

A Study on the Use of Underwear as Outerwear

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Abstract

As foundation wear, underwear is the starting point where a woman shapes her figure and constructs a female identity. In the late twentieth century, the use of underwear as outerwear was extensively adapted, so underwear as outerwear is the latest thing today. Based on literature review, this study aimed to examine how underwear was adopted for use as outerwear extensively in the late twentieth century. The result of this study can be summarized as follows. First, originally there was no border between underwear and outerwear at the start. With the change of female social and political status, the function of underwear and its design has been changed diversely. Also, its revealing and decoration has been linked with female sexual attraction. Second, by some precursor fashion designers such as Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier, underwear was redefined as outerwear with erotic but powerful meaning in the Twentieth century. Their idea had an enormous influence on contemporary fashion culture, and consequently has become popularized like lingerie look today. Third, the change of female social status led a big change in view on the female sexuality and the ideas of femininity in fashion culture in the Twentieth century. Dressed by Gaultier, Madonna's performance wearing corset costume played a role in redefining contemporary femininity in relation to sexuality and power, even though it is still under the controversy.

Key words : underwear, outerwear, femininity, sexuality, identity.

I. Introduction

Underwear is the clothing closest to female skin, a private and often secret indication of her feeling about herself. The tendency of the use of underwear as outerwear has become popularized in twentieth century fashion culture. The context of its image does not suggest provocation or physical sexuality only anymore, but perhaps it signifies the changing attitudes regarding women and their bodies with the ideal of an erotic but

powerful femininity. According to Bressler, "A woman's choice of lingerie will affect her behavior and set the tone for the events that follow, whether they include a busy day in the office, a work out at the gym, or a romantic dinner".¹¹ It can be said that underwear is an important aspect of clothing often linked with female sexuality and identity, although it serves a good many other functions as well. Then what makes underwear become acceptable as outerwear?

Most of previous researches show that aspects of aesthetics,²⁻⁸⁾ history,^{9,10)} and body image of

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1) K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, *A Century of Style Lingerie* (London: Apple, 1998), p.7.

2) Sang-Ryu Lee, "Aesthetics of Underwear," *Journal of the Korean Society of Costume* Vol.52 No.1 (2002), pp.159-173.

underwear.¹¹⁾ Lee¹²⁾ and Choi¹³⁾ analyzed the use of underwear as outerwear as the decadence deconstructive phenomena reflected in the current fashion culture. These researches deal with subjects historically related to the female status, respectively, therefore, a comprehensive study is required to understand a link between each other.

The goal of this study was to examine how underwear was adopted for use as outerwear considerably in the late twentieth century. Regarding the method of literature study, first, the historical background to the development of underwear as outerwear were explored by referring books on history of western fashion culture and lingerie to research the functional and design changes in the use of undergarment. Second, to find how underwear was redefined as outerwear by contemporary fashion designers their works were analyzed through fashion books and visiting exhibition. In addition, American pop singer Madonna is one of the most popular and important icons of femininity in contemporary culture, so her performance wearing the corset costume was analyzed

to investigate the relationship between femininity and female sexuality in fashion. This study is expected to contribute to understand the relationship between the change in female social and political status and the idea of femininity through the development of underwear as outerwear.

II. The Historical Background to the Development of Underwear as Outerwear

Christian Dior pronounced that without foundations there can be no fashion.¹⁴⁾ His speech emphasizes the importance of the original function of underwear. However, Ewing argued that Dior's announcement could be appropriately reversed to 'without fashion, there can be no foundation'.¹⁵⁾ I agree with Ewing in his opinion, because the history of underwear has been intimately related to fashion trends. He also said that fashion is a changing shape, and that shape is mostly shaped and controlled by what is worn underneath it.¹⁶⁾ Thus, it can be said that we cannot appreciate the

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- 3) Eui Jung Lee and Sook Hi Yang, "A Study of Fetishism in Fashion," *Journal of the Korean Society of Costume* Vol.23 No.2 (1999), pp.272-283.
 - 4) Sun-Young Kim, "The Study on the Image of a Woman's Body Exposure Expressed in Modern Fashion," *Journal of the Korean Society of Costume* Vol.57 No.1 (2007), pp.28-38.
 - 5) Young-Ran Cho, "A Study on the Expressional Method of the Eroticism in Clothing" (Master Dissertation, Duksung Women's University, 2004).
 - 6) Young-Ju Jang and Myung-Sook Kim, "A Study on the Feminism through Contemporary Fashion," *Korean J. of Human Ecology* Vol.2 No.2 (1999), pp.63-79.
 - 7) Mi-Hee Shon and Young-Ja Lim, "A Study on the Influence made by the Feminism on Contemporary Fashion," *Journal of the Korean Society of Costume* No.32 (1997), pp.261-282.
 - 8) Jin-Ah Yoon and Myung-Hee Lee, "Design Analysis and Apparel Patternmaking of Lingerie Look," *Journal of the Korean Society of Costume* Vol.56 No.7 (2006), pp.152-166.
 - 9) Soon-Ja Lee and Soon-Hong Lee, "A Study on Women's Underweares," *Journal of the Korean Society of Costume* Vol.50 No.6 (2000), pp.89-107.
 - 10) Mee-Hyang Nam and Soon-Hong Lee, "A Study Underweares." *Journal of the Korean Society of Costume* Vol.50 No.1 (2000), pp.129-144.
 - 11) Ghi-Young Kwon and Pil-Gyo Cho, "The Symbol of the Body Image Expressed in Modern Fashion Design," *The Research Journal of the Costume Culture* Vol.8 No.5 (2000), pp.681-706.
 - 12) Sang-Ryu Lee, "The Vogue about Outwearization of Underwear in a Tendency to the Century-end," *Journal of the Korean Society of Costume* No.35 (1997), pp.340-341.
 - 13) Young-Ok Choi, "The International Deconstruction Trend Expressed in the Works of Jean Paul Gaultier," *The Research Journal of the Costume Culture* Vol.9 No.4 (2001), pp.36-37.
 - 14) in K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, op. cit., p.10.
 - 15) E. Erwing, *Dress & Undress: A History of Women's Underwear* (London: B.T. Bastsford Ltd, 1978), p.11.

significance of the outer form unless we understand the nature of the supporting garments beneath. Then, did underwear always exist separately from outerwear? What was its original function? What was its shape like, when compared with modern underwear? It was possible to find the answers to above questions by an chronological study on the background to the development of underwear as outerwear.

1. Ancient Times

The earliest known pieces of underwear can be traced back to the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Greece, when it seems their use was purely functional. According to Saint-Laurent, in Egypt and Sumeria during this period the slaves and the majority of the poorer people wore nothing, whereas the nobles were already using gold thread in their garments—first the loincloth by extending it downwards to the feet and upwards to the shoulders (Fig. 1, 2).¹⁷⁾ Clothes soon took on a symbolic value in ancient civilizations. Saint-Laurent also mentioned that people of high rank had the right to wear a loincloth under their tunic, and from this developed the underskirt, that

is the first undergarment, and its development is due not to a sense of hygiene or fear of cold, but to a sense of social status.¹⁸⁾ <Fig. 3> and <Fig. 4> are notable evidence as a starting point for underclothing. <Fig. 3> is a Babylonian girl of about 3000 BC from Sumeria who wears what today would immediately be described as briefs, and <Fig. 4> is dressed in the first recorded corset and crinoline. Both are unconcernedly bare-breasted and dressed in what in their day was obviously outerwear. When, several hundreds of years later, clothing in ancient Rome followed closely along the lines of that in Greece and elsewhere. A Roman mosaic in the Imperial Villa, Piazza Armerina in Sicily, shows female athletes wearing a bikini-briefs and bra-in the fourth century AD (Fig. 5).

Through tracing back to the ancient clothes, it is possible to find the origin of undergarments. At first, there was no distinction between underwear and outerwear until more than one layer of clothing was worn. Also, its original function was a status symbol. But although, as Bressler mentions, a very early archetype of the bra was worn by ancient Roman women, many of the items of underwear typically worn by women today are



<Fig. 1> Straight-falling Egyptian Tunic, Starting below Waist, with Crossed Shoulder Band and Knotted Sash, about 1125 BC.



<Fig. 2> T-shaped Tunic from Egypt c. 1500 BC.



<Fig. 3> Sumerian Terra Cotta Figure c. 3000 BC.

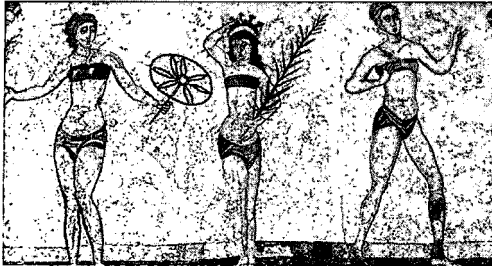


<Fig. 4> Cretan Snake Goddess c. 2000 BC.

16) Ibid., p.11.

17) C. Saint-Laurent, *A History of Women's Underwear* (London: Academy, 1986), p.9.

18) Ibid., p.10.



〈Fig. 5〉 The First Modern Bra and Briefs. From the Villa Armerina, Sicily, a Mosaic of the 4th Century AD.

comparatively modern inventions.¹⁹⁾

2. The Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages there was a perceptible development in clothes including the undergarment. Bressler said that members of the European privileged people, in the Medieval Times, began to wear simple linen clothes under richly decorated and expensive outer dresses to protect these expensive costumes from dirty bodies, and to provide a layer of warmth for the wearer.²⁰⁾ These simple linen shifts became the first undergarments for the nobility, sometimes worn as nightwear, and gradually became everyday clothing for the people of the lower classes too.²¹⁾ Moreover, Cox mentioned that “Underwear also contributed to the definition of male and female identities, and the gender roles that went with them, by helping to construct the general silhouette of fashion”.²²⁾

〈Fig. 6〉 shows the difference between men and women's fashion in the Middle Ages. A notable difference between the clothing of men and women, is that women's underwear was highly developed to include various items such as corsets and petticoats, whereas men's underwear was of little significance. For centuries, the female body has been moulded into a variety of shapes to suit



〈Fig. 6〉 Clothes Emphasized the Difference. A Scene of Courtly Love. Manuscript of Remand de Montauban. 15th century.

the fashions of the day. The corset, in particular, has played a crucial role in achieving the desired line. According to Cox the original corset derived from the “cotte” of the 1300. A rigid laced tunic of linen, stiffened with paste to fit closely to the body, the cotte helped create the slim, serpentine silhouette of medieval Europe.²³⁾ Sometimes the corset was itself an outer garment, made of properly rich materials (Fig. 7). The fashion in this



〈Fig. 7〉 The Corset as an Outer Garment in a Painting. An Allegory of Fame, by Bernardo Strozzi (1584-1644) (The National Gallery, London).

19) K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, op. cit., p.7.

20) Ibid., p.7.

21) C. Saint-Laurent, op. cit., p.64.

22) Cox Caroline, *Lingerie: A Lexicon of Style* (London: Scriptum Edition, 2000), p.10.

23) Cox Caroline, op. cit., p.16.

era from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century became greatly exaggerated, and used the highly decorated dress fabrics of the day. Consequently, the corsets of the Middle Ages were richly ornamented and worn as decorative outerwear (Fig. 8). Also, by becoming a device that compressed the waist, thereby drew sexual attention to the bust and hips by creating the hourglass figure.²⁴⁾

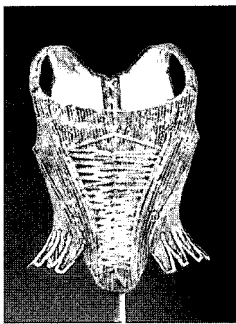
As the corset was the most important features of female underwear for the upper part of body, the petticoat was also essential for the lower part of the body in Medieval Times. The showing of petticoats by the holding up of skirts, became something of a status symbol.²⁵⁾ Moreover, in the Tudor period petticoats came into view more than ever before, because skirts were being tucked up or looped back with pins or ties to reveal them and this item of underwear was thus turned into a main part of fashionable outerwear (Fig. 9). Petticoats were now more and more elabo-

rately embroidered, quilted, frilled and made in colours that blended with dresses.²⁶⁾ Ewing also argued that the visible outer petticoat and glimpses of other petticoats, revealed by softer outer clothes, had sex-appeal too.²⁷⁾

The Middle Ages was an important period in women's undergarment. At this time the precursors of modern items such as the corset and petticoat emerged and developed as they followed the trends in outerwear fashion. Underwear served to make the perfect shape on which to display the outerwear, and sometimes it was revealed as outerwear, when it was often decorated with elaborate embroidery. Also, it was used to enhance female sexual attraction during this time.

3. Modern Times

During the nineteenth century, the quantity and style of underwear worn by women reached extremes. So, unapproachable did the female body become beneath the layers of underwear that taking it off created its own form of sexual titillation. A contrast in volume between the upper and lower parts of the body was created by bodices and tightly laced corsets.²⁸⁾ A well-developed bust, a tapering waist and large hips were the combination of points recognized as a good female figure, and became the ideal. It was achieved with the notorious S-bend corset which actually distorted the female physique and badly affected women's health, harming both respiration and reproduction.²⁹⁾ As a result, these tortuous devices aroused in women the desire to be free from the constraints of the artificial body shape, and the increasing participation of women in sports such as golf, riding and tennis made women choose healthy and more natural shaped corsets.³⁰⁾ The advent of new materials such as soft knitted fabrics



〈Fig. 8〉 Corset, Late 1760s (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*).



〈Fig. 9〉 Lady Jane Grey in a Full-skirted Dress, Opening to Reveal an Elaborate Petticoat all Down the Front. Portrait c. 1547

24) Cox Caroline, op. cit., p.16.

25) E. Erwing, *Fashion in Underwear* (London: B.T. Bastsford Ltd, 1971), p.23.

26) Ibid., p.32.

27) Ibid., p.34.

28) K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, op. cit., p.8.

29) Ibid., p.14.

30) E. Erwing, op. cit., p.66.

used by the corset firm, led to the production of the Liberty Bodice which became world-famous.³¹⁾

In the early twentieth century, there were huge events which greatly influenced female life and fashion. The First World War presented women with an enormous challenge coping with new types of work outside the home, so women demanded underwear that allowed greater physical freedom.³²⁾ By abandoning the corset and creating simpler garments, the newly revealed 'natural' body reflected the strength which women had gained in real terms from the successes of the suffrage movement, and their experiences in the workplace during the First World War. It also signified their growing presence in the public arena (Fig. 10).³³⁾ Also, the great depression and the Second World War had a profound effect on underwear, so purely functional underwear emerged as a result.³⁴⁾

Also, the innovation of man-made fiber such as Nylon in 1939 and Lycra in 1959 as well as their application to corsetry revolutionized both under and outerwear. Its excellent economic, technical and fashionable abilities had a radical impact on fashion industry (Fig. 11).³⁵⁾ Lycra especially had a great impact on the teenage underwear



<Fig. 10> New Responsibilities brought Women New Freedom. - A Woman in an Armament Factory 1916.



<Fig. 11> 'Lycra', Du Pont's 'Light and Mighty' Synthetic Spandex Fibre Introduced in 1959, Made Sheer, Figure Controlling Possible.

market which rejected all the physical and social restrictions. Thus, with the emergence of the mini-skirt, the contemporary corsets and corselettes were replaced by tights.³⁶⁾

In the twentieth century especially, there were dramatic changes in female underwear fashion caused by the social and political climate. Female sexual attitudes and behavior became much more free than in any other period. Now, the adopting of underwear as outerwear made the border between underwear and outerwear vague.

III. The Re-creation of Underwear as Outerwear by Contemporary Fashion Designers

The twentieth century has seen the increasing use of erotic as well as sexual imagery within female fashion, and some designers have made sexuality increasingly explicit in their work. This work has often been inspired by traditional lingerie. Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier were two designers who concentrated on provoking attention by adopting underwear into their outer-

31) Ibid., p.67.

32) C. Buckley and H. Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2002), p.52.

33) R. Arnold, op. cit., p.65.

34) K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, op. cit., p.120.

35) E. Erwing, op. cit., p.122.

36) K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, op. cit., p.20.

wear collections.

As an early example, Hollywood continuously influenced women's fashion worldwide throughout the twentieth century. Science fiction especially, was all the rage at the start of the 1970s. In the sci-fi films, actresses wore many unusual costumes inspired by underwear. For example, in the film *The Magic Christian* (1970), Raquel Welch was dressed in a sculptured leather corset, suggestive, provocative, and fetishistic (Fig. 12). Also, Jane Fonda (Fig. 13), in sci-fi-cult film *Barbarella* (1968) wore a funky corset.³⁷⁾ Another shocking film which inspired a youth culture movement with its fetishistic look was released in 1975 (Fig. 14). In the film *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Richard O'Brien was dressed in a fetishistic corset with torn fishnets, safety pins, and dog collars. This film confronted sexuality and gender stereotypes, and had its leading man dressed in corset, garter belt, and stockings.³⁸⁾ Soon after, these kinds of clothes were popularized by female punks during the 1980s' Punk movement.

As a fanatical advocate of the Punk cultural

movement, Vivienne Westwood was the most sensational British designer because her interests and innate creativity led her in an eccentric, controversial, sometimes shocking direction but it was always utterly original.³⁹⁾ In the early 1980s, when punk fashion had already been commercialized, she presented her first catwalk show, the 'Pirated' collection, in 1981. In the following years, when she presented 'Buffalo Girls' (1982/83), she became the first designer to use the bra as outerwear. Since then her design ideas inspired by fashion history, have frequently used underwear as outerwear. Westwood's 'Buffalo' collection for Autumn/Winter 1982-83 featured large satin bras worn over sweatshirts, an early example of the trend for underwear as outerwear, which would have a huge impact on international fashion (Fig. 15).⁴⁰⁾

Westwood's reinterpretation of historical dress is her greatest skill: she has done it for longer and better than any other designer. She once said that there has never been so little respect for history.⁴¹⁾ Her reinventions of old fashion items such as the corset and the crinoline reappeared



⟨Fig. 12⟩ Leather Corset Couture Worn by Raquel Welch in the Film. 'The Magic Christian' (1970).



⟨Fig. 13⟩ Funky Style Corset Couture Worn by Jane Fonda in the Film. 'Barbarella' (1968).



⟨Fig. 14⟩ Fetishistic Corset Couture Worn by Richard O'Brien in the Film. 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show' (1975).

37) K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, op. cit., p.20.

38) Ibid., p.21.

39) Ibid., p.104.

40) V. Mendes, *20th Century Fashion* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), p.225.

41) S. Ruth, "The Big Picture; Vivienne Westwood; PRprofile; Fashion," *The Times*, 23 April 2004, 16.



⟨Fig. 15⟩ Vivienne Westwood's Buffalo Collection, A/W 1982-83.



⟨Fig. 16⟩ Vivienne Westwood's Black Satin and White Organza Crinoline Skirt and Blous. 'Mini-Crini' Collection, S/S 1985.

in unexpected ways throughout her work, and they always attract attention. In the Mini-Crini collection (S/S 1985), Westwood showed hoop skirt looks undergarment (Fig. 16). Her abbreviated crinoline was formed in the same way as its 19th century precedent but combined with the modern mini. It moves and sways, constantly revealing areas of flesh.⁴²⁾ The crinoline was a women's undergarment introduced in the 1830s, originally a stiffened petticoat which extended the skirt. It drew attention to the lower part of the body but was inconvenient to wear. Thus, combining it with the miniskirt made it possible for women to wear it while still able to move freely, and the mini-crini became underwear adopted as outerwear.

The reveal of the luxury corset is another key favourite of the Westwood look. In her 'Harris Tweed' collection (Autumn/Winter 1987-8) (Fig. 17), she reclaimed and reinvented the liberty corset based on eighteenth century corset design. Now, the corset was worn openly as fashionable outerwear, rather than as underwear. "Long dis-

paraged as a symbol of female oppression, the corset began to be reconceived as a symbol of female sexual empowerment.⁴³⁾

As the pioneer fashion designer adopted underwear as outerwear, she had an enormous influence on contemporary fashion culture, and her idea of using corsetry techniques for outerwear was explored later in the century by younger designers, most notably Jean Paul Gaultier.

Under the influence of Westwood's corsetry in the 1980s, French fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier became successful, and his early designs played with issues of power and sexuality with an irony borrowed from punk culture.⁴⁴⁾ Underwear frequently was seen in Gaultier's work as outerwear from his 'Le Dadaism' collection in 1983. Tolkien said that "He freely acknowledges a huge debt to Vivienne Westwood, but it was his corsets that opened the floodgates on a rash of bondage and fetish-inspired clothes that traveled straight into the 1990s".⁴⁵⁾

Also, Gaultier has explored the fetishist dream



⟨Fig. 17⟩ Vivienne Westwood's Red Velvet Corset Dress, Inspired by an 18th Century Corset, in 'Harris Tweed' Collection, A/W 1987-88.



⟨Fig. 18⟩ The Cage Dress Inspired from 19th Crinoline, In Jean Paul Gaultier's 'Le Tour de Monde en 168 Tenues' Collection, S/S 1989.

42) C. Wilcox, op. cit., p.20.

43) Steel in C. Wilcox, op. cit., p.21.

44) C. Buckley and H. Fawcett, op. cit., p.128.

45) T. Tolkien, op. cit., p.134.

of raunchy female sexuality in an extreme, unconditional way. (Fig. 18) is the cage dress which he showed in the 'Le tour de Monde en 168 Tenues' collection in Spring/Summer 1989. This cage dress, made of satin fabric, looks like the hooped skirts of Victorian crinolines, not just drawing attention to waist and hip but also to the bust, and gives off the allure of semi-nakedness.⁴⁶⁾ In the film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989), his cage dress was worn as outerwear by the actress Hellen Mirren (Fig. 19). Moreover, by working for film Gaultier had great fun playing with our sexual fantasies. In the film *The Fifth Element* (1997), Milla Jovovich's body was bandaged up in Gaultier's futuristic costume but mostly exposed (Fig. 20).

Gaultier was never frightened to push the boundaries of accepted fashion taste to its limits in his first dedicated lingerie collection, both sexes are invited to play around with their own and each other's gender stereotypes and clichés. Such headline grabbing ideas captured the attention of the pop star Madonna, who commissioned Gaultier to design the costumes for her 'Blond Ambition World Tour' in 1990.⁴⁷⁾

Pop singer Madonna, dressed by Gaultier in



〈Fig. 19〉 The Cage Dress Worn as Outerwear by Actress Hellen Mirren in the Film. 'The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover' (1989).



〈Fig. 20〉 Gaultier's Futuristic Bandage Costume Worn by Milla Jovovich in the Film. 'The Fifth Element' (1997).



〈Fig. 21〉 Madonna in 'Blond Ambition' Concert Wearing the Famous Cone Bra Corset by Jean Paul Gaultier in 1990.



〈Fig. 22〉 Lingerie Style Female Clothes for 2006/7 in 'KOOKAI' Shop Show Window in Nottingham.

the late 1980s and early 1990s, was one of the first to bring underwear as outerwear to the public's attention. She and Gaultier not only revived the corset, they also brought back the 1950s bullet bra. Her 'Blond Ambition' look was a perfect expression of the Gaultier aesthetic, both female and male spirit which he believed summed up the contemporary world (Fig. 21). The impact of Madonna's stage costume affected her audience of mainly teenagers deeply. Her young fans immediately adopted a diluted version of her style, wearing an array of top bra and bustier with jean, and today this style is still popular in the high street (Fig. 22).

IV. The Relationship between Femininity and Female Sexuality in Fashion

Western culture historically has invested much sexual meaning in the female body, and the stereotypical ideas of femininity have had a close relationship to fashion. Craik mentioned that female character and status in society are frequently judged by appearance because femininity is defined in terms of how the female body is perceived and represented.⁴⁸⁾

46) C. McDowell, *Jean Paul Gaultier* (London: Cassel & Co, 2000), p.112.

47) K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, op. cit., p.54.

From the twentieth century onwards there has always been existence a link between underwear, sexual politics, and femininity with the change of female status in fashion culture. During the nineteenth century, the female body was hidden beneath the layers of underwear. As the twentieth century arrived, women were controlled in every aspect of their lives. Just a whiff of ankle was a racy tantalizing sight in the 1900s, momentarily peeking out below full skirts and surrounded by pantaloons (Fig. 23).

After the Great World War, as women rejected the corset, the link between underwear, sexual politics, and female emancipation became evident. Bressier argued that: "Instead, the flappers of the 1920s adopted a looser, androgynous style, its ambiguous sexuality perhaps compensating for the shortage of eligible men during that decade".⁴⁹⁾ This clear evidence of underwear reflecting women's attitudes appeared again through the twentieth century. Because of the growing female presence in the public after the success of the women's suffrage movement and their work experience during war time, women were more visible in society and could be seen everywhere from the workplace to the dance hall.

As women came out from the privacy and



⟨Fig. 23⟩ The Sexy Lineup: Cancan Girls Get Their Kicks from Lacy Lingerie.

seclusion of the home, existing ideas about public women, actresses and prostitutes who were seen as lacking virtue and legitimate status, changed and the modern woman emerged.⁵⁰⁾ Modern woman adopted the startling dress styles which were the trade mark of previous public women for their racy sexual attraction. So, by embracing fashion as a force for liberation, women were also linking themselves to the quest for pleasure and seduction.

For a long time, the female body was simply a site for male desire, the object for male gaze that meant power and control, then any depiction of the female body within that society would habitually be appropriated in that way.⁵¹⁾ Madonna first attracted public attention by her portrayal of female sexuality that was seemingly unfettered by any outside constraints. She was overt in her presentation of the female body with skimpy clothing.

Dressed by Gaultier, Madonna confronted negative and oppressive representations of femininity and female sexuality in western culture by using a visual language that alluded to the conventions of female sexual objectification but placed them in a different context. The famous pink satin corset with pointed and stitched bra cups designed by Gaultier was sensational in its impact, and was part of the device by which Madonna, performing in a massive media spotlight, attempted to redefine contemporary femininity in relation to sexuality and power.

Madonna is in control of her image, not trapped by it, so 'control' and 'power' are terms used repeatedly in connection with her. Also, the image of Madonna constructed in the press casts her as an extremely controllable woman capable of imperiling social morals and values. However, in another vein the press simultaneously constructs Madonna as being very ordinary and having ordinary and 'understandable' desires.⁵²⁾

48) J. Craik, *The Face of Fashion-Cultural Studies in Fashion* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.46.

49) K. Bressler, K. Newman and G. Proctor, op. cit., p.8.

50) R. Arnold, op. cit., p.65.

51) F. Lloyd, *Deconstructing Madonna* (London: B.T. Bastsford Ltd, 1993), p.88.

Madonna's image and her performance are still the subject of great controversy today. However, without hesitation, it could be said that Madonna is a 'Post-feminist heroine', because she, created by Gaultier, challenged what she identified as a figure of 'empowerment' for females in order to redefine female desire as active yet existing within the bounds of conventional heterosexual representation.

The power of female sexuality and beauty is something positive and pleasurable. Thus, it will be no arguing that relationship between women's appearance, their bodies, their fashion, and their sexuality is extant, and will continue.

V. Conclusion

Underwear has played an integral part in defining women's identities. The adoption of underwear as outerwear has been growing more substantial in the late twentieth century. By reviewing literature, the historical background to the development of underwear as outerwear and the meaning of connection between underwear and contemporary femininity in relation to sexuality in fashion culture were examined, and the results are as follows.

First, for centuries, female underwear has been developed following trend in outerwear fashion, even though actually there was no border between underwear and outerwear at the start. Lots of underwear items were created each era. Some of them continued to be developed for essential playing to make a more ideal female body shape suggested in each period, and some types of them fell out of use. The continuous revealing and holding of underwear shows not just the change of basic function as undergarments support outer garments but also the change of social and political function. Also, the historical private and public aspects of underwear always have been linked with female sexuality.

Second, by the twentieth century the history of underwear charts women's progressive emanci-

pation, the effects of two world wars, the benefit of man-made fabrics and the impact of the sexual revolution. The traditional corsets and petticoats were energetically reinterpreted and reformed into outerwear by fashion designers Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier. By using the sensual and sexy aspects of lingerie, normally considered too perverse and subversive to be on show, they brought taboo-breaking fashion into the mainstream. Thus, underwear as outerwear became a key in female fashion today.

Finally, there always has been existence the link between underwear, sexual politics, and femininity with the change of female status in the history of fashion culture. Especially, through the twentieth century, the clear evidence of underwear reflecting women's attitudes appeared again and again. Underwear, however functional it may or may not be, is increasingly an erotic element in its own right. Madonna's powerful visual language made her be adopted by some as a figure of 'empowerment' for females who redefined contemporary femininity in relation to sexuality and power.

In short, for a long time a female's character and social status have been continuously judged by appearance in terms of how the female body is perceived and represented. Today, the use of underwear as outerwear has been popularized. It means that the recognition of the underwear of women has changed. Now the distinctions between public and private have been subverted by redefining female desire. Therefore, it can be said that the use of underwear as outerwear to express female self-identity has grown and will continue to develop with the tide of fashion culture.

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