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Fashioning Appearances

Although this is an examination of the meanings and utilizations of clothing within elite early modern society, this first chapter will consider its styles and component garments. This may seem like a step in an altogether unreflective direction – a scrap of 'hemline history' – but before any scrutiny of meaning we need an appreciation of form. Without at least sharing the vocabulary of clothing with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wearers, and to some degree being able to visualize its referent objects, our understanding of journal entries, laws, satire and pictorial records will be very partial indeed. What follows, therefore, is a broad-brush introduction to the costume of the period, divided between male and female dress.[1] After this apparently straightforward narrative of costume history, however, the chapter returns to look again at the styles of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dress. This time we consider the possible implications of a garment's structure and shape, exploring how clothing helped form both individual bodies and cultural perceptions.

The Wardrobe – Men

The story of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century fashion can be told very simply. Our starting point is a sketch of a clothed male figure dating from the 1570s (Figure 1). The drawing comes from the marginalia of a York Archbishop's Register, and was presumably penned idly by some bored clerk.[2] The sketch indicates that our modern gestalt of the appearance of an Elizabethan was very close to theirs. The basic articles of male dress for most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the doublet, hose and cloak. As we can see in the clerk's drawing, doublets, worn over a shirt, were sleeved garments covering the torso. They were close fitting, but also well wadded and reinforced with boning. During the latter part of the sixteenth century this stiffening and padding developed into the 'peascod belly', a style which swelled belly-like out from the stomach and even, in more extreme forms, over and below the waist line (Figures 2

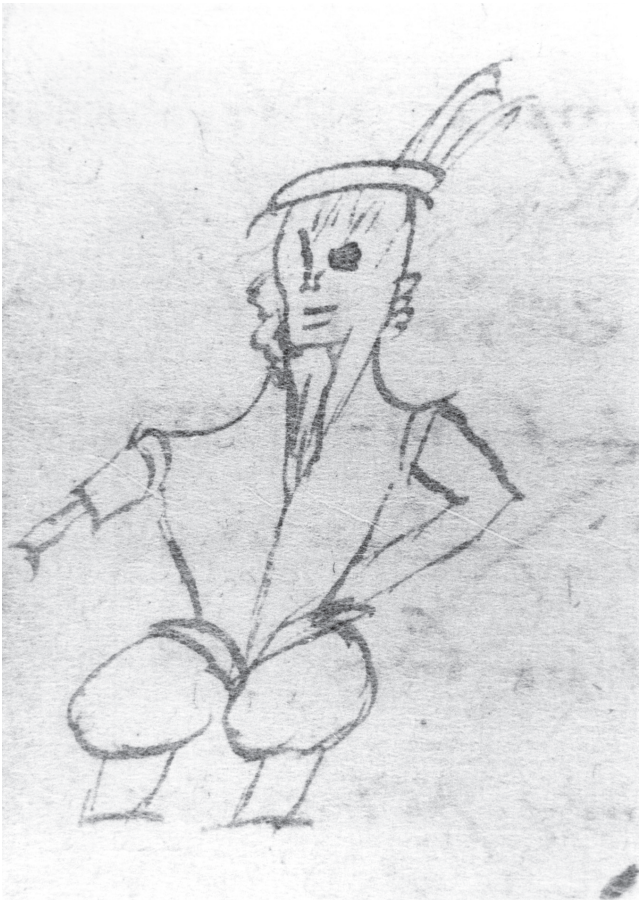

Figure 1 Marginal drawing, BIHR, Cons.AB. 33 (1570–2), fol. 13ᵛ. Reproduced from an original in the Borthwick Institute, University of York.

and 3). Although always appearing to open centre front, the buttons or lacing there could be merely decorative, with the real hook and eye fastenings to the side. Sleeves were either sewn into the garment, or made as separate items to be attached by long laces called points. Our clerk's drawing shows a doublet wing that might decoratively hide such an arrangement. Jerkins were very similar garments to doublets, only usually sleeveless, and were worn over the top for warmth. Due to their similarity of appearance, their presence in portraits is often very difficult to tell.

Figure 2 Sir Philip Sidney, after Unknown artist, date not known. By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 4 shows a partially unbuttoned jerkin worn over a doublet that features a modest peascod belly.

Hose, which covered the legs, comprised two sections: upper and nether. Upper hose, synonymous with breeches, enclosed the body from the waist to somewhere between thigh and knee, depending on the style. These were various, but the 'typical' Elizabethan look – portrayed by the archdiocesan clerk – was of trunk hose. This was a short, full style that ballooned out from the waist and extended only to mid or upper thigh

Figure 3 Sir Francis Drake, Unknown artist, *c*. 1580. By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

(Figures 1, 2, and 4). The remaining area of the visually isolated and elongated leg was covered by long stockings or by canions. The latter, possibly pictured by the clerk, were close fitting extensions to trunk hose, made often in a contrasting fabric and sewn into the gathered fullness of the onion-shaped uppers (Figure 4). An alternative style, increasingly popular from the last quarter of the sixteenth century, were Venetian breeches. Venetians were cut to be full and baggy around the hips and

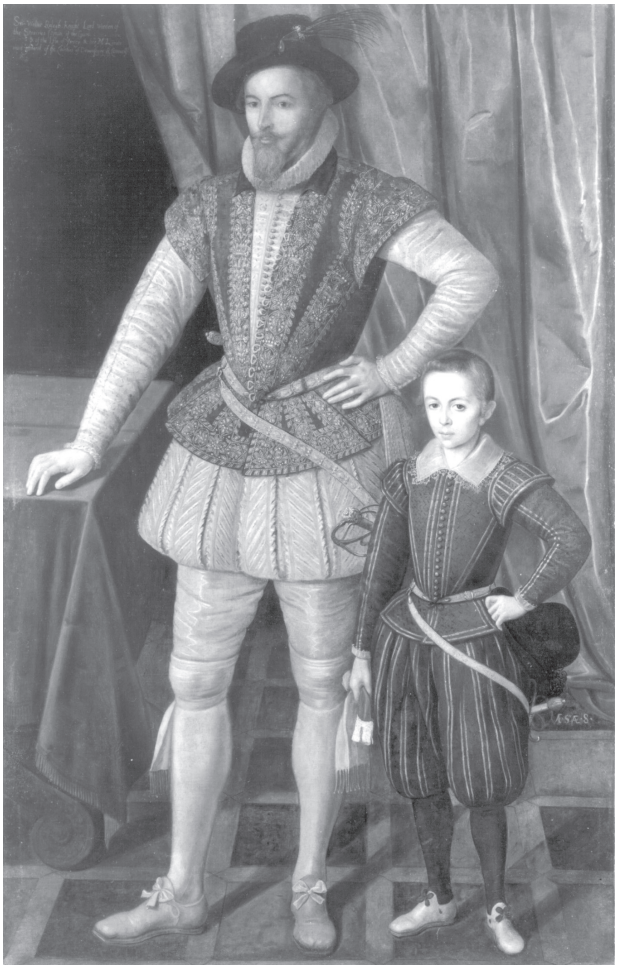

Figure 4 Sir Walter Raleigh and Walter Raleigh, Unknown artist, 1602. By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

thighs, but tapered to narrowness about the closed knee (Figures 3 and 4). With all styles of upper hose the lower portion of the leg was covered by a garment variously named as nether hose, nether stocks, or stockings. These were gartered either over, or underneath the breeches (Figure 4).

Although gowns continued to be worn, particularly for warmth or sobriety, from around the mid-sixteenth century cloaks were far more fashionable (Figures 3 and 5). While their claim to chic remained constant,

Figure 5 Young man against roses, Nicholas Hilliard, 1588. V&A Picture Library.

the preferred styles changed: sometimes hooded, sometimes with hanging sleeves, now shorter, now long. A younger son making his place on the fringes of Elizabethan court society, Philip Gawdy (1562–1617) wrote to his brother of an attempt to introduce one of these stylistic changes. 'Uppon Wednesday last a very specyall strayte commandement from the quene gyven by my L. chamberlayne, that no man shall come into presence, or attend uppon Her Ma^{tie} wearing any long cloke beneath the knee, or therabouts.' Although inconvenient to fashionable aspirants,

Gawdy astutely remarked that, 'It commeth in a good hower for taylers and mercers and drapers'. For 'all men ar settled into longe clokes', and must perforce either rush to get them shortened, or pay for a new one – both options that spelled profit for the craftsmen.[3]

The item that lives in our minds as an inescapable vision of the second half of the sixteenth century is the ruff. Originating as a small frill drawn up at the neck of a shirt, by the 1570s the ruff had grown in size and complexity, and had become detachable. Shaped into a wide variety of styles, the quintessentially Elizabethan image is of the cartwheel ruff, whose closed pleats encircled the wearer and produced the 'head on a plate' look (Figures 3, 5, and 9). The alternative style of neckwear for both men and women was the band or, as we would name it, the collar. Again developing from the neck of a shirt or smock, it became a detachable item and was worn in two varieties: the falling and standing. The first of these was turned down in a way we would think of as being typically collar-like (Figure 4). The second, as its name suggests, stood out and up around the neck (Figure 6). Although known throughout the sixteenth century, in

Figure 6 Phineas Pett, Unknown artist, 1612. By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 7 Henry Rich, 1st Earl of Holland, Daniel Mytens, 1633. By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

James I's reign both varieties of band came to dominate, and the ruff disappeared from fashion. Unlike the falling band, the standing variety also declined in use, and after the 1620s was little seen. Cuffs, ranging from plain linen to complex lace and ruff styles, in form usually echoed the collar above (Figures 2 and 4).

These basic items of male dress in fact changed very little over the seventeenth century. Breeches became longer and baggier in the Jacobean

period (Figure 6), bands gained supremacy, and the ruffs that remained were often worn not standing up but falling unstiffened across the shoulders. This tendency to less rigidity and to looser forms continued until, broadly coinciding with the accession of Charles I, dress presented a much softer and restrained look (Figure 7). Furthermore, despite the extraordinary social upheavals throughout the Civil War and Interregnum, mid-century fashionable dress stayed remarkably static. The individuals wielding power may have been different, but the way they were clad was often the same. Indeed, official portraits of the Interregnum rule frequently copied Van Dyck's paintings of the courtly regime, simply substituting new parliamentary heads for the old royalist ones.[4] Thus, despite the disruptions of political and social life, the visual appearance of the elite remained unbroken until the 1660s.

The Restoration did not only bring a monarch and court to England; it brought also their French styles of dress. The old guard returned with a new flamboyance, which, for men's clothes particularly, exaggerated the loose fullness of former styles to a remarkable degree (Figure 8). The tabs or skirts of the doublet disappeared, leaving a garment so short that it no longer met the breeches below. Instead lace and linen from the shirt beneath foamed out at the wearer's midriff. The independently fastened breeches burgeoned into the 'petticoat' style rather like modern culottes. The only two suits in this style that survive in England are a guide to the typical construction. Open at the knee, the breeches featured an almost unbelievable fullness, each leg measuring a phenomenal five feet two inches in circumference.[5] With so much room for a false move, it is perhaps no wonder that Mr Townend, Pepys's friend, made 'his mistake the other day to put both his legs through one of his knees of his breeches, and went so all day'.[6] The other feature typical of men's dress in the early 1660s were the garnishing ribbons. Derived originally from the points used to truss an outfit together, these laces had survived into the seventeenth century as decoration, leaving the functional work to buttons, and hooks and eyes. Adorning the post-Restoration modes, however, they fluttered to prominence; the ribbons trimming one surviving suit have been estimated as having a total length of 141 yards, while the other suit has a glorious 216 yards adorning it.[7] This cascading ensemble was finished off with a short circular cloak.

Despite the exuberance of Restoration fashions, they were short lived. Novel in 1658, already by 1665 this look had started to wane.[8] Then in October 1666 came the death knell. Charles II's act of sartorial patronage that introduced the vest, coat and breeches ensemble, ushered in the basic forms of a mode that is still with us today. Replacing the doublet, the

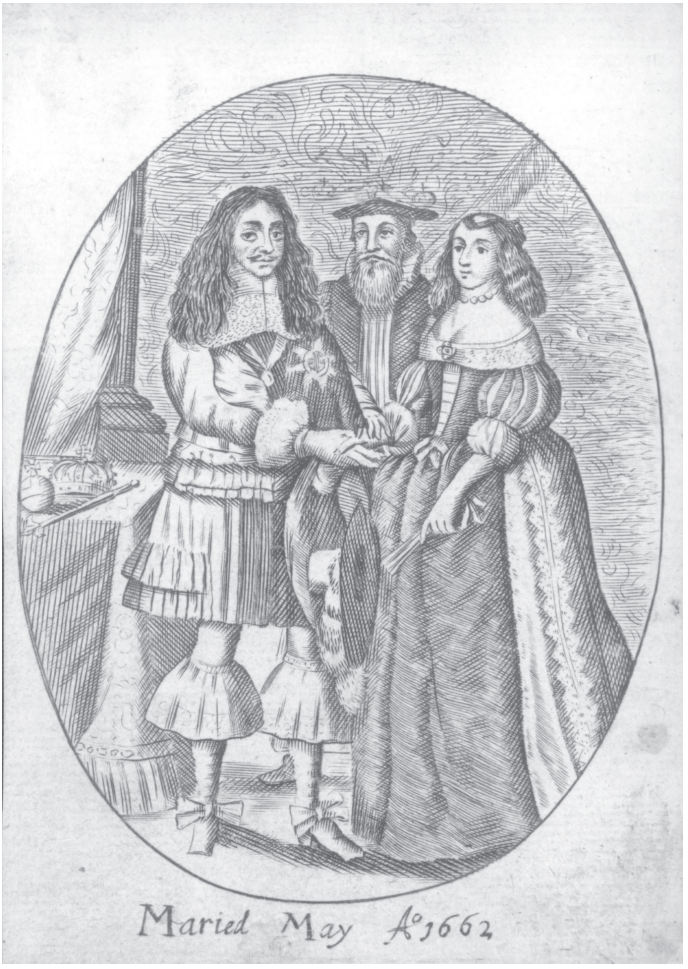

Figure 8 Charles II and Catherine of Braganza, Anonymous artist, 1662 or after. By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

earliest forms of the vest were much more substantial garments than the reduced modern waistcoat. Long, and of a relatively narrow fit, this garment covered the breeches, making their fullness untenable and decorative exuberance redundant. Thereafter a neatly fitting breeches style was worn, plain and tapering to the knee. Over the top the coat, cut along very similar lines but sleeved, completed the outfit. Thus ousted, cloaks

declined from fashion, remaining in use only as warm and serviceable outer coverings. The three-piece suit was born.

The Wardrobe – Women

The basic components of the woman's wardrobe were bodice, skirt and gown. The bodice, being that part of the dress above the waist, was worn over the shift and stiffened by whalebone, wood strips, or reeds.[9] Either back or front lacing, bodices that did fasten down the front would generally be worn with a stomacher. This was a stiffened triangular insert worn point down, and fastened to the bodice at either side by points, pins or ribbon ties. Functionally, the stomacher filled in the gap between the two front edges of the bodice and continued the corseting effect. Visually, the highly decorated insert took the eye from the top down to its long bottom point, making the torso appear even longer. As with men's doublets, bodice sleeves were either fixed or detachable. A number of styles emphasized certain features: some close fitting, others flaring at different points, and some sporting elaborate shoulder rolls. The most dramatic in form were trunk sleeves. Like men's trunk hose they puffed out from the limbs they covered, and were so large that their fullness was supported and held in shape by an internal framework of wire, whalebone, or wood (Figure 10). Their dimensions might be enlarged still further by the addition of gauze oversleeves, ballooning affairs that added yet another texture to the complicated assemblage (Figure 9).

The striking characteristic of the sixteenth-century skirt was its farthingale shape. The first form, popular for most of the second half of the century, was the conical Spanish farthingale (Figure 9). True to its name, this fashion originated in Spain around 1470, at least 70 years before its English appearance.[10] It was known there as a 'vertugadin', the anglicization of which results in its variant names (farthingale, vardingale, vardugal and so forth). In the 1590s the French, or wheel, farthingale took the fashionable lead, and most portraits from this period feature the distinctive 'hula hoop' round the wearer's hips over which the overskirt falls vertically to the ground. These portraits also show that the farthingale was worn tilted up at the back, and that a deep flounce often lay over the horizontal level of the skirt (Figure 10). The final basic component of sixteenth-century women's dress was the gown. This was a full-length garment worn over bodice and skirt, with a range of possible sleeve styles: hanging, puffed, sleeveless or full. The loose version was generously cut, and from the shoulders fell freely to the ground. The close bodied or fitted

Figure 9 Mary Cornwallis, George Gower, *c*. 1580–5. © Manchester Art Gallery.

gown was shaped to the waist, from where it was generally worn open to reveal the skirts beneath (Figures 9 and 11).

As with men's costume, over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries remarkably little happened to alter the basic construction of women's apparel. The farthingale declined during James's reign as did the use of extended and enlarged sleeves (Figure 12), and this gradually developed into the softer Caroline silhouette characterized by a full draping skirt and

Figure 10 Portrait of a Lady of the Elizabethan Court, *c*. 1595 (oil on canvas), attributed to William Segar (fl. 1585- d. 1633). Ferens Art Gallery, Hull City Museums and Art Galleries, UK/Bridgeman Art Library.

short bodice (Figure 13). However, post-Restoration women's dress is simultaneously more and less complicated than the pictorial record might suggest. Taking portraits as source material would suggest that elite women appeared swathed in careless satin, with expanses of shift negligently showing at the low neckline and beneath the loosely fastened sleeves. However, these paintings actually record the contemporary vogue for posing *en déshabillé* – a state of 'undress' that outside the picture frame was only suitable for the privacy of the home. As well as purely informal poses in smock and loose nightgown, other arrangements of dress helped the sitter play at pastoral or Olympian roles.[11] Because of this vogue for

Figure 11 Portrait of Mary Denton, attributed to George Gower, 1573. York Museums Trust (York Art Gallery).

informal and fanciful images, portraits are problematic as evidence of late seventeenth-century fashion. Instead, 'information about it has to be sought in French fashion drawings, and contemporary engravings and illustrations'.[12] Looking at these alternative sources reveals a much simpler story, for the development of women's dress in the 1660s is consistent with earlier styles (Figure 8). In fact, apart from the lengthened bodice that, worn with a deeply pointed stomacher, lowered and narrowed the waistline, very little had altered from mid-century modes.

As with men's dress, change came at the end of the seventeenth century. The major alteration in form appeared in the 1670s with the development

Figure 12 Portrait of a Lady, 1618 (oil on canvas) by Marcus Gheeraerts (*c*. 1561–1635). Ferens Art Gallery, Hull City Museums and Art Galleries, UK/Bridgeman Art Library.

of the mantua, a one-piece gown that replaced the separate bodice and skirt. Fitting closely at the waist, it was worn open in front and generally fastened back to reveal an underskirt beneath. Although different in structure, visually the alteration in women's dress is hard to perceive. Indeed, its major ramification was in the realm of production. For being unboned (and thus worn over a corset), the mantua was sewn by sempstresses. Thus

Figure 13 Henrietta Maria, Unknown artist, 1635. By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

women inched their way into the production of outer wear, an industry until then the sole preserve of the male tailoring establishment.[13]

These, then, were the main components of the wardrobe. For men and women alike the basic units of dress did not change until the 1660s and 1670s brought about radically new structures. The doublet, hose and cloak

ensemble was replaced by the prototypical three piece suit; and less obviously the mantua gown initiated dramatic changes in the tailoring profession, and in form looked forward to the sack dresses and side hoops of the next century. This simple story is one that is retold in innumerable texts on costume history. Fashions come and go, their duration is linked to the periodization of history by monarch, and their appearance is rendered accessible by simplified outline drawings. However, scrutinize this convenient tale for just a moment, and we find that undertaking a vestimentary history is by no means such a routine matter. The structure of garments and their techniques of assemblage and wear have certain implications for both the body within, and its relationship to other bodies, and to space. It is not enough to state merely that breeches were full or bodices were corseted, for this distension and constriction meant something for the wearer, and influenced not only physical behaviours, but also such intangibles as perceptions of beauty, grace and health. Bearing this in mind we must therefore return to our simple story of elite fashion and rescrutinize its changing forms. In doing so we will find that even the most basic dress history carries within it certain possibilities for understanding the society whose clothes it describes.

Reviewing the Wardrobe

From the mid-1500s, dress styles were characterized by extreme visual complexity. Both the male and female forms were progressively more and more unbalanced and 'distorted', with separate parts of the dressed anatomy given independent status. Rather than being subordinate to the effect of the total assemblage, each item of the late Elizabethan elite wardrobe had an independent and striking visual existence: garments were 'hooks for the eye upon which the gaze catches'.[14] Coupled to this was a decorative exuberance that loaded every point with embroidery, jewels, slashes, ribboning and pattern. Indeed, Christopher Breward has described three dimensional fashionable costume as 'a canvas or panel' for the flat decoration on its surface.[15] In addition to this love of variety, Geoffrey Squire sees the exaggerated independent forms of garments such as ruffs, doublets and farthingales as practising 'techniques of disintegration'. With variety, distortion, and disintegration of the whole, late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century dress was, Squire has persuasively written, typically mannerist.[16]

For example, the stiffened and padded doublet broke away from the body beneath, and swelled into the peascod belly. This was satirized by

the impassioned Philip Stubbes, who concluded that, 'for certaine I am there was never any kinde of apparell ever invented, that could more disproportion the body of a man then these Dublets with great bellies hanging down beneath their Pudenda, (as I have said) & stuffed with foure, five or six pound of Bombast at the least'.[17] Squire, interpreting this Renaissance style as a caricature of the middle-aged figure, also notes that it was, and remains, a unique fashion. 'At no other time has a distended belly been artificially suggested rather than corrected or disguised.' Furthermore, this portly mature torso was frequently set over the equally stereotyped long slim legs of youth (Figure 5).[18] These chic legs, vital to the image of a courtier, suggested 'an aristocratic elegance suitable for dancing, fencing, or riding', those most courtly of pursuits.[19] Also close fitting, and well wadded like the rest of the doublet, sleeves were cut and sewn with a pre-shaped bend at the elbow, which accommodated the inward movement of the arm without straining the seams. On the other hand, straightening the arm would have been moving against the garment's cut, and the longer outer side of the sleeve would inevitably have tightened and puckered. Thus, when not in movement, elegance and ease would enforce a stance with slightly bent arms. Such considerations add a further dimension to our understanding of the 'Renaissance elbow', that ubiquitous arms akimbo stance that set the type for male assertiveness through the Tudor and earlier Stuart years (Figures 1 to 4).[20] Whatever the origins of this form of bodily display, as with all dressed movements it worked with, not against, the material conditions of the clothing, intellectual and physical circumstance together combining to produce a behavioural result.[21]

In order to bear out their fullness trunk hose, like doublets, were padded and stuffed to glorious proportions (Figure 2). This was done either with multiple linings, or the addition of wool, hair and other suitable materials. Such width and weight about the hips clearly had its effect on stance and gait. Primarily it helped achieve the gallants' swagger, but secondly it also bore out the arms, thus further emphasizing the bent and elegant elbow. However, sartorial pride might occasion a corresponding fall. Physician and writer, John Bulwer, who in the mid-seventeenth century made a direct comparison between trunk hose and women's farthingales, also related the tale of a gentleman whose garment was stuffed with bran. A small rent was torn in his hose 'with a naile of the chaire he sat upon', so that as he gallantly entertained the ladies the bran poured forth 'like meale that commeth from the Mill'. This caused much laughter amongst the company. The gent, ascribing the mirth to his social success, was encouraged to yet more energetic efforts – 'untill he espied the heape of

branne, which came out of his hose', and took a shameful and hasty departure.[22]

In the absence of belts or suspenders, all upper hose styles were held up by being attached to the doublet. This was done by lacing through holes in the breeches' waistband to corresponding eyelets at the waist of the doublet. Sometimes visible – a decorative virtue out of functional necessity – more often this line of points was hidden by tabbed doublet skirts. In the seventeenth century metal hooks and eyes took over fastening these two garments, but visible points were often retained as vestigial, but flamboyant, accessories. Providing the hose were full enough to allow for stretching and sitting, this system of fastening had the advantage of ensuring that the weight of heavy and generously tailored fabrics was carried from the shoulders, rather than dragging from the waist. However, the many eyelet holes in surviving garments suggest that lacing must have been a lengthy operation, and trussing or hooking at the back required either extreme dexterity, or more likely help in dressing. Such sartorial conditions explain the interested observation of gentleman traveller Fynes Moryson (1566–1630) that, 'the Italians clothe very little children with doublets and breeches, but their breeches are open behind, with the shirt hanging out, that they may ease themselves without helpe'.[23] It also contextualizes the precepts in conduct literature that condemn public trussing or incomplete lacing. Such behaviour or appearance could only suggest that the wearer had been occupied with bodily functions.

Of the many garments that we find it difficult to deal with from a modern perspective, one of the most obdurate is the codpiece (Figure 2). Originally a triangular flap in the hose, the codpiece improved fit and, by lacing separately, performed the equivalent function of the modern fly. As with so many other aspects of sixteenth-century dress, however, the codpiece underwent an exaggeration of form that resulted in some startling items of wear.[24] The development of Venetians, though, and of later styles of breeches thereafter, made it redundant. The longer, looser garments were made with a fly opening, and the codpiece was no longer needed to join trunk hose at the fork. It would be disingenuous to deny that the codpiece had sexual significance. French comic writer, François Rabelais (d. 1553), in describing Gargantua's enormous and exuberant codpiece – 'like to that horn of abundance, it was still gallant, succulent, droppy, sappy, pithy, lively, always flourishing, always fructifying, full of juice, full of flower, full of fruit, and all manner of delight' – makes abundantly clear its symmetry with the member it encased. Indeed, 'as it was both long and large, so was it well furnished and victualled within, nothing like unto the hypocritical codpieces of some fond wooers, and

wench-courters, which are stuffed only with wind, to the great prejudice of the female sex'.[25] 'Wench-courting' was also on Wat Raleigh's mind. Poet and playwright, Ben Jonson (1573?–1637), who accompanied Sir Walter's son on a tour of France, complained of this 'knavishly inclined' youth who set 'the favour of damsels on a codpiece' – a flamboyant seventeenth-century equivalent to notches on a belt.[26] And Michel de Montaigne (1533–92), author of the famous *Essays*, engagingly called it a 'laughter-moving, and maids looke-drawing peece'.[27] However, it would be as misleading to overplay the sexual symbolism of the codpiece, as to underplay it. Firstly, there are remarkably few textual or iconographic mentions that make overt any significance of this kind; and secondly, its exaggerated form is shared by most other garments in the contemporary wardrobe. We choose to dwell on the enhanced shape of the genitals, but almost miss men's over-long legs and outsized bellies.

Having no apparent practical function, the ruff is another garment that clearly demonstrates the distance between modern and early modern dress sensibility. However, because of its portrayal in graphic and sculptural media, this icon of Tudor culture has acquired a permanence that quite belies its ephemeral nature as a garment. For rather than having an enduring form, the ruff was remade at every wash. Cleaned, and then dipped in starch, the pleats of the ruff were then shaped into 'sets' with heated metal irons called poking sticks.[28] These sets were further arranged and held in place by pinning. 'By varying the sets into which the ruff is ironed and the arrangement of the pins, a different configuration can be given to the ruff each time it is laundered.'[29] Only a very few Elizabethan ruffs survive, but the complexity, creativity and time-consuming nature of their construction has been revealed by the Globe Theatre's recreation of contemporary costume. A typical one of their ruffs was made from a strip of linen ten metres long, which was then handsewn, in hundreds of pleats, into a neckband just fifty centimetres in length. The starching, ironing and pinning of this basic linen form can then take up to five hours at every laundering.[30] Vulnerable to wind and rain, the fragile nature of the enterprise was ridiculed, like so much else, by Stubbes. 'But if Aeolus with his blasts, or Neptune with his stormes, chaunce to hit uppon the crasie bark of their brused ruffes, then they goe flip flap in the winde like rags flying abroad, and lye upon their shoulders like the dishcloute of a slut.'[31] The closed and pleated ruffs were accompanied by many other elaborate and dramatic styles: open, fan-shaped, cutwork and so on. Like the standing band, the tilt and angle of the larger varieties was achieved by pinning them to a wire frame underneath, called an underpropper or supportasse – another skilled and time-consuming technique of construction. Although

structural, these frames, attached to the collars of doublet or bodice, were made decorative by cording them with silk or metallic threads. For the hundred or so years in which it held fashionable sway, the ruff was a truly privileged form of dress. The time and labour involved in its techniques of making and remaking could only be afforded by the wealthy, as could its techniques of wear. For the restriction of movement and vision, and the enforced 'proud' carriage of head and wrists surrounded by such sartorial delicacies, argues the possession of leisure, or at very least a dissociation from manual occupation.[32] What for some may have been read as excessive or inconsequent, was a serious statement of luxury, wealth and style.

For women the analogous item to the doublet was the bodice. Frequently called 'a pair of bodies', this garment had no darts to allow for either fullness at the breast or tapering at the waist. All shaping was achieved by curving the seams; and the bust, although pushed up, was also flattened.[33] This effect was increased by the busk, a removable bone or wood insert slipped into a casing sewn at the front, which further pressed against the breasts and stomach. Thus although boned, these garments produced a very different effect from the nineteenth-century tight lacing corsets with which we are familiar. The nineteenth-century varieties were much more complicated in their construction, and were already shaped into the hourglass form, which then moulded the wearer. Added to this dramatic pre-shaping, the new metal eyelets enabled a much tighter lacing than had been achievable with the weaker, more flexible sewn holes.[34] Sixteenth-century bodices shaped their wearer into a longer lined and flatter torso, rather like an inverted triangle (Figure 10). They supported the body within, too, but without exerting the level of constriction the differently shaped nineteenth-century technology made possible. In addition to a design in which the central busk was removable for comfort, it is important to remember that, because the lacing controls the tightness of fit, this was also under the wearer's control. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say under the wearer's direction, since many bodices were back lacing and might require someone else to fasten them.

This corseted body form is echoed in the idealization of an exaggerated torso so evident in portraiture from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Whether covered in cloth or painted as exposed by the low cut bodices of the 1610s and 1620s, the early modern painterly vision elongated and enlarged this area, although still rendering it flat and without obvious signs of breasts (Figures 12 and 14).[35] This iconography argues the presence of a societal perception which registered a flat, lengthy torso as a womanly attribute. Whether the focus of desire or disapprobation (as was the case with many moral commentators whose

Figure 14 Frances Howard, Countess of Somerset (1589–1632), William Larkin. By kind permission of the Duke of Bedford and the Trustees of the Bedford Estates. © The Duke of Bedford and the Trustees of the Bedford Estates.

stock-in-trade included outrage at this display), this shaping of the female form dominated the cultural aesthetic. It is a vision of female beauty clearly distinct from the centuries preceding and following; being altogether different from the high circular breasts of medieval art, or the

generous curves of eighteenth-century beauty.[36] As the disproportionately long legs in certain images of male courtiers bespoke a necessary attribute of manly elegance, so the anatomically improbable but culturally desirable long bosom was the female equivalent.

Although no sixteenth-century farthingales survive from anywhere in the world, scholars have used tailors' patterns and paintings to re-create their construction. The earlier conical Spanish variety was made by an underskirt with hoops of willow, whale bone or rushes sewn into material casings, which provided a frame for the overskirt in a very similar way to the Victorian crinoline. The hula hoop look of the later French style was achieved in two ways. Either an underframe was used, as with the Spanish variety, or a less pronounced look could be had by tying a 'bum roll' – like an oversize stuffed sausage – around the hips. The flounce of this farthingale was achieved by pinning the very long lengths of the overskirt so that it disguised the ridge caused by the frame beneath (Figure 10). Rather like the different forms that could be created by techniques of setting and pinning a ruff, so too the flounce responded to ingenuity of styling. Variations of pleats, ruffles, gathers and tucks – although perpetuated in portraits and effigies – were transient creations lasting only while the dress was worn. 'The arrangement of the skirt worn over a French farthingale was left to the wearer and her servant, who folded and pinned the flounce to suit the size of the padded rolls or frame as required.'[37]

De rigueur in the final years of Elizabeth's reign – in 1593 Philip Gawdy sent his sister-in-law 'a fuardingall of the best fashion' – the style doggedly outlasted her.[38] This must have been at least partly due to James I's wife, Anne of Denmark, who preferred its formal (and by now increasingly old-fashioned) lines for court wear. However, by 1617 it had sunk into an irrevocable decline in England, a fashion slump witnessed by Lady Clifford, eventually to become the Countess of Dorset, and Pembroke and Montgomery. In November of that year she wrote, 'All the time I was at Court I wore my Green Damask Gown embroidered without a Farthingale.'[39] A few months before, in June, Sir Dudley Carleton (1573–1632) had written from his ambassadorial posting at The Hague. The letter, addressed to his good friend John Chamberlain, mentioned the arrival of a mutual acquaintance. It seems 'My lady Bennet' did not stay long by reason of:

> the boys and wenches, who much wondered at her huge vardugals and fine gowns, and saluted her at every turn of a street with their usual caresses of whore, whore, and she was the more exposed to view because when she would go closely in a covered wagon about the town she could not because there was no possible means to hide half her vardugal.[40]

Figure 15 Elizabeth I, Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *c.* 1592. By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

While clearly out of fashion in Holland, and declining in England, the farthingale continued in Spanish-influenced areas. By 1662 the arrival of the future Queen, Catherine of Braganza, and her entourage, prompted Pepys into writing that the 'portugall Ladys . . . are not handsome, and their farthingales a strange dress'. Diarist John Evelyn (1620–1706) was more emphatic: their farthingales were 'monstrous'.[41]

It takes only a moment's reflection to realize that the spatial effects of this dramatic style must have been considerable. The wearer of the French farthingale in particular has an architectural quality, and obtrudes into social space with insistent dimensions. It is tempting to link this spatial dominance to the social dominance of the fashion's elite wearers. This was most clearly the case with the farthingale's most visible champion, Elizabeth. Emanating from the monarch, female court dress of the last decade of the reign – like royal iconography – was extreme: wheeled skirts, trunk sleeves distended with padding and wire, hanging sleeves, standing ruffs, and wired rails that framed the head in a halo of gauze and jewellery. This relationship of political and sartorial power is clearly envisaged in the Ditchley Portrait (Figure 15): Eliza, massive and encircling, standing over the realm.[42]

After Elizabeth's death, the farthingale began its slow decline. The female silhouette shrank; narrower sleeves were worn, and the more modestly proportioned bum roll supported the skirts. Although continuing as court wear, the connotations of the farthingale had changed. No longer read only as splendid and elegant (or even as proud and immoral), contemporaries began to view it as formal, old-fashioned, and even faintly ridiculous. So, well before the farthingale finally disappeared in England, perceptions had begun to change. John Chamberlain's opinions (1553–1627) are illustrative. In February 1613 this witty observer of Jacobean life wrote a long letter to Dudley Carleton's wife, Alice, describing the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Frederick, the Elector Palatine. At the close he remembered, 'One thing I had almost forgotten for hast that all this time there was a course taken and so notified that no Lady or gentlewoman shold be admitted to any of these sights with a verdingale, which was to gaine the more roome, and I hope may serve to make them quite left of in time.'[43] Thus the reception of this fashion had moved from it being viewed as an indispensable part of the elite female form, to an inconvenient, perhaps backward-looking, waste of space.

Extremity, then, characterized fashionable clothing of this period. From the middle of the sixteenth century garments progressively swelled and ballooned in size, until by the 1620s they had reached the limits of their form. Held out by an internal framework or weighted by hidden padding, these garments suggested an angular stance that highlighted component parts of the dress, and the body. Heads were isolated by ruffs or held erect by collars; the torso was held upright in its encasing doublet or bodice; arms angled out or rested on the farthingale hoops; and hips were distended by hose or skirts. While male legs and the manly gait was highlighted by the wearing of stockings, women's perambulations were hidden

entirely beneath the gliding farthingale.[44] Not only anatomically exaggerated, these styles also embodied contradiction. The paunch of the peascod belly operated in counterpoint to slender young legs, the swollen hips of men's hose presented a typically female silhouette, and the plunging but flat-chested women's bodice shaped an androgynous torso. Despite the apparent fixity of an assemblage, many of the effects were ephemeral, as ruffs, lace, skirts and sleeves might change their appearance at the next wearing. But while the effects themselves were short lived, their preparation was lengthy and complicated. With extensive lacing, pinning and buttoning, dressing was a time-consuming process requiring, for its most dramatic and complex forms, not only the wealth to afford them, but also the leisure to wear them. The complaint of dramatist Thomas Tomkis (fl. 1614) that 'a ship is sooner rigged by far, than a gentlewoman made ready' is much quoted.[45] His exasperated description of a task taking over five hours is obviously exaggerated satire, and also conveniently omits to mention that the techniques of assemblage were identical for men. It does, however, indicate that an activity our society endeavours to make increasingly rapid and simple was approached with an altogether different set of values four hundred years ago.

The extremity of dress form was matched by the extremity of its surface appearance. With a decorative abandon the dressed figure was layered in different textures and loaded with lace, jewels, chains and accessories. Garments were embroidered, slashed, pinked, puffed and paned. The few garments that remain to us are in a hugely faded and tarnished state, but portraits indicate the resplendence that was once theirs. These pictures were painted in full day and show the richness of colour and textures. Quite another effect must have obtained by candlelight glinting on jewellery and metallic thread. That the wearers were alive to their clothing's night-time possibilities is indicated by Francis Bacon's advice (1561–1626) on the costuming of masques. The future Lord Chancellor wrote in his *Essays*: 'The *Colours*, that shew best by Candlelight are; White, Carnation, and a Kinde of Sea-Water-Greene; and *Oes*, or *Spangs*, as they are of no great Cost, so they are of most Glory.' However, he warned, 'As for *Rich Embroidery*, it is lost, and not Discerned'.[46]

While Bacon was writing of the appearance of the dressed figure on a stage, the implicit notion of performance is equally applicable to the clothing worn in the theatre of everyday life. For the courtier *sprezzatura* – that nonchalant and effortless grace – was the ideal bodily comportment, and in the public spaces of the newly urban early modern world it was practised through the medium of contemporary dress. While apparently contradictory, it is the difficulties of fashion that add to the grace of its

successful performance. Indeed, perhaps such an effortless ideal could only flourish among the extremity of such effortful sartorial forms. But it was a performance destined to end. Inevitably, as with all fashions, such styles reached the limits of their possibility, and when there was nowhere else to go with the old aesthetic a new look began to emerge.

Beginning around the reign of Charles I, dress came to be characterized by a new decorative restraint; instead of featuring variety and contrast, a dressed outfit was completed by matching colours and fabrics. Individual details no longer obtruded onto the eye, and parts of an ensemble were pressed into sartorial service for the good of the whole. Less strange to our eyes and contoured more to what we choose to delineate as the body's 'natural' shape, mid-seventeenth-century fashions at first sight slip through interpretation. Their relative familiarity does not provoke questioning, and commentators simply have less to say about less startling clothes. Apart from a temporary flutter into petticoat breeches, this comparative restraint was to last until the eighteenth century saw women burgeoning into enormous side hoops and panniers. However, although less remarkable at first sight, certain features of this vestimentary order do rise to the notice.

For both men and women the dressed waistline moved to higher up the body, and thus presented a new paradigm of desirability (Figures 7 and 13). But while this shortened torso contributed to an appearance of being less encased, the basic construction of the garments remained unaltered. Thus while renouncing former padding and distension in sleeves or stomach, the doublet and bodice both retained internal rigidity: the doublet with the stiffened neck and belly piece – two triangular inserts placed either side of the front opening; the bodice with the boning and busk. Being short-waisted and square-necked the bodice gave its wearer a broader, thicker appearance. Matching this look the sleeves, too, were puffy and short. Set well down on the shoulders and cut to three-quarter length, they limited vertical movement of the upper limbs and, for the first time, exposed a woman's forearm. For hundreds of years only revealed to the intimate gaze, the seventeenth century disclosed this body part to public view (Figure 13). Beneath the waistline 'puffy fluid bulk' was manifested in the voluminous folds of the skirt worn over hip pads.[47] Female beauty, in these styles, was realized as a kind of soft massivity. Less evident in men's dress the high-waisted doublets yet enabled the doublet skirts to lengthen, and hanging over full breeches the male outline thus echoed, albeit in a minor key, the broad bottom-heavy look of the women (Figures 7 and 16). At the margins of dress linen and lace maintained a constant presence, however, as with the tailored garments,

Figure 16 Endymion Porter, Van Dyck and School, 1628–32. By kind permission of the Earl of Mexborough.

the impression of rigidity had gone. Instead, 'unstarched and exploiting the natural weight of linen thread, they drooped and draped, flapping about the shoulders and wrists and over the top of boots'.[48] The dominant decorative motif were long bold slashes, through which showed either a contrasting lining fabric, or the shirt or smock; and the favoured material, particularly for women's dress, was satin. Its folds and shine made it an ideal textile for draping full fashions, and the typical Caroline portrait

emphasizes the play of light sliding on its surface. In a stock pose the subject furthers this effect by lightly grasping the abundant and satiny billows.

So, our simple story of costume forms as illustrated by a doodle at the margins of a 1570s ecclesiastical register, turns out to be more complex. In his casual depiction of the jaunty Renaissance elbow, the artist unconsciously leaves us an image of a body and mentality shaped by apparel. For clothing forms helped structure both the wearer's physical behaviours, and his or her ideas. It affected stance, movement and the relationship to space; and also dramatically influenced the criteria that signified such concepts as vigour, manliness, femininity and beauty. However, so far we have considered only notional people from the past – the 'typical' Elizabethan in trunk hose or the 'average' Caroline lady in satin. It is now time to turn to actual individuals, and the experiences they recorded of the relationship between their clothing and their physical bodies. In doing so we will find that apparel impacted heavily on their sensations of health and physical well-being. It was also involved in a complex interpretation of the body, in which the boundaries between flesh and fabric merged. Finally, dress was used in both highly personal, and culturally generated ways, to help individuals create, mark and manage moments of transition in the body's journey from the cradle to the grave.

Notes

1. For further detail, see Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion: The Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women c.1560–1620* (London, 1985); Jane Ashelford, *Dress in the Age of Elizabeth I* (London, 1988); Karen Baclawski, *The Guide To Historic Costume* (London, 1995); C.W. Cunnington and P. Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1954; repr. 1962); C.W. Cunnington and P. Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century*, 2nd edn (London, 1966); Aileen Ribeiro and Valerie Cumming, *The Visual History of Costume* (London, 1989).
2. BIHR, Cons. AB. 33 (1570–2), fol. 13^{v}. There are two almost identical sketches on fols 12^{v} and 13^{v}.
3. *Letters of Philip Gawdy*, ed. by Isaac Herbert Jeayes, The Roxburgh Club, 148 (London, 1906), pp. 90–1. Gawdy wrote his letter from Greenwich on 29 August 1594.

4. David Piper, *The English Face* (London, 1957), p. 112. On the republican appropriation of Caroline portrait images see Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, Portrait, and Print 1645–1661* (Cambridge, 2000), esp. pp. 31–68.
5. Lesley Edwards, '"Dres't Like a May-Pole": A Study of Two Suits *c*.1600–1662', *Costume*, 19 (1980), 75–93 (p. 84).
6. *Diary*, II, 66, 6 April 1661. Also quoted in Edwards, 'Dres't Like a May-Pole', p. 84.
7. Edwards, 'Dres't Like a May-Pole', pp. 86, 90.
8. Edwards, 'Dres't Like a May-Pole', pp. 79, 80.
9. Baclawski, *Guide to Historic Costume*, pp. 37–8. If the bodice was not boned, a corset of almost identical design would be worn beneath. The main difference between the two garments was decorative: the corset, not made to be seen, was plainer and more purely functional.
10. See Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Caroline Beamish (New Haven, 1997), pp. 91–2.
11. See Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society 1500–1914* (London, 1996), pp. 95–9. Nightgowns were for informal day wear and not, as the name might suggest, bed attire.
12. Ashelford, *Art of Dress*, p. 100.
13. Naomi Tarrant, *The Development of Costume* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 66, 116. See also Avril Hart, 'The Mantua: its Evolution and Fashionable Significance in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *Defining Dress: Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity*, ed. by Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson (Manchester, 1999), pp. 93–103.
14. Alexandra Warwick and Dani Cavallaro, *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and Body* (Oxford, 1998), p. 83.
15. Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress* (Manchester, 1995), p. 67.
16. Geoffrey Squire, *Dress, Art and Society* (New York, 1984), pp. 45–69.
17. Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, The English Experience, 489 (London, 1583; repr. Amsterdam, 1972), sig. E2^{v}.
18. Squire, *Dress, Art and Society*, p. 55.
19. Ellen Chirelstein, 'Emblem and Reckless Presence: The Drury Portrait at Yale', in *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550–1650*, ed. by Lucy Gent (New Haven, 1995), pp. 287–312 (p. 295).
20. See Joaneath Spicer, 'The Renaissance Elbow', in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Oxford, 1991), pp. 84–128.

21. In 'Mode and Movement', *Costume*, 34 (2000), 123–8, Jackie Marshall-Ward – Director of the historical dance group, Danse Royale – discusses the effects of Renaissance costume on the body when performing contemporary dances.
22. J. B., *Anthropometamorphosis: Man Transfrom'd: Or, the Artificall Changling* (London, 1653), pp. 541–2.
23. Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary*, 4 vols (Glasgow, 1907), IV, 219–20. See also G.R. Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Illicit Sex in Early Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1979), where the author quotes from a court case concerning homosexual assault. During the deposition a yeoman's son explained that he had gone into a field 'with the purpose to untruss his points for the easing of nature' (p. 175).
24. Grace Q. Vicary, 'Visual Art as Social Data: The Renaissance Codpiece', *Cultural Anthropology*, 4 (1989), 3–25 suggests that the later enlarged type of codpiece developed as a functional and symbolic response to the contemporary syphilis epidemic.
25. *The Works of Rabelais*, trans. by Sir Thomas Urquhart, intro. by J. Lewis May, 2 vols (London, 1933), Book 1, Chapter 8, pp. 29–30.
26. Quoted in *Advice to a Son: Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Francis Osborne*, ed. by Louis B. Wright (Ithaca, 1962), p. xxii.
27. *Montaigne's Essays: John Florio's Translation*, ed. by J.I .M. Stewart, 2 vols (London, 1931), II, 254.
28. Starch was introduced into England from the Netherlands in 1564. This technological development enabled ruffs to grow in size and complexity, see Ashelford, *Art of Dress*, p. 33; and Nancy Bradfield, *Historical Costumes of England 1066–1968*, rev. edn (London, 1970), p. 78. Interestingly, Richard Mabey, *Flora Britannica* (London, 1996) states that an alternative form of starch, particularly for ruffs, was found in the crushed roots of the wildflower Arum maculatum, or Lords-and-ladies. However, its use often caused 'severe blistering of the launderers' hands' (p. 386).
29. Jenny Tiramani (Associate Designer, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre), Information panel for 'Patterns of Fashion' exhibition, Victoria and Albert Museum, Gallery 40, 1 February 1999 – 22 August 1999.
30. Ibid. For more on the complexities of constructing ruffs, and the Globe's re-created costumes in general, see Jenny Tiramani, 'Janet Arnold and the Globe Wardrobe: Handmade Clothes of Shakespeare's Actors', *Costume*, 34 (2000), 118–22.
31. Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, [sig. D7^{v}].

32. The argument linking restrictive clothing to economic conditions was first developed by Thorstein Veblen in *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). He maintained that, along with the phenomenon of conspicuous wealth, such conspicuous leisure was a condition of fashionable dress. More recent re-articulations of this theory can be found set out in Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery: The Classic Study of Fashion Through the Ages*, rev. edn (London, 1976), pp. 32–9.
33. Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion*, p. 8.
34. However, in *Patterns of Fashion* (p. 46, Figure 328; pp. 112–13, no. 46) Arnold includes detailed photographs and drawings of a sixteenth-century German bodice in which the lace holes are reinforced inside and out with metal rings.
35. As Ellen Chirelstein has pointed out in 'Lady Elizabeth Pope: The Heraldic Body', in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540–1660*, ed. by Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London, 1990), pp. 36–59, there are 'no known full-scale portraits from this period that depict truly rounded breasts and nipples' (p. 58). The only contexts in which such an imaging seems to have been acceptable are the bold – in every sense – illustrations in popular literature, and depictions of masque costume. The most famous of the latter are the designs by Inigo Jones, of which a number show women in topless costumes. As strict representations these drawings need to be treated with caution, for they presumably bear the same idealized relationship to the actual worn costume as do designers' drawings today. This caution is supported by the few full-length portraits that exist depicting court women in fanciful, but unexceptional, masque dress (for example, 'Lady in Masque Costume as a Power of Juno', John de Critz, 1606; 'Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford as a Power of Juno', attr. John de Crtiz, 1606). However, the exception to this is a miniature by Isaac Oliver ('Portrait of an Unknown Woman as Flora', *c*. 1610). The unknown subject wears a masque dress cut beneath the bosom, which, through transparent gauzy linen, clearly shows her breasts and nipples. Chirelstein suggests that in both 'the idealised and privileged context of the masque', and in the private, intimate world of the miniature, 'nudity' was more allowable than in portraits proper ('Lady Elizabeth Pope', pp. 56–9).
36. For the depiction of breasts in art, see Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 186–207.
37. Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion*, p. 12.
38. *Letters of Philip Gawdy*, p. 77.

39. *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. by D.J.H. Clifford (Stroud, 1990), p. 64.
40. *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain 1603–1624: Jacobean Letters*, ed. by Maurice Lee, Jr. (New Brunswick, 1972), p. 237.
41. *Diary*, III, 92, 25 May 1662; *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. by E.S. de Beer, 6 vols (Oxford, 1955), III, 320, 30 May 1662.
42. Andrew Belsey and Catherine Belsey make a similar point in 'Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I', in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540–1660*, ed. by Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London, 1990), pp. 11–35.
43. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. by Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols (Philadelphia, 1939), I, 426.
44. Squire suggests the farthingale provided a motionless counterpart to active masculinity, see *Dress, Art and Society*, p. 65.
45. Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua or the Combat of the Tongues* (1607), quoted in Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion*, p. 39.
46. Francis Bacon, 'Of Masques and Triumphs', in *The Essays*, ed. by John Pitcher (Harmondsworth, 1985), p. 176. Oes and spangs sewn on to decorate material, were small pieces of metal like sequins.
47. Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, p. 106.
48. Squire, *Dress, Art and Society*, p. 78.