

## **Macro and micro innovations in eighteenth-century fashion**

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That nature perfects the harmonious and proportionate beauty is one of the propositions that transpired in the works of early eighteenth century writers. Dynamic sense of aesthetics was underscored by anticipation of eventual deformity and monstrosity. Nowhere was such moral caution more obtrusive than in the popular satires directed against the artificial swelling of female silhouette, caused by the invention of hooped petticoats in eighteenth-century England. While it is often understood that this vehemently ridiculed undergarment, or the revived farthingale, played a prominent feature in defining the shape of eighteenth-century dress, its origin and its relation to the contemporary socio-economic changes have been little discussed. Fashion cycles had been institutionalised by the burgeoning textile industries of late seventeenth-century France, and a logical extension of this historical fact confers that the iconic eighteenth-century shape of panniers, as hooped skirts were called in France, was also linked to the self-perpetuating fashion inevitability there. Material and pictorial evidence for this 'abominable' style are limited at the outset of contagion but documentary evidence is rich in the satires. This paper attempts to provide a socio-economic account, speculating on the motives behind the creation and adoption of this fashion innovation of unsung origin.