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THE INFLUENCE OF CARIBBEAN COLONIES ON EUROPEAN WOMENS FASHION AT THE END OF THE XVIII CENTURY AND BEGINNINGS OF XIX

LA INFLUENCIA DE LAS COLONIAS DEL CARIBE SOBRE LA MODA FEMENINA EN EUROPA A FINALES DEL SIGLO XVIII Y PRINCIPIOS DEL XIX

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Abstract
Neoclassical fashion defined its diaphanous look by seeking to revive the style of the ancient Roman civilization, and the marble statues of ancient Greece; further influenced by the excavation of Pompeii in 1738 and its archeological developments in 1748. The attitudes towards voluminous and pompous fashions had changed, however the acceptance of the new modern and much more revealing silhouette did not occur without challenges. For neoclassical fashion to be accepted it needed a foundation to make it plausible, and it needed a pioneer to wear and deem it 'appropriate'. This study builds a comprehensive analysis of some of the relationships France, England and other European countries built with their colonies in terms of textile manufacturing, imports and exports, and most importantly cultural appropriation. This study seeks to analyze how those colonies gave them new fashion perspectives, to develop the neoclassical fashions, we recognize from that period. In addition, this study will analyze the powerful influence of Josephine Bonaparte and other important female figures from neoclassical France, in perpetuating and expanding the use of these fabrics and styles; most importantly Josephine's Caribbean background and her possible preference for lighter fabrics due to her birth on the island of Martinique, and how that influenced her sophisticated and cosmopolitan approach to fashion.

Key Words: Cultural appropriation, Taino Dress, Neoclassical Dress, Fashion, Directory period, Caribbean Colonization.

Resumen
La moda neoclásica definió su aspecto diáfano al revivir y buscar capturar el espíritu de la antigua civilización romana y las estatuas griegas, una influencia fomentada por la excavación de Pompeya en 1738 y sus desarrollos arqueológicos en 1748. Las actitudes hacia las modas voluminosas y pomposas habían cambiado, sin embargo, la aceptación de la nueva silueta moderna y mucho más reveladora no se produjo sin desafíos. Para que la moda neoclásica fuera aceptada, necesitaba una base que la hiciera plausible, y necesitaba un pionero que la usara y la considerara "apropiada". Este estudio construye un análisis comprensivo de algunas de las relaciones que Francia, Inglaterra y otros países europeos

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construyeron con sus colonias en términos de manufactura textil, importaciones y exportaciones, y lo más importante, apropiación cultural. Este estudio busca analizar cómo aquellas colonias le dieron nuevas perspectivas a la moda, con el fin de desarrollar las modas neoclásicas, que reconocemos de ese período. Además, este estudio analizará la poderosa influencia de Josefina Bonaparte y otras importantes figuras femeninas de la Francia neoclásica, en la perpetuación y expansión del uso de estos tejidos y estilos; lo más importante es el origen caribeño de Josephine y su posible preferencia por las telas más ligeras debido a su nacimiento en la isla de Martinica, y cómo eso influyó en su enfoque sofisticado y cosmopolita de la moda.

Palabras Clave: Apropiación cultural, Vestimenta Taína, Vestimenta neoclásica, Moda, Periodo directorio, Colonización Caribeña.

State of the question

The purpose of this research is to bring attention to a topic which has been considerably ignored by both the world of fashion history and academia. This research seeks to fill in the gaps of previous research concerning the origins and ingenuity of some of the garments popularized in the fashion worn by European women of high society in the 18th and early 19th century, and their connections with the Caribbean. Arguably, it could be said that as a general rule, fashion has been analyzed from the perspective of Europe as the trendsetter to the world, but less frequently are trends from the Americas or other parts of the world given leadership in the establishment of trends; the main challenge I have encountered is finding sufficient literature which focused more profoundly on the subjects of Caribbean dress from the perspective of Indigenous peoples as well as African peoples of the time period I've chosen to research. Some literature which analyzes the subject in a certain sense, is the work of Kathleen A. Staples and Madelyn Shaw: *Clothing Through American History, The British Colonial Era,* which although not as clearly focused on the Caribbean, does indeed provide insight as to the movements and changes happening in the Americas during the colonial period. In the case of the literature by Kathleen A. Staples and Madelyn Shaw, the research does an excellent job at analyzing the general types of clothing and colors used during the colonial period in North America, as well as explaining some of the processes of how clothing was worn and constructed during the period with what was available, however, the research found in this book focuses exclusively on North America, the indigenous tribes of North American regions, and the African slaves that were present in

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what is now the United States. Although the insight provided by the book does indeed help with identifying some of the similarities that could have been found between the indigenous tribes of the Caribbean, as well as some of the experiences of Africans who were enslaved in either of the two regions, the differences in population, climate, available resources, and social milieu between Europe and the Caribbean versus Europe and North America do not aide in providing sufficient details for the specific topic of this article. One of the best resources I found were the online articles found on The Fashion and Race Database; founded by Professor Kimberly M. Jenkins of Parsons School of Design in 2017, this database is unique in the academic research market, as it aims to increase the racial diversity found in fashion history. The articles provided on the database were useful but relied on many of the sources that I had already encountered. In both cases, although relevant, they were limited in quantities, and I had to piece together a lot of what was found. The literature which I found useful was the work of Amelia Rauser (*The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion, and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s)* as well as their many research collaborations on articles pertaining to fashion and dress in the Caribbean colonies of the 18th century, most especially the online article titled "Madras and Muslin Meet Europe" on Neoclassical Appropriation, published on the Lapham's Quarterly. This is arguably one of the only articles which clearly focuses on cultural appropriation during the Neoclassical period, and which sheds light on how some of the clothing worn by West Africans was then adapted and re-interpreted by high society Europeans. For example, the 'madras cloth' which is still considered a part of traditional West African dress today. [1] The work of Amelia Rauser excels in engaging the connections between Europe and West Africa in the setting of the Caribbean colonies, as well as the importance of cotton during the height of its production in the 1780s and 1790s. This research also provided important insight on the origin of the "chemise" gown worn by Marie Antoinette which will be discussed later on in the article, as well as the incorporation of accessories like hoop earrings, also introduced by West Africa. Little information was found

[1] Amelia Rauser, "Madras and Muslin Meet Europe", Lapham's quarterly, (2020, March 18) available at: https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/madras-and-muslin-meet-europe.

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on indigenous Caribbean natives, and what possible contributions they provided during this period.

Introduction

From a young age, many young girls in the Caribbean were often told by their mothers to wear an *enagua* underneath their best Sunday dress or skirts, to maintain modesty and avoid unwanted transparency from the light-weight fabric of their dresses. An *enagua* is normally a small, short, white, or ivory skirt in a silky or light cotton material which is worn discreetly underneath a dress of a similar or longer length and can often be seen as a "coming of age" garment,[2] as it is mostly older girls or adolescents who will begin to use these on special occasions. The word enagua (originally 'inagua') is a Taino word for a skirt worn by married Taino women[3]. Like the word *inagua*, the Taino peoples were responsible for giving us words like *huracán*/hurricane, *barbacoa*/barbecue, and even *tabacu'*/tobacco. However, little has been analyzed and studied about what they wore and contributed to the fashions of their time. Long before the Caribbean islands were invaded by foreign European lands, the Taino peoples had developed a system and government amongst their peoples, and with that came hierarchies in which certain garments and adornments were worn to display rank and wealth. Although the Taino peoples of the Caribbeans had a well-established society, this is not often researched nor is it recognized when discussing the possible artistic and cultural influences the Americas would have had on Europe during the 15th century and beyond. There is ample research to be done on these topics, which cannot be fully covered within the parameters of this article, and for this reason, the focus will remain on women's fashion and aesthetics with special attention paid to the white and soft cottoned looks of the Neoclassical late 18th century Europe.

At the start of the 18th century, women's fashion in Europe was ornate and complex, there were differences in dress in the varying social classes of course, but even lower classes wore similar styles albeit with less expensive fabrics. Women of a particular social standing would wear a dress known as a mantua or "court dress" on formal occasions, it was made of

[2] Real Academia Española. (s.f.) Enagua. En *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 23.ª ed., (versión 23.7 en línea), accessed December 15, 2023, available online at: https://dle.rae.es
[3] J. Pedreira, "The Dictionary of the Taino Language", (1997), available online at: https://www.taino-tribe.org/telist-i.htm.

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silk and embroidered with gold and silver thread. Underneath the women would wear a hoop made of linen and stiffened by whale bones and a petticoat to match the skirt and train of the dress. On the front of the dress was a fabric stay with a strip of bone, wood, or metal included to maintain the posture of its wearer tightly laced and upright. Towards the middle of the century, fashion began to change drastically, between 1780-1800 the corset shortened, the waistline rose, and hoops and petticoats were discarded except at court.[4] First popular in France, and later in England during (1795-1800), the airy and diaphanous fashions of the Directory period caused not only fascination but also criticism. Neoclassical dress was unique in that it was both simple and complicated to achieve. It was one of the first recognized periods in which fashion looked to the past for inspiration. "Neoclassical dress was designed by and for the elite and it constructed elite status in multiple ways";[5] something was done quite differently in the posterior fashion periods, and it presents the question of whether what had influenced this dramatic change, had a lot to do with globalization via colonialism. The Rococo period (1740-1770) was exuberant and extravagant, full of excess and opulence. A contrast to the neoclassical period that would follow. Europe had become a potence, and thanks to their colonies, their imports of sugar, cotton, and gold had influenced much of the grandeur on display during the period.

> *As it marked the end of the Baroque period, the Rococo period was the grand culmination and celebration of excessive styles and fashions: powdered wigs, farthingales, heavily ornate stays and over skirts, one can say that nothing was too grand to during this time.*[6]

It was during the late Rococo period where there is a visual shift in the dress of the time, a change which was most notably first seen on the French royal Marie Antoinette.

[4] Victoria and Albert Museum "Introduction to 18th-Century Fashion", V&A, (2021) available online at: http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/i/introduction-to-18th-century-fashion/
[5] Mireille M. Lee "Antiquity and Modernity in Neoclassical Dress: The Confluence of Ancient Greece and Colonial India" *Classical World* (2019), p. 86
[6] C. Delors, "Marie-Antoinette and the death of rococo « Versailles and More."(2022) available online at: Blog.catherinedelors.com. https://blog.catherinedelors.com/marie-antoinette-rococo-and-yet-another-exhibition/.

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Royal families were fond of commissioned portraits, these portraits were normally created to emphasize an ultimate image of themselves for the public, and one of the most important aspects of this image (especially for women) was the dress and adornment that would be worn to convey the public image they desired. At the time, it was custom to showcase as much wealth and power as possible by wearing the most expensive textiles and ornate Jewels. However, Marie Antoinette changed the dynamics of royal imagery when in 1783 she commissioned a portrait to be made by Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun wearing a simple chemise dress that would be known as the *"chemise a la reine"*.[7] Not much is known as to what had influenced Marie Antoinette's choice, although historically it has been suggested that she often liked to go against the norms of society, thus it possibly being a simple act of rebellion, although it could be suggested that her idea of wearing such a simple cotton dress could have flourished from Caribbean culture. Something to consider is that the very style of a "chemise gown" could have derived from the Taino *Inagua,* further influenced in cut and design by the African cotton dresses which were worn by Africans that were brought to the Caribbean. Even after acquiring wealth and status, many African women continued to wear these simple white cotton dresses accessorized by beads and different wraps and shawls, well into the 20th century, an example we can see in fig. 1. Many Africans in the Caribbean had continued to adapt and create fashions to withstand the hot climate of the islands, with ample uses of cotton, muslin, and linen.

Before the portrait and death of Marie Antoinette, there were changes taking place within the French monarchy which could have possibly furthered and encouraged her choice of the chemise for the portrait. France was expanding in wealth and properties, they were advancing further in their pursuits of exploiting as many resources as possible from their colonial territories, this brought exposure to new ideas and customs from the Caribbean to France and the rest of Europe, meanwhile, plenty of controversies surrounding the queen's expenses and overindulgence began to take hold of the country, signaling the start of a very dark period in France and for the French monarchy. Marie Antoinette's execution in 1793 at the age of 37, brought about a focus on her life and her tastes, the silhouette worn in her

[7] Daniel James Cole, "Hierarchy and Seduction in Regency Fashion", Jane Austen Society of North America. (Persuasion 2012), pp. 3-14.

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portrait by Vigee Lebron "flourished in popularity and became known as the *"robe en chemise"* (see fig. 2) taking on a higher waistline and a narrower silhouette enhanced using 'mousseline' otherwise known as muslin fabric".[8]

Something which Europeans also believed of Taino natives upon their first encounters in the 15th century. Although these were simple observations, their subjective view of "undress" in natives, could have arguably limited the recognition of certain ornaments or bodily adornments as "dress", therefore inhibiting the idea that there was an established cultural dress and fashion in the Caribbean peoples.

> *The Taino likely viewed the heavy dress of the Spanish, from the shiny metal of their armor to the color, texture and form of their wool and silk clothing, as much of a novelty as the Spanish viewed native 'nudity' (overlooking the body ornaments that constituted proper 'dress' in indigenous terms).*[9]

The aftermaths of the French revolution created a stronger reliance on the Caribbean colonies, not only for possible escape from France, but also as a possible form of escapism from the brutality which France was undergoing during the period of *La Terreur* (1793-1794). France had reached a stage of fury and rebellion, and with the period of the terror came mass massacres, public executions, and many were imprisoned to later die in jail. It is estimated that during this period around 20,000 people were killed across France.[10] The vast majority of the people killed were ordinary French men and women, not members of the elite, only 8.5% of the Terror's victims belonged to the nobility, 6.5% to the clergy, with 85% belonging to the Third Estate (meaning non-clerics and non-nobles); women represented 9% of that total.[11] France was in search of a new government and way of living,

[8] *Ibid.*.
[9] Joanna Ostapkowicz, "Fashioning the 'Other' The Foreign & Diplomatic Currency in the Sixteenth-Century Caribbean & in Europe." *Transnational Perspectives on the Conquest and Colonization of Latin America*", no. 1st, (2019), pp. 14-17.
[10] Harrison W. Mark, "Reign of Terror," *World History Encyclopedia*, (2022) available online at: https://www.worldhistory.org/Reign_of_Terror/.
[11] Claire Rioult & Romain Fathi, "The French Revolution executed royals and nobles, yes – but most people killed were commoners" The Conversation, (2023, July 12), available online at:

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among the elites there was a newfound curiosity with the ancient lifestyles of Rome and Greece, a past which seemed favorable in comparison to the tumultuous present. By the time of the reigns of George III and Louis XVI, the effects were noticeable and evolving further as the nineteenth century approached. The Neoclassical movement eventually encouraged other historic revivals and ethnic inspirations, possibly becoming one of the first moments in human history where something from the past influenced the present. France had begun to associate the ostentatiousness and ornamentation of the Rococo period with oppression, injustice and ultimately the destruction of the monarchy, the rest of Europe was soon to follow suit.

The Taino Influences

By the time Neoclassical fashion had gained notoriety in Europe, the European continent had been making use of their colonies in the Caribbean and their ample resources for hundreds of years, Europe now had long access to cotton and tobacco fields. Much of this was product of harsh years of inquisition, destruction and death, the period of colonization had wreaked havoc on the Caribbean, and while Europe reaped the benefits of their acquired properties, information about what had become of the Caribbean natives which inhabited the islands before the Europeans was limited. It could be argued that the limited information and sources concerning the art and dress of Taino's and other Caribbean tribes are due to the absence of care that was given to these cultures when first encountered. Much of what was originally worn and created by the natives in the Caribbean has gone without notice or record. There are however small exceptions, small remaining artifacts from the Taino's can be found in places like the modernist Museo Nazionale Preistorico Ethnografico Luigi Pigorini in Rome, and the Museum Für Völkerkunde in Vienna, Austria. The first find to discuss is

https://theconversation.com/the-french-revolution-executed-royals-and-nobles-yes-but-most-people-killed-were-commoners-200455.

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a compact sculpture, acquired as early as 1680, when it was part of the Fernando Cospi collection in Bologna.[12] It is estimated that the item was made between 1492 and 1524.[13]

> *The compact, 'Janus-esque' sculpture consists of two separate elements: a figural top, likely a headdress; and a belt, nailed to a sixteenth-century wooden display mount, its surfaces covered with a vibrant arrangement of glass and shell beads, mirrors and -remarkably- rhinoceros horn, all woven on to a thick cotton framework. These artifacts and their iconography are within the repertoire of indigenous Caribbean artistry, specifically that of Hispaniola (present day Dominican Republic/Haiti). It is believed to be a cemí (representation of a spirit, deity or ancestor.*[14]

The main exports from the Caribbean to Europe began with sugarcane. [15] Plantations arose all around the Caribbean in order cultivate and create products derived from sugarcane. In 1492, when Christopher Columbus had encountered the island of *Quisqueya* (present day Dominican Republic) the island was inhabited by the Taino Indian population. He was confused as to where he had landed, believing that he had found himself in India, as Europeans knew the Asian continent fairly well.[16] Little did he know that he had traveled across the Atlantic. It went on to become the first European settlement in the new world and the birthplace of a modern-day America.[17] When Columbus landed in present day Cuba, it was inhabited by two separate Amerindian cultures: "the *Guanahacabeyes* (a remnant of an

[12] Joanna Ostapkowicz, "Fashioning the 'Other' The Foreign & Diplomatic Currency in the Sixteenth-Century Caribbean & in Europe." *In Transnational Perspectives on the Conquest and Colonization of Latin America*", no. 1st, (2019), pp. 14-17.
[13] Joanna Ostapkowicz, "Radiocarbon Dating Wooden Carvings and Skeletal Remains from Pitch Lake, Trinidad." *Radiocarbon: 8th International Symposium* 59, no. Special Issue 5, (October 2017), available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/RDC.201.
[14] Joanna Ostapkowicz, "Fashioning the 'Other' The Foreign & Diplomatic Currency in the Sixteenth-Century Caribbean & in Europe." *In Transnational Perspectives on the Conquest and Colonization of Latin America*", no. 1st, (2019), pp. 3-14.
[15] D. Richardson, "The slave trade, sugar, and British economic growth 1748-1776.", Vol. 17, No. 4, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (1987), p.739, available online at: https://doi.org/10.2307/204652.
[16] J. Lopez Nuila, "Los restos de Cristobal Colón en Santo Domingo" 8th ed. Vol. 9, *Revista De Museología Kóot*, (2018), available online at: doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5377/koot.v0i9.5907.
[17] Samuel Hazard, *Santo Domingo, past and present, with a glance at Hayti* (London, S. Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1873) available online at: https://www.loc.gov/item/02012418/

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archaic Paleoindian culture that once dominated Cuba and the Americas) and the *Guacayarima* a similar remnant in westernmost Haiti, the word *Siboney* is a later Arawak description of the tribe meaning: *people of the rock*".[18] By the time Columbus had arrived there were well-established network of natives across islands, exchanging ideas and establishing properties, this made for expansion of ideas in terms of dress and design. Clothing is an identifier, and although the 'cloth' may have seemed to lack on the bodies of natives, this was the view and observation made by a culture that was on the opposite extreme quite heavily clothed. It is important to note that the reaction, or rather, the opinion concerning what constitutes as garment, can vary depending on those who observe the garment or dress. To Columbus and the Spaniards, the natives were nude, but to the natives it could be argued that each bead, necklace, shell, cloth, or hairstyle was part of a dress, and an act of fashion which meant something to their image and what they wanted to portray about themselves. To understand Taino dress and what they meant to convey, and how this became an influence, it is important to look at dress from a sociological perspective:

> *A sociological perspective on dress requires moving away from the consideration of dress as object to looking instead at the way in which dress is an embodied activity and one that is embedded within social relations…The phrase "getting dressed" captures this idea of dress as an activity. When we get dressed, we do so within the bounds of a culture and its norms, expectations about the body and about what constitutes as a 'dressed' body.*[19]

Dress and adornment were not only an important form of expression and identification for the Taino's, but it also became a way to bargain with and understand the Spanish upon their arrival. The Taino's began to trade items made of cotton, primordially belts, which seemed to be a very important item of dress within their culture. The *cacique* (chief) often wore a belt to symbolize his position of power as chief and leader of his tribe.

[18] Mark Piper, "The Tainos in Philately", *The Cuban Philatelist* 2 (3), (2005), available online at: http://www.philat.com/biblio/P/PIPE0709.pdf.
[19] Joanne Entwistle, "Addressing the body" *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Social Theory* (Wiley, 2015), p.10.

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This was often seen as the most prized gift to brought to foreigners, signaling peace, honor and friendship as illustrated in the following text:

> *Later, the cacique Guacanagarí, a close ally of the Spanish, gifted no fewer than twelve belts to Columbus. Such gifts, likely worn prominently during important occasions, gave the caciques evidence of their privileged access to the foreigners and the material wealth and social/political capital that they represented.*[20]

Other accounts told by the Spanish and Italian who had arrived in the Caribbean with Columbus, describe dramatic tales of encounters with natives who decorated their bodies with different colors of paints, and making emphasis on their nakedness which they found shocking and animalistic. Some of the accounts may have fallen prey to exaggeration and misinterpretation, which can be expected from a post-medieval Europe's first encounter with the Americas. This presents a problem in furthering the analysis of understanding what Taino dress meant to represent, as it creates the 'barbaric' contrast between the cultured, educated and "dressed" Europe, and the "savage" Caribbean. It could be suggested that it is important to use caution when analyzing some of the textual exchanges between Europeans in the Americas and their descriptions of the Caribbean life, which were often considered completely accurate by continental Europe:

> *His face was smeared with charcoal -although this practice was common among the Indians of the Antilles. In addition, "He wore all his hair very long and shrunk and tied behind, and then placed in a net made of parrot feathers, and he was thus naked like the others.*[21]

Feathers became a staple in women's fashion during the Late 18th century, often worn in the hair to adorn an updo, as well as often as an accessory to clothing. By the end of the

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 11
[21] Pedro L. San Miguel, "De la visión edénica al salvaje: Cristóbal Colón y los orígenes del Dilema "civilización o barbarie" en America" *CLÍO*, Año 89, Núm. 199, (enero-junio 2020) p. 91-176, available online at: https://catalogo.academiadominicanahistoria.org.do/opac-tmpl/files/ppcodice/Clio-2020-199-091-176.pdf

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18th century feathers had been popularized to the point of scandalous overconsumption, as bird populations around the world began to suffer on account of the fashion.[22] It was around 1521, that feathers gained great notoriety and became popularized after feather headdresses and hats were worn by men in power, as well as when they were brought as gifts from the Americas by Charles V and his conquistador, Hernán Cortes, causing an impression on the rest of Europe and a new demand.[23] Arguably, it could be observed that it was the way the Taino's across the Caribbean islands displayed and wore their feathers which could have inspired the use of them as headdresses amongst nobility and high society. The few Taino gravesites found in the Bahamas, have also found certain adornments in the forms of shell necklaces, amber and adornments inspired by the shapes found in the ocean,[24] further proving that Taino natives had an affinity for decorating themselves as a form of dress.

One of the most important aspects of Taino culture and dress to analyze is their use of cotton. Cotton was not only a way to make cloth, but it was also a form of currency and a way to connect with their spiritual world. As noted earlier in the chapter, Taino natives would make idols out of cotton to connect with their ancestors and have them continue to be present in their lives.[25] When observed the zemi/cemi's are intricately knit and woven, much attention is paid to the knit and how closely each of the cotton strands should be, producing the effect of a perfectly knitted item, with a particular width around the shoulders, and knees, possibly indicating the presence of shoulder decoration or knee adornment as observed in fig. 3. As in most cases, this form of art could be an imitation of life, and because cotton was so important to the Taino's also created bodily adornments for themselves made of cotton.

[22] R. J. Moore-Colyer, "Feathered women and persecuted birds: The struggle against the plumage trade", c. 1860–1922. *Rural History*, 11(1), (2000) pp. 57–73, available online at: https://doi.org/10.1017/s0956793300001904

[23] Tom Almeroth-Williams, "When real men wore feathers." (University of Cambridge, 2019), available online at: https://www.cam.ac.uk/whenmenworefeathers.

[24] W.C. Schaffer, R. S. Carr, J. S. Day, and M. P. Pateman "Lucayan-Taíno Burials from Preacher's Cave, Eleuthera, Bahamas", *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, I, vol. 22, (2010), pp. 45-69, available online at: https://doi.org/10.1002/oa.1180

[25] Joanna Ostapkowicz & Lee Newsom "Gods adorned with the embroider's needle: the materials, making and meaning of a Taino cotton reliquary" *Latin American Antiquity* (September 2012), available online at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/23645631.

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They wore cotton bands on their upper arms, calves, and ankles. Although normally flat, some were thicker, and shaped liked rolls of cotton rather than strips.[26]

It was claimed that by 1565 Taino's were now extinct, most succumbing to disease by 1555, and most of them killed and massacred by European forces. Currently, there is debate as to whether they were indeed completely 'extinct' or if they were simply no longer accounted for by Europeans when exchanging census information back and forth between continental Europe or in their words they were ended by 'paper-genocide'. In present day, many Taino descendants have reclaimed their heritage, and have helped to research and restore information about their customs and traditions, many of them recreating some of those traditions, and sharing them with younger generations:

> *For centuries, the indigenous people of the Caribbean, known as Taíno, were said to be extinct. But recently, historians and DNA testing have confirmed what many modern, self-identifying Taíno already believed: that a genocide was carried out on paper, after the census stopped counting them, but their identity persisted… after 1533, when Indian slaves were "granted" their freedom by the Spanish monarchy, any Spaniard who was reluctant to let their Taíno slaves go would simply re-classify them as African.*[27]

Despite the many difficulties in finding and analyzing Taino artefacts to understand their dress and culture, we can see their influence grow from the first encounters between European colonizers and natives, to how those encounters encouraged and provided new ideas for Europe in terms of fashion and jewelry to the Late 18th century and beyond.

The Impact of Slavery

[26] Joanna Ostapkowicz, "Fashioning the 'Other' The Foreign & Diplomatic Currency in the Sixteenth-Century Caribbean & in Europe." *In Transnational Perspectives on the Conquest and Colonization of Latin America*", no. 1st, (2019), pp. 3-14.
[27] Jorge Baracutei Estevez, "On Indigenous Peoples' Day, Meet the Survivors of a 'Paper Genocide.'" History, *National Geographic*, (October 14, 2019), available online at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/meet-survivors-taino-tribe-paper-genocide.

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Once settlements were made, the rest of Europe became interested in the Caribbean, reports of lush forests, pristine beaches, and unique tropical fauna sparked the interest of European governments towards further colonization. From the early 17th century, however, people from other European powers, including France and England, also settled in the region. The English settled St Kitts in 1624, Barbados, Montserrat, and Antigua in 1627 and Nevis in 1628. Around the same time, France established colonies in Martinique and Guadeloupe. In this way, the Caribbean came under the control of several competing European countries, joining Spain, which had established its first colonies in the region more than a hundred years before.[28] The impact which slavery contributed to European fashion has been arguably ignored by fashion history literature when it undoubtedly cannot and should not be. The sole reliance on African slaves for the textile production of cotton and muslin alone, signifies that changes in European fashion would be imminent, not only due to new available resources, but to the new ideas and cultural influences that would come along when these new relationships were formed.

Unfortunately, as the new relationships formed between Europe and Africa were due to enslavement and oppression, the potential influence that Africa would have had on the fashions worn in Europe during the period of colonization would have been undoubtedly silenced. This creates a profound gap between the ideas that have been established and recorded by the majority of European history books which cover fashion and dress, and what could have actually been the reality of the time. For instance, the importance of cotton arose thanks to slave labor and its expansion, but it was not only cotton as a textile which increased in popularity, but how it would have been designed and created into a garment. It could be suggested that the way in which Europeans first related to cotton and muslin had to be greatly influenced by the first examples they saw of these textiles being worn in the Caribbean colonies. An example of this would have been the headwrap, which was a distinctively West African garment worn by the women, which was then adopted and worn by European women of high society during the neoclassical era. This particular item of dress

[28] J. Lopez Nuila, "Los restos de Cristobal Colón en Santo Domingo" 8th ed. Vol. 9, *Revista De Museología Kóot*, (2018) available online at: doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5377/koot.v0i9.5907.

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could have also signified the beginnings of "cultural appropriation" between Europe and the colonies they governed at the time:

> *First mandated by sumptuary laws as a way to mark the free colored woman, the headwrap was appropriated by women of all colors and classes in the West Indies and worn in a variety of forms and folds, both in madras plaid and plain muslin. As cropped curls and natural hair supplanted the frizzed, padded, and powdered headdresses of the 1780s, turbans and headwraps were widely adopted by fashionable European women in the 1790s. But the most distinctive element of slave-inspired neoclassical fashion was madras. A 1795 illustration in the London-based Heideloff's Gallery of Fashion shows a woman wearing a madras handkerchief as a fichu, while an 1801 plate from Paris-based Journal des dames et des modes depicts a woman in a dress made entirely of madras cloth. White women also wore madras as headwraps. Clearly these sartorial gestures—the muslin round gown, the hoop earrings, the madras cloth, the headwrap—added up to a deliberate reference to the visual and material culture of the West Indies. This cultural appropriation is in many ways a familiar story: a mainstream culture borrows symbols from a marginalized culture to enjoy the edgy cool of its significations without the consequences of its lived reality.* [29]

The spread of sugar plantations in the Caribbean created a need for workers. The planters increasingly turned to buying enslaved men, women and children who were brought from Africa. Some five million enslaved Africans were taken to the Caribbean, almost half of whom were brought to the British Caribbean (2.3 million). As planters became more reliant on enslaved workers, the populations of the Caribbean colonies changed, so that people born in Africa, or their descendants, came to form the majority. Their harsh and inhumane treatment was justified by the idea that they were part of an inferior 'race'. The

[29] Amelia Rauser, "Madras and Muslin Meet Europe", Lapham's quarterly, (March 18, 2020), available online at: https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/madras-and-mhttps://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/madras-and-muslin-meet-europeuslin-meet-europe

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same applies to the perspective in which the clothing and dress brought to the Caribbean colonies and Europe was viewed, unlikely to be recognized as beautiful and desirable as worn by the creators themselves, this clothing was only seen as appropriate and "fashionable" when adapted, worn, and celebrated by a white European woman of high society. These behaviors became acceptable and popular due to systems of hierarchy that were placed by Europeans during the periods of colonization, perhaps in order to diminish the possible uprisings or indignations that could have risen if a proper understanding of the horrors of slavery were disseminated.

> *Complicated ways of categorizing race emerged in the Caribbean colonies that placed 'white' people at the top, 'black' people at the bottom and different 'mixed' groups in between. Invented by white people, this was a way of trying to excuse the brutality of slavery.*[30]

These categories went as far as to impact the way in which Europeans who came in close contact with the Caribbean colonies were viewed as well, with many of the white women who were either raised or cared for by African nannies, considered as having distinctly negative personality traits, associated with their African connections. With some writers at the time claiming a certain immorality in their characters, developed from associating with black and brown people. A text from 1793 by J.B. Moreton, describes in detail, just how negative the perspective was:

> *If you surprise them (at home), as I have often done, you will be convinced of the truth of this assertion, that Ovid, with all his metamorphoses, could not match such transformations: instead of the well-shaped, mild, angelic-looking creature you beheld abroad, you will find, perhaps, a clumsy, greasy tomboy, or a paper-faced skeleton, romping, or stretching and lolling, from sofa to sofa, in a dirty confused*

[30] David Lambert, "An introduction to the Caribbean, Empire and slavery", *The British Library*, (November 16, 2017), available online at: https://www.bl.uk/west-india-regiment/articles/an-introduction-to-the-caribbean-empire-and-slavery.

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> *hall, or piazza, with a parcel of black wenches, learning and singing obscene and filthy songs, and dancing to the tunes.*[31]

To be in any way associated with the enslaved and the indigenous was to be reduced to nothing but filth and obscenity, to be "contaminated" by the savagery which was considered an inherent quality of those who were not white and European. It is easy to understand, why in terms of fashion and dress, the true origins of some of the new fashion ideas that were being exported to Europe, had to be "cleansed" from all association with the African slaves, as well as the indigenous. Slavery had created the contrast which Europe and its claim to "elegant whiteness" needed in order to succeed not only politically but also in style and dress, to successfully be "above" another in all aspects. Clothing would become another way in which slaves were distinguished from their white counterparts, as their resources to dress themselves would be both limited and noticeably oppressed, with some slaves being above others solely based on their clothing. Fredrick Douglas, an American social reformer, abolitionist, writer, orator, and statesman wrote about some of the ways in which clothing defined the slave, in his 1855 memoirs:

> *My Bondage and My Freedom:*
> *Those [house] servants constituted a sort of aristocracy on Col. Lloyd's plantation. They resembled the field hands in nothing, except in color. The delicate-colored maid rustled in the scarcely worn silk of her young mistress, while the servant men were equally well attired from the overflowing wardrobe of their young master's; so that, in dress, as well as in form and feature, in manner and speech, in tastes and habits, the distance between these favored few, and the sorrow and hunger-smitten multitudes of the quarter and the field, was immense.*[32]

[31] J. B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners: Containing Strictures on the Soil, Cultivation, Produce, Trade, Officers, and Inhabitants: with the Method of Establishing, and Conducting a Sugar Plantation. To which is Added, the Practice of Training New Slaves*, (1793, January 1), p. 109.

[32] Fredrick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, (New York City: Mundus Publishing, 1855).

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Slavery created a fusion of identity in terms of dress for the African peoples both in North America and the Caribbean, it is clear that there were limited resources which were available to the enslaved in terms of clothing, many of what they would have worn were solely "cast offs" of their owners, making it difficult to have a clear idea of what enslaved Africans would have worn. It is also important to recognize the large diversity that would have existed in the groups of enslaved, and their regions of provenance. There would have been a large variety of customs, languages, traditions and of course, ways of dress. To understand some of the garments and forms of dress brought by the Africans to the Caribbean, it is necessary to narrow down the African countries most affected by the slave trade during the 15th and 16th centuries. Due to their positions on the Atlantic Ocean Senegal and Gambia seem to be historically the most exploited by the European slave trade. But before the slave trade began, the Senegalese nation and nearby countries were well established traders of textiles and weaves across Africa and Asia. With many exchanging influences of cultural dress with India and China as early as 800 AD. In Chad, cotton was being grown and cultivated for making similar textiles to those they had imported from India.

> *By the 1400s, East African trading cities like Mombasa and Malindi were sending their own trading ships to Gujarat, in India, to buy cotton and silk cloth… When camels started to be common, people also began to weave camel hair for clothes*.[33]

It could be argued that by the time Europe had any contact with Africa, they had long been established as strong competitors in the textile and fashion world of the time, with strong weaving skills, rich resources, and easier access to trading routes with Asia and the Middle East which had at that point in history been known for producing elaborate textiles and weaves as far back as 2000 B.C. it is easy to conclude that they had long been defining themselves through dress and adornment. Unfortunately, research is limited due to the lack of information on what West African clothing and adornment had evolved to post Medieval

[33] Karen Carr, "Medieval African Clothing - More and More Cotton" *Quatr.Us Study Guides*, (October 2, 2017), available online at: https://quatr.us/african-history/medieval-african-clothing-cotton.htm.

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era, this is only one tragic indication of how preposterous the slave trade was to West African history, not only in terms of anthropological information, but also in seeing the development of art and dress through the passage of time.

There are few voices from West Africa during the late 18th century left to tell us a story on what was worn, and what was preserved even after the stripping of identity left behind by the slave trade, but if analyzed closely, there are some visible & delicate fragments, providing hope that these African influences survived and adapted to life in the Caribbean, returning to Europe in some shape or form, although notoriously negated by European high society, the influence is present and recognizable.

The assimilation of Caribbean dress by women of European high society

For a particular style of fashion to be accepted, it must first be embraced and announced as 'fashionable' by someone already in fashion and in power. In 18th century Europe that fashionable and powerful person was Empress Josephine Bonaparte. A European Creole woman, she was unique for her time in that she had experienced Caribbean life and was able to bring what she had lived and seen on her return to France. Born Marie-Josephe-Rose de Tascher de La Pagerie on June 23, 1763, on the island of Martinique, Josephine Bonaparte would become the next leading fashion icon in France, since Marie Antoinette.

She was a great disappointment for her family, as they were expecting a male heir to take over the plantations and other important affairs on the island, but regardless of this came to be one of the most well-known figures in French history. In the years upcoming her birth, the island had been torn in ownership between England and France.[34] At the time of her birth, Martinique had been developed for its sugarcane plantations and cotton fields, by this period Taino's were now 'extinct' from the islands, and what was left of them had intermarried with the Spanish, Africans and English, the Caribbean was now a true melting pot of cultures. Marie-Josephe Rose or *yeyette* as she would have been called by her *mulato* (referring to people of mixed European & African ancestry) governess, would have lived a

[34] Kate Williams, *Ambition and Desire: The Dangerous Life of Josephine Bonaparte* (Random House Publishing Group 2014).

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rather carefree life, and grown-up eating sugarcane to the point of famously ruining her teeth with cavities, something which would create for the distinctively closed and coy smile she would be seen in many of her portraits later in life to hide her dental damage.[35] Josephine's childhood clothing imitated those worn by the adults in her life, more than likely her mother's clothing, which was the custom of the time. However, it is very possible that having grown up in a vast and relatively empty area, with little to no visitors she would have had the freedom to dress with much more liberty and ease than children growing up in the French aristocracy.[36] The humidity and heat of the Caribbean is a strong factor in choosing lighter textiles for dress, this means, that as a child, Josephine would have most likely worn light chemises with short sleeves and hemlines in either white or ivory. It is also possible that she would wear a similar skirt to the Taino *inagua*, during her preadolescence and late childhood. The textiles of choice would have been muslin, linen, or cotton. As these are the most breathable and adaptable fabrics to wear in hot humid climates.

> *Since at least the seventeenth century, the 'tropics' had been seen as spaces holding vast potential wealth but also death and disease. To combat these deadly but desirable landscapes, the Europeans had built a considerable commodity culture around the preservation of white European health, and for many, tropical clothing was one of the most important and essential items. Many considerations had to be made as to which textiles and fabrics were most convenient to wear—wool, cotton, linen, silk, or a combination of these materials. Research was done as to which way they could survive better, and most importantly the role of the enslaved in the local practices and development of tropical clothing.*[37]

The Caribbean was now a melting pot of cultures and interactions between people of Indigenous, European, and African descent. This not only created a mixture of ideas, and

[35] Andrea Stuart, *The Rose of Martinique*, (New York City: Grove/Atlantic, 2005), pp. 3-29.
[36] *Ibid*, pp. 1-3.
[37] Ryan Johnson, "European Cloth and 'Tropical' Skin: Clothing Material and British Ideas of Health and Hygiene in Tropical Climates" *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, III, (2009), pp. 530-560, available online at: https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.0.0252.

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innovations in everything from architecture, the culinary fields, and fashion, but it was also in a unique position to Europe and the rest of the world. The Parisian eighteenth-century "chemise gown" worn by Marie Antoinette in her portrait, was indeed designed to assimilate the comfortable, seemingly liberating attire donned by women in the tropics, and thus the same style was further developed and adapted to the Late 18th century by women like Josephine Bonaparte. Typically made of muslin, lawn, and other sheer textiles, these gowns were still worn with a support garment, including the whalebone-stiffened stays known as a *corps* in French.[38] The simple garment of the Caribbean was now taken to Europe and adapted to the high society lifestyle as the new 'it-dress' of the time.

Josephine Bonaparte often reminisced about the Caribbean sensations of her childhood, which influenced her fashion choices and ways of presenting herself, in a text describing her childhood she said: "I ran, I jumped, I danced, from morning to night; no one restrained the wild movements of my childhood".[39] She would carry these memories deep within her for the rest of her life, and as the empress of France, she would not only recreate them by importing thousands of flowers, and trees from her native Martinique, but she would also continue to wear her Caribbean style, a fashion that would spread rapidly through the kingdom, giving her a status in the fashion world and giving a present day glimpse to how the dress of the native Taino and the African had evolved in this new Caribbean culture.

The climate of Europe and the Caribbean greatly differ, this created certain difficulties when adopting the styles worn by the creole women of the colonies. It was also a cause for a variety of strong opinions throughout high society Europe. One group in favor of neoclassical style had favorable opinions of the dress, with many high society men of the time stating that the less discreet, and more overtly nude fabrics showcased the body and were conveniently helpful in distinguishing the differences in gender, and in exalting the female figure as the ancient Greeks would have also thought to be appropriate. The newly found obsession with the idea of women resembling Greek statues, had collided well with the cotton and muslin imports from the West Indies, and something unique for post-medieval

[38] Philippe Halbert, "Creole Comforts and French Connections: A Case Study in Caribbean Dress « The Junto." *The Junto*, (September 11, 2018), available online at: https://earlyamericanists.com/2018/09/11/creole-comforts-and-french-connections-a-case-study-in-caribbean-dress/.
[39] Andrea Stuart, *The Rose of Martinique*, (Grove/Atlantic 2005) p. 11.

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Europe occurred: women were wearing less and showing more of their bodies. What had once been an undergarment, had now become outerwear. Opposing sides to neoclassical dress criticized women of high society for indulging in a dress which was arguably scandalous for the time. "With reduced underwear (or no underwear) the sheer fabric clung to the buttocks, and the breasts could clearly be seen through the garment. [40]It is often commented that many women of the time went as far as wetting the already thin and transparent fabrics to enhance the further seduction aspects of the dress. The point was to enhance and showcase the nude breasts and the body, with some women enhancing their natural breasts by wearing false ones to achieve the desired look.[41] A trend which could have been influenced by the 'nudity' found in the Americas, the idea of women showing off their bodies was possibly liberating, but also a new commodity. A form of nudity (or the illusion of it) was now a trend among high society women. The style of dress had its consequences, as women of the time who wore these fashions suffered with something known as "the muslin disease". During the winter, many continued to wear thin muslin garments, causing numerous cases of pneumonia and early deaths[42] due to their long exposure to the cold in very little clothing. As previously noted, the climate of the Caribbean is most definitely not the climate of Europe in the late 18th century.

It could be suggested that the Neoclassical period might have been the first step towards a feminist movement in terms of dress and identity, in which the woman was allowed to show more of her body if she pleased and go without excessive undergarments which might have restricted more of the wearer's movement. The changes in clothing meant a change in the undergarments as well.

> *The impulse toward greater "naturalism" in dress exposed and unfettered the body. The new, high-waisted silhouette eliminated traditional stays, which used lacing and*

[40] Amelia Rauser, *The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion, and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s,* (Yale University Press, 2020), pp. 1-3.
[41] Daniel James Cole, "Hierarchy and Seduction in Regency Fashion", Jane Austen Society of North America. (Persuasion 2012), pp. 3-14, available online at: https://www.academia.edu/38183036/Hierarchy_and_Seduction_in_Regency_Fashion_pdf
[42] Laura Engel & Amelia Rauser "Artful Nature: Fashion and Theatricality, 1770-1830" (2022), available online at: https://walpole.library.yale.edu/event/artful-nature-fashion-and-theatricality-1770-1830-masterclass.

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> *busks to form the torso into a long-waisted cone. Instead, women embraced shorter, less constraining corsets with cups for the breasts, or did away with corsets altogether. Neoclassical dress allowed greater bodily freedom and thus changed the way actresses moved on the stage and women walked on the street. Yet some feared that this unfettered style made women not more vigorous, but more susceptible to disease.*[43]

Lady Emma Hamilton had been a successful actress in London, before traveling to Naples in 1786 where she would eventually marry Sir William Hamilton in 1791; and rise to become one of the most important figures in both fashion, style and grace. Lady Emma Hamilton became one of the other women to adapt the white diaphanous looks of the Caribbean cotton dresses and showcase them to the rest of Europe through her dance and acting performances. Emma was celebrated in the salons of Naples, and later throughout Europe, for the performances she gave in which she replicated the poses of ancient statues and paintings, including many from the famed collection of her husband.[44] Emma Hamilton had created a new bond between fashion and art, she wore the neoclassical style and attempted to embody the statues of the Greek gods by recreating their poses through dance. White was the color of choice, for defining aspects of Neoclassical fashion, and since resembling the statues of Greek gods was the ideal of the time, it was encouraged that the body resemble the marble most of these statues were constructed from. As Emma's dance was choreographed to imitate a Greek sculpture, her dresses had to be white and loosely draped.

In France, Josephine Bonaparte went on to unite with Juliette Recamier, Theresa Cabarrus Tallien, to collectively be known as the fashionable trio of "the three graces". They were not only the style icons of the *modes grecques* but also, among the most influential

[43] *Ibid.*
[44] Mireille M. Lee, "Antiquity and Modernity in Neoclassical Dress: The Confluence of Ancient Greece and Colonial India." *Classical World* 112, Vol. CXII, nº 2, (2019), p. 86, available online at: doi:10.1353/clw.2019.0004.

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salonnieres of the consular and directorial periods.[45] They had become the most popular hosts for the festivities of the time and had brought their creole influences on high society Europe. It can be argued that the events organized by these women were the greatest sources to see what was socially acceptable to wear during that time. This being the first recorded period of "anti-fashion" there was a lot to take in.[46]Josephine Bonaparte and her creole background gave the society a glimpse into life in the Caribbean, perhaps due to her upbringing, she was known to wear what she wanted and how she wanted with little influence from sartorial France as well as consequence. Even against her husband's protests of her excessive imports of lightweight fabrics from the Caribbean, she seemed to calmly proceed with the affirmation of her well-established tastes.[47] Josephine would stay true to her Caribbean background throughout her entire time within the French empire. Josephine would strategically use her Creole status in the construction of her identity and fashion, Napoleon frequently referred to his wife as his "little creole" and many were in awe of her elegance and uniqueness.[48] Several contemporaries of Josephine recount her wearing her hair tied up *a la creole*, and there have been reports that even Napoleon's family felt uneased by her popularity and elegance within high society circles.

Creole women had a certain fame in Europe, they were considered privileged and admired, they were seen as influences of taste and style. It is no surprise that this would give Josephine Bonaparte leadership when it came to implementing the fashions she had worn in her life as a girl in the Caribbean, further perpetuating the idea that life in the Caribbean was privileged and exotic, and those who had lived a life there and returned to Europe's high society, had more to offer in terms of style, dress, and lifestyle. The following description of Creole women in the text by Francois Girod captivates the spirit of the way creole women were viewed in the 18th century:

[45] Claire Cage, "The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France 1797–1804" *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. XLII, nº 2, (2008) p.193-215, available online at: https://doi.org/10.1353/ecs.0.0039.
[46] Alicia Kennedy, Emily B. Stoehrer, and Jay Calderin, *Fashion Design, Referenced: A Visual Guide to the History, Language, and Practice of Fashion*, (Gloucester, MA, Rockport Publishers 2013), pp.1-3.
[47] Justine D. Young, *Fashion in European Art: Dress and Identity, Politics and the Body, 1775-1925*. (London, Bloomsbury Academic ed. 2019), pp. 42-43.
[48] *Ibid*, p. 53.

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> *Dressed lightly, as necessitated by the climate, they appeared that much freer in their movements and thus better able to awaken the idea of pleasure. Made especially seductive by the nonchalance that characterized all their actions'; These thoughts, along with the overall idea that there was an evocative, sensual, and languorous lifestyle associated with the French colonies.*[49]

Cultural appropriation & negation

The contrast between neoclassical dress and its purpose, and how white dresses were worn in the late 18th century Caribbean islands is drastic and noteworthy. Neoclassical dress was impractical for the sake of impracticality and showcasing status, meanwhile the white cotton dress that inspired it was practical and easy to wear for the purpose of hard labor, slavery and adapting to hot unforgiving climates.

> *The whiteness of neoclassical dress was central to the construction of elite status. White garments connoted leisure: since they were difficult to keep clean, they were not practical for physical labor. Indeed, white neoclassical dresses would have been impractical even for wearing out of doors.*[50]

In the Caribbean, white was the color of almost every dress worn by the locals, both wealthy and poor. Those enslaved would have worn white simple garments to work in, as well as the ladies of the plantation houses (see fig. 4). It is a fact that the simple round gown of white muslin was itself a West Indian invention, well documented in the paintings by Agostino Bunias of Caribbean life (1770-80, see fig. 5), hence providing visual proof that life on the Caribbean colonies was without a doubt influential in the fashions worn during the neoclassical period in Europe.[51] It is a challenge to find remnants of full garments worn

[49] *Ibid*, p.53.
[50] Mireille M. Lee, "Antiquity and Modernity in Neoclassical Dress: The Confluence of Ancient Greece and Colonial India." *Classical World*, Vol. CXII, no. 2 (2019), p. 86, available online at: doi:10.1353/clw.2019.0004.
[51] Amelia Rauser, *The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion, and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s*, (Yale University Press 2020), p.140.

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in the Caribbean, due to how worn the garments would have been and the damage caused by the same climate which inspired the chemise gowns. Most physical traces of colonial age Caribbean garments are limited to archaeological artefacts like buttons and buckles, and so it becomes necessary to rely on art and illustration, to understand them better. The 1786 painting by Agostino Brunias is one of the only pieces of art to depict images of a muslin chemise gown worn in the Caribbean, by Caribbean women. The paintings illustrate in detail some of the customary scenes that could have been witnessed in 18th century Caribbean islands. In another image by the painter, a colonial woman in a loose white gown can be seen inspecting textiles for sale in a market on the island of Dominica.

Of course, it is difficult to find evidence of the Caribbean woman wearing her own garment and dress, once adapted to Europe, a lot of the customs and adornments that were originally worn by the Taino natives, as well as those brought to the Caribbean by the Africans was relegated to fashionable high society women in France who were now experimenting with cotton and lighter fabrics. The garments that were marked by scandal in France were garments that had been worn with ease in tropical and subtropical colonies across the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. These were garments of West Indian invention but were now constituted as part of Neoclassical dress.[52] The concept of race and Neoclassical dress has not been explored profoundly, as the voices of those who originated most of these garments were silenced by the cruel. governments of the time. There is little to nothing in writing and illustration from the Taino natives themselves explaining why they wore what they wore, and for this reason, we have merely a European interpretation of what could have been something completely different. Making it difficult to understand to what level some of these garments have been appropriated and misunderstood.

> *Within the context of the French Caribbean, it is striking to see discourse like that of the creole Moreau de Saint-Méry and the European baron de Wimpffen implicate colonial clothing within larger debates on gender, luxury, morality, and even race. Regardless of whether they sought to subvert or challenge any cultural status quo*

[52] Philippe Halbert, "Creole Comforts and French Connections: A Case Study in Caribbean Dress" (2018) *The Junto.*

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> *through dress, Caribbean women, from the marchandes modistes of colonial Saint-Domingue to Madame Fortier and Louise d'Avezac, emerge as compelling figures in an Atlantic world where the stakes of revolution might toe the line between the political and the sartorial.*[53]

Cultural appropriation is a theme that comes into play in present day fashion and design[54] as much as it did throughout the neoclassical period in a variety of ways. Often alienating not only the culture which originated the style of dress or adornment from a certain privilege as an author or inventor, but also alienating the public which receives that trend from understand its source and what their choices really are as consumers of said style. Power is taken from the Taino culture when it is denied the chance to be recognized as a society with the power to create something that another culture assimilates into their own. We know from a few sources (for example) that Taino chiefs and their wives often wore similar garments as those depicted in their *cemi* idol sculptures (as noted in the previous chapters) and that these thick shoulder weaves and decorations could have possibly influenced some of the bigger sleeves, decorated by slashes and worn throughout the Baroque and Rococo periods in Europe.

> *As described by Bernáldez in 1494, witness to Columbus' visit with a Jamaican delegation in which the cacique's wife wore 'on her arms, about the armpits […] a roll of cotton, made like the upper part of the sleeves of old-fashioned French doublets'. While such armlets may have exhibited a thick, textured weave, possibly with additions of beadwork, the treatment of the cemi's shoulder epaulettes is unprecedented among surviving examples of Taino sculpture, particularly the slashed nature of the upper and lower bands… the elaborate treatment is reminiscent of European fashions at the turn of the sixteenth century…* [55]

[53] *Ibid.*
[54] Susan Scafidi, *Who Owns Culture? Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law*, (Rutgers University Press 2005).
[55] Joanna Ostapkowicz, "Fashioning the 'Other' The Foreign & Diplomatic Currency in the Sixteenth-Century Caribbean & in Europe," *In Transnational Perspectives on the Conquest and Colonization of Latin America*", no. 1st, (2019), pp. 14-17.

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The consequence of the long periods of colonization were slavery, death and racism towards people who were not European. The more cultures mixed and intermarried within the Caribbean, the more necessary it became to establish hierarchies which would allow the privileges of Europeans to continue. Skin color and facial features would many times become the deciding factor in establishing which social class a Caribbean of mixed descent would belong to, those resembling white Europeans taking the upper hand, the damage had been done. Although the Caribbean had become a melting pot of cultures; Indigenous, European, and African, the appropriation of Caribbean fashions by white European women would become the ideal in terms of beauty and fashion even after being worn firstly by the indigenous and African. At one point it became popular in European societies to mock and ridicule the skin color of the mixed Caribbean peoples, often negating that Europeans were assimilating a lot of their dress and identity. A 1790s play by Samuel Jackson Pratt, *The New Cosmetic; or, The Triumph of Beauty, A Comedy,* which explicitly connects the liminality of the Creole West Indies with the ideal of the woman as a living statue, a character in the play is acknowledged for saying, 'I loved the girl once, when she was white, but never thought of her after she became a Mulatto' the play highlighted the moral depravity of Creole culture as shown by the supposed physical decay of a female character from white, English beauty into brown, lusty, ugliness.[56]

The attack on people of color continues with a rather disturbing colored stipple engraving published in Paris in 1803, Mirate Che Bel Visino (see fig. 6), in this illustration it was argued that the natural beauty of neoclassical dress only made sense on a white woman. Here, a white woman has dressed up her African servant in fashionable dress of the late neoclassical period and jewelry. She holds the black woman's face before the mirror with a sense of mockery; the intended contrast is between the black and white, the "ugly" black servant who is depicted missing a front tooth, and the "beautiful" who would of course

[56] Samuel Jackson Pratt, The New Cosmetic, Or the Triumph of Beauty, a Comedy by C. Melmonth, Esq. Inscribed to Mrs. Hodges. (London 1790).

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be depicted as the white woman[57], thus, associating darker skinned individuals, not only with ugliness, but also with an immoral personality.

The longest lasting issue with the role that cultural appropriation played in Europe during the Late 18th century and beyond is the belief that an object of adornment and dress worn by a person of a culture/race other than European was inappropriate, unattractive, and unfashionable, even though the idea contradicts the very desire of European society to imitate and adapt said item(s) into their own dress and identity. These ideals convey the thought that if the original wearer is not white, the item is unwanted until a white body wears the item to make it desirable for the rest of the world, and with it taking away the voice of the culture and the identity they convey through their dress and adornment.

In this way, cultural appropriation becomes a theft of identity, it takes away from the original wearer through desire and want, admiration hidden behind covetousness; to later adapt it to another identity and say: "now it is acceptable to wear, because I wear it, and not you" in this way identity is not only stolen, but silenced, as the lines between adaptation and appropriation become blurred, when in reality total negation of the original source is what has happened. In Late 18th century Europe, the solution to propagating the sheer white fabrics of neoclassical dress was to find suitable wearers to make those garments and adornments desirable for wear and consumption. Aside from Josephine Bonaparte there was also Madame Taillien, the Spanish socialite who joined Josephine Bonaparte and Juliette Recamier in their fashion trio of "the three graces". She was most popularly known for wearing her hair in the head wrap (see fig. 7), originally worn by enslaved African women in the colonies, a tradition which goes back for centuries in Africa, and most especially in West African nations where most of the enslaved had been taken from[58] thus this was no longer a "slaves headdress" on Madame Taillien, it was now a symbol of status and high fashion. Several of these Creole-neoclassical fashion elements can be observed in a 1786 portrait of a black African woman painted in Saint-Domingue (modern day Haiti) (see fig. 8). Clad in a loose, white round gown, the woman wears madras plaid as a head wrap and

[57] Amelia Rauser, *The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion, and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s*, (Yale University Press 2020), p.151.
[58] Colleen E. Kriger, *Cloth in West African History*, (AltaMira Press 2006).

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prominent gold hoop earrings. Gold hoops had long related to black people and by the 18th century, they were associated with Creole culture as can be seen in fig. 9, both enslaved and free were taken up by white women as fashionable accessories in the 1790s; it is said that Madame Taillien wore them with a blonde wig for a portrait in 1794. The head wrap was another distinctively West Indian garment that was now absorbed into Neoclassical fashion.

> *First mandated by sumptuary laws to mark the free colored woman, the head wrap was appropriated by women of all colors and classes in the West Indies and worn in a variety of forms and folds, both in madras plaid and plain muslin. The creole head wrap (called vehoule by the Creoles) became the signature accessory of the Directory hostess Juliette Recamier as well, and was depicted in most representations of her, including the famous bust by Joseph Chinard".*[59]

In Europe's history, skin color has been seen as the indicator of someone's wealth and position, as well as moral and intellectual worth, while other physical characteristics have not.[60] Race science, led by the publication of new editions of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's influential taxonomy, on the varieties of mankind, during the 1790s, helped suppress the tensions, by assuring white people that they were different, and it was usually implied, superior to other people in the world.

> *Neoclassical dress participated by appropriating the cultural symbols of an oppressed group that was increasingly recognized as categorically distinct and layering these over references to antiquity. In doing so, they gained the depraved glamour, consumptive sickliness, and scandalous aura of plantation culture, as well as a heightened sense of their own whiteness by contrast with the black and indigenous culture of the original wearers".*[61]

[59] Amelia Rauser, *The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion, and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s*. (Yale University Press 2020) p. 151.
[60] John P. Jackson, and Nadine M. Weidman, *Race, Racism, and Science: Social Impact and Interaction*. (Rutgers University Press 2006).
[61] Amelia Rauser. *The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion, and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s*, (Yale University Press 2020) pp.151-152.

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When researching Neoclassical fashion, most historical texts credit ancient Greece and Rome as the ultimate cause and influence for the movement of Neoclassical dress, but it can be argued that without the sources of cotton and muslin brought in from the Caribbean colonies, as well as the impressions caused by the first encounters with Taino natives and later on with Africans, Neoclassical dress was unlikely to have evolved in the matter that it did.

The decline of Neoclassical fashion

The decline of Neoclassical fashion began when it became a burden on the French economy to promote and wear the textiles from its colonies. A recovering France was looking to its new leader Napoleon Bonaparte, for guidance, leadership, and order. He could not make the same mistakes as the French monarchy, *La Terreur* was not something in desire to be repeated. Changes had to be made when it came to expenses and overconsumption.

> *General Napoleon Bonaparte became first consul in 1799, and he began to restore both political and economic stability to the French people. Their desperate need for stability inclined them to accept the creation of the Empire in 1804, and when Bonaparte placed the laurel-leaf crown on his head at Notre Dame, he had become their new Caesar.*[62]

It became unpatriotic to wear cotton and muslin or any imported textiles, and sufficient protests had been made in terms of whether it had been decent for women to continue wearing such light and sheer fabrics in France. Josephine Bonaparte would have had to adjust, as would the rest of the women in France. The idea was to join colonial France with European France, as well as advertise a visual unity between both territories. Josephine became the figure in displaying that alliance through her clothing. Antoine-Jean Gro's Portrait of Empress Josephine (1808-09) emphasized this change, while she still had the

[62] Katell Le Bourhis, Editor, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789–1815*. ((The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City 1989), p.12.

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Neoclassical cut of dress and style, she was known for wearing continuously through the Neoclassical period, she now had elements from the newly colonized regions of the French empire, and a renewed heaviness to the textiles which draped her body. This included her use of a cashmere shawl (see fig.10), which was brought back from Egypt when Napoleon and his troops witnessed its displays by mamelukes wearing them as sashes and head turbans. Josephine became known as the most elegant scarf wearer in France.[63]

At the height of trade embargo (1807), it was increasingly difficult for Josephine to obtain the fabrics she desired to wear, one of her closest confidants the Duchess d'Abrantes, reported that Josephine did not hesitate to buy massive amounts of Indian muslin or foreign fabrics. Indeed, when Napoleon proclaimed his intention to prohibit the absolute use of cotton in France, Josephine registered her shock and displeasure at his idea and persuaded her husband to abandon the notion.[64] Josephine had made it quite clear that although Napoleon was the emperor of France, she was the image of France, and she would try to uphold the title for as long as she could.

Whites and ivories were no longer the ideal, Napoleon's regime had slowly reverted fashion back into the trend of rich colors and heavier textiles. The wearing of color had become fashionable once more around 1810 and can be seen as a celebration of the French Industry. Another trend which was growing rapidly in popularity thanks to Josephine and her new embrace of color, was the use of coral necklaces. The French had a newfound monopoly on the coral fisheries off the coast of Africa and Marseilles, and this made for a rising in the use of coral jewelry,[65] as can be seen in a lot of the portraiture of the time. Josephine Bonaparte and her position as the image of France had come to an end, as well as her marriage to Napoleon, which had an arguable negative effect on the monarch who continued to mourn the loss of Josephine despite his marriage to Maria Luisa de Austria in 1810 up until his death in 1821, with Josephine dying from pneumonia at the age of 50 in 1814.

[63] Justine D Young, *Fashion in European Art: Dress and Identity, Politics and the Body, 1775-1925*, (2019), p. 49.
[64] *Ibid*, p.43.
[65] *Ibid*, p. 52.

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> *French silk and taffeta had replaced the nude muslins and cotton fabrics, different to the Baroque period, the silhouette remained with an elevated waist in the Neoclassical cut. Lyon silks, deeper colors, and rich embroideries became increasingly fashionable under the emperor's direction. With the demise of the Empire in 1815 the taste for antiquity had faded.*[66]

Conclusions

In summary, there are a few notable factors within Europe which could have arguably contributed to the Neoclassical fashion movement of the Directory period: the French revolution, the rejection of opulence and things associated with the ancient monarchy, and of course the newfound affinity for Greek and Roman antiquity due to the connections formed with the ruins of Pompeii. However, the visual elements which make the Neoclassical fashion most recognizable from other periods of fashion, became available by influence and inspiration from the Caribbean colonies their diversity of cultures. It was the lifestyle of the Caribbean and the adaptation to its climate, which brought about the assimilation of wearing lighter textiles back to Europe, possibly also encouraging the confidence of European in wearing less layers and finding comfort in exposing the body with more ease.

Cultural appropriation has done a great disservice to the sources we could have had available in order to understand the garments and adornments worn by Taino natives, and with that comes the consequence of not fully understanding what they wished to convey through their act of dress. Although this limits the findings and resources concerning what they wore, through recognizing the acts of cultural appropriation perpetrated in the past, and using the right strategies, there is hope that we can begin to ask the questions which might lead us to a better understanding. There are a few strategies which could be helpful in expanding our knowledge on this subject, starting with analyzing the garments of Caribbean Africans not only during the Late 18th century but in the centuries before enslavement, seeking to understand the intricacies of trend exchange between Europe and the Caribbean

[66] Katell Le Bourhis, Editor, *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire, 1789–1815,* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City 1989), p. 12.

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through the means of analyzing portraiture, and art, as well as giving importance to what is left behind in the forms of dress and adornment from Caribbean natives. Creole women who returned to Europe after having lived most of their lives on the Caribbean islands, could also be an advantage when furthering this research, it is through them that perhaps we can understand more about a culture whose people had been silenced for more than two centuries. Whatever is left behind from the Taino's and the Caribbean Africans in the forms of dress and adornment, tells us a story in which trends and fashion are not solely of European origin, but also, that indeed there are voices loud enough to be seen and heard from the indigenous and African people that influenced Europe and the world in the same manner.

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FIGURE 1: Photograph by Unidentified, & Subject of Unidentified Woman or Women. (1860-1880).

FIGURE 2: "Marie-Antoinette en chemise ou en gaulle - Vers 1783 - Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun"

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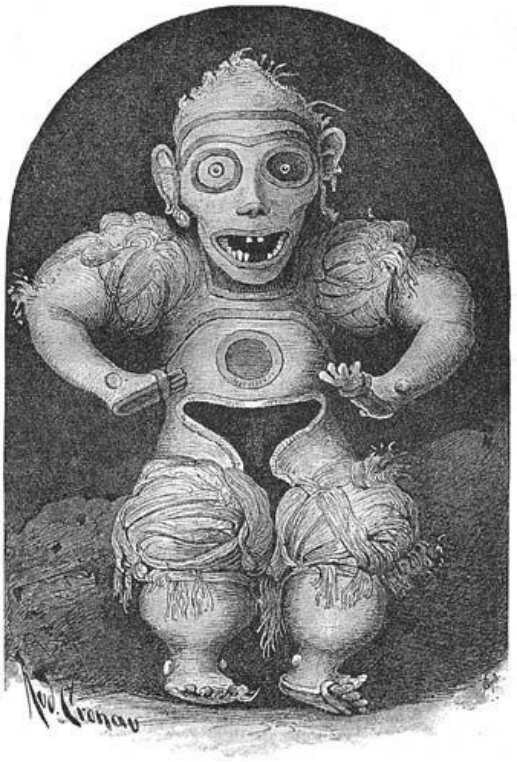

FIGURE 3: Feest, C. (1986). *Cotton zemi from Dominican Republic*.

FIGURE 4: "Creole Woman"

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FIGURE 5: Agostino Brunias (Italian, ca. 1730-1796). *Free Women of Color with their Children and Servants in a Landscape*, c.1770-96.

FIGURE 6: Mécou, A. J., & Sicardi, L. (2019). *Mirate che bel Visino*.

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FIGURE 7: "File:Portrait of a Lady by Marie-Guillemine Benoist

FIGURE 8: Now known as *Portrait of a Haitian Woman* (1786)

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FIGURE 9: Gillray, James. (25 February 1796). *A mulatto Caribbean woman wearing elaborate clothes and jewellry. Etching by J. Gillray after himself, 1796.*

FIGURE 10: "Josephine Bonaparte"