Introduction

Eighteenth-century Britain witnessed the development of a very specific and popular form of social entertainment – the masquerade. These costumed entertainments operated as either private events (to invited guests) or large commercial entertainments (available for the price of a ticket). A combination of regular reports in newspapers and descriptive fictional masquerades in popular literature spread textual depictions of the entertainment throughout the Georgian world, bringing ostentatious costumes and themes of revelry and debauchery to the reading public. The excitement of this glittering entertainment was further amplified in contemporary visual and material culture with illustrations of lively masquerade scenes filled with creative, humorous, and fancy disguises filling print shop windows, appearing on handkerchiefs, and taking shape in decorative and cosmetic porcelain figurines. These representations helped recreate the evening's entertainment and engaged the wider public with the culture of the masquerade, often mixing fantasy with reality and leaving the imagination to fill the spaces between. Within these gaps between textual and visual and material depictions, there is a noticeable discrepancy concerning an integral symbol and component of the masquerade: the domino. The domino habit – consisting of a cloak, mask, and usually tricorn hat with feathers – was both everywhere and nowhere. It was repeatedly presented as problematic across newspaper sources, used as a profitable tool among masquerade warehouse owners, and the convenient costume of choice for gentlemen of the upper ranks, all while remaining noticeably absent from visual depictions.

Exploring the complex life of the domino and its dichotomous nature through a variety of material, visual, and written sources, including existing domino habits, warehouse inventories, trade cards, diaries and correspondence, prints, and newspapers allows us to re-examine the domino's place within Georgian culture and how its relationship to the masquerade sheds new light on the lived experience and historical significance of the masquerade as a cultural phenomenon. Using this combination of sources establishes a more comprehensive understanding of the domino and how it reflected real and imagined experiences of the masquerade. The Element will first establish a definition of the domino and examine its materiality and physicality before moving on to two subsequent sections. These sections will trace the domino's movements through eighteenth-century society – from the warehouse to the masquerade to print and visual cultures. Following the domino through these various spaces and contexts will answer key research questions regarding how the domino was worn, how it contributed to the socio-economic exclusivity of the masquerade, why it was a popular costume choice, and how its meaning and purpose changed as it

moved into different spaces. It will examine contrasting representations of the domino found in masquerade reports and imagery that circulated through the public sphere. Newspapers presented the domino as an overwhelming and dull presence across masquerades while the domino remained largely absent from contemporary visual culture. The range in sources also provides important insight into what the domino meant to people of various situations: seller versus consumer, middling versus upper rank, hosts versus participant. Ultimately, this Element will expand the chronological, geographical, and socio-economic footprint of the masquerade, bringing in the perspectives of understudied contributors to the masquerade experience (warehousemen and women, masquerade hosts) and examining the entertainment as the domino existed across time (the days leading up to and following the masquerade itself) and moved through London (from vendor to wearer to masquerade and back again). Employing material and visual cultures to analyse the domino will revise and broaden existing historical narratives and literary scholarship on the masquerade, widening our understanding of the contemporary cultural and social significance of the entertainment.

Existing scholarship on the masquerade, including the work of Terry Castle, Catherine Craft-Fairchild, and Dror Wahrman, examines the entertainment in and of itself and the opportunities it provided for various types of social interactions.[1] Their work engages heavily with literary sources, leaving important material in manuscript accounts, material culture, and visual culture understudied. Dress historian Aileen Ribeiro has produced significant research on the masquerade habit in England and its appearance and function in portraiture. Her work on eighteenth-century dress has supplied a concise history of the domino costume, explaining its Italian roots and contemporary presence in masquerade culture.[2] Her work, however, leaves room for further analysis of the domino as it existed in wider cultural, social, and economic contexts. Examining the nuances of the masquerade through text and the material and visual culture of the domino will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural, social, and economic aspects of the masquerade. The domino highlights the tension between real experiences of the masquerade and imagined expectations

[1] Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); Catherine Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); John Eglin, *Venice Transfigured: The Myth of Venice in British Culture, 1660–1797* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 2006).

[2] Aileen Ribeiro, *The Dress Worn at Masquerades in England, 1730 to 1790, and Its Relation to Fancy Dress in Portraiture* (London: Garland Publishing, 1984), 33–9; Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe: 1715–1789* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 245–50.

of the entertainment as depicted in visual culture and literature. As Amanda Vickery, Giorgio Riello, and many other scholars of eighteenth-century material culture have argued, objects can and should be used as evidence in combination with written and visual sources. Subsequent work in eighteenth-century material culture by Vickery, Zara Anishanslin, and Jennifer Van Horn, among others, has skilfully combined material culture and historiographical methodologies to create object biographies, presenting more complete pictures of objects' significance in social and cultural contexts.[3] Riello's 'history of things' approach serves as the primary methodology used, as it is most suited to this Element and the surviving evidence and sources, providing a historical analysis of the relationship between the domino and people, as well as exploring how the domino and the masquerade operated in Georgian society in both real and figurative ways.

1 The Masquerade and the Domino

1.1 The London Masquerade

The eighteenth-century London masquerade has been characterised as a space for social mixing and debauchery, open to all individuals, irrespective of social rank. While their use in contemporary literature and visual culture supports this perspective, recent work on the social history of the entertainment has shown that it was much more complex than these representations suggest. Analyses of the financial aspects of attending a masquerade, the spaces in which they were held, and ticketing practices all reveal that this entertainment did not align with wider trends of increasing accessibility that other forms of leisure culture experienced.[4] Rather, the masquerade remained an exclusive space of elite sociability that reinforced the shifting social hierarchies of the eighteenth century through fashionable display and conspicuous consumption. The availability

[3] Giorgio Riello, 'Things that Shape History: Material Culture and Historical Narratives', in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (Routledge, 2009), 24–47, 28; John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Zara Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Jennifer Van Horn, *The Power of Objects in Eighteenth-Century British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

[4] Peter Borsay, 'The Emergence of a Leisure Town: Or an Urban Renaissance?', *Past & Present* 126 (February 1990): 189–96, www.jstor.org/stable/650813; Neil McKendrick, 'The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. John Brewer, Neil McKendrick, and J. H. Plumb (London: Europa, 1982), 9–21; John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: HarperCollins, 1997); Meghan Kobza, 'Dazzling or Fantastically Dull? Re-examining the Eighteenth-Century London Masquerade', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 43, no. 2 (2020): 161–81.

of tickets did not promise affordability or mingling between ranks nor did costumes guarantee gender play or transgression of social boundaries in dress. The chronological framework of the masquerade is equally important in considering its place within leisure culture. This Element examines the domino within the second half of the eighteenth century, 1762 to 1810, placing it in the context of two distinct periods: the height of masquerade culture and its gradual move to wider accessibility through the adoption of broader commercial practices. The first period fell within the height of masquerade fashionableness between 1762 and 1785 and was defined by extortionate ticket prices, ostentatious costumes, and spectacle. Tickets cost an average of two guineas (excluding the cost of costume and transportation), making them reasonably affordable for only 0.8 per cent of the population and the highest priced in leisure culture.[5] The masquerade's horizontal movement between elite spaces of sociability and the presence of guards at the doors at this time reinforced the exclusionary nature of the entertainment, allowing the nobility and gentry, as well as key members of the *beau monde*, to dominate the space and use it as a site of fashionable display and performative spectacle. The period that followed, 1786 to 1810, was characterised by slowly declining ticket prices, changing ticketing practices, and shifts in advertising that all reflected the move to wider commercialisation and presence of the middling sorts.

While these characteristics are significant components of the masquerade and necessary to establish the framework and chronology of this Element, it is equally important to understand the way the term 'masquerade' was used within the eighteenth century. Popular forms of assembly, like the ridotto, fête, ball, and masquerade, each involved a varied combination of similar components – musical performance, dance, and/or elaborate décor. The masquerade, however, maintained a unique position and clear identity within Georgian leisure culture through its namesake: the mask and habit.[6] This was a central defining feature of the entertainment, as was the necessity of a ticket for entry and the ceremonial

[5] Kobza, 'Dazzling or Fantastically Dull', 169–70. Opera tickets were seldom higher than half a guinea for a box, five shillings for the pit, and 2s 6d for the gallery. There were special ticket prices for some operas, including galas and opening nights when prices might rise; however, these were considered 'regular' rates. In his work on Vauxhall, David Hunter has cited admission to Vauxhall and Ranelagh Gardens costing between one and two shillings, placing these leisure sites significantly lower than the price of a masquerade ticket. David Hunter, 'Rode the 12,000? Counting Coaches, People and Errors En Route to the Rehearsal of Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* at Spring Gardens, Vauxhall in 1749', *The London Journal* 37, no. 1 (March 2012): 13–26, 16; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 15 May 1777; *Public Advertiser*, 24 May 1777.

[6] John Kersey, in *A new English dictionary* (London: Robert Knaplock at Bishop's Head, 1713); Nathan Bailey, in *Dictionarium Britannicum* (2nd ed., London: T. Cox, 1730); Samuel Johnson, in *Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language in Minature* (8th ed., London: Lee and Hurst, 1797).

unmasking. Ticketing aided in regulating admittance, reinforcing the masquerade's exclusive nature, while concluding the evening with a grand unmasking held participants accountable for their behaviour throughout the entertainment. These main features were present in masquerades throughout the century, making it an identifiable and familiar leisure experience.[7]

1.2 Roots of the Domino

The Venetian domino has received considerable attention in both dress history and cultural history, surfacing in the work of Aileen Ribeiro, Terry Castle, and John Eglin among others. Their work defines the function and physical construction of this classic Venetian garment and analyses the domino within the context of *carnavale*.[8] Ribeiro and Castle draw important connections between this Italian piece and its presence and reputation in British masquerade spaces. Re-examining these cultural roots provides a foundation that allows for a closer comparison of the Italian and British iterations. Studying the domino in both places highlights that while the British domino took inspiration from its Venetian counterpart, it underwent a series of small evolutions that impacted its function and reputation in British masquerade spaces throughout the eighteenth century.

The domino originated in Venice, where it functioned predominately as a disguise to protect elite identity. It was most commonly associated with the pre-Lenten festivities of *carnavale* when public spaces were open to the rich and plebeians alike. From the month of December through to mid-February, the domino was worn in the streets by people from various ranks and occupations, which increased its presence in the public eye and created scenes filled with black cloaks and white masks. Although the domino appeared in the highest numbers during *carnavale*, it had multiple functions and was also worn during ceremonies of state and within the walls public of gaming houses.[9] This exhibits the domino's continued use throughout the year and highlights that the garment was not confined to a singular space, entertainment, or event. The domino's non-*carnavale* functions do, however, show that it was tied to a singular rank of people – the elite.[10]

[7] Kobza, 'Dazzling or Fantastically Dull', 164.
[8] Ribeiro, *The Dress Worn at Masquerades in England*; Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*; Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*; Eglin, *Venice Transfigured*.
[9] Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 58–9; Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 245–7; Eglin, *Venice Transfigured*, 59–61; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Harper and Row: 1978).
[10] Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 247.

The domino outfit consisted of several characteristic pieces: a black cloak, a mask, a tricorn hat, and an optional veil for added concealment.[11] The cloak itself was often identified as the defining component of the ensemble and its colour the cause of censure and commentary. Travellers on the Grand Tour and foreign ambassadors often 'noted the gravity of Venetians even during their prolonged Carnival season, and those . . . depicted in black domino and white mask seem oddly dour, as they did to the traveller who remarked on the monotony and seemingly inappropriate solemnity of the ubiquitous domino'.[12] Each piece hid a particular part or parts of the body: the cloak covered the torso and legs, the mask concealed the face, the hat hid the top of the head and hair, and the veil kept the neck, head, and mouth out of sight. This is seen in many of Pietro Longhi's paintings, which depict Venetians in a range of places and scenes in domino dress. Longhi's work depicts domino cloaks in multiple lengths and shows how the mask, veil, and hat worked together to cover the face and head. Ribeiro identified these differences in cloak styles, explaining that 'occasionally the short net or lace cloak, the *mantellina*' was used in place of the full-length option, being 'light and floating' in nature.[13]

With black dominos as the uniform of Venetians (and the elite in particular), foreign visitors partaking in *carnavale* were left to dress in more colourful variations. The bright garments of ambassadors, dignitaries, and those on the Grand Tour made foreigners easier to identify and brought pops of colour into an otherwise dark scene. Colour was not the only potential indicator of identity – differences in mask styles could betray gender and varying lengths in cloaks could reveal expensive dress that was indicative of wealth and status. The black *moretta* mask was part of a woman's traditional domino dress, though it could also be worn on its own. Its round shape covered only and exactly the area of the face – eyes, nose, and mouth. A bead or button held in the wearer's mouth kept the mask on the face, disguising the face and incapacitating the voice as points of identification. The *bauta* mask was characteristic of men's domino dress and opposite to the *moretta* in colour, shape, and application (Figure 1). Its white colour stood out from the black cloak, veil, and hat of the domino, unlike the *moretta*, and it was attached by tying a string around the head, leaving the mouth unencumbered. The rough square shape of the mask covered the eyes and nose, but drew away from the mouth and chin to accommodate eating, drinking, and speaking. In addition, the anonymity of the domino could have been enhanced through the addition of a piece of silk or lace, 'placed on the head and drawn

[11] Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 246–7.
[12] Eglin, *Venice Transfigured*, 56.
[13] Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 247.

Figure 1 Venetian *bauta* mask, author's collection

across the lower jaw'.[14] When worn together, these main components – black cloak, veil, *moretta* or *bauta* mask, and hat – physically defined the Venetian domino costume and made it a distinct and recognisable form of disguise across Europe. Outside of Italy, the Venetian domino could be worn in pre-Lenten festivities but was most prevalent in leisure spaces of elite sociability that occurred throughout the year, such as masquerades and fancy dress parties. Its consistent presence at court masquerades in France, Germany, and Sweden pointed to widespread recognition and use among the upper ranks and nobility. Dressing in the Venetian domino exhibited knowledge of elite Venetian culture while also signalling ties to or experiences of the Grand Tour. The domino had comparable popularity within British masquerade culture; however, due to the commercial nature of the entertainment, the domino grew into various iterations and embodied a range of meanings that were dependent on its acquisition, materiality, wearer, and geographical context.

1.3 The British Domino

As the domino moved from Venice to London and into other metropoles of Britain, its original function and key characteristics evolved to cater to the commercial masquerade experience. These changes resulted in three defining aspects of the British domino that reflected its Venetian roots while establishing it as a crucial but increasingly contentious symbol of the masquerade. This is exhibited through changes to its defining physical components, range of

[14] Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 246–7; Meghan Kobza, 'The Habit of Habits: Material Culture and the Eighteenth-Century London Masquerade', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 50, no. 1 (2021): 269–70.

availability, and limited geographical use. Beginning with a brief overview of these three qualities provides a foundational working knowledge of the domino that will be useful when moving into more detailed analyses of the habit in subsequent sections.

The British domino was not unlike the Venetian equivalent in that it consisted of a draping cloak, mask, and head covering. In both locations, these components allowed the wearer to determine the level of concealment their habit provided and remain anonymous or recognisable. Wearers could decide on their style of mask independent of their gender and if they would cover their head with a hat, the attached hood, or leave it bare. Similarly, it was up to the wearer to select the colour, any embellishments, and the length of the cloak. British iterations could vary from this style and often mixed and matched the domino cloak with the *bauta* or an eye mask, and/or the tricorn hat. The veil, however, was one component the British left in Venice. Rather than use the veil as an additional face and head covering, the British domino mask used a smaller piece of fabric attached to the bottom of the mask as a means to conceal the mouth and jaw. This is evidenced in an existing masquerade mask and in multiple contemporary British prints spanning the eighteenth century (Figures 2, 3, and 4). In each image the mask worn with the domino is reminiscent of the structure and shape of the *bauta* but depends on a small swatch of fabric to cover the lower half of the face rather than the Venetian veil. This made it easier to eat and breathe within the often hot rooms of masquerade venues.

The distinction between a 'regular' and Venetian style domino appears across several contemporary masquerade experiences, pointing to the British version being recognised as a version all its own. A masquerade warehouse

Figure 2 Silk and tarlatan masquerade mask, c.1780–90, Museum of London

Figure 3 'An Epistle to Miss – &c. &c.' 1749, courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

auction list distinguished between the types of domino available, labelling some as simply 'domino' and others as a 'bahoote [bauta] domino' or 'Venetian domino', though there is little detail to differentiate one from another.[15] This variety in domino style also appeared in personal accounts, indicating a clear

[15] Spellings include bauta, bahoote, and bahute.

Figure 4 Daniel Dodd, *Charles Revelling at a Masquerade*, c.1770–80, courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

difference, but similarly lacked clarification in what qualified a domino as *bauta* or 'Venetian'. The Duchess of Northumberland identified varying styles of domino at a masquerade in 1768, using 'Venetian' and 'bahute' to distinguish this particular type from just a 'domino'.[16] Her use of 'bahute' and 'Venetian' point to these labelled dominos as resembling the classic *bauta* mask and black cloak associated with the Venetian practices of wearing the ambiguous disguise and highlight an implied difference between these and the expected British version.

Another important identifying characteristic of the British domino was its commercial availability and the choice to wear black or a more colourful option, regardless of national affiliation. As previously discussed, black dominos were limited to use by Venetians, making them an exclusionary garment and making visitors dress in a non-black garment. While the coloured dress code of Venice did not formally apply to British masquerades, the accessibility of the domino was heavily dictated by financial limitations. In theory, dominos were available to everyone – hopeful masqueraders could choose to borrow or purchase a domino and acquire one without needing to rely on credit or social status. However, the price of acquisition when combined with the cost of a masquerade ticket would have barred the majority of the population from even infrequent attendance. During the height of masquerade culture (1762–85), admittance to the top three masquerade venues, Carlisle House in Soho Square, King's Theatre, or the Pantheon, would have cost an average of two guineas and

[16] Diaries of Elizabeth Percy, Duchess of Northumberland, MSS 121/5a, 25, the archives of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle.