Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express’d in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man ...
he of the farthingale is ‘slightly more than thirteen handspans’, which has been estimated to equal nearly three metres.¹

During the reign of Elizabeth I the farthingale developed from the Spanish corselet style into the drum-shaped whole far-
thingale 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 1583 portrait of Anne of Denmark (Fig. 28). She par-
ticularly admired this style of dress, and moulded the farthingale less
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 an expensive farthingale that I do not exag-
grate when I say it was four feet wide in the hips.” To do 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 – can be seen just below the long string of pearls. Anne
mats
her
hands
on
the
shell-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 expense of muslin fabric was
required – another sign of conspicuous leisure and conspicuous
consumption. Elizabeth of the Netherlands, in a portrait of a very
similar date, wore her skirt pinned in a similar arrangement, with a
narrow ruffle covering the edge of the farthingale (Fig. 29).

In his last incarnation, this whole farthingale was sometimes
rolled up at the back, an effect in part created by the use of a book (a strip of
wood, very or bone) inserted into a central channel in the front of the stops or bodice, which
extended below the farthingale and pushed it down in the front, thereby raising the back.
Books could be given as gifts from a host, and were sometimes used with arm’s lengths or
intimate posies. The farthingale was sometimes worn over a muslin shaped padder loaned
for extra support, and to facilitate the lifting effect. Women in England began to stop wearing
short 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, continue to wear bust
rolls for some time longer which provided a less exaggerated effect.

With these shaping underneath it, a woman might wear one or more petticoats. The
outer petticoat could be highly decorated and was frequently designed to match, not
shadow. Portraits do not reveal that often what appears to be a rich petticoat visible beneath a skirt
pinned at the front (as in the portrait of Princess Elizabeth, Fig. 27) is actually a farthingale. 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 of the side and back.
as in Holbein’s portrait of Cidy Harrow (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 presence of pregnancy and its dynamic associations, the high mental and moral status that they also often provided a record of a woman in the final months of her life.

WASTICULTS, NIGHTGOWNS AND MANTELS

Before getting dressed or to receive visitors in the privacy of her own home, a woman might wear a formal combination of a mantlet with skirt. The mantlet identified in fig. 41 is worn by an unmarried woman at this time, a loose fit, which is unusual for someone of this age and unmarried. A married woman would be in her bedroom or dressing room, so that she is a very intimate portrait. Her own hair was associated with virginity. The sense of intimacy is furthered by the woman’s casual pose, bare feet, and the fact that her hair is缭 with a simple hairpin. This style was fashionable in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and it is believed to be a mark of social status and beauty. Another comfortable option was a nightgown, made of silk or cotton and often lined with silk. It is frequently imported from Asia, in the eighteenth century these become known as Chinese 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. 1539–40) for depicting a woman in informal dress, the portrait (unlike others thought to be Anne Boleyn) seems to be wearing a embroidered nightgown over a simple gown (fig. 42). This is a reflection of what could be the black nightgown worn as a gift by Henry VIII to Anne during their courtship, and that its depiction here is intended to underline its particular significance and expense.

A seventeenth-century nightgown can be seen in the portrait of Henrietta d’Ansembourg, Countess of Granthorn (fig. 43). She was her husband’s night gowns worn over her gown, apparently without stays. During the eighteenth century the nightgown was generally worn for more formal occasions, and it is believed to be through the eighteenth-century fashion, a fashionable style of day dress introduced in the 1740s, which, although worn with stays, provided a comfortable relief from restrictive court styles of bodice and skirt. Although popular in England at the end of the eighteenth century, maximum variety appears in portraits at this time — but they are often seen in fashion plates and prints. In a 1794 print of Mary II (fig. 44), the queen wears a fashionable mantlet, along the lines of Henrietta’s nightgown — without a waist seam, and with the two sides of the front plaited into shape and joined by a tuck. Below the waist, the skirt is pulled back on each side and pinned or tied into a strap and styled arrangement of drapery forming a bust and opening to reveal a petticoat underneath. A comparable
with its fashionably puffed elbows. For the pale-skinned queen, this was a defining style of attire, exaggerating the delicate whiteness of her complexion, the whiteness of her face, and the discernibility it bestowed on her. In this context, art was the lens through which we viewed her story.

Although by the seventeenth century, the convention to be depicted with a 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 headwear became increasingly common and would remain in vogue for many decades. During this time, a common way for a fashionable woman to carry small necessaries was by attaching them to a girdle round the waist. These necessaries (known in continental fashion with a patronizing colloquialism such as an apron, or more regularly to refer to this store) might be conveyed; fans and books 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 of decorative examples in the Royal Collection reflect the variety of shapes and styles that were found. One example is constructed of gilt brocade and yellow taffeta with a red dress, the size of a frog (fig. 54). Although unlikely to have been worn regularly at court, it must have been appreciated for its novelty, and in doing so exemplified one of the key factors driving new fashions - the search for the innovative and different. During this period, the elite rarely needed to carry money, accounts were instead settled on a periodic basis. Instead, these small necessaries might have been used as 'sweet bags' - in empty, smell-infused, perfumed 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 printer Wenceslaus Hollar, who visited England in 1627 under the patronage of the influential Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. His etchings are invaluable in bringing elements from this later period to light. The first of Hollar's major series focusing on attire was published in 1645, consisting of etchings of English women and was entitled Theatrum Matae (The Theatre of Women). Like many of his series, the Fine Point Art (fig. 58), 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 for travel or walking outside. Hollar's prints show the clothing actually worked, how the layers were placed back and so on.

A Group of Online, Kendalls, Fans and 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 various types of fine feathers and lace. On the left-hand side is a coat of
DOUBLETS AND COATS

Throughout most of this period a man would wear a doublet on the upper part of his body over his shirt. Shaping, padding 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. Finished skirts below the waist were a feature of doublets during the reign of Henry VIII; these shortened and gradually accepted into a set of overlapping stiffened lapers. In his 1543 portrait by Mytens (fig. 59), Charles I wears a doublet of red wool embroidered silk with four geometrically designed stiffened lapers at the front. Based on comparison with a surviving example (fig. 96) — associated with Charles I and of similar design and date — these were probably also lapers on the back. In the portrait the lapers are edged with silver brocaded and gold silk satin, and a similar device is used to emphasise the panniers across the chest (through which the gold silk lining is visible) and to decorate the shoulder wings projecting from the shawl down the sleeves. These add massive bulk to the shoulders and contrast the join at the shoulder seams. Here the shawl or cape is stitched to matching gold and silk satin, which has been apparently stiffened to such an extent that it creates a three-dimensional effect, standing away from the arms until just below the elbows where the panniers are joined together. Underneath 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 strung from neck to waist—each tight enough to prevent attractive gaping on the garment intended to fit tightly to the body. The portrait is unusual in suggesting that at this date all buttons were fastened (unlike in following decades when half-waist and doublet were often unbuttoned). 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 buttons adorning the man’s doublet, which runs along the waistline. Contrasted from bows of gold and silver striped ribbons, each button is topped with an aptle, the metal of which would have made an attractive flashing noise as the garments moved together. Here they are probably ornamented, a vestigial feature with the original in fact that doublets and breeches were originally tied together through holes in the waistband of each — the aptles serving the practical purpose of holding the threading together and preventing the ribbon or cord from fraying. Metal hooks and eyes replaced this method for holding up the breeches at this time that this portrait was produced, and such hooks are visible inside the surviving example. Aptle 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 movements. It meant, for example, that he had to sit without leaning at the waist, and that bowing during the period took the

Fig 59: Portrait of Charles I, 1625, by Mytens.
PAINTED FOR BATTLE AND THE HUNT
The mid-seventeenth century saw a vogue for an unusual type of miniature which could be coloured by applying pearl and transparent washes to the image. Constructed from very thin sheets of vellum, this type of miniature can include both male and female portraits, and several can be identified with well-known figures as character types of the period.