

Cemetery Gates

Death and Mourning Through the Ages

Corvis Nocturnum



Schiffer

elaborate fabrics used as trim. Gradually easing back into color was expected coming out of half mourning. All manner of jewelry could be worn.

The standard mourning time for a widower was two years but it was up to his discretion when to end his single stage. Men could go about their daily lives and continue to work. Typically, young unmarried men stayed in mourning for as long as the women in the household did.

Death infiltrated many objects in the nineteenth century, quite apart from clothing. Throughout the period, certain images were used again and again to represent frailty and the brevity of human life. Draped urns, broken columns, weeping willows, and extinguished torches can be spotted in articles as diverse as tombstones, portrait children's books, and embroidered samplers. The same imagery even recurs in the literature and poetry of the day. Bereavement touched virtually every aspect of Victorian life, lending a somber hue to even the brightest day.

Most of the fabrics associated with Victorian life are no longer in use today, partially due to the invention of modern synthetic fabrics, but also because many Victorian fabrics are too expensive to manufacture today. A full widow's weeds (archaic word for garment) in the mid-nineteenth century required a crepe dress with a plain collar and broad weeper's cuffs made of white muslin, a bombazine mantle (cloak), and a crepe bonnet with veil for outdoors. A widow's cap was for indoor use. Crepe, used for the veil and trim, is the fabric most associated with mourning. The fabric is made from silk and similar to crepe de chine; in this instance "crepe" refers to the crinkled surface of the lightweight fabric. Mourning crepe was made from gummed, tightly twisted silk threads. It was a volatile and hazardous fabric. In the rain, it would shrivel and practically disintegrate. Rain-proof crepe was introduced at the turn of the twentieth century, but it didn't change things much. Constant breathing through the fabric caused many respiratory health problems.

Dresses were often made from crepe. As the crepe wore out, it was removed and replaced with fresh material. An economical woman could use an old dress in full mourning; some women dyed a dress black for this purpose.

Mourning attire by designer
Kambriel Fashions, *Courtesy of*
Kambriel, 2010.

Mourning attire Men's frock coat
by designer Kambriel Fashions,
Courtesy of Kambriel, 2010.



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Onsite:
Mourning attire bustle by
designer Kambriel Fashions,
Courtesy of Kambriel, 2010.

Mourning attire by designer
Kambriel Fashions, *Courtesy*
of Kambriel, 2010.



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Mourning attire by
designer Kambriel
Fashions, Courtesy of
Kambriel, 2010.