleated into a small space. However this would place great stress on armscye seam and would result in distortion of armscye fabric not recommended as an attachment method despite potential historical accuracy This attachment method must be modified but this distances the treatment from what was done in the period and can have ethical implications as not representative of original methods.

The curator may research and produce an historically accurate method for constructing replacement sleeves that would not unduly stress the object however there is another option for this particular object. Sleeves could be constructed but they could match the neutral shades of the mount or exhibit space in an attempt to visually separate them from the object. Certainly the neutral shades of white, grey and beige would look somewhat out of place against the bright shades of the printed silk. Additionally, these sleeves need not be attached to the original object at all. They could be mounted directly on the mannequin which would allow for adequate interior support of the sleeve head without the additional concern for the condition of the armscye. The mannequin would require an extra investment of time and resources and would only be used during this one exhibit, according to current museum practices.⁶⁸ This method relies, however, on the implication that the average museum visitor would pick up on the visual cues of the colour of the under sleeves and understand their relationship to the original object. A textual explanation would be most effective at this however text panels are very limited (see section 2.6). And here again it is assumed that the visitors read the text panels to learn about each individual object.

⁶⁷ Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 1: Englishwomen's Dresses and Their Construction c. 1660-1860*, (Hollywood: Costume and Fashion Press, 1977), 59.

⁶⁸ Conversation with Rebecca Quinton, June 20, 2012

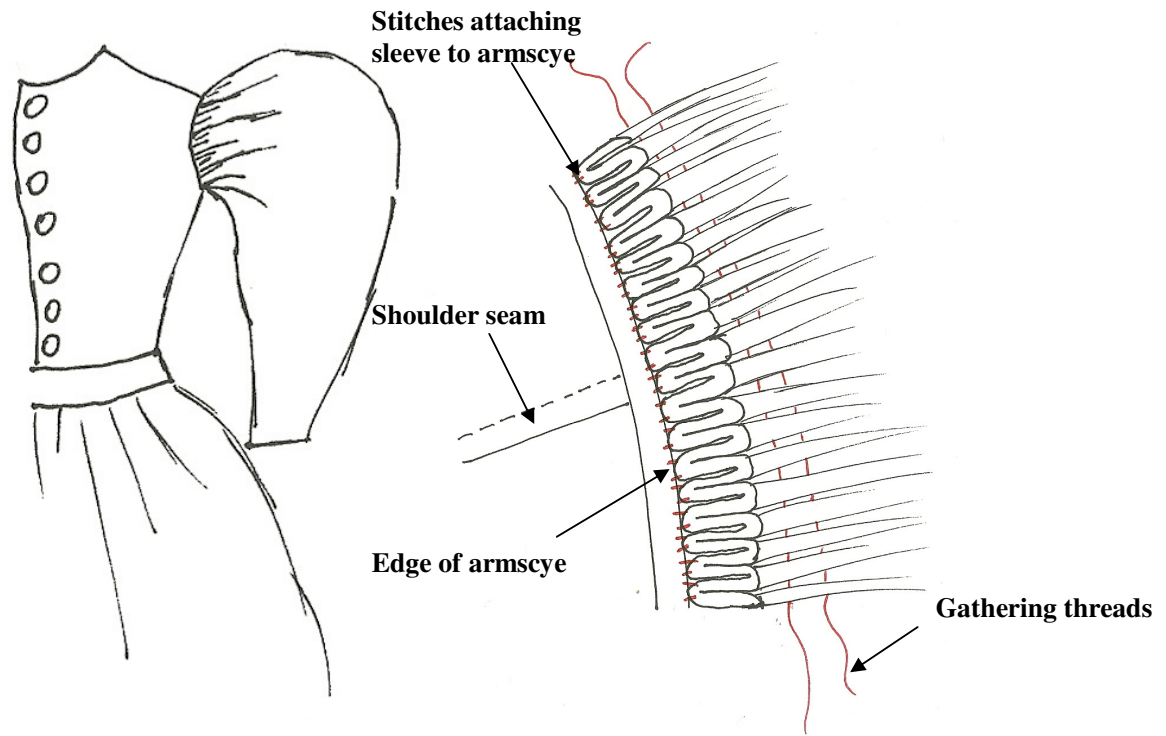


Figure 5: Left, and example of sleeve scale and shape that may have been in evidence as part of E.1932.15.k. Right, a sketch demonstrating the cartridge pleating method.

4.5 Summary

Certainly the question to reconstruct the sleeves of this object can be argued in either direction while still following professional ethical guidelines. Part of the object's current social role is to serve the community while on display or available for access by members of the public. Display forces a discussion of how this object is to represent the messages that are a part of its history. Its history as an elite item of fashion from the 1820's and 30's promotes the importance of its now missing sleeves and forces the question of whether and how to represent the sleeves that were likely a part of its past. The simple attachment of new sleeves is a preservation issue for the delicate silk but sleeves mounted on the mannequin would limit this affect. Again the interplay between the visual and textual cues of display and exhibit design lend importance to these decisions as the method by which to send the most truthful message through the object depends so much on how the visitor perceives the object.

Chapter 5: Second Object Case study

5.1 Introduction

As in the first case study in Chapter 4, this case study is intended to illustrate the practical, ethical issues encountered by a textile conservator during highly interventive treatment of costume. The focus of the following discussions is on those aspects of treatment that are of particular importance for the discussion of this topic.

This object (accession number: E.1977.96.74) was chosen for this dissertation because of its complex object biography and is incomplete. This dress was originally created during the 1780's and the silk brocade fabric dates to this period. It was then significantly altered at least once around 1800 and there are signs that may indicate a second alteration even later.

In contrast to the example in the previous chapter, this object has had more conservation testing and intervention but less historical context. Please see the appendices for the conservation and curatorial paperwork.

5.2 The Object

The object is in two pieces. The bodice is separate from the skirt. The bodice appears to be missing the "bib-front", or stomacher portion with only rough linen in the centre front. The original 1780's pleats are visible in the centre back. Short loose sleeves are pleated into the armholes. The bodice is lined in various grades of linen fabric with piecing in some areas. The skirt is made up of six widths of fabric, four in the back and two in the front. The back four sections are all approximately one metre long and are pleated into a cotton waistband. The cotton is printed in purple with an edge printing at one end of the tie. The print either wears off or the pattern peters out roughly two thirds along the waistband. The front of the skirt is two panels with one panel centred and the second panel split in two lengthwise and placed on either side of the centre panel. This is presumably so that there is no seam down the centre of the

skirt front. The front skirt is pleated at the sides into a waistband made of the same brocade. Only one tip remains on the proper right front side.

5.3 Curatorial notes existing documentation

Curatorial notes for this object lend important information regarding the specific dating of the various elements. These references included a date for the style of the brocade as well as comparable objects in other collections. Notes made by H. MacCulloch in August of 2000 lists comparable objects in other collections. They are:

- At the Museum of London: A.20194, 36.9411, 39.155, 64.130
- From Glasgow Museums: E.1938.92.k

MacCulloch also provides two academic references that add context to the object. They are:

- S. Malls, *Women's Costume 1750-1800*
- N. Rothstein, *Silk Design of the Eighteenth Century* p. 264-265.

This type of background research falls clearly into the role of the curator. While this information is important for the conservator to read and understand in order to approach a treatment with the appropriate perspective, the conservator's real value to the museum is through the evaluation and composition of a holistic treatment that best serves the needs of the object as well as the needs of the museum.

5.4 Condition Report

This condition report is composed based upon both the documentary evidence from museum files as well as a physical examination of the object.

5.4.1 Staining and Soiling

There is extensive staining and soiling on both the bodice and the skirt. Some soiling is clearly the result of wear. The hem, for example is soiled all around the skirt and particularly deep at the back. It appears that the combination of wear to the hem and

the deposition of the soiling has weakened the silk considerably. The silk is split horizontally along the crease of the hem and above the hem in many places.



Figure 6: soiling and damage to the back hem of the skirt. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

The same correlation between soiling and structural damage can be seen on the proper left shoulder where a large brown stain corresponds to damage to the silk on the shoulder pattern piece.



Figure 7: soiling and damage to the proper right shoulder. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

This soiling appears in various shades of brown over all parts of the object. There are concentrated stains on the linen portions of the bodice front and those, as well as the two areas detailed above, represent the largest and most visible of the stains.

There is additional staining that appears to be the result of an attempt to wash the bodice.⁶⁹ This staining is mostly green in colour and surrounds the coloured threads of the fabric in an obvious bleeding pattern. There is similar staining on the underarms which may be the result of perspiration rather than a cleaning attempt.



Figure 8: staining surrounding a floral motif on the back of the proper right shoulder. Image © CSG
CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

5.4.2 *Structural Issues: Bodice*

The bodice has numerous structural issues. The centre back seam, which according to notes from museum documents is likely not original to the initial 1780's version of this object has split approximately 6cm down from the neckline.⁷⁰ The seam appears to have been originally sewn by a single whip stitch attaching both lining and silk, which are now both separated. The seam is temporarily supported by nylon net

⁶⁹ See Appendix C: Conservation Report, page 9.

⁷⁰ See Appendix C: Conservation Report, page 1.

however the split has been in place long enough for the fabric, both silk and lining, to become slightly distorted.



Figure 9: The centre back seam of the bodice. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

As was detailed above in section 5.4.1, soiling on the proper left shoulder has contributed to the degradation of the silk over the shoulder. The silk is brittle and is easily damaged.

The linen front section of on the proper left has torn, perhaps along a seam that was originally there. As well it appears that there may have been an alteration there at one point as there is a sizable tuck at the lower edge of the bodice. The fabric taken up by the tuck is firmly curled and flattened into the tuck.

5.4.3 Structural Issues: Skirt

In general the silk of the skirt is brittle and easily torn. However only areas at the extremities of the skirt, for example the hem, seams, and under the waistband, are currently damaged. As was detailed above in section 5.4.1, the soiling along the hem appears to have contributed, in conjunction with wear, to the damage and horizontal

splitting along the hem. The hem is currently stabilized by nylon net (see Figure 9, above).

The waistbands and the pleated areas show signs of similar issues. The pleating is in sharp creases that show some signs of wear along the edges, most likely due to the brittleness of the fabric. The back waistband is made up of cotton with a purple geometric print. Much of the print is worn away however one tie had preserved the print better than the middle of the waistband and also shows a border to the print. The waistband is quite dirty and shows the yellowing that is most likely the result of cellulose degradation. A section of the stitching holding the waistband down has come undone; as well the waistband has split along the crease on the proper right side. The fabric remains relatively strong and flexible, particularly in comparison to the silk fabric.

The silk waistband exhibits the same brittleness as the other silk portions of the object. The proper right tie has been torn away at the end of the waistband and the seam in the middle of the proper left tie is delicate. Wear and splitting occurs at regular intervals along the top edge of the waistband. Large portions of the centre front skirt panel have split just below the waistband and are now supported by nylon net.



Figure 10: damage and splitting of the centre front skirt panel just below the waistband. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

The proper right seam of the skirt is split from 24.1 to 71 centimetres from the waistband.

5.5 Treatment Proposal

This treatment is proposed as a method that would allow this object to be displayed to the public in one of the galleries of the Glasgow Museums system.

5.5.1 Staining and Soiling

Existing documentation refer to the considerable soiling and staining on both portions of this object. The staining has been a focus of testing as various cleaning solutions were tested on the coloured threads to test their colour fastness.

Solution	Time	location	Thread colour	Results
De-ionised water	30 min	Bodice		No movement
		Skirt	Dark pink	Fugitive
		Skirt	Maroon	Fugitive
1% NDB solution*	30 min	Bodice	Green	Fugitive
		Skirt	Dark Pink	Fugitive
White Spirit	30 min	Bodice		No movement
		Skirt		No movement
Acidic Acid solution (10cc acidic acid + 90cc de-ionised water)	40 min	Bodice	Dark Pink	Fugitive
		Bodice	Green	Fugitive
		Skirt	Dark Pink	Fugitive
		Skirt	Green	Fugitive
5% Vulpex**, 95% white spirit solution	40 min	Bodice	Dark Pink	Slight movement
		Skirt	Dark Mulberry	Fugitive
		Skirt	Dark Pink	Fugitive
		Skirt	Green	Fugitive

*it is not clear what the term NDB refers to

** Potassium Methyl Cyclohexyl Oleate

Figure 11: Data from solubility tests made undertaken on the object in 1987. See Appendix B for a copy of the original Conservation Record Card.

The results from this testing were not conclusive enough to encourage an attempt to clean this object. The conservators who undertook this testing recommend that “professional cleaning” and dry cleaning be investigated for this object.⁷¹ It was noted however that a suitable dry cleaning establishment would have to be found as at the time it appeared that they did not know of one.⁷²

Although the object has not been cleaned, cleaning would benefit the object in several ways. Firstly, as testing has shown, some of the solutions used to test the dye fastness were successful in also removing soiling.⁷³ This is a positive sign that cleaning would be generally successful at removing soiling. This would serve both to improve the appearance of the object and reduce the impact of soiling on the degradation of the silk. The bodice does not have the same brittleness of the skirt and the pattern of dye bleeding suggests that it had been washed at some point.⁷⁴ This is a further indication that the object would benefit from washing if the silk were to become less brittle. The general brittleness of the skirt is of great concern as it can exacerbate any stress that the object is put under.

Cleaning the object should not be done without a consultation with a curator to determine the importance of the soiling. Evidential soiling can be of great importance to the history of the object and cleaning is an irreversible treatment.⁷⁵ There is no evidence available at the time of this writing that any of the stains and soiling identified are the result of specific moments in the objects history but are rather the result of typical usage of the object during its history.

A successful cleaning would begin with testing. Since dry cleaning has been recommended, the major solvent used in dry cleaning, tetrachloroethylene, should be used to test all colours of threads for dye fastness.

⁷¹ See Appendix A: Condition Report, page 1, and Appendix C: Conservation Report, page 10.

⁷² See Appendix C: Conservation Report page 10.

⁷³ See Appendix C: Conservation Report page 7.

⁷⁴ See Appendix C: Conservation Report page 9.

⁷⁵ Agnes Timar Balazsy, Gyork Matefy, and Sandor Csanyi, 'Effects of Stains and Stain Removal on Historical Textiles,' in *Preprints of the 10th Triennial Meeting*, vol. I (Washington, U.S.A.: ICOM-CC; James & James, 1993) 330.

Ideally, cleaning with tetrachloroethylene would take place in an appropriate laboratory environment however this is often not possible. If not, it is necessary to work with a commercial dry cleaner who is willing to work closely with conservators to tailor the cleaning cycle to the needs of the object. In both cases the object would need to be closely supported, however, the agitation of a dry cleaning machine is of concern in this case. Delicate areas of the object, mainly those currently supported by nylon net, will need to be re-examined and additional stitching added in some areas. The net around the centre back split should be reinforced in particular. Both pieces of the object should be stuffed with nylon net and both the skirt and bodice wrapped in at least one layer of net. The goal is to restrict the movement from the objects throughout the cycle of the machine. The bodice in particular would have the sleeves and centre front linen panels sandwiched in net and then sewn down to the body of the garment. The skirt should be folded in half to make as spherical and compact of a shape as possible so that it does not haphazardly fold or twist itself during the cycle. The wash solution should consist of only the solvent tetrachloroethylene and no additional surfactants. The cycle should be customized to limit the length of the agitation. The temperature should be maintained at as close to ideal levels as possible since heat directly contributes to the degradation of the silk. Due to the compact nature of the objects, an additional drying cycle should be added to the end to help the solvent to evaporate out of the objects.

Once the objects are removed from the machine they should be left to allow the solvent to evaporate for at least a day or until it is no longer detectable. It is important to note that tetrachloroethylene has significant health risks and appropriate personal protection equipment and lab procedures should be followed at all times.

With appropriate testing and protection applied before cleaning, the object should greatly benefit from the removal of soiling

5.5.2 Structural Issues: Bodice

The bodice has several structural issues detailed in section 5.4.2. There are three major areas; the centre back seam, the proper left shoulder, and the proper right front tear. All three cases require the addition of a support fabric however the choice to apply it using stitching or an adhesive depends.

In the case of the centre back seam the lining was sewn with a lapped seam and has torn along the seam line so the seam allowance remains attached to the opposite side.

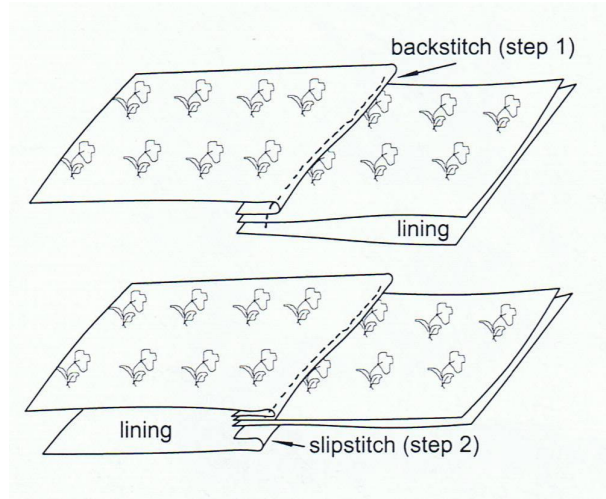


Figure 12: Diagram of lapped seam techniques. The centre back seam of the object was sewn similarly to the upper diagram. Image from Baumgarten, Linda, *Costume Close-Up: Clothing Construction and Pattern 1750-1790*. Hollywood: Costume and Fashion Press, 1999, 39.

The seam is torn along most of its length. This allows ample space to insert a support fabric. As well, the linen should respond well to stitching this support fabric in place since the fabric is flexible and pliable. Horizontal couching stitches should work well to hold the back sections together and to brace against any strain from being placed on a mannequin. The thread from the centre back seam holding the silk together failed but the silk is still strong enough for this seam to be re-sewn. This treatment does not obscure any of the original tailoring details nor does it significantly alter the aesthetics of this part of the object.

The support for the left shoulder is slightly different. The decision between a stitched support or an adhesive support depends on how this area of the object reacts to the solvent cleaning. Currently, the fabric in this area is quite brittle and the silk has begun to fragment. Stitching through this area would likely result in exacerbating this problem. As well even with a successful cleaning, this area is likely to degrade at a faster rate than the rest of the object due to the effects of the soiling and this degradation will only result in making the fabric more delicate and prone to

fragmentation. However the silk fabric is quite smooth and it may not adhere easily. Replicating the smoothness of the silk in an acceptable manner for the testing of various adhesives prior to treatment would be very difficult. Using an adhesive without fully understanding how it will react with the silk has any number of risks from a failed bond, to an inflexible bond or an irreversible affect on the object. However the silk may react in a manner that allows for accurate testing for adhesives and a satisfactory bond in which case an adhesive support would be ideal for both the current and future condition of the object. The role of the object in the collection of the Burrell includes the importance of the rich fabric that the object is made from. And an overlay in this area would obscure some of the fabric and there is plenty of access to insert an adhesive coated support fabric between the silk and the lining. Based upon the assumption that a suitable adhesive and support fabric combination was tested and determined to be appropriate for this fabric, an adhesive coated support patch would be cut to the size of the shoulder pattern piece. Extra should be left where the damage borders a seam so that the patch edge could be turned under and stitched to the lining. Excess adhesive on the support fabric revealed by the damage should be removed by cotton swabs soaked in the solvent used to apply the adhesive.

The damage to the tear on the proper right from linen is more complex than it first appears and the treatment of this area may have ethical ramifications. The tear extends nearly all the way from the top of the seam to the hem of the bodice. The edges of the tear are distorted and curled so that it is not possible to see whether there is an area of loss or not. The tear seems in some areas to have occurred along a seam however this is again unclear. The bottom of this section of the bodice is taken up in a tuck that may contain 5cm of hem length in it. The alteration is rough and the damage itself may have occurred because of the alteration. In order to understand the extent of the damage, the upper portion of the tear must be humidified and the threads re-aligned. The alteration may need to be removed for two reasons. The first is that the damaged area may not be able to be supported with the tuck in place and the second is that the tuck is most likely distorting and pulling the fabric in a manner that could damage it. Certainly the pressure of being put on a mannequin would place strain on this area. If the tuck were removed it would have to be recorded. Ideally a diagram of the pattern piece with seam lines marked would most accurately record the location and extent of

the alteration. The linen here would respond to a stitched support in the same manner as the centre back lining.

5.5.3 Structural Issues: Skirt

The structural concerns of the skirt are of particular importance since the skirt will bear the weight of all the fabric it contains. While the soiling has likely contributed to the damage and splits in the skirt, the damage is also the result of mechanical strain unlike the damage to the shoulder of the bodice. Differing from the bodice as well, the damage to the skirt is generally in the form of horizontal splits rather than fragmentation. Stitched support for the damage to hem and the front waist would be ideal in this case. Placing the couching lines vertically will help to support the weight of the skirt. The front waistband would be well protected by a crepeline overlay while the back waistband is large enough to accommodate an inserted patch. In both cases the waistbands should be supported by stitching. Finally the seam on the surviving front waistband tie should be re-stitched.

The open seam on the proper right side of the skirt should be re-stitched. The fabric is still whole as it appears the thread tore in this seam and the extent of the original seam can be clearly seen with the evidence of thread remains and stitch holes.

5.6 Role of Interpretation for this Object

The role of interpretation in the above proposed treatment is important to consider especially for the actual presentation of the object on the mannequin. The treatment outlined above does not describe how this is to be achieved and this portion of the treatment is best planned with this input of both curators and exhibit designers.

5.6.1 Bodice Reconstruction

The bodice is missing a major portion of the centre front. This section is the characteristic portion of this style of dress known as an “apron-front”. The section of fabric was attached to the skirt front and pinned or buttoned up over the linen front sections.

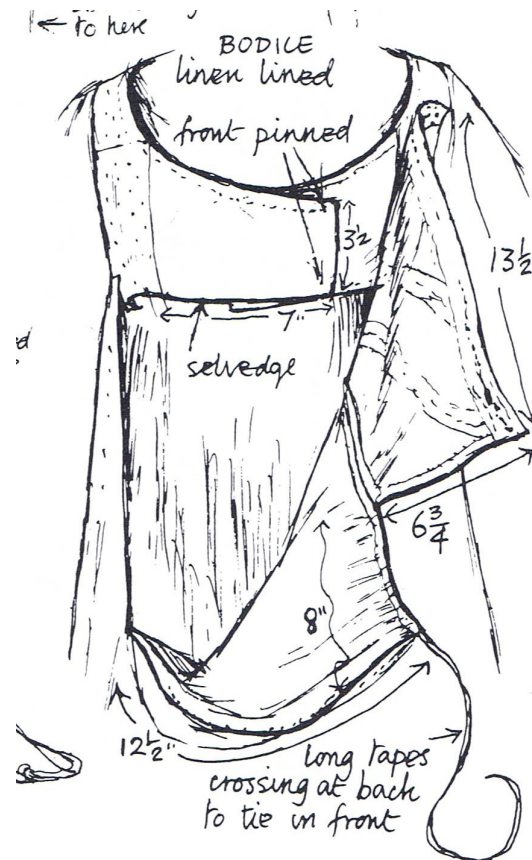


Figure 13: Image of the method for fastening an apron-front dress. Image from Bradford, Nancy. *Costume in Detail: 1730-1930*. Hollywood: Costume and Fashion Press, 1968, 89.

This piece is important in several ways when considering the roles that this object plays. The missing piece would serve to display the fabric and is in an important area, the centre front of the bodice. As well it characterizes a style of dress that is particular to this period.

Since this piece is missing and there is no additional documentary evidence it is impossible to know what the final form was. There could have been decoration on the apron front or it could have been fastened to the bodice in a particular way but it is not possible to know. It would be a disservice to this object not to reconstruct this part of the dress in a way that is understandable to the museum visitor. This object represents an elite item of dress and it would not have been worn without this piece.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Conversation with Rebecca Quinton, June 20, 2012

The pragmatic manner in which this reconstruction is undertaken can also alleviate fears of misrepresenting the object. By making the additional piece removable, it is possible to return this object to its original state quite simply. The missing apron front piece is a simple rectangle. The measurements for this piece should be taken from the bodice while it is on a mannequin. The edges of the piece would be hemmed and the bottom edge stitched to a piece of cotton tape that in turn is stitched to the overlay of the front waistband in a manner that distributes the weight of the apron front.

Designing the material used to create the apron front to imitate the fabric of the object would be challenging. It is possible to commission the recreation of the silk however this would be extremely expensive and likely out of the budget of any temporary exhibit. Cheaper alternatives are available. There are commercial companies that print custom fabric and it would be possible to imitate the woven patterns of the silk with a printed fabric although the sheen and reflected light would never be the same. However this is a viable option for the context of this object. Additionally, a printed cotton piece would have a long life and would age better than a silk version. Inevitably the reconstruction and the object would age differently and would eventually appear dissimilar however, this cannot be helped. It is important to note that this fabric would have to be designed based upon the object after it has been cleaned, since the overall appearance is expected to change.

5.6.2 Mounting

At this point in the treatment, assuming the object responded well to testing, it remains in two pieces. This separation is maintained because the manner of attaching the two pieces is unclear. There are stitch marks on the bottom edge of the bodice however there are also faint signs of a waist seam much higher up on the back of the bodice. It is difficult to determine how and where the skirt attached to the bodice at the back. There is evidence for multiple seam lines in the skirt and it has clearly been unpicked and re-sewn into a waistband several times. It is also not clear how exactly these two pieces were intended to fit together. It is assumed that the cotton would be hidden somehow so was the bodice simply laid over top of the skirt, covering the waistband with stitches worked through all layers. The stitch marks on the bodice

seem to indicate that this could be the case since the marks are several millimetres in from the edge.



Figure 14: This image shows the stitch marks on the bodice hem. They appear to be the result of prick stitches penetrating from the outside hem through all layers to the inside. See diagram below for a potential waist construction using this technique. Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, taken by the author.

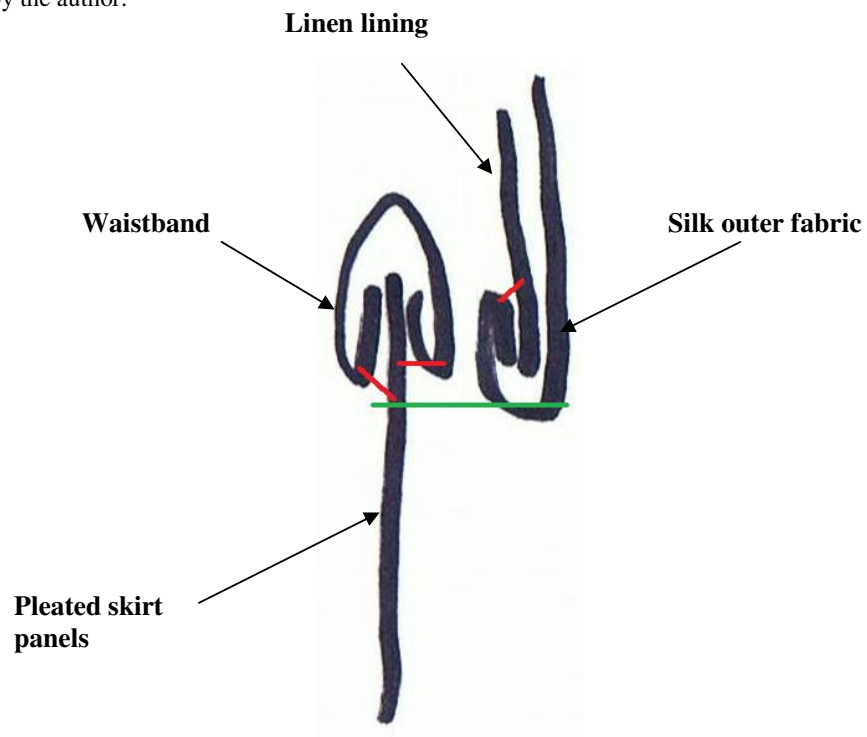


Figure 15: This diagram represents a potential waist construction method. The red lines are stitches constructing the skirt and bodice separately while the green line represents the prick stitching attaching the two elements together.

However attempting to match these stitch marks to those found on the skirt is not possible because of the many marks left from re-setting the skirt. It is entirely possible that the current form of this dress represents the latest in a series of alterations and that this particular alteration was never fully completed. In which case the object was never worn in its current form and there is no correct method to attach these two pieces since they never were!

This type of discussion is, however, better suited to a curator since they would have knowledge of the range of possibilities typical of this period. Without additional information, the conservator can still suggest mounting techniques that allows this object to function in the museum and become available to the public in a manner that reasonably represents its historical role while still maintaining the physical information found within the object's details.

It is not necessary to sew these two sections together to allow for the safe display of the object. In fact, by maintaining their separation, the weight of the skirt and the weight of the bodice can be laid on to the mannequin individually rather than having the skirt hang from the bodice and then the bodice from the mannequin.

The object could be presented on a mannequin in this manner. Firstly the mannequin should be adjusted to such a height that the hem of the skirt rests on the floor. It should not pool there, but the weight on the waistband will be lessened if the hem touches the floor. The skirt is cut with a train, however, so this will increase the object's space within the exhibit. Two cotton tapes, attached to the back waistband in strong areas, should be stitched to the mannequin to hold it into position. The bodice would then be placed upon the mannequin with the mannequin padded so that the hem of the bodice extends just beyond the back cotton waistband, hiding it. The linen fronts should be overlapped and pinned into place and the apron front brought up and carefully pinned to the mannequin. These pins will have to pass through the bodice so their placement should be chosen carefully to cause the least marks and the least amount of strain to the bodice. The lack of any other type of fastening requires that pins be used in this case and this is also a historically accurate method for fastening. The waistband ties from the back can be gently tucked out of sight and the remaining

silk tie can be either passed through the loop in the centre back and pinned flat at the waist or, if it responds well to the addition of the support fabric, can be tucked inside the skirt to hang down. It is not advised for the silk tie to be tied in a bow as the silk is too delicate to withstand damage from the stress.

5.7 Summary

Treatment for this object should begin with cleaning. Based upon the evidence of previous dye fastness tests, it appears that solvent cleaning may be the most effective. The object would benefit from cleaning both by lessening the degradation caused by soiling as well as by softening the fabric generally. The use of a professional dry cleaner would be possible although not ideal with a careful relationship with the dry cleaners that would allow for the customization of the dry cleaning cycle as well as appropriate padding and support for the object.

Support for structural issues in the bodice and skirt can take the form of a combination of stitched and adhesive support depending on how the object responds to cleaning.

The reconstruction of the missing apron-front can be considered unethical however this piece of the dress represents a characteristic aspect of dress from this period as well as ameliorating the visual nature of this object to better allow it to represent an elite item of dress. Commercial printing is easily available and printed cotton may allow for the best match of colour and longevity of this treatment.

The method by which the skirt was attached to the bodice is unclear and it is possible that the current altered form was never completed. It is not necessary to re-attach the two pieces if they are mounted carefully. By attaching the skirt back directly to the mannequin, the weight of the skirt is supported there and the bodice can be laid over top, giving the illusion that they are attached while still maintaining the integrity of the object's current form. The front of the bodice would be pinned to the mannequin and the apron front pinned on top of that.

The combination of treatment and careful mounting allows for the balance between creating an impression of a whole object while maintaining the peculiarities of its

current form. This form of treatment allows for the object to fulfill its basic function to be displayed to the public without any major misrepresentations of its many roles. The addition of interpretive information about the object's biography would increase the transparency of the exhibited object however the limitations placed on temporary exhibits rarely allows this. Instead, this treatment serves to strike a balance between competing needs.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This work began with a discussion of how costume offers particular challenges to the conservator. The three-dimensional and multi-layered nature of costume, are characteristics of the physical nature of costume. These characteristics generally make it difficult to properly support the objects during storage, treatment, and display. Alterations are common among pieces of costume as these objects were of great value in the past. These alterations force the conservator to make judgements of the value of individual periods of the objects history in order to treat the object and continue the normal functions of the museum. International conservation standards promote the invisibility of the conservator's work in the biography of objects but the active treatment of objects often makes this impossible. Items of costume held in museums are particularly prone to these ethical dilemmas and demonstrate how current conservation techniques require that the conservator's work become an active part of each object's history.

Context is an important aspect when examining potential treatments from a pragmatic and practical perspective. Glasgow Museums provides a typical example of a museum in the west. Their theories and guidelines are consistent with current museum practices and museum association standards. This is reflected in their interpretation strategies that, while serving the vision statement of Glasgow Life, allow for the balancing act that a conservator must play between being an advocate for the object's preservation and allowing the object to serve the community. The system of temporary exhibits and the methods for communicating messages to the visitor further reflect the conflicts inherent in the treatment of costume.

The conservation literature related to the topic of the treatment of costume is an important source for examination of both practices and theories. A clear paradigm shift occurs in the published literature surrounding the treatment of costume. Sources that review past treatments are rare but a valuable tool to illustrate this paradigm shift. Current ethical guidelines and codes of practice illustrate some major concepts, namely the concept of minimal interventions, which guide current conservation practices. While these concepts are promoted in the ethical codes, they are not rigidly

defined and ethical codes generally acknowledge that there are competing values between the current uses of the objects and their preservation. In particular the concept presented in the AIC code of ethics that part of the conservation profession is to act as and advocate for the object is an acknowledgement of the conflict inherent in current conservation practices.

Object E.1932.51.k is an example of this balancing act. The question to reconstruct the sleeves of this object can be argued in either direction while still following professional ethical guidelines. Part of the object's current social role is to serve the community while on display or available for access by members of the public. Display forces a discussion of how this object is to represent the messages that are a part of its history. Its history as an elite item of fashion from the 1820's and 30's promotes the importance of its now missing sleeves and forces the question of whether and how to represent the sleeves that were likely a part of its past. There is a strong argument that the sleeves are an essential part of this object's elite status. There are, however real pragmatic concerns for how the sleeves could be reconstructed. With the addition of these pragmatic concerns, the sleeves become a preservation issue as they could adversely affect the delicate silk fabric of the object. Mounting the sleeves on the mannequin would limit this affect however the sleeves are then a temporary feature of the exhibit and may not be financially justifiable. Again the interplay between the visual and textual cues of display and exhibit design lend importance to these decisions as the method by which to send the most truthful message through the object depends so much on how the visitor perceives the object.

The treatment of E.1977.96.14 is more complex than the first object, due mainly to its highly soiled condition. Based upon the evidence of previous dye fastness tests, it appears that solvent cleaning may be the most effective. The object would benefit from cleaning both by lessening the degradation caused by soiling as well as by softening the fabric generally. The use of a professional dry cleaner would be possible although not ideal with a careful relationship with the dry cleaners that would allow for the customization of the dry cleaning cycle as well as appropriate padding and support for the object.

The reconstruction of the missing apron-front is an aspect of this treatment that again challenges the concepts of minimal intervention presented in professional ethical guidelines. Like the first case study, this piece of the dress represents a characteristic aspect of dress from this period as well and would elevate the visual nature of this object to better allow it to represent an elite item of dress.

Mounting the pieces of the object separately would allow the object to be presented as a whole while maintaining the minimum treatment necessary. While carefully designing a method for mounting is key to upholding this concept, the resources spent on this part of treatment would be used for a temporary exhibit, adding to the financial challenges of putting on an exhibit. The addition of interpretive information about the object's biography would increase the transparency of the exhibited object however the limitations placed on temporary exhibits rarely allows this. Instead, this treatment serves to strike a balance between competing needs.

It is hoped that this work draws together the broad themes ethics with the pragmatic and individual concerns with the treatment and display of objects in Glasgow Museums. As we have seen, international conservation standards promote the invisibility of the conservator's work in the biography of objects but the active treatment of objects often makes this impossible. Items of costume held in museums are particularly prone to these ethical dilemmas and demonstrate how current conservation techniques require that the conservator's work become an active part of each object's history.

Appendix A: E.1977.96.14 Condition Report

CONDITION REPORT

E1977.96.14a+b

17.2.87

Description Dress c1780

Ladies dress consisting of a bodice and skirt of cream silk brocaded with trailing sprays of red and pink roses and green leaves and with a satin weave vertical stripe. Bodice is lined with linen. Fabric 1780 but dress has been altered c1800-10.

Condition

- The dress is in fair condition, but is very dirty and has patchy stains.
- The brocade is quite hard and has split in some places round the hem. Here the dress is particularly dirty and frayed.
- The right side seam where the pocket access is, has come apart about 10" in all.
- The waistband area is weak and split at the front.
- The bodice is very dirty especially across the shoulders. The colour under the arms has run, due to perspiration.
- The centre back seam has started to come apart about 1" and the lining 3", and 2"
- The bodice lining of linen is very dirty and badly stained across the right front. The left front lining has almost completely come away from the main bodice.
- The colours used for the sateen flowers looks very fugitive, and the green has already run in several places.
- The silk on the left shoulder has split.

Treatment Recommended

- As the colours look very fugitive I would suggest dry cleaning if possible.
- Removal of the bad stains
- Stitch up skirt side seam, and seams in bodice.
- Support the weak area at skirt waistband and shoulder. The

treatment recommended continued

hem edge also need strengthened and supported.

- Cleaning this garment would help soften the already quite hard fabric, as well as greatly improving its appearance

Display

- Do not display this garment. It is too weak at present and needs to be supported.
- Aesthetically the dress is too dirty for display and the above treatment would need to be executed first.

Appendix B: E.1977.96.14 Conservation Record Card

GLASGOW ART GALLERIES (Burrell Collection)		CONSERVATION RECORD CARD	
CAMPBELL		DRESS C.1780	
DESCRIPTION of OBJECT	Lady's two piece dress, in cream & floral silk brocade. Bodice is cut high & a low neckline. Skirt has ties at either side & pocket slits at either side.	REGISTER NUMBER	E1977.96.14a+b.
KEEPER'S SIGNATURE		INVENTORY NUMBER	
DATE RECEIVED	27/2/87.	LOCATION	
RESTORED BY	C. Covan.		
DATE RETURNED			
CONDITION	<p>Fair condition, but very dirty & covered with small discoloured patches & stains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brocade is quite hard in places. - Bodice has patches of green dye especially under the arms, fugitive. - Bodice is in a poorer state than the skirt. The front bustle section is missing, exposing the coarse cotton underlay that has a bad stain. This section, on the left, has an unravelled seam. - The dress fabric is older than the style of the garment, & there's evidence of remodelling. - Side seam (right) has opened. The weakest area of the skirt is across the tummy & hips, where the silk has split at the waistband. 	CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHS	<p>BEFORE</p> <p>DURING</p> <p>AFTER</p>
DETAILS of CONSERVATION	<p>- Spot tested the coloured welt threads for colour fastness.</p> <p>① De-ionised water (30mins) Bodice - no movement. Skirt - dark pink & maroon - fugitive.</p> <p>② 1% N.D.B. solution. " Bodice - green - fugitive. Skirt - dark pink - fugitive.</p> <p>③ White spirit " Bodice - no movement. Skirt - no movement.</p> <p>④ Acidic Acid solution (40mins) (10cc acetic acid + 90cc de-ionised water.) Bodice - dark pink & green - fugitive. Skirt - dark pink & green - fugitive.</p> <p>⑤ Vulpex + white spirit solution (40mins) 5% → 95% Bodice - dark pink slight movement. Skirt - dark mulberry, dark pink & green fugitive.</p> <p>- Conclusion.</p> <p>- the bodice has probably been washed at some point, but the skirt has not. Cleaning of the garment has been postponed P.T.O.</p>		

' a more satisfactory method can be found. Professional learning may be one answer.

s re-packed & returned to the store.

Appendix C: E.1977.96.14 Conservation Report

CONSERVATION REPORT

E1977.96.14a&b

Description - Dress c1780

- A lady's dress consisting of two pieces, a bodice and skirt, in a cream brocaded silk with a stylised, formal, floral pattern woven into the fabric. The flowers are in trailing sprays running the length of the fabric in maroon, dark pink, pale pink, mulberry, plum, ecru and dark green leaves.
- The fabric has a vertical sateen stripe $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide and at $\frac{3}{4}$ " intervals. The selvages consist of two stripes of dark green, equally divided by a cream stripe and the fabric has been hand woven.
- The skirt is made from 5 widths of the fabric $19\frac{1}{2}$ " and 2 panels measuring $9\frac{1}{4}$ " wide. These smaller panels are at the sides of the skirt where the pocket slits are. At the bottom of each panel there is a section $2\frac{1}{2}$ " deep and $9\frac{1}{4}$ " wide.
- At the waist on either side there are 3 pleats facing outwards.
- The pocket slits are 12" deep.
- The bodice is cut high, hence a raised waistline, and the skirt ties round the inside and outside with tapes.
- The neckline is quite low and angular and there are no side seams in the bodice.
- The back of the bodice still retains the 4 large tucks, stitched down, and a small loop at the bottom waistline for the skirt ties to loop through.
- There is a linen underlay across the bust which would have been covered with a bib but this is now missing. There is no obvious way of fastening the bodice.
- The sleeves have one underarm seam and several large tucks at the shoulder seams.
- The bodice is lined with linen. The lining sleeves are considerably smaller than the silk ones. The sleeves also appear to have been removed at some point. More likely though it seems that the dress was altered about 1800-10 although the fabric dates from 1780. I think the smaller panels at the side are reduced larger panels

and the spare cloth used to make new sleeves in the style of 1800. The bodice has been cut shorter and the edge turned under. There is evidence of earlier stitch lines round the sleeve holes and bodice hem edge.

Measurements

Shoulder to hem - 52"	Bust - 35"
Nape to waist - 13"	Waist (skirt) - 36"
Skirt CB length - 39"	Waist (bodice) - 32"
Skirt CF length - 38½"	Sleeve length - 11¾"
Hem circumference - 112"	Underarm sleeve - 7½"
Waistband silk - ½"	Armhole - 17"
Waistband printed cotton - 2"	

Fabric and Construction

- The weave is a combination of plain or tabby and satin weave and the flowers are formed with floating wefts.
- There are cream coloured flowers with a twisted thread that look like floating wefts but it is actually inlay, done by hand with a two ply yarn. Two silk threads have been twisted together but one thread has been tighter than the other and a wavy effect created to give greater surface texture.
- The garment has been hand stitched with natural coloured linen thread for the bodice lining and cream silk thread for the silk brocade.
- Back stitch has been used round the armholes. Running stitch for the 4 pleats on the bodice back and whipping stitches for the turned under edges.
- The skirt seams have running stitch and whipping stitch for turned under edges.

Condition - Generally

- The dress is in fair condition but is very dirty and is covered with small discoloured patches and stains.
- The brocade is quite hard and has split in several places, in particular round the hem which is also suffering from walking dirt.

- The dyes used for the floral pattern look very fugitive and the green has already run in several places.

Bodice

- The bodice is in a poorer state than the skirt and although the fabric is pretty and still easily defined there is a grubby, patchy look about the cloth. There are many stains of varying colour, area and destruction of the silk.
- The front of the bodice left side is much dirtier than the right where there is a very large grey/fawn stain from the front round under the arm, continuing well into the bodice back and sleeve. This stain has made parts of the silk very hard and brittle and other areas are very soft and smooth.
- Moving from this left side towards the centre front is a piece of the linen underlay. This piece has split from the silk-linen seam and also the seam thread has unravelled. This front panel is hanging dangerously, ~~is~~ is badly stained. There also seems to be a section of the linen missing, either cut or ripped. This panel is made of linen and a finer linen, both plain weave. The finer fabric section lies underneath the corresponding panel on the right side, (see photographs for details), and is made from yet another fabric of wool and linen. Here there is a very large orange/brown stain at the upper edge and also smaller ones further down.
- Stitched to this is the right side of the silk bodice. The front has an orange/brown stain and the colour has run round some of the green leaves. Towards the bodice edge there are light brown horizontal marks.
- The right sleeve underarm has yellow/grey patchy marks with fugitive green and red dye, again from the flowers. The fabric is still quite supple although the lustre has gone.
- The centre back seam has started to unravel for about 1" from the neck edge and the green dye has run - again round the flowers and leaves.
- Moving further left across the bodice back there is an enormous brown coloured mark extending across, under the arm and well into the undersleeve. The discolouration continues to the bodice front and up towards the shoulder.

- There is a crease in the silk under the left sleeve that has split about $\frac{3}{4}$ " and looks set to split further. On either side of the crease there are 2 rows of old stitching lines, the needle marks are still quite noticeable.
- On the opposite side of the bodice, under the right sleeve, there is a corresponding crease line and stitching marks, but only a slight split because the fabric, although stained, is much more supple.
- The above suggests to me that the two smaller side panels in the skirt were reduced to make new bodice sides as well as sleeves. The central area of the bodice with the pleats is original, but the centre back seam is more recent, probably some fabric has been removed for a tighter fit.
- The shoulders are very dirty, especially the left shoulder which has a dark tea coloured stain spreading well into the sleeve. The mark is probably handling dirt and degradation of the fabric. It has split in several places including the armhole, sleeve seam and the linen lining can be seen underneath. The woven flowers are very discoloured in this area.
- The opposite or right shoulder has fared better but where the sleeve meets the bodice at the shoulder there is a nasty yellow/brown mark as well as fugitive colour.
- Finally, the bodice lining has come apart at the centre back seam. There is a $3\frac{1}{2}$ " rip from the top down, a gap of $\frac{1}{2}$ " of intact seam, then a $2\frac{1}{4}$ " gap followed by $1\frac{1}{2}$ " of intact seam. (See photograph for details.) In this case it is not the seam thread that has departed but the linen fabric that has ripped.
- Overall the bodice is in a poor condition, much worse than the skirt.

Skirt

- The skirt has a uniform dirtiness. There are assorted stains and marks covering the whole skirt.
- There are no alarmingly obvious or holed marks but a few tea coloured stains and water marks. The dirtiest area is round the hem where the fabric has split and frayed.
- The weakest area of the skirt is centre front across the stomach.

The weight of the fabric, coupled with surface abrasion and wear and tear has taken its toll. The fabric has split along the narrow silk waistband 7".

- The skirt has been remodelled, as said before, and there is still some pale blue tacking thread in the waistband.
- The silk waistband continues to form two long ties, 20½" on either side of the dress but the right side tie is missing, having split and fallen off at the skirt edge.
- The existing tie on the left is very dirty. The fabric is hard and fragile. There is a seam in the tie 1¼" from the skirt edge, which is in a precarious state.
- The back of the skirt has a similar arrangement with ties. These ties however, which wouldn't be seen, are of a printed cotton. The waistband is ⅞" wide and the ties are the width of the waistband flattened out. The cotton fabric band on the right side of the skirt has a very obvious print of a pimperl type flower in dark maroon. At the centre back of the band the flower print starts to disappear until by the end of the left side tie there is no evidence of a pattern at all. The cotton at the centre back is also very dirty.
- The printed cotton tie on the right side has the remains of a border edge at its end (see illustration). This fabric is another indication of the alterations from a later period.
- Both front and back waistbands have been very crudely attached to the skirt top. The cotton waistband has come away from the skirt about 3", revealing the coarse cobbling holding the pleats in place.
- The right side seam, where the pocket slit is, has come apart for a further 10" after the slit.
- The bottom right back seam has a 1" hole 1½" from the hem edge.

Treatment Recommended

- Cleaning of the garment.
- Spot testing with de-ionised water, water and 1% solution NDB and white spirit.
- Depending on results, the appropriate cleaning method, if possible, should be used.

- Support all weak areas with nylon net before cleaning.
- Support all weak areas.

Skirt

- For the fragile area at the skirt waistband a piece of polyester crepeline at the back, stitched down with a crepeline thread. Secure the torn and frayed areas on the front with the same thread and darn. Encase the worn silk waistband in crepeline for support.
- Stitch a strip of crepeline 4" wide around the inside of the hem and darn to secure the very weak areas, again using a single crepeline thread. If the dress comes up considerably cleaner (if cleaned) then either the white or dyed crepeline can be continued round the hem edge to the right side of the skirt. This should be done only round the very weak and holed areas.
- Replace the lost silk tie on the right side with a new one and stitch on behind where the original one was, and support the other one.
- Stitch down the cotton waistband where it has come away with single cotton thread.
- Stitch the split side seam with a cream silk thread.

Bodice

- If possible the bodice should be cleaned in the same manner as the skirt after temporary support for the weak areas has been applied.
- A fine linen backing should be placed behind the ripped and torn area of the bodice front and stitched down with a fine cotton.
- The centre back seam should be stitched up and a piece of nylon net placed down the centre back seam on the inside and stitched down.
- The two small splits on either side of the underarms, back, should be stitched down.
- Fine net should be stitched over the left shoulder with securing stitches round the split areas.
- Photograph each stage.
- Illustrate where and when necessary.

Treatment Carried Out

Spot tested the bodice and skirt dyes. The results of the tests are as follows:-

1 Spot Testing

1. De-ionised water
2. De-ionised water and 1% NDB
3. White spirit

Left for 30 mins. each time

Colours

- Maroon, dark pink, pale pink, mulberry, dark plum, dark green, cream, maroon printed cotton.

Results:

Bodice

- No movement of colour with the de-ionised water or white spirit.
- Only the green left any traces of colour in the 1% NDB solution.

Skirt

- The dark pink and maroon left dye marks in the de-ionised water. The other colours left only dirty marks, no dye.
- The NDB solution left traces of colour from the dark pink and again dirty marks from the other fibres.
- The white spirit made no impression on any of the colours.

2 Spot Testing

Acidic Acid

10cc acidic acid + 90cc de-ionised water.

Leave for 40 mins.

Results:

Bodice

- Only the dark pink and green fibres left any trace of dye.

Skirt

- Again the dark pink and green left some dye residue.

Conclusion

- The acetic acid will not 'set' the dyes as hoped, in fact the acid seems to have released more colour rather than less and it would be unwise to continue with the acidic acid.

3 Spot Testing

5% Vulpex + 95% white spirit

Leave for 40 mins.

Results:

Bodice

- The dark pink has left only a very slight trace of colour but the other fibres have remained fast.

Skirt

- The dark mulberry, dark pink and green have all left very obvious traces of colour. The remaining colours have stayed fast.

Conclusion

- It appears that the bodice has been washed at some point, explaining the lack of colour residue while spot testing, but also the reason why there is so much fugitive dye on the bodice fabric.
- The skirt hasn't been washed or cleaned in the past, at least not in the same manner that the bodice was washed. The distinctive dye residue left after spot testing suggests that the colour is unstable and that washing or cleaning at this point, with the tried and tested solutions, would be unwise.

Summary

- As the spot testing results indicate, cleaning the dress with these solutions would cause too many problems. Therefore it was decided to leave the dress as it is for the time being.
- Professional dry cleaning may be an alternative but an investigation for a 'safe' establishment will need to be made.
- The garment should be returned to the store without any conservation done at this point. Re-packing and supporting the weaker areas with acid-free tissue paper will keep the dress stable until a more satisfactory cleaning method is found.

Appendix D: E.1977.96.14 Object Catalogue Entry

GCC CULTURAL & LEISURE SERVICES (Museums) DECORATIVE ARTS: COSTUME & TEXTILES		REGISTER NUMBER E.1977.96.14	
OBJECT NAME Dress – bodice .1; skirt .2		DATE circa 1780 (material) circa 1800-10 (dress)	
CLASSIFICATION women's wear; main garments		TITLE	
DESIGNER / MAKER / RETAILER		ASSOCIATED DATES	
PLACE			
MATERIALS silk	TECHNIQUES hand-stitched	CONDITION	CONSERVATION
MEASUREMENTS			
DESCRIPTION <p>Woman's dress consisting of bodice and matching skirt in cream brocaded silk patterned with trailing sprays of red and pink roses and green leaves with a satin weave vertical stripe, circa 1780. Dress altered to form round gown with high waistline, circa 1800-1810;</p> <p>a) Woman's bodice closed at front with square décolletage and high waistline, but front section in plain linen and missing decorative stomacher front. Short sleeves. Lined with linen. Bodice made from earlier dress altered to form part of round gown with high waistline.</p> <p>b) Woman's skirt with silk waistband with fullness gathered into centre back. Skirt made from earlier dress altered to form part of round gown with high waistline.</p>			
MARKS / INSCRIPTIONS			
ACCESSORIES			
ACQUISITION SOURCE Mrs T R Warden		ACQUISITION METHOD Gift	ACQUISITION DATE 1977-08-19
FUNDING SOURCE		COST	

Appendix E: E.1977.96.14 Object Record

Reg No. E1977.96.14a+b No. of Pieces 2 Card No.

Name of Object BODICE AND SKIRT Class

Function Date c1810

Material Cream silk with satin weave stripe and trailing floral s rays in red, pink and green (ca1780)

Cut, Construction, Decoration.

Bodice back shows original 1780s cut, with pleats sewn down and tapering at centre. A loop has been added at the foot. The original bodice has been cut to give high waisted line, and short wide sleeves have been added. At the front, the sides are not balanced, but both have linen flaps added to cover bust (badly stained) Skirt has a slit on either side and is pleated, scantily on one side and fully on the other, into a narrow band with tyers at each side. The scantily pleated side has a waistband of the same silk, the fully pleated one, a band of printed cotton (badly faded) Very little piecing, and only at foot.

Measurements

Maker/Supplier Place of Origin.

Wearer Place of Wearing

Related Material

Acquired From: Mrs Warden, 3 West Chapelton Lane, Bearsden Place & Date

Gift Loan Purchase

Pedigree

Photograph Sketch Pattern

Authority for Identification

Curatorial Documentary Traditional

Published Refs.

The dress can be compared to:

Summer garments:

- Museum of London has a number of dresses c. 1795-1800 altered from earlier dresses: A 20194, # 36.9L/1, 39.115, 64.130 (See 2. Halls, Women's Costume 1750-1800)
- Silk Designs in: M. Rothstein
Silk Designs of the Eighteenth Century
pp. 264-265.
- E1 938.92. k. an earlier dress altered to a high waisted style.

Paintings:

Description of E1977.96.14 a&b:

This bodice & skirt form a dress which in its present state dates from the first decade of the 19th century, but which has been adapted from a dress c. 1780. The fabric is a cream silk brocade woven with vertical stripes & sprays & trailing swags of pink roses. The pattern of the fabric probably dates from the 1770s/1780s (see N. Rothstein Silk Design of the 18th Century pp. 264-5).

The bodice (a) clearly is ~~based on~~ altered from a bodice c. 1780 - the piecing & pleating down the back matches those worn in the 1770s/1780s (see eg. E.1932.51 h&i). But the bodice has been cut short in a style popular 1800-1810 (see N. Bradfield Costume in Detail 1730-1930 p. 95-96). The bodice is cut with a square neckline & short sleeves, both lined with linen. The front section of the bodice is 2 pieces of linen which must have been covered by a bib front (see N. Bradfield op. cit). This no longer exists. The bodice is in a delicate state & has been supported with net.

The skirt (b) is formed from a number of widths & part widths of 19" silk with some piecing. These are sewn into a cotton waistband - the back piece has little flaps pointed out inner edge - with pleats at the sides to add some fullness. There are two silts at the edge of right & left (the skirt has right & left) but the right edge has split further down the seam.

Both skirt & ~~the~~ bodice are fairly dirty - see condition report.

██████████
██████████████████
██████████
██████████

NAME	SEEN
TW	
B	

DEC/GFT

FILE

23 August 1977

Dear Mrs Warder,

I am writing on behalf of the Glasgow Art Galleries and Museums to thank you for your gift of costume from your late aunt's house at 73 Kintore Road Newlands. The 1920's afternoon dress is in excellent conditions, and will display very well.

On closer examination I think that the white brocade dress with red flowers is made from a silk (probably English) c.1780, and was altered (not very well) in about 1800. The linen fronts of the bodice would have been covered by a fichu. This dress will be most attractive when cleaned; our textile conservator has achieved great success in washing eighteenth century silks.

The 1840's shirt will be very useful for display; we now have a day shirt, a dress shirt and a filled evening shirt of similar date.

I do feel that if all your other shirts are of that same date, then the Sotheby's representative has misled you as to their value. Shirts of that time were made in lots of a dozen or so, and they still survive in reasonable numbers. I am sure that they would not fetch a high price at auction - certainly not as much as £20 each for few collectors or museums would be anxious to secure them.

It is more likely that the Sotheby's man thought they were older - perhaps of about 1780 or 1790. If there were shirts of that date in the collection, we might indeed be glad to purchase them, and would at least like "first refusal".

Yours sincerely,

B

Jane Tozer
Assistant Keeper, Dept of Decorative Arts

Appendix F: E.1932.51.k Object Catalogue Entry

GCC CULTURAL & LEISURE SERVICES (Museums) DECORATIVE ARTS: COSTUME & TEXTILES		REGISTER NUMBER 1932.51.k	
OBJECT NAME dress		DATE circa 1825-1830	
CLASSIFICATION women's wear; main garments		TITLE	
DESIGNER / MAKER / RETAILER		ASSOCIATED DATES	
PLACE			
MATERIALS silk	TECHNIQUES hand-stitched	CONDITION	CONSERVATION
MEASUREMENTS centre back bodice: 280 mm (finished top edge) waist: 625 - 640 mm bust: 1090 mm - variable, no lining.			
DESCRIPTION Woman's dress in yellow silk printed with a stylised pattern of flowers and foliage in light blue, green and red. V-shaped neckline with bodice gathered into centre of waistband and pleated up onto each shoulder, held in place with cream silk satin band and button, piped edged in light blue silk satin. Epaulet sleeves edged with cream silk satin band piped along inside in blue silk satin, lined with cream silk net. Bodice fastens centre back with buttons. Slightly raised waistline with deep waistband. Full-length skirt pleated at front and gathered into waistband at back, lined with glazed silesia.			
MARKS / INSCRIPTIONS			
ACCESSORIES			
ACQUISITION SOURCE Mrs Anne Houston		ACQUISITION METHOD Gift	ACQUISITION DATE 1932-10-07
FUNDING SOURCE		COST	

Appendix G: E.1932.51.k Condition Report

CONDITION REPORT E1932.51k

13.5.87.

Description Dress c1825-30

Yellow silk dress with small all over pattern in emerald green and red. The front fullness of the bodice is caught up on the shoulders with small yellow silk bands. Epaulle sleeves are edged with yellow silk and lined with net. The bodice fastens at the back with small buttons. The full skirt is lined with glazed silesia.

Condition

- Fair. Badly faded across the dress front resulting in several weak areas. The 'V' centre front of bodice is badly faded and has a bad repair.
- The centre front, at the waistband, again faded, has bad degradation of the fabric, making it weak.
- The centre front panel of the skirt, at thigh level, has split areas of silk that look very fragile. The centre front hem area has a bad tear on the left.
- The sleeve holes have signs of seam stress. The net lining in both sleeves has fallen apart and is very delicate.

Display

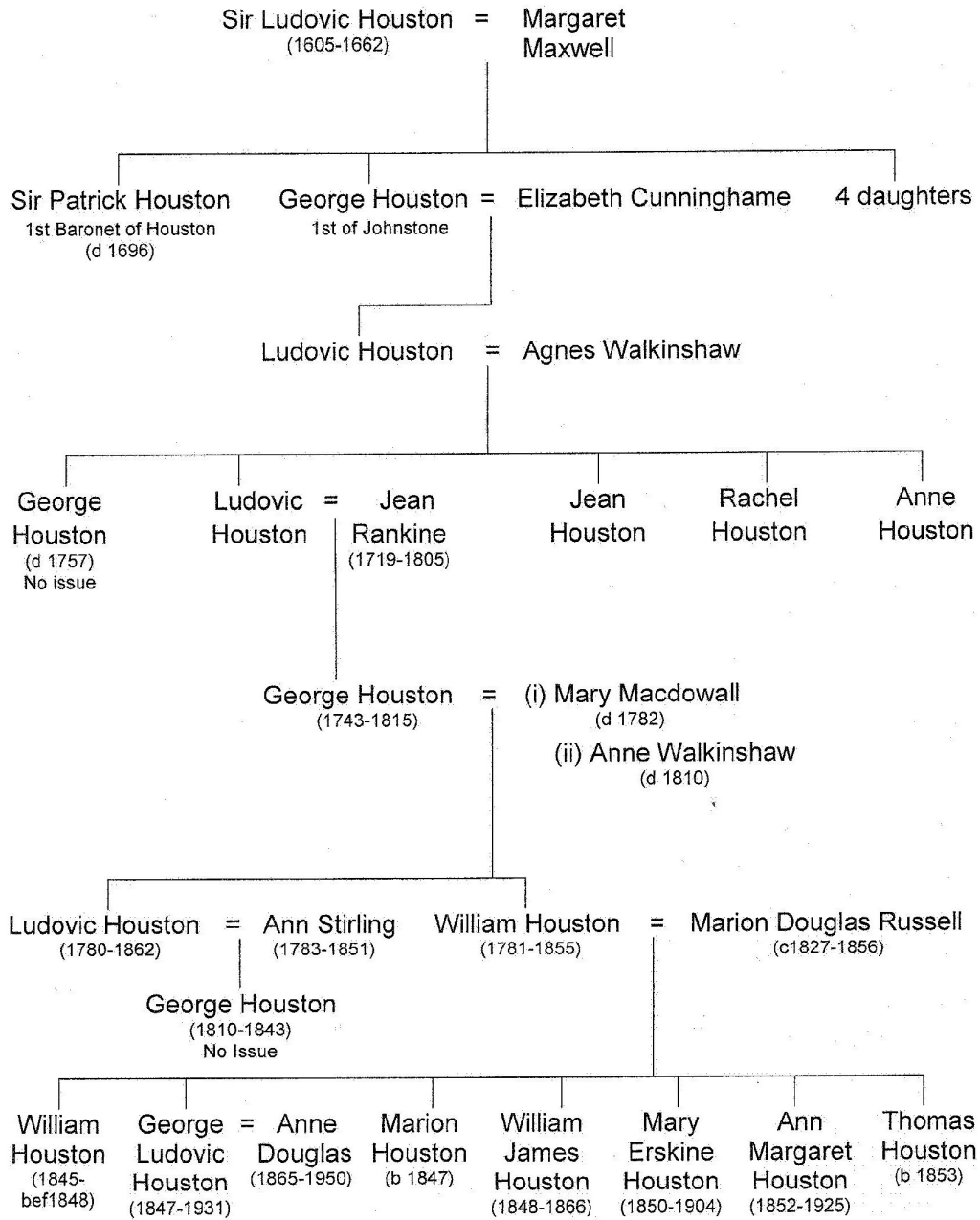
- Could be on display for a very brief period, but the dress needs much support for the weak areas. The fading of the fabric is not pleasing to the eye but does not interfere with its construction or overall appearance.

Appendix H: E.1932.51.k Object Record

1932.51: Collection donated by Mrs Anne Douglas Houston

- 1932.51.h-l Woman's English gown and matching petticoat in pink brocaded silk woven with small carnations, circa 1779-1782
- 1932.51.j Woman's dress in white muslin embroidered in white cotton thread in a design of wheatear motifs, circa 1825-1828
- 1932.51.k Woman's dress in yellow silk printed with a stylised pattern of flowers and foliage, circa 1825-1830
- 1932.51.l+m Woman's polonaise gown and matching petticoat in cream brocaded silk woven with clusters of flowers and foliage, circa 1780-1782
- 1932.51.n Woman's sack back gown in pink silk woven with white stripes and rosebuds, circa 1779-1782
- 1932.51.o Woman's petenlair in white linen cord quilted, circa 1779-1781
- 1932.51.p Woman's English gown in light blue silk woven with small white horizontal stripes, circa 1779-1782
- 1932.51.q Woman's petticoat in quilted yellow silk
- 1932.51.r Man's hunting coat in red wool broadcloth with green silk velvet facing and silver gilt braid frogging, circa 1770s-1780s
- 1932.51.s Man's breeches in red silk velvet, circa 1730
- 1932.51.t Man's breeches in cream-yellow and red checked silk velvet, circa 1730
- 1932.51.u Man's waistcoat with hand-sewn decoration (unfinished), 18th century

Houston Family Tree



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