CHAPTER THREE

THE IMAGE OF THE ENGLISHMAN

The Politics of Appearance

The study of appearances, a favoured subject of gender and cultural historians, has often got short-shrift in the history of ideas, and yet, unfairly so, if we consider that the dominant or desirable aesthetic of an era or a people reveals values, distinctions and attitudes with great immediacy and vividness. It is much more apposite to see how material and intellectual culture feed off each other than regard them as discrete entities. Thanks to work being done by cultural and gender historians, we are now closer to understanding how identities of various kinds were materialised through clothes.¹ Why are the image-makers and image-breakers so crucial to our story about identity formation? Appearances, one could say, came to matter in new ways in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance world. This was, in part, because of the discovery of ‘things’,² of the increasing scale of consumption and the trickle-down effect of courts on the socio-cultural habits of wider publics. This was, in the words of William Cornwallis, an ‘Age [...] of Taylors’.³ Clothes were the ‘body of the body’ as Erasmus had put it and as such became a focus for much energetic comment and contestation, as contemporaries assessed their relationship with virtue, social hierarchies, classical and religious values, gender and national identity. The subject of fashion in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England was no exception to this wider phenomenon, and to judge from both governmental and non-governmental sources, it was the foreignness of both textiles and clothing styles that helped to make it so. The sumptuary legislation charts the social and economic problems associated with the influx of such luxuries: it was felt, for example, that they would destroy the delicate balance of trade and disrupt God-given hierarchies. All these subjects have been well-covered in the literature.⁴ The concern here is rather with the thought of those who saw it as impinging upon a sense of national self.

¹ See, for example, Jones and Stallybrass 2000, Kuchta 2002, Vincent 2003, Rublack 2010.
² Rublack 2010, xx.
³ Cornwallis (1600–1), sig. L8r.
⁴ For a general account of sumptuary laws see Baldwin 1926; on the Tudor period in particular see Hooper 1915, pp. 433–449; see also Coleman and John 1976, pp. 137–139.
To understand just why appearances became a matter of such moment, it is necessary to engage with the great paradox surrounding early-modern attitudes to fashions more generally. At one level, there is a common propensity to play up the superficiality of the sartorial in all its frivolous exteriority and caprice, suggesting thereby that it was a matter of little weight: quite fittingly, it was at this time that the word ‘fashion’ acquired the connotation of constant change. Yet, if the matter were as superficial as this implied, it is surely logical to ask why there was such overt anxiety about it and why it was deemed so important to repeat *ad nauseam* that it was unimportant. One could argue, of course, that it simply made for good satire (and austere didacticism), which is true as far as it goes. The overdressed are types that everybody loves to hate. Nevertheless, there is a more profound reason. In many of the texts there is evidence not merely of disgust or a desire to poke fun, or even the poor man’s habitual envy of what is not his, but of fear: a palpable fear that seems due to a belief that these fashions could actually work deep personal and societal transformations. There is a sense, in short, in which clothes are thought to ‘make’ the man or indeed unmake him. Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass have a point then in saying that fashion was, for the early moderns, an apparent ‘superfluity’ that had the ‘power to constitute an essence’, which had, in short, a disproportionate capacity to establish identity in a highly visible and public way. Ulinka Rublack is along the same lines in thinking that clothing was regarded not just as an external but as something which moulded a person and materialised his/her identity. This constitutive power of fashion is reflected in the very etymology of the word: *factio* in Latin means the action or process of making. But the converse was also true, because it was felt that fashion had the capacity not only to establish identities, but also to destabilise them. This fundamentally explains why contemporaries fretted so much about the threat continental fashions posed to what was native and natural.

**A Golden Age of Native Dress**

As with speech, the construction of Englishness present is very much reliant on a particular version of Englishness past. One of the points constantly made in favour of plain dressing is that it is truly historic. The

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5 *OED* sub fashion 10, 11.

6 Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 3; Rublack 2010, p. 138.
version of the past offered is organic, mythicized, sentimental and nostal-glich. It is all too easy to dismiss nostalgia merely as a reflective mood rather than a tool, to see it as nothing more than the emotional resort of the crank, betraying a perverse inclination to put the clock back after having failed to prevent it going forward. All this is to do it genuine disservice. There need be nothing more self-conscious and, dare I say it, politicised about the careful selection of past events it entails, nothing more deliberate than their presentation in an emotive way. This, I would argue, is the nature of nostalgia in the Tudor and early Stuart period, as regards its reflections on dress.

William Harrison, the historian and obsessive chronologist, provides an obvious starting point in his section on English ‘apparel and attire’ in *The description and historie of England*. This is a crisp, passionate polemic against the ‘phantasticall follie of our nation’ in this matter and a firmly-drawn contrast with former times. It is the latter that draws our attention in the statement: ‘Neither was it euer merrier with England, than when an Englishman was knowne abroad by his own cloth, and contented himselfe at home with his fine carsie hosen, and a meane slop’. Paradoxically, in this unspecified period, the Englishman was at once indistinguishable at home and distinctive abroad: precisely the kind of clothes that made him disappear among his compatriots made him stand out everywhere else. This is just as it should be, according to Harrison. The traditionalism in such a view is not only to be seen in purely temporal terms, but in national ones: he is harkening not just to a past age, but to a former state of the nation. In Merry England, men were proud of their native cloth. The current state of the nation is, as he vehemently claims, corrupt as they have disowned what is their own.

The slightly woolly allusion to blessed customs of old receives rather more precise treatment in the hands of Robert Greene and Barnabe Rich, who set their defence of plain ideals of dress in the context of particular reigns. What one selects as a golden age, whether justifiable or not, is revealing for what it says about one’s aspirations in the present, and it is no less so here. The character of Cloth Breeches claims that it was a good and ‘blessed’ time for England when King Stephen wore cloth, and later recalls rather more vaguely the time when ‘the king himself was content

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7 This appears in the second edition of Holinshed’s *Chronicles*. It is one of the extra chapters in the description of England that had not appeared in 1577. Cf Holinshed 1577; Holinshed 1587.

8 Holinshed 1587, p. 172.
to keep S. *Georges* day in a plaine paire of kersie hose: when the duke, erle, lord, knight, gentleman and esquire, [...] wore such breeches as was spun in his house'.

Rich’s appeal to the past is still more dramatic. Taking advantage of the supernatural setting, he brings before us former English kings – the ones that are in heaven that is – whom St Peter calls upon to discern the true from the false Englishman. In particular, they are asked if any of them actually know Velvet or ‘any of his name remaining in *Englande*, in the tyme of theyr raignes and gouernments?’ Not one of them does because he simply is not grounded in the country. The character of Cloth, however, is recognised by no less a personage than Henry III. It is the ultimate legitimation: by all accounts, his reign was known for its sober manner of attire, in contrast with his father King John. Despite the passing of many generations, this king is truly able to say that he knows this type of man ‘very wel by his lookes’, and stresses that he completely ‘resemble[s] his auncesters, and hath the very liuely picture of his Predecessours, the which were very honest plaine dealing men’. What is Rich trying to do here? He is not, I would argue, being explicitly subversive, but there surely is a political slur in the subtext. In going out of his way to idealise the old, native ways, once sanctioned by monarchy, the contrast with the Tudor court of the 1590s is an obvious one, however unstated.

For this reason, Kuchta’s interpretation that defenders of the old sartorial regime such as he are merely condemning the ‘conspicuous consumption of the *nouveaux riches*’ not the ‘long-standing ostentation of the aristocracy’ is an unconvincing one. There clearly is a message here for the established, if they are willing to listen. The monarchs and aristocrats could be dressed appropriately to their station and still be plain men: that is the didactic point he seeks to make.

It is thus very plausible to argue that the importance of the monarchy in setting the standards of truly English wear in the past was invoked precisely because there was now no such homely example from on high. Neither Tudors nor Stuarts were models of simplicity of attire but rather examples of magnificence and grandeur (read excess and luxury in the eyes of sartorial conservatives). James I’s wardrobe budget was particularly notorious, and it was during his time that the French influence became more dominant. Delicately in 1616, Robert Anton expressed his

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9 Greene 1592a, sigs. B4r, Dr1.

10 Upon the simplicity in the reign of Henry III see Fairholt 1846, pp. 103–105. Ironically, velvet was first imported from Italy in that period, Yarwood 1961, p. 57. R[ich] 1593, sigs. C1r–C2r.

hope that Prince Charles would ‘all things rightly set’ when he came to rule, that:

Exempt from outward fashions so appli’d,
As it is truly noble, without pride,
Or forraine imitation, but intire
To his owne fashion.12

Charles I, unlike the mistier kings of past ages who had apparently clothed themselves so simply, never did anything of the sort. In this he showed himself no different from his father or his father’s godmother, Queen Elizabeth. The theme of pointed nostalgia continued in his reign. In one of the glut of pamphlets characteristic of his last years, Peacham noted that ‘the plainnesse of our English Kings in former times hath beene very remarkable,’ and that it was not until Henry VIII that a monarch had so much as worn a band about his neck, and even that was very plain, without lace.13 As a historical statement, this is of dubious accuracy because English kings, notably Edward II, were often given to luxurious clothing, but the assertion of a direct lineage of plainness is part of the polemic he is making about identity. It is not a simple statement of fact. Here again, plainness is held to be consistent with true traditions of English monarchy. If there was a recognition at the time that the ‘wardrobe of power was itself a form of power’, then Peacham’s point is that plainness is its best expression: excess merely fritters power away.14 It detracts from ‘gravity’. Just as, in the humanist dictum, true nobility does not reside in birth but in virtue, true magnificence does not lie in quantities of lace, jags and slashings. Plainness is compatible with fitting grandeur. He makes the observation, in general terms, that the situation is altered since former times but delicately leaves the contrast with particular monarchs unwritten. Yet the criticism is implied, even when there is no intention of making an argument against monarchy or its obligation to appear glorious. These were perhaps dangerous waters in 1638, and Peacham himself was no radical, but one of royalist and Anglican sympathies. He does end the section on a severe note, however, declaring that God will punish those who are clothed with strange apparel.15

12 Anton 1616, pp. 27–28.
13 Peacham 1638, p. 61.
15 Peacham 1638, p. 76. The following year indeed he wrote The Duty of All True Subjects 1639.
The monarchical associations of the tradition of plain dressing were also visible in Philip Stubbes' morally stringent work *The Anatomie of Abuses in England*, as he recalled how kings made do with simplicity in 'times past', but it is not his principal focus. Instead, he concentrates on the plain tradition in the lives of ordinary men. The dialogue is initially framed as an outsider's view; Philoponus is a returned traveller from Aligna – a cipher for England – who tells Spudeus, an ignorant countryman, of the 'natures [...] properties and conditions' of that people.\(^{16}\) It cannot however remain objective for long, and Philoponus recalls plain Englishmen of former days as if he were talking of his own ancestors. He claims that his father lived in a period when men wore frieze coats and straight-cut hose of carsie, 'of the same colour that the sheepe bare them' with the result that they both lived longer and were 'ten tymes harder than we'.\(^{17}\) In other words, rude health, longevity, manliness and morality were all bound up in native costume.\(^{18}\)

The theme of common man is also present in the popular civic pageant of 1614 entitled *Himatia-Poleos* and performed in honour of Thomas Hayes, the new Lord Mayor of London. It is an intriguing text for several reasons. First, it is self-consciously civic and more particularly metropolitan in tone. Secondly, it gives us an insight into the 'cult' of the native from the perspective of very interested parties indeed: Anthony Munday was a member of the Company of Drapers and took pride in signing himself as citizen and draper. The arguments made for sartorial conservatism are forceful. Native clothing, it is declared, resembles the walls of a city. Hence the title in translation *Garments of the City*. They ‘ingirt’ the city and preserve it from ‘dangerous annoynances [sic]’. It is almost as if siege has been declared. The cities of England, especially London, are the first line of defence against threat: they know that their best advantage lies in the maintenance of England's drapery, that this makes for the 'flourishing condition of Himatiaes Common-wealth'.\(^{19}\) Such street dramas were a mixture of history, allegory and myth, so it is not surprising to find some veneration of 'olde Antiquitie', of happier, better times when men wore the cloth they had made rather than silks they had imported. The defence is put in the mouth of a shepherd, understandably enough as he is seen as the origins of the cycle from lamb, to wool, and from thence to cloth.

\(^{16}\) Stubbes 1595, 4th edn, pp. 30, 1–3. The first edition dates from 1583.
\(^{17}\) Stubbes 1595, p. 28.
\(^{19}\) Munday 1614, pp. 5, 7.
Ycleped Englands Draperie,
More worth then gaudie brauerie,
Of Silken twine, Siluer and Golde,
Nere knowen in those blest daies of olde:
Then liu’d that graue and worthie man.

The shepherd is staged to remind people in ‘silken sattin Townes’ of authentic and transcendent English values. Munday is deliberately vague about this past, just as he is deliberately vague when conjuring up a vision of the peace, plenty and bounty of former times that was so envied by other nations. There were naturally some imaginative advantages to imprecision: his folkloric lyricism was unrestricted by the regurgitation of mere fact, thus revealing more about his desires for the present than his insight into the past. What he was trying to get across was the picture of a population of honest, plain and virtuous men that had once peopled the country but were now in danger of extinction. They were being even now displaced by embryonic merchant capitalism.

Something of the same construction of an historic idealised English masculinity, albeit aimed at an audience of the exclusively literate, is visible in the first of Joseph Hall’s moral satires, when he yearns for the days when men were ‘Clad with their owne’ and when the life they led was of a piece with their attire.

Then men were men but now the greater part
Beasts are in life, and women are in heart.

The manly men that he depicts were clothed in ‘home-spun Russet’ and void of ‘forraine pride’. There was an egalitarianism in this ‘fairest age’, the ‘time of Gold’, which he claims not to find in evidence in these decayed days. Even the great ones of yester year were clad more simply than the under-groom of a hostelry is now, he laments. Hall’s position as university lecturer of rhetoric in Cambridge make us read his remarks in a more formal light; besides, the Virgidemiarum in which this image figures was the ‘first collection of formal verse satires on the Latin model’, and in the ecclesiastical clamp-down on satire in 1599, received the dubious distinction of being burned in Stationers’ Hall, although it was thereafter

20 Munday 1614, p. 13, 10, 16. Yeleped is either a misprint for ‘Ycleped’ (called/ named); or it remains as yeleped in which case, coming from yelp, it would mean to acclaim or praise. The latter seems to fit better in context. OED sub yelp II 2.
21 [Hall] 1598, pp. 46, 48. For another eulogy of old national traditions of plainness of dress in the mouth of a rustic who claims to base his opinions on knowledge from the Chronicles see Nashe 1633, p. 9.
22 [Hall] 1598, pp. 48–49. 45.
reprieved. The ban itself is indicative of the discomfort with the satiric genre, particularly the biting Juvenalian kind, in the late sixteenth century. There was something felt to be ideologically destabilising about it, a fact which should give us pause in teasing out the full discomfiting implications of the works discussed here.

As none of these writers were intending to provide readers, or in Munday’s case, street audience, with even the crudest outlines of a history of costume, the question must be asked what they were actually doing in setting their ideas so firmly in historical context, albeit a history with large fictionalised content. The first and most obvious reason is the need to stress continuity in the image of the Englishman and induce readers to take pride in an inherited tradition. Although historians have not made the link explicit, there was a construction of the immemorial in terms of dress as well as in law, and the character of a Cloth Breeches, or a shepherd, or the example of a plain king or a gentleman symbolised just such a claim. Transcendence was held desirable in the matter of appearances. Disjunctions on the contrary were problematic: in Greene’s comedy, Velvet Breeches was a recent Italian arrival; in Rich’s eschatological account, whilst still implicitly Italianate, he was also, oddly enough, a descendant of the Normans. There was a Norman yoke of fashion also, it would seem. It was not that Rich was making a complete anti-French tirade – after all, Henry III whom he admires was one of the Plantagenet descendants of the House of Anjou – but in giving Velvet a sufficiently complicated background, he effectively cut him off from the simple line of authenticity which the other is guaranteed.23

Making a pseudo-historical case was also an invaluable means of relegating hierarchical distinctions and divisions to secondary importance. This is a delicate point which has sometimes been overlooked. Kuchta regards authors like Stubbes and Green as defenders of the social order in the sense that they believe dress should make hierarchies visible. This is a straightforward reading and it is partially correct but it does not fully capture the entirety of their thought, which is no more approving of hierarchies than it is critical of their problems.24 It is arguable, in fact, that the historical vision as outlined was also a strangely un-hierarchical one, not that it denied hierarchy, but rather that it effectively transcended it. Some sort of parity was achieved between social groups. Princes and people were drawn together in a unity of dress, so that the vision that emerged

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23 Greene 1592a, sig. B1v; R[ich] 1593, sig. C1v.
was that of a uniform community of homespun men. Munday put across this sense of prelapsarian solidarity quite clearly in extolling a past where ‘Draperie the rich Clothing of England [...] clothed both Prince & people all a like’. This was ‘long before the knowledge of fantastick habites’: it sounds like the account of the Fall, and the knowledge of good and evil.25 Cloth Breeches’ declaration that he ‘belong[ed] to the old auncient yeomanry, yea and gentility’ is also emphatic. He is properly speaking not merely as a farmer but as a gentleman too. This statement was meant to sound triumphant even definitive: it is a position from which he will not budge, even though he is all too aware of his present decline among the gentility of the day.26

Naturally, the type of clothing advocated did have peculiar resonance in the case of the yeoman, the rock solid ‘base and foundation’ of the Common-wealth, as Thomas Scott would call him, and guarantor of its ‘strength and libertie’.27 This type was particularly idealised. It is very plausible to argue that this was because he represented the social via media, being neither too grand nor too poor. His idealisation therefore would correspond nicely to the value laid on moderation, as Shagan has pointed out.28 He was the living personification of the call to ‘moderate ourselves’.29 Furthermore, interest in him was part of a wider interest in the pastoral that only an age increasingly metropolitan feels the need to cultivate. His was the vita activa of a homely and productive nature, rather than the frenetic activism of the city and court. He was an honest man, in Rowlands’ verse, ‘plaine in Russet clad’ with ‘mutton-taffety’ doublet, dirty hat, kersey stockings and pinned-up sleeves but of far greater worth (both economic and moral) than the gallant type, ‘[a]ll Silke and Veluet’ clad.30

It was also felt that, of all ‘types’ in society, he was the most likely to have retained older ways of dressing. One of the clearest illustrations of this occurs in the robust portrayal of the type in Thomas Fuller’s The Holy State of 1642. Fuller himself was a clergyman of royalist sympathies, but not Laudian ones, a balance of affinity also reflected in this supremely temperate exposition of the estates and offices of the realm. Within that, reflections on national distinctiveness could not but occur, but that they occur primarily in his description of the English yeomanry is a point of no small

26 Greene 1592a, sig. Br'.
27 [Scott] 1622, p. 28.
29 Scott 1622, p. 84.
30 Rowlands 1609, sig. A2v.
moment. It is the homely attire of this man, the first maxim that he elaborates upon, that makes him ‘the surest landmark, whence forreiners may take aim of the ancient English customes’. In short, Fuller does not envisage him as a closely guarded secret of the nation, something to be kept out of sight as an embarrassment, but rather as its chief symbol, witnessing to what Englishness genuinely and historically is. He is the mark of the land, the archetypal national character. He blushes if, for reasons of duty, he must wear more elaborate clothes on occasion. The slight is reserved for gentry who have repudiated old styles, ‘floting’ instead after foreign fashions. Fuller is emphatic that the yeomanry is an estate of people ‘almost peculiar to England’. The only approaching comparison are the German boors and even then, the comparison fails because they are incapable of rising.31 It is a piquant aside that this treatise found its way into the less formal studies of those gentlemen who came to Cambridge with no intention of making ‘Scholarship their profession’, but to acquire beneficial learning merely for ‘delight and ornament’.32 Knowledge of this readership is interesting for two reasons. It shows the full reach of Fuller’s moral exposition: the elite are encouraged to respect a ‘social’ inferior and to regard him as the fulcrum of the nation. The yeoman, they are told, is a ‘Gentleman in Ore’.33 Secondly, the slur against sartorial novelty presumably found its target among the aspiring gentlemen of the university.

It was not only the yeoman who was praised for being immune to sartorial novelties. English merchants too came in for praise in some sources. Here again, there was respect for a useful group in society who made a point of dressing simply, in keeping with their station but also remembering the canon of historic plainness. Harrison extolled these wealth-creators, who, although they dressed in fine materials, recalled ‘a great péece of the ancient grauitie apperteining to citizens and burgesses’ by the ‘forme and colour’ of their garments. Of ‘all estates’, they were most to be commended.34 Apparently, fine fabric could be offset against subdued colour. Plainness could but did not have to mean cheap, native cloth: one could dress expensively and still remain authentically English. In this context, the example of the Dutch was invoked. The case for emulating them in matters of simple apparel was made most forcefully by Thomas Scott in the curious pamphlet entitled The Belgicke pismire stinging the

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32 MS 48 (I.2.27), Emmanuel College Library, Cambridge. Overbury’s Characters (1615) found a similar niche.
33 Fuller 1642, p. 116.
34 Holinshed 1587, p. 172.
slothfull sleeper. A thriving mercantile culture, the presence of rigorous Calvinism and the dominance of a non-aristocratic burgess class in the United Provinces had brought about a plain and sober aesthetic, in which the preference for rich black textiles was pronounced over many decades. Scott who, in a recent analysis, is depicted as an adept blender of both classical humanist and Puritan discourse, is also skilful in giving much contemporary national colour to both.\cite{35} To him, it seemed obvious that the English should learn from the Dutch. Imitation in general was frowned upon, as we know, but he argued that this was an exceptional case because coming from the ‘same race originally’, to learn from the Dutch was like learning from one’s own ancestors. The very nature which the English and Dutch held in common predisposed them to plainness: ‘they are such whose natures and maners we better agree with, then with any other Nation: having euer found them plaine, but sure friends’.\cite{36} These days when the English had fallen from ancient ways, and when ‘the principall clothing vsed amongst vs, is both forraine and beyond the ability of the wearer’, it was the Dutch who admirably remained ‘constant to their country fashion’. Peacham, in a text of the same year, agreed with him: Dutch dress argued for ‘a constancie of minde and humour’. Their value as exemplars of rectitude was obvious. Scott, however, does reluctantly admit that there too people are becoming corrupted by the lightness of the French.\cite{37} From these remarks, it would appear that for Scott what it was to be English and what it was to be Dutch were cognate notions. Both peoples shared the same spiritual descent from classical Stoicism, and had given special place to the values of self-sufficiency, self-control and constancy in their cultures. Indeed, Scott was also drawing on the more recent and Christianised tradition of stoicism, exemplified in Justus Lipsius’ *De Constantia* of 1584. The value and virtue of constancy could be effortlessly nationalised.

The two problems Scott has with current modes are their foreignness and their capacity to flout the good ordering of society. It is illuminating that he should place these two alongside, and it is therefore appropriate to examine more precisely the extent to which visions of Englishness were

\cite{35} For this interpretation see Colclough 2005, pp. 102–119. For emphasis on Scott’s classical humanism see Peltonen 1995, pp. 229–270. For concentration on the puritan angle see Lake 1982, pp. 805–25.

\cite{36} [Scott] 1622, p. 49. Andrew Fleck is researching the Dutch influence on English identity and his book with the provisional title *The Dutch Device: English National Identity and the Image of the Dutch, 1588–1688* is currently under consideration with Oxford University Press.

\cite{37} [Scott] 1622, pp. 83, 81, Peacham 1622, p. 204.
embedded in moral and societal discourses. We must ask whether this qualifies or enhances the proposed interpretation about the importance of the national. This embeddedness is most thoroughly illustrated and therefore most fruitfully to be studied in the three serio-comic works which present Cloth Breeches to a Tudor and Stuart audience. The most important of them, Greene’s *Quip*, went through six editions in the first year alone, and again appeared in 1606, 1620, 1622 and 1635, so that his agenda got much airing over a period of forty years. As the name of the first work, *Debate between Pride and Lowlines* and the last in the trio, *Greene’s newes both from heauen and hell* suggests, the moral dimension is always to the fore; indeed one of the key purposes of the mock trial is to decide who is the worthier person of the two. Yet such questions never came alone. Greene is being a little disingenuous in claiming that he ‘twits not the weede but the vice’. Both weed and vice are represented as typically Italianate, and Velvet Breeches is ultimately condemned to hell not just for his vice but for claiming to be something he is not. Narratives of virtue and nationality are all bound up together: none of the texts are proposing anything like a nationally neutral account of what constitutes the good and bad life.38 Already then in the 1590s, something is visible of the phenomenon that Jones and Stallybrass have deemed to be characteristic of conservative republican thinking in the 1650s, that tendency to naturalise ‘English virtue, as if it was embedded in pastoral wool and cloth production and contaminated by the workings of culture in the form of fashion’.39 It did not have clearly republican political overtones in the late Elizabethan period, but it was a construction ripe for politicisation when social and political tensions came to the fore in the 1640s.

The other major concern of these three writers which does, at times, appear to override considerations of Englishness is the importance accorded to social estate in determining what was acceptable and unacceptable in matters of dress. This is, however, only an apparent incompatibility. It is true that they do express their most serious reservations for the figure of the upstart, something that seems to suggest that the only real problem that they have with the dispersal of new fashions is the fact that one cannot, in the proverbial phrase of the day, tell a courtier from a carter because of them.40 It is also true that Greene, whose work is the most

38 Greene 1592a, sig. A2v.
39 Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 76.
thorough treatment of the subject, has Cloth Breeches utter a long speech, in which he defends himself from accusations of being socially subversive in his dislike of finery. Noblemen and gentlemen, he admits, ought to go as their birth and office requires; he claims to find fault only with upstarts raised from the plough or those ‘aduanced for their Italian deuices’.41 There are two things to bear in mind in helping us to understand the complex balancing act that Greene was negotiating between questions of nationality and social hierarchy. Firstly, as we have already outlined, his historical vision was one in which national distinctiveness inscribed in dress most definitely transcended class. Yet this nostalgic vision was combined with a rather more pragmatic present-day perspective: Greene knew that dress distinctions were there to stay and he could even (grudgingly) see it as fitting although never ideal. He was adamant that the rot would not spread to all social estates.

The criticism of upstarts is not merely an example of snobbery; it is motivated by the genuine sense that a homespun life is of more worth. Upstarts, in Greene’s eyes, were not making an ascent but a descent. Baseness could have two possible senses: if Velvet’s is the worst sort, Cloth Breeches’ kind roots him to the earth, literally to England. But the usage of the soft target of the upstart may also have been a means for issuing wider criticism and getting away with it. Ridiculing him was a kind of undercover attack on anyone Italianate, and that surely cut across the issue of social status. After all, there is surely an intimation that those promoted for 'Italian deuices' will not just be parvenus. Greene would not have been so naïve as to think that they alone aped foreign ways, and that established nobles and gentlemen were not susceptible in the least. Indeed, Velvet Breeches claims to have already transformed English gentlemen, working his way into the heart of the establishment. The rot has gone far.42

Essentially, of course, even the partial exemption of the established nobles and gentry from their critique, is inadequate because they fail to provide us with a positive vision of the use of fine clothes. Indeed there is something rather thin about Cloth Breeches’ claim to respect genuine status distinctions expressed in dress when none of the worthy characters that appear throughout Greene’s prose drama uphold them, even when they are entitled to. When, for instance, the knight, esquire and the honest English gentleman are proposed as jury members to try the case, Velvet Breeches fumes against them because, among other reasons, they are

41 Greene 1592a, sig. B3v.
42 Greene 1592a, sig. B3v.
content with ‘homely robes’ and ‘home spun clothes’ when technically they could have aspired to ‘better’. By not aspiring to ‘better’, they were rooting themselves in an authentic national tradition of dress, and their life-style, being honest, humble and hospitable was in harmony with this. The narrator, far from being a neutral judge, affirms their way of life immediately by employing them as jury members.\textsuperscript{43}

If not aiming to reinstate a plain manner of dress across all estates, these authors did at least want to restate its value in the clearest possible terms, so that it was not pushed into the margins in a society increasingly caught up in luxury trade at all levels. The extended tale is like a plea for recognition that cloth at least be honoured if not worn by Englishmen of worth, regardless of rank. This for them was the classic way of being English which transcended both time and class. The personage of Cloth is thus not an anti-establishment figure, precisely because he is at the roots of the establishment. In Greene’s \textit{Quip} the favourable opinion of the jury gives his position in the country all the security of the law. On the basis that he has been ‘in \textit{Diebus illis} a companion to kings, an equall with the nobilitie a friende to gentlemen and yeomen’, they decide for him, and in language which allows of no qualification, ‘appoint him for euer to bee resident’\textsuperscript{44}. He is subversive and conservative at one and the same time.

**THE MATERIALS OF IDENTITY**

It is time to consider more closely the question of material – its provenance, texture, manufacture and colour – and how that came to be invested with meanings. The regard in which simple cloth is held is primarily due to the fact that the industry was unimpeachably native and definitively established.\textsuperscript{45} England had been a major producer of cloth throughout the middle ages: it represented home industry in the dual sense of being domestic and national, and so could never be accused of being a newfangled fabric.\textsuperscript{46} There is a deep economic conservatism behind the defence of traditional dress. The kersie that has been mentioned was a thick, warm, comfortable cloth, an innovation of the Middle Ages and named after a village in Suffolk.\textsuperscript{47} Having these resources to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Greene 1592a, sig. E1r.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Greene 1592a, sig. F4r.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Upon on the various meanings that may be attached to fabrics see Kuchta 1993, p. 242.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Lockyer 2005, p. 148.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Greene 1592a, sigs. B1r, D1r valorises kersie. Kerridge 1985, p. 5 gives details of this fabric.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
hand was not considered an accident. For Philoponus, the principal interlocutor of *The Anatomie*, it is in the way of being a decree of the Lord that ‘every country should be content with their owne kinde of attire’.48 There was a divine mandate for the usage of native materials.

Traditionalists also made a great point of boasting about the texture and durability of native cloths, what one might call the pragmatics of apparel. As has been seen from many of the examples, simple homespun attire was associated with a variety of functions: it was not beneath a King on festal day, and at the same time was a ‘carters weed [...] fit for husbandry’ and more besides.49 Such attire fitted one out for ritual ceremony and also for the active life of the producer. Moreover, cloth was adapted to English seasonal changes, being ‘[l]ight for the were, meete for al sort of weather’.50 Stubbes was firmly of the opinion that the English wools, frieze, rugs (stout woollen cloths), and kerseys were handsomer, and warmer than anything from abroad: the foreigners, he claims, themselves are aware of this, so these stuffs are in demand elsewhere. He turned the table on the vogue for exotic ‘trifles’, saying in characteristically grudging fashion that the continentals ‘are not to be blamed’ for wearing silks and velvets because they do not have ‘any other kinde of clothing to couer themselues withal’.51 Ironically, in certain cases, it seemed that necessity abroad was the mother of luxury: foreigners were to be pitied because they *had* to wear soft materials. Stubbes was sure that the English had no need to lower themselves to the bonds of such degradation, no compunction to deck themselves out in the dubious trappings of material finery.

Native cloths also conserved the balance between practicality and a perfectly satisfactory comeliness. It represented a kind of sartorial golden mean. This is patent in Harrison’s nostalgic description of the ‘fine carsie [kersey] hosen’ and ‘the meane slop’ of the historic Englishman: the good quality trouser and the rather poorer quality tunic balance each other out, as it were, guarding against the height of excess by adhering to the principle of moderation. Not only the clothes themselves, but the Englishman himself ideally occupied the ground between the ‘fine’ and the ‘meane’.52 The cause of moderation could unite people on both ends of the spectrum in the Civil War period. Scott, a radical, was convinced that if a critical

48 Stubbes 1595, p. 12.
49 Greene 1592a, sigs. D1r, B3t.
50 Thynne 1841, p. 10.
51 Stubbes 1595, p. 10. [Terilo] 1604, sig. Cv comments that sheeps’ russet does not stain, and is therefore more practical.
52 Holinshed 1587, p. 172.
mass cultivated moderation in habit, ‘our Broad-clothes would in short time fret out their Silkes and Velvets’ and all would be restored, thus envisaging a cultural revolution in the original sense of coming back to the point from where it all started.\footnote{Scott} 1622, p. 84. Nor were all royalists defenders of flamboyantly-dressed cavalier types. The crude stereotypes in no way reflect the reality. Brathwaite’s gentleman would shape ‘his coat to his cloth’, and scorn ‘as much to be behelden’ in sartorial matters ‘as to be a Gallyslave’.\footnote{Brathwaite 1630, sig. Nnn}'. Peacham in the circumstances of 1641 which would have lent particular weight to his words, espoused ‘a middle, plain and decent garbe, which is best, and most to be commendned’.\footnote{Peacham 1641, pp. 26–27.} Plainness was a value which could transcend civil war dichotomies.

The other advantage of cloth was that it could be worn as it was without any extra processes beyond the necessary cutting and fitting. There was a historic association here too. Simplicity of design was a reality of the medieval era when the country’s technical textile expertise was relatively rudimentary. Although England was the ‘European outpost for the raw material of cloth production’, it lacked knowledge of elaborate procedures of dyeing and finishing.\footnote{Greene 1592a, sig. B1r; Thynne 1841, p. 10.} In prizing lack of design, one was in fact setting oneself in the context of a national tradition, or rather the \textit{lack} of a tradition. The description of the ‘plaine paire of Cloth bréeches’, for example, includes no mention of the trimmings or embroidery that were so characteristic of his antagonist. Instead, a particular point is made of the fact that they were ‘without either welt or garde’, and that they were ‘straight to the thigh’. What such writers are doing is sizing up this character by absence, by what he does not have as much as by what he does; but they read it so that the fact of being ‘without’ is a boast, that to be ‘but of cloth’ is a source of pride.\footnote{See Figure 1. The frontispiece to the 1592 editions and again to the 1606 and 1635 editions is more satisfactory than the 1620 and 1622 ones. In the latter case, the difference between the two characters is less pronounced.} The frontispiece to Greene’s \textit{Quip} illustrates something of what he had in mind. There the character, appearing mysteriously reunited to a body, is dressed as one would expect: loose jerkin roughly-belted, and breeches open to the knee.\footnote{See Figure 1. The frontispiece to the 1592 editions and again to the 1606 and 1635 editions is more satisfactory than the 1620 and 1622 ones. In the latter case, the difference between the two characters is less pronounced.} The illustration was often subsequently used in related contexts and Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas have
affirmed in relation to one of these that Cloth’s garments would have been worn at the time only by ‘very humble folk.’

Colour as well as style came to be imbued with national meaning. This is a subject whose history has been notoriously under-written although recent studies by Michel Pastoureau have begun to historicise it successfully. The Renaissance and post-Renaissance world does not give rise to the easy national colour associations made possible by the rise of the flag as popular national symbol in the late eighteenth century; nevertheless, we can point to a preference among English writers of this period for sober shades of dress in keeping with the ‘natural’ colours of the country. Harrison, for example, gave the Englishman a choice of brown, blue, or puke for his coat, gown and cloak. The brown referred to the undyed wool from black sheep, otherwise known as ‘sheep’s russet’. For many, this colour was the very touchstone of national worthiness: not surprisingly, the nameless worthy Englishmen of the past described by Stubbes and Joseph Hall wore it, as did Fuller’s yeoman: ‘He wears russet clothes, but makes golden payment’. In Gervase Markham’s treatise on the English husbandman, he specified that it was not the ‘silken scorrer’ but the ‘plaine russet Husbandman’ that he wrote about, suggesting that this man did more for the ‘kingdomes generall profit’ than the other. Dyeing with woad or, after 1580, with woad and indigo would have produced the kinds of blue that are advocated both by Harrison and Greene. At the time, Suffolk was particularly well-known for its dyed-in-the-wool true blues such as ‘sad blue, blue, azure, watchet, plunket, and huling’ in descending order of intensity. But blue was socially freighted also: choosing it pulled against the contemporary logic that it was not a gentleman’s colour, having come to be associated more with serving men. Made from galls and copperas, puke would have made for bluish-black woollen cloth which again was sober rather than flamboyant.

Having dyed the Englishman’s outer garments in very homely colours, Harrison could permit somewhat more chromatic interest in the doublet.
That said, he was careful to balance its tawniness with the qualification that it must be 'sad', meaning in this context gravity and constancy rather than melancholy. He drew on another connotation: tawny was associated in the Middle Ages with the life of the humble.65 If he donned velvet, it must be black; and we get the same impression that any 'comelie silke' he approves of will be subdued in shade. Black was very much in vogue amongst European elites, had been so indeed since merchants in the Italian states took to wearing it in the fourteenth century, and later, it came to be associated with the Spanish Habsburgs in their golden age, but Harrison is not endorsing it because it happens to be in the fashion, but because it is a fitting shade for his Englishman independently of any fashion at all.66 This comment is of a piece with his respect for the English merchant class that we have remarked upon earlier. They could be said to have cultivated conspicuously inconspicuous clothing: wearing black was a fashion but also an anti-fashion. Yet, there were powerful foreign examples which were obviously influencing thought on the subject, although English commentators would like to believe themselves to be spontaneous. The Venetians and the Dutch could be said to have developed the phenomenon of 'merchant black.' The Dutch we have already mentioned.67 Long before that, the Venetian mercantile class, forbidden to wear aristocratic scarlet, had chosen this restrained way of expressing their status. Peacham had praise for Venetian laws which ensured that upper garments should be of 'plaine black.'68 Dutch example was the easiest to invoke because of a shared Protestantism, but the quarrelsome relationship of Venice to Rome (the city was under papal interdict in 1606–7) made it easier for the English to praise. Naturally, the Spanish influence, although existent, is rarely remarked upon and never acknowledged in this regard: that would be anathema (Peacham is indeed singular in praising their constancy of attire).69 In general, they have to find other ways of endorsing the usage of black.

How much this desire for sobriety of hue was part of what Pastoureau calls a phenomenon of Protestant 'chromoclasm' is difficult to say. In his recent work on the history of the colour black, he maintains that the

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65 Upon the point of melancholy see McCracken 1985, p. 523. Upon its association with the lowly see Allen 1936, p. 89.
66 Holinshed 1587, p. 172; Pastoureau c2001, p. 96.
67 See above pp. 88–89.
68 Peacham 1641, p. 28. This refers to a more general custom, rather than specific legislation.
69 Peacham 1622, p. 204. Studying court portraits, Smuts claims that in the 1610s, many courtiers took to wearing black and abandoned brocade in imitation of Spanish sartorial gravitas. See Smuts 1987, pp. 101–04.
Protestant code was ‘almost entirely constructed around a black-gray-white axis.’\textsuperscript{70} With its more elaborate liturgies, clerical vestments, its polychrome sculptures and cultivation of art, it could be argued that Catholicism espoused and celebrated colour in a way that Protestants, as a general rule, did not. Undoubtedly, this religious dimension weighed more strongly with some commentators than with others. Harrison had espoused Protestantism fully, and certainly the call for courtiers to declare their true colours was made most forcefully by Thomas Scott, whose Protestant sympathies invariably tended in a radical direction. That said, the colour he actually recommended was military scarlet, not homely russet, so although the ideal was certainly monochrome, we cannot accuse him of renouncing vividness altogether. Unlike some other critics, he did not confine himself to abuse, but actually pushed for reformation. Playing on the dual significance of the word bravery, he affirmed that

\begin{quote}
‘it were bravery [...] worthy of a courtier [...] to adorne himself with domestique ornaments, banishing those [...] Butterflies [silk-bows] from his eares and elbowes, who durst buzze about him contrarie perswasion: and whilsthee seeth the Italian, French and Spaniard come in Silkes, to incounter these with scarlet cloth; those English braueries, as our Ancestours had wont [...] to do.’\textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}

By some linguistic slippage, ‘bravery’ had come to signify its exact opposite in one of its usages since the 1560s, and Scott obviously wants to expose to ridicule that sense of superficial pomp and finery and bring courtiers back to its original.\textsuperscript{72} He also opens up a new way for us to think of identity when he talks in terms of a persuasion. Of what persuasion are these so-called Englishmen if everything about them speaks other than what they are? His point is that to be distinct, they must renounce such fancy wear like the men of the past had done.

What writers have been doing in arguing for plainness of attire has been to restate what they saw as permanent national values in a time of rapid and even alarming change. They are seeking to forge an image of true English masculinity, revealed not concealed by his person. Whether they really expected to make a significant impact on the \textit{mœurs} of the day is rather harder to say. The story that was told was never exactly a

\textsuperscript{70} Pastoureau \textsc{c}2001, p. 100; Pastoureau 2008, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{71} Scott 1622, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{72} The roots of this duality are in the Italian where \textit{bravo} meant brave, gallant and fine at once. English received this sense through the French in the later sixteenth century. \textit{OED}. 
comfortable one: the strong sense of the passing of an old order and the
certain insolence of the new made a degree of pessimism inevitable.
Just how much so was revealed in a most disturbing way at the conclusion
of Thynne’s *Debate*. When the jury had withdrawn to weigh up the relative
merits of the two breeches, the matter was almost at once taken out of
legal hands by the appearance of six military men who advanced on Cloth
Breeches and, calling him a ‘weede of lowlines’, proceeded to tear him
apart ‘peece by peece’. The destruction was complete, for ‘[n]ot so much
as the codepeece was exempt’. Given the symbolic identity of this charac-
ter, in destroying him, they were tearing apart the visible representation
of English identity, and although the violence is imaginary – being merely
a ‘dream’ of the author’s – and the tone supposedly comic, it is a graphic
reminder to us that there were very real anxieties over the future of tradi-
tional modes of dress and, by extension, traditional modes of being
English.73

A WORLD OF FASHIONS

The mirror dimension to the construction of national identity through
clothes was the attack on outlandish fashions. Critics could and did voice
opposition to the new fashions upon many grounds – moral, social, sex-
ual, and indeed – as occurred pre-eminently in the symbolic dress divi-
sions of the Civil War period – political and religious. Questions of
Englishness were not aloof from these considerations; rather they seeped
through them, constituting a base to which the debate often returned
and from which it drew particular strength. The sources portray a verita-
ble riot of new garments and new styles in the Englishman’s closet. Many
make a point of reeling off long dismissive lists of items so as to emphasise
the bewildering eclecticism of it all. The *Chronicles* breathlessly run
through the ‘Spanish guise’, ‘French toyes’, ‘high Alman fashion’ ‘Turkish
maner’ that Englishmen took to with eagerness, as well as the ‘Morisco
gowns, the Barbarian sleeeues, the mandilion worne to Collie weston ward
[crookedly] and the short French breeches’. That the borrowings are
not even confined to the conventional culprits – the three Romance
countries – indicated just how far astray he has gone in his craving for
style.74 There is a very familiar ring to Portia’s complaint about her English

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73 Thynne 1841, pp. 61–64.
74 Holinshed 1587, p. 172. The mandilion was a sleeveless jacket, worn by common folk,
used as livery in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Harrison was the first to write
suitor in *The Merchant of Venice*: that he has his doublet from Italy, his hose from France, his bonnet from Germany, and his behaviour from everywhere does not surprise us in the least.\(^{75}\) If that was material for a laugh and no more, there was more acidity in Henry Fitzgeffrey’s satiric depiction of the gallant as constituting a bewildering ‘world of fashions’ in his very person, his boots speaking Spanish to his Scottish spurs, his suit cut in the French way, and all in all, scorning ‘plaine dealing at his heeles’, heels precisely which were high according to the dictates of the day. The ultimate irony is reserved for the final couplet however.

No! In his *Habite* better vnderstand,
Hee is of *England* by his *Yellow Band*.\(^{76}\)

Far from his band ‘discovering’ him to be truly English, by 1618, the colour yellow had been utterly stigmatised as the most un-English of hues, denoting Catholicism, treachery, and a host of other unnatural vices besides.\(^{77}\)

Apart from the intention to ridicule, what lies behind the recitation of these lists? Firstly, they vividly capture the type’s inability to stand alone. This ‘world of fashion’ does not possess himself. He is dispersed rather than collected, a mosaic of jarring incompatibilities. To understand the full resonance of this depiction, it needs to be interpreted alongside contemporary ideas about gender, in light of the fact that ‘an idealised masculinity [was] equated with positive values of self-sufficiency’.\(^{78}\) Imitation ran counter to this, suggesting that the Englishman was a dependent creature, that his way of being was essentially a servile one. ‘O *England,*’ writes Brathwaite, addressing young gentlemen in particular ‘how much art thou growne unlike thy selfe? When disvaluing thy own forme, thou deformest thy selfe by borrowing a plume of every Country, to display thy pie-coloured flag of vanity?’ We are touching on some interesting points here. England is personified as having ‘innate’ form, a shape which it is deforming and devaluing. This form, he has said, is divinely given. Breaking it is...
like breaking one’s first faith, one’s first love. His contemporaries are all too keen to acquire an ‘adulterate shape’.79

The effect of frequent enumerations of foreign garments is also to provoke the reader into turning the question back on itself: why should the Englishman need to copy others? It is surely more proper for him to be his own person and dress in his own way. Appositely, Peacham in The truth of our times mused seriously on why ‘our English’ had not ‘wit’ enough to invent fashions, but instead were constantly seeking inspiration from France. From there had come the slashed doublets, half shirts, pickadilbies, long tapered breeches, spangled garters, periwigs, and all types of foolery ‘unknowne to our manly forefathers’.80 Although he is factually wrong about some of the attributions, he is summing up wholesale cultural hybridity. Their fellow countrymen should not need to look abroad. If the lists flag up the nets of dependence in which the Englishman is enmeshed, they also serve to expose the extent of his interior fragmentation. Joseph Hall satirically re-imagined the Englishman’s body to ‘fit’ the varied provenances of his clothing. It is not just a matter of a French hat, an Italian ruff, German hose and Spanish doublet, rather is it:

A French head ioyn’d to necke Italian:
Thy thighs from Germanie, and brest fro Spains:
An Englishman in none, a foole in all.81

The body itself is transformed and with it, the mind. There is a suggestion in some sources indeed that such a one is simply not useful to the country. His citizenship is null and void. ‘I never knew any wholly affected to follow fashions, to have beene any way usefull or profitable to the common wealth’, Peacham says, whilst Rich says that they do positive harm, that they are ‘preuidiciall to the whole Common wealth’.82 Why so? For one thing, there is a generally-held conviction that a life devoted to following fashions was a wasted life of otium, that it was essentially unproductive of any real societal good. For another, there is no conception that the private vice of luxury might prove publically beneficial to the economy: they are very far indeed from the thought of Bernard Mandeville. Personal vices are public vices too: over-indulgence destroys the fabric of the commonwealth. That is why their critique is so politicised in national terms: crucially, it is never just about the transgressive individual but is invariably

80 Peacham 1638, pp. 73–74.
81 [Hall] 1598, p. 48.
a larger story. And it is a story with many past examples: Brathwaite, for example, points to the sorry example of Roman decay attributable in part to sumptuary excess; he also mentions Old Testament precedents.83

The most strikingly politicised image of practices of sartorial imitation comes from the ever trenchant pen of Dekker. In his description of the deadly sins of London, he goes furthest of all. The slave to fashion that he depicts is both a dishonourable subject and a dismembered carcase.

For an English-man's suite is like a traitors bodie that hath beene hanged, drawne, and quartered, and is set vp in seuerall places: his Codpeece is in Denmarke, the collor of his Dublet and the belly in France: the wing and narrow sleeue in Italy.84

The image is grotesque and supremely effective. As the supreme political crime punishable by hanging, drawing, and quartering, he sought to make the point that treason had a peculiar likeness to the cultural 'crime' of dressing in exotic ways. A traitor was the archetype of fragmented identity, his heart having betrayed the allegiances of his birth. The fashionable Englishman had done something of a similarly despicable nature in worldly terms. Yet, there is a difference too. Cultural treason was its own punishment. The law may not intervene but the criminal's fractured body, scattered to the four winds, is displayed for public condemnation. He is the ultimate victim of satire. There is also the potential inference in Dekker’s passage that someone who would betray his country culturally could surely betray his country in other more serious ways too. In any case, such a one was felt to be a national liability.

Underpinning these passages is a vision of what it was to be a complete Englishman, although it is expressed primarily by what it is not. Another writer who is clearly moving towards the same end is William Goddard in A neaste of vvaspes, his second published collection of satirical epigrams. Writing from Dordrecht in the United Provinces where he was then serving, the external perspective perhaps only sharpens his caustic instincts; the subtitle nods ironically to 'some of our English bees'. Appealing to the readers' judgement in one of the brisk untitled epigrammatic verses, he urges them to

speake I praie, who ist would gess or skann
Fantasmus to be borne a Englishe man?
Hees hatted spanyard-like and bearded to

83 Brathwaite 1641, p. 10–13.
84 Dekker 1606, p. 32.
Ruft Itallyon-like; pae'd like them also
His hose and doubletts' Frenche;
[...]Oh hees compleate! what shall I descant an?
A compleate Foole: noe compleate Englishe man.\(^{85}\)

As elsewhere, the enumeration of influences is used to very particular effect to deny the gallant the completeness that he ought to possess. This fixation on ‘completeness’ is a common one in the idiom of the period: it reflected the vogue for fashioning fully accomplished individuals in particular contexts.\(^ {86}\) In Goddard’s denigration of *Fantasmus*, the emphasis falls on the final, damning rhyming couplet. The one thing that he really ought to be – a full-statured Englishman – he is not.

Another way of casting imitative figures into discredit was to use, as Dekker did the analogy of illegitimacy. His personification of the character of *Apishnesse* had a murky – indeed an improper background, having been ‘begotten, betweene a French Tayler, and an English Court-Seamster’.\(^ {87}\) The implied irregularity of this liaison and the illegitimate issue to which it has given rise impugns the national and the social credit of this individual more pointedly perhaps than any other. Court values and French mores were ‘matched’ to produce this illegal offspring. His characterisation of Apishness draws on quite a tradition. The *ape* was a staple way of describing somebody who mimicked the behaviour of others. The ape was also said to kill off his own species with ‘culling’.\(^ {88}\) To ape was therefore used frequently to signify to imitate exaggeratedly, to deck out, and to stifle one’s own nature: it was a term of great opprobrium.

It is Harrison, Robert Anton, Ralph Knevet, and William Rankins who explore most fully what exactly it meant for foreign styles to ‘make Apes of Englishmen’. Harrison was quite clear that it concealed the true nature of his compatriots so much so that no one is ‘so disguised, as are my countrie men of England’.\(^ {89}\) Anton, in one of his philosophical satires directed against the corruptions of the day, described the phenomenon as a kind of

\(^{85}\) Goddard 1615, Title page, sig. Fr'.

\(^{86}\) On the matter of completeness, one thinks immediately of Peacham’s *Compleat Gentleman* of 1622 and Walton’s *Compleat Angler* of 1653. But there is a veritable efflorescence of this notion in the works of the period: Thomas De Grey (1639) *The compleat horse-man*; Sir John Doddridge (1630) *A compleat parson*; Richard Elton (1650) *The compleat body of the art military*; Gervase Markham (1639) *The complete farriar* and Gervase Markham (1649) *The English house-wife containing the inward and outward vertues which ought to be in a compleat woman.*

\(^{87}\) Dekker 1606, p. 30.

\(^{88}\) Rankins 1588, p. 2. This idea that apes killed their own offspring with spoiling them too much as also present in Charron 1608, III, p. 465.

\(^{89}\) Holinshed 1587, p. 172.
‘transmigration’ whereby Englishmen’s bodies had become those of ‘Zainie-Apes’. The word transmigration is an interesting one, a clear sign that Anton is searching for a deeper way of describing the process of imitation. That is, one may say, his word for a radical change of identity. For Knevet, the implications for Englishmen of being ‘what thou see’st’, of ‘all gath’rings piec’d’ were of the very worst kind. Transformed into wolves and apes by Gallic fashions, they forfeited ‘those old Herculian shapes / Of Vertue’. The fact that Knevet, as an educated man, tended to set his ideas in a classical frame of reference, adds authority and force to ideas which otherwise would appear quite commonplace. This is the neo-classical moralism at work once again: the prevalent vision of national man is in constant dialogue with classical modes of being.

The most extended usage of this image is to be found in Rankins’ *The English Ape, the Italian imitation, the footesteppes of Fraunce* of 1588. The title itself uncovers what Rankins regards as the nefarious circles of influence in which the naïve Englishman was enmeshed in this period. He was acutely aware of the broader contexts. The influence of the Medici dynasty had waxed high in France for decades with the presence of the powerful Queen Mother Catherine and her very Florentine entourage. This had influenced, indeed transformed fashion, cuisine, and ballet, in short all those rituals and entertainments that characterised court life. Her lavish ‘magnificences’ (courtly entertainment) dazzled those prepared to be dazzled and disgusted everybody else. Much of the lavishness subsequently associated with the French court thus had Florentine origins. Her arrival seemed to be the root of all this. Rankins’ point is that if by the 1580s, England has decided to follow France’s lead in cultural matters, then they are actually following a country which is itself no more than a lackey. They were copying a copy. The ultimate subjection was therefore to Italianate ways and habits. Far from being a simple matter, the whole country is caught in complex nets of dependence.

For Rankins, apish imitation was as much a matter of ‘inward disposition’ as it was of ‘external habite’ and this leads him to reflect deeply on what it said about the Englishman. He is adamant that it divorced him from his natural ways, and he has no hesitation in using the language of

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90 Anton 1616, p. 28.
91 Knevet 1628, sig. F2v.
92 The lackey, or foot soldier, originally innocent of pejorative overtone was now coming to possess negative connotations in England as one who was servilely obsequious. Hughes 1988, p. 45. The *OED* counts the first incidence of pejoration from 1588.
physical deformity to describe his misshapen countrymen: ‘blinded (with an *Italian* disguise) and disfiguring themselves (with every French fashion), [they] corrupt their natural manners’. The notion of disfigurement is suggestive: if to figure is, in the understanding of the day, to ‘shape oneself into a particular form’, then to disfigure is to mar, to misrepresent one’s natural form, to destroy the beauty of it. This is attended by a host of images of estrangement, disguise, alienation, misshapenness, bedecking and betrayal, all to show that to be apish was to be untrue to oneself at a very profound level. Such fretful words should give us pause. They are indicative of the broader contemporary fascination with the idea of ‘fashioning’ and ‘representing’ oneself in public: through them Rankins seeks to tease out the meanings given off by symbolic expressions. The practice of imitation was deemed to misrepresent the Englishman not just in his superficial appearance but in his very being. The ape of all nations could not truly be said to belong to his own.

There is, one could argue, a positive vision generating all Rankins’ harshest strictures, a vision which draws on two general principles. First of all, his Englishness is historic and secondly, it is something to be professed. That these slavish followers would have sufficient disregard for the national past so as to want to be ‘newe founde people’ is therefore condemnation in itself. We have seen, earlier, the discomfort with ‘rootless’ characters, with those who were not grounded in the realities of their own land. This is another illustrative example of that particular mentality. Second, there is a damning indictment of him who does not seek to retain the ‘perfection of his own profession’. This is not the first time we have come across the notion of Englishness as a profession, and it suggests that the action and behaviour of the mature man need to be aligned in a certain way before one can be said to be fully English. Birth, in other words, is not enough in itself. The model advocated consists in preserving historically-warranted distinctions, and above all in not being beholden to the customs of others. They need to live up to who they are.

As well as a profound critique of the practice of imitation, such commentators also treated of the theme of inconstancy and explored why it too went against the grain of the values an Englishman ought to enshrine. Inconstancy was another national anti-value. We need to situate this way of thinking contextually. It is a point seldom made but worth stating...
explicitly that the four generations from 1560 to 1650 witnessed multiple more 'generations' of fashion. It would be unwise to put a number on such 'generations', as old styles persisted and co-existed with newer styles, but suffice it to say that the male coming of age in 1560 would, if he lived to a reasonable old age, have seen great variety in mode of dress. Broadly speaking, the Tudor ('Holbein') silhouette, and the Caroline ('Van Dyck') version are utterly different in form. In between, the constant changes bewildered and alarmed. There are two preliminary questions to ask. Was ‘fashion’ actually happening more rapidly than heretofore or was it just a case of inflamed perceptions? It is quite possible, given increased trade, that the pace of change was indeed more rapid, in which case the critics are justified in thinking this a recent development. But it was also true that societal perceptions about the value of constancy as opposed to inconstancy were at a high, and that anything in that realm touched on a very raw nerve.

The second question to ask is how far the charge of ‘inconstancy’ is levelled at just the elites. Harrison does not confine his criticism to one social category, in professing disgust at ‘the change and the varietie: and finallie the ficklenesse and the follie that is in all degrees’. The unrest of the fashion scene led him to complain that ‘nothing is more constant in England than inconstancie of attire’.96 It is hard to assess how justified his judgement is, but we have, in any case, to get away from a simple dichotomy between elite and common fashions: given the reuse of materials, and the way the lower orders inherited and bought fine clothes at second or third hand, the clear-cut distinction does not stand. Clothes had multiple biographies.97 So there is some justification to setting this phenomenon in national terms, to claim that changes affected all ranks to a greater or lesser extent. Stubbes was at one with Harrison’s view, saying that no people were ‘so curious in new fangles’ as the English.98 Peacham pointed out that while the rot began at court, it then moved onto the city and lastly to the countryside. In a later work, he again insisted on the extremity of the case in England, remarked upon the self-imposed nature of the phenomenon. ‘But we, the Apes of Europe, like Proteus, must change our shapes every yeare, nay quarter, moneth and week, as well in our dublets, hose,
cloaks, hats, bands, boots, and what not’. The language of shape-changing is reminiscent of the language of transmigration: Proteus is the god of inconstancy. Nor should we forget that there was something innately theatrical about all these changes of costume: one thereby assumed a role for the purposes of showing off, before abandoning it in favour of something ‘newer’ and more proclamatory.

Four main problems with inconstant behaviour can be singled out. First, it defied the Christian stoic ideal of stability which had real currency among the educated. The new man was a person of giddy impulses and habits. There was no fitting austerity in his make-up at all. Second, much like the practice of imitation, it exposed him as creature-like and dependent. Thomas Gainsford, in his commonplace book *The rich cabinet*, held the fantastic courtier to be a slave to change, ‘so subject to newfangelnes’. Lastly, it betokened effeminacy. Wilson summed up a common way of thinking about the difference between men’s and women’s natures when he said that “[t]o bee borne a manchilde, declares a courage, grauitie, and constancie. To be borne a woman, declares weakenes of spirite, neshenes [sic] of body, and fikinesse of mynde.” Women might thus be expected to be more changeable in their dress, and while still not endorsing that, it was at least in their case, a ‘natural’ propensity. When there are references to male fickleness however, there are implicit questions being raised about his masculinity. The other reason why the inconstancy of Englishmen in matters of dress showed up badly was because it appeared to contrast with the Spaniard and the Dutchman whose fashions remained markedly constant in form and style, as we have earlier seen. Peculiarly, the Catholic Habsburgs and the Calvinist merchants had this in common: sobriety and stability.

The imitative and inconstant Englishman was further problematised by the perceived sumptuousness of the trends he took to following. The habitual language used in the sources already skews the subject because the tendency is to talk about ‘excess’ in apparel. That is already to judge it. We may with greater objectivity refer to the phenomenon of greater elaborateness in dressing, born, according to Daniel Roche in his seminal study on the history of costume, of court civilisation in the Renaissance. It may be said that the particular political and cultural complex of the *ancien regime* privileged an aesthetic of ostentation: power needed more

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99 Peacham 1636, pp. 63–64; Peacham 1641, p. 27.
101 Wilson 1553, fo. 7v.
102 Peacham 1622, p. 204.
than ever the supplement of outward show. It was staged in the careful choice of clothes. In particular, we are interested in the male dimension of this practice for although women too participated in this aesthetic, what it meant for national man was more of a preoccupation. The tendency for elite men to dress as or more elaborately than women would last till the French Revolutionary period in many places in Europe; already, there is much resistance to it. In England, given the nature of their desirable self-image, the criticism of those who dressed ‘both extravagantly and elaborately’, prioritising ornamentation and display over function, was especially acute, especially as the tendencies filtered down through society.\textsuperscript{103}

It is well to give an overview of what particular fashions were read as ‘excess’ when transplanted into England. Franco-Burgundian hegemony had had a definitive influence early on in establishing Renaissance fashions along flamboyant lines, with its preference for brightly-coloured fabrics and its admittedly eccentric penchant for jags and slashings.\textsuperscript{104} The Spanish Empire had taken up the flame in sartorial terms by the latter half of the sixteenth century and whatever the sobriety of its colours – especially after Philip II and his court took to wearing black (princely black, as Pastoureau calls it)\textsuperscript{105} – the forms of the peascod doublet and the farthingale which they gave Europe were nothing less than grandly conceived. Clothes became monuments in textile. They were staged creations, a vital part of the exercise of power. From the reign of Louis XIII onward (1610–1643), it was France who set the tone, and what the falling lace collar and high riding boots lacked in monumental splendour, was more than compensated for by the negligent grace with which they were worn, and the perceptible femininity of even masculine dress. It was the age of sartorial \textit{sprezzatura} and we have already seen how ambiguously this was regarded. From the point of view of a history of ideas, the study of a dominant and subordinate aesthetic is revealing. It may be said at once that England’s power in dictating fashion was, at this time, minimal. It did not initiate any of the grand fashion statements. It is thus no surprise that English critics, watching the unfolding of these influences and their trickle-down effect, tended to equate foreignness of whatever kind with

\textsuperscript{103} Roche 1994, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{104} Bruhn 1955, p. 28. Kipling 1977 provides a general discussion of the Burgundian origins of the English Renaissance. The fashion for jags spread from Burgundy at the start of the fifteenth century. Slashings meanwhile were first used by Swiss soldiers in 1477, after a victory rout which consisted in patching up their own ragged clothes with the banners and materials left by the defeated Burgundian army. Peacham 1638, pp. 70–72 gives an account of this incident. Turner-Wilcox 1989, p. 324.
\textsuperscript{105} Pastoureau 2008, pp. 101–103.
sartorial exuberance. The attire of the affectate ‘speakes French or Italian’, Overbury pointed out: it was as a foreign tongue.106

As well as being construed as foreign, the habitual collocation ‘excess in apparel’ possessed complementary layers of meaning. Firstly, such a concept came packaged with overtones of the irrational, the uncontrollably expressive, and even the feminine: it was something of a commonplace of the day that women being ‘less rational and more emotional than men tended to dangerous extremes’.107 Here then we are in the realm of what critics saw as fantastic: wildly exuberant display disconnected from function and utility. The collocation also sums up a sense of moral repugnance; for Ascham, another way of talking about it was ‘outrage in apparel’.108 In the early-modern usage of the word ‘outrage’, there is not yet the mild sense of decent people being offended by a transgressive action. What Ascham means is, in fact, much stronger than that. An outrage means acting out of normal reasonable bounds; it can also mean an act of gross violence against society. The very fierceness of the image is of interest: the implication is, as it was in Dekker’s image of the traitor, that of cultural criminality. But there is yet a further and, I would argue, more fundamental connotation without which allusions to excess do not make sense. To talk about something as excessive is already to have made a value judgment about what one conceives the just measure to be. So the notion of excess of apparel presupposes the prior existence of a concept of the mean and of the moderate Englishman who existed at least in the imagination, as one who conserved a balance in his appearance between the shabby and the luxurious by dressing simply but appropriately according to his station.

Nowhere is the notion of riotous and ridiculous extravagance more vividly captured than in Gascoigne’s description of what happens when one tried to ‘English’ exotic fashions: ‘we make an English football of Spanish Codpeece, an English Petycoate of an Itallian waste, an English Chytterling [linen frills] of a French ruffe’.109 His point was twofold. Foreign fashions could never be fully nationalised: no matter how much they try to ‘translate’ the garments for domestic use, the attempt was laughable and even more excessive, causing them to lose all sense of proportion. The other implication is, of course, that foreign fashions should never be nationalised. The days were when the English had mocked at such garments, he

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106 Overbury 1615, sig. C⁵v.
108 Ascham 1570, sig. hi⁶v.
109 Gascoigne 1576a, sig. Ciii⁶v.
claimed, accounting them ‘vyle and vyllanous’, now they had surpassed the excesses elsewhere. Gascoigne’s main point in this short piece, entitled *A delicate Diet, for daintiemouthde Droonkardes*, is to rail against habits of excessive drinking which were also inculcated by the example of foreigners – i.e. the German and the Dutch – but his image of fashionable decadence is a testimony to his belief that no bad habit went alone. Sartorial excess was part of a wider culture of self-indulgence and moral falling-off.110

Naturally, there were some garments, materials and designs which stood out as more excessive than others, and consequently came in for a larger share of criticism and ridicule. Particularly worthy of note was the attention paid to styles of breeches. The centrality of this garment to the construction of masculinity was inevitably vital. In this period, as the trunk hose receded into a short skirt-like garment, the breeches became a more prominent item of apparel, although confusingly, these were still sometimes referred to as hose. Stubbes weighs in against three variants which were in vogue in the 1580s: firstly the French hose which came in two kinds – very round, and very short and narrow, all with extra panes and ornamentation.111 These first incidentally were what Peacham would recall with some sarcasm when looking back at the vogues of Elizabethan dress, describing them as ‘round breeches not much unlike Saint Omers onions’ which, combined with long stockings, were convenient for people like the Earl of Leicester and those who wanted to show off the handsome-ness of their leg.112 Next to be singled out for criticism by Stubbes were the Gally hose – otherwise known as the Gally-Gascoignes, which were very large and wide with slashing, their name indicating their provenance in Gascony. Lastly, it was the turn of the Venetian breeches to come under attack. They were a popular classic of their kind, being much like knickerbockers. Pear-shaped, their general bagginess was gathered in at the waist and tapered beneath the knee into ties of silk.113

It is plausible to presume that the kind of breeches which serve as a synecdoche for the Italianate Englishman in the trio of Elizabethan sources already examined were meant to be Venetians. They match the Italian origins of the character and they had moreover come into vogue around the year 1570, the time in which we have established that Thynne composed his satire. His comment to the effect that ‘its furniture dyd so

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110 Gascoigne 1576a, sigs. Ciiiv-Ciiiir.
111 Stubbes 1595, p. 30.
112 Peacham 1638, p. 66.
113 Stubbes 1595, p. 30.
exceede’ conjures up the lavishness of such a garment. Indeed it was customary for them to be ‘laied on also with rewes of lace, or gardes’. That very same year indeed Ascham had complained of the ‘huge hose’ fashionable at court and elsewhere. The Venetians continued to be in vogue until the mid-1590s, knowing the height of their popularity in the 1580s. Interestingly, the two frontispieces associated with different editions of Greene’s Quip present two different kind of breeches. Although the images are rather crudely executed, they are in their way quite revealing. Many of the other items of apparel belonging to the florid courtier – his high plumed hat, cartwheel ruff, the star-shaped spurs, and puffed doublet – a peascod one in the first illustration, known as the Spanish body – are common to both, allowing for distinction of drawing. There the resemblance ends because in the editions of 1592, the embodied character is clearly wearing Venetian breeches tapered to below the knee. This picture was re-used again in the 1635 edition because by then, the French-inspired cloak-bag or full oval breeches had become common in England and their resemblance to the earlier Venetians was marked. However, the editions of 1620 and 1622, by contrast, portray a man in shorter paneled and slashed trunk hose with canions: this style knew its zenith in the period from 1570 to 1620 and was then just going out of fashion. Although the latter image is not exactly faithful to the letter of the text, it keeps the spirit: hose of this kind is over-sumptuous. It is not without some irony that we notice that the costumes of the story have become actual ‘people’ in the illustrations. It was of the highest significance to the works that the breeches were disembodied: the clothes spoke for themselves, the ultimate sign of what Jones and Stallybrass call the ‘animatedness of clothes’. The drawings only made the message more obvious still.

The depiction of star-shaped spurs on Velvet Breeches in the 1592 frontispiece, although seemingly a small detail, draws attention to the matter of footwear, and will be a fundamental reason why the cavalier-type is so called. A trend took hold in the early 1600s of wearing spurs over one’s boots when walking rather than just confining them to riding. This led to a swaggering stride, with an accompanying jangling sound. With the

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114 Thynne 1841, p. 9.
115 Stubbes 1595, p. 30.
116 Ascham 1570, fos. 21r–22r.
117 See figure 1.
118 On the so-called cloak bag breeches see Willett and Cunnington 1963, pp. 47–8.
119 Willett and Cunnington 1963, p. 43.
120 Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 2. In Rich’s narrative, however, the breeches must have bodies in some sense because there is mention of their hair and ears. R[ich] 1593, sig. B1v.
exaggerated weight on the leg, this kind of gait was inevitable. In the clashes between London citizens and gentlemen officers in December 1641 when the labels ‘roundhead’ and ‘cavalier’ were first flung around in the sense that would become most memorable to history, it is important to realise just how weighted the latter already was with meanings. Originally the word for horseman had been adopted into English as cavalero from the Spanish, but in the late sixteenth century, it took on the form of the French word cavalier, acquiring in the process a more extended meaning of a gentleman trained to arms. From about 1600, it began to be used to denote the ‘roistering, swaggering gallant’, so targeted by the satirists. It was not just that he was a horseman, it was that he acted as if he was always on a horse, above the multitudes. Samuel Rowlands was a key voice in expressing this shift: he it was who announced in the very opening words of his first collection of satires that ‘Hymours, is late crown’d king of Caualeeres’. Among his features was an inability to divorce himself from a horseman’s wear in everyday life.

Sir gall-Iade, is a Horse man e’ry day,
His Bootes and Spurres and Legges do neuer part.

Further on, in a later epigram on the gallant, he contrasts the jangling sound such a one makes in striding along with the homely bell-wearing traditional dancers of England, and laments ‘[h]ow rare his spurres do ring the morris-daunce’. He was far removed indeed from the traditions of his own country.

Ironically, it has been suggested that the wearing of boots indoors was made fashionable by Prince Charles who needed to walk with callipers concealed inside his boots to help minimise the effect of childhood rickets. In that sense, it was a more English style than critics were prepared to admit. It is true that the French influence was key in the evolution of boot-style and by the 1620s, one finds Louis XIII’s court setting the trend for the wide slouchy ‘cavalier’ boot and the lighter ladrines. The slouchy turn-downs on the tops of these boots became known as French falls. About them, the poet Matthew Stevenson would say:

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On the cavalier swagger see Turner-Wilcox 1948, pp. 104–105. Willett and Cunnington 1963, p. 59 and Yarwood 1961, p. 141 date the practice of wearing boots for purposes other than riding to the 1610s onwards, but based on the evidence I consider below, I set this rather before, to the early 1600s.

Upon the subject of these labels in 1641 see Williams 1990, p. 88.

OE D sub cavalier, 2a.

[Rowlands] 1600, sigs. A2r, A7r, C3r.

Goddard 1615, sig. F4v.
The stockings underneath were so fine that they were protected by frothy lace-edged booothose which itself became something of a statement. In the picture of the *English Antick*, these are very visible, while the commentary would have it that they are ‘as long as a paire of shirt sleeves, double at the ends like a ruffe band’. The sentiment was not at all far removed from the opinion that had been expressed in Stubbes’ *Anatomie* many years previously. The wholly superlative nature of their design led Spudeus to say that they ‘plainely argue the vertiginy, and instabilitie of their more then phantasticall braines’.

The type of fabric was also an immediate indication of provenance, for just as cloth proclaimed itself to be English, velvets, silks and taffetas were self-evidently not. Whenever these fabrics are mentioned therefore, their status as imports is understood: it becomes another mark against them. Demand for silk was the largest of all: the imports of silk fabrics increased from 3.3% to 5% of all imports in the period from 1559 to 1622, while imports of raw silk went from 1% to 7.5% in the same time-span.

Particularly desired items were the extremely expensive silk stockings which remained in demand throughout the period. We are unsurprised to learn that Velvet Breeches is accompanied by stockings of ‘pure Granado silke’, appropriately enough because the city of Granada experienced a boom in silk production in the 1500s. Thynne immediately distanced himself from such excess by commenting that ‘Such [stockings] as came neuer upon legges of myne; their cooller cleane contrary vnto mylke’. In Rich’s version, Silk Stockings is a character referred to by the cheated mercer, as a ‘byrde of the same feather’ as Velvet, given over to misdeeds in earthly life. Velvet’s main association in the sixteenth century was with outposts in Italy, particularly Milan and Genoa; its manufacture was also spreading to Lyon, Germany and Holland. Velvet Breeches thus proclaims his provenance before uttering a word.

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126 Stevenson 1645, p. 73.
128 Stubbes 1595, p. 35.
129 Levy Peck 2005, p. 85. Admittedly, James I did try to introduce the silk industry but not very successfully; weaving imported silk was the only success story of the period. Levy Peck 2005, pp. 1–2, 85–111.
130 Thynne 1841, p. 9. See also Greene 1592a, sig. B1r.
It is Philip Stubbes, however, who probes most deeply into the impact that such luxurious materials are having on the robustness of English masculinity. There are few exotic fabrics that he fails to mention in his comprehensive tirade but it is specifically after he has deplored the shirts made of camerick, lawn and holland that he talks of Englishmen being transmuted by ‘this their curiosity, and nicenes in apparell’. This process of mutation is, for him, at once physical and psychological. As regards the former, the note in the margin reads ‘Nicenesse of apparel maketh the bodie tender’, and we are to understand that the textural softness of clothes detracts from the physical hardiness of the person.  

The Englishman had lost his mettle, he had gone ‘soft’. If, as Laura Levine affirms, femaleness was the ‘default position, the thing one [was] always in danger of slipping into, then how one dressed was one of the most slippery slopes’, especially when it was a matter of wearing silks and satins.

The association of intricacy of design with foreignness fitted into an established groove. England had not developed sophisticated techniques of finishing cloth in the middle ages, but tended rather to send raw cloth to the Low Countries and Italy, and then re-import the finished product. This began to change in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, but principally because waves of Protestant immigrants from the Low Countries and France brought with them advanced textile manufacturing skills. So even still, there were ample grounds for those who were keen to prove that these sophisticated processes were neither native nor natural, and not even the Protestantism of these immigrants could attenuate hostility. The design of Velvet Breeches, for instance, is elaborately detailed. It has panes of ‘Neapolitane stuffe’ drawn out with the best ‘Spanish satine’ and is elaborately embroidered – ‘maruellous curiously ouer wipt’. With the mention of the silk lace, cloth of gold, and silver which is used to welt (reinforce border), to gard, (add an ornamental trimming), to edge and to...
face this garment, we are clearly in the realm of the superfluous. The costume – and we must constantly bear in mind that here the costume is the character – manifests in every stitch the overly involved processes that went into making it and therefore the *artificioso*, the artfulness of the construction. We are also being fed the insinuation that there is something innately crafty about design. When Thynne observes that the gold lace was ‘ful craftely engined’, it is not simply in the sense of it being finely wrought. Crafty had been often used in a pejorative way since Chaucer.

The capacity to go to excess lay also in the selection of colour. This area is criss-crossed by a multiplicity of vectors – some age- and character-related as Grant McCracken has shown, others pertaining to status, office and heraldry, and all of them dependent on what was available in terms of the dyeing of textiles at any one stage. As regards the national vector, this is primarily an anti-French construction. The French were an obvious target: the brilliance of the last Valois King and the Bourbons alone gives every justification for Daniel Roche to describe colour as ‘one of the principal elements of court civilisation’ during the Renaissance. In their respect, it is especially apposite. As we have already seen, the Italian merchants, the Spaniards and the Dutch tended to be more restrained. Let us focus on the 1580s, a decade in which the controversy about French colour came particularly to the fore. We know that the favourite colours of the French court then were green, violet, brown, orange, yellow, and rosy pink (l’incarnat), although it is often frustratingly difficult to know exactly what shade is meant. Some of these choices, especially the pink, can be seen in the anonymous picture of a ‘Ball at the Court of Henry III’ (c1580) or the ‘Wedding Ball of the Duc de Joyeuse’ (c1581). By all accounts, Henri III’s court was riotously polychromatic and no doubt this was, in large part, the doing of the flamboyant favourites, the *mignons* who possessed disproportionate cultural influence. Their example quickly spread. Harrison held them responsible for bringing all manner of ‘gawrish colours’ into England. Admittedly, the Tudors probably did not need much coaching, but they did need to learn the dyeing techniques or import. There are a range of objectionable ‘new’ hues, such as ‘gooseturd gréene,
[yellowy green] pease porridge tawnie, [yellowish-brown green], popingaie blue [parrot blue-green], lustie gallant [light red], all recently devised to ‘please phantastickal heads’ but contributing to the degeneration of the commonwealth. For him, a penchant for colour was inseparable from the sin of vanity: the French thought themselves ‘the gaiest men, when they haue most diversities of iagges and change of colours about them’, as if style could compensate for substance. Their light-headed frivolity was in contrast with the genuine merriness of Englishmen in the past.143

After the Chronicles, it is more common to find a roughly-drawn distinction between the garish and the sober without too many particulars added in. Ascham does not blame an outside influence specifically, but at the same time is adamant against the wearing of ‘gaurishe coolers’ by even the great ones at court. With his awareness of Italy, he may well have been cognisant of the recent works on varieties of colour coming from that country.144 The jolly ‘light timberd Jacke a Napes’ in Greene’s Quip had his cloak daubed with ‘colourd lace’; the Englishmen of the present, according to Hall, so far from being in home-spun russet as of yore are now masked in ‘garish gauderie’ from abroad.145 The sense of lamentation is visible most of all in William Terilo’s hymn to time past. We know nothing at all about Terilo except the evidence of his chronic wistfulness from this sole published work; it may be that it is a pseudonym for Nicolas Breton.146 In days of yore,

Sheepes Russet would not staine
There were no greenes nor reddes:
Carnation, Crimson, yealow, blew,
Plaine people no such colours knew.147

This was the prelapsarian Englishry from which they were all exiled. Whether or not it was really purer is not the point. They imagined it to be so and that is what mattered to them.

The mention of the colour yellow in the above verse leads us into the dramatic (and truly bizarre) story of its stigmatisation in seventeenth-century England. If there is one single colour that gets an anti-national

143 Holinshed 1587, p. 172.
144 Ascham 1570, fo. 21r. On the Italian treatises on colour see Allen 1936, pp. 82–83.
146 See ESTC.
147 [Terilo] 1604, sig. Cr1r. See also Taylor 1612, sig. F2 for contrast between gaudy courtier who ‘scornes with his heeles to know his russet Sire’. This last says more about the generation gap than it does about Englishness per se. Similarly Rich does not make the foreign motif at all obvious, but he thinks gaudy attire is effeminate, and endorses the example of the ancient Romans who prohibited light coloured silks in all, except players and prostitutes. Rich 1614, pp. 22, 32.
reputation in the space of 40 years, this is it. Even to say this suggests the way in which a fairly innocuous external like colour can acquire depths of meaning and symbolism in particular cultural contexts. These meanings generally prove inaccessible and inexplicable to a later age; in this case, no residual traces are left of what was once a prevalent idea. All the more so then does the subject require a very precise historical treatment. As with gesture, the meanings given off by colour are extremely contingent. Now as Jones and Stallybrass have recounted the story, it is pre-eminently a construction of the 1650s. In the new political dispensation, the colour yellow comes to represent all that was wrong in the past. A retrospective interpretation, it holds up the earlier vogue for starched saffron collars as a symbol of all that was most degenerate, foreign, effeminate, and unProtestant about the Stuart regime.148

Our interest lies with the earlier texts upon which this later construction was built. The unlikely origins of the myth are to be located in a charged convergence of circumstances in 1615. The facts are simply stated. Anne Turner, a Catholic, was found guilty of contributing to the poisoning of Thomas Overbury in the Tower of London, andlegendarily, she went to her execution wearing a fashionable yellow band. Not even the question mark over whether he was actually poisoned or not or her recantation of Catholicism counteracted the dramatic effect this item had in the minds of observers. The Overbury murder was an event of some note because it would appear to have implicated the Earl and Countess of Somerset, he the King’s favourite and she daughter of the Catholic Howard family. What some deplored, others found novel and exciting, and the fashion for starched yellow ruffs took greater hold (although it may have done so without this incident). For critics, the distinctive collar worn by the female criminal thus became associated with a range of phenomena they wanted to distance themselves from. As the fashion developed, it was no longer uniquely associated with Anne. Both Rich and Brathwaite underlined that it was not native to England but had been brought by ‘some man of little vertue’ according to the former, by a returned traveller, according to the latter.149 To its perceived effeminacy, was added the more traditional connotation of the colour yellow: treachery. According to Rich, ‘these yellow starcht bandes shoulde bee euer best suited, with a yellowe Coate’.150

149 Rich 1617, p. 40; [Brathwaite] 1658, p. 156. This poem entitled ‘The Ape of Fashion’ (pp. 156–61) was written at an earlier point and only belatedly published according to Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 73.
150 Rich 1614, p. 35.
Starch itself incidentally had acquired a Catholic connection because from 1608 to 1610, the Earl of Northampton had had a highly unpopular monopoly in the starch industry. Of course it did not even need that connection to become despised among those with Puritan leanings. The mixture of elements was particularly noxious, and Rich, ever one for his ‘plain speeches’, spoke for many mourners at the offensively fashionable grave of English masculinity when he reflected that ‘wee haue converted the coller of steele to a yellow-starched-band.’ Military excellence was no longer prized in these effete times. Thus did the colour yellow come to transcend itself and become a symbol of otherness.

Throughout it has been apparent how ideas about sartorial degeneration draw together the themes of morality, nationality and masculinity. Also being established is a clear link with freedom and independence of habit. Subjection, as revealed in the way one dressed, was construed as a repugnant way of living. If an important dimension of liberty was to be free of unwarranted influence, then the incoming modes, dictated by people who were unanswerable to any tradition within the native country were going to strike at the very heart. Unsurprisingly, this kind of language came easily to Gabriel Harvey who depicted Englishmen as ‘vassals’ to Lady Pleasure, Lady Courtesie, and most of all Lady Nicity. The warning was even more momentous when uttered in 1622 by a very different voice, that of Thomas Scott, when he asserted primly that ‘the customary subjection to any of these vices effeminate the heart of man, and prepares a State fit and supple for any other subjection, how base, dejected, or dishonorable soever it bee’. In this way of thinking, foreign fashions were but another expression of arbitrary power and could pave the way to worse political abuses.

**Dressing the Head**

Changing hair-styles were also part of the domain of fashion. Moreover, because of the extraordinary metaphorical usage of the concept of headship in the period, the matter could be especially sensitive. The head was the seat of reason; a man was head of the household. How he dressed his head was considered important, even revelatory of his inner character.

151 See, for instance, Stubbes’ strong condemnation of starch, Stubbes 1583, sigs. D7–D8.
152 Rich 1617, pp. 6, 8–9.
153 Harvey 1884, p. 97.
and his ability to rule rationally. It is an excellent illustration of the politici-
sation of hair-styles that the civil war conflict should be divided on its basis: 
the closely-cropped roundheads set against the curly long-haired King’s 
men. In truth, this distinction was not absolute: far from it, indeed. Braddick 
holds that there is ‘no truth to the claim that you could tell a parliamentar-
ian from a royalist on the basis of their haircut.’ Nonetheless, its potency 
as a stereotype was real. What we need to do is contextualise this story in 
the generations before the conflict and investigate to what extent there 
was a reflection on ‘native’ English as opposed to foreign modes of coif-
jure.

One entry into this subject is through consideration of the figure of the 
barber. Just like the tailor, he too was a crucial manufacturer of identity: an 
image-maker upon whom much depended. Of particular interest then is 
the appearance of this character in Greene’s *Quip*. The proposal that he act 
as juryman in the case between Cloth and Velvet is the occasion for the 
former’s highly-charged denunciation of his role in transforming the 
Englishman. Cloth mimics the typical barber’s behaviour to his fashion-
able clients, beginning by describing his pretentious address, full of ‘fus-
tian eloquence’, ‘low conge’ and ‘cringe with [the] knee’. It is a prelude to 
worse. As one might expect, the barber does not even offer to perform the 
‘English cut’, considering it too ‘base’ and unsophisticated; instead his cli-
ent is faced with the dazzling choice of the Italian, Spanish or French 
styles. The effeminate quality of all three is brought out in various ways. The 
Italian cut, although short and round, is ‘frounst with the curling yrons’. If preferred, the Englishman can become ‘like a Spanyard long at 
the eares, and curled like to the two ends of an old cast periwig.’ Worst of 
all, the Englishman could be ‘Frenchefied with a loue-locke downe to your 
shoulders’. In each of these, there is one common antipathy: curls. Why 
would curly hair prove so repugnant to social conservatives? Firstly, curls 
were, in most cases, achievable only through artifice. Secondly, curls were 
considered effeminate.

156 See for example Anon. (1641) *The Answer to the rattle-heads concerning their fiction-
ate resolution of the round-heads*; Anon. (1641) *A Dialogue betwixt rattle-head and round-
head*; Anon. (1642) ‘The Round-heads race’ added to *The Distractions of our times wherein 
is discovered the generall discontent of all estates throughout the whole land*. Anon. (1642) 
*A Short, compendious, and true description of the round-heads and the long-heads shag-polls 
briefly declared*.
157 On the subject of hairstyles and gender in early-modern England see Fisher 2006, 
pp. 129–158.
In particular, the lovelock or cadanette in French was the *ne plus ultra* of decadence in the day, consisting of a long curl trained from the nape of the neck to fall over the shoulder.\footnote{Willett and Cunnington 1963, p. 71; Turner-Wilcox 1989, p. 199.} Needless to say, Cloth Breeches has no time at all for any of these trends: his only use for a hairdresser is ‘pla[i]n to be polde’, and to have his beard cut. We are not informed how his beard is cut but presumably it is not in *pique de vant* fashion or any of the ways deplored by Harrison.\footnote{Holinshed 1587, p. 172.} Greene is playing with notions of baseness; while others denigrate it, he sees it as fundamental, and therefore something to be valued. There is a rather coy postlude to this episode. In Rich’s pamphlet of the following year, in which both breeches were strangely united to their bodies, their struggle, finally breaking into physical expression, hinges on a point of hairstyle. Just as the narrator comes upon these two enemies locked in conflict, Cloth has managed to get the upper hand by catching hold of a ‘goodly locke hanging downe his left cheeke’, it ‘being in the French fashion.’ The symbolism of the action is not lost on us. In more ways than one, long locks dragged one down.\footnote{Yarwood 1961, pp. 130, 138–41; Willett and Cunnington 1963, p. 71.}

Said to have became fashionable among the mignons of the court of Henri III, the lovelock achieved cultic status among late Elizabethan courtiers and continued throughout the Jacobean and Caroline period, only gaining in elaboration.\footnote{Greene 1592a, sigs. C3*-C4*; R[ich] 1593, sig. Brü; [Hall] 1598, p. 61.} A French aristocrat, Honoré d’Albert, seigneur of Cadenet, brought in the fashion of decorating it with a bow and jewel, thus making the lock even more repugnant to its critics; while another of the same ilk, Henri de Lorraine, the Count of Harcourt took to wearing an earring in the ear which was not covered by the tress, earning the sobriquet *Cadet la Perle*. The offending lock is caricaturised by Hall who compares it, in a rather macabre way, to a hanging chord.

> His haire *French like*; stares on his frighted hed,  
> One locke *Amazon-like* disheueld,  
> As if he ment to weare a natiue cord,  
> If chaunce his *Fates* should him that bane afford.\footnote{Said to have became fashionable among the mignons of the court of Henri III, the lovelock achieved cultic status among late Elizabethan courtiers and continued throughout the Jacobean and Caroline period, only gaining in elaboration. A French aristocrat, Honoré d’Albert, seigneur of Cadenet, brought in the fashion of decorating it with a bow and jewel, thus making the lock even more repugnant to its critics; while another of the same ilk, Henri de Lorraine, the Count of Harcourt took to wearing an earring in the ear which was not covered by the tress, earning the sobriquet *Cadet la Perle*. The offending lock is caricaturised by Hall who compares it, in a rather macabre way, to a hanging chord.}  

Again, as with Dekker, the echo of treachery is not far away. Somewhat later, after the extra finishing touches had caught on among Jacobean courtiers, Rich fumed about ‘from whence commeth this wearing, & this
imbrodering of long lockes, this curiositie that is vsed amongst men, in freziling and curling of their hayre’.164

A very thorough condemnation of this style and all that it entailed was articulated by William Prynne in *The vn louelinesse, of loue-lockes*. The lovelock was only one of a range of degenerate hair-styles which he deplored, but it is easily the most raged-against. Prynne’s thought about a range of matters was very much in evolution when he published this in 1628. He would become foremost in battling against Laudianism and indeed his Protestantism is patent throughout. Already his religious instincts against excess ceremony are combined here with a pronounced and narrow vision of national authenticity. It is a particularly sour polemic full of repetition, vituperative language, and the most intemperate expression. His angst rests on the dichotomy he observes between profession and practice, for ‘[w]e all profess ourselues to be Heroicall, Generous, and true-bred Englishmen, yea Zealous, downe-right, and true-hearted Christians,’ yet by bowing to these customs ‘disclaime our very Nation, Countrey, and Religion too’.165 He constantly reiterates his conviction of his compatriots’ multiple degenerations from the state of being English and Christian and, in a highly correlated sense, their loss of masculinity. ‘Are not many now of late degenerated into Virginians, Frenchmen, Ruffians, nay Women in their Crisped-Lockes, and Haire?’166 The Frenchified come in for a particular beating because they have ‘nothing else to make him famous, (I should say infamous,) but an Effeminate, Ruffianly, Vgly, and deformed Locke.’167 After such vivid criticism, there is quite simply less to say about the positive case but he does emphasise that ‘[o]ur English Guise and Tonsure’ is just a ‘naturall plaine and common cut’ and has the dual advantage of being both civil and ancient. It is not untypical of a certain kind of mind-set that the truly English way of being could be summed up in one sentence while exotic ways needed a wordy treatment of many pages to demolish.168

These chapters have provided a consideration of the ways in which Englishness and foreignness may be said to have inhered in certain models of speech and dress. The attention given to these issues convinces us of the importance attached to public ways of being English; it is not for nothing that the metaphor of proclamation has been present throughout.

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164 Hall 1598, p. 61; Rich 1614, p. 35.
165 Prynne 1628, sig. A3’.
166 Prynne 1628, sig. A4’.
167 Prynne 1628, p. 27.
168 Prynne 1628, p. 26, sig. A3”, p. 27.
Positive and negative constructs drew life from each other, although the latter strikes home perhaps more forcefully because of the exceptional abusiveness and colloquial vigour that characterised it. Idealism and bleakness were, as is often the case, bedfellows. Harvey again undoubtedly spoke for and to many in early-modern England, by echoing Cicero's ringing denunciation of Catiline.

O tymes, O manners, O French, O Italish
Inglande
Where be ye minde and men that woont
Terrify strangers?
Where that constant zeale to thy country glory, to vertue? [...] Where owld Inglande?169

The fact that Harvey himself was not known for representing old English ways gives the observation its undertone of piquancy, and proves that no matter how objective he or anyone else thought they were, they always wrote from 'within' the experience, and reveal their own susceptibility to foreign models by the language they used and perhaps also by the clothes they themselves wore.170

It is all too easy as a result to dismiss such commentators as either cranks or dreamers, just as it is tempting to treat what they said as the early-modern equivalent to tabloid journalism or sentimental memoirs – more given to illusion for affect than to accuracy. Yet grouping them together as hide-bound traditionalists or eccentric panegyrists of a lost world, given over to the very worst form of embattlement there was, that of being powerless to stop trends and categorical in the rejection of them, would absolve us from the necessity of taking what they said seriously. We are entitled to be sceptical about their vision of a homogenous national mode of dress in past ages; entitled also to be sceptical about their reinstatement of the value of a home-spun language in their own day, but what we cannot be sceptical about is their sincerity in valuing these things and the energy which went into putting them across.

Moreover, the fact that those whose views we have studied resist being bracketed as a coherent group goes to show the extent of the appeal and how unwise it would be to pin them down unduly to one way of seeing the world. Diverse people who could at one stage of their career have been

169 Harvey 1884, p. 97.
170 Greene 1592b, sig. C1v records that he had had his lapses in younger years. In his Repentance, he describes how on return from the continent with a group of friends from Cambridge, he came back 'ruffeled out in my silks, in the habit of Malcontent'.

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described as university wits, humanist rhetoricians, courtiers, urban hacks, professional writers, antiquaries, clergymen of various sympathies, royalists or hard-line radicals might be expected to have had very different perspectives on many different things: that they found common cause in this way of thinking is a point no less piquant than it is significant. We will, in sum, understand nothing of them or of the period if we do not realise that they were expressing normative values about Englishness, criss-crossed, it is true, by a host of vectors from class to gender, and religion to politics, but none of them overriding, still less contradicting fundamental considerations about what it was to be an authentic exponent of national virtue. Yet the great irony of it all is that any ideal, even the deliberately plain, is, by virtue of being construed and put before a public, rhetorical. We cannot be so naïve as to take a plain Jane at face value. Richard Lanham slyly observes that in ‘a fallen, cosmetic world, she is asking not to be considered, wants to be overlooked – or perhaps to claim attention by contrast. She is as rhetorical as her made up sister, proclaims as loudly an attitude.’171 The plainly-spoken, plainly-dressed Englishman was himself a grand statement of the age.