English Eighteenth Century Costume and it's depiction in the paintings by Reynolds, Gainsborough and Hogarth

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Introduction

'The work of the artist is one of the most important primary sources for the historian of dress.' (19, p. 15). After all, it is mostly through paintings by artists of a particular era that inform us of the costumes worn at that time. But not only is the style of apparel recorded but also the form in which it would have been worn, including the costume's **'minute social distinctions indicating class more subtly than any sumptuary law.'** (19, p.15).

Therefore, the clothing worn by men, women and children, must be viewed from portraits rather than researched from literary compositions. For this reason the description of English and Irish eighteenth century attire is referred to appropiate paintings of that period in this thesis. The three British reputable artists to emerge from that era of English portrait painting are Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough and William Hogarth. Each artist's approach to painting costumes is quite unique, yet they all portray the attire with deliberation and sensitivity. Therefore a chapter is devoted to each artist, discussing two portraits by the artist which reflect the fashions worn during the eighteenth century.

> **Even when a painting appears to be firmly dated on the canvas or by exhibition, the actual work may have taken several years to complete, or may have been altered by later additions..** (19, p. 15).

In order to establish what was fashionable in society, rather than fashionable in paintings, the costumes are compared to other artists works to verify the correct styles and shapes that were worn. The paintings by the Irish artists, James Latham and Philip Hussey, reveal that the attire of the fashionable Irish society were much simpler and less ornate than their English counterparts. These Irish artist's work shall be featured in the final chapter.

Although the portrayal of costume was painted according to

each of the above named artist's personal requirements of what constitutes a portrait; the epitome of eighteenth century elegance, that being the emphasis on the ornamentation and frivolity of dress, prevailed in every painiting.

Chapter 1

Reynolds' interpretation of costume worn by the aristocracy in England in the mid-eighteenth century.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was a man of great determination and resolution. Painting, above all other things, was the passion which fulfilled his life. He was a bachelor and lived with his sister who was **'a perpetual warning of the possible defects of the feminine character.'** (22 p. 21). He was a diligent worker who always seemed to have an urging desire to accomplish a superior painting than his rivals, namely Allan Ramsay and Thomas Gainsborough. This intense compulsion was the cause of many arguments with his sister Fanny who **'often reproved him for practising his art on Sundays'.** (22 p.13).

Nevertheless, the outcome justified the means, since Reynolds has provided us with some unsurpassed paintings of that era. His continual ambition was to be something much grander than a portrait painter. He hoped that the art of portraiture would be treated as a branch of historial painting, such as the paintings by Raphael or Michelangelo. It is evident in all the commissions Reynolds undertook that he wanted to make **'painting a profession'** instead of a trade, or perhaps, more aptly, **'an art rather than a craft.'** (21 p. 17)

> **Reynolds's portraits reveal universal human values beneath an individual human likeness, which has been observed with the detachment proper to the professional portrait painter.** (22 p. 9).

His approach to portraiture is so profoundly intimate that we, as the viewer, seem to intrude on the sitter's privacy. It appears that Reynolds had a special talent that could penetrate through a resemblance and portray inner qualities that are so often lost in other paintings. It is known that he was **'too keen on his painting and too deaf to have a chatty bedside manner'**, with most of his sitters but Reynolds discovered their distinct mannerisms that creates such a personal portrayal. (21 p.21).

Unlike an earlier generation of British painters who went on the Grand Tour with no clear idea of what they wanted to achieve, Reynolds knew exactly what to gain from the experience in 1749. While he was an apprentice of Thomas Hudson in London, Reynolds had already learnt the enormous value of having a collection of drawings, prints and paintings by the Old Masters which he could constantly refer back to again and again. In Italy he wanted to understand the **'tradition of the accepted great masters of the past, who had worked not only in the narrow field of portraiture'**, for example Giorgione Titian, **'but in the nobler sphere of historical painting'.** (22 p. 16). It was this bridge between portrait and historical paintings Reynolds wanted to cross. He wanted to know the secret that the old masters knew that reputed them with the status of 'Master'. This seemed to be Reynolds' life-long quest which directed his painting technique and style.

Reynolds referred back to the work of the Old Masters to obtain their knowledge of composition and also their technical mastery of light and shade. For this reason, many of his competitors in the artist field regarded his methods of adaptation as plagiarism. However, one literary composer of that time was adamant in his statement,

The artist borrowing is a means of achieving originality ..... the sounds that carry furthest and last longest are echoes. (22 p. 16).

Reynolds did modify compositions of other artists, even those of his contemporaries, Ramsay being one, but nevertheless, he used their painting technique in such a way that it would be impossible to distinguish his painting as any other artist's but Reynolds'.

'By the eighteenth century a sense of ingrained Englishness

in dress was an established feature of fashionable society' (18 p. 20). Although England was not the dominant leader of fashionable europe, they adapted the fashions of other countries and the result was a truly British interpretation of continental styles. France was the prevailing country to demand such a strict following of fashion. Towards the end of the previous century the French court at Versailles established the essence of etiquette and decorum in dress. And France continued to be the strongest influence on high fashion in English society well into the eighteenth century. It was the English nobility who looked towards the French sovereignty as the source of wisdom regarding elegance of dress and refinement of manners. At that time, anybody who was interested in propriety and being prominent in fashionable society studied and followed the changing styles of the French Court.

Dress of that period captured all that is graceful and elegant in men's and women's clothing. By the early 1730s ladies costume moved away from the classical sobriety of the Regence style with its light colours and floating silks to the wit and ornamentation of the Rococo. fig. 1. However the English did not really catch up with this new development in dress until a full decade later, whereas the French had, by this time~~this time~~, well and truly established the Rococo style as fashionable attire.

Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Georgiana, Countess Spencer and her daughter was painted in 1760 and owned by Earl Spencer at Althorpe. Fig. 2. This painting is a marvelous example of the style of dress which flourished throughout Europe in the mid eighteenth century. But due to England's geographical location, their interpretation of any particular fashion varied slightly according to popularity. The Europeans partook in this opulent and extravagant period with great enjoyment and enthusiasm compared to the English who never quite got the same atmosphere of dramatic exuberance as their counterparts. Nevertheless, Reynolds' painting of the

Countess with her daughter portrays the dress of the upper classes and the aristocracy.

The commonest costume worn by most women throughout this period was the mantua gown. Fig. 3. This dress was the basic shape of all the fashionable outfits that were worn at court and also at other formal occasions. The mantua inspired the cut of the immediate fashions of the following decades, and in this portrait, Countess Spencer is wearing one such variation called the '**sack**' or '**robe a la francaise**', as it was known in Europe. This form of dress was at first worn quite loose, suitable for lounging around in, in the mornings. The French magazine La Bagetelle commented on this approach to dress: **' A present comfort seems the only thing that the ladies of Paris care about when dressing.'** (18 p. 130). However as time progressed the sack sometimes became known as the negligee by the english, which is a confusing term since it gradually became a more formal gown, fitted at the waist with a tight bodice.

It is evident that Countess Spencer is wearing a sack since the sack-back is partly shown cascading behind her. Fig. 4. Like the mantua, this costume probably started life as an early form of the mantua. It is interesting to discover that the earliest sack dresses were called contouches, which apparently came from the Polish word kontusz, a caftan like garment with hanging sleeves in the shape of an inverted V which fell to your toes. The first version of the sack dress had loose pleats not only on the back but also on the front and was popular with mothers-to-be because of their shapelessness and comfort. Mrs Delany advised her pregnant sister that they were **'easier and handsomer .... for a lady in your circumstances'** (18 p. 36).

These early sacks were worn with the front seams tied just below the waist, as seen in J.F de Troy's painting

La Declaration de L'Amour which hangs in the Wrightsman Collection, New York. Fig. 5. Also this sack was worn open in the front revealing the petticoat underneath. As the shape of the sack advance, small boxpleats became more formalized, descending from the back of the neck and merging below the shoulders into the folds of the gown. Eventually the sack became more formal in the 1730s with the regulation of the back pleats into just two large double boxpleats. This pleat development, with the introduction of the tighter fitting waist, produced an orderly structure to the gown and was worn extensively at the English court of King George III.

Unfortunately it is not possible to view much of the sackback of Countess Spencer's dress but we get the impression of fullness and volume flowing over the sides of the gown. Fig. 2 These small pleats inherited the name Watteau pleat since most of the women in Antoine Watteau's paintings appear to be be wearing these gowns. Watteau's tentative pencil drawings, Studies of Women's dress in Stockholm's National Museum, displays the fall of the sackback, capturing the graceful line and majestic flow of this gown. Fig. 6.

Countess Spencer's costume is obviously highly fashionable for the mid eighteenth century since another woman of high society Lady Jane Coke once wrote from London in 1751 : **' You ask me whether sacks are generally worn; I am so partial to 'em that I have nothing else.'** (2 p. 27). The Countess's gown has an open front, revealing her petticoat made of the same fabric as her dress. When the robe and petticoat were made of the same or complementary fabric, as it is in this incident, the outfit was called a suit. Although most of her dress is hidden behind the table her daughter is standing upon, we catch a glimpse of the robing down the edge of her shoulder and skirt. Great ingenuity was needed to cover the seams of a bodice and skirt. Lace was generally the commonest trimming

used for the robing of women's costume throughout the eighteenth century. Countess Spencer's bodice has only one row of frilled lace, travelling from her shoulder and probably continued to her waist where the robing widens into a ruched flounce down to the hem of the skirt.

In order to visually separate the skirt from the petticoat in a suit such as Countess Spencer's, lace above all other trimmings was sewn along the edge. By the middle of the century women's dress was decorated with trimmings such as ribbons, lace and silk flowers. An English magazine named The Spectator printed an artical about the wife of a Justice of the Peace who was **'flounced and furbelowed from head to foot, every ribbon was wrinkled and every part of her garment in curl.'** (7 p. 58). These 'argrements' were made and sold in special shops or warehouses in Paris.(18 p. 60). Lace was one of the elaborate, indispensable materials that was worn by both men and women. Surprisingly people of all classes, ranging from the nobility to servant girls, saved and scraped to buy it, even though the finest quality lace was costlier than silks and satins. Often lace from France, Belgium and Italy was twenty times as expensive as a length of fashionable imported silk. Yet, money was of no concern since **'wearing expensive laces was a way to display one's fame and fortune, rather than one's taste.'** (13 p.109)

But this was not the only reason why lace was so popular throughout society. It's translucent character created a magnificient sharp contrast against a static dark background and also the flowing movement over a silky surface. However, lace was also designed to be worn gathered or draped over skirts or sleeves producing rich contrasts in testures or light and shade. Lace is an important feature on Countess Spencer's dress, especially the ruffles on her sleeves as seen in fig. 7. This was a vital costume accessory that was worn on both male and female dress in varying quantities.

According to fashions, sleeve ruffles changed little in their overall shape and in their surface decoration. But Reynolds' portrait depicts these ruffles when they were used most spectacularly.

At the beginning of the century a frill or narrow border was only visible and as the decades passed, double ruffles became more common. But it wasn't until the 1750s when the triple-layered flowing sleeves became the height of fashion. The lavish fall of the lace sleeves on Countess Spencer's gown with its volume and length behind the arm adopted the name weeping ruffles. They were largely composed of muslin, gauze or net and the lace borders were sewn onto the edge of the sleeve. Fig. . Because lace was so expensive, cambric or muslin was used to create these dramatic exploding layers like a misty waterfall around the arms. Lace designs derived from embroidered and patterned silks and satins. The English silk designer, Anna Maria Garthwaite produced many designs for patterned gauze lappets which were **'clearly influenced by contemporary lace design.'** (11 p.225). Fig. 8.

The flower was the most typical motif to be woven into the borders which then decorated the lappels or ruffles. The borders of the Countess' sleeves are only wide enough to accommodate a row of bloomed flowers, which are composed upon a net that is sprinkled with tiny spots. Fig. 7. The Brussels lacemakers were reputable for their needle work, especially the designs of **'opulent flowers and luxuriant foliage, fountains and palm trees.'** (11 p.90). The colour of Countess Spencer's lace sleeves appears to be duller than that of her kerchief around her neck, one explanation being that the thread used was a finer silk, which when used for bobbin lace becomes a golder yellow hue. This expesive lace produced in France And Flanders, not surprisingly was named Blond Lace.

One contemporary of Reynolds said that in his male

portraits he sometimes **'lost likeness in his endeavours to give character where it did not exist.'** (21 p.17). But in the case of Chartes Coote, the 1st Earl of Bellamont, in the National Gallery of Ireland, it is contrary to this quotation. This portrait by Reynolds in, 1774, captures the spirit and personality of the Earl with great gusto and panache. Fig. 9.

Surely this painting of Charles Coote reached new heights in the art of portraiture. This artist not only captured the style of men's costume of the eighteenth century but also depicted how the sitter responded in these clothes. Men's garments, at that time were not only worn for practical reasons but in addition, for ostentatious display. Unlike fashions today, their attire was just as important as women's and in some instances, surpassed the exuberance of women's costume. In the case of this painting, the Earl's outfit reflects the lavish decor expected of the male nobility. Those who attended court respected the rules of decorum that not only included propriety but also a code of dress.

Evidently the Earl of Bellamont comes across as a pompous aristocrat dressed in his finery, to be immortalized on canvas by one of the most reputable artists at that time. Yet, an aura of dignity and honour shines through his pretentious stance which , at first, strikes the eye of the viewer. An atmosphere of distinction surrounds his pose in this painting by Reynolds, that manifests itself after the initial shock and amusement upon seeing the Earl dressed in such a costume. It is known that the Earl of Bellamont was a brave and respected person since he was made a knight of the Bath by King George III for his chivalry in quelling a rebellion in the North of Ireland. Sir Herbert Croft commented on his courage although he also regreted that the Earl's virtues did not **'keep place with his comeliness and his bravery'**. (21 p.261).

The Earl's dramatic costume is that of a knight of the

Bath which, although he has exquisite accessories, is the basic shape of men's dress of the late eighteenth century. This painting was finished in 1774 and depicts the suit that was commonly worn by all classes at that period. Of course not everybody could afford such beautiful fabrics but the style was widely copied in less expensive cloth. However Reynolds said that portraiture was like **'copying a ham or any object of still life'**. (21 p. 17). Therefore we can assume that the Earl's costume is a true representation of formal dress.

At first observation, the suit appears to coincide with the fashions worn in the 1770s. The classical uniformity of the suit was by that time international. With the increasing knowledge of tailoring, coats were cut narrower creating a neater silhouette. When the Earl's costume is compared with another portrait by Reynolds of Warren Hastings completed in 1768 which is at present in the National Portrait Gallery , London, there are distinctive differences. Fig. 10. Although the latter sitters costume represents the everyday suit, the fashionable shapes of the coat, breeches and waistcoat were similar to those for formal court wear.

The open coat allowed the waistcoat underneath to be clearly seen, which perhaps encouraged the evolution of its lavish decoration. Also, the waistcoat was usually made of a differently coloured material that was often heavily cmbroidered with a motif, and the coat and breeches of the suit were in the same plainer fabric. But surprisingly the Earl of Bellamont's suit is made of white silk with the coat, instead of the waistcoat, in pink. With closer inspection, it is possible to establish the sleeve cuff of his red coat hidden in the shadows of his 'surtout' or overcoat. Fig. 11. Therefore the white lace- trimming sleeves belong to the waistcoat even though this became unfashionable during the 1740s. At that time waistcoats began to shorten until they reached mid thigh length, whereupon the front began to curve away from the waist to the

hem. These alterations are evident in the Earl's waistcoat, even the placing of the pockets which were moved just below the waist during the 1750s, coincides with the fashions of the late eighteenth century, as seen in Fig. 11.

Then why did Reynolds include sleeves in the waistcoat, when those who regarded themselves as fashionable, as the Earl surely did, had stopped wearing them beneath their coats the previous decade ?. It is a well known fact that in the majority of cases Reynolds only painted the faces of the sitters and employed a servant as a model for the hands and clothes. He probably only had sketches and memory as references of the costume worn by Charles Coote, the 1st Earl of Bellamont. But probably, Reynolds was attracted **'by a compromise between contemporary style and the clothes seen in old portraits'.**(21 p.26)

Undoubltedly it was on such **'old portraits'** (21 p.26) by Allan Ramsay that inspired Reynolds' painting of the Earl. Its likeness to Ramsay's George III in his Coronation Robes painted in 1761 and part of the Royal Collection, is unquestionable. Fig. 12. Both artists were sworn rivals in their profession and it was Reynolds' hope to achieve the appointment of Principal Painter of the Court during King George III's reign. That was destined for Ramsay since William Gaunt had said **'George III and Queen Charlotte took as great a liking to the temperamental, music loving Gainborough (another portrait painter of that era) as they seem to have felt aversion for the bland Joshua Reynolds.'** (8 p.189). Yet, he acquired the post as court painter upon Ramsay's death in 1784, and as the result of his prodigious work throughout his life.

> **Reynolds was more careful as a draughtsman, more interesting in the description of expensive fabrics, more delicate in his handling, and more subtle in colour.**(21 p.23)

The delicate rendering of the robing along the edge of the waistcoat and cuff is so precise that it is possible to note the gathered detail along the centre of the lace border. fig. 13. Again lace is used on the edge of the Earl's chemise which is just visible under his wasitcoat's sleeves. Lace played a role in men's costume as a status symbol which declared their wealth and position in society. However by the time this portrait was completed, lace was diminishing in appearance on men's formal dress since the elegant, graceful qualities of lace eventually caused its association **'exclusively a feminine affaire.'** (13 p.109).

The Earl's elaborate surtout appears more like a curtain drape than an overcoat. It was obviously Reynolds' intention to create a majestic aura in this painting of the Earl since his attire is so decorative which enhances the portrait. Though the corded tassels hanging from his neck discredit the sitter somewhat. Previously Reynolds used the effect of the tassels in another portrait of Frederick, the 5th Earl of Carlisle, painted in 1769 and owned by George Howard of Castle Howard. As in all three portraits, tassels, bows and sweeping overcoats feature with great panache. Fig 9, 12, 14.

However, the Earl of Bellamont, with his head-wear of towering white ostrich plumage deserves the most admiration. In contrast with his magnificent red surtout and white suit the Earl is wearing a black wig with the long locks tossed over one shoulder. Until the 1740s, it was acceptable for men to style their own hair but towards the end of the century, all except the lowest classes wore wigs of some kind. This wig was probably composed of human hair although horse and goat hair were also popular and less expensive. The Earl's wig is tied back in the queue style which is nowadays known as a ponytail.

Charles Coote, 1st Earl of Bellamont, standing majestically

beside the banner that declares him a knight of the Bath, will join others that have also recently been invested Knights, since their helmets and banners are visible in the background. Reynolds portrays the Earl as a gallant and courageous cavalier even though he was also known as **'the Hibernian Seducer'** and a **'valmont like figure.'** (21 p.261). Perhaps Reynolds did **'cast the privileged members of society into impressive roles'** but if this is the case, then the Earl of Bellamont played the role excellently. (21 p. 18).

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Back view of a sac back hitched up, with a large apron in front. The high fontange type cap is put over hair worn up, *c* 1780

Fig. 4

Fig. 53

Fig. 6

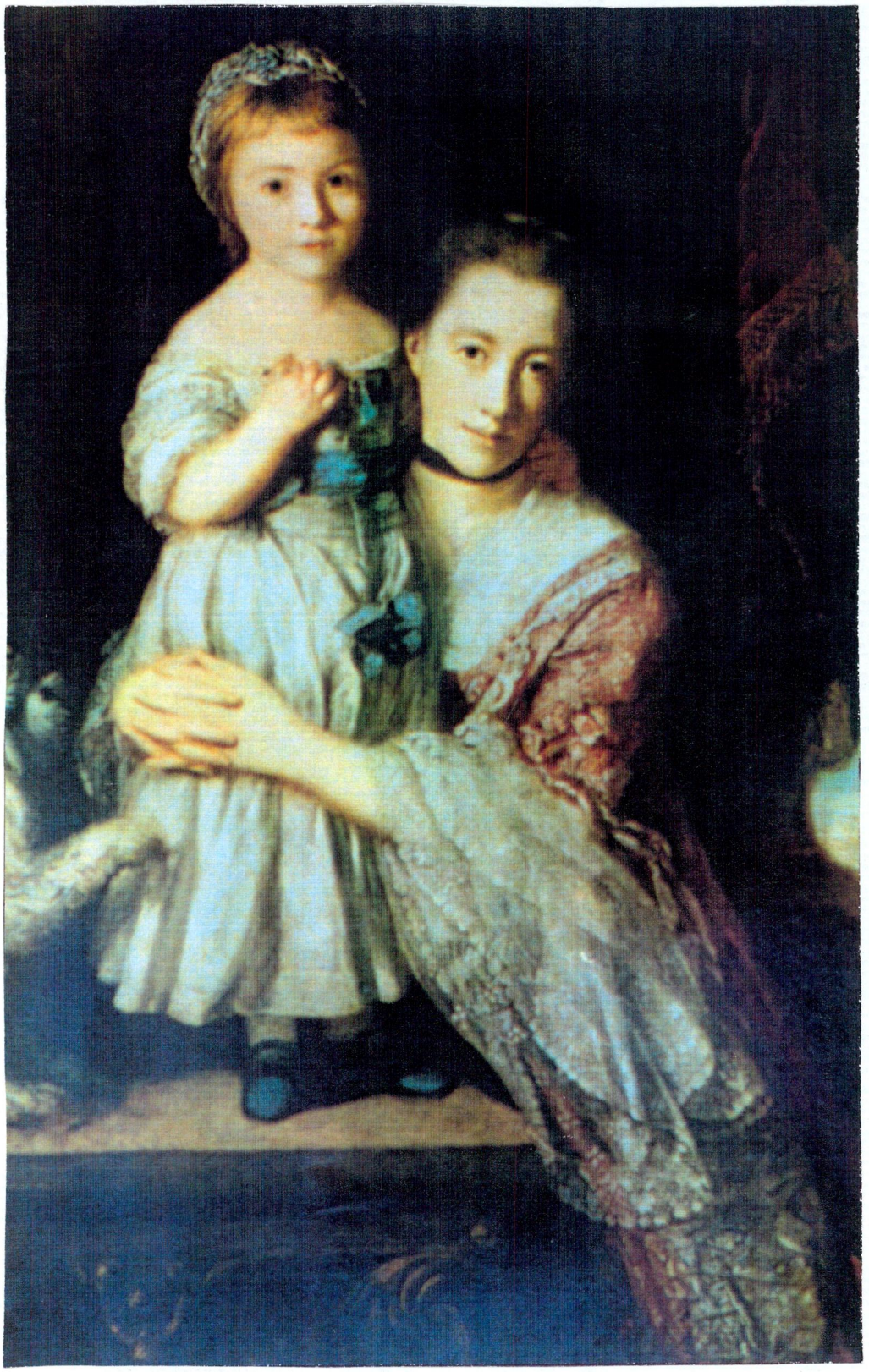

Fig. 7

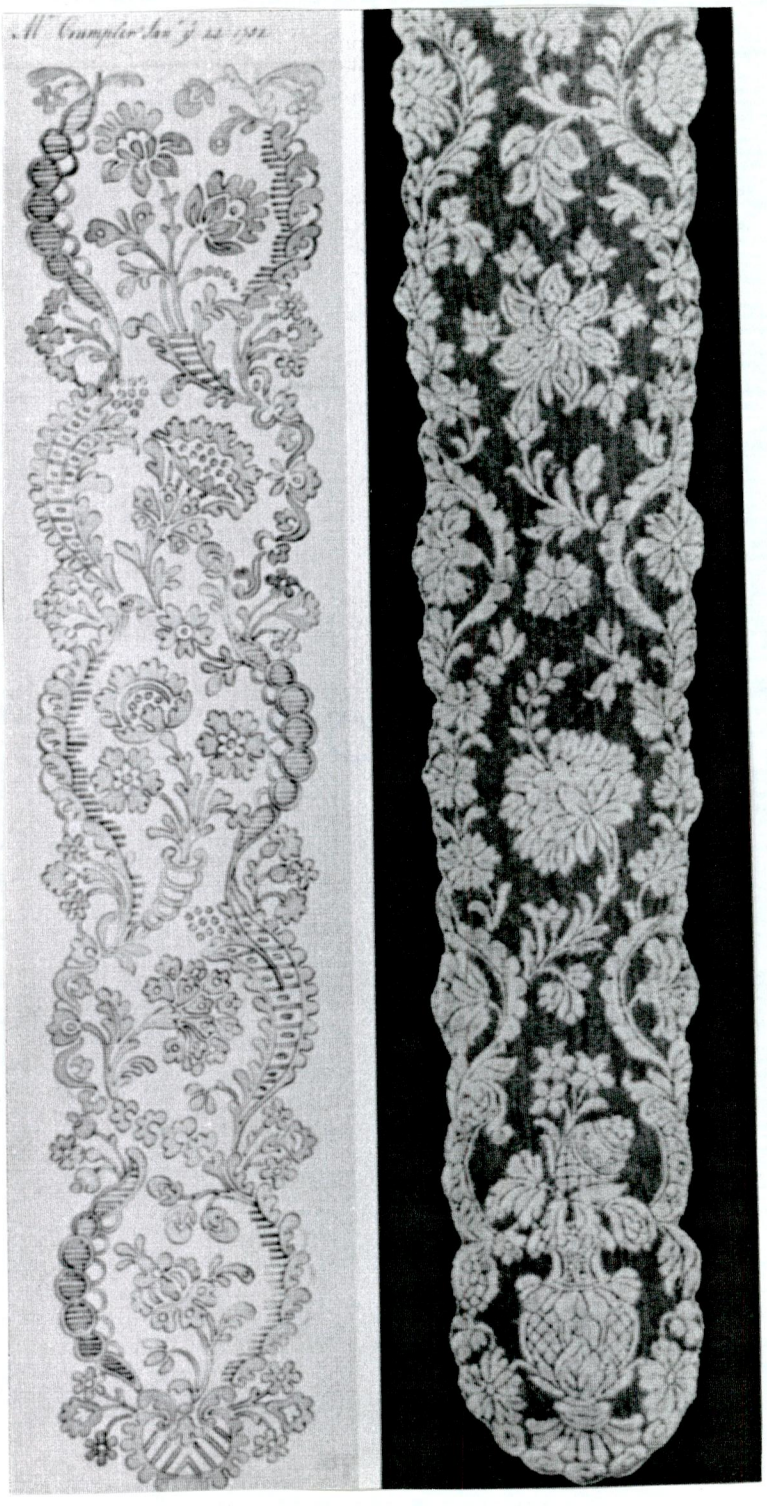

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

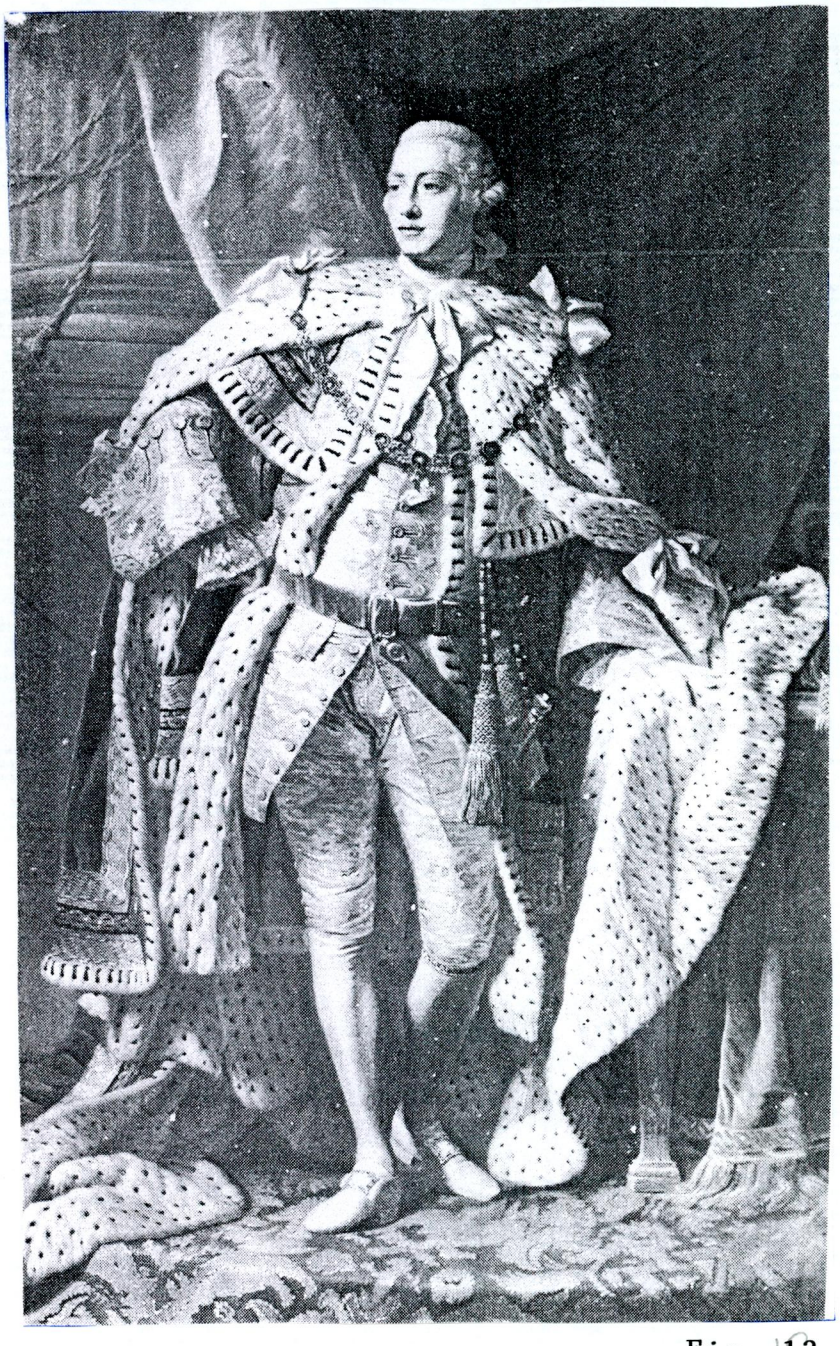

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Chapter 2

Gainsborough's depiction of women's costume worn by the upper class in the closing years of the eighteenth century.

It is certain that all odd scratches and marks, which even to examination, are so observable in Gainsborough's pictures, and which even to experienced painters appear rather the effect of accident, that design this chaos, this uncouth and shapeless appearance....' (9 p.13)

Reynolds continued to write that Gainsborough's paintings **'by a kind of magic, at a certain distance assumes form, and all the parts seem to drop into their proper places'** (9 p13). Obviously he studied Gainsborough's style of painting with great intrigue and fascination, which was of such envy to his rivals, including Reynolds. But unlike Reynolds, Gainsborough had little awe for the Grand Manner and its form of painting since his heart lay in what was then considered the lesser genre of landscape painting.

His lifetime spanned an age of profound change in British painting and in the public's attitude towards British artists. Yet he did not care much for the public's or clients' impressions of what was expected of a portrait. He once said,

Now damn Gentlemen, there is not such a set of enemies to a real artist.... that they reward your merit by their company and notice.... they have one part worth looking at, and that is their purse. (9 p.16)

Gainsborough however, did not have a reputation as the brazen and impudent character, which is portrayed in that quotation. On the contrary, he was liked by everybody and remembered as a person of feeling and impulse. Although essentially modest and unpretentious, clearly he was an intuitive genius.

Gainsborough appears to have been easily excitable, highly strung eccentric person, when Reynolds tells how his rival had a habait of continually remarking to those who happened

to be around him,

> **whatever peculiarity of countenance, whatever combination of figures, or happy effects of light and shadow..... he neglected nothing which could keep his faculties in exercise.** (9 p.13)

He was obviously a man who observed everything going on around him with great fascination. Therefore, he must have had a vast amount of subjects and sources that would have been suitable for the compostion of his portraits and landscapes. It is no wonder that Gainsborough's paintings brought about a new dimention in the art of portraiture.

Gainsborough probably had a far greater knowledge of his profession than any other painter of that time. The soundness of his technique of painting and varnishing is reflected in the good condition of his pictures, except those damaged by the ignorance of restorers throughout the centuries, which still remain in their original state today. Gainsborough knew exactly what impression he wanted to achieve through his portraits, his style of painting reflected his own ideology of how a painting should be interpreted, since he once wrote to a client in Colchester;

> **You please me by saying that no other fault is found in your picture than the roughness of the surface...being of use in giving force to the effect at a proper distance, and what a judge of painting knows an original from a copy by, in short being the touch of the pencil, which is harder to preserve than smoothness.** (10 p.37)

Like Reynolds, Gainborough was exceptionally fortunate to have been born when he was, since ten years or so earlier surely he would have been dispirited by the outworn traditions regarding English portraiture. Even though both men grew up in the same period, the similarities of their work remain few.

Gainsborough was a man of great spontaneity and impulse, whereas Reynolds was a man of reason and calculation. He often wondered at Reynolds' equal application whereas he himself was often irregular in his work, sometimes not working for three or four weeks at a time but then for a month with great diligence. **I wish you would recollect,** he once wrote to a patron who was ' damnably out of humour about his picture not being finished,'

> **that painting and punctuality mix like oil and vinegar, and that genius and regularity are utter and must be to the end of time.** (9 p.14).

Yet, Gainsborough's paintings were worth the long wait, since the result of his labour always caused great interest and admiration.

One of the first full length portraits he painted after his move from Ipswich to Bath in 1759, was of Ann Ford, later known as Mrs Philip Thicknesse which is at present in the Cincinnati Art Museum. Fig. 15. Nothing in his Ipswich style resembles the grandeur, originality of pose and sheer beauty of brushwork that is evident in this painting. Strangely it was as though Gainsborough's imagination had suddenly found the impetus it needed amongst the metropolitan clientele and gaiety of Bath society. With the unveiling of this portrait he was no longer classified as a charming petit maitre, and soon achieved recognition as a painter of the highest rank.

This painting of Ann Ford must have been of enormous importance to Gainsbourough since it would, being his first executed large scale canvas, establish his reputation as a portrait painter in his new home town. Therefore, it is no wonder that he turned for inspiration to the work of Van Dyck, who was the principal painter of Charles I the previous century. In many ways both painters were alike, not only in their painting technique but also in character. They seemed to thrive on

similar personal qulaities since Van Dyck was also **'coupled with an eye for nature in various forms that was always keen, and a poetic feeling inherent in his character.'** (8 p.95)

It is evident from Anna Ford's portrait that she was a musician and played both the viola de gamba and the cittern, which is placed under her arm. During the year this portrait was painted she gave a series of recitals in London and two years later she married Gainsborough's early patron and good friend, the brilliant but spiteful, vain and quarrelsome Philip Thicknesse in 1762. Regarding the painting, the most striking feature is the splendour of her dress and her adamant bold pose. The remarkable serpentine twist of Ann Ford's pose emphasises the flow of her dress with great effect.

This highly original work is positively Rococo in concept but Gainsborough's brilliance of interpretation clashes with the classical dignity of Reynolds portraits. Therefore, it caused some disturbance and many people had the same opinion as Mrs Delany when she wrote that the painting was of **'a most extraordinary figure, handsome and bold; but I should be very sorry to have any one I loved set forth in such a manner.'** (9 p.108)

Likeness was Gainsborough's **'principal beauty and intention of a portrait'** as he said himself. (10 p.18) Above everything else he wanted a physical and personal portrayal of the sitter which he believed was not possible if Reynolds view was adhered to, which stated if a portrait was to retain a timeless quality, then the costume should not be painted in the fashion of the day . Instead, the sitter should wear a costume in the manner of the antiquee or else something sufficiently generalized, so there was no possibility of the picture taking on the appearance of last years fashions. Because of Gainsborough's rejection of this theory, it is assumed that Ann Ford's dress was highly fashionable during the 1760s.

This portrait depicts her in a sack dress similar to that of Countess Spencer's in the previous chapter, (p.6). At that time it was popular to wear the skirt of the dress as an important decorative feature. Miss Ford's gown is clearly shown in this painting, thus it is possible to discuss the elaborate ornamentation used thorughout the dress. The petticoat is by far the largest adorned surface area but rather than crowding it with abundant ribbons and bows, instead it is subtly covered with decorations made in the same fabric as the dress as seen in Fig. 16

Great creativity was used to enhance the splendour of Miss Ford's costume. Magnificent swirls of furbelows whirling up and around the petticoat cause a delicate three-dimensional effect. It is interesting to note that there is a gathered flounce along the bottom of this petticoat which gives the impression of another layer underneath. This same layering technique is also visible on Madame de Pompadour's dress, painted by F. Boucher in 1759 and can be seen in the Wallace Collection, London. Fig. 17

However, it was typical of the French to exaggerate such details with great flare and the English comparison was indeed a poor substitute because of their approach that **'common sense and morality ought to be reflected in one's dress.'** (13 p.22) Yet, this portrait by Boucher was finished only a year before Miss Ford's was completed so, this form of ornamentation was probably still in its transitional stage.

The costume in this painting is made of beautiful beige satin which was a typically sombre colour worn at that time. However, as materials grew plainer, trimmings increased in importance, usually causing the effect of a collage with an abundance of beads, flowers, ribbons and feathers. This elaborate décor was applied to the stomacher, which was triangular in shape and fitted into the V shaped gap left between the bodice

edges. Fig. 8. The pointed end of the stomacher was either abrupt, rounded or scalloped. Unfortunately, Miss Ford's cittern covers her stomacher but the square neckline or decolletage is clearly visible, showing the delicacy of the robing running down her shoulder. Fig. 19

Women of unquestionable virtue kept their modesty and warmth by wearing a lace edged handkerchief, referred to as a neckerchief or just kerchief, around their decolletage. This is worn by the lady in Hogarth's painting of David Garrik and his wife which was completed in 1757 and is part of the Royal Collection. Fig. 20. The kerchief was shaped in a diagonal folded square of muslin or linen which was draped around the neck and secured with a knot under or over the stomacher. Although the size of the kerchief remained very much the same throughout the century, it was the lace borders that changed according to new fashions.

Miss Ford's kerchief is strictly influenced by the fashions of the mid eighteenth century. With the approach of the 1760s, plain mesh grounds became increasingly fashionable since muslin was abundantly used to create fullness on the upper section of sleeve ruffles above lace borders, and again for the drape and width of women's kerchief. Fig. 20. For many people, the popularity of plain mesh muslin and linen enabled them to participate in fashionable attire, since lace was a luxury on account of its expense and extravagance.

Extensively used, especially by the nobility throughout that period, lace on women's ruffles and kerchiefs became accessible in all classes of society. Although craftsmanship varied according to the cost and quality of the lace, usually the lace's characteristics were imitated with great care and precision. fig.20a. The lace details on Miss Ford's costume were painted in a suggestive, rather than a descriptive manner, which was typical of Gainsborough's brush technique. Yet, the impression

of laces delicate and transparent nature is understood because of his indeterminate, hatching brush strokes.

The eighteenth century was a period of continual enmity between France and England, therefore the demand for Flemish lace was enormous. Thus English portraits more commonly depict its bobbin lace than France's prestigious needle laces. For this reason Miss Ford's decorative borders were probably made by the bobbin lace technique, which consisted of threads wound onto small bobbins and a parchment that was patterened with pins to quide the lace maker. The principle behind this lace technique was to join together a number of threads, resembling the warp on a piece of woven material by twisting or overlapping them with each other. A distinctive feature of bobbin lace, which was popular with both men and women, was the intricate designs of plumply rounded flowers curving from leafy sprays. Fig. 21. Regrettably the patterns on Miss Ford's lace are indistinct, but Gainsborough's haphazard brushstrokes indicate a wisp of movement isolated among sprinkled dots, similar to the lace in fig. 22.

Gainsborough was severely restricted in his work by the canons and the requirements of the patrons who accounted for his livelihood. Professor Waterhouse called that moment in time **'the most drab in the history of English painting'** and yet it was this artist's talent that shone through the rules and regulations set by the academy regarding the art of portraiture. (10 p. 29)

Portraits were required for their likeness, not only of people but also dogs and even horses. Towards the end of the century it was still considered de rigeur for artists to collect Old Masters, even though Hogarth had been acquiring paintings years before Reynolds or Gainsborough. But one particular painting of Gainsborough's, which was inspired by the work of Van Dyck, and is possitively among his finest

works.

The portrait of The Honourable Mrs Thomas Graham, painted in 1777, can be seen in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. Fig. 23. Though Gainsborough studied the work of his contemporaries as well as the great masters of the past, during that time he learnt from them, '**not slavishly, but to nourish and enrich his own painting... into a highly individual style**'(10 p. 41). The qualities evident in Van Dyck's portraits emerge yet again in the painting of Mrs Graham. This latter artist's majestic and exquisite beauty of handling was the foundation for Gainsborough's style of portraiture. Yet,he '**transformed Van Dyck's manner into his own pictorial language.**' (1 p.225).

The slight but dignified turn of Mrs Graham's head captures the pride of a beautiful nineteen year old, who was painted soon after her marriage to Thomas Graham, The mighty plinth would appear too powerful in competition with Mrs Gramham, yet her regal pose and magnificent attire match and excel the enormous granite column she leans against. Gainsborough's new concept of portraiture involved placing the sitter among the landscape in a natural manner by standing or strolling them in their surroundings. His backgrounds were always less formalized than Reynolds' paintings, but in his later works they ceased to be merely backgrounds, and instead became a part of the painting in which the sitters breathed and moved. The atmosphere of this portrait revolves around the majestic arrangement of Mrs Gramham's pose within the landscape.

Such a dramatic dress enhances the aura and dignity surrounding her. Obviously the magnificence of the costume reflects the grandeur and sophistication Mrs Graham was accustomed to, since an outfit like this was usually worn to a masquerade ball. Horace Walpole, an influential member of

Court, noted that **'there were qualities of pretty Vandykes and all kinds of old pictures walked out of their frame'**, at one particular masquerade held at Vauxhall in 1770. (18 p.184). However, this form of dress, which began as an English fad during the eighteenth century, soon became subdued in the generalized romantic flare for costume, although many of the essential features still remained.

This particular dress Mrs Graham wears in Gainsborough's painting was one of the most influential informal habits de fantaise, which was known as the polonaise. It evolved from the paintings of previous artists such as Rubens and Van Dyck. Popular details, such as starched lace decolletage and tapered sleeves, of the previous century merged with the fashions of the day. The polonaise was **'English in inspiration but French in interpretation.'** (24 p.31). Though Mrs Graham depicts the elegant and gracefulness associated with the 1770s, this costume was immensely popular throughout Europe rather than in England between 1770 and 1790.

The distinctive feature of the polonaise was the overskirt hitched up into three separate drapes. Usually the central drape at the back was longer than those on the sides, but this depended on the choice of the wearer. Mrs Graham's skirt is hitched in the mentioned form, with the back drape just in view, falling to the hem of her petticoat. The effect of ruched volumes of fabric was achieved by attaching loops in the inside seams and running core threads through these loops which in turn were pulled up to the back waist. Buttons and loops or ribbon ties were linked together, separating the drapes from each other. Fig. 24. Yet, Mrs Graham's overskirt appears to be attached to the bodice, since the gathers of her skirt can be clearly seen at her waist and again the seam gathering the drape disappears under her arm, rather than travelling around to the centre- back. Fig. 24a.

The petticoat usually worn with the polonaise had deep

flounces around the hem and quilting surrounded the revealed surface area of the fabric. But the costume in Gainsborough's painting differs in the treatment of the petticoat. Instead, the luscious crimson silk is ruched or puckered, creating a magnificient surface texture in contrast with the smooth, lustre satin overskirt.

Another distingusihing feature of this costume is the cut of the bodice which was made rather like a corset. All the seams were reinforced with whalebone and the front curved downwards into a point below the centre of the waist. This tapering at the waist, in contrast with the bellowing gathers of the skirt, caused the impression of an hour-glass shape with a thin waist and hige hips. Robings disappeared from the bodice front since a fastening of buttons, hooks and eyes or laces tied the bodice edges together. Strangely there is not an opening in the centre of Mrs Graham's gown since the shine of the tough satin across her decolletage is unbroken.

The three-quarter length sleeves are frilled, but unlike the triple ruffles of previous costumes, Mrs Graham's are tight and narrow to the wrist. Typical of Van Dyck costume was the fabulous, ornate lace collar. The raised spikey lace is one characteristic that is similar to Maria Luigia de Tassia's costume, which was painted by Van Dyck and hangs in the Prince of Liechtenstein's private art collection. Fig. 25. Similarities between the two women's costumes are unquestionable, such as the string of pearls hanging in precisely the same style with a jewel attached to their decolletage.

Surely this indicates that Gainsborough valued the elegance and delicacy of other artist's paintings because they included the '**assurance, sophistication and exquisite beauty of handling** (which) **were the touchstone for Gainsborough's nature style of portraiture.**' (9 p.39) Unmistakably, the motif of Mrs Graham's hand fingering the pale pink satin folds of

her skirt and the effortless drooping right hand holding the feather derives from **'the Van Dyck manner.'** (1 p.225). However, Gainborough introduces warmth and emotion into his portrait, the result achieving the personal depiction of youthful feminine beauty and grace unsurpassed by any other artist of the eighteenth century.

Fig. 15

Fg 16

Fig. 17

Fig 19

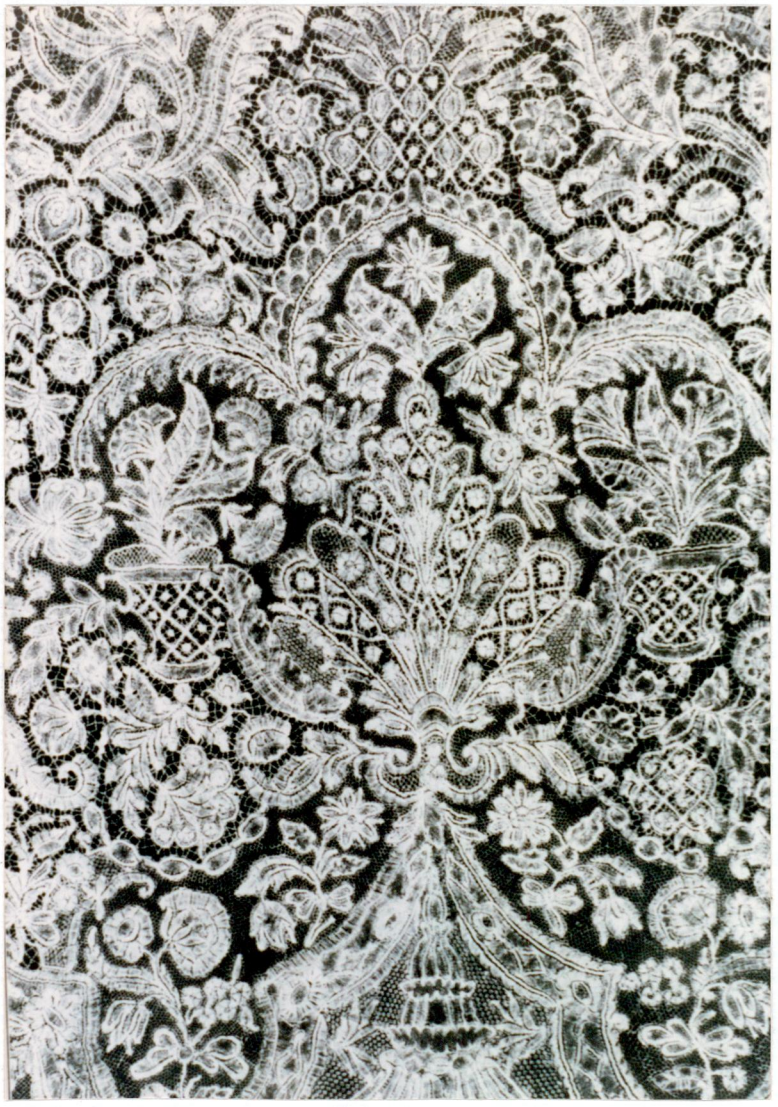

Fig. 21

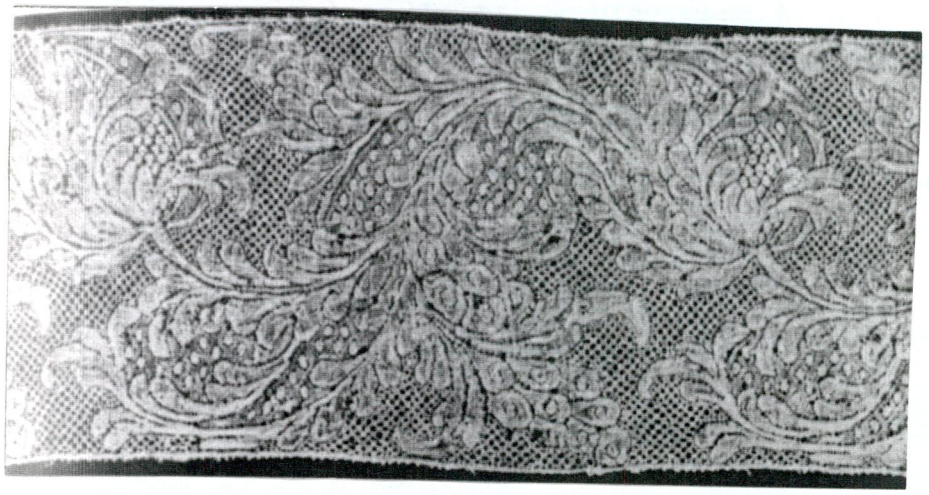

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

Fig. 24a

Fig. 24

Chapter 3

Hogarth's portrayal of clothing worn as every day attire, in men's, women's and children's costumes.

William Hogarth was in a different class of portrait painting from Reynolds and Gainsborough, because he was born a quarter of a century before these artists when the conception of English portraiture began to be recogniszed as an art form at home and abroad. Being the predecessor of the two latter artists, Hogarth announced the need for artistic liberation in English painting, which led the way forward for other contemporary artists.

It is true to say Hogarth was in a league of his own. After all, he was the founder of morality painting, that dealt with everyday subjects whihc told compelling stories making people laugh and cry. He understood what his countrymen regarded as a picture and so deliberately created this new type of painting with their specifications in mind. Hogarth realised that art must have a purpose in order to impress the public.

Ingeniously he took the popularised conversation piece style of painting and evolved it a stage further by introducing a story line that taught the viewer the rewards of virtue and the wages of sin.

> **Hogarth developed a new kind of portrait group that is quite consciously neither portrait nor genre, nor history painting but partakes of all three.** (15 p.20).

It was this merging of different approaches to painting that caused the attraction of his work by people in all classes of society. Hogarth compared his style of painting to the art of the playwright since his sitters or characters performed an act through gestures rather than words. He produced characters of each figure in a picture, either by the expression on their faces, through their costume or by their behaviour. The stories were always evidently clear, whether teaching lessons of the ill fate of alcohol or the perils of gambling or the evils of promiscuity.

A painting by a contemorary artist of his time could have inspired Hogarth's fascination for the conversation piece come landscape come portraiture. Antoine Watteau's painting Le Bal Champetre, painted in the 1720s and seen in the Dulwich College Picture Gallery, shows various people in historical costume and fashionable dress mingling in a setting that appears more like a stage than a landscape. Fig. 26. Hogarth had the opportunity to study this painting among other Old Masters because of the rise in popularity of collecting and exhibiting masterpieces and contempory work. Hogarth himself established and promoted an exhibition gallery at the Foundling Hospital which was a **'fashionable meeting place'**, that also provided **'advertisement for contemporary painters.'** (9 p.34)

Hogarth's series paintings require great examination and inspection. At first, the overall appearance of the sitters is apparent, however with continual exploration other intricacies are discovered. Henceforth this leads to the integration within the other paintings and further interpretations of the previous paintings. He elaborated his intentions of using such subject matter when he wrote:

> **Subjects I considered as writers do, my picture was my stage and men and women my actors who were by means of actions and expressions to exhibit a dumb stew.**(3 p.1)

An example of Hogarth's unique form of painting is Marriage a la Mode, which was painted in the early 1740s and exhibited at the National Gallery, London. Fig. 27 All six paintings of the series tell a complete anecdote yet each picture could be viewed as an individual work. Even Hogarth was prepared to sell the paintings separately at one time, for he believed in **'each picture being an entire subject of itself.'** (3 p. 14). All six pictures were, like all his works, painted with exact care and amazing detail. Therefore they must be regarded as independent easel paintings in their own right.

Every subject, no matter how minute, is executed with painstaking accuracy, clearly indicating Hogarth's passion and esteem for each painting.

Marriage a la Mode was Hogarth's most ambitious attempt to bring his art to the attention fo the connoisseurs. Before putting brush to paint he visited Paris in order to view French painting at first hand so he could adapt the latest possible opinion on art into his own work, therefore making these pictures acceptable as magnificent pieces of work to be hung in aristocratic homes. As society was becoming more cosmopolitan, the gentry adorned their houses with elegant furniture and magnificent paintings in their **'pursuite of cultural refinement.'** (13 p.40)

In this series of paintings, Hogarth incorporated two themes of questionable virtue into this popular series, the first being the struggle between the values of money and blood. this is represented by the marriage of the wealthy merchant's daughter to the son of the money orientated aristocrat; and secondly the theme of a recurrence of the past emerging from one generation and continuing in the next because of the older generations sinful behaviour.

The second painting of this series called Tete a Tete is the most informative of all the pictures, since it depicts just the husband and wife together it is possible to analyse their relationship without the interference of lovers, fathers, lawyers and such, as seen in the first painting of the series, The Marriage Settlement. fig. 28. But perhaps what is more interesting is relationship through their state of dress. Hogarth creatively depicts their costume as an important feature of the painting which provides evidence of the couples infidelity. Even though he painted the lavish, splendid fashionable attire of the eighteenth century and the stylish lifestyle of those with wealth, he skilfully suggests the ugliness and dullness of their high-life.

At every opportunity Hogarth provides undertones of corruption and morally depraved actions either by the indication of an object or by the reactions of the character. Lady Squanderfield, the wife, clearly portrays the attitude of a loose woman, not only by her pose but also in the choice of her dress. Fig. 29 Obviously a lady of such status and high society would not appear so relaxed with her legs outstretched and knees apart, especially before her husband and servants. It was unusual for women to disregard their lessons of correct deportment when it was only the lower class that could appear in public in such a state. But similar to Hogarth's attitude on painting, all does not appear as it first seems; for example, at first sight it looks as if Lady Squanderfield is just stretching and awakening from her lazy morning. But the sideways glance at her husband insinuates her amused or perhaps contemptuous feelings towards him.

The costume worn by Lady Squanderfield was usually restricted to the bedroom and only worn as a garment of leisure. Instead of spending the entire day in a tightly fitted sack or mantua with yards of fabric and hoops or paniers, another form of costume replaced this enabling a few hours of freedom. '**Polite society did not require her to be dressed until two-thirty or three in the afternoon**'(12 p. 22) and since it has only gone twelve on the clock over the Viscount's head, Lady Squanderfield has plenty of time to change into her day dress. Hogarth obviously discovered the pet-en-l'air jacket worn by women in France while on his visit to Paris since this costume was introduced to English society between 1745 and 1770, some three or four years before it became customary for English women.

The pet-en-l'air was basically a jacket that was fitted to the waist and flared out at the hips. But not only did it stop in length above the knee but also kept the sack-back feature of the sack gown. This detail can clearly be seen in Hogarth's painting. Fig.29. The sackback is visible under

Lady Squanderfield's raised arm and tumbles down until it reappears just below the tablecloth. Because Hogarth painted with such clarity it is possible to note that a double border in the same fabric suffices as robing and this feature is used again on the jacket's sleeve.

The stomacher was usually worn with such a gown, as in this instance, but instead of the decoration of bows and frills her stomacher is plainly laced with cords and further decorated with one blue bow. The pale golden hue of Lady Squanderfield's jacket contrasts beautifully with her soft pink underskirt. Although the colours are not as rich and textured compared to Reynolds' and Gainborough's portraits in the previous chapters, p. 4 and p. 17 respectively.

Lady Squanderfield is wearing a popular cap of the 1730s called a mob cap. This style of headwear was shaped similarly to a bonnet which curved round the face with lappets hanging from both sides. fig. 30. These lappets were either pinned in folds on top of the head or, as in the painting, tied under the chin. The white edging emerging from her decolletage is the frill of the linen chemise which was worn under the gown. Disappointingly there is no lace decoration on Lady Squanderfield's costume, not even on her sleeve ruffles which were made of muslin or fine linen, like her headwear. Since this costume was only worn during the mornings, the lack of ornamentation was probably usual because such a dress was not worn before company.

Another cap is barely visible in this painting, but Hogarth purposely positions the lap dog on the foot stool pointing at the cloth falling out of the Viscount's pocket. Fig. 31. In the mid eighteenth century, it was usual to distingusih an unmarried woman by decorating her bonnet with a blue ribbon whereas a married woman like Lady Squanderfield did without. Hogarth obviously wanted to question the unfaithful actions of

her husband, but ther are many clues and indications concerning his whereabouts that previous night. The bowed cap is an emblem of his infidelity and the Viscount's downcast attitude in association with his graceless recline produces the appearance of a drunkard. Also his fashionable dishevelled costume, particularly both stockings falling down from under his breeches once again signifies intoxication. Even though the Viscount's clothes are in such an unorderly fashion, it is still apparent that his suit shows his wealth and grandeur.

Like all suits of the eighteenth century, a coat, waistcoat and breeches consisted of the attire worn by men of all classes. However, the Viscount is wearing the height of fashion, with his co-ordinating coat edged with gold embroidery and breeches in black velvet and waistcoat entirely embroidered on golden fabric. In 1753 Mrs Delany noticed the Duke of Portland at Court and admired his outfit of '**dark, mouse-coloured velvet, embroidered the same as the coat.**' (17 p.91) Hogarth's painting includes such minute details as the pocket on the viscount's breeches, each edged with three gold buttons. A man of wealth could afford to indulge in elaborate trimmings which proved his status in English society. However, Lord Chesterfield, an important and wealthy figure of that time, believed that such adornment had it's time and place.

> **A man of sense... dresses as well, and in the same manner as the people of sense and fashion of the place where he is...Dress yourself fine where others are fine, and plain where others are plain.** (2 p. 25)

The white linen chemise should be hidden under his partly closed waistcoat and so only reveal his steinkirk tied in a twisted knot and drawn through a chemise button hole to hold it in place. The gold embroidery on the coat is repeated on the Viscount's three-cornered hat, a style which was very popular in the 1750s. The brim was turned up on three sides to

form the shape of a triangle, and shapes varied according to the cocked brim. It was noted in the London Chronicle in 1762 that '**some have their hats open before like a church spout** (which was only popular among the lower class)**...some wear them rather sharp, like the nose of a greyhound.**' (17 p. 96) The Viscount declares his disregard for his wife by refusing to remove his hat in her presence, yet another sign by Hogarth that the marriage has broken down before it had time to be established.

Another painting by Hogarth, without the imagery and moral reflections of the latter series is The Mackinnon Children, completed in 1742 and on show in the National Gallery of Ireland. Fig. 31. Similar to the style of composition and execution of Reynolds and Gainsborough, Hogarth depicts the children with great thought and deliberation. Although the surroundings of this portraiat are in principal stage-like in arrangement with foliage in the foreground and an architectural backdrop behind, Hogart lets the brother and sister, William and Elizabeth, create their own scene, that of being children interacting together. Here the artist displays his talent for capturing the essence of childhood through the gestures and expressions of the two sitters.

Throughout the eighteenth century, girls of Elizabeth's age, which was seventeen, were expected to wear dresses '**which resembled women's in their proportions, fabric and trimmings**' (19 p. 31). Unfortunately this also included suffering '**just as did their mothers to attain a wand-like smallness of waist.**' (6 p.130). This was achieved by wearing stays which were sometimes boned but more often corded or quilted to achieve the correct deportment, that was so important in that society.

Elizabeth obviously had not quite reached the age of maturity when she would wear a sack or mantua gown; instead she is wearing an ensemble featuring a bodice and underskirt of

the same fabric and an apron. England was recognized as a nation who encouraged a **'free and easy manner in which the bodies of children of the present generation have been formed.'** (18 p. 160). Yet, Elizabeth's bodice is evidently tightly fitted around the waist, which emphasises the fullness of her skirt. Fig. 32.

The surface decoration of this costume is relatively minimal, unlike the extravagant decor worn by Miss Ford in the ~~first~~ second chapter. p.17 . Lace stomachers were very popular with young girls during the 1740s since another painting by Hogarth, The Graham Children, painted in 1742 and at present in the Tate Gallery, London, again depicts growing girls wearing stomachers similar to Elizabeth's. Fig. 33.

However, lace details appear to be used only as trimming borders along the edge of her stomacher and apron. Hogarth's tentative brush work captures the swirling motion of the lace design featured on the apron's borders. The elegant motif of a curved leaf flows along the scalloped hem of the lace, but regrettably the precise details of the lace is lost in the fall of the fabric as Elizabeth sits in her chair. Yet, such motifs were commonly produced in Belgium, fig. 34, and in the 1760s the demand for Flemish laces **'remained so overwhelming that the needle laces of France were forced to copy them.'** (7 p. 65).

The scalloped feature on the aprons lace borders reappears on Elizabeth's sleeves. Clearly the gathered frill of the chemise sleeve is plainer than the elaborate ornamentation as seen on women's attire, at that time. In order to achieve the illusion of layered ruffles on the bodices' sleeves, two rows of lace borders are sewn on the sleeve's hem to create a flounced effect. Again, the decolletage is beautifully trimmed with frilled lace which continues around the shoulder and neck.

Hogarth payed particular attention to the portrayal of Elizabeth as a young woman. The delicate arrangement of the

yellow buttercups and pink rose attached to her mob cap replaces the blue ribbon usually worn by single women. Also the fragile periwinkle and mussel shells gathered in her apron's folds reminds us of her youthful playfulness and innoncence. Her brother William is also depicted as a young man, wearing the attire of a gentleman and holding a book in his hand. However, he obviously has more interest in the butterfly perched on the sunflower's head. Fig. 35.

Such a grand outfit was tailored similar to a man's which included a coat, waistcoat and breeches. Commonly, during the 1740s, suits were cut from the same fabric with the waistcoat made in a contrasting colour. William's coat and breeches are plainly made of brown woolen yarn with no decorative details adorning either garment. However, the waistcoat, in green fabric, is trimmed with bands of silver threaded embroidery along the hem, buttoned edge and pocket flaps. Similar to fig. 36, both boys are featured in identical suits, although the Graham boy's waistcoat is not decorated at all.

The magnificent tall sunflower positioned between Elizabeth and William represents **'an emblem of devotion.'** (16 p. 69). Whether this devotion expresses the joys of childhood or the love of a brother and sister, is left unanswered by Hogarth.

Fig. 26

Fig. 27

Fig. 28

Fig 29

Fig. 30

Chapter 4

The clothing of Irish fashionable society, as seen in Latham's and Hussey's paintings, in relation to the style of costume popular in England throughout the eighteenth century.

While the English contined to enjoy a life of immense extravagance and splendour, the Irish were under British rule. But by the early eighteenth contury colonization was complete and the forming of a separate parliament in Dublin established the city as the second largest of importance in the British Isles. Of course this increased the wealth and industry within the country and therefore set higher material and commercial standards of Irish life. Because of the economic growth of the country more people could afford to dress 'en mode' but generally it was the English and descendants of those who came to Ireland the previous century who frequented the court in Dublin.

Although this court was not as spectacular in dress and grandeur as other European capitals,

Irish courtiers knew the written code in which quality fabric in the current season's design and in the current degree of richness, indicated a family's wealth, breeding and fashion awareness. (5 p. 92)

With the daily shipping of material goods between England and Ireland fashionable trends never escaped the Irish eye. However there is a distinctive difference in the styles of dress worn by the Irish which were regarded as high fashion. Obviously it was through the interpretation of English costume that many of the features of court dress were adapted according to Irish taste. Most people of high society frequently boasted that their dress and social habits were similar to, if not better than, those of the continent. It was often said at court that Dublin **'was as brilliant and polished as that of Paris in its best days.'** (5 p. 92).

The majority of references concerning Irish costume of the eighteenth century are in the form of paintings and drawings rather than literal descriptions. However, there was scarely any painting in Ireland until the closing years of the seventeenth

century, mainly due to the fact that the country was in such political turmoil in the preceding centuries. Much of the painting attributed to Irish artists of those following years has been compared to the English school of that same time. One artist in particular, who was a successful portrait painter in Ireland during the eighteenth century, was James Latham.

Unfortunately ther is not an extensive record of this artist's life, like many of his contemporaries, because there was a lack of interest in Irish visual arts since those who could afford a portrait were usually of English heritage. Latham studied at the Guild of St. Luke's School in Antwerp between 1724 and 25, which probably is the principal cause of his **'distinctive stylistic manner'** that differs from other Irish artists such as Philip Hussey. (22 p. 5). One of Lathan's many fine portraits is that of Sarah and Pole Cosby which was painted in the late 1740s and is at present owned by a private collector. Fig. 37. This painting not only depicts the style of dress worn by the upper class in Ireland but also captures the grace and panache associated with both male and female attire.

Similar to London and Paris, women in Dublin wore the mantua for formal and special occasions but the Irish woman's most favourable gown worn as informal attire in the home was the closed robe, as seen worn by Sarah Cosby. Fig.38. Upon viewing the painting, it is evident why such a dress was known by this name. The bodice of Sarah's gown is elegantly fastened down edge to edge in the front with four encrusted gold clasps.

Like all variations of dress at that time, the tailored look predominated in all outfits with emphasis on a close fitted bodice and small waiste which contrasted with the fullness of the skirt. A distinctive feature of the bodice of a closed robe was the cut of the deep, rounded decolletage which is echoed by the deep V shaped front that ends below the stomach. Incredibly

such a dress was worn so tight that it is possible to notice the tautness of the fabric skilfully painted by Latham. Fig.

In the past, this artist's style of painting includes **'heavy eyes and confident crisp depiction of drapery,'** (22 p. 5) which has been questionably attributed to William Hogarth. Latham also painted, like Hogarth, with great accuracy and sensitivity, hence it is possible to count the three folds in the sleeve-head of Sarah Cosby's dress.

The magnificient green satin fabric reflects the light as it falls and folds around her body. Even though the cascading sackback of Countess Spencer's dress, as painted by Reynolds is not a feature of the closed robe, Latham substituted this with a wrapped stole made of deep olive green satin elegantly falling away from Sarah's shoulder. Like many of the English artists, Lathams **'splendid realist portraits are painted with a real feeling for paint, colour and texture.'**(4. p.14)

The separate skirt again intensifies the luxurious composition of the fabric. The movement of the gathers around the waist captures Latham's bravura handling of paint. Another painting that depicts the costume of the upper class in eighteenth century Ireland is Bishop Robert and his wife Katherine, painted in the 1730s and is exhibited in the National Gallery of Ireland. Fig.39. This portrait features a closed robe worn by Katherine which is similar in style to that of Sarah Cosby's. Both women's costumes are fastened down the front with jewel clasps and also the bodice sleeves are ruched and held in place with a clasp, revealing the linen chemise sleeve worn underneath.

It is true to state that **'court dress was distinguished by the quality and expense of the fabric than by the cut and style.'** (5, p. 92). Yet women wore such stylish costume **'because of the prestige associated with making such expensive and ornate gowns** (by) **dressmakers who started to compete with tailors in making ladies gowns.'** (5, p. 104)

Obviously the matua-makers skill of pattern construction was of a high standard in order to compete with established tailors, therefore such gowns as Sarah cosby's were made with equal professionalism as men's attire.

An important feature of these closed robes was the under-garment which was used as a decorative feature on the bodice. Women's linen chemise frills soften the decolletage edge and also serve as sleeve ruffles which were very popular in England towards the mid-eighteenth century. However, unlike their counterparts, Irish women did not exaggerate sleeve fullness with triple lace tiers flowing behind their arms. One cause of the lack of lace used as decoration on women's gowns was the result of too few lace manufactures in Ireland.

Unfortunately lace making was never established on a grand scale in Ireland at that period. The first Irish lace is dated from the 1820s when Carrickmacross lace was very popular. But it was not until 1829, over half a century later, that an Englishman named Charles Walker, established the first professional lace industry in Limerick, hence the name Limerick Lace. Fig. 40 . But before then lace was imported from Brussels, Bruges and Paris via England. However because of the expensive custom taxes on imported materials, smuggling was a booming trade. Often a smuggler carrying **'laces, linen and cambrics... who was stripped of his under garments ... appeared like the mummy of an Egyptian King.'** (18, p.51).

Of course men's attire did not neglect the lavish attentions that were treated on women's costume. It was customary for men to show their wealth with equally rich, ornate fabrics. Pole Cosby was evidently a man of great means judging by the luxurious costume he is wearing in this portrait by Latham.Fig. 41. Cosby's outfit was the height of fashionable dress since the largest significant change in men's clothing towards the mid century was its gradual simplification. The Guardian journal of

as the O'Briens of Drumoland and the Fitzgeralds of Glin.

This portrait shows an example of costume worn by the nobility in Ireland, which has many similarities with English formal wear of the early eighteenth century. Undoubtedly, Mrs Corbally's dress is an open robe since the overskirt is worn open in the front over the petticoat. This distinctive feature is clearly visible in the painting because, Mrs Corbally's overskirt falls away to the ground, revealing her petticoat underneath, as she sits down. Fig. 43.

> **The female was seen as a mere dependant, a decorative accessory who could display the family wealth and social status in fashionable dress.** (19, p. 32).

Unlike the exuberant furbelowes and ribbons that lavish Miss Ann Ford's gown in chapter two (p. 17), Mrs Corbally's dress is scantly ornate. The robing runs around the back of her neck and down the shoulders, ending at the waist as the gown joins the stomacher; whereas the 1740s saw the introduction of the robing carried down to the hem increasing in size and elaboration, especially on English and French costume. Yet again this robing detail is used on the sleeves, just above the elbow and also above the lace ruffles to exaggerate the fullness and drape of the fabric.

The elaborate, graceful fall of a sack-back is not featured on this open robe. However, the crisp white lace of the stomacher and sleeves add texture in contrast with the shiney rich blue satin gown. Mrs Corbally's stomacher is attractively covered with rows of layered alce starting from the square decolletage and finishing at its deep V point, where the stomacher is attached to the petticoat. A double layer of ruffles cascades down her arm, elegantly matching the lace of her sleeve borders and stomacher. Although the brush work of the lace is insufficient to note its design , Hussey captures the volume created by ruffled lace.

1713 stated that in order **'to keep to the propriety of dress the coat, waistcoat and breeches must be of the same piece'.** (18, p.91). But by the 1740s this was no longer adhered to.

Mr Cosby's suit was made from navy velvet fabric with the coat and breeches both in one colour and his waistcoat is featured as the main centre piece in dashing scarlet with silver damask embroidery. At the Prince of Wales's birthday celebration in 1739, Mrs Delany noticed that gentlemen were also wearing **'much finery, chiefly brown with gold or silver embroidery, rich waistcoats.'** (2, p. 28)

The ruffle of a man's chemise sleeve was always visible just below the coat cuff. Usually this was trimmed with lace which matched the cravat tied around the neck. In this instance Latham painted Cosby in a simplified linen chemise, similar in quality to his own daughters. On viewing their cuff details, it is apparent that both are wearing frilled borders of the same size. The white of the linen creates an excellent contrast with Cosby's navy coat.

An important component which finished the whole ensemble was the wig. This hair piece was a style that developed from the bob wig which was basically composed of a central parting with curls rolling down either side, ending at shoulder level. Eventually these wigs were tied back and held in a black silk bag worn at the nape of the neck, as seen in this portrait. This article of dress created an impression of grandeur and dignity which no man could adopt without the necesary attire.

Philip Hussey's painting An Interior with Members of a Family is dated from the 1750s and is on view in the National Gallery of Ireland. Fig. 42 . This charming group portrait is **'possibly of the Corbally family of Rathbeale House, Co. Dublin'.** (4, p. 15). Little is inlwn about the artist or this family except that Hussey came from Cloyn in County Cork and had some patrons who were landowners in the south-west of Ireland, such

Mr Corbally expresses the simplicities of the country life by weasring an informal suit. Unlike the magnificent attire of the Earl of Bellamont in the first chapter (fig. 9), there is little comparison between both men's outfits, except perhaps the informity of the suit. The coat, waistcoat and breeches are similar in tailoring, but the splendid ornamentation is edited from Mr Corbally's garments.

> **The masculine ideal became one of solid integrity...which was expressed in safe, conservative styles of clothing, and in discreet and sombre colours.** (19, p. 32).

Obviously Mr Corbally's stance symbolizes his status as head of the house. Hussey states this sitters dignity and pride through the pose, of one hand leaning on a chair and the other upon his hip. The sober grey woollen fabric of the suit is dull in colour compared to his wife's fabulous blue stain gown. Yet, Mr Corbally expresses the stately graces of a gentleman who takes pride in his surroundings.

The opulent carpet, which immediately captures your eye, distracts the viewer's attention. The portrait of Mrs Congreve with her Children, painted in 1782 by the Englishman Philip Reinagle, is also on view in the National Gallery of Ireland.Fig. 44. Both paintings feature elaborate carpets which inspired Paul Durcan's poem named after the painting An Interior with Members of a Family. In the last verse he states that,

> **A family of today** (mid eighteenth century)
> **Is the family that gets carried away**
> **By its own carpet.**

The distinctive wallpaper and the grand firegrate is sufficient alone to insinuate that this family were probably ranked as nobility. But the richness of Mrs Corbally's costume and the mannerly apparel worn by Mr Corbally indicates their **'station in the world'.** (2, p. 205).

Fig. 31

Fig. 32

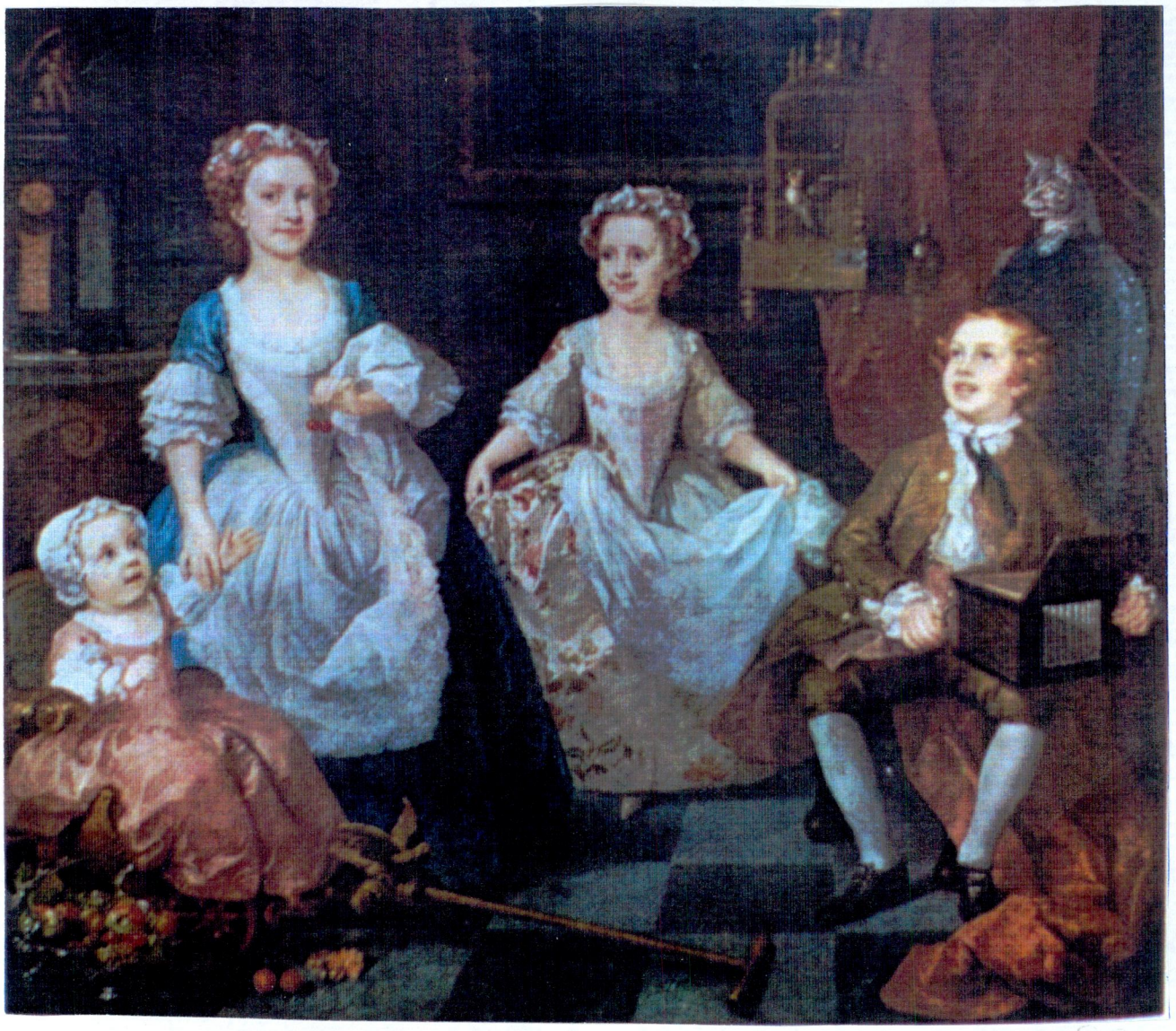

Fig. 33

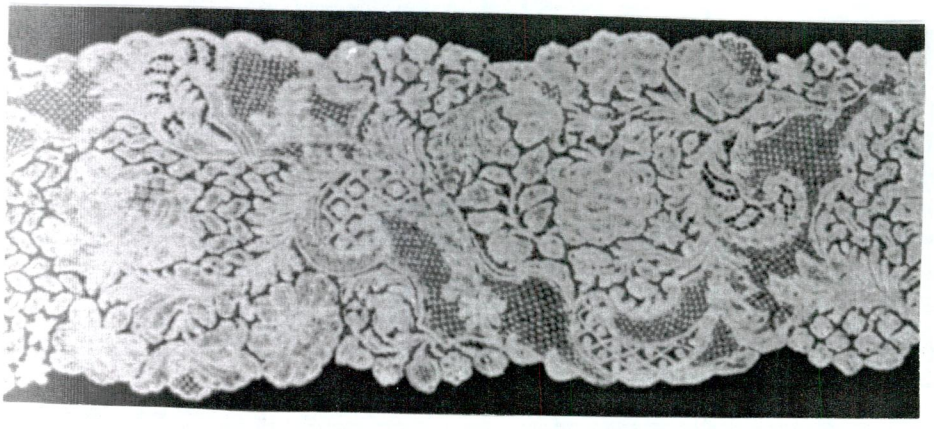

Fig. 34

Fig. 35

Fig. 36

Fig. 37

Fig. 38

Fig. 39

Fig. 41

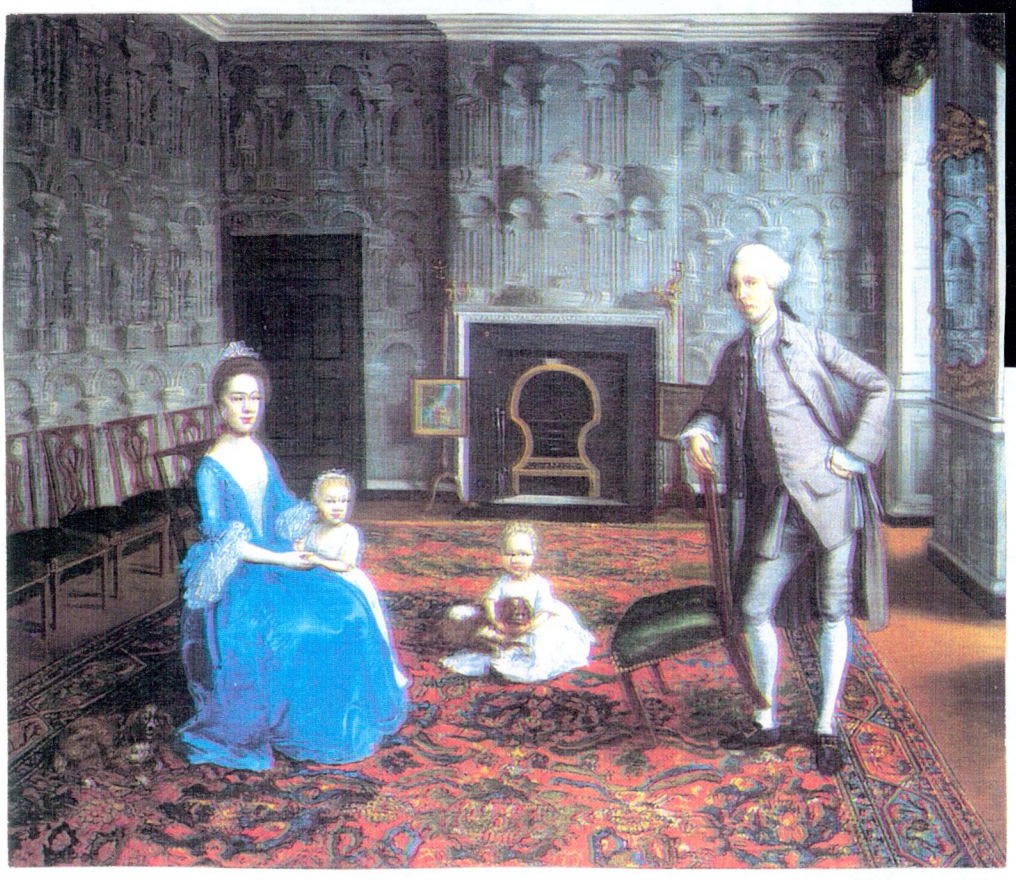

Fig. 42

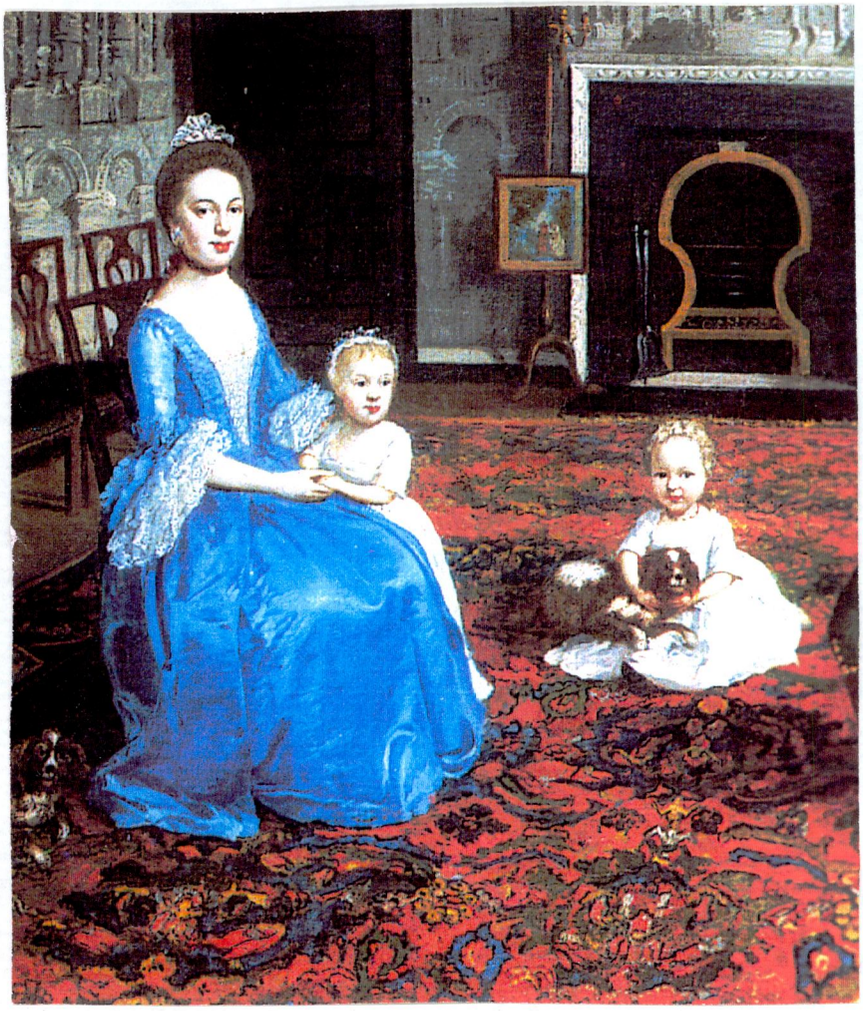

Fig. 43

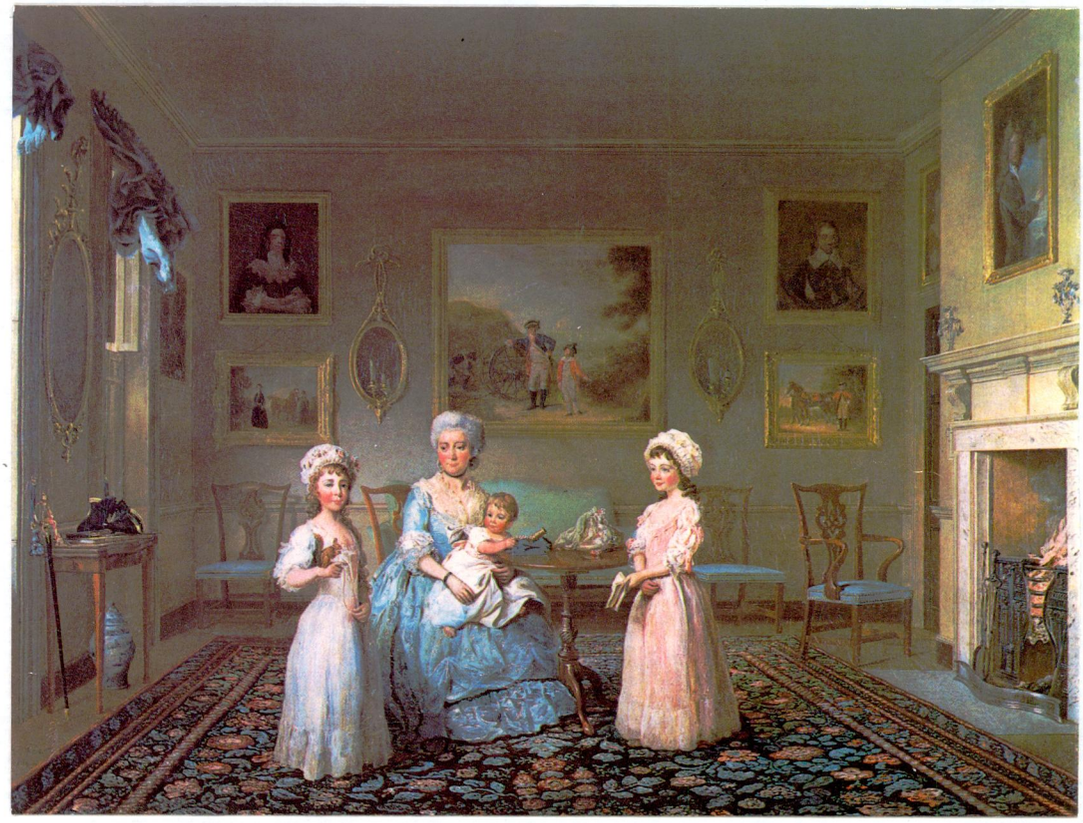

Fig. 44

Conclusion

'Clothing is a very direct way back to the past and to other peoples lives.' (20, p.13). Through the interpretation of costumes by artists, such as Reynolds and Hogarth to name but two, we are able to acquite an understanding of what it was like to live during the eighteenth century. Not only is the costume depicted, in the portrait, but also the life-style which was customary to the sitter.

This era saw the introduction and development of the sack which probably exclusively inspired the evolution of other gowns, such as the open-robe and the pet-en-1'air, fig.43 and fig. 29 respectively. The costume played an important role in a portrait, since the attire worn, reflected the mood and tone of the painting. Obviously the Earl of Bellamont's clothing suggests a dashing, charismatic personality, as seen in fig. 9.

The reason why I decided to write this thesis on eighteenth century costume was because of the extravagant and lavish use of fabric and lace. The magnificence of the portraits painted by Reynolds, Gainsborough and Hogarth are in my opinion the epitome of fashionable costume of that era.

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