

# The Kimberley Gown

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VISITORS to The Metropolitan Museum of Art have known the Costume Institute's collections since 1946 when that institution was first housed in the Museum. Before that, the Museum's own Department of Renaissance and Modern Art had been collecting costume material in the Textile Study Room. The two collections existed side by side. Then in 1960 the Costume Institute became a regular department of the Museum, and plans were made to house it in new, more spacious quarters and to turn over to the Costume Institute the apparel kept in the Textile Study Room. The new installation and the transfer of holdings were planned for 1970 when the Museum would celebrate its Centennial year. Those plans have now come to fruition. What was already a great collection in the Costume Institute has now been graced by the addition of a second distinguished costume collection whose chief ornament is a masterpiece of the tailor's art. It is the late seventeenth-century English gown (Figures 1–3) that serves as the subject of this essay.<sup>1</sup>

\* Originally written when the author was Curator of Textiles, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

1. Acc. no. 33.54a,b.

2. In chronological order: *Art Treasures Exhibition 1932*, exhibition catalogue, auspices of the British Antique Dealers Association, at Christie's, London, October 12–November 5, 1932, p. 8, not illustrated; Andrew Carfax, "The Elizabethan Relics of Kimberley," *Apollo* 16 (1932–1933) p. 164 (and 163 also?), ill. on p. 163; A. F. Kendrick, "III—Textiles and Furniture" in "Art Treasures Exhibition," *The Burlington Magazine* 61 (1932) p. 172, fig. B on p. 173; "A dress that ranks as an art treasure . . .," *The Illustrated London News*, January 28, 1933, ill. and caption on p. 121; John Goldsmith Phillips, "An English Dress of about 1690," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 28 (1933) pp. 123, 124, fig. 1 on p. 123; Doris Edson, with text by Lucy Barton,

The gown has already been published a number of times.<sup>2</sup> It is curious that these authors—some of whom had the opportunity to study the gown at first hand—described it so inadequately. Their words leave the reader with the impression that the gown is important but rather dreary. The truth is that the Kimberley gown is elegant and beautiful, and it is also an immensely important monument in the history of costume. But to find this out, one must pause, look, and discover that truth. Blanche Payne, one of the four writers who took patterns of the gown, knew the correct approach: "One must see it to appreciate it, and the more closely it is examined, the greater the admiration and respect it arouses."<sup>3</sup>

Here is how these writers described the ground fabric: "beige coloured cloth with narrow stripes of dull orange-red and peacock blue"; "drab woollen cloth with narrow parallel stripes in blue and brown"; "brownish wool with orange and blue stripes"; "light taupe woollen goods (like a light broadcloth) with or-

*Period Patterns . . .*, a supplement to *Historic Costume for the Stage* (Boston, 1942) pp. 34–37, fig. 10 on pl. 11, pattern no. 10; Preston Remington, *English Domestic Needlework . . .* (New York, 1945) p. 4 and captions to pls. 4, 5 (detail of wide embroidered band on petticoat); Millia Davenport, *The Book of Costume* (New York, 1948) II, p. 599, figs. 1585, 1586 on p. 599; Barbara Snook, *English Historical Embroidery* (London, 1960) pp. 104, 105, line drawing as fig. 68 on p. 105; François Boucher, *Histoire du Costume en Occident de l'Antiquité à nos Jours* (Paris, 1965) p. 263, fig. 588; Blanche Payne, *History of Costume . . .* (New York, 1965) pp. 377, 378, 414, fig. 405 on p. 377, pattern drafts 13a–c on pp. 553–555; Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Clothes, 1600–1930*, with line diagrams by Margaret Woodward (New York, 1968) p. 304, fig. 18 opp. p. 112, diagram IX (pattern and drawings).

3. Payne, *History of Costume*, p. 378.



FIGURE 1

Gown with matching petticoat, made of striped woolen fabric and embroidered with silver-gilt yarns, English, from Kimberley Hall, Norfolk, about 1690–1695 (shown as restored in 1970). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 33.54a,b

FIGURE 2

Detail of the gown shown in Figure 1, the front of the bodice



FIGURE 3

Detail of the gown shown in Figure 1, the back of the bodice



ange and blue stripes”; “gray wool with brown and blue stripes edged in red”; “gray wool, striped in indigo blue and henna”; “dark grey woollen fabric with narrow woven stripes alternately brown and blue, edged with red” or “grey wool with brown and blue stripes”; “warm gray broadcloth, striped predominantly in royal blue and dull gold” or “grayed-tan wool with stripes of blue bordered with orange-red and dull gold bordered with rust” (which is almost right); “lainage bleu et argent”; “grey wool, striped in indigo blue and henna.”<sup>4</sup>

Now it is perfectly obvious that no one textile, no matter how deceptive its pattern, could possibly answer all those descriptions. To set the record straight, let it be said here that the fabric is not broadcloth but

4. The color notes appear, in the order of their quotation, in the following publications: *Art Treasures* catalogue, p. 8; Kendrick, “Textiles and Furniture,” p. 172; Phillips, “English Dress,” p. 123; Edson, *Period Patterns*, p. 34; Remington, *Domestic Needlework*, caption to pl. 4; Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II, p. 599; Snook, *Historical Embroidery*, p. 104, caption to fig. 68 on p. 105; Payne, *History of Costume*, p. 377, draft 13b on p. 554; Boucher, *Historie du Costume*, p. 263; Waugh, *Women’s Clothes*, p. 304.

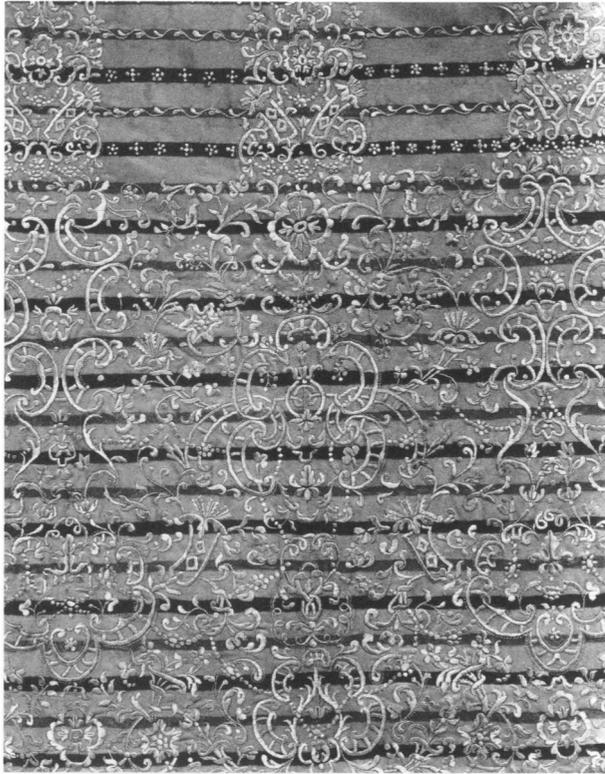


FIGURE 4  
Detail of the gown shown in Figure 1, the lower part of the embroidery decorating the petticoat

a soft, fine, tabby-woven (over one, under one) woolen fabric that has been given a napped surface though not the dense, felted finish characteristic of broadcloth. Its color is not gray, beige, or blue (or blue and silver) although “brownish” and “warm gray” may be admitted. There is more hue in the tone than these terms suggest. The fabric shows an orange yellow tone about two steps above middle in value and neutralized a bit more than three-quarters of its full intensity. It is a rich, creamy earth color incorporating both brown and green. The stripes, which run parallel to the weft, are much more colorful than the descriptions indicate, except for the third from last. The stripes appear in a regular sequence: an ultramarine stripe some  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches wide bordered by vibrant terracotta (“henna” will do) stripes about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch wide; then a stripe of the ground color, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch wide; then a stripe of dark mustard yellow about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch wide bordered

by a pair of magenta stripes each about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch wide. Therefore, four tones define the stripes, and the ground of the fabric shows a fifth tone. In addition to this, there are leafy vine and blossom patterns embroidered with silver-gilt yarns over the stripes (Figure 4), a detail that several other authors have mentioned.<sup>5</sup> The blossoms (four- and five-petaled, alternating) have been worked on the blue stripes, the leafy vines on the mustard stripes.

So much for the color. Since none of these authors set out to treat the subject exhaustively, it is not surprising that their appraisals of the gown’s rarity fail to stir the reader. Certain writers have already said, directly or by implication, that the gown is indeed rare: “The richly designed gown and petticoat en suite are unusually complete and well preserved.” “This dress has been pronounced by M. Maurice Leloir, of the Société de l’Histoire du Costume, to be without doubt the finest example of its date in existence.” “So few of them have been preserved that [this] dress . . . is quite exceptional,” or “few English costumes of this type have survived.”<sup>6</sup>

The costume is not only rare. It appears at present to be unique. Having made an intensive search through the pertinent literature, and having conducted correspondence with specialists in England and France as well as in this country, the present writer can state with some degree of confidence that if another civilian gown of this period exists in Europe or in this country it is lying away quietly, unknown to costume historians. Only one more or less contemporaneous English costume came to notice. It is the set of coronation robes belonging to Frances Theresa Stuart, the Duchess of Richmond and Lennox. Her effigy in Westminster Abbey wears them. This costume has not been, or cannot be, firmly dated; but it is said that the duchess wore the robes at the coronation of Queen Anne in 1702.<sup>7</sup>

5. Phillips, “English Dress,” p. 124; Snook, *Historical Embroidery*, p. 104; *Art Treasures* catalogue, p. 8; Kendrick, “Textiles and Furniture,” p. 172.

6. In the order of their quotation: *Art Treasures* catalogue, p. 8; Carfax, “Elizabethan Relics,” p. 164; Remington, *Domestic Needlework*, p. 4 and caption to pl. 4. Phillips, “English Dress,” p. 123, qualifies Leloir’s opinion with a “perhaps” and also observes that “complete European costumes of the seventeenth century are exceedingly rare.”

7. L. E. Tanner and J. L. Nevinson, “On Some Later Funeral Effigies in Westminster Abbey,” *Archaeologia* 85 (1936) pp. 176–179, pl. LVII, figs. 1, 2.

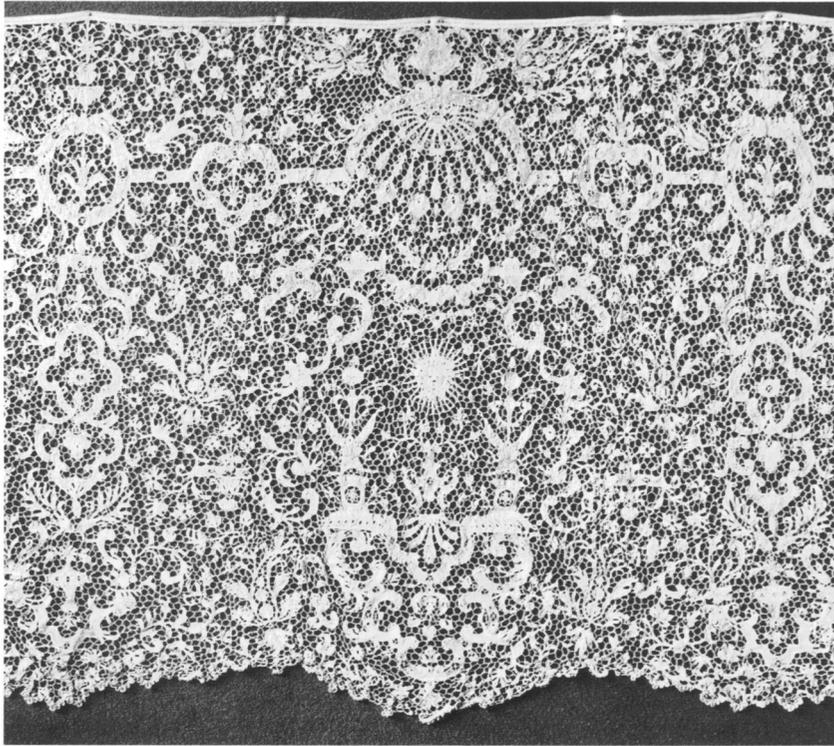


FIGURE 5  
Detail of a flounce of needlepoint lace, French, last quarter of the xvii century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 24.163

Although these robes reflect contemporary taste in civilian fashion, they nevertheless constitute a ceremonial costume and remain in a different category from the Kimberley gown.

A gown dated in the catalogue as “vers 1685” figured in the exhibition “Costumes d’Autrefois, XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe Siècles,” held at the Musée Galliera, Paris, April to October 1938.<sup>8</sup> Some of the costumes in that group were reconstructions made with genuine fabrics and also some genuine parts of costumes or accessories. It seems that the “vers 1685” gown was one

8. The exhibition catalogue, which was issued by the sponsoring body, the Société de l’Histoire du Costume de la Ville de Paris, gave the following brief description of this costume, no. 16, on p. 16: “Sur mannequin: Coiffeuse, jupe soie rose, robe soie noire brochée et fontange, vers 1685.”

9. Madeleine Delpierre, Conservateur, Musée du Costume de la Ville de Paris, reported in a letter to the present author (unpublished) that since the costume in question had not been photographed and since the description in the catalogue is so vague, it was not possible to identify the costume in the collections of the Société de l’Histoire du Costume, and that the costume placed on exhibition in 1938 as no. 16 was surely one of the group of costumes that were part genuine and part reconstructed. In Maurice Leloir, *Histoire du Costume de l’Antiquité à 1914* (Paris, 1935) X, p. 5, right

of the reconstructed examples, possibly with a genuine stomacher.<sup>9</sup>

Two specialists who know the Kimberley gown particularly well from having taken patterns of it suggested that a brocaded silk gown, preserved in the National Museum at Copenhagen and dated around 1710, is related to the English costume. Illustrations of this silk gown indicate that its cut shows one of the early stages in the eighteenth century’s process of transforming the late seventeenth century’s silhouette into its own terms.<sup>10</sup> Certainly it is related to the Kimberley gown,

half, there are front and back views of a gown that shows the features listed in the 1938 catalogue for no. 16, and this gown appears to be a reconstruction except for the stomacher, which looks genuine, if somewhat later than 1685. If this is not the same gown as that exhibited in 1938, and possibly photographed in some context outside the scope of the records now available concerning this collection, it is nevertheless still of interest and can serve to suggest how the gown that was exhibited might have looked.

10. Blanche Payne and Janet Arnold noted in letters to the present author (unpublished) the relationship between the two gowns. For the silk gown, see Payne, *History of Costume*, pp. 414, 415, fig. 434 on p. 413 (photograph of front), fig. 435 on p. 414 (drawing of back).



**FIGURE 6**  
Portrait of Queen Mary II. Mezzotint by John Smith after the portrait by Jan van der vaart, about 1689–1694. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Crown copyright

but the brocaded silk gown does not reflect the same fashion.

The date proposed here for the Kimberley gown—that is, about 1690–1695—is offered as a tentative suggestion based on the present writer’s interpretation of material relating to the history of fashion in costume at this period. Maurice Leloir dated the gown around 1690 when he saw it in the autumn of 1932, but we do not know on what considerations he based that date. Subsequent writers, with two exceptions, have adhered to this dating, which scarcely can be improved upon. Barbara Snook, who published the gown in her book on the history of English embroidery, dated it “at the very end of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th century,” possibly because of her observation that “the

rococo C curl dominates the design,” and that the embroidery on the petticoat shows “a light rococo design reflecting French taste.”<sup>11</sup> But the disposition of elements in the needlework pattern is strictly symmetrical, and the C scrolls turn inward, moving in exuberant but closed paths rather than the open, centrifugal paths taken by rococo ornaments, including C scrolls (Figure 4). The late Norah Waugh dated the gown around 1700, but there is no explanation given for that date in her book.<sup>12</sup>

It has not been possible to locate original documents that might contain the name of the gown’s owner or information on which to base a date. Without this, dated or datable pictorial sources offer the most promising avenue of research. Curiously, there are very few portraits of English women wearing gowns at this period. It seems to have been a fashion among painters or sitters to have the latter wear something less constricting. With a few exceptions, portraits of the last quarter of the seventeenth century show women wearing loose robes cut or tied around the torso to show the fashionable long-waisted, flat-bosomed line. One of the exceptions is a half-length portrait of Queen Mary (Figure 6). It may be dated between 1689, when she and William III were crowned, and the end of 1694, when she died. The queen wears a gown with sleeves rather like those of the Kimberley gown, and possibly also with bodice revers shaped like those of the Kimberley example, but so much of the bodice is covered by the lace lappets of the headdress that firm comparisons are impossible to make. We have to turn to contemporary French prints with fashion interest in order to find enough material to set up criteria to use in dating the Kimberley gown. These prints demonstrate quite clearly the fact that the silhouette represented by this gown—with certain variations from time to time—enjoyed favor in fashionable circles throughout the last quarter of the seventeenth century. To refine the date within this period, one must evaluate evidence gathered by studying the silhouette, the fabric, the embroidery, and any other details that seem significant in this context.

The silhouette of all fashionable gowns of this period (1675–1700) showed a relatively long-waisted bodice

11. Snook, *Historical Embroidery*, pp. 104, 105.

12. Waugh, *Women’s Clothes*, p. 304.

and an overskirt pulled back, or up and back, to expose part of the petticoat. The two front edges of the overskirt could be pulled around the body and caught together at the back, at waist height or lower. At the sides, the two parts of the skirt described two graceful arcs passing at a level somewhere between the hips and knees if the skirt draped low.<sup>13</sup> If it was pulled up high as well as back, the skirt bunched up over the hips (Figures 7–9) and gave the silhouette a bustle effect at the back of the waist and a pannier effect at the sides, the latter emphasizing the width of hips that—judging from the cut of the Kimberley gown—had already been extended slightly.<sup>14</sup> When the skirt draped low, only a wedge-shaped portion of the petticoat showed in front and just a bit of its lower part appeared at the sides. In most cases, whether early or late in the quarter-century, but mostly late, the overskirt rode well up on the hips, exposing all of the front, and most of the sides, of the petticoat (Figures 7, 9).

Judging from the available evidence, it appears that low draping was fashionable in the earlier part of the period, around 1675–1680, and passed out of favor soon afterward, and that high draping appeared as early as around 1680 but did not become usual until after 1685. The Kimberley gown has no original skirt fastenings to show how the skirt was meant to be draped, but there is other internal evidence to show that the overskirt was worn high on the hips. First, the wide vertical bands of embroidery have been worked all around the petticoat except at the very back. The mass of the gathered overskirt, with its train, would have covered the back of the petticoat in any case (Figure 7), so the absence of needlework in that place is not in itself remarkable. But what is significant is the fact that the vertical parts of the ornament, which decorate only the upper half of the petticoat, continue as far toward the back

13. Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II, figs. 1409, 1410 on p. 536, 1411 on p. 537; André Blum, *Les Modes au XVIIe et au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1928) ill. on pp. 22, 46 (lower left); Boucher, *Histoire du Costume*, fig. 577 on p. 260.

14. Camille Piton, *Le Costume Civil en France du XIIIe au XIXe Siècle* (Paris, n.d.) ill. on p. 224; Payne, *History of Costume*, fig. 406 on p. 378; Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II, fig. 1428 on p. 548, figs. 1454–1456 on p. 554 (these show the pannier effect particularly well); Leloir, *Histoire du Costume*, pls. 9A, 9C, 10 (lower right), all three particularly for the pannier effect. Payne, *History of Costume*, p. 377, had already pointed out that the side seams of the Kimberley gown had been cut “to accommodate some sort of padding.”

as they do. This shows quite clearly that most of the upper part of the petticoat was meant to be seen and consequently that the overskirt would have draped high. The silver-gilt embroidery yarns were surely expensive, and it seems unlikely that they would have been lavished on ornaments that were not going to be visible. Second, the plain seams running down the sides of the overskirt are constructed in such a way that the face of a seam shows on the outside of the skirt from the waist to a point about 9 inches away; and there the seam abruptly reverses itself, the face switching to the underside of the skirt while the raw edges appear on the outside. The tailor had to reverse the seams in this way because there was no lining fabric to mask the

FIGURE 7

L’Escarpolette, published by I. Danckerts, copied from a design by Nicolas Arnoult, French, probably last decade of the xvii century. Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whittelsey Fund, 49.95.244



underside of the skirt when it was partly turned over in the draped position (Figure 7). The faces of the side seams would show properly, and none of the raw edges would show, if the skirt were draped in such a way as to make its two front edges, or some folds of its mass, rest high enough on the hips to mask the turn of the seams, or no more than about 9 inches from the waist. These inches are not to be calculated entirely in the vertical direction since the seams move outward from the waist as well as downward. Had the skirt been meant to drape low, with just its two front edges masking the turning points of the seams, and the rest draping

low, there would have been no point in placing the turning point of the seam so high in the first place.

Striped textiles have often been in and out of fashion, and I do not know any way of dating them in their own right. In the dated fashion prints of this period striped fabrics appear most frequently between 1684 and 1688.<sup>15</sup> This is not to say by any means that stripes went

15. In addition to Figures 8, 9, and 11 in this article, dated 1687 and 1688, see the following prints of which examples are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum: J. D. de St. Jean, *Femme de qualité en deshabilité d'Esté*, 1684; Gerard Jollain, *Damoiselle en Robe de Chambre à la Siamoise*, 1688; Gerard Jollain, *Fille de qualité en habit d'Esté à la Chinoise*, 1688.

**FIGURE 8**

*Fille de qualité, en d'Eshabillé d'Esté*, by Nicolas Arnoult, French, dated 1687. Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whittelsey Fund, 57.559.5, leaf 3



**FIGURE 9**

*Femme de qualité en habit D'esté*, by Nicolas Arnoult, French, dated 1687. Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whittelsey Fund, 57.559.5, leaf 7



out of favor in women's gowns immediately after 1688 nor that they were not being used before 1684; indeed there are a number of examples in prints datable as early as around 1680 and as late as 1697.<sup>16</sup>

What evidence the pattern of the needlework on the Kimberley gown can contribute points again, and only in a general way, to the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Although the pattern has been called "Renaissance" and "rococo," it is entirely typical of its period, as certain writers have already pointed out.<sup>17</sup> There is a close relationship between this brilliant pattern (Figure 4) and the patterns of certain French laces of the last quarter of the seventeenth century (Figure 5).

Summing up the evidence presented so far, we can say that the Kimberley gown was cut to show the fashionable silhouette of approximately 1685–1700. Neither the ground fabric nor the embroidery pattern can help refine that date. Any refinements will have to be made through external evidence: specifically, more or less datable points of fashion.

For reasons that will be made clear presently, it is safe to assume that fashionable English women followed French fashions very closely and with very little time lag. Therefore, it is probably significant that certain French prints of the late 1680s and the 1690s show details that relate to corresponding features in the Kimberley gown. For example, some of the prints in this group show robings that make a right-angle turn at the hemline and continue around the edge of the train.<sup>18</sup> The Kimberley gown shows the same disposition of robing-like ornaments, but in this case they are worked in the ground fabric rather than being made separately and applied, as they appear to be in some of the gowns shown in the prints.

It seems that during the 1690s the sleeves of French gowns became longer and fuller than they were during the previous decade.<sup>19</sup> This appeared to have been a consistently expressed change, unlike the fashion for a certain degree of variety of form and length of sleeve in the preceding decade (Figures 9–11). The sleeves of the Kimberley gown are closer to those that were fashionable in the later decade.

A different detail relates the gown to the end of the earlier decade. There are a few prints dated 1688 or 1689 showing gowns trimmed with strips of galloon arranged to form a wedge-shaped unit at the back of



FIGURE 10

Dames de qualité en conversation dans les Thuilleries, by Nicolas Arnould, French, probably last decade of the xvii century. Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whittelsey Fund, 54.5.10.7

the bodice and bands around the cuffs of the sleeves and down the edges of the overskirt (Figure 11) as well as (in one case only) on the surface of the skirt and

16. Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II, fig. 1410 on p. 536 (dated variously, 1675–1680 approximately); fig. 1465 on p. 558 (1697); Leloir, *Histoire du Costume*, pl. 11D (dated as 1690–1695), pl. 27 (lower right, dated as 1695–1700); and Piton, *Costume Civil*, ill. on p. 231 (upper left, undated, but apparently in the 1690s).

17. *Art Treasures* catalogue, p. 8; *London News*, p. 121; Snook, *Historical Embroidery*, p. 104; Remington, *Domestic Needlework*, caption to pl. 5; Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II, p. 599.

18. Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II, fig. 1455 on p. 554; Piton, *Costume Civil*, ill. on p. 231 (upper left); Leloir, *Histoire du Costume*, pl. 27 (upper right).

19. Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II, compare figs. 1585 and 1586 (the Kimberley gown) with fig. 1428 on p. 548 and figs. 1454 and 1456 on p. 554; also with Leloir, *Histoire du Costume*, pl. 15 (upper right).



FIGURE 11  
 Femme de qualite Jouant du Clav'esin, by Nicolas Arnoult, French, dated 1688. Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whittelsey Fund. 48.90.1

petticoat.<sup>20</sup> The Kimberley gown shows a similar disposition of ornaments on the bodice, sleeve cuffs, and skirt edges, although the ornament itself is of a very different sort. Two of these prints show a curious detail near the back of the neckline that perhaps represents a point of fashion.<sup>21</sup> The facings of the revers on the front of the bodice do not seem to continue intact to

meet the facings decorating the back of the neckline; instead, the rear portions of the main facings have been gathered slightly some 2 inches from the ends, making it appear that separate short pieces of facing have been inserted. These apparent lines of joining, as well as the center and ends of the facing covering the back of the neckline, are covered with bits of galloon or jewels of some sort (Figure 11). The Kimberley gown shows neckline facings arranged in precisely this way (Figure 3).

If these points of fashion—the robings, sleeves, ornament placement, neckline facings—can be dated on the basis of the relatively few prints that show them, then the Kimberley gown can be dated around 1690 to 1695. But we face here the perennial question: do these small details concern matters of date, or do they only reflect individual preferences selected from a great variety of details that were available to clients at any one time?

We know nothing certain about the gown's history from the time it was made until 1932 when the firm of Acton, Surgey, Ltd., exhibited it at London in the *Art Treasures Exhibition* held at Christie, Manson and Woods from October 12 to November 5. On that occasion the same exhibitor also showed a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century embroidered sleeved waistcoat and (together with Mallet & Son, Ltd.) an embroidered velvet throne (or hangings from a bed and throne, set up as a throne?), both of which were described in the catalogue as having come from Kimberley.<sup>22</sup> Although the catalogue entry for the embroidered wool gown does not specify that it came from Kimberley, the exhibitor gave this as its provenance when describing it in a letter a few months later.<sup>23</sup> We have some nineteenth-century references to textile treasures belonging to the Wodehouse family of Kimberley Hall, which stands in Wymondham, some nine miles southwest of Norwich, in Norfolk. One of these references certainly is to the throne, one surely to the waistcoat, and one possibly to the woolen gown. Francis

20. In addition to Figure 11 in this article, see Piton, *Costume Civil*, ill. on p. 226 (upper left) and Leloir, *Histoire du Costume*, pl. 11c.

21. See Figure 11 in this article and also Piton, *Costume Civil*, ill. on p. 226 (upper left).

22. *Art Treasures* catalogue, pp. 7, 8. For the definitive statement on the throne, see William G. Wells, "Heraldic Relics from Kimberley," *The Scottish Art Review* 8, no. 4 (1962) pp. 17–21, 31. Mr.

Wells suggests several interpretations of the throne, one of which is (p. 18): "It is possible, however, that the 'throne' is a mixture of bed hangings and throne."

23. In a letter addressed to Joseph Breck at the Metropolitan Museum by G. M. Adams-Acton, dated January 24, 1933, the writer refers to the gown as "the magnificent late 17th-century robe which we possessed from the Kimberley Collection." The letter is preserved in the Museum's archives.

Blomefield, writing about Kimberley and the Wodehouse family, mentioned the throne as early as 1805.<sup>24</sup> About fifty years later, John Bernard Burke wrote about an important costume preserved in the house in this way: "There are, however, still visible some remains of this old house, which was visited by Queen Elizabeth in one of her progresses. She spent the night there, and the dress that she wore upon that occasion, is yet in the possession of the family."<sup>25</sup> A pity that the term *dress* is seems vague one. Does it refer in this case to "the bodice and sleeves of the Queen's dress, embroidered in gold spangles, left as a compliment to the lady of the house . . . still preserved at Kimberley House" mentioned by the Earl of Kimberley in his history of the family, printed in 1887?<sup>26</sup> The gilt and silver embroidered bodice, or sleeved waistcoat, to which this notice undoubtedly refers, together with a matching coif and so-called forehead cloth, as well as two pairs of embroidered leather gloves said to be part of the same royal gift, are all in the Elizabeth Day McCormick Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.<sup>27</sup> Or, returning to the 1854 reference, was Burke speaking instead of what Andrew Carfax called in 1932 "the Robe of Estate and skirt, which, from its regal character, suggests that it was worn by the Queen herself"?<sup>28</sup> As Carfax's description continues, it sounds more and more like the Kimberley gown: "The Robe and skirt are of striped cloth heavily embroidered with gold bullion in Renaissance arabesque ornament, and, like all the other articles, in perfect condition."<sup>29</sup> Still later in the same publication, he described what is almost certainly the same costume, the Kimberley gown, and it is hard to

draw any conclusion but that somehow he wrote twice about the same object: "Not the least remarkable of these relics is the complete dress of a lady of about 1690 (William and Mary). The dress, which hooks behind the waist, leaving the front open to show the underskirt, is embroidered in gold stripes on both sides of the cloth, and ends in a long train. The bodice is of the straight-fronted stiff type of the period, low in front, and the whole equipment is very weighty."<sup>30</sup> If there were two such gowns in the 1932 exhibition answering such similar descriptions, then one of them has managed to disappear quite successfully.

The Kimberley gown continued to evoke interest after the *Art Treasures Exhibition* closed. *The Illustrated London News* devoted a full page to it, with a large color illustration and a long caption, in its issue for January 28, 1933.<sup>31</sup> Letters in the Archives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art show that the Museum had already expressed interest in the gown and that negotiations for its purchase continued during the winter. The Museum bought the gown, with income from the Rogers Fund, from the firm of Acton, Surgey, Ltd., in April 1933. In 1934 and again in 1936 the Museum bought other textiles from the Kimberley Hall group: a late seventeenth-century embroidered linen coverlet and three matching cushions; a silk gown of the third quarter of the eighteenth century; an eighteenth-century embroidered linen apron; and a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century embroidered linen coif, unfinished and not made up.<sup>32</sup> The Kimberley gown is of course the most important of the five purchases. A detailed description of its materials and construction is in order.

24. Francis Blomefield, *An Essay toward a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk* . . . (London, 1805) II, p. 552, note 6.

25. John Bernard Burke, *A Visitation of the Seats and Arms of the Noblemen and Gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2nd ser. (London, 1854) I, p. 107.

26. John, Earl of Kimberley, K. G., *The Wodehouses of Kimberley* (privately printed, 1887) p. 39. The present writer did not have access to the original text and gives it as quoted in *Art Treasures* catalogue, p. 8.

27. Acc. nos. 43.243 (bodice or sleeved waistcoat), 43.244a,b (coif and triangular "forehead cloth"), all embroidered with silver and silver-gilt yarns and gilt spangles, on linen; and 43.246a,b and 43.247a,b, two pairs of leather gloves with embroidered cuffs. See Gertrude Townsend, "Notes on Elizabethan Embroidery," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 40 (April, 1942) pp. 25-27, 34, 35, including illustrations. In 1963, after John Nevins pointed out that the bodice or waistcoat had been remodeled about 1630, the museum staff restored it as much as possible to its original con-

dition (see *She Walks in Splendor*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, October 3-December 1, 1963, coif and waistcoat illustrated on frontispiece, and entries for these pieces, pp. 69, 73).

28. Carfax, "Elizabethan Relics," p. 163.

29. Carfax, "Elizabethan Relics," p. 163.

30. Carfax, "Elizabethan Relics," p. 164.

31. *London News*, p. 121.

32. The four purchases are recorded as follows: coverlet and cushions, acc. nos. 34.104.1-4 (Frances Little, "Two Early English Embroideries," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 29 [1934] pp. 188-190, fig. 2); gown, acc. no. 34.108 (Frances Little, "Two Costumes of the Eighteenth Century," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 30 [1935] pp. 40-42, ill. on p. 41); apron, acc. no. 36.128.1 (Frances Little, "Costumes, Accessories, and Textiles" *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 32 [1937] p. 34, not illustrated); coif, acc. no. 36.128.2 (Little, "Costumes, Accessories," pp. 35, 36, not illustrated).

The verbal description that follows ought to do for most purposes. For those whose interests concern the matter of reconstructing costumes of the past, it should be said that three scale patterns of the gown have already been published and that a fourth is being prepared for publication.<sup>33</sup>

The textile used for the gown was woven of woolen yarns. These yarns are thin and fine, and they have been closely interwoven in tabby binding. The fabric was napped to the point where its surface became frothy, so that it is very difficult to distinguish the individual yarns. At the time it was woven, the fabric must have had a special name, like the “Cloth of all kinds, Sarges, Stuffs, Bays, Kerseys, Sayes, Perristones, Perpetuanhs” mentioned by John Haynes in his account of the woolen trade in England in or around 1706,<sup>34</sup> or the shalloons, russells, tammies, camblets, crapes, and others recorded by historians of the trade.<sup>35</sup> Today we do not know precisely what each of these terms signified. Generically, the textile of the Kimberley gown probably belonged to the class of *stuff* rather than *cloth*. These were the two main headings under which woolen fabrics were grouped. Although nearly contemporary definitions do not state the matter in these terms, it seems that the term *stuff* included any relatively light fabric of wool that did not have the densely napped surface—almost like felt—of *cloth*. To us it seems an unnecessary distinction to have drawn, but apparently the distinction was significant around the time of the Kimberley gown. Edmund Verney, writing from Oxford to his father at home at East Claydon, on May 29, 1688, “believes that ‘stuff will be more modish than cloth this summer, and that most people will wear it. But however seeing you have Bought cloth already I am very well contented with a cloth sute.’”<sup>36</sup>

The fabric of the Kimberley gown shows intersecting yarns that appear—as far as one can distinguish them through the nap—to be identical; and there is no way to tell the warp from the weft. No selvage has survived to settle the matter, but a peculiarity in the construction of the gown suggests that the wefts run vertically

along with the stripes. This is not a warp-striped fabric, then, as a recent publication implied.<sup>37</sup> There are three butted seams on the body of the gown that could not be explained if the stripes ran with the warp. Two butted seams run across the bodice, one on each side, just below the line of the breasts; and the third seam runs entirely across the lower part of the back panel of the skirt, just before it meets the floor to become a train. The distance from each of the bodice seams to the hemline in front is 61½ inches, and from the shoulder seam to the butted seam below, in back, it is again 61½ inches. There would have been no point in making these butted seams (which were so masterfully executed that they are almost invisible) if the fabric had been used with the warp running in the vertical direction. In that case, the tailor need only have cut the three sections in single lengths, the front panels only some 13½ inches longer than they now are and the back panel some 32½ inches longer. The reasonable conclusion to draw from this evidence is that the fabric from which the gown was cut showed weft stripes, that it was at least 62 inches wide, and that it was used on its side, that is, with the warp running horizontally (vertically on the petticoat). Why was this done—was it a matter of economy? It is hard to imagine why the tailor could cut the gown more economically from a wide, expensive fabric, using little of it, rather than from a narrow, less expensive fabric, using more. The back part of the petticoat (and the right shoulder of the gown, where there is a butted patch) suggests that economy was not entirely forgotten as a consideration in confecting the gown. There is one more plain seam near the back of the petticoat than is necessary, another butted seam (running from waistband to hemline), and a narrow vertical panel at the very back that was made up of small rectangular pieces of the woolen fabric held together with butted seams. Since the petticoat measures 111 inches in circumference, and since the stripes run horizontally on this part of the costume, the tailor could have made the petticoat with only two pieces of the 62-plus-inch-wide fabric, each piece as long as the pet-

33. Edson, *Period Patterns*, diagram no. 10 (two plates); Payne, *History of Costume*, drafts 13a-c; Waugh, *Women's Clothes*, diagram ix. Janet Arnold has taken a pattern of the Kimberley gown with a view to publication at a future time.

34. John Haynes, *A View of the Present State of the Clothing Trade in England* . . . (London, 1706) p. 3.

35. John James, *History of the Worsted Manufacture in England* . . . (London, 1857) pp. 173, 197.

36. Margaret M. Verney (Frances Parthenope [Nightingale], Lady Verney), *Memoirs of the Verney Family* . . . , IV (London, 1899) p. 406.

37. Payne, *History of Costume*, drafts 13b, c on pp. 554, 555.

ticoat is high at its maximum, or 48 inches; and two plain seams would have sufficed. But instead of that, he made the petticoat from what seem to be pieces and scraps of fabric that were left over when he had finished cutting the gown.

We have no other gown to compare with this in terms of construction and orientation of the fabric, but we have quantities of French prints showing women wearing gowns with vertical stripes throughout (Figure 8), vertical stripes on the gown and horizontal on the petticoat (Figure 9), vertical on the gown and diagonal on the petticoat, or vertical on the gown with vertical and horizontal combined on the petticoat in a kind of chevron pattern.<sup>38</sup> Some prints show gowns of plain fabrics worn with petticoats made of striped fabrics, or plain fabrics trimmed with applied materials arranged in stripes, the stripes running horizontally. But none of these illustrations shows a gown with horizontal stripes. Therefore, it seems likely that the key to the puzzle of fabric orientation in the Kimberley gown is to be found in the realm of fashion. If the lady who ordered the gown had this fabric on hand and liked it particularly, or if she bought it because it had a special attraction for her, or if she was unable to find a warp-striped textile she liked, then the tailor would have had to use this wide, weft-striped fabric on its side in order to make the stripes run in the fashionable direction, or vertically. We know that warp-striped woollens of some sort were made in England during the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and probably both earlier and later as well; but perhaps they were not suitable for this use: “to make the same [a *buffyn*, a worsted fabric] a pearl of beauty, is to make it striped, by colours in the warp, and tufted in the striken.”<sup>39</sup>

The business of patches and extra seams in the petticoat has nothing to do with the condition of the gown as we understand “condition” in reference to works of

art. In those terms, the woolen fabric and the silver-gilt yarns have survived very well, notwithstanding the presence of a few small holes in the former. But most specialists have agreed that the gown has undergone some changes in form, and there are differing opinions concerning the extent of the alterations and restorations. My own examination of the costume, executed with the great advantages of unlimited access and time, and conferences with colleagues, has enabled me to make the following observations and to draw the conclusions that seemed to follow naturally from them.

The petticoat has a cut edge along the bottom, an edge that during an alteration program had been turned up with some other materials to make a false hem. There is no way of determining whether the present edge was turned to make a hem originally nor whether any of the woolen fabric was cut off along this edge. At present the cut edge follows the lower contour of the wide band of needlework more or less closely, dipping with it toward the back where the petticoat drops to form a slight train. On the other hand, it is certain that the top of the petticoat is gathered on a modern band and that some of the fabric has been cut away. There are indications that the petticoat’s fullness might originally have been controlled by a drawstring; if that is true, possibly the fabric forming the heading for the string was cut away together with enough of the fabric below it to make the dipping V-shaped contour now present at the front of the waist. This alteration appears to have been made concurrently with others that enabled a woman taller than the original owner to wear the petticoat. To effect the desired changes, the converter made up a circular band of the same woolen fabric, relatively fresh and unembroidered, measuring 4 to 5½ inches in height, and sewed it along the bottom edge of the petticoat. The seam—and possibly the entire band—might then have

38. See the following examples: Piton, *Costume Civil*, ill. on p. 227, two vertical-stripe gowns, one petticoat with horizontal stripes, the other with vertical stripes meeting horizontal stripes near the bottom in the center at mitered corners; ill. on p. 231 (upper left), vertical-stripe gown with petticoat covered with flounces (base fabric not clearly visible); ill. on p. 242 (right), vertical-stripe gown and petticoat (possibly not matching). Leloir, *Histoire du Costume*, pl. 11D, vertical-stripe gown and petticoat. Blum, *Les Modes*, ill. on p. 48 (lower left), vertical-stripe gown, petticoat with vertical stripes meeting horizontal stripes near bottom in center at mitered corners. Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II,

fig. 1410 on p. 536, vertical-stripe gown, petticoat with vertical stripes meeting horizontal stripes near bottom in center at mitered corners. Also, in the Print Department, Metropolitan Museum, a print by Gerard Jollain, *Fille de qualité en habit d’Esté à la Chinoise*, showing gown with vertical stripes, petticoat with diagonal stripes.

39. James, *Worsted Manufacture*, p. 144. This statement is taken from a document prepared by the worsted weavers of Norwich sometime around “the close of the reign of James I” (see pp. 139 ff.), and therefore it antedates the Kimberley gown by some seventy years.

been covered with galloon, lace, fringe, or some other material to mask the awkward join where neither the stripes nor the seams in the extra band corresponded to those in the petticoat. Then the worker lined the lower half of the petticoat, including the extra band, with a neutral ocher-colored silk taffeta; cut a pocket slit at each side above; sewed one or two small rectangles of fresh, unembroidered wool into a 4½-inch-high void at the top edge of the garment, in back—a void easily explained if one postulates the presence of a drawstring to gather the fullness, a string whose abrasive action and frequent knotting in this place eventually wore out the wool—and finally cut a placket at the center back, through the newly applied pieces of wool and down into the original fabric, to enable the wearer to enter the petticoat that now had a restricting waistband. All of these alterations, except the gathering on the waistband, show stitches made with a plied, ocher-colored sewing silk. None of this thread appears in the three plain seams and one butted seam that extend from the top to the bottom of the petticoat. These seams show what appear to be original sewing silks, one pale beige, not plied, the other dark brown and plied. The condition of the needlework adjacent to these seams proves that they have not been altered. First, the plain seams show on their inner faces narrow edges of woolen fabric that were left unembroidered, obviously prepared by the needleworker for seaming in just these places. Second, the embroiderer went over the plain seams after the tailor had joined up the preembroidered pieces of the petticoat and completed along the seam line certain small details that he had not been able to make whole when the separate parts of the petticoat carried separate parts of the pattern. These secondary stitches have survived intact, as have the primary stitches that form the pattern spanning the butted seam running down the front of the petticoat. Clearly, the petticoat has suffered no loss from its circumference except for the portions at top and possibly at bottom that have already been discussed. In its converted form, the petticoat was worn a long enough time for the silk lining to have accumulated a concentration of soil and wear at the center back, near the hemline, from contact with shoes. Later, someone cut the lining all around approximately an inch above the dropped hemline (where a silk tape had been sewn as a finish, inside), turned the extra band up to form a false hem inside,

and then stitched the lining down against the back of the new hemline.

Possibly at the time of one of these alterations the gown's sleeves were shortened or otherwise reshaped by cutting. Either then or in more recent times the cuffs were restitched to make them narrower. It was in recent times that the main sleeve seams were taken in from 1 to 2 inches and that the side seams of the bodice, running from under the arms to the waist, were also taken in about 2 inches. The two pleats at the front of the bodice, and the pleats at the back, have been altered. It seems likely that the back showed only two pleats originally rather than four.<sup>40</sup> The stitches holding the sleeves to the bodice, and those holding the facings to the bodice and neckline revers, appear not to be original, and most of the facings have been turned under at the edges more than they were designed to be. It is impossible to make an exact evaluation of the integrity of these areas since the construction of the costume shows certain inconsistencies of method and since there are no other gowns of this sort to compare it with. Happily, except for some relatively minor repair stitches in the upper parts of the side seams, all the seams of the gown's skirt appear to have survived intact. They show fine running stitches executed with plied dark brown sewing silk. The edges of the skirt, from the waist down and around the train and back again, are cut rather than hemmed. Since the tight, napped finish enables the cut yarns to resist raveling, it seems possible that these edges were never hemmed. On the other hand, the outer edge of the embroidered border is very close to the edge of the fabric, and here and there groups of gilt embroidery yarns pass right over the edge as they define a motif adjacent to and parallel to this edge. Although this detail may be taken as evidence that the edge was not cut after it was embroidered, it is equally valid to argue that someone cut away some of the edge—whether originally finished with a hem or not—so carefully that groups of stitches like these were

40. Leloir, *Histoire du Costume*, pl. 28 (lower right); Piton, *Costume Civil*, ill. on pp. 217, 236 (center figure only), 242 (left). All show backs of gown bodices rendered in such a way as to suggest the possibility that the garment had pairs of pleats flanking the central section. By contrast, Figure 11 in the present article and Piton, *Costume Civil*, ill. on p. 226 (upper left), show quite clearly that the gowns represented there have only one pleat on each side of the central section.

left intact and firm thanks to the rigidity of the yarn. Also, in certain places in the body of the gown, the sharp edges of the flat wire forming the skin of the gilt yarn have cut through the woolen fabric forming miniature whipped-over cut edges in those places where, as at the outer edges, a group of yarns are massed together to form a long, relatively straight contour.

The gown might have been made with a partial lining. The overskirt clearly was never meant to be lined, since the needlework decorating it shows stitches finished equally well on both sides. The underside of the same fabric was meant to be seen when the skirt was gathered up and partly turned over (Figure 9). When an overskirt was made of a nonreversible fabric, like brocaded silk or wool, then presumably it had to be lined to mask the wrong side of the textile (Figure 7, figure at right). It seems likely that in some cases linings were used only or primarily in order to bring a different color or texture to that part of the costume. These observations would apply also to the “manto” or mantle that turns up in contemporary literary sources. That garment was a separate overskirt worn with a bodice and petticoat, the whole costume resembling a gown in all but a few details. We know that mantos were lined too: “We went in a hakeny cotch to Mr. Cops, and I bought a black manto of a waved silk and lined it with black velvet, and black velvet bodys and petcot to it, and black fringes round the petcot.”<sup>41</sup> The bodice of the Kimberley gown has no lining, but on the inside, at the back, the silver-gilt embroidery yarns pass through a layer of dark chocolate-colored silk taffeta that has deteriorated and is falling away. Possibly the entire bodice once showed such a lining; on the other hand, it may well be that the embroiderer needed the silk behind the more loosely woven woolen fabric to help anchor the heavy stitches. These stitches—that is, the ones decorating the triangular space at the back of the bodice—are not neatly finished on the back since that part of the gown would not be worn reversed. The areas of needlework on the petticoat show the same treatment inside the garment. Here lightweight silk taffetas of two colors answer the same purpose: some silver-gilt stitches pass through dark chocolate-colored silk; others penetrate silk of a warm, dark khaki shade. The small motifs worked in the horizontal stripes pass through the wool alone, suggesting that the purpose of the taffeta was indeed to help anchor the metallic yarns

in places where the pattern required that the yarns be used densely. Yet a third taffeta, neutral ocher in tone, lines the lower half of the petticoat. As noted above, this lining is not original, at least in its present place and form. We know that some petticoats had linings: “Sister Noel has bought a very fine manto of Mr. Sharod; it cost her 3 pound a yard; her petcot is of the same and lined with black saten.”<sup>42</sup>

The matter of linings raises the question of whether this gown was intended specifically for winter wear. John Goldsmith Phillips observed that the fabric is heavy enough to serve as protection against damp, cold weather.<sup>43</sup> Indeed this is so, and perhaps it would have been even more so if the bodice and petticoat had been lined with closely woven silk. But it seems that in the past woolen garments were worn in summer in England, even though there were some who objected. Sir Edmund Verney, having sent a cloth suit to his son at Oxford, wrote to the young man on June 30, 1688, “I perceive you Think yr new Cloathes too warm for Summer, But I Do not, if it Bee a ffault, I am sure it is a good one.”<sup>44</sup> The French regarded ermine or velvet as one fashionable answer to discomfort from cold. Two prints from around 1680 show women in formal and informal winter costumes, and they specify the names of the materials being worn.<sup>45</sup> The formal costume includes a black velvet gown, a marten capelet, a petticoat made of strips of ermine applied to a black fabric of unspecified weave and fiber, and a number of accessories. The informal costume includes a mantle of brocade with gold figures lined with fire-colored plush, an outer petticoat of matching plush and an inner one of brocade with silver figures and bordered with ermine, some accessories, and presumably a bodice, whose material is not noted. Until we find evidence that woolen gowns were worn characteristically in one season or another in England, the matter rests unresolved.

Illustrations of the Kimberley gown show the details of its construction quite clearly (Figures 1–3). The bodice and skirt were constructed as one garment. The

41. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Twelfth Report, Appendix, part V, *The Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Rutland, K.G., preserved at Belvoir Castle*, II (London, 1889) p. 97.

42. *Manuscripts*, p. 101.

43. Phillips, “English Dress,” p. 124.

44. Verney, *Memoirs*, p. 407.

45. Piton, *Costume Civil*, ill. on p. 206.

wide pleats starting at the waistline in front pass up to the shoulder seams where they meet corresponding pleats that pass down to the waist in back and finally lose themselves in the folds of the skirt (Figures 2, 3, 10, 11). The skirt is so long in front that if allowed to hang free about 17 inches of it would rest on the floor. What appear to be robings bordering the front edges of the skirt and the opening of the bodice are in fact composite units. From the hemline to the waist they are borders of embroidery worked directly in the ground fabric; and from the waist upward they are separately cut facings sewn to the revers of the bodice. The facings continue over the shoulders and become the sides of the square neckline; at the back they meet another facing that completes the neckline. The triangular shape and large scale of the facings at the front of the bodice, and their elaborate needlework ornamentation, might indicate that the gown was meant to be worn without a stomacher. Certain prints show that some gowns were worn without stomachers about this time (Figures 8, 10), and some of them have faced revers or robings of this sort.<sup>46</sup> But in some cases gowns with the same construction at the bodice opening were worn with stomachers (Figure 7). The stomachers shown with the Kimberley gown in photographs published earlier than the ones reproduced in this article were not originally associated with this gown but were made from pieces of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century needlework or bits of metallic galloon and lace.

In buying or commissioning an embroidered costume, the lady who wore the Kimberley gown followed a tradition long observed in England. Portraits of English men and women dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often show the subjects dressed in embroidered garments or accessories.<sup>47</sup> The embroiderer who worked this gown used only two stitches, satin stitch and stem stitch, and two kinds of yarn, both of silver gilt. The narrower yarn shows a bright yellow

silk core with a tight Z twist, wrapped spirally and very closely with flat silver-gilt wire in the S direction. Similar yarns, plied in three, make up the slightly thicker yarn. Where the needlework pattern decorates a surface whose shape changes in its course, as the facings on the revers of the bodice and the shaped facings on the neckline do, the pattern expands or contracts to accommodate the shape. Possibly the original needlework pattern took these subtle variations into account; possibly the embroiderer adapted the ornaments to the requirements of this gown. A whitish substance shows at the edges of certain motifs here and there over the surface of the gown. This must be the material the embroiderer used—a paste or paint?—to fix the pattern on the fabric after it had been transferred to the surface, probably by pouncing. Perhaps the embroiderer made the necessary scale and shape changes at this stage of the work.

The petticoat's knee-high border of silver-gilt needlework is the chief decoration on the costume. It is probably not fortuitous that it resembles a flounce of gold lace. Single or multiple lace flounces, whether of linen or metallic yarns, often served similar functions in French costumes at this time. There is some evidence that lace was used in this way in England too, but perhaps needlework took its place occasionally, as appears to have happened with the Kimberley gown.<sup>48</sup> Certainly fringes served as petticoat flounces in England:

M<sup>is</sup> Botts rett to know which way thay lays the petcots, but as yet I cannot give you an account, for I am told the las is not yused, and in ded I have [not] seen any petcots but what has been ermen, and mad up just like you one ermen petcot. Three frenges is very mutch yused, but they are not sett upon the peteot strat, but in waves; it does not luke well, and the fringes that is yused in that fashion is the plane twested fring not very deep. I hear of som that has nine frenges sett in this fashion.<sup>49</sup>

46. Leloir, *Histoire du Costume*, pl. 11E; also apparently (the representation is less explicit) the following: Boucher, *Histoire du Costume*, fig. 586 on p. 263; Blum, *Les Modes*, ill. on p. 46 (lower left and lower right).

47. For the sixteenth century, see C. Willett and Phillis Cunningham, *Handbook of English Costume in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1954) figs. 2 on p. 20, 9 on p. 36, 23 on p. 65, and 57 on p. 151; also, Davenport, *Book of Costume*, I, figs. 1185 and 1186 on p. 444, 1192 and 1193 on p. 447. For the seventeenth century, see C. Willett and Phillis Cunningham, *Handbook of English Costume in the*

*Seventeenth Century* (London, 1955) figs. 16 on p. 44, 34 on p. 90; also, Davenport, *Book of Costume*, II, figs. 1469 on p. 561, 1474 on p. 564, 1502 on p. 571, 1519 on p. 578.

48. John or Mary Evelyn, *Mundus Muliebris: or, the Ladies Dressing-Room Unlock'd* . . . (London, 1690) pp. 2–3: "Short under Petticoats pure fine, / Some of *Japan* Stuff, some of *Chine*, / With Knee-high Galoon bottomed, / Another quilted White and Red; / With a broad *Flanders* Lace below." This is part of a satirical poem listing the clothes a lady of fashion must have.

49. *Manuscripts*, p. 99, a letter written in December 1685.

This observation of Bridget Noel's, one of Lord Campden's daughters, shows that England was not without her fashion-conscious citizens. According to one statement, published in 1694:

after the Restauration of King *Charles* the Second, *England* never saw, for matter of wearing Apparel, less Prodigality, and more Modesty in Clothes, more Plainness and Comeliness than amongst her Nobility, Gentry and Superior Clergy; only the Citizens, the Country-People, and the Servants, appeared clothed, for the most part above and beyond their Qualities, Estates or Conditions, and far more gay than that sort of People was wont to be in former times. The Men at present are not much guilty of Extravagancy in Attire, but the Women are in nothing so fantastical as to their Dresses (Commodos as they call 'em) for the Head; and indeed in all their Apparel, from the Lady to the Servant-Maid, they are too Expensive and Whimsical.<sup>50</sup>

This is not a very explicit picture of the conditions under scrutiny, but there is no doubt that even this very conservative observer noticed the women's head-dresses. As for the attire of English men, it may not have been *very* extravagant, but some men chose things that would not have gone down very well with a partisan of sumptuary laws. In 1688, Sir Miles Stapleton, Bart., of Yorkshire, a man of refined tastes who often visited London, bought "3-½ yds. of rich flowred velvet at 13s. a yard for a pr. of britches for myself."<sup>51</sup> In the same year, when Edmund Verney's father sent him those heavy clothes at Oxford, Sir Edmund wrote to him on May 26 and assured him in regard to the tailor, "I Gave Him great Charge to make yr Cloathes Gentill and Modish as can Bee."<sup>52</sup> The younger man was certainly fashion conscious, as part of his reply shows: "I hope you will consider to buy me some good shirts or elce some sort of wastcoat sutable for Summer ffor it is not fashionable for any Gentleman to go Buttened up either summer or winter but especially summer. I shall likewise want new stockings and lased ruffles to weare with my new clothes."<sup>53</sup> A month or so later he asked that he might have a pair of breeches made of

silk as his next ones "for variety's sake." His father acted on this request by ordering for his son "a pair 'of Damask Silk Breeches, as Gentile as any Body weares Them . . . in a little Deale Box with a payre of modishe shoes Buckles.'"<sup>54</sup>

Like these men, certain English women were very much aware of the demands of fashion. John Evelyn or his daughter Mary wrote a satirical booklet published at London in 1690, *Mundus Muliebris: or, the Ladies Dressing-Room Unlock'd*. . . . It contains a poem listing the clothing a lady of fashion ought to have by her. The list is long. The publication also contains *The Fop Dictionary*, where there are definitions of fashion terms. Such terms are certainly spelled better here than in Bridget Noel's letters, but they do not come to life as they do when they clatter off her deliciously gossipy pen. Bridget lived in the midlands, but now and then she got up to London. Whether she picked up the fashion news there or on home ground is not clear; but it is sure that she drank it all in and retailed it in her letters. She had firm opinions about fashion and design in clothing. In a letter of May or June 1686, she tells her sister, the Countess of Rutland, "My Lady Gansbourer meet us at Burley, but in sutch a dres as I never saw without disput. Her iengan [Indian?] manto is the worst of the kind, it is purpel, and a great dell of green, and a letel Gould, and great flours, ther is som red with the green, and noe lining, which luks most a bomenable."<sup>55</sup> Nor did she like the costume that the same lady—another sister—wore on a different occasion: "My sister Gansbor was in her fritful red manto and petcot, and all the rest of the ladys was very fine, but of ther clos you shall have an account in my next."<sup>56</sup> And she was proud of her original fashion ideas—or perhaps amused by her mistakes: "I am wonderd at for bying a black petcot, for they say black mantos is worn, but colerd petcots with the mantos."<sup>57</sup>

"My sister Gansbor's" red manto and petticoat presumably matched. That perhaps suggests that she too followed a fashion other than the one that decreed that colored petticoats must be worn with black mantles or

50. Edward Chamberlayne, *Angliae Notitia: or, the Present State of England: With Divers Remarks upon The Ancient State thereof* (London, 1694) p. 462.

51. J. Charles Cox, "The Household Books of Sir Miles Stapleton, Bart., 1656–1705 [Continued]," *The Ancestor*, no. 3 (October 1902) p. 156.

52. Verney, *Memoirs*, p. 405.

53. Verney, *Memoirs*, p. 406.

54. Verney, *Memoirs*, p. 408.

55. *Manuscripts*, p. 109.

56. *Manuscripts*, p. 108.

57. *Manuscripts*, p. 98.

that “One black Gown of Rich Silk, which odd is / Without one Colour’d Embroider’d *Bodice*.”<sup>58</sup> The owner of the Kimberley gown also followed the fashion for matching parts of a costume. But she preferred relatively neutral tones to the brilliant colors commented upon in Bridget Noel’s letters. In addition to the colors already mentioned, she speaks of “a carlet [scarlet] and silver petcot . . . a night gown and petcot of a very pritty silk of black and Gould, and carelet.”<sup>59</sup>

The happy hedonism behind all this also finds expression in the article “Apparel, or the Ladies Dressing-Room” in *The Ladies Dictionary*, published at London in 1694: “Apparel and Ornaments are not only for shrouding Nakedness, and *screening the pinching Cold*, but for setting out the shape and proportion of the Body, and rendering the Fabrik of Mortality more *Airy and Charming*.”<sup>60</sup> Then the author observes that “the *French* for the most part have given them Names, as well as communicated the *Fashions* to us.”<sup>61</sup> The French certainly created the terms and the fashions, and they communicated them across the Channel in at least three ways. The first was the medium of prints showing people fashionably dressed. This would have been the easiest means of disseminating fashion news, the prints either loose or bound into a periodical like the *Mercurie Galant*. Second, illustrations of fashions in three dimensions, with real materials, went to England in the form of fashion “babies” or dolls. The literature of fashion history often refers to such traffic, but specific instances of it before the middle of the eighteenth century are hard to find. Possibly it is safe to take as fact “Mr. Spectator’s” editorial comment published on January 17, 1711/1712, even though the two letters it prepares for are too good to be true:

I presume I need not inform the polite part of my readers, that before our correspondence with France was unhappily interrupted by the war, our ladies had all their fashions from thence; which the milliners took care to furnish them with by means of a jointed baby, that came regularly over once a month, habited after the manner of the most eminent toasts in Paris.<sup>62</sup>

58. Evelyn, *Mundus Muliebris*, p. 2.

59. *Manuscripts*, p. 98.

60. *The Ladies Dictionary; Being a General Entertainment For the fair-Sex . . .* (London, 1694) p. 10.

61. *Ladies Dictionary*, p. 10.

62. See *The Spectator . . .*, I (Philadelphia, 1829) p. 360, no. 277.

Finally, we know of one French milliner who crossed the Channel to practice her trade in England, and it seems reasonable to think that others would have done the same. In his diary entry for March 1, 1671, John Evelyn mentions “a French pedling woman, one *Madame de boord*, that used to bring peticoates & fanns & baubles out of France to the Ladys.”<sup>63</sup> An editor’s note published with that entry explains that the reference is to Madame Henriette de Bordes d’Assigny, who is mentioned in state documents between 1670 and 1683, at the earlier date as one of the queen’s dressers.

Perhaps these migrant milliners helped to spread from France to England the craze for extremely tall headdresses. Women could wear their head ornaments supported on a silk-covered wire frame, or *commode*, and make an even taller coiffure *à la Fontanges* by adding a tapered, pleated muslin or lace extension (the “top-knot”) at the top (see Figure 1 for a reconstructed example). To us, the *commode* and *Fontange* are distant and romantic things. We can with equanimity regard them as charming or ridiculous. But to people living at the time the Kimberley gown was worn, when the fashion was new, towering headdresses seemed delightfully or hideously outrageous. They made a natural target for satirical comment. The ballad of which the following stanza is a part was sung at Bartholomew Fair and published in 1691:

There’s many short women that could not be  
match’d,  
Until the *top-knot* came in fashion;  
Tho’ they wore their shoes high, both painted  
and patch’d,  
And humour’d the tricks of love’s passion:  
But now by the help of our rousing *commodes*,  
They wheedle young men to come nigher;  
For a wench that is short, in bed, can make sport,  
As well as one twenty yards higher.<sup>64</sup>

A tall headdress suitably finished off the long, elegant silhouette of the gowns or bodice-and-mantle costumes that fashionable women wore at this time. But whereas the headdress went completely out of fashion

63. E. S. de Beer, ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn*, III (Oxford, 1955) p. 572.

64. Frederick W. Fairholt, ed., *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume: from the 13th to the 19th century*, vol. XXVII of the Percy Society’s *Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature . . .* (London, 1849) p. 198.

early in the eighteenth century, the basic concept of the gown continued, with changes in detail, until almost the end of that century, to be revived (superficially imitated rather than developed), from around 1870 to 1890. To the best of our knowledge, the Kimberley gown is the only surviving civilian costume that embodies that archetypal concept.

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