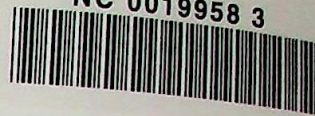


Louise Campbell
N. Gordon Bause



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FASHION
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INTRODUCTION

Through earlier studies on dress in the eighteenth century I became increasingly interested in the idea of the importance of clothing and manners in society. In the eighteenth century people from all walks of life, from the nobility through the middle classes - down to the common people, all had something in common; that was almost obsessive interest in clothing, manners, protocol and etiquette. Looking back on this period, from our viewpoint here in the informality of the twentieth century, the procedure and etiquette involved in all walks of society in the eighteenth century seems a world away and very alien to us.

In order to successfully negotiate the many pitfalls involved for persons attending the Court or participating in 'society' it was necessary to study instruction manuals in order to learn the rigid code of manners which determined who was or was not part of 'Good Society' in the same way that people consulted Emily Post in the early twentieth century. It was also possible for aspirants to society to consult the memoirs of people who frequented the court such as Fanny Burney, Mrs. Delany and Horace Walpole. The Court Chamberlain was an important source of what was the correct protocol on approaching Royalty or attending the Court.

In this essay I have dealt with the unconscious assimilation of the information given by the clothing and accessories worn in both France and England during the eighteenth century and how dress and etiquette were inter-twined.

CHAPTER ONE

Outward manifestation of wealth through dress.

In eighteenth century Europe dress was a barometer of both financial and social status. The fabric of the dress alone could declare the wearer's income. Silk dresses were very expensive due to the cost of the silk and the yardages involved (from 18 - 80 yards) meant that a lady's silk dress could cost anything from £10 to £80; this at a time when a well-to-do tradesman's house was worth £500.

There was a gradual change in the preferred colours for clothing throughout the century. For delicacy of hue the age of Rococo cannot be equalled. Its subdued shades of blue, pink and green with their delicate gradations and subtle blending must have been a soothing feast for the eye - a complete contrast to the colours popular in the latter part of Louis XV's reign.

The favourite scale of colours during this period (1730's) ranged from a deep strong red to light brown, while the early years of Louis XVI's reign (1774) were characterized by a preference for a purplish brown known as puce. There was young puce and old puce, puce-head, puce back, puce belly, puce thigh, puce with milk fever etc. 1

Paris delighted in finding perverted names for fashionable colours.

Sewerage, street muck, london fog, nymph's thigh, nun's belly, carmelite's paunch, poisoned ape, dying ape, merry widow, unhappy friend, reincarnation, fop's entrails, sick spaniard, constipation and smallpox are but a small selection of the ridiculous names bestowed upon various shades of yellow and green. 2

This basic fabric was only the beginning of the creation of a dress - it also needed trimmings and accessories. The making of a ceremonial dress involved three people - the tailor for the bodice, the dressmaker for the skirt and the milliner for the trimmings which, because of the yardages involved, added considerably to the cost of the dress. In 1779, in Paris one could find 150 different styles of trimmings. They all had different and frequently amusing names such as:

Soupirs etoufflés (stifled sighs), regrets superflus (vain regrets), oeil abattu (dejected gaze), plaintes indiscrettes (indiscreet complaints), composition honnête (honest character), desirs marques (plain desires), doux sourire (sweet smile) etc. 3

Because of the expense involved, a silk dress was often altered by changing a trimming or two. These trimmings were very important in terms of conspicuous - i.e. gold and silver lace soon tarnished and had to be removed to be sold for melting down because this metal lace was fashionable when shiny and new. (fig.1) The clothing which was most obviously wealth and class orientated was that belonging to the Rococo period with its abundance of surface decoration (fig,2) which invariably included expensive lace, ribbons and even diamonds and other gems. It was not unheard of for garments to be profusely decorated with embroidery - even when made from patterned silk.

Professional embroiderers were needed at every court; they provided embroidery not only in gold and silver, but also of spangles, chenille and even fur. For grand occasions such as a 'Birthday Court', it was not uncommon for precious stones to be embroidered onto fabrics. Charles Germain De Saint-Aubin's L'art du brodeur of 1770 mentions that

The coat worn by the Dauphin for wedding that year was embroidered with diamonds and that of the comte de provence included opals in the border..

On a smaller scale, embroideresses worked for the English Court, some of whose fine embroidery has been recorded by Mrs. Delany. At court in 1740 she admired the embroidery on the Duchess of Queensbury's clothes:

They were white satin embroidered, the bottom of the petticoat brown hills, covered with all sorts of weeds, and every breadth had an old stump of a tree that runs up almost to the top of the petticoat - broken and ragged and worked with brown chenille, round which twined nasturiums, ivy, honeysuckles periwinkles, convolvuluses and all sorts of twining flowers which spread and covered the petticoat, vines and the leaves variegated as you have seen them by the sun I never saw a work so prettily fancied. 4

Apart from the work of professional embroiderers, much fine work was done by ladies of gentle birth. To be an accomplished embroiderer was synonymous with being well educated. Embroidery, for aristocratic and wealthy women, served their aesthetic senses. It also gave them a feeling of accomplishment and diminished the tedium of long days with nothing much to do, as this work was one of the very few permitted to the rich. In the 1740's Frederick the Great's sisters embroidered his waistcoats with silver thread and in Richardson's novel Clarissa (1748), the heroine herself

embroidered the cuffs and robings of her primrose gown in a running pattern of violets and their leaves; the light in the flowers silver; gold in the leaves.

Another method of decorating court dress was the use of expensive furs. Not only was fur used to edge and line jackets and coats but was also used to line wrapping gowns. (fig.3). However,

Its most rococo manifestation was for decoration on the dress; its fluffiness and the taste for sharp contrasts in fabrics and sheer expensive impracticality appealed to the fashionable lady, and from the 1740's on it was interpreted in robings, petticoat bands, stomacher ornaments, tippetts and necklaces fur was not only used to trim fashionable dresses but for the heavy swag-like decoration on court gowns.⁵

In fig.4 Madame Adelaide is depicted by Nattier seated against a background of classical pillars. She is wearing an open robe with its stomacher and petticoat trimmed with strips of a dark fur which looks like mink. She is wearing a parure of lace composed in a flounce worn flat around the neckline and arm flounces made up of two rows of flat lace and triple elbow frills. Her dress is finished off with bows at the elbows and throat and she is wearing a pompon of flowers with hanging lappets of black lace. All of this sumptuary elegance is further enhanced by the swags of luxurious gold brocade swirling in an arc over her head. This superfluous drapery which serves no purpose is another tangible sign of the sitter's wealth. In the eighteenth century cloth was the most important man-made commodity. Beautiful and expensive fabric was something to be admired just as one could admire an expensive painting or some fine glass. The ownership of elaborate and expensive clothing was an important proof of the wearer's social dominance. Since the subject could only wear one dress at a time, such prominent display of yards of brocade behind him or her conveyed the meaning that they possessed more such stuff and were literally able to throw it around.

Traditionally superfluous drapery has been a sign not only of wealth and high rank but of moral worth; angels, saints, martyrs and biblical characters in Medieval and Renaissance art often wear yards and yards of extra silk and velvet. Drapery derived additional prestige from its association with classical art and thus with nobility, dignity and the ideal.⁶

This use of superfluous fabric was also apparent in the sheer scale of the dresses of the period. Shirts were inflated on hoops to provide a framework on which the wearer was able to display great quantities of cloth while overskirts, panniers, flounces and trains required even more cloth. In addition to this were the yards and yards of expensive, fragile trimmings. Not only was there this outer extravagance but 'respectable' upper class women wore no fewer than three petticoats; less than this number was considered pathetic and indicated poverty and a lack of class.

This display of wealth through dress was also seen through their accompanying accessories such as lace and jewellery.

Lace in the eighteenth century was so indispensable that it was as commonly found as the poorest of stuffs, yet costlier than silks and satins. Lace was so intricately woven into the fabric of everyday life that no garment, no elegant accessory was without it, yet the narrowest strip took months to make. So exclusive and elegant was lace that only nobles and high-ranking clergy men could afford it, yet servant girls and burghers wives scraped and saved to buy it. 7

From 1720 to 1770 lace was considered as the finishing touch without which a person could not be considered as elegant. Its function on clothes was like that of gilding on furniture or plaster work on ceilings - it underscored the elegance of the whole.

In the seventeenth century Jean Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's Minister of Finance from 1661 to 1683, succeeded in establishing lace making in France on a large scale, some of the best of which coming from the Argentan region which remained the aristocratic lace par excellence throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. In the painting of Mademoiselle de Beaujolais - 1745 (fig, 5) she wears a set of matching point d'argentan laces known as a parure (taken from the french), It includes a neck ruffle worn gathered around the décolletage, another flounce of larger width worn flat around the shoulders, arm flounces composed of two rows of straight laces, triple elbow frills, a stomacher and an apron gathered into a point at the waist and finished off with a ruffled flounce forming three scallops. With the exception

of the delicate lace apron worn, for more informal occasions, by young ladies this parure, as such, remained standard for formal wear throughout the century. In order for both men and women to keep up their appearance through the use of lace, it was necessary to spend large amounts of money. Marie Leszcznska (1703-1768) who married Louis XV, was provided with a wedding allowance of 200,000 livres by her future husband for the purchase of her 'habits, linen and laces, both bobbin and needle;8 - a sum equal to the total amount of revenue produced by the Valenciennes lace industry for the same year (1725).

A method of comparing the sums expended on lace relative to other items of Louis XV's wardrobe is provided to us by a bill from M. Balzac, the king's embroiderer, for the delivery in April 1765 of a richly worked coat of silver watered silk, charging 233 livres 55 sols, or almost exactly the price of one ell of Brussels lace. 9

In England the expenditure on lace was more moderate because of the English love of more flexible, informal dress than that of the French court. Dealers imported foreign laces like Brussels and Mechlin lace and also sold bone lace made in Buckinghamshire. Mrs. Delany bought her fine new-fashioned suit of Brussels lace, which cost nearly £50, in 1743 from a Mrs. Carter - a lace dealer in London. Towards the end of the century there was an upsurge against the importing of foreign laces - people preferring instead to support the home lace industry.

In Dublin in 1765 a club of young gentlemen refused by unanimous consent to toast any lady who wore French lace. 10

Due to the tendency of the period to use an abundance of all fabric in order to show off one's wealth, accidents could happen; this was seen when,

In 1778 King George III and Queen Charlotte stood sponsors at the christening of the Duke of Chandos' infant daughter, the poor baby was so smothered by a maintain of lace that it quietly passed away during the ceremony the victim of an overwhelming honour. 11

It is virtually impossible to ascertain the proportion of income spent on clothes by members of the court and the length of time these clothes were expected to last. It is probably safe to say that their cost was high in comparison to other

costs of existence. 12. The amounts spent on clothes by royalty were astounding. The Empress Elizabeth of Russia never wore a dress twice and on her deathbed was found to possess 15,000 dresses. Some indications of amounts of clothing purchased in the eighteenth century can be gained from details of trousseaux. The Archduchess Josepha of Austria, on her marriage to the King of Naples in 1767, had a trousseau worth 200,000 florins which included 99 silk dresses trimmed with gold and silver lace. However, in England a modest trousseau was more usual. According to Mrs. Delany, when Lady Frances Carteret married the Marquis of Tweeddale in 1748, she had six dresses including her wedding dress of flounced white satin with a silver trimming, and in 1756 the very wealthy Mrs. Spencer had

Four negligees, four nightgowns, four mantuas and petticoats. She was married in white and silver trimmed, her first suit she went to court in was white and silver, as fine as brocade and trimming could make it the diamonds worth £12,000; her earrings three drops, all diamonds, no paltry scrolls of silver, her necklace most perfect brillants, the middle stone worth £1,000.

Ref.



Fig. 1: Marie-Josèphe de Saxe (1731-1767) by
J.M. Nattier (1685 - 1766) Colour.



Fig. 2: La Marquise d'Aiguirandes (1750) by F.H. Drouais.

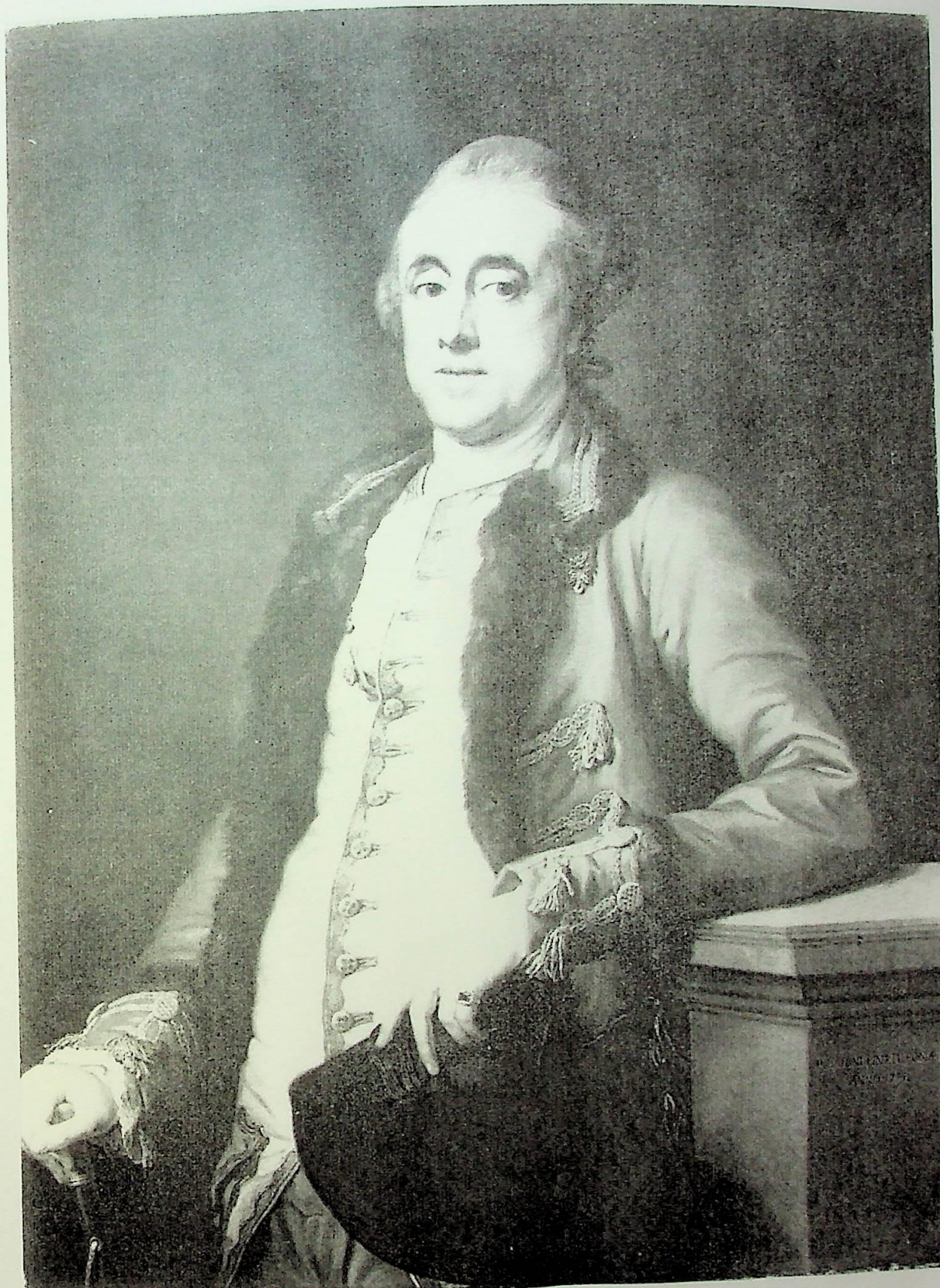


Fig. 3: John Scott (1774) by P. Batoni.



Fig. 4: Madame Adelaide (1732-1800) by J.M. Nattier (1685-1766) Colour.

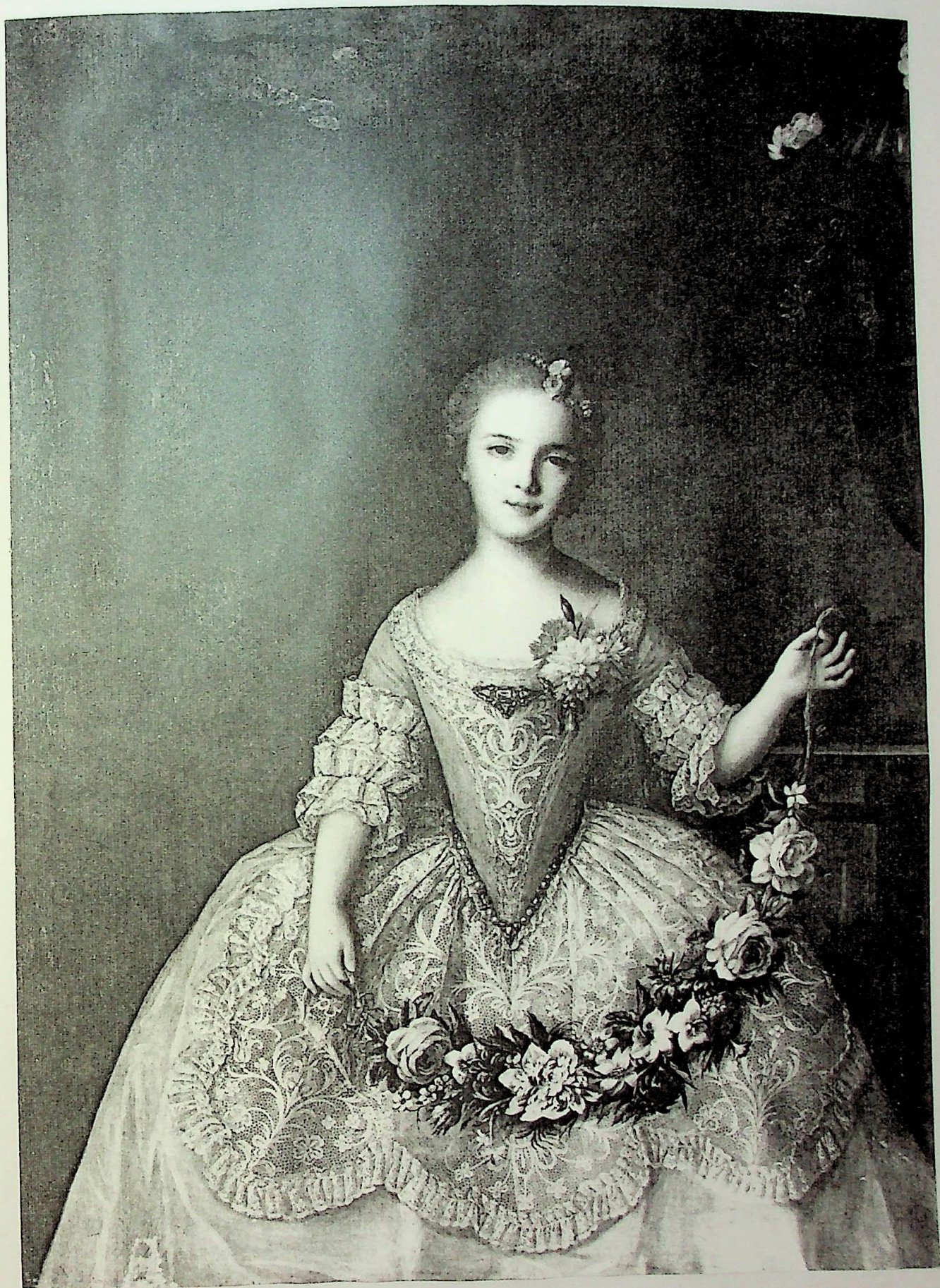


Fig. 5: Portrait of Mademoiselle de Beaujolais
(C.1745) by J.M. Nattier.

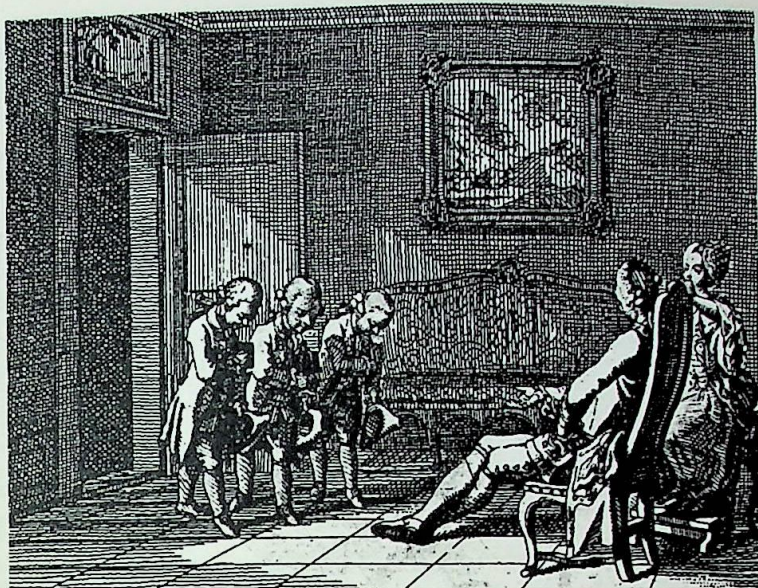


Fig. 6: Children thanking their father for gifts,
(1770) Daniel Chodowieki (German 1726-1801)

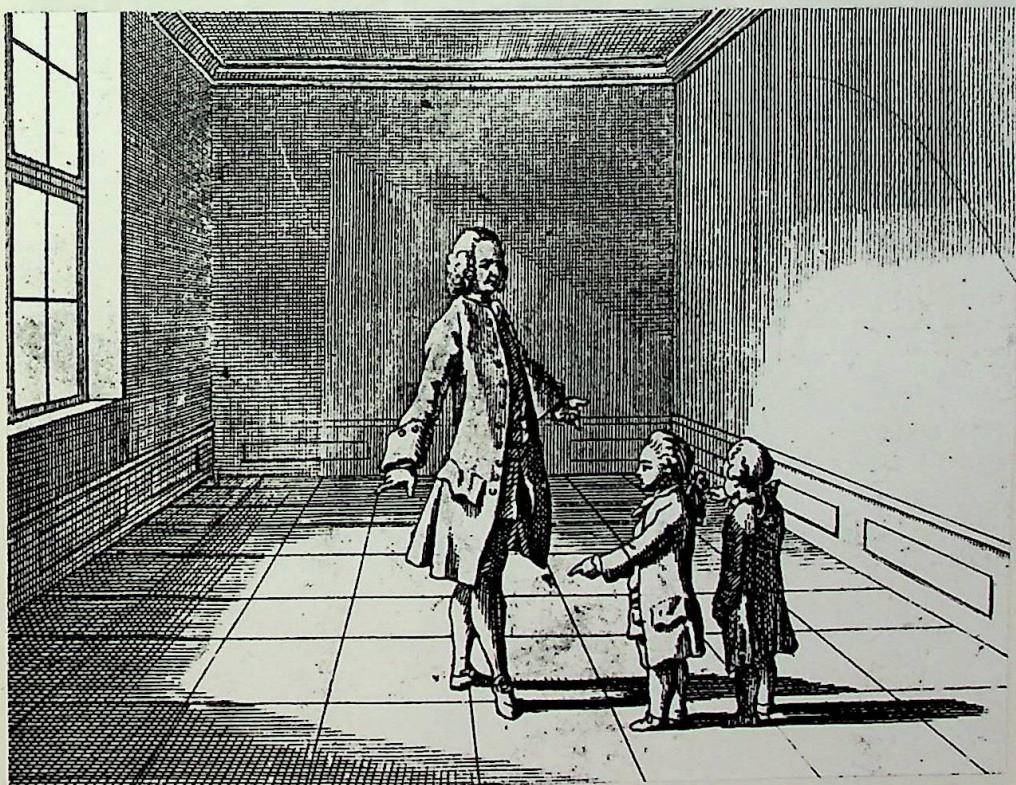


Fig. 7: Dance Master teaching correct movement (1770)
Daniel Cholowieki (German 1726-1801)



*Wirklich, da hatte die Mama recht.
Ma foi, maman avoit raison.*

II. Aufz. 5^e Auftr.

Fig. 8: Actually, Mother was right, (1784)
Daniel Chodowiecki (German 1776-1801)



Fig. 9: The rudiments of Genteel Behavior, (1737)
Plate 5, To offer or receive.
engr. by LP. Boitard after B. Dandridge.



Fig. 10: The rudiments of Genteel Behavior (1737)
plate 2, To give or receive.
engr. by LP Boitard after B. Dandridge.



Fig. 11. Le Lever - after P. Longhi.



Fig. 12. La declaration de l'amour, (1725)
by J.F. de Troy (detail)

CHAPTER TWO

Deportment and Etiquette.

In the eighteenth century it was customary for both sons and daughters of the younger fashionable set to receive tuition in deportment and manners from a dancing master, supplemented by manuals on etiquette such as A. Petrie, The Polite Academy, J. Levron, The man of Manners: or Plebian Polished'd and P. Rameau's, The dancing master. In addition to these manuals, polite society also studied novels of the day such as Pamela and Evelina and also the published diaries of fashionable people. Boys and girls were spoken of as young ladies and gentlemen and ladies and their behaviour was moulded upon that of their elders, as were their clothes. Childish romping had to be laid aside and replaced by a gravity that was considered neither unnatural nor unbecoming to their youth. Children could indulge their playful fancies among themselves, but in the presence of their parents and elders they were expected to observe the strict rules of decorum (fig. 6 and fig. 7).

Dancing masters of the eighteenth century followed the precept suggested by De Lauze in 1623, that the first rule of importance in acquiring elegant deportment was the correct placing of the head.

The head being the principle part of the human figure, must first be considered because it entirely governs all the rest. If held erect, without stiffness, the shoulders fall into proper position, the chest expands, and the back 'straight and light', assists the motion of the hips. They in turn affect the knees and feet. Thus a person whose head is rightly placed is capable of standing walking, dancing or performing any genteel exercise in a graceful, easy and becoming manner. 1 (fig. 8,9,10)

Fashionable Attitudes:

Since the new fashion of negligent behaviour, remarked upon by the newspapers of the day, was a casting off of superfluous ceremony, it was a complete contrast to the more studied, careful negligence of the beribboned cavaliers of the seventeenth century.

Some people affected the very opposite of polite reticence in their conversation where 'the most coarse, uncivilized words

in our language' were openly used particularly by the 'coxcombs of the Town' as proof, in their opinion of their being in the center of current fashion. 2

An affectation of the period was the mis-pronunciation or misuse of words, also there was a tendency to treat people as if they were deaf and declared themselves as if giving a speech. Young ladies who had returned from an 'improving' trip to France were likely to imitate the liveliness and loud manner of speaking of that country. Whereas the English child was brought up to believe that

Nothing points out ill-bred people more than talking loud in the street while amongst the fashionable set it appeared that to 'speak loud in Publick Assemblies' was in their opinion looked upon as 'Part of a refined Education!' 3

This tendency to break away from the burdensome formality required in earlier years was initiated by the upper etchelons of society who were secure in their position or birth. They found it much easier to disregard the petty tyrannies of excessive formality than did those of the merchant/Bourgeois classes who might fear that their attitude would be misconstrued as ignorance of correct behaviour.

It was also considered fashionable amongst modish ladies of quality to receive their guests while in bed in the morning or while finishing their toilette as they considered this practice as part of good breeding. (fig. 11).

How artfully could a woman give herself an air of wise deliberation by a studious contemplation of a pincushion, or the ivory comb with which she combed her flowing hair. How nonchalantly at ease could she appear as she gained a moment's pause by applying her tongue to a patch, which required to be placed with nice judgement in exactly the right spot. 4

Visiting day was certainly a serious occupation of the fashionable lady, who wished to be considered in the height of fashion. In contrast to this, in the seventeenth century, it was the fashion for affected young men of fashion to receive their visitors while they lay in bed. In fact, they often reserved the hours between ten and twelve o'clock in the morning for this purpose.

Where they would be found reclining most magnificently, with a long reclining, most magnificently, with a long periwig

neatly laid over the sheets, extravagantly powdered and exactly curled. 5

Bearing:

The costumes of the period ensured good posture which was, in turn, the sign of good breeding. The stiffly boned bodice remained in fashion for most of the eighteenth century. These unbending corsets caused discomfort to the wearer unless the torso retained its upright position - any slumping of the body and the wearer would be painfully prodded by the iron or steel rods in the corset ($\frac{3}{4}$ of an ell long, a finger in breadth and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick). To recline in the privacy of one's boudoir while wearing loose fitting garments was one thing (fig.12,13), but once dressed there was no relief from the constant pressure. In this status-conscious society, corsets immediately proclaimed class distinction. The more severe the cut and boning of the corset, the higher the lady's class but only if it was worn with an air of unconcern.

To a lady of the eighteenth century the corset conferred a degree of social security for more satisfying than physical comfort.....the posture of status was consciously built into the corset's shape.....that correct and elegant posture which was the unmistakable stamp of the upper class. 6

Incredible as it may seem to us today, in the eighteenth century, fashionable men and women willingly suffered physical discomfort and deliberately sacrificed freedom of movement for the sake of status as can be seen from this excerpt from the Duchess of Devonshire's letter to a friend in 1778:

.....My new french stays...are so intolerably wide across the breast, that my arms are absolutely sore with them; and my sides so pinched - But it is the 'Ton'; and pride feels no pain..... to be admired, is a sufficient balsam. 7

It was even known for ladies to start corseting themselves quite early on in the day for an evening party - tightening the laces every quarter of the hour.

Motion:

The motion of walking was so admired in the eighteenth century that everyone who considered themselves to be fashionable spent a portion of each day walking in a park where they could display themselves and their clothing to its

best advantage before others (figs. 14,15,). The shoe affected the manner of walking more than any other part of the ensemble. Because of the height of the heel - six inches or more - and because of the lack of support for the arch of the foot, walking was a difficult process. Nevertheless, one was still expected to retain the same elegant mien in walking as when standing or sitting still.

The rate of walking should be moderate, neither too quick nor too slow. One suggests heedlessness, the other indolence..... A lady was advised to walk smoothly and swimmingly without justling her skirts. 8

In the eighteenth century the hooped skirt was the most difficult item of clothing to manouever - large panniers were undoubtedly the ultimate status symbol. These could extend side of the hips and were sufficient to cause traffic jams, riots over seats in the theatres and general confusion in such areas as parks, ballrooms, carriages and church pews.

A certain lady of the manor in a country town, returned wearing the large hoop. Startling the congregation on a Sunday, she filled the area of the church and walked up to her pew with unspeakable satisfaction, amidst the whippers, conjecture and astonishment of the whole congregation. 9

Of all the motions, dancing was the most difficult and most admired. It not only was a favorite leisure-time activity but it also provide opportunities for exercise and when done properly gave an easy and graceful air to the person. The most popular dance in this century was the minuet - a stately, difficult dance which required exact timing, superb body control, intense concentration and apparent effortlessness. The most elaborate form of the minuet was danced by one couple at a time for as long as seven minutes. It was a dance designed to show off the elegant movements and costumes of the dancers to a highly critical audience. (Fig 16, 17).

To the lady wearer these large hooped skirts not only served to add dignity and grace to the figure but also set the wearer physically apart from the crowd, highlighting her appearance as a work of art. The ease and elegance with which a person moved became the pinnacle of social achievement in eighteenth century society due to the fact it could not be purchased but instead had to be painstakingly learned (fig. 18)



Fig 14: A group of men and women in a landscape
(c. 1725) by B. Lens 111.



Fig 13: La Toilette,(1742), F. Boucher (Colour)

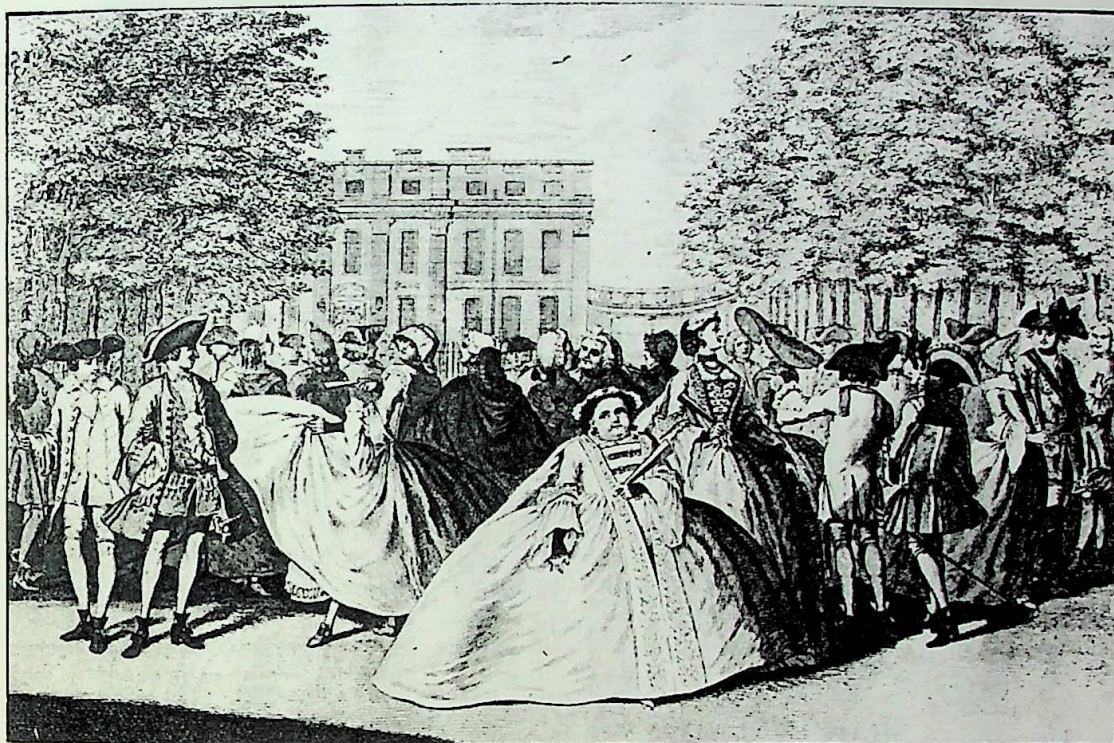


Fig 15: 'Taste A-la-Mode' (1745) - engr. after
L.P. Boitard.



Fig 16: Engraving from The Lady's Magazine,
July (1782)

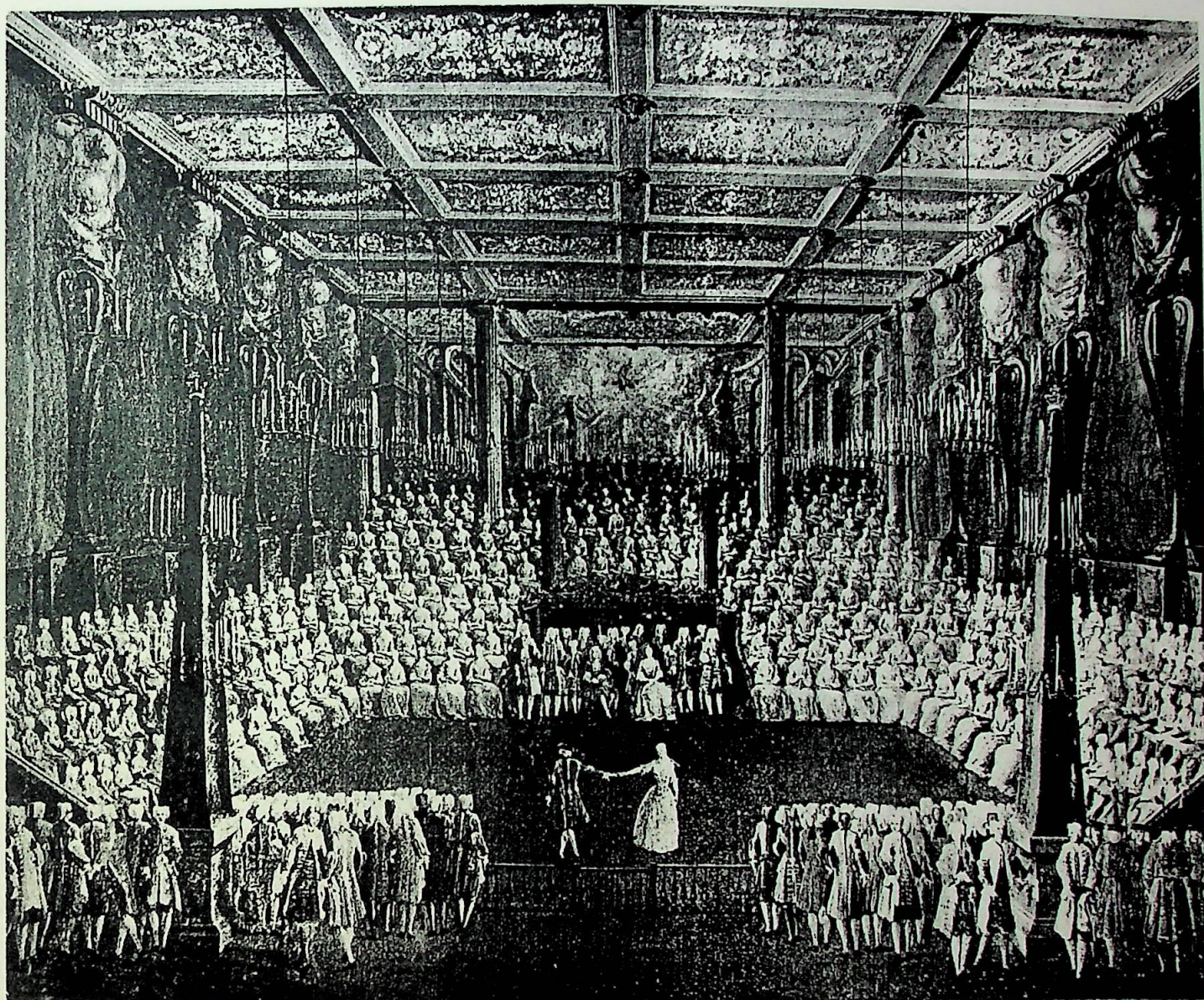


Fig 17: The state ball at Dublin Castle (1731)
attr. William van der Hagen.

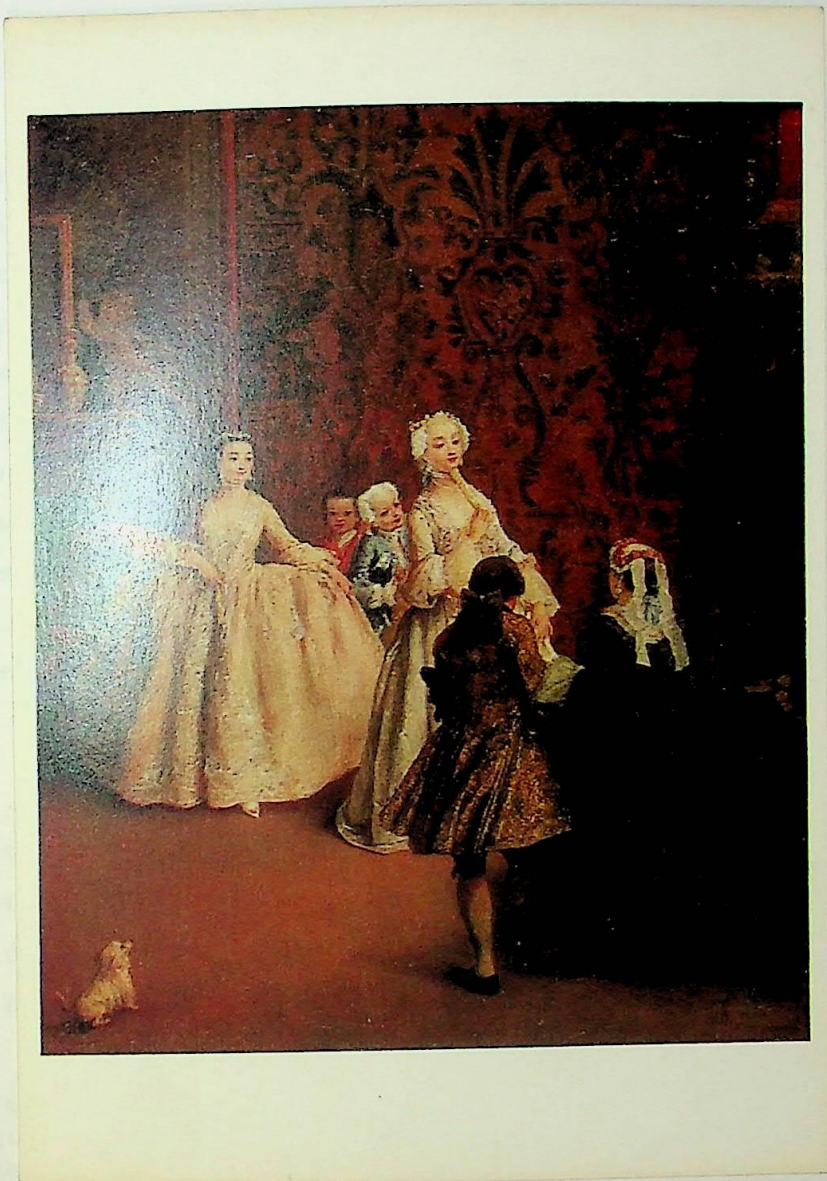


Fig 18: Presentation by Pietro Longhi (1702-1785 Colour

CHAPTER THREE

The unspoken language of accessories:

In the eighteenth century the art of conversation was raised to new heights - it was a vital outlet for new thoughts and ideas. It was not uncommon for people to carry on both verbal and non-verbal conversations at the same time. Verbal conversation consisted of speaking clearly, distinctly and gracefully, all the while being careful not to display undue emotion whether it be anger or excitement. One of the most interesting aspects of the art of conversation in the eighteenth century was the potential non-verbal language of costume accessories such as fans, snuffboxes, handkerchiefs, make-up etc. A person might say one thing with words and just the opposite with a flick of their fan or a pinch of snuff.

The language of fans:

The most suitable accessory for this non-verbal language was the fan. 'Women armed with fans as men with swords and sometimes do more execution with them' warned Addison in 1711.¹ A lady - whether of the nobility or of the middle-classes - who appeared without her fan was considered undressed.

It was her dear and constant companion revealing the secrets of her head and heart to all who could read the language of the fan, which could assume a thousand different moods. Without saying a word, a lady could use it to flirt outrageously one minute and severely reprimand a lover the next. Accordingly to Addison, the mere flutter of a fan was fraught with drama.²

During the eighteenth century the fan had become as vital a part of a lady's attire as was her head-dress or any other accessories; indeed so much so that since the restoration, the manufacture of fans contributed to the trade of England, and employed thousand of men, women and children.

The use of a fan as a shield from the sun, or a too hot fire, as the means of creating a cool breeze or to deter annoying flies, can be understood. At often times the fan was kept folded and any unnecessary fluttering was refrained from as it would appear absurd and affected. At the same time-in contradiction of the above, the fan gave scope for an infinite variety of expressions particularly in the hands of a practised

exponent of the art. This manipulation of the fan required great manual dexterity of the fingers and wrists. These movements added a rich, silent vocabulary to the art of conversation and, needless to say, were completely indispensable to the art of flirtation. It was this aspect of the fan which became both a prime target for the satirists of the day, and the source of fanciful interpretations of the inner meaning of the fan's movements.

A woman could possess all the airs and graces of what some persons imagined was good breeding. She could take snuff, or use her handkerchief in the most agreeable manner; laugh with the refinement of the best bred, or extend her little finger as appositely as the highest in the land. Yet 'all these talents will avail her nothing from the shafts of ridicule if she uses her fan in a bourgeois manner'. In fact, according to informed opinion, it was by the innumerable ways of handling a fan that 'one distinguishes the Princess from the Countess, and the Marchioness from the commoner; 3

In the telling of a story, the fan would move 'to and fro like a pigeon's wing in flight'. At the end of a gesturing arm it added grace and flair to a greeting given from the depths of a carriage. And in the crowded ball-room 'unnumbered fans to cool the crowded fair, with breathing zephyrs move the circling air.' 4.

Indeed, difficult as it is for us to believe today, a woman who was vulgarly dressed, and both dull and plain, would become supportable to eighteenth century society if she knew how to wield a fan correctly and guided its movements knowledgeably. The fan was believed capable of conveying more precise meanings than just creating elegant gestures. The language of love, the Spaniards firmly believed, could be interpreted by flowers or by the fan's gestures - these latter being the easier understood. Various actions used in handling the fan became a code by which it was possible for ladies to communicate their feelings or intentions to admirers with whom, owing to the strict conventions of those days, it was not easy to converse freely. (fig.19). For a detailed description of these actions please see Appendix I.

Another aspect of this language of accessories was the language of the ribbon. This was considered suitable to demonstrate good breeding and the more or less subtle aspects of courtship. Ribbons worn in knots at the bosom, waist and

on the sleeves were, like patches, a language of gallantry, 'knots below and knots above, Emblems of the ties of love' declared a poem in The London Magazine of 1755. 5 (fig. 20, 21)

Use of Powder:

In the time of Louis XV and Louis XVI every man, woman and child in high society powdered their hair with rice powder / although coloured powders were added to the hair to improve its natural colour and included blue, yellow and a brick-dust hue the most commonly used powder was grey, not white as countless historical films would have us believe. Grey heads made everyone look old but, unlike the cult of youth in the twentieth century, to look old was regarded as good style or 'bon ton' in the eighteenth century. In fact, powdered hair was considered so natural in this period that

Fredrich Nicolai saw at Augsburg a statue of the Blessed Virgin wearing a wig which was always freshly powdered on feast days. 6

Use of Make Up:

As artificially grey hair spoiled even the best of young complexions it was necessary to use make-up. In the eighteenth century a lady of fashion needed to waste no time on soap and water but she would never forget her make-up. White skin was prized above all, and in order to achieve this, face and bosom were covered with mercury water or rice water - much safer than the formerly used 'ceruse' or white lead paint which was responsible for maiming and, indeed, killing many a lady of fashion. The face was considered as much a work of art as the clothing of the period and much care and time were spent in order to achieve the porcelained whiteness so much admired. On top of this matt white surface, blue veins were carefully added to simulate the delicacy of skin so much admired. Because of the combination of white skin and grey hair it was necessary to use rouge in order to add a little colour. 'Bon Ton' forbade respectable women to rouge so that it looked natural; that prerogative was reserved for ladies of a certain profession who liked to emulate nature by using rouge. Ladies of quality tended to apply it a trenchant, that is to say, that it was

obvious a mile off that the red colour was artificial. People even tried to suggest, by the way in which they applied it, their moods and feelings and even their status in society. ^^ The ladies of the court at Versailles favoured well defined flame-coloured patches close under the eye which they thought emphasized the eyes and gave them sexual allure.

Ladies carried their cosmetic boxes everywhere with them along with their chatelaine and stay hook, and repaired their complexions quite brazenly. It is hard to believe that rouging was considered so natural that even corpses were made up.

In 1730 Keyssler saw Cardinal Pamphile lying in state in Rome with rouge on his face. This mania for cosmetics was centered mainly in France. Mme de Monaco even rouged herself for the ride to the guillotine. Although other countries also cultivated the habit they did not lay it on so thickly. 7

Along with the use of white paint and rouge, the eyes were made up with lamp black together with false eyebrows made from mouse skin of all things.

One reads of a gentleman at an Assembly who, observing that an eyebrow on his wife's face was beginning to slide owing to the heat in the room, called out a warning. Whereupon she utter'd a loud shriek and was removed from the room in a succession of fits. 8

Patches:

The final stage in the make-up was the application of beauty patches, little pieces of black gummed silk or paper. This craze started in the days of Henry IV of France when they were used to cover small scars and spots - some of them caused by smallpox - but they were never as much the rage as during the eighteenth century. Before long they had developed their own language and had become specific facial symbols (fig. 22).

In London they were even used as political devices, the right wing Whigs wearing them on the right cheek, and the (then) left wing Tories wearing them on the left. 9

These simple black spots soon appeared in a variety of shapes - stars, crescents, suns, circles, squares, hearts, even animals and little people. And at the courts of Louis XV,

the precise position of these facial symbols became loaded with meaning. Of course some people, especially the Russian ladies, tended to get carried away and covered their faces with patches and so, in 1759, The Lady's Magazine stated that no woman should have more than one or at the utmost one large patch and a little satellite stuck just by the greater planet. These patches were named according to their position.

The patch in the centre of the brow was called 'la majesteuse', that on the nose 'l'effrontee', that near the eye 'la passionnee', that near the corner of the mouth 'la baiseuse'; that on the upper lip 'la galante', that between the mouth and chin 'la silencieuse' and that covering a pimple 'la recluse'.¹⁰

As the story goes, when the famous French preacher Massillon condemned these patches in a church sermon, inquiring why these patches were confined to the face only, Parisian ladies of quality soon decided to adorn their bosoms as well. And according to Casanova they were not just confined to visible place. There was also a tendency to wear large patches, originating in the need to cover the effects of venereal disease;

The Germans called them 'venus-blumen', claiming that this fashion was also the result of French influence. ¹¹ (fig 23) But even here fashion was pushed to the extreme by some ladies ornamenting theirs with diamonds.

Shoes and Stockings:

The tendency for the hooped skirts of the period to swing up and show the legs gave a glimpse for the first-time of the ankle and shoes, both of which exerted strong sexual allure. It was fashionable for a lady to raise her skirt in order to show her embroidered stockings. (fig. 24)

These ladies were well aware of the erotic aspect of the garters, tying above and below the knee, and which were often embroidered with mottoes of a slightly risqué kind - 'No search' was a popular phrase. ¹²

The shoes were made of linen or silk and had a six-inch heel, which tipped the body forwards and created the short-stepping gait peculiar to the eighteenth century. Apart from a neat foot, which was much admired, the chief smartness of

the shoe lay in the buckle or tie which looked like a front fastening and for a while fashionable Parisiennes wore a small brooch, preferably of emeralds on the back seam and this was called the 'Venez y Voir'. Given the propensity for hoops which allowed the shirt to rise up and show the legs, it seems strange to us in the twentieth century that undergarments were never worn - it was considered unladylike for a woman to don a male garment and the woman who did was considered little better than a whore. Even maids never donned breeches except for cleaning windows. The only exceptions were professional dancers who, however, were fined heavily for showing them. Casanova tells an amusing tale of a prima ballerina in Barcelona who, when performing one evening, was

Carried away by her lively temperament and gave her hoop such a swing that the whole of the unmentionable garment showed and she was fined. So enraged was she that on the following day she came on minus her drawers and in the aforesaid movement gave the entire parterre the opportunity of confirming the fact. Brought to task, she replied 'I am only forbidden to show my breeches, and I do not think anyone can claim to have seen them tonight.¹³

Snuff:

In fashionable society at this time, the taking of snuff was widespread and remained invogue for a long time. Apart from the satisfactin gained from using snuff, it also imparted an air of nonchalance and confidence to the user. To appear at ease, the sixteenth century gentleman and lady used their gloves, pomanders, lockets and fans. In the seventeenth century they used the snuff box and fan to fill awkward silences. The eighteenth century beau and his lady refined this use of the snuff box and fan in order to appear at ease. (fig 25). Their modern equivalent would light up a cigarette instead. This method for the release of tension led, inevitably, to the development of fashionable tricks in the handling of these objects. Richard Steele in his newspaper advertisement 'Exercise of the snuff-box, according to the most fashionable airs and Motions' (1760) - offers in mock seriousness, to teach 'Young merchants the ceremony of the snuff box, or Rules for offering

snuff to a stranger, a friend, or a mistress, according to the degree of Familiarity or Distance', 14 Snuff boxes were a favourite gift to ladies at the time, e.g. Marie Antoinette's trousseau contained 52 gold snuff boxes.

Seeing then that the whole of society, ladies no less than gentlemen, took snuff we can well imagine their appetizing appearance and delighted smell, for does not Liselotte tell us how unpleasant snuff smelt and how dirty it made all the ladies' noses look. 15

It seems hard today to realise that despite the use of gorgeous fabrics in dress, it wasn't considered necessary to wash the body. Indeed, the clothes themselves were only washed every five or six weeks as it was such a time consuming and strenuous effort (fig.26). To compensate for this, a great many cotton or linen shifts were necessary to protect the costly garments from the dirt of the body. These shifts were changed and washed more regularly, about every two to three weeks. Saint-Simon tells us that Louis XIV took baths only when in love. On rising he would wipe his face with a handkerchief drenched in scent then a courtier would pour some rose water and orange flower water over his fingers and that was the extent of his bathing. The Empress Anna of Russia never used water to wash with, but instead preferred to rub butter into her skin.

When as later as 1782 we find in an introduction to 'Bon Ton' for the use of upper classes, a warning against the employment of water externally and a recommendation of perfumes instead, when we read that it is advisable to wash one's hands nearly every day and one's face almost as frequently, we cease to wonder at anything. 16

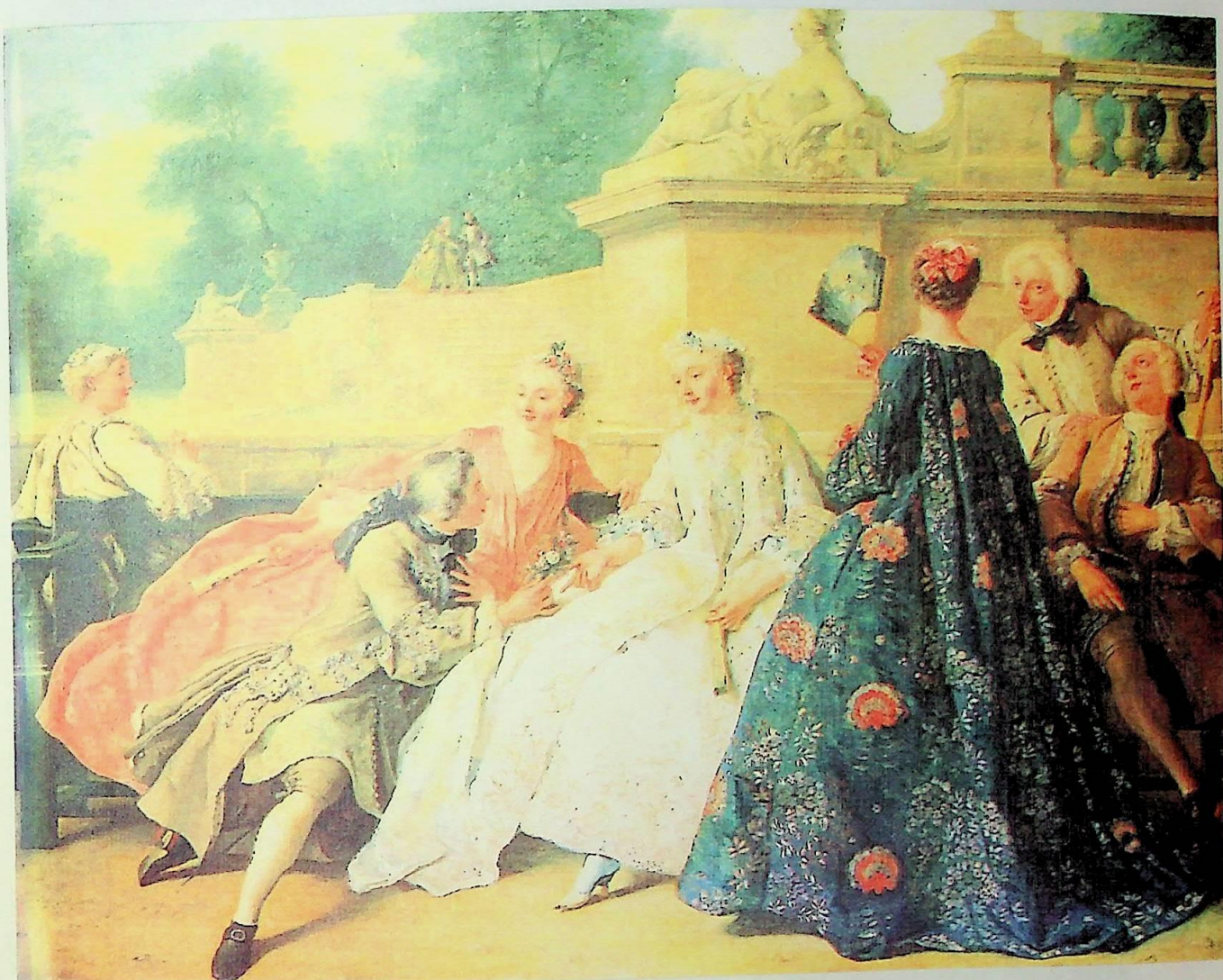


Fig 19: La déclaration de l'amour (1731)
J.F. de Troy, (colour)

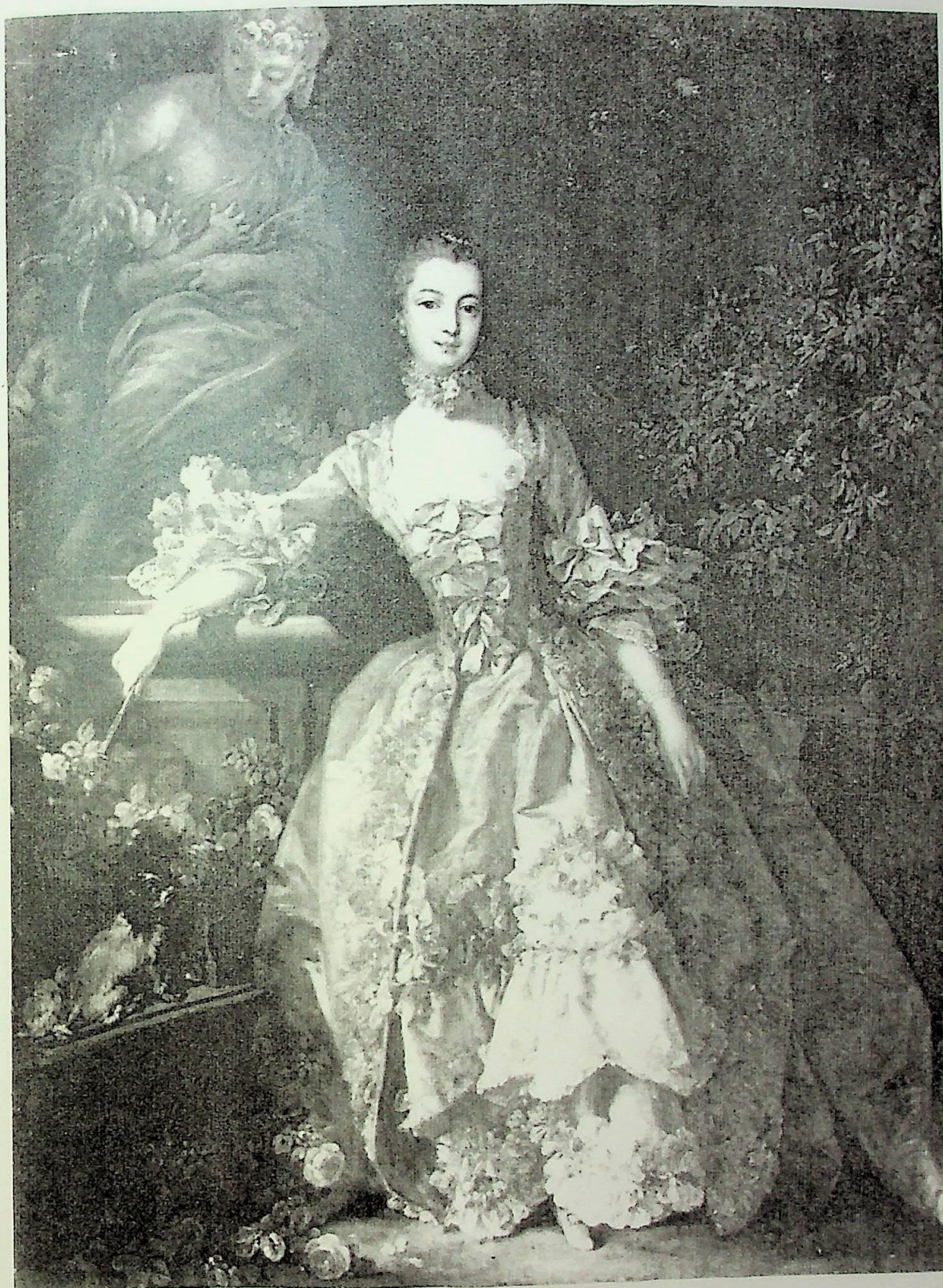


Fig 20: Madame de Pompadour, (1759) by Boucher.



Fig 21: Queen Marie Antoinette (1783) by
Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842) Colour.



Fig 22: Before, (1736) engraved by W. Hogarth.



Fig 23: Folly adorns Decrepitude with the attire of youth (1745) Louis de Surgis.



Fig 24: Study of a woman seen from behind by
T. Gainsborough.



Fig 25: James Craggs the Elder, C (1710) J. Closterman.

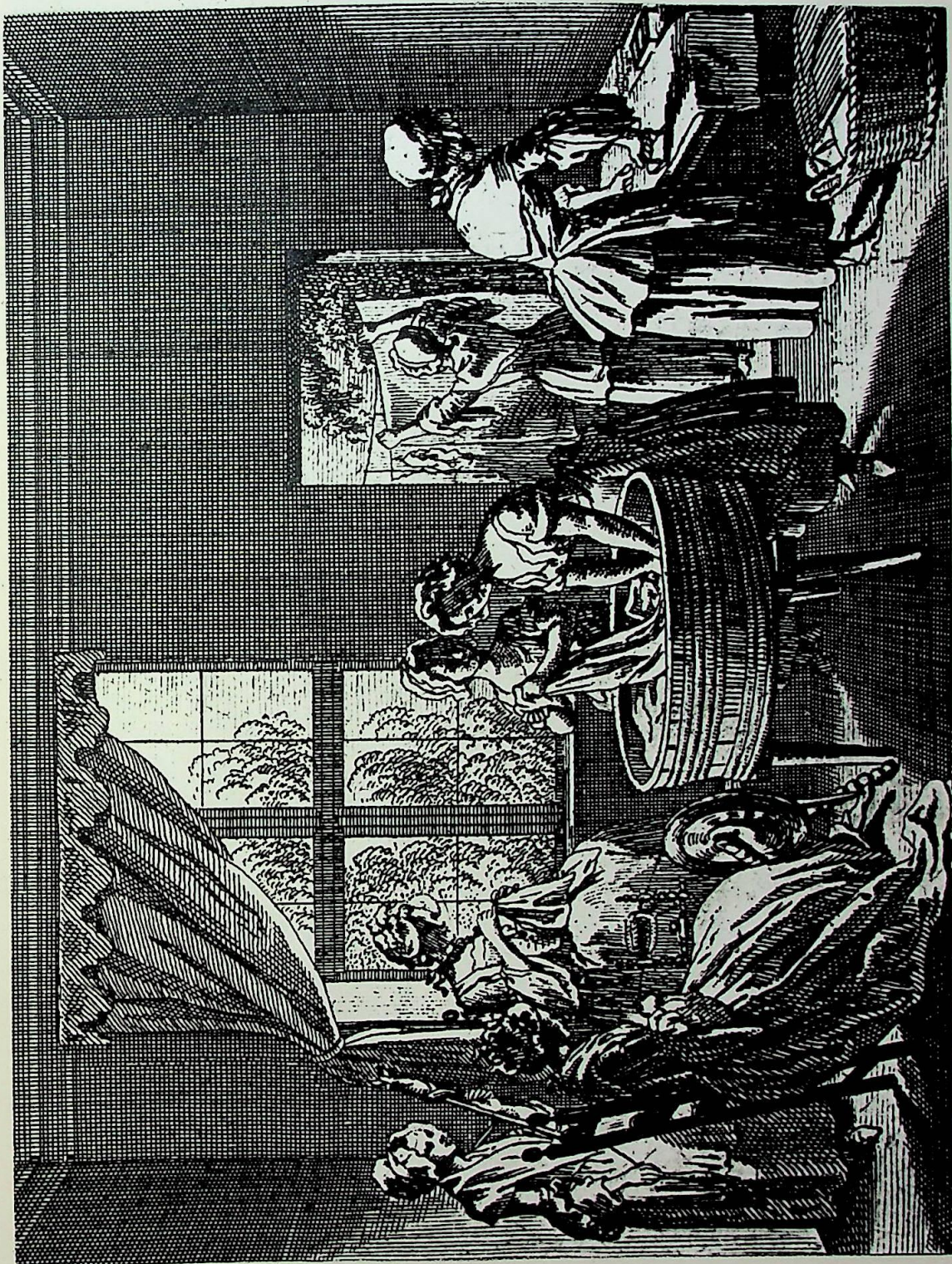


Fig 26: Women's room for sewing, washing, and ironing (1770) engraving by Daniel Chodowiecki (German, 1726-1801)

CHAPTER FOUR

Attempts to cross the class barrier:

In the eighteenth century, to dress above one's station was considered not only very extravagant but it was also seen as having the capacity to be deliberately deceptive. Clothes were the visible emblems of social standing and in England, in particular, people were very aware of their class level and there were fierce attacks on anyone who tried to cross the class barrier by copying their social superiors. This conscious copying of higher social levels became particularly prevalent during this period due to the custom the aristocracy had of giving their cast-off clothing to their personal servants. These items of clothing were normally stripped of their expensive trimmings but, even so, it was often difficult to distinguish the servant from the employer. It was easier to distinguish the men-servant because it was more likely that they would be in livery. Even so, however grand the livery, it represented a rise in status for a servant to be taken out of it.

Unlike men servants, waiting women wore no uniform at all. Defoe, for one, thought that they should and in 1725 wrote of the change in a servant girl on coming to London (fig. 27,18):

Her neat leathern shoes are now transformed into laced ones with high heels; her yard stockings are now turned into fine woolen ones with silk clocks and her high wooden pattens are kicked away for leather clogs. She must have a hoop as well as her mistress and her poor scanty linsey-woolsey petticoat is changed into a good silk one, four or five yards wide at least. In short, plain country Joan is now turned into a fine London Madam. 1

He also writes of the social embarrassment this finery could cause:

I remember I was put very much to the blush being at a Friend's House and by him required to salute the Ladies, and I kiss'd the chamber jade into the bargain for she was as well dressed as the best. 2

This tendency for maid servants to affect fashionable dress was deplored by many people at the time although a mistress was usually happy for her servant to dress well because this reflected her own status in society. And these were just below

Stairs maids; by the 1760's a lady's maid was virtually indistinguishable from her mistress. One documented occasion when a maid was taken for a lady of quality occurred in 1792. This was Betty Eden who was at court

And somehow by her Ignorance which did as well as impudence contrived, being very well drest to make her way, not knowing where she went till she actually arrived at the door of the Drawing Room, on one side of which she actually stood the whole time.....it seems she follow'd some Ladies who were very well drest but not in court dresses till she came to the Bar where they gave tickets but she was overlook'd and so pass'd in with them. 3

Richardson's Pamela, perhaps one of the best known servants in English literature, has a lot to say about her clothes and how whether she feels that they are suited to her station in life. We cannot overestimate the importance of this novel. It was what we could call a "best seller", perhaps for the first of such phenomenon in the history of English fiction, in that everybody read it; there was a "Pamela" rage throughout society. Motifs from the novel appeared on teacups and fans and people studied the etiquette of dress and station contained in the novel. At the beginning of the novel the dress of the maid is indistinguishable from that of her mistress:(Fig. 29)

A silk nightgown, silken petticoats, cambric head clothes, fine Holland linen, laced shoes. 4

Not only was the right of the maid to her mistress's clothes well established but she could sometimes receive finer clothing or indeed whole wardrobes in a bequest. In Pamela (1740), upon the death of her mistress, not only does the heroine receive mourning and the sum of four guineas but also

A suit of my late lady's clothes, and half a dozen of her shifts, and six fine handkerchiefs, and three of her cambric aprons, and four Holland ones..... two suits of fine Flanders laced head-clothes, three pair of fine silk shoes, two hardly the worse..... and the other with wrought silver buckles in them; and several ribands and top-knots of all colours; four pair of ine white cotton stockings, and three pair of fine silk ones; and two pair of rich stays. 5

All of the above are certainly more suited to a mistress's station and not the station of a lady's maid. As Pamela says, 'The clothes are fine silk and too rich and too good for me to be sure'. 6.

At least, she, unlike Molly Seagram in Fieldings Tom Jones (1749) realises the folly of wearing something so much grander than the village community. Molly, however, was foolish enough to wear to church a sack still richly trimmed with which she had received from the squire's daughter, Sophia Western who naturally had thought that the dress would have been suitably altered before being worn by someone of such inferior class as Molly, who is merely a serving girl. On entering the church

Molly had seated herself some time before she was known by her neighbours. And then a whisper ran through the whole congregation, 'who is she?', but when she was discovered, such neering, giggling, tittering and laughing ensued amongst the women. 7.

Realising that her new clothing would not be suitable for her station when she returned to her parents' home, Pamela invested in a new wardrobe more suited for a country girl:

I tricked myself out as well as I could in my new garb, and put on my round-eared ordinary cap; but with a green knot, my home-spun gown and petticoat and plain leather shoes..... a plain muslin tucker I put on, and my black silk necklace, instead of the French necklace my lady gave me; and put the earrings out of my ears. When I was quite equipped, I took my straw hat in my hand, with its two green strings and looked about me in the glass as proud as any thing. 8

When Pamela finally marries into the family of her late mistress, she was accepted not because of her impeccable virtue but because of her natural virtues and applied intelligence of the niceties of life - dress, deportment, conversation, literature and so on. And, once again, she dons the clothes once owned by her late mistress but this time in accordance with her new elevated position in society.

Fine linen, silk shoes, and fine white cotton stockings, a handsome quilted petticoat, a rich green mantua silk gown and coat; a French necklace, and a laced cambric handkerchief, and clean laced gloves; and taking my fan in my hand, I like a proud hussey, looked in the glass, and though myself a gentlewoman once more. 9

There had always been people who tried to copy their superiors but never had this position been reversed until about 1730, when English gentlemen began to wear what was regarded as working men's clothing:

There is at present (wrote an observer in 1739) a reigning ambition among our young gentlemen of degrading themselves in their apparel to the class of the servants they keep.....My Lord Jehu wears a plus Frock. (and at the theatre).....Some had those loose kinds of great-coats which I have heard called 'wrap-rascals' with gold laced hats slouched in humble imitation of stage coachmen; others aspired at being grooms. 10 (Fig 30, 31)

This tendency towards informality in menswear continued until even the more formal French adopted it and was soon deemed suitable for all occasions even for Royalty.

When Samuel Curwen saw the royal family in 1781, he thought the Prince of Wales 'affects much the Jemmy dress and air. Age will doubtless soften down the juvenile taste and affectation'. 11 (Fig. 32)

Indeed by the end of the century the Prince had progressed to a more mature softened down version of the Jemmy dress, due in part to the refining influence of Beau Brummell.

CONCLUSION

In the eighteenth century, clothing and etiquette became such an integral part of the very fabric of society that through these means a person's social position in life could be reinforced or even altered for the better. If a woman's clothing indicated that she was of the 'Beau Monde' and that her husband or father was wealthy enough for her to patronise the more exclusive modes, then her dress and bearing told people that she belonged to the 'Quality'; and through her own ingenuity would manage to stand out from her rivals.

The part played by dress in the regulation and civilizing of behaviour was an essential part of Louis XIV's grand plan in the seventeenth century to cope with what was in many ways a nasty, brutish and insolent aristocracy; 'Persons of quality must now become Persons of Taste' was the guiding rule, and for many nobles a brilliance of style in dress became almost their 'Raison d'etre'. The etiquette of dress which visibly demonstrated one's place in society was a tyranny gladly accepted by the ruling classes, for uniformity of Taste could also encompass and individualism of approach. 12



Fig 27: 'La Balayeuise' engraved after E. Bouchardon (1738)

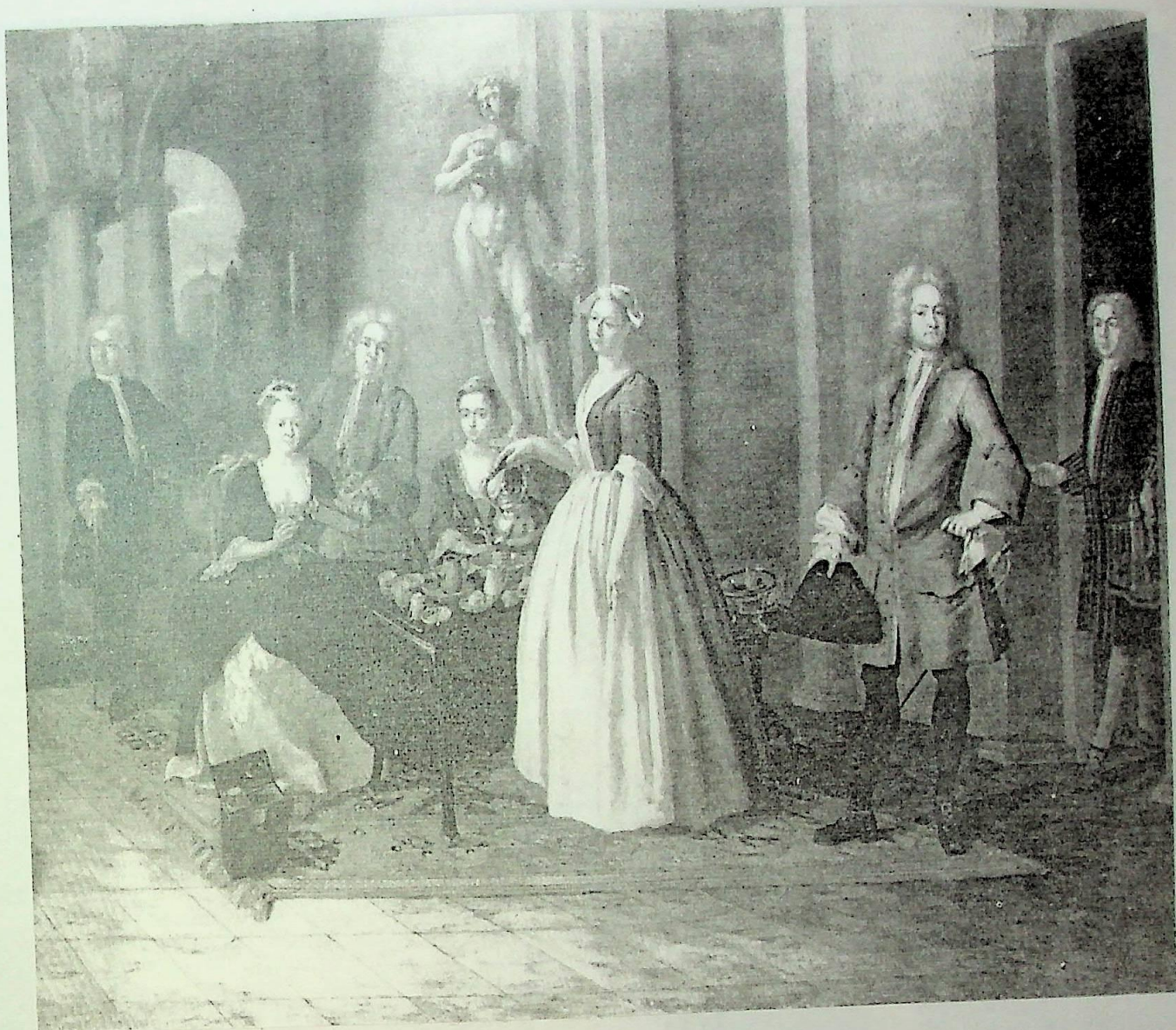


Fig 28: An English family at tea, (C. 1720)
J. van Aken.

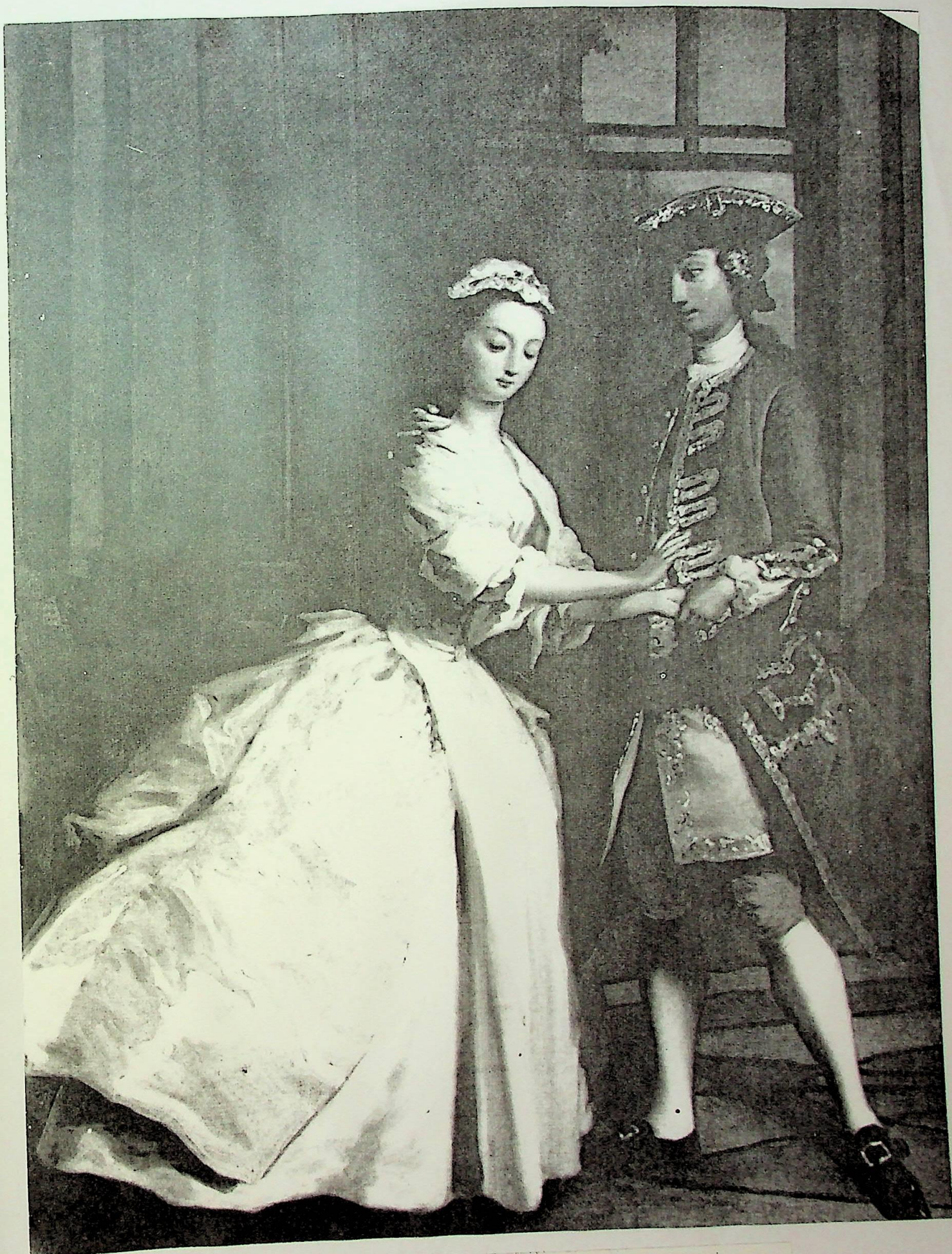


Fig 29: Pamela and Mr. B. By J. Highmore (1745)

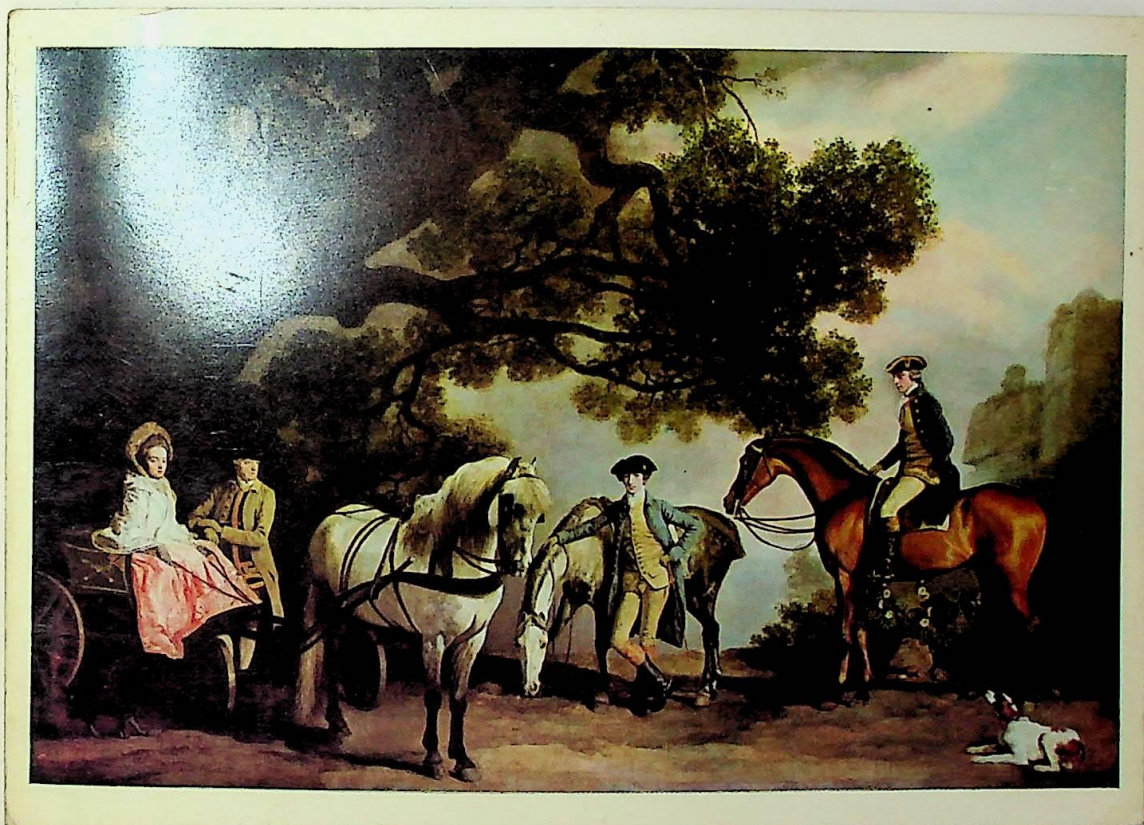


Fig 30: The Milbanke and Melbourne families, by George Stubbs (1724-1806)



Fig 31: Sir John and Lady Clerk of Penicuik, by Henry Raeburn, (1756-1823)



Fig 32: The Prince of Wales, (C. 1786) by George Stubbs.

APPENDIX I

Some gestures for use with the folding fan.

The positions:

First This may be described as the ordinary or normal position. The closed fan is held lightly between the tip of the thumb and the index finger of the right hand, which is then placed in the palm of the left hand when standing walking or making a curtsy the hands are held thus at the point of the bodice, the arms somewhat rounded. When seated, the hands rest in the lap in the above position.

Second (a) Place the tip of the closed fan in the upturned palm of the left hand, which is placed immediately below the left hand; rest the palm of the right hand, the fingers extended in a gentle curve, on the tip of the handle - the fan being vertical. The elbows are held a little away from the body in order to make the arms appear slightly rounded.

(b) Without moving the fan away from the hands, reverse the latter so that the left hand is now uppermost. This position can be used when either standing or seated. (Fig. 33,34)

Third The tip of the closed fan is pointed vertically downwards, so that it rests on the lap; the right hand assumes the same position as that in the second (a) while the palm of the left hand is placed lightly on the back of the right hand, the arms rounded as before. This attitude is suitable for elderly women e.g. Mrs. Malaprop.

Fourth: The left hand rests in the lap palm upwards; the right hand is placed in the left with the fan held vertically in the half opened position. The half opened position. The half opened position of the fan is sometimes used to hide the face when praying in church (fig 35)

Attitudes with the fan closed:

The tip of the fan is held against the face as follows:

- (a) to the lips (Be quiet we are overheard)
- (b) touching the right cheek (yes)
- (c) touching the left cheek (no)
- (d) lightly touch the tip of the nose (you are not to be trusted)
- (e) touching the forehead (you must be out of your mind)
- (f) rest the chin on the tip of the fan held vertically (your flattery annoys me)
- (g) Cover the left ear with the closed fan (do not betray our secret)
- (h) Hold the closed fan raised in front, and gaze at it with concentration (make yourself clear to me)
- (i) Point tip of closed fan horizontally, towards the hear (You have my love)
- (j) Yawns behind closed fan (go away, you bore me)

Attitudes with an open fan:

- (a) Hide the eyes behind widespread fan (I love you)
- (b) Hold the open fan over your head (I must avoid you)
- (c) Slowly lower the open fan, in the right hand till the sticks are pointing towards the ground (I despise you)
- (d) With the right hand turned palm uppermost, extend the open fan (like a plate towards the person) - (You are welcome)
- (e) With the open fan held pointing downwards, the back of the hand visible to the person in front, make quick brushing away movements (I am not in love with you) 13.



Fig 33: Lady Betty Germain, (1731) by C. Phillips.



Fig 34: Isabella Countess of Hertford, (1765)
by A. Roslin (Colour)



Fig 35: Charlotte Phillippine de Chatre de Cange, Marquise de Lanuire, by C.A. Coypel.

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