In Fine Style

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man ...

Polonius to Laertes, *Hamlet*, Act I, scene iii

EVEN when it conceals the body, clothing is revealing. For the sixteenth- or seventeenth-century audience, clothing could reveal information about a wearer's social position, wealth, religion, nationality, marital status, fashionability and so on. Today, given our inevitably incomplete knowledge of the social context in which the paintings were produced and viewed, some of the subtle nuances have been lost. Traditionally, the importance of clothing in portraiture to the modern viewer or researcher has usually been as a tool for dating a portrait. Yet the clothing worn, together with the manner in which it has been painted by the artist, can reveal so much more – it can help identify a sitter, artist or provenance, and more broadly can provide information about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century society and attitudes.

This chapter places fashionable clothing of the Tudor and Stuart period within its cultural context, looking at the varying attitudes of monarchs towards fashion, and at the court culture that placed such emphasis on fashionability. It then demonstrates why clothing (sometimes viewed as a superficially appealing but ultimately frivolous element of a painting) can be so integral to its interpretation. It examines what clothing in a portrait can reveal, while also demonstrating the importance of surviving garments and other sources.

Pp. 10–11 (detail from fig. 12) Juan Pantoja de la Cruz (c.1553–1608), *Margaret of Austria, Queen Consort of Philip III of Spain*, c.1605.

MONARCHS AND FASHION

Like the population as a whole, monarchs varied in their personal interest in fashion and used clothing in different ways. For a king like Henry VIII, highly aware of the role of art, architecture and performance as a tool for propaganda, clothing constructed from rich fabrics played a vital role in the creation of both his personal image of magnificence as well as the reputation of his court as prosperous during a period of severe religious disruption (fig. 2). For his daughter Elizabeth I, dress was a key component in her iconography, its colour and complex symbolism contributing to the cult of the Virgin Queen. Portraits depict the idiosyncratic and eclectic patterning of clothing and jewellery that was a feature of her dress (fig. 3). Amongst the Stuart monarchs, Charles I cultivated a less ostentatious vision of fashionability than his predecessors – its restrained elegance fitted with the monarch's reserved personality and tendency to favour grandeur and formality, a taste which was to some extent tempered by his young and vivacious French queen Henrietta Maria and the influence of fashions from an increasingly powerful French court. Upon his restoration to the English throne in 1660 their son Charles II, with severely limited funds

Fig. 2 Remigius van Leemput (d. 1675), *Henry VII, Elizabeth of York, Henry VIII and Jane Seymour* (copy of 'The Whitehall Mural'), 1667.
Oil on canvas, 88.9 x 99.2 cm. RCIN 405750

ABOVE

Fig. 28 Attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (c.1561–1635), *Anne of Denmark*, 1614. Oil on panel, 110.5 x 87.3 cm. RCIN 404437

OPPOSITE

Fig. 27 Attributed to William Scrots (active 1537–53), *Elizabeth I when a Princess*, c.1546. Oil on panel, 108.5 x 81.8 cm. RCIN 404444

base of the farthingale is 'slightly more than thirteen handspans', which has been estimated to equal nearly three metres.[10]

During the reign of Elizabeth I the farthingale developed from the Spanish conical style into the drum-shaped wheel farthingale, worn with the skirt arranged into flounces pinned to the farthingale beneath, then left to fall to the ground. This is clearly seen in the 1614 portrait of Anne of Denmark (fig. 28). She particularly admired this style of dress, and insisted the farthingale be worn at court long after it ceased to be fashionable. The Venetian Ambassador in 1617 wrote of Anne, 'Her Majesty's costume was pink and gold with so expansive a farthingale that I do not exaggerate when I say it was four feet wide in the hips'.[11] In the portrait her skirt and bodice are of matching silk, a silver-grey background woven with small sprigs of flowers. Arranged into approximately 30 deep flounces, the skirt opens down the front – two buttons to fasten it can be seen just below the long string of pearls. Anne rests her hands on the shelf-like section of the farthingale around her waist, a position that helped stop the garment from swaying in an uncontrolled manner. Arranging the fabric into such pleats took a significant length of time and an expanse of surplus fabric was required – outward signs of conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption. Elizabeth of Brunswick, in a portrait of a very similar date, wears her skirt pinned in a different arrangement, with a narrow ruffle encircling the edge of the farthingale (fig. 29).

In its last incarnation, the wheel farthingale was worn tilted up at the back, an effect in part created by the use of a *busk* (a strip of wood, ivory or bone) inserted into a central channel in the front of the stays or bodice, which extended below the farthingale and pushed it down in the front, thereby raising the back. Busks could be given as gifts from a lover, and were sometimes carved with amorous images or intimate poems. The farthingale was sometimes worn over a moon-shaped padded bum roll for extra support, and to facilitate the tilting effect. Women in England began to stop wearing wheel farthingales after the death of Anne of Denmark in 1619. The farthingale would not reappear again until the eighteenth century, in the form of the hooped petticoat, and in the nineteenth century as the crinoline. Women did, however, apparently continue to wear bum rolls for some time longer which provided a less exaggerated effect.

With these shaping undergarments a woman might wear one or more *petticoats*. The outer petticoat could be highly decorated and was frequently designed to be seen, not hidden. Portraits do not reveal that often what appears to be a rich petticoat, visible beneath a skirt parted at the front (as in the portrait of Princess Elizabeth, fig. 27) is actually a *forepart*. This consisted of a triangle of expensive fabric, which was then sewn onto the kirtle beneath with the less expensive fabric hidden by the upper skirt at the sides and back.

ABOVE
Fig. 40 Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8–1543), *Cicely Heron*, c.1526–7.
Black and coloured chalks, 37.8 x 28.1 cm. RCIN 912269

OPPOSITE
Fig. 41 British School, *Portrait of a Woman*, c.1620.
Oil on canvas, 89.7 x 80.6 cm. RCIN 406064

as in Holbein's portrait of Cicely Heron (fig. 40). This is one of the earliest 'pregnancy portraits', a form of self-presentation that enjoyed a particular vogue in England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. While such portraits served both to commemorate the process of pregnancy and its dynastic associations, the high mortality rate meant that they also often provided a record of a woman in the final months of her life.[15]

WAISTCOATS, NIGHTGOWNS AND MANTUAS

Before getting dressed or to receive visitors in the privacy of her own home, a woman might wear an informal combination of a *waistcoat* with skirt. The unidentified sitter in fig. 41 is wearing an embroidered waistcoat of this type. Her loose hair, unusual for someone of this age and unheard of for a married woman unless in her bedroom or dressing room, suggests that this is a very intimate portrait. Hair worn loose was associated with virginity.[16] The sense of intimacy is furthered by the waistcoat's unusual low neckline (more in keeping with contemporary court styles).[17] The high waistline in this portrait gives the impression of pregnancy, although by this date (c.1620) waistlines had begun to rise and this is perhaps an interpretation of the fashion – its scalloped bottom edge reveals that this is not an adaptation of a longer garment, but was made to be this length.[18]

Another comfortable option was a nightgown, made of silk or cotton and often lined with fur. Frequently imported from Asia, in the seventeenth century these became known as *Indian gowns*, although the fabric might be from a variety of different countries, and they were often made up in England. In a Holbein portrait, unique at this date (c.1533–6) for depicting a woman in informal dress, the sitter (thought to be Anne Boleyn) seems to be wearing a fur-lined nightgown over a linen smock (fig. 42). It has been conjectured that this could be the black satin nightgown given as a gift by Henry VIII to Anne during their courtship, and that its depiction here is intended to demonstrate its particular significance and expense.[19]

A seventeenth-century nightgown can be seen in the portrait of Henrietta d'Auverquerque, Countess of Grantham (fig. 43). She wears her belted silk nightgown over her smock, apparently without stays. During the seventeenth century the nightgown was gradually worn for more formal occasions, and it is believed to be the origin of the *mantua*, a fashionable style of day dress introduced in the 1670s which, although worn with stays, provided comfortable relief from constrictive court styles of bodice and skirt.[20] Although popular in England at the end of the seventeenth century, mantuas rarely appear in portraits at this time – but they are often seen in fashion plates and prints. In a 1694 print of Mary II (fig. 44), the queen wears a fashionable mantua cut along the lines of Henrietta's nightgown – without a waist seam, and with the two sides of the front pleated into shape and joined by a stomacher. Below the waist, the skirt is pulled back on each side and pinned or tied into a complex and stylised arrangement of drapery forming a train and opening to reveal a petticoat underneath. A comparable

with its fashionably arched neckline. For the pale-skinned queen, this was deemed a flattering style of attire, exaggerating the desirable whiteness of her complexion, 'the whiteness of her face rivalled the whiteness of her veils, and in this contest artifice was the loser, the veils paling before the snows of her skin'.[35]

Although by the seventeenth century the convention to be depicted with head covered was no longer observed, it remained usual for women to be depicted in portraits with their hair dressed. Towards the end of the century a tall style of headdress (known as a *frelange*) became increasingly complex and could reach extraordinary heights.

During the sixteenth century a common way for a wealthy woman to carry small necessary items was by attaching them to a *girdle* round the waist. *Pomanders* (decorative containers filled with aromatic substances such as ambergris, orris or rosemary to scent the air),[36] prayer books, fans and scissors might be transported in this way, and are occasionally seen in full-length female portraits of the period. Bags are rarely depicted in paint although they survive in some number – several decorative examples in the Royal Collection reflect the variety of shapes and styles that were found. One example is constructed of gold thread and yellow taffeta with a cord drawstring, in the shape of a frog (fig. 58). Although unlikely to have been worn regularly at court, it must have been appreciated for its novelty, and in so doing exemplifies one of the key factors driving new fashions – the search for the innovative and different.[37] During this period, the elite rarely needed to carry money; accounts were instead settled on a periodic basis. Instead these small receptacles might have been used as 'sweet bags' – to carry sweet-smelling perfumed powder or dried flowers, and to scent clothing when in storage. They might also have been given as part of the New Year's gifts to the monarch, when they would have contained coins or other small presents.

While small accessories are sometimes included in portraits from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, they are often omitted by later artists such as van Dyck. However, fashionable accessories held particular appeal for the Bohemian printmaker Wenceslaus Hollar, who moved to England in 1637 under the patronage of the influential Thomas Howard, 2nd Earl of Arundel. His etchings are invaluable in bringing objects from this later period to life. The first of Hollar's major series focusing on attire was published in 1643, comprising 40 etchings of English women and was entitled *Theatrum Mulierum* (The Theatre of Women). Like another of his series entitled *The Four Seasons* (fig. 59), showing women dressed throughout the year, the importance of these prints to dress historians lies in the fact that they depict women from a variety of social orders – and from the front, side and back. They wear the sort of expensive indoor clothing commonly depicted in portraits, but also fashionable clothing worn for travelling or walking outside. Hollar's prints show how clothing actually works, how the layers were pinned back and so on.[38]

A Group of Muffs, Kerchiefs, Fans, Gloves and a Mask (fig. 60) by the same artist has a particularly tactile three-dimensional quality. Hollar seems to have relished the contrast in texture between the various types of fur, feathers and lace. On the left-hand side is a *vizard*

Fig. 58 Purse in the shape of a frog, seventeenth century.
Gold thread and yellow taffeta, 10.0 x 6.0 cm. RCIN 37043

OPPOSITE
Fig. 59 Wenceslaus Hollar (1607–77),
(TOP LEFT) *Spring*, 1643.
Etching, 27.0 x 19.2 cm (sheet). RCIN 802403
(TOP RIGHT) *Summer*, 1644.
Etching, 26.9 x 18.9 cm (sheet). RCIN 802404
(BOTTOM LEFT) *Autumn*, 1644.
Etching, 27.0 x 18.6 cm (sheet). RCIN 802405
(BOTTOM RIGHT) *Winter*, 1644.
Etching, 26.7 x 19.2 cm (sheet). RCIN 802406

OPPOSITE

Fig. 81 Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), *Charles I*, 1635–6.

Oil on canvas, 84.4 x 99.4 cm. RCIN 404420

ABOVE

Fig. 82 *Man's cloak band*, English, *c*.1635.

Barnard Castle, The Bowes Museum, Blackborne Collection. Acc. 2007.1.1.28

LEFT

Fig. 83 Charles I (1600–49), *Eikon Basilike: the portraicture of His Sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings*, London: Roger Daniel, 1649 (Madan 25).

Four lengths of blue silk ribbon are punched into the boards. An inscription inside the book describes these as Charles I's Garter ribbon.

RCIN 1080417

DOUBLETS AND COATS

Throughout most of this period a man would wear a *doublet* on the upper part of his body, over his shirt. Slashing, paning and embroidery were just some of the ways to add interest to the basic design of the doublet. Like breeches, it changed in shape over time – with, for example, significant variations in the line and level of the waistline. Pleated 'skirts' below the waistline were a feature of doublets during the reign of Henry VIII; these shortened and gradually morphed into a set of overlapping stiffened *laps*. In his 1628 portrait by Mytens (fig. 93), Charles I wears a doublet of brownish plum-coloured silk with four geometrically designed stiffened laps at the front. Based on comparison with a surviving example (fig. 94) – associated with Charles I, and of a similar design and date – there were probably six laps on the back. In the portrait the laps are edged with silver braid and gold silk satin, and a similar device is used to emphasise the panes across the chest (through which the gold silk lining is visible) and to decorate the shoulder wings projecting from the shoulder down the sleeve. These add masculine breadth to the shoulder line, and conceal the join at the shoulder seam. Here the sleeves are cut into strips of matching gold silk satin, which has apparently been stiffened so that it creates a three-dimensional effect, standing away from the arm until just below the elbow where the panes are joined together. Undersleeves of the same silk can be seen beneath.

While the surviving doublet is constructed from different materials and decorated with embroidery, it is very similar in shape. It has the same wide shoulder wings and the curving V-shaped waistline. In both, a line of closely spaced buttons stretches from neck to waist – such tight spacing prevented unattractive gaping on a garment intended to fit tightly to the body. The portrait is useful in suggesting that at this date all buttons were fastened (unlike in following decades when half-unbuttoned doublets were *de rigueur*). Buttons were often made of silk or metal thread wrapped around a wooden core, but could also be formed of metal or of precious materials set with gems.

One of the most eye-catching features of the Mytens portrait is the line of bows encircling the monarch's waistline. Constructed from bows of gold and silver striped ribbons, each is tipped with an *aglet*, the metal of which would have made an attractive tinkling noise as they brushed together. Here they are probably ornamental, a vestigial feature with its origins in the fact that doublet and breeches were originally laced together through holes in the waistband of each – the aglet serving the practical purpose of aiding the threading process and preventing the ribbon or cord from fraying. Metal hooks and eyes replaced this method for holding up the breeches at around the time that this portrait was produced, and such hooks are visible inside the surviving example. Eyelet holes are also still present, and ribbons will have been used to create the effect seen in the portrait. The fact that breeches and doublet were securely fastened together in such a manner placed limitations on a man's deportment. It meant, for example, that he had to sit without bending at the waist, and that bowing during the period took the

Fig. 93 Daniel Mytens (c.1590–1647), *Charles I*, 1628.
Oil on canvas, 219.4 x 139.1 cm. RCIN 404448

ABOVE AND OVERLEAF
Fig. 94 Doublet associated with Charles I, 1620s.
Brown silk satin embroidered with blue silk cord.
Private collection

7

PAINTED FOR BATTLE AND THE HUNT

Fig. 248 British School, *Set of Mica Overlays and Miniature of Queen Henrietta Maria*, c.1650.

Oil on copper, mica. RCIN 422348

The mid-seventeenth century saw a vogue for an unusual type of miniature which could be dressed in a variety of different outfits by placing painted transparent overlays on top of the master image. Constructed from very thin slices of mica, the 19 overlays seen here include both male and female outfits, and several can be identified with well-known figures or character types of the period.

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White leather gloves dyed mushroom brown, trimmed with ribbons, c.1660–90.
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