

Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, Volume I

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With its hot springs and ancient Roman baths, the city of Bath has a long history as a popular spa town. Originally, the sick visited to drink the town's waters, which many people believed to have medicinal qualities. During the Georgian era, Bath's popularity grew and it became an increasingly fashionable place to socialize. A late eighteenth-century Bath guidebook entitled *The New Bath Guide; Or, Useful Pocket Companion* (1784) explains that Bath was "originally a resort of . . . diseased persons" but that Master of Ceremonies Richard Nash transformed the city into a place of amusement "as much frequented by the gay and healthy for their pleasure, as the sick for their health."

With this transformation, the city's social life began to operate through stricter rules and social codes for what was considered socially acceptable and materially fashionable. In an 1811 history of Bath, *A New Guide Through Bath, and its Environs*, Richard Warner points out that these "improvements in manners" and customs created the "elegant" amusements that Bath became famous for, including balls and plays.

While these elegant amusements attracted many of Britain's elite to the city, they also drew scorn from satirists of the time. Austen herself critiques Bath's fashion culture in her letters to her sister Cassandra. In a May 1801 letter, she writes, "Another stupid party last night; perhaps if larger they might be less intolerable, but here there were only just enough to make one card table, with six people to look on, & talk nonsense to each other." She goes on to describe one guest as "any other short girl with a broad nose & wide mouth, fashionable dress, & exposed bosom." Austen's personal dislike for the spa town (and its tendency to expose female vices in particular) permeates *Northanger Abbey* as well, from Mrs. Allen's preoccupation with fashion to Isabella's constant flirtation.

The manners and mores of Austen's time affected both men and women, but they were often manifestations of gender inequalities and assumptions that disproportionately regulated women. For example, Austen frames a visit to the Pump Room in gendered terms: "Mr. Allen, after drinking his glass of water, joined some gentlemen to talk over the politics of the day and compare the accounts of their newspapers; and the ladies walked about together, noticing every new face, and almost every new bonnet in the room" [50].

At the same time, women like Austen were finding a new degree of autonomy in cities like Bath, coinciding with their growing sense of agency as readers and writers of the early novel. Describing how Catherine and Isabella choose to spend their time, Austen writes, “if a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments, they were still resolute in meeting in defiance of wet and dirt, and shut themselves up, to read novels together” [23]. Indeed, Catherine’s trip to Bath not only introduces her to the rules of fashion and courtship; it also introduces her to new people and lifestyles. In judging the relative merits and flaws of these new people, Catherine cultivates her growing independence of thought. For example, she forms her own opinion of John Thorpe despite the way others praise him:

“Little as Catherine was in the habit of judging for herself, and unfix’d as were her general notions of what men ought to be, she could not entirely repress a doubt, while she bore with the effusions of his endless conceit, of his being altogether completely agreeable. It was a bold surmise, for he was Isabella’s brother; and she had been assured by James that his manners would recommend him to all her sex; but in spite of this, the extreme weariness of his company, which crept over her before they had been out an hour, and which continued unceasingly to increase till they stopped in Pulteney Street again, induced her, in some small degree, to resist such high authority, and to distrust his powers of giving universal pleasure” [47].

Below, an essay from *The Mirror*, an eighteenth-century conduct periodical mentioned in *Northanger Abbey*, models the pervasiveness of fashion culture in cities such as Bath. Then, a set of newspaper articles from *The Bath Chronicle* displays Georgian Bath as a place that confined women to fashion and courtship standards, but also opened new possibilities for them to engage in intellectual pursuits of their own. Finally, a timeline featuring period works of visual satire shows the ways in which artists in Austen’s day critiqued Bath’s fashionable society, echoing the commentary in Austen’s letters and *Northanger Abbey*.

The Mirror

On the left is a digital copy of *The Mirror*, a popular conduct magazine published through the Edinburgh Review every Tuesday and Saturday in 1779 and 1780. Circulating in Austen’s lifetime, *The Mirror* is explicitly mentioned by Mrs. Morland in *Northanger Abbey*:

“There is a very clever Essay in one of the books up stairs upon much such a subject, about young girls that have been spoilt for home by great acquaintance—“The Mirror;” I think. I will look it out for you some day or other, because I am sure it will do you good.” [178]

According to Austen scholars, Mrs. Morland is referring to Essay No. 12 from Saturday, March 6, 1776, entitled, “To the Author of *The Mirror*”, which begins on page 76 of the text [1], and is available in full-text using the embedded copy here or by visiting the [Internet Archive website](#).

The Mirror frames fashion as a threat to both country and religion. Fashion is not only frivolous, but capable of making young women prefer French phrases to English, and even doubt the immortality of the soul. It will, as the author writes, “bring our estates to market, our daughters to ruin, and our sons to the gallows” [82]. **Despite extensive caution in *The Mirror*, why might Mrs. Morland remain “wholly unsuspecting” of the city’s threat to Catherine’s morality [9]?**

Femininity and Bath

“London Fashions for September” *The Bath Chronicle* (Bath, England), Thursday, September 03, 1807; pg. 2; Issue 2384. *British Newspapers Part IV: 1732-1950*.

1. Evening Dress.--A round train dress of India muslin, embroidered in a fancy border of needle-work at the feet. The frock bottom, ornamented with white beads. A full Spanish short sleeve, over a plain one of white satin. A scalloped lace tucker, placed straight round the bottom. Circassian scarf of gold, chambray, or lace, crossing the back, and gathered in front of the left shoulder into an emerald brooch, reaching to the feet, finished with a gold tassel, and occasionally formed into drapery by the attitude of the right hand. The hair tastefully disposed in bands and curls; and a small ostrich feather crossing the crown towards the right side, is fastened to the hair with an emerald stud. Earrings, necklace, and bracelets of pearl, with emerald clasps. White kid gloves and shoes.

2. Evening Walking Dress.--A plain round gown of jaconot muslin, a walking length, simply ornamented with rows of open-hems round the bosom. A plain square bosom fitting close to the form, laced up at the front, and trimmed at the edge with twisted muslin. A large straw hat of the Gipsy form, tied across the crown with a silk handkerchief. Deep Vandyke frock, of lace or needle-work. A black lace or Chinese shawl, thrown in irregular negligence over the shoulders. Straw-coloured kid gloves and shoes. White sarsnet parasol, deeply fringed, and painted in historical devices.

3. A Walking Dress.--A plain round robe of the finest French cambric. A Capuchin cloak of muslin or coloured farsnet, edged in Vandyke, fitting close round the throat, with a falling collar, and confined in the center with a ribband or brooch. A village hat of straw or chip, with silk crown, and ribband to correspond with the cloak. Shoes of brown kid; gloves, York tan; and a parasol of clouded farsnet.

4. Evening Dress.--A round train gown of white farsnet, with square back, wrap front, and short full sleeve; ornamented round the bottom, bosom, and sleeves, with a rich chenille ribband of shaded green. A short sash tied behind with faded chenille ends. The Parisian head-dress, composed of the hair formed in braids and curls, blended with bands of green and gold foil. The pear earrings of gold and pearl. An imperial necklace of linked gold; elastic bracelets of the same, with emerald studs. Shoes, white satin; gloves, French kid; and fan of white crape, painted in a border of the yellow sessamine.”

“Modest Courtship.” *The Times* (London, England), Thursday, Aug 28, 1806; pg. 3; Issue 6827. *Times Newspapers Limited*. Gale Document Number: CS50866972.

An Advertiser for a wife announces, that if some young lady under twenty-six years of age, of fascinating manners and appearance, pays immediate attention to his advertisement, ‘it may lead to an alliance with a country gentleman.’”

“Women.” *The Bath Chronicle* [Bath, England], Sunday, November 14, 1824; pg. 4; Issue 3270. *British Newspapers Part IV: 1732-1950*.

It is bad policy to depreciate women. I would sooner teach them to overvalue than to undervalue themselves, so long, at least, as they are our companions for life, and the mothers of our children. We all act according to our own standard of self-estimation; and the more sensitive we are, the more are we influenced in our behaviour, by the opinion of others concerning us. Women are more sensitive than we; and, therefore, more at the mercy of opinion. It is women, after all, that form our characters. I never knew an extraordinary man, whose mother was an ordinary woman; or whose wife was a fool, unless he married her in his dotage. But among other pleasantries of the day concerning women, it has come to be said frequently of late, that women are inferior to men, in

their intellectual faculties...I am no advocate for their intellectual superiority, take all their faculties together; but I believe that they are equal to men; and and that while they are inferior in some things, they are superior in others...while they have less of one quality, intellectual or physical, they have more of another, such as that of imagination, for example. ”

Women, Fashion and Bath Society

The extravagance of Bath fashion and society was frequently mocked during the late 18th century and early 19th century, the same time as visual satire became a popular method of social critique in England. Some artists, such as Thomas Rowlandson, exaggerated England's and Bath's culture of elegance in order to critique social codes and mock its frivolity. These works of art not only give a glimpse of life at Bath during the Regency era, but also contextualize Austen's satire of Bath within a period of social commentary that was dominated by visual satire. In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine's "heroine training" serves to both satirize the heroine and the Bath culture she occupies: "Our heroine's entrée into life could not take place till after three or four days had been spent in learning what was mostly worn . . . Her hair was cut and dressed by the best hand, her clothes put on with care, and both Mrs. Allen and her maid declared she looked quite as she should" [10]. Comparing Austen's satire of Bath to that of visual artists and caricaturists reveals the ways in which Austen both appropriates and transforms the satirical tropes of Bath society.

1798 Dancing at the Balls

Balls were one of the most popular amusements in Bath during the Georgian era. Held in the Assembly Rooms, balls allowed women to display their fashionability. Rowlandson's print, depicting a woman practicing a dance in full dress, satirizes the preparations women took for balls. In *Northanger Abbey*, ball culture is at the forefront of Catherine's experience at Bath, and many pivotal scenes take place in the Assembly Rooms. Mrs. Allen "was so long in dressing" for Catherine's first ball that "[Catherine and Mrs. Allen] did not enter the ball-room until late" [11]. When attending another ball, Mrs. Allen seeks approval for her and Catherine's appearance from a new acquaintance, asking Mr. Tilney what he thinks of their gowns [16-17]. Similarly, when Catherine prepares for the cotillion ball, "What gown and what head-dress she should wear on the occasion became her chief concern" [52]. **What does Mrs. Allen's and Catherine's infatuation with elegant dress tell readers about their characters? Are there differences in the way these**

two characters think about fashion? What is the significance of characters meeting each other at balls?

1798 Carriage Culture

While walking was a dominant mode of transportation in Bath, carriages provided an alternate way of traveling. Rowlandson's painting depicts the arrival of a fashionable woman in a carriage as an event worthy of celebration. In *Northanger Abbey*, male carriagemen frequently wait upon women. For example, John Thorpe reveals his desire to be seen driving a woman through Bath when he tells Catherine "I did not come to Bath to drive my sisters about, and look like a fool . . . I only go for the sake of driving you" [71]. However, Mr. Allen believes that it is inappropriate for women to drive around in open carriages with men [75]. Later, General Tilney encourages Catherine to ride with Henry in his carriage on the way to *Northanger Abbey*, purportedly so she can see the view (but really to promote an attachment with his son). **What does Thorpe's obsession with horses say about him as a character? What do we learn about other characters based on what and how they drive? Where does the novel stand on the appropriateness of young people riding in carriages?**

1798 The Pump-Room

The pump-room was the building attached to the baths where people went to drink the waters and socialize. Rowlandson's depiction of the pump-room demonstrates that various types of people visited, both for reasons of health and fashion. The narrator of *Northanger Abbey* describes the pump-room as a place where a woman may find new acquaintances, when Catherine hopes her intimacy with Miss Tilney will develop as quickly as it had with Isabella Thorpe: "In the pump-room, one so newly arrived in Bath must be met with, and that building she had already found so favourable for the discovery of female excellence, and the completion of female intimacy, so admirably adapted for secret discourses and unlimited confidence, that she was most reasonably encouraged to expect another friend from within its walls" [41-42].

1805 Courtship Culture

Not unlike the figure in the cartoon, Henry Tilney glibly describes a contractual understanding of courtship rituals while dancing with Catherine at a ball: "We have entered into a contract of mutual agreeableness for the space of an evening, and all our agreeableness belongs solely to each other for

that time . . . I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage. Fidelity and complaisance are the principal duties of both; and those men who do not choose to dance or marry themselves, have no business with the partners or wives of their neighbours" [54]. And Isabella Thorpe plays "commerce" [64], a suitably-titled card game based on bartering other players to improve your hand, which scholars note mirrors her trading of suitors. Like many satirists, Austen's critique of fashion and Bath society are rooted in deeper ethical questions about the valuation and negotiation of women within courtship culture. The showy display of wealth in Bath, through balls, gowns, and carriages, which often showcases women's bodies, also serves to cheapen them. **Does Austen subscribe to courtship culture, reject it, or both?**

1777 City and Country

In this print, the exaggerated hair, crashing into the ceiling of a country home, and the family's aghast looks, portray the city as a place that corrupts women, cultivating a ridiculous elegance that no longer fits in with country life. Ironically, this family reunion becomes a chaotic scene of horror, portraying something both terrifying and amusing about the city's power to indoctrinate women into a culture of fashion. In *Northanger Abbey*, we see this tension in Henry's lesson to Catherine on the picturesque, which changes her perspective on a country landscape: "It seemed as if a good view were no longer to be taken from the top of an high hill, and that a clear blue sky was no longer a proof of a fine day. She was heartily ashamed of her ignorance" [80-81]. **How does Austen characterize city and country (including Bath, Fullerton, and Northanger Abbey) as either opposing or similar places?**

1796 The Morality of Fashion

James Gillray's satire of a breastfeeding mother mocks both the revealing nature of modern dress, and the dispassionate nature of modern motherhood, linking the woman's imprudent fashion choices to a kind of familial neglect. The fashionable woman's apathy towards her child contrasts with the emotion in the "Maternal Love" portrait above her head-dress, which depicts a woman in simpler attire tenderly breastfeeding her child. Additionally, the man peering through the window reveals the degree to which women's bodies were regulated and judged in Georgian society. **Are there passages in Austen's novel where you see fashion choices representing larger moral choices?**

1802 Novel Reading

Novel reading became a fashionable pastime during the late 18th century and early 19th century. This cartoon, described in an inscription at the top as an "attempt to describe the effects of the sublime and wonderful," caricatures the female reader, and in particular the kind of darkly fanciful literature that attracts both Isabella and Catherine. While Austen satirizes female fashion, she (like Gillray) also satirizes the female reader. *Northanger Abbey* is famous for its defense of the novel, and its hero declares "The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid," but it also mocks its naive heroine who sometimes fails to differentiate between fact and fiction [77]. Often, Austen both mocks and defends female readers at the same time. For instance, Catherine reveals both her naivete and deep cultural misogyny when she confesses a dislike of history: "The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all--it is very tiresome: and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention" [79]. **What do the reading practices of various characters (John Thorpe, Isabella Thorpe, Catherine, Henry) tell us about them?**

1802 Muslin Dresses

Muslin, a cotton imported from India, was an extremely popular material for women's clothing throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. In this image, James Gillray satirizes the obsession with muslin dresses, displaying flowing muslin gowns as dangerous and impractical. Muslin plays an important role in *Northanger Abbey*, from Henry Tilney's bragging about buying a "true Indian muslin" for only "five shillings a yard" [16], to Mrs. Allen's objection to open carriages not out of propriety but because "a clean gown is not five minutes wear in them" [75]. "Dress is at all times a frivolous distinction," Austen writes; "Woman is fine for her own satisfaction alone. No man will admire her the more, no woman will like her the better for it... But not one of these grave reflections troubled the tranquility of Catherine" [52].

Given the dominance of muslin within Bath fashion, from newspaper articles to caricatures, it is not surprising that the cloth should loom large within Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. However, given that the trend was only possible through imperial England's trade with India, Austen's frequent mention of muslin betrays a subtle critique not only of the frivolity of fashion but also the politics of empire.

Muslin in the Indian Subcontinent

The British East India Company was one of the world's dominant trading organizations from the 17th century to the mid 19th century. With its monopoly on Indian imports into England, the East India Company transported massive amounts of goods, such as spices, tea, muslin, and other various textiles, from India to England. Due to the wealth of textiles in India, the East India Company made sure to establish strong footholds in the continent's textile-producing regions.

By the end of the 17th century, the company had established three such trading centers, one in Bengal, another in Madras, and another in Bombay. These main trading hubs were referred to as Presidencies. In addition to being hotbeds for textiles and other goods, each Presidency was under the control of a governor and housed the company's armies, functioning as places from which the British began to rule India, first economically and then militarily. In bringing Indian muslin to England, the East India Company shaped the customs of British fashion and severely impacted India through military conquest and exploitation of labor.

BENGAL PRESIDENCY

The Bengal Presidency consisted of territory along the northern border of India. Within the Bengal Presidency, Calcutta was the most important location for exports, while Dacca produced some of the most elegant muslin.

DACCA

Since the Assyrian Empire, Dacca has been known to produce some of the most sought-after muslin in India. Around 1660, the East India Company began to export these muslins from Dacca to England.

CALCUTTA

In the early 17th century, the East India Company established numerous factories in and around Calcutta. The area began attracting various traders and merchants, eventually turning Calcutta and Bengal as a whole into one of the East India Company's major trading regions. In the midst this prosperity, the company began building Fort William at Calcutta in 1679. The fort became the major

place where Dacca muslins were exported to England until the exportation of these muslins ceased in 1817.

An article from the March 23, 1811 issue of the *London Times* states that "A letter from Calcutta, dated November 7, 1810, states, that all ships of the East India Company, of the season 1809-10, which left England before the 9th of June last, had arrived safe in India."

MADRAS PRESIDENCY

The Madras Presidency consisted of territory along the eastern border and down around the southern tip of India. Within the Madras Presidency, Fort St. George was the location where goods were both traded and exported to England.

FORT ST. GEORGE

After moving their south India trading center to Madras, the East India Company began construction on Fort St. George in 1640. While military housing was one of the main functions of Fort St. George, it also served as another trading hub where the company could acquire Indian goods.

BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

The Bombay Presidency consisted of territory along the western border of India. The city of Bombay served as the headquarters of the Bombay Presidency, where the Bombay Castle housed military personnel.

BOMBAY

In 1686, the East India Company shifted its center on the west coast of India from Surat to Bombay. Prior to the East India Company's arrival, goods such as muslin, silk and other textiles were already being traded in Bombay. When the English established their presence, this type of trade grew exponentially.

Like Calcutta, Bombay offered many opportunities to skilled workers, such as weavers and traders. By the early 18th century, Bombay was such a popular trading post that it attracted goods not only from the area, but from other regions of India as well.

Bombay was home to the Bombay Castle, which the East India Company used as a military fortress, most notably housing the Bombay Marine. Through battle, the Bombay Marine helped establish British rule in India.

TRANSPORTING GOODS TO ENGLAND

Once ships were loaded with cargo, they traveled to London. As shown on the trading routes map, the ships went around the Cape of Good Hope. After their voyage, they arrived at the mouth of the River Thames.

Muslin in London

After arriving from India, the East India Company's ships docked in London and the company stored and distributed goods around the city.

ORIGINAL DOCKS

Prior to 1806, the East India Company docked their ships and removed their cargo in a public docking area on the west end of the Thames, near the Tower of London. From there, the cargo went to the East India House or other storage warehouses.

EAST INDIA DOCKS

Once the East India Company began building bigger ships, the company decided that it needed private docks. These docks, located on the eastern end of the Thames, opened in 1806. Built with the most modern technology, the docks provided a space for the East India Company to efficiently unload cargo. As with the original docks, many goods were transported from these new docks to the East India House and warehouses.

An article from the August 5, 1806 issue of *The London Times* titled "New East-India Docks" describes the celebration at the opening of the docks: The Grand-Gate, on the land-side, was open for the reception of visitors at half-past eleven, and by one, the place was crowded with genteel company . . . The Company's band were on [a ship's] quarter-deck, playing "Rule Britannia," and the crowded assembly of elegant company, who thronged all her decks, cheered repeatedly, in return to

the loud and continual huzzas from the shore . . . The whole of this truly gratifying spectacle concluded at nearly four o'clock, to the evident but inexpressible satisfaction of the multitude collected to view an exhibition so intimately connected with the trade and commerce, the stability and glory, of this great maritime and commercial nation."

EAST INDIA HOUSE

Ships' cargoes were continuously taken to the East India Company's headquarters, known as the East India House. When the East India Company governed over parts of India, this building served as the main location for government and administrative business. In addition to storage facilities, the East India House had a sale room where goods would be auctioned and sold.

East India Company scholar Anthony Wild mentions that the East India Company was adamant about making the East India House appear very British, masking the Company's ties to India. **What does this patriotic, British architectural imply about the Company's view of India?**

Where do tensions between imperialism and patriotism play out in the novel? Henry Tilney boasts about purchasing "true Indian muslin," [16] but are there passages suggesting Tilney's patriotism, and his desire to be seen as British?

BENGAL WAREHOUSE

Although the East India Company both stored and sold items in various rooms of the East India House, the company's trading success in the late 18th century eventually led to a significant increase in imported goods, which made it necessary for the company to acquire more storage space.

One such space was the Bengal Warehouse, located just north of the East India House on New Street. By the 1780s, the Bengal Warehouse housed goods from Bengal, including textiles such as muslin.

COAST AND SURAT WAREHOUSE

The Company constructed another warehouse system, the Coast and Surat Warehouse, on Cutler Street, adjacent to the Bengal Warehouse. Like the Bengal Warehouse, the Coast and Surat

Warehouse stored items imported from specific regions in India, in this case Fort St. George and Bombay.

After constructing these warehouses, the East India Company had multiple locations from which to showcase and sell goods. With sales occurring in the East India House and the surrounding area, the company commercialized this particular area of London.

FLEET STREET BUYER & SELLER

A group of retailers called Middleton, Innes, and Jolley repeatedly ran an advertisement for the muslin they bought from the East India Company.

Each advertisement is similar to the one posted in the February 4, 1789 issue of the *London Times*, which reads: MUSLIN, IRISH LINEN, DIMITY, and CAMBRIC WAREHOUSE, No. 192, Fleet-Street, corner of Chancery-Lane. MIDDLETON, INNES, and JOLLEY, (from Smith's) respectfully inform the Nobility, Gentry, and Public at large, that they have opened the above capital Warehouse for the Sale of every article . . . They particularly request the attention of Ladies to their Muslins, of which they have laid in an entire new and very extensive Assortment, purchased at the East India Company's last Sale."

Another of their advertisements, one from July 06, 1792, states that they received "from the India House, a very large stock of every kind of Bengal Muslins."

CRAVEN STREET BUYER & SELLER

Other *London Times* advertisements show that a Londoner by the name of J. Christian also purchased muslin from the East India Company and sold it to the public.

In the same July 06, 1792 issue of the *Times* that the last Fleet Street muslin advertisement appeared in, J. Christian announces that he has a muslin warehouse on "the Corner of Craven-Street" and that he has "cleared from the East India Company's Warehouse, a very large quantity of Dacca and almost every other description of Bengal Muslins, amongst which are . . . Some very fine thick Muslins fit for Morning Dresses."

FROM LONDON TO BATH

While Londoners frequently bought and sold muslin from the East India Company, the Company also sold muslin to citizens from various regions of England, including Bath.

Muslin in Bath

After collecting muslin from the East India Company, Bath salespeople sold the textile in Bath's shopping district. As a result, muslin became a specific commodity in Bath's consumer culture that Austen comments on in *Northanger Abbey*. Throughout the novel, women shop on specific streets and display their muslin and fashionability in the city's public spaces.

MILSOM STREET

During Jane Austen's time, Milsom Street was a popular shopping center in Bath with various types of stores, including those that sold muslin.

In a newspaper article from the April 20, 1786 issue of *The Bath Chronicle*, the opening of a new muslin warehouse on Milsom Street was announced to the public: "LINEN and MUSLIN WAREHOUSE, MILSOM-STREET, BATH, PERCIVAL and CUNDITT (from Coward's) most respectfully beg leave to acquaint the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public, that they have opened the above Warehouse with an ENTIRE NEW and good assortment of every article in the LINEN-DRAPERY BUSINESS, selected with the greatest care and attention . . . PERCIVAL AND CUNDITT having collected from the INDIA SALE, JUST OVER, a most choice assortment of MUSLINS of every kind, respectfully solicit the attention of the Ladies to this article in particular, flattering themselves many of them will be found equally curious and uncommon with any now on sale in this country."

The characters in *Northanger Abbey* visit similar shops on Milsom-Street. For example, when Isabella chats with Catherine in the Pump-room, she exclaims, "Do you know, I saw the prettiest hat you can imagine, in a shop window in Milsom-Street just now--very like yours, only with coquelicot ribbons instead of green; I quite longed for it" [25]. While Isabella does not specifically mention muslin here, her shopping took place on a street where muslin was certainly sold in clothing shops.

What does Isabella's desire for Milsom Street's commodities paired with the newspaper article's advertisement of a "choice assortment" of muslins suggest about the street's influence on her as a consumer? What's the significance of the fact that Austen mentions several times that the Tilney family lives on Milsom Street?

BATH STREET

Another advertiser of goods, Samuel Slack, frequently announced his stock of muslin on Bath Street, located within close walking distance of Milsom Street.

In the September 11, 1800 issue of *The Bath Chronicle*, Slack advertises his newly bought Muslin, which he will sell on Bath Street: Cheap INDIA MUSLINS, CAMBRIC MUSLINS, PRINTED CALICOES, &c. BATH-STREET, BATH. SAMUEL SLACK begs leave to acquaint LADIES and the Public, the East-India Sale has just finished; and that he has purchased several hundred lots of the CHEAPEST MUSLINS, ALMOST EVER SEEN, which he purposes offering to Ladies at the very lowest wholesale prices.”

Like Slack, Henry Tilney emphasizes cheapness and "bargains" as an important part of shopping for muslin [16]. Does Tilney's opinions on shopping make him more or less relatable to Catherine and Mrs. Allen? How does his knowledge of fashion influence Catherine and her life at Bath?

In her letter to Catherine, Isabella mentions how she used a Bath Street shop in order to hide from Captain Tilney, writing, “The last time we met was in Bath-street, and I turned directly into a shop that [Captain Tilney] might not speak to me;--I would not even look at him” [160].

Based on the above passage, how does Isabella manipulate the intended purpose of shops? Does her manipulation uphold or undermine the female consumer culture that advertisers created?

BOND STREET AREA

Bath Newspapers also provide evidence that Bond Street was another popular location for muslin sales and shopping in general.

In an advertisement from the January 12, 1786 issue of *The Bath Chronicle*, a Bath citizen advertises his muslin shop on Bond Street: "CAPITAL SALE OF INDIA MUSLINS, UPPER CORNER OF BOND-STREET, BATH. THOMAS COWARD requests permission to acquaint the Publick (but more particularly the Ladies) that he is just returned from attending during the whole of the Sale of the East India Company's MUSLINS, and of which he has purchased a most considerable assortment of every kind, which he now humbly offers for their inspection."

Bond Street is mentioned in the novel when Catherine desires to go shopping: "Towards the end of the morning, however, Catherine, having occasion for some indispensable yard of ribbon which must be bought without a moment's delay, walked out into the town, and in Bond Street overtook the second Miss Thorpe" [84].

How does the layout of the city and locations of shops create a consumer culture of instant gratification, full of citizens who desire to purchase items "without a moment's delay"?
How does this kind of shopping relate to an imperialist mode of consumerism?

PUMP ROOM

In *Northanger Abbey*, the characters often visit the pump room to socialize.

Austen specifies that attending the pump room was a daily routine for Catherine: "Every morning now brought its regular duties — shops were to be visited; some new part of the town to be looked at; and the pump-room to be attended, where they paraded up and down for an hour, looking at everybody and speaking to no one" [14].

Austen emphasizes the Pump-Room's centrality to Bath society, especially in terms of fashionable dress. Catherine and the Allens "set off in good time for the Pump-room, where the ordinary course of events and conversation took place. . . the ladies walked about together, noticing every new face, and almost every new bonnet in the room" [50].

This passage suggests that Catherine and Mrs. Allen spent their leisure time looking at the fashionable items that other women wore. **How does the mixing of fashion and leisure shape the female characters' public lives?**

ROYAL CRESCENT

Brock Street leads to the Royal Crescent, a curved lane of Georgian-style houses, pictured above. In his 1819 Bath guidebook, *Walks Through Bath*, Pierce Egan explains that women "promenaded" along the Crescent to show off their fashionability: "numerously neatly-apparelled pretty females . . . here enjoy their leisure hours, participating in the pleasures which this promenade affords them."

In *Northanger Abbey*, the Tilneys, accompanied by Isabella and Catherine, visit the Royal Crescent. Reflecting on their excursion to Mrs. Allen, Catherine says, "We walked along the Crescent together for half an hour. They seem very agreeable people. Miss Tilney was in a very pretty spotted muslin, and I fancy, by what I can learn, that she always dresses very handsomely" [48].

What does Catherine's attention to Miss Tilney's attire reveal about the role of fashion and muslin in her relationships with other characters? Is Catherine's compliment on Miss Tilney's dress actually a way of affirming Henry's character, considering the fact that Henry told Catherine that Miss Tilney "has often trusted [him] in the choice of a gown" [16]?

UPPER ASSEMBLY ROOMS

Opened in 1771, the Upper Assembly Rooms consisted of buildings devoted to different amusements, including dancing, tea-drinking, and card-playing.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine attends her first ball at the Upper Assembly Rooms. Austen comments on the importance of female dress at balls: "Our heroine's entree into life could not take place till after three or four days had been spent in learning what was mostly worn, and her chaperone was provided with a dress of the newest fashion. Catherine too made some purchases herself, and when all these matters were arranged, the important evening came which was to usher her into the Upper Rooms. Her hair was cut and dressed by the best hand, her clothes put on with care, and both Mrs. Allen and her maid declared she looked quite as she should do." [10]

LOWER ASSEMBLY ROOMS

The Lower Assembly Rooms was another venue that hosted balls, including the one where Catherine first meets Henry Tilney.

Tilney pokes fun at Catherine and female journaling: “Yes, I know exactly what you will say: Friday, went to the Lower Rooms; wore my sprigged muslin robe with blue trimmings — plain black shoes — appeared to much advantage; but was strangely harassed by a queer, half-witted man, who would make me dance with him, and distressed me by his nonsense” [15].

What does Tilney's attention to Catherine's dress and his claim to know muslins "particularly well" say about him [16]? What does such a remark reveal about the way he regulates women's bodies?

PULTENEY STREET

When the Allens arrive in Bath with Catherine, they move into "comfortable lodgings in Pulteney-Street" [10].

In *Walks Through Bath*, Pierce Egan claims that Pulteney Street is debased compared to other parts of Bath: "In starting from Great Pulteney-Street, [a] visitor will, for a moment, turn aside from the mansions of fashion and elegance, to take a cursory view of the abode of depravity and misconduct, in order to render the view of this highly-famed city complete and impartial."