


French revolution

Late 18th century

The French Revolution of 1789 marked a turning point in the history of fashion. There was an overnight change in the form and attitude towards the clothes after the revolution. As Paris was the centre of fashion the changes there were reflected everywhere.

Men's clothes changed in emphasis while women's changed both in emphasis and form. Clothes moved more towards simplicity (as during the terror anything with ostentation or wealth or privilege was an invitation to a swift end).

Women no longer wore the extravagant panniers, corsets, plumage and rich fabrics of the earlier part of the century. They were replaced by simple, flimsy, muslin gowns and simpler sandals. Dresses showed little ornamentation. Skirts were plain worn with a sash about the waist and bodices were simple. The waist line ascended to the armpit (empire style) with tiny sleeves and the lower arm was covered with long gloves.



The desire for little clothing affected the undergarments. Silk tights replaced the full petticoats. Shoes were heelless and bound to the ankles by ribbons.

Men's Costume:- Changes in men's fashion were less dramatic than those in the women costume. There were simpler fabric with less embroidery and trimmings but the forms (Silhouettes) were a development from the previous ones.(1790)

The frock or Tail coat, cut away at the front was worn universally all over the Europe formally as well as informal wear.

**White Breeches
and
Cut Away
Tail coat**

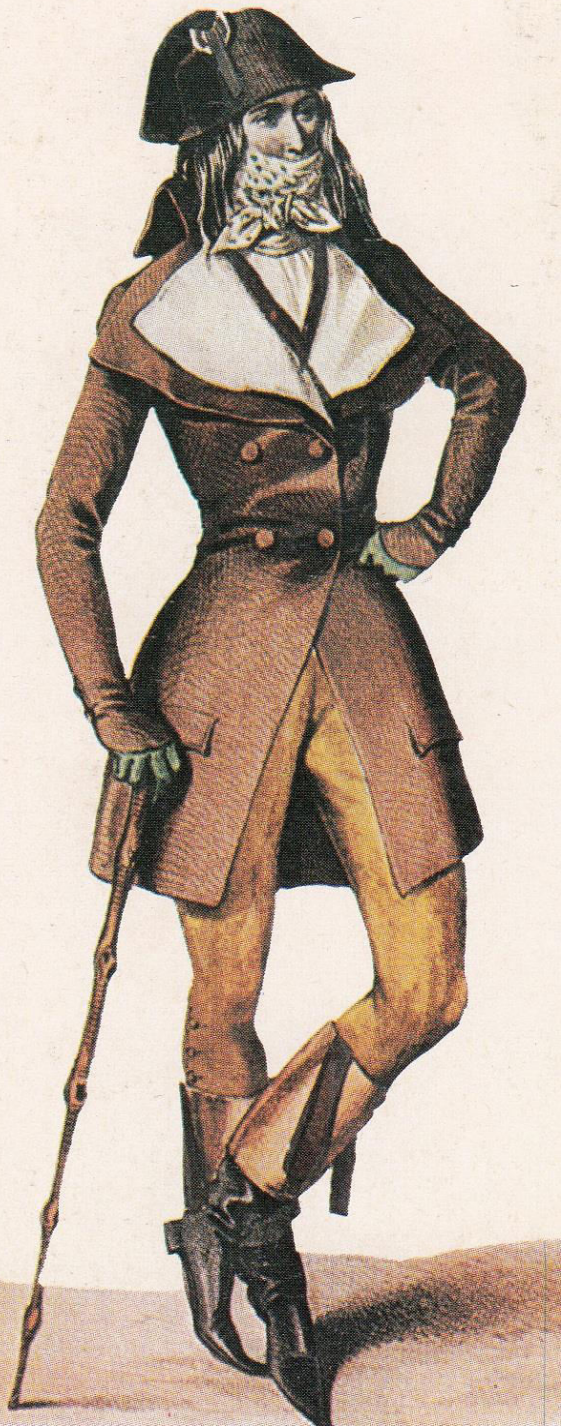


The most fashionable Tail coat was of the square cut type, single breasted with wide revers and by the end of the decade these were replaced by double breasted coats. In mid 90's the tails were very long (reaching calf) but later they were only till the back of the knees.

Sleeves were wrist length and tight fitted. The wide turned cuffs were abandoned.

Two cut-in pockets with flaps were at waist level.

Waist coats were also worn which were either single or double breasted and were cut straight at waist level.



- ▶ Double Breasted Coat with Wide Revers and
- ▶ Set-In Pockets
- ▶ Neck Cloth
- ▶ Breeches Buttoned up below the knees
- ▶ Boots
- ▶ Gloves

A frilled shirt was worn underneath. Neck stocks/ cloths were used. and the same effect was achieved by wrapping a white cravat round the necks and tying in a soft falling bow at the throat.

Breeches were skin tight and fastened just below the knee with a row of buttons. They were of white satin for formal wear.

Pantaloon for normal wear were also worn which were tighter and till the calf. Gradually they became less tight and full length. They were made of a kind of jersey which was more flexible and didn't wrinkle.

**Frock
Coat
Fitted
Waist Coat
Cravat
Loose
Pantaloons**



Cravat with different Knots



- Hat with Crown
- Bicorne Hat
- Tail Coats
- Waist Coats
- White and Black Breeches



Over garments:- Capes were still worn but Great coats were the most fashionable outer garment for men. They were single breasted and shorter than the earlier coats, had a small turned over collar and several overlapping shoulder capes.

Hairstyles and hats were the most noticeable area for change.

Hair was now worn in its natural state and were not powdered and were cut quite short.


There was no particular hair style in 1790's.

Tri corne hat went out of fashion (after about a century) . It was replaced by two styles of hats. For formal occasions the bicorne hat was worn which was a wide brimmed black hat cocked on two sides, sometimes decorated with feathers or some other ornaments but mostly it was left plain.

The other style was used for everyday wear and was the fore runner of the top hat. It had a narrow slightly curled brim and a crown which tapered towards the top.

Other accessories were the same as in the early century.

Gloves fitted very closely. Dress swords were replaced by sword sticks which were disguised as simple walking canes.



Foot wear

For indoors white or patterned tight stocking were worn with breeches and pantaloons with soft heeless black leather pumps.

For outdoors boots were worn which were short, seldom rising above the calf, with the top cut at an angle and decorated with braid or tassels.

Women's costume:- After the revolution women's costume in France moved towards simplicity and freedom from both moral and physical restrictions.

Paniers, corsets, bum rolls and even petticoats were abandoned completely.

Women wore a style known as **robe en chemise** which resembled the undergarment of the previous century. It was kind of a state of undress after the Egyptian society ladies. The material used for these gowns was so sheer that for the sake of decency skin coloured tights were worn underneath.

The robe en chemise worn with open sandals was an attempt of Parisian ladies to copy the costume of ancient Greece. During the early 1790's the gown was at its simplest; a slender shift of sheer muslin, gathered at the neck and under the breasts which made it extremely short waist in contrast to the elongated waists of the previous decade. This became the feature of the empire gowns of the early 19th century.

**Robe-en-
Chemise---
Short
waisted
Gown in
transparent
material**



Gowns had

- ▶ deep neck lines
- ▶ Short Puff sleeves
- ▶ and
- ▶ Sometimes had
- ▶ Flounces and Long Trains



Necklines varied and revealed breasts. The modesty pieces used earlier became smaller and like a neck cloth similar to men.

Mostly sleeves were very short and puffed but sometimes they were a copy of chiton i.e. open sleeves fastened with a row of small brooches.

Skirts were very long and the excess material from the hem was loosely draped over the forearm exposing the lower leg.

There was a practice of damping the gown so that the material would cling more closely to the body.

- ▶ **Short waisted Gowns**
- ▶ **Modesty pieces**
- ▶ **Hats**
- ▶ **Bonnets**



After 1800, the vogue for these flimsy, outfits began to wane. Court gowns were now made from traditional fabrics like satin and velvet and for less wealthy these were made from printed calico or linen.

The basic silhouette remained the same with its high waist. Necklines were still cut low and square. The skirts of court gowns were long reaching the ground at front and forming a train behind. Other gowns were ankle length. Borders and hems were often embroidered and sometimes flounces were used. Sleeves were short and puffed.

Some women started using corsets. The only new arrival was drawers which was a trouser type under wear.

The drawers developed into pantaloons which were tight fitting undergarments fastening just below the knee. Later the name was changed to Pantalettes.

Over garments:- During the 1790's outer garments were more necessary as the sheer gowns offered no protection.

There was a great vogue for cashmere shawls but due to war, trade routes were cut off and imitations were produced in France and in Scotland.

Pelisse was cut as a coat gown, three quarter length raglan sleeves and lined with fur.

**Spencer—
a short
overcoat
with
fitted
sleeves**

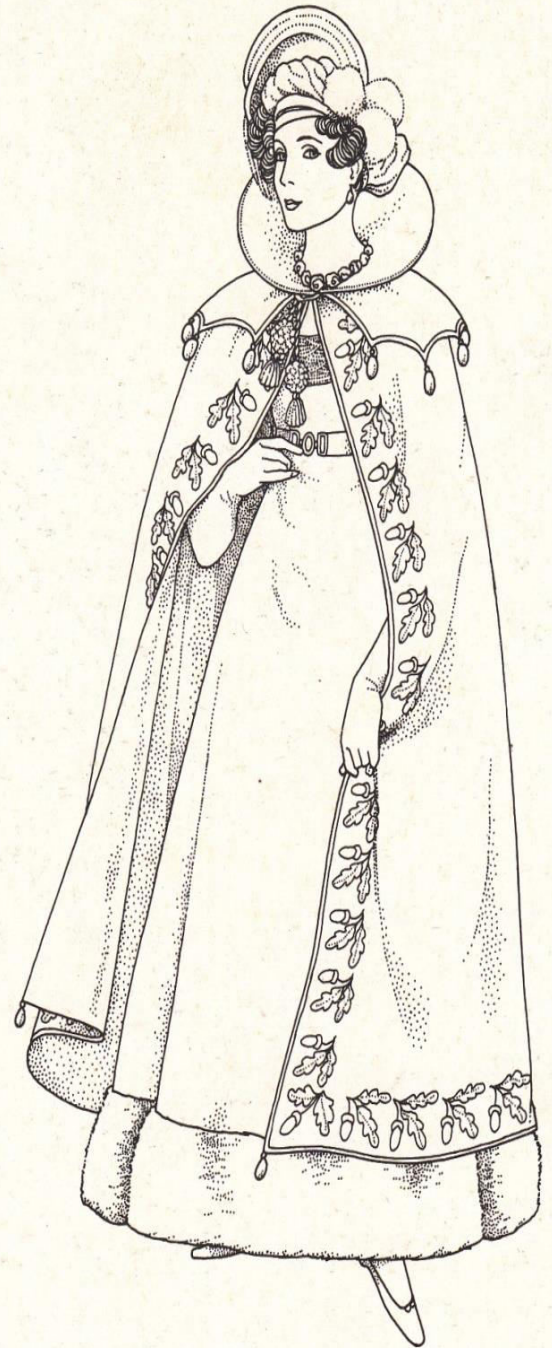


The Redingote:- Great coat of men was also worn with two or more overlapping shoulder capes for protection in wet weather.

The Spencer was very popular for less extreme weather. This was a very short single breasted jacket (originally from England) sleeveless or with tight fitted wrist length sleeves. The jackets were fitted with buttons from neckline to hem.

The Pelerine was even smaller and elaborate cape that covered the shoulders, scarves and fur bows. It was tied with a cord round the neck.

**Redingote
Great Coat
with
multiple
Capes
And
Embroidere
d at edges**



Footwear

Sandals were common in 1790's. After 1800, footwear was a simple low sided, heel less slipper in either satin or soft leather. It had a short rounded toe which was decorated with either a small ribbon bow or embroidery

Hair

Powder wigs and frizzed hair styles vanished and different styles came in fashion.

Masses of ringlets held in place with a bandeau was close to Greek style but they used a huge vertical plume also.

- ▶ **Gloves**
- ▶ **Footwear**
tied with
triple
bows
- ▶ **Bonnet**



- ▶ **Fur**
Around
the Neck
- ▶ **Hair set**
into
curls
- ▶ **Hanging**
ear rings



During the revolution (Terror) hair was cut short. Towards 1800, a new variety of hairstyles appeared which were more like Greek's- A portion of hair was brushed forward over the forehead and the rest scraped back and tied into chignon of curls. Various Greek inspired hair ornaments were also worn such as wreath of diamonds and pearls, plumes, feathers, topazes and antiques. There was still exaggeration in hair styles.

Head dress

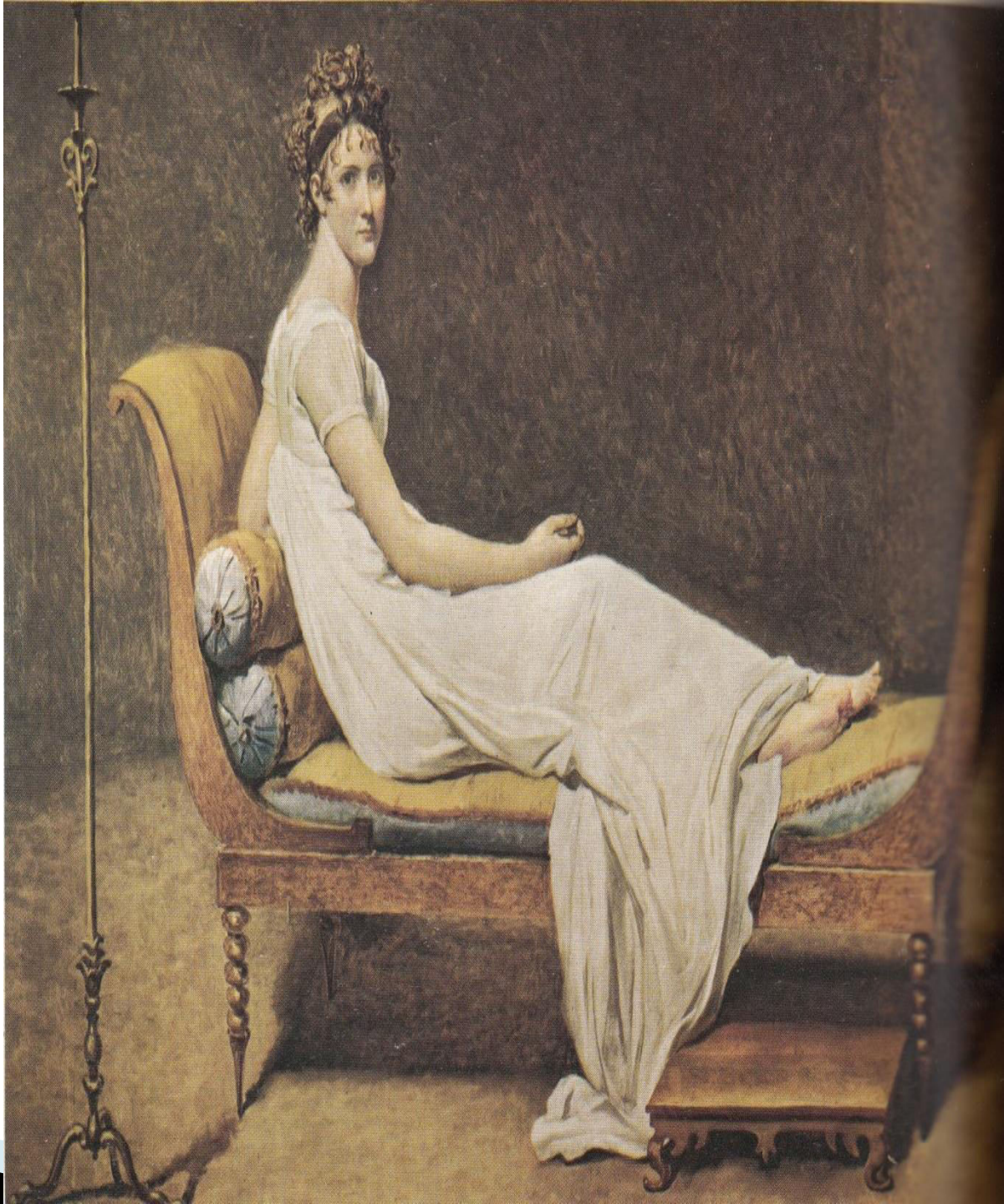
Women adopted wide range of headwear. Mob caps (of mid 18th century) in silk trimmed with ribbons were still very fashionable for day time wear .

For evening wear, they were replaced by turbans made in patterned fabric to match either the gown or the shawl and had a plume as decoration. The high crowned hat (of 1780's) was worn only for riding.

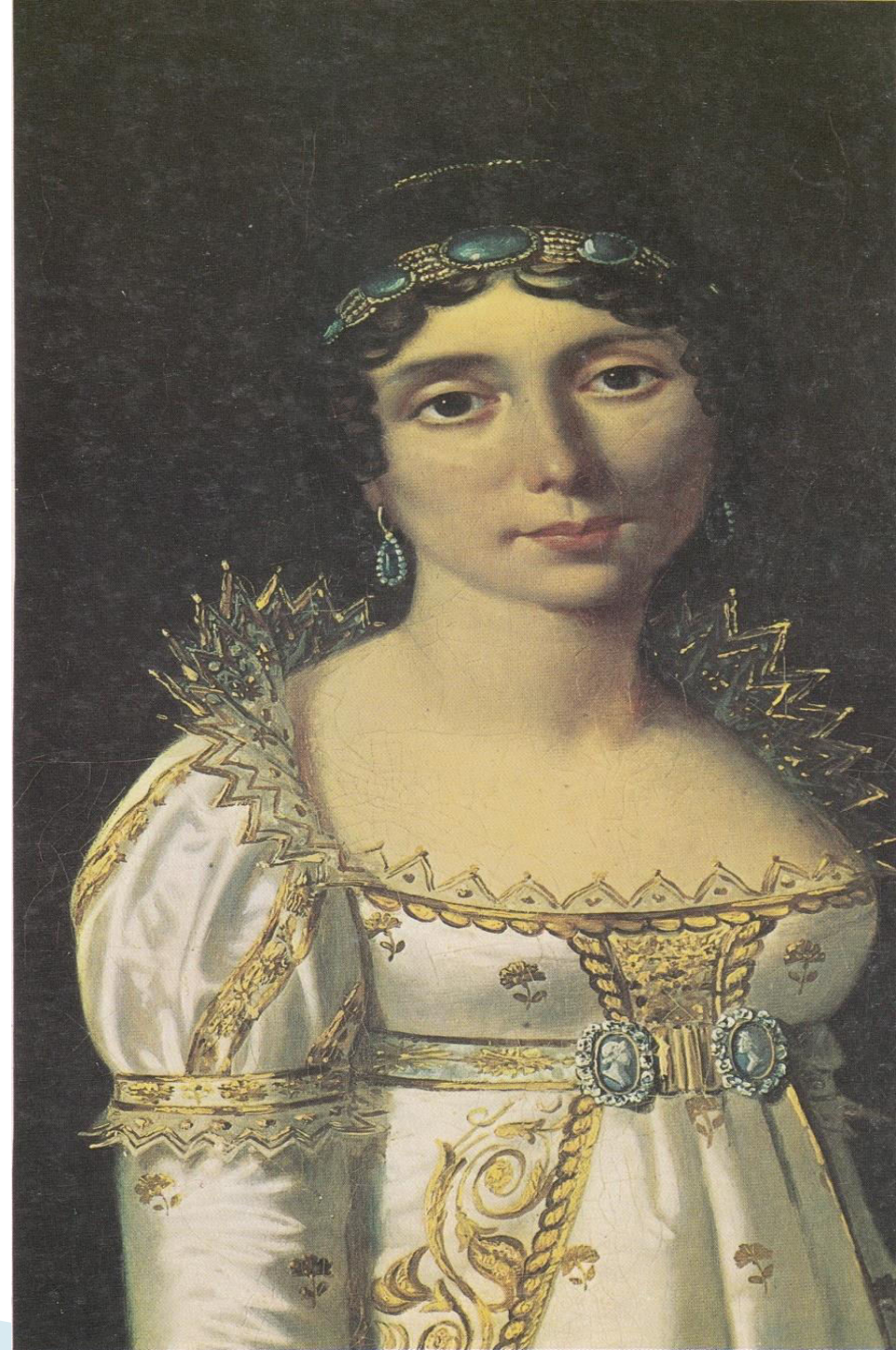
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Ringlets held with a Bandeau



- ▶ Gowns had deep squarish neckline and Puff sleeves
- ▶ Masses of Ringlets of hair held in place with Bandeau



A wide range of bonnets, predominantly of straw came into fashion. They were tied under the chin with a coloured ribbon..

A most extra-ordinary headdress was a poke or poking hat. This was a form of bonnet but had an enormous brim which extended far beyond the wearer's face.

Different Types of Mob Caps for Day Wear

