

Sidesaddle 1690-1935

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Sidesaddle
1690-1935

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oil on canvas, 40 x 50 inches
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Backwards in High Heels: A Brief History of the Sidesaddle

by Dr. Ulrike Elisabeth Weiss, University of St Andrews (UK) | Guest Curator

A brief note on spelling: Three versions are historically correct. In British English, "side-saddle" is the preferred option. In American English, both "sidesaddle" and "side saddle" are in use.

The Ladies' Seat and Types of Sidesaddles: A 1678 Snapshot

"Haute Ecole" (the classical dressage developed in the 16th century) consists of complex, highly controlled exercises aimed to display the strength and grace of the horse as well as of the rider.¹ To be able to control his horse in this way, the rider must have perfect self-control. Therefore, schooling in the manège provided excellent training for life at court, where every move and emotion had to be strictly guarded.

The ideal courtier had to be a perfect horseman, and *Haute Ecole* riding became an important part of a nobleman's education.² Soon, he could choose from a number of riding manuals written by some of the most famous riding masters. One of the very first to also include a short section on horsewomen in his book was Georg Simon Winter von Adlersflügel (1629-1701). His successful career had led him to work for the Danish as well as several German courts, and in 1681 gained him the peerage.³ In 1678, he published his *Wohlberittener Cavallier: Oder Gründliche Anweisung zu der Reit- und Zaumkunst*, in Latin and German.⁴

The section on horsewomen is just three pages out of several hundred, yet they are mentioned in the title, where Winter claims to "also serve the ladies with a report of how to properly and elegantly go for a ride in the countryside."⁵ He did not, however, write for the ladies themselves, but for the riding masters who would have to teach them. Indeed, he spent a full paragraph describing how

to help a lady into the saddle without touching her inappropriately.

Winter's text provides a clear snapshot of the types of saddles used at the time. He describes three ways in which a lady in the 1670s might sit on a horse: fully sideways; sideways but facing forward; and astride.

The latter may come as a surprise because in Britain, riding aside had become the norm long before the Victorian Era. On the Continent, however, ladies could choose to sit astride well into the 18th century. The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) clearly demonstrate this difference in traditions.⁶ She was a keen horsewoman and even took her sidesaddle with her when she accompanied her husband to Constantinople in 1716. When she moved to Italy in later life, however, she gladly adopted the Italian ladies' fashion of riding astride, finding it much safer.



Fig. 1: Ladies riding out. Plate 104 from Georg Simon Winter von Adlersflügel's *sive Eques peritus: hoc est, artis equestris accuratissima institutio...*, 1678. National Sporting Library & Museum.

As we can see from Winter von Adlersflügel's text and his illustration, riding astride was socially acceptable at the time. At least this was true for unmarried ladies: Winter pointed out that sitting in this fashion was thought to be "a major cause of infertility."⁷ When it came to "any other reasons" that might be raised against the practice, he was more coy. Winter and his contemporaries found unmentionable the obvious sexual connotation of sitting in this way, yet this explains why there are so few Early Modern portraits of ladies riding astride. When being represented on canvas for future generations, decorum was even more important than in every-day practice.

Regarding sidesaddles, Winter von Adlersflügel described two types that were in common use in the 1670s. First were the ones "made in the old manner, where one sits with one's back in line with the right side of the horse and places the feet side by side on one long stirrup on the horse's left, which are not only uncomfortable, but also dangerous."⁸ He warned how easily the lady might overbalance on one of them and fall either forward or back.

Second was the type he considered the best saddle for women, which had to be "well-padded with roe hair, and of the right width so that the lady may well hook her right leg round the pommel, which pommel should be straight upright, but well-rounded, covered in leather and equally well-padded with roe hair."⁹ There should, he continued, "be a cushion firmly attached in front of the saddle on the horse's neck where the lady's right leg [...] would comfortably rest." He also recommended that there should be "a handhold equally firmly fixed on the right side for the lady to grab on mounting" in case her seat became infirm.

History of the Sidesaddle: Brief Overview

Winter von Adlersflügel's description of the two types of saddles shines a light on the development of the sidesaddle. Academic literature on this topic still is surprisingly rare and sometimes contradictory. Also, the same few myths are repeated over and over again.¹⁰

Very broadly simplified, there are five key dates of transition, explored in more detail below:

- Around 1400, ladies began sitting sideways. At first, they did so on formal occasions only, then also when riding out.
- By the late 15th century, the first images appeared of ladies sitting sideways, but facing forward in the sidesaddle. This method became wide-spread from about 1550.
- From the early 18th century, two "pommels" (alternatively called "heads" or "horns") were used instead of one, forming a forked saddle that cradled the offside leg and offered better grip.
- A century later, around 1830, a downward pointing pommel, the "leaping horn" was introduced, now providing grip for the left leg as well.
- During the 1920s, most women abandoned the sidesaddle. But its history continues, as it is currently experiencing a fashionable comeback.

With each innovation, adoption was a slow process. The respective "old manner" was usually preserved for many decades, or in the case of the chair saddle, for centuries.

Sitting Fully Sideways: The "Sambue"

Until the High Middle Ages, ladies rode astride. This is demonstrated in several illuminated manuscripts of the first half of the 14th century. The most famous of these are the *Codex Manesse* and the *Taymouth Hours*.

The *Codex Manesse* is a collection of about 135 "minnesongs," or songs of courtship. It was compiled in Zurich in 1304, with more songs and images added around 1340.¹¹ Its plentiful illuminations (as the painted illustrations of manuscripts are called) show several ladies on horseback, all sitting astride. Male and female dress was cut along very similar lines, and both men and women used the same type of saddle. This had a very high pommel (front of saddle) and cantle (back part of saddle).

The so-called "Taymouth" Book of Hours dates between 1325 and 1340. It was probably commissioned

in London by a female member of the royal family.¹² Among its many illuminations are 32 hunting scenes. These all show the same lady, either on her own or accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting. They are hunting and killing hare, fowl, boar and deer. These scenes are meant to be read as allegories of the religious texts they accompany, but they also provide realistic depictions of contemporary hunting practice. They clearly demonstrate that ladies could take a very active part in all forms of hunting, although what we cannot deduce from such sources is how many or indeed whether only a minority of ladies did participate.

The only female "rider" regularly depicted sitting sideways in medieval times is Mary, mother of Christ,

Fig. 2 and 3: The months of May and August from the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, illuminated by the Limbourg brothers, c. 1405/10, Musée Condé, Chantilly



in the *Flight into Egypt*. However, Mary does not ride, but is being transported. Nor are images of the *Flight into Egypt* meant to depict actual riding practice. Not only does Mary's donkey ride presage Christ's entry into Jerusalem, but her representations are often framed as highly ceremonious. In this sense, her saddle serves as a throne.

Mary's image may have been modelled on Epona.¹³ The Celtic goddess of horses and fertility is often shown on a throne, either on a horse or between two horses. Quite possibly it could be said that Mary's image itself then provided a model: in the 13th century, noble ladies began to sit sideways on formal occasions.¹⁴ A famous example is the procession of King Wenceslas of Bohemia and his Queen, shown in an illuminated copy of the Golden Bull which was made in Prague in about 1400.



One of the two most persistent myths regarding the history of the sidesaddle is that of Ann of Bohemia (1366-1394), Richard II's queen, introducing this style of riding to England, yet there are no contemporary sources to confirm this story. It was first mentioned by a young Czech nobleman who traveled in Britain around 1600, two centuries after Ann's death.¹⁵

What does seem evident is that ladies throughout Europe began to sit sideways more regularly, and not only on formal occasions. The first to observe this was Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, in his ground-breaking *Dictionary of French Furnishings*, published between 1858 and 1872. He stated that "from the beginning of the 15th century, the ladies gave up riding astride."¹⁶ According to his research, the type of saddle used for sitting sideways was called "sambue," a term first mentioned in French poems of the 13th century. He described this saddle as a kind of strapped-on cushion which could easily be adapted for use as required. Stirrups could be added for sitting astride, while ladies sitting aside would be provided with a footrest, the "planchette."¹⁷ This is the sidesaddle Winter von Adlersflügel described as "after the old manner." In fact, such saddles, with a high rim or a railing added for extra safety – hence "chair saddle" – provided a form of transport throughout the Early Modern period, and were still in use in the late 19th century to lead women or children about.



The main scene for the month of August shows a hawking party, and the focus is on a lady riding sideways on a white horse. Carrying her own falcon, she actively takes part in the hunt. She is seen from the off-side, and her saddle, covered in richly embroidered fabric, seems to form a low rim at the back to provide her some additional support.

Fig. 4: A tapestry from the Southern Netherlands, *Hawking Party*, c. 1500-1530, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941

Two of the earliest, and certainly two of the most famous, images showing ladies sitting aside beyond a very formal ceremonial context can be found in another Book of Hours [Figs. 2 & 3]. The *Très Riches Heures* were commissioned by the Duc de Berry, the French King's younger brother, between the years of 1405 and 1410. The illuminations, in particular those of the calendar months, are renowned for their detailed and realistic depictions of courtly life. The months of May and August offer the rare opportunity to see the sidesaddle from both sides. Or rather, to glimpse it: one of the main problems in trying to reconstruct the early history of the sidesaddle from images is the fact that in most of them the saddle is covered by the rider's dress.

The central scene for the month of May shows a group of courtiers in the countryside, in what appears to be a May procession: they are all decked out in young greenery. Prominent among the group are several ladies, all sitting aside. Their horses are adorned in elaborately gilded tack. This includes what looks like a crupper strap (a piece of tack that loops around the tail and is connected to the saddle to keep it from sliding forward), which was apparently needed to hold the sidesaddles in place. The male tack does not have such crupper straps. The ladies' long, flowing dresses, so-called "houppelandes" with huge, flared sleeves, fully cover their feet, but nonetheless it is obvious they are resting side by side on planchettes.

The falconry scene also demonstrates another way women could now be seated on a horse – riding pillion instead of on a sambue, sitting aside behind a gentleman. This was facilitated by the growing differentiation of military and civilian equestrianism. The military saddles retained the high pommel and cantle, as seen in *Codex Manesse* or the *Taymouth Hours*, to support the knights' ever heavier armor and the horses were, in fact, often armored as well. Civilians, on the other hand, used much lighter, lower saddles, like the sambue described by Viollet-le-Duc. Since this had no or only a very low cantle, it allowed two people to mount. A second cushion, the pillion, could be affixed to make sitting this way more comfortable and to protect the lady's dress from the horse's sweat. No medieval example survives, but one can assume that such pillions also provided footrests for added safety. They might additionally have had a hand-hold fastened at the back, or the ladies might have been able to hold on to the crupper strap. With their other hand, of course, they held on to their escorts. The sexual innuendo was clear and was exploited in many depictions that play on allegorical meanings of the hunt; 16th-century tapestries, in particular, favored such scenes.

Riding pillion reinforces what riding fully sideways meant in terms of equestrianism: loss of control. A rider controls a horse by a combination of aids, through hand, "seat" (i.e., their sit-bones and weight), and legs. Sitting fully sideways on highly padded cushions, women gave up seat and leg control, making the hand on the rein mostly ineffectual. Additionally, as Winter von Adlersflügel pointed out, sitting fully sideways requires a difficult balancing act. Therefore, ladies were restricted to the smoother gaits, i.e. the slow "walk" and also the faster, four-beat "amble" as well as the two-beat "pace," either or both of which most palfreys (the light medieval horses or mules favored for riding out) were capable.¹⁸ For safety, a lady riding out had to be accompanied by a male rider or by a runner, as shown in the illustration of Winter's text [Fig. 1].

Why Did Women Begin to Sit Aside?

There must have been compelling reasons and inescapable social pressures to make women

abandon the freedom and independence of riding astride. The causes are manifold and complex, but there are recognizable overarching trends.

Gender roles were being redefined during this period. Across Europe, many men expressed their contempt for women in their texts. Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies*, published in 1405, presents a formidable defense of the role of women, yet her response serves to highlight just how powerful the discourse was.¹⁹ In the context of this contemporaneous debate, the sidesaddle can be interpreted as one material manifestation of the new concept of femininity. If a woman's key virtues were to be passive and amenable, then the sidesaddle was the saddle to demonstrate her compliance. Apparently, the sexual innuendo contained in riding pillion was perfectly acceptable, while a woman sitting astride, in control of her horse, no longer seems to have been. One of the most famous women to have transgressed gender roles, Joan of Arc (1412-1431) also lived during this period of change – and died at the stake, charged with heresy and cross-dressing.

Fashion unfailingly reflects concepts of gender. The loose gowns of the early 14th century appeared almost gender-neutral and provided full freedom of movement. Beginning about the mid-14th century we see more tailoring, and male and female costume become markedly different. Femininity was highlighted by a pronounced bust and long, flowing skirts. This tailored look was supported by laced bodices, meaning that the body was tightly bound.²⁰ Clothes determine how one carries oneself. The elongated, slender bodices both highlighted and required a change of posture and behavior. The new fashion reflected how the feminine ideal was changing. The free movement enjoyed by the lady in the illuminations of the *Taymouth Hours* was made difficult or impossible by such tight lacing.

Fashion did not make sitting astride impossible, though. This is demonstrated by a fair number of images throughout the 15th century – most of them Italian – which still show women riding astride. Images provide essential evidence for the history of the sidesaddle because written sources rarely

specifically note whether ladies rode astride or aside.²¹ These images, however, do not necessarily reflect everyday practice. Rather, they illustrate the courtly ideal. Therefore, ladies outside Italy may also have continued to ride astride throughout the 15th century, but, representing them doing so was apparently now considered inappropriate.

Throughout the same period, hunting practice and women's involvement also changed. In the words of one researcher, hunting "went tame" through increasing enclosure in parks.²² "Par force" hunting on horseback with dogs, chasing a mature male deer through wild terrain, provided a test of speed and courage. In contrast, in the managed landscape of a park, the deer had no chance of escaping and could even be driven to a pre-ordained spot for the kill. The deer park also allowed spectators access without the need to even get on a horse, and watching rather than participating seems to have become the feminine role in hunting. Take, for example, the famous *Devonshire Tapestries*, which date from about 1430/50.²³ These show a series of hunting scenes for boar, bear, swan, otter, deer and fowl. Many ladies are depicted, but they are almost exclusively shown to be onlookers. Only in the falconry scene are two ladies taking part on horseback – sitting sideways – but even they have followed the hunt as spectators. Unlike the lady in the *Book of Hours* of the Duc de Berry, they are not themselves carrying falcons. In fact, one of them is being embraced by her male companion, so the emphasis, as in so many hunting depictions of the time, was on courtship as a different kind of pursuit.

Falconry was the main form of hunting that ladies on horseback actively stayed involved in the longest, probably because this was the only form of hunting that did not require speed. It also did not require the use of a weapon. Instead, the falconer had to build a close relationship with their bird, and "feminine" virtues could come into play here. While falconry was still practiced into the 16th century, it came to lose significance. If ladies wanted to stay involved in the pursuit, a further reform of their seat was necessary, now that the sidesaddle had become the norm.

Sitting Sideways, Facing Forward: The One-Pommel Sidesaddle

To regain some of the control over their horses they had relinquished by adopting the sidesaddle, horsewomen turned face-forward. Instead of just twisting their middles to be able to look in the direction their horse was going, they began sitting with their shoulders and hips parallel to the horse's. This enabled them to use their seat as an aid again, making their hands on the rein more effective as well. To make this feasible, the rider's right leg had to move up, becoming parallel to the horse's back, and in the process relinquishing the planchette as a footrest. On a sambue, turning forward would have made the rider's balance even more precarious, with no support of any kind for the right leg. And where the sambue had been turned into a chair saddle by the addition of supporting railings, turning face-forward would have been impossible. Therefore, the answer may well have been to use a male saddle instead and to hook the right leg around the pommel.²⁴

It is not altogether easy to establish what types of male saddles were most commonly used during this period either, other than that there was a lot of regional variation. This is because very few actual examples survive, and books on horsemanship had yet to be published. Additionally, in portraits of horsemen, the saddle is usually hidden as well, covered by the riders' coats. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, however, it is evident that a light civilian saddle with a low pommel and cantle was in use.²⁵ A lady might have been able to adopt such a saddle for sitting sideways, or have it adapted.

The first history of female saddles and riding costume (*La selle et le costume de l'amazone*) was published in 1890 by Jules Pellier, who came from a dynasty of French riding masters.²⁶ Each of his chapters is preceded by an intriguing picture of a saddle of the period discussed – intriguing because these are all photographs of actual saddles. Unfortunately, Pellier did not reference his sources but his study has been seminal despite its inherent contradictions. The most striking of these has proven to be the most influential: in his chapter on the saddle of the period of Louis XIV

(that is, of the second half of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century), he depicted a forked sidesaddle. Yet he stated that this – or at least a preliminary version – had been invented by Catherine de Medici, which would firmly date its introduction to the 16th century.²⁷

The myth that Catherine de Medici (1519–1589) single-handedly brought about what was the most important reform of the sidesaddle to date does not originate with Pellier, but his book certainly helped to broadcast it; it is the one story repeated over and over again in the retelling of the history of the sidesaddle.²⁸

At age 14, Catherine had been married to the French king's younger son Henri and became dauphine after the death of her husband's older brother in 1536. After Henri II died at only 40 (the result of an injury in a jousting tournament), Catherine acted as regent for two of her young sons in succession and then became close advisor to the third. She was one of the most powerful women of her time. Therefore it is perhaps no surprise that all manner of innovation has been attributed to her in colorful accounts of her life.

The first of those was Pierre de Bourdeille, the Abbé de Brantôme's *Vie des Dames Galantes*.²⁹ Brantôme knew the queen personally in later years, yet his tales are considered to be sometimes more lively than accurate. Brantôme described the young dauphine as a keen and excellent horsewoman. He initiated the myth, claiming that Catherine was the first to have hooked her leg around the pommel, which would date the invention of the forward-facing seat to the late 1530s or early 1540s.³⁰ Closer reading, however, reveals that Brantôme contradicted himself: In another section he noted that Catherine learned her style of riding from her contemporary, the Duchesse de Lorraine, Christine of Denmark (1521–1590).³¹ Christine, he continued, had in turn been taught to sit in this way by her aunt and guardian, Mary of Austria and Hungary, regent of the Netherlands (1505–1558).³² In fact, it has recently been pointed out that Mary of Austria visited the French court in 1538, where she took part in the King's hunts, and that Catherine might have adopted her style of riding at that time

because she was keen to emulate this powerful role model.³³

So, what do we conclude from Brantôme regarding the sidesaddle? Firstly, that in the 1540s several of the first ladies of France set the example of sitting facing forward with their right leg around the pommel. Secondly, that while this style might have been new in France, it was already practiced in the Netherlands and possibly elsewhere, too. Thirdly, Brantôme felt compelled to invoke a string of powerful women – who all acted as regents for their sons for extended periods – as role models for this form of female equestrianism, which might imply that it was still controversial, at least in France, at his time of writing.

As for Catherine de Medici's adoption of the forward-facing side-seat, it may be asserted that, as an avid horsewoman, she had been used to riding astride in her native Italy. Since this apparently was not an option for the young dauphine at the French court, she would have gladly embraced the new fashion

Fig. 5: Elizabeth I about to gut a deer. Illustration from George Turberville's *Noble Arte of Venery or Hunting*, 1575 (1908 facsimile of Bodleian copy of 1576 black-letter edition), National Sporting Library & Museum





Fig. 6: A rare surviving side-saddle from the later 16th century, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

as the closest substitute that could be considered appropriate.

No sidesaddle of the first half of the 16th century survives, and research so far has not revealed an image of one. Regarding the shape of Catherine's and her contemporaries' saddles, we can therefore only draw conclusions from later models. It is reasonable to assume that the male type of saddle was adapted for such use, for example by padding the pommel to make it more comfortable for the right leg. A cushion may also have been added in front of the pommel, as Winter von Adlersflügel described, but no such example survives. Charles Chenevix-Trench, who included a chapter on "Women Riders" in his exploration of *The History of Horsemanship* of 1970, also suggested that the pommel may have been moved slightly over to the left, though images and examples of 17th century sidesaddles do not bear this out.³⁴ The pommel seems to have remained fixed in the center. In theory, the saddle may thus have been used sitting to either side.³⁵ Yet sitting to the left had been the convention from the beginning and certainly was the norm by the 16th century. A saddle of this type could have also been used sitting fully sideways, provided it was fitted with a planchette instead of a stirrup.³⁶

One of the earliest images of a sidesaddle constructed for the forward-facing side-seat appears in George Turberville's *The Noble Art of Venery or Hunting*.³⁷ First published in 1575, it is lavishly illustrated by woodcuts. In one, Queen Elizabeth I has dismounted and is about to ceremoniously gut a deer. In the background, a servant holds her horse. Her saddle has a very high, upright pommel, with a rim at the top to provide extra grip. The cantle forms a padded ledge to prevent her from slipping back, and the seat seems to be made of a fairly flat, padded cushion. Colchester Museum in England preserves a sidesaddle which is said to have been kept for the use of Queen Elizabeth.³⁸ This would date it to the later 16th century and make it one of the earliest (partially) surviving examples of this type: all textile trappings and all padding except for the seat are missing. This seat provided ample space for the sideways position, which requires more room than sitting astride. It has no cantle, while the pommel, instead of being straight upright as in the Turbeville woodcut, is slightly curved forward, again to provide better grip. A similar, more complete example of a sidesaddle of this period is held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon [Fig. 6].³⁹ Here, part of the saddlecloth survives. This extended to cover the withers and shoulder and protected the ladies dress from sweat and hair. The "cushion" in front of



Fig. 7: Saddle thought to have been used by Queen Christina of Sweden, 17th century, Royal Armoury, Stockholm

the saddle which Winter von Adlersflügel described would probably have looked similar.

This shape of saddle fits with Brantôme's description, according to which Catherine and her equestrian role models used the pommel ["l'arçon"] to hook their legs around. It was not Brantôme, but Jules Pellier who claimed that Catherine had "une petite fourche" – that is, a small fork, or two horns – added to the sidesaddle.⁴⁰ Extensive research, however, did not unearth any images of such a type of sidesaddle dating from the early 16th century.⁴¹

One of the earliest general overviews of the history of saddles and tack was published by Christian-Henry Tavard in 1975.⁴² He suggested that, rather than adapting a male saddle, the first ladies to sit facing forward used a gap between the railing and the pommel of a sidesaddle of the sambue type to hook their right legs through.⁴³ Saddles of the type he describes survive, but they date from the second half of the 17th century, when the fashion of sitting facing forward was well established. One of the best-preserved examples of such a saddle is kept in the Royal Armory in Stockholm and is believed to have been used by Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689), another avid horsewoman (who much preferred sitting astride) [Fig. 7].

Tavard went on to argue that further development of this model led to the "forked" two-pommel sidesaddle. Research does not prove this: the earliest images of the forked sidesaddle appear in the second quarter of the 18th century, while all earlier evidence shows saddles of the type used by Queen Elizabeth or Queen Christina.^{44, 45}

To support his argument for the early date of the forked saddle, Tavard points to a print by Dürer, *The Lady and the Landsknecht*, dated 1496/97 [Fig. 8], however, this does not show details of the lady's saddle.⁴⁶ What it clearly demonstrates, on the other hand, is that she is sitting facing forward, several decades before Catherine de Medici or Mary of Austria. This and other depictions throughout the 15th century confirm yet another of the great Viollet-le-Duc's observations.⁴⁷ He posited that, as the pommel



Fig. 8: Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528), *Lady and Landsknecht*, c. 1497, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Julie Parsons Redmond, 1960

was there in plain sight and reach, "it would have been very strange if no woman would have thought of using it before Catherine de Medici, which is why, throughout the 14th and 15th century, ladies are often represented sitting almost astride in the sambue."⁴⁸

To sum up: Contrary to tradition, the forward-facing seat was not invented by Catherine de Medici. Instead, this seat was made acceptable and fashionable in the second quarter of the 16th century through being employed by a number of powerful women, including Mary of Austria and Christine of Denmark.

The saddle used for the purpose was either an adapted sambue or, more likely, an adapted male saddle. The two earliest surviving examples of such saddles in Britain date from the later 16th century. For many decades, their shape and construction does not

seem to have changed much. Some, like the one used by Queen Christina, had a railing to the offside to provide additional support, but most simply provided a padded cushion and one upright, well-padded pommel, often curved forward to provide better grip.

The Late 17th Century: New Techniques of Hunting, a New Style of Riding, and the Development of the Riding Habit

We can first glimpse saddles of the single-pommeled type used by Queen Christina in portraits of noble horsewomen about to set out for the hunt. Such stately equestrian portraits of women (but with the rider still on foot) begin to appear in the 17th century in Britain. The earliest and therefore most famous is that of Anne of Denmark (1574–1619) [Fig. 9], queen consort of James VI and I, dated 1617.⁴⁹ Anne asserted her independent mind in commissioning this life-size portrait which shows her in a pose and context until then reserved for male likenesses. (It is important to note that none of the powerful regents of the 16th century – neither Mary of Austria, nor Catherine de Medici – were officially portrayed as horsewomen, no matter how prominent and commented-upon their exploits on horseback were.)⁵⁰

Paul van Somer painted the queen in full hunting dress, surrounded by her hounds, and with her horse held ready for her by a servant. Her saddle, of which we can just see the front part of the off-side, is covered in red velvet. A heavy, velvet saddlecloth hangs to well below the horse's knee, conveying status as well as providing ample protection for the queen's robe. It would, however, not have allowed her to ride at a fast pace.

A decade-and-a-half later, Daniel Mytens painted a double portrait of King Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria, departing for the hunt [Fig. 10].⁵¹ Again, this is life-size, and again, a detailed depiction of the queen's hunting dress and her saddle is provided. The latter consists of a thick, straight cushion and a curved pommel. There does not seem to be a footrest. The long saddlecloth covers any strappings, and an ornate breastplate secures the

saddle to the front. There probably would have been a crupper strap, too, but unfortunately the painting does not show us this detail.

The queen's hunting dress is made of sturdy cloth, and her petticoat (the term used in the 16th to 19th century for any skirt worn with a separate bodice) seems to be of the same material as her husband's breeches. Moreover, her bodice is of a strikingly similar cut to his, despite the different collar. This might just be explained as being practical, but she is also wearing the same broad-brimmed, feathered hat as her husband.⁵²

As the great costume historian Janet Arnold demonstrated, ladies had been wearing dress of such style for hunting (and traveling) since at least the 16th century.⁵³ The first mention, however, of a specific

Image: Royal Collection Trust
<https://www.rct.uk/collection/405887/anne-of-denmark-1574-1619>

Fig. 9: Paul van Somer (Flemish, 1577-1621), Queen Anne of Denmark, consort of King James VI/I of Great Britain, 1617, Royal Collection

Image: Royal Collection Trust
<https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/3/collection/404771/charles-i-and-henrietta-maria-departing-for-the-chase>

Fig. 10: Daniel Mytens (Dutch, 1590-1647), Charles I and Henrietta Maria Departing for the Chase, 1630/32, Royal Collections Trust

“riding habit” in Britain dates from 1666. During the same period, a distinct term for the riding dress also came in fashion in France. Here it was called “l’habit d’Amazone.”⁵⁴

This is no surprise that gender role play was inherent in the riding habit from the start. Hunting on horseback had become very much a male pursuit. Therefore ladies taking part made a statement by dressing in a masculine fashion. And the gentlemen took note. In 1666, Samuel Pepys, the famous diarist, complained: “Only for a long petticoat dragging under their men's coats, nobody could take them for women in any point whatsoever [...] a sight that did not please me.”⁵⁵

A few decades later, in 1711, Richard Steele scoffed in *The Spectator*: “if the Amazons should think fit to go on in this plunder of our sexes ornaments, they ought to [...] complete their triumph over us, by wearing breeches.”⁵⁶ This, of course, would have been the ultimate transgression: from the moment breeches first appeared in their “modern” shape, they had become one of the key emblems of the battle of the sexes.⁵⁷ Breeches came to symbolize masculinity, and women shown grabbing for them – a popular theme in satirical prints – were denounced as grabbing for power.

It meant that horsewomen in their masculine-style outfits were treading a fine line: as long as they cut

an elegant figure, they might be admired for their spirits. At the same time, they had better not outdo the gentlemen or appear too much in control (of their horses and otherwise), or else they might be discredited as viragos or shrews. To be called “amazonian” was at best a spiked compliment. Richard Steele, quoted above, had in fact initially been describing a scene of a group of riders, whom he at first took to be all men, until he belatedly spotted the petticoat and noted:

*I looked again on the face of the fair Amazon who had thus deceived me, and thought these features which before had offended me by their softness, were now strengthened into an improper boldness.*⁵⁸

It is no coincidence that the term riding habit first appears in print in the 1660s, and the well-traveled Winter von Adlersflügel was absolutely on trend when he included a section on (how to teach) horsewomen in his manual in 1678. During the same period, equestrian hunting scenes became a popular genre in painting, first in the Netherlands and soon in Britain. At first, these hunting scenes were part of the scenery in idealized landscapes.⁵⁹ (For an example, see Wyck's 1690 painting, *Hare Hunting* [cat. no. 1].) These scenes regularly include horsewomen – or perhaps it is more appropriate to say, they often include one token woman on horseback. All female equestrians thus depicted decorously sit aside.⁶⁰

The new genre reflects the fact that hunting had now become a favorite and prestigious pastime for wealthy landowners and was no longer a prerogative of the courts. This is certainly true for the Republic of the Netherlands and in Britain, where the development was codified by the Game Law of 1671.⁶¹ While previous acts had upheld the exclusive royal privilege to hunt wherever they pleased, the new law granted this right to every landowner above a certain income. At one fell swoop, it conceded the wealthy more rights and dispossessed the poor. Previously, cottagers had been able to hunt for fowl and rabbits in the commons, but the new law made this illegal

for anybody who did not meet the income threshold. In effect, it granted a small minority the right to literally trample over and damage their neighbors' property in pursuit of their own pleasure.

This pleasure was greatly heightened by the divisive new law: in sporting terms, it made hunting a thrill and a challenge again. As the numbers of deer and boar had steadily declined, the main prey at this point were fox and hare.⁶² The former would have been considered unworthy game in previous times, but now that these animals could be pursued beyond the boundaries of one's own land, the chase as such became the purpose of the exercise. And the chase got considerably faster during this period: from the mid-17th century, the British nobility began to import Oriental horses. These were not only used to breed racehorses but were also cross-bred to produce ever swifter hunters.⁶³ Therefore, the changes in hunting technique went hand in hand with a profound new development in riding style. The "English hunting seat" was light, active, and forward. Compared to manège riding, the stirrups were shortened and the rider was poised over the horse's center of gravity. The new seat combined the influence of Eastern horsemanship and the racecourse. It required a different, lighter saddle – the "English hunting saddle" still in use today. It also asked for a light hand, so a single rein and a snaffle bit were the preferred choice. "Haute Ecole" riding, on the other hand, relied on a deep, heavy seat in a saddle high both at the front and back, and used two bits, the snaffle and the curb, the latter applying leverage through the shank.

During the course of the 18th century, the new forward seat with a minimum of restraint came to be seen as an image of English political liberty (as enjoyed by the gentry) and of British "gentlemanly capitalism."⁶⁴ The successful "merchant aristocrats"⁶⁵ had to be autonomous, move fast and be prepared to take risks, and the hunting field was where they could display these qualities, just as the courtiers on the continent could exhibit their grace and self-control in the choreographed horse ballet of the Haute Ecole where everybody had to play a pre-ordained part.⁶⁶

Before further exploring what this means for female equestrianism and, eventually, the sidesaddle in



Fig. 11: (attributed to) Joseph Parrocel (French, 1646 - 1704), *Madame La Comtesse de Saint Geran*, c. 1670. This is one of a series of portraits of noble horsewomen by Pierre Mignard and Joseph Parrocel now preserved at the Royal Armouries Stockholm

Britain, a brief look at French equestriennes of the late 17th century may be illuminating. In political terms, France, the epitome of absolutism, presented as Britain's opposite. The life of the nobility remained firmly focused on Versailles and Paris, where around 1670 a remarkable series of female equestrian portraits was produced.⁶⁷ Some of the first ladies at court proudly had their portraits painted by leading court painters such as Joseph Parrocel and Pierre Mignard [Fig. 11]. A current PhD project at Cambridge on the emergence of female sport culture in Early Modern Europe is analyzing how the practice of these ladies fitted with contemporary theory on health and exercise.⁶⁸ Otherwise, the paintings have rarely been studied.⁶⁹ The ladies are portrayed as distinct personalities. They display their lavish and equally individual riding habits. They show off their beautiful horses in the levade, the passage, or in full canter – poses which had so far mostly been reserved for male courtly and military portraits. Except, of course, these ladies are

sitting aside. Further research is needed as to who commissioned the series of portraits and for what space and audience they were intended. They obviously formed part of the lively discourse on "femmes fortes" ("strong women") at the time, in which the ladies depicted would have been fully engaged.⁷⁰ Some of their contemporaries posed to be portrayed as Minerva (the goddess of wisdom and warfare) or armored amazons, by the same painters.⁷¹ The heroic and virtuous amazon was celebrated in plays, and Amazonian battles provided a popular motif for paintings and prints. At the same time, the term "amazone" began to be applied to horsewomen in general, and the newly defined riding habit, as discussed above, was called "l'habit d'amazone."

In the series of equestrian portraits, the French courtly ladies' saddles are fully covered by their habits, but it is safe to assume that their saddles were of the same type as the one used by Queen Elizabeth I a century earlier, or indeed by Queen Henrietta Maria thirty years before. That is, they had one central, upright pommel or horn, and they consisted of a thick cushion, with a smaller cushion added to rest the right leg on. They were used in combination with an elaborate saddle-cloth which at least partly protected the rider's petticoats.

This is the sidesaddle Winter von Adlersflügel described as the most appropriate, in 1678, and it is the sidesaddle



Fig. 12: Jan Mijtens: *Maria, Princess of Orange-Nassau*, 1665, Mauritshuis, The Hague



Fig. 13: Aelbert Cuyp (Dutch, 1620 – 1691), *Lady and Gentleman on Horseback*, c. 1655, reworked 1660/1665, National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection

used across Western Europe at the time, as evidenced by other contemporary paintings. For example, this type is depicted in the portrait of Henriette Adelaide of Savoy, Electress of Bavaria, and her husband, painted about 1665 as part of a series of hunting scenes decorating the Savoy palace of Venaria near Turin.⁷² The same type of saddle is shown to be used by Maria of Orange-Nassau, in the portrait painted by Jan Mijtens, again in 1665, and preserved at the Mauritshuis in The Hague [Fig. 12].⁷³ Fashion also knew no borders: the princess wears a riding habit very similar to that of the ladies of the French court. Again, note the masculine cut of the coat (especially the collar) and the masculine hairstyle. Unlike the French ladies, who had their braided, Maria of Orange is wearing her curled hair long and loose, very like the big wigs fashionable for male courtiers at the time. In the Republic of the Netherlands, wealthy burghers also used this type of saddle, as can be seen in the unusual double portrait of *A Lady and a Gentleman on Horseback* now held at the National Gallery in Washington [Fig. 13]. This was painted by Aelbert Cuyp at around 1655 and reworked ten years later.⁷⁴ The most notable differences in terms of fashion and tack lie in the lady's more feminine dress and hairstyle and in the elaborately embroidered, but rather shorter saddle-cloth.

To sum up: The 1660s and 70s are an important period not just for equestrianism in general, but also for female horsemanship. As hunting on horseback

became a prestigious pursuit beyond the courts, images of hunting parties (including women) proliferated. And the courtly hunting habit developed into a more widely used, "amazonian" riding habit, distinguished from other day-wear by being cut along masculine lines.

The Forked Two-Pommel Sidesaddle, an Invention of the Early 18th Century

It took another several decades for the sidesaddle to be developed to better accommodate the growing field of horsewomen in newly-fashioned riding attire. As women wanted to keep up with the fast pace of

Fig. 14: Sir Godfrey Kneller (British, 1646/9 - 1723), *Portrait of Lady Henrietta Cavendish*, c. 1715, Ham House, Surrey, ©National Trust Images

the hunt, they needed better grip. This was provided by shifting the central pommel and adding a second one, forming a "fork," or "cradle" to accommodate the right thigh and support the rider's balance.⁷⁵ As Britain was by then setting the standard for the new style of horsemanship (French writers complained about "Anglomania"),⁷⁶ it is not surprising that this modification should have originated there. The new shape is not commented on in contemporary literature, though, and the date it was first introduced remains uncertain.

Perhaps the earliest painting to show a saddle of this type might be the portrait of Lady Henrietta Cavendish, Viscountess Huntingtower [Fig. 14].⁷⁷ This shows her in a fashionable, pale riding habit, dismounted, with her horse held in waiting for her in the background. It was painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller, the leading portraitist of the period, in 1715. A year earlier, he had already depicted her in the same pose and another striking outfit (but without the horse),⁷⁸ and at about the same time, he also portrayed the Countess of Mar and Kellie in a similar style.⁷⁹

The fashion statement clearly was important to the sitter. She was fully on trend: one-toned riding habits with heavy gold or silver braiding around the buttons were now the preferred choice. The jackets were cut to resemble soldier's uniforms, with wide-buttoned cuffs and pocket flaps,⁸⁰ and the skirts were narrower and less billowy than those of the 1660s and 70s. The habit was worn with a cravat and a tricorne hat over a masculine wig (shorter now than in the 17th century). This style was censoriously described as "the Hermaphroditical, by reason of its Masculine and Feminine Composition."⁸¹ Lady Henrietta's posture, too, would have befitted a gentleman.

What if her saddle also was of the very latest fashion? What little we see of it, curiously highlighted by its bright crimson color, is the pommel, or possibly just half of the pommel: it is curved sideways and looks very much like part of a cradle-shaped rest for the right leg.

What such a saddle looked like in action, from the off-side, is demonstrated in a gouache by James



Fig 15: model of a sidesaddle, Plate XI in François Alexandre de Garsault's *Le Nouveau Parfait Maréchal*, Paris, 1741. National Sporting Library & Museum

Seymour (1702–1752), showing *A Lady and a Gentleman Riding Out* [cat. no. 2].⁸² This is undated, but likely to have been executed between 1730 and 1750. The saddle was very similar to the male model of an English hunting saddle at the time, except for the two pommels, forming a fork. However, it had to be secured in position by both a broad girth and a crupper as well as a breast strap. The saddle-cloth was much simpler and more functional than in the 17th century examples. This befitted the riding habit worn: The uniform style was still fashionable (and remained so well into the 1780s) but displayed different detail about the cuffs and the front, now worn fully buttoned up. Seymour shows the lady well poised and centered, facing fully forward. His painting also makes obvious how long the seat had to be to accommodate this position. While her companion is riding on a snaffle only and with loose reins, she is using a snaffle and curb and has apparently just used the whip, as the raised tail, tense neck and backward

ears of her horse suggest. This is a gray, no smaller or lighter than her companion's, and Seymour clearly shows it is either a stallion (which would be highly unusual for a lady's horse) or a gelding.

Seymour's gouache makes an interesting comparison to two further paintings. The first of these, John Wootton's *Preparing for the Hunt* [cat. no. 3] was painted at approximately the same time, in 1745. Yet Wootton (1678/82–1764),⁸³ who by many was considered to be "the best horse painter in England" of the first half of the 18th century,⁸⁴ was a generation older than Seymour and therefore possibly preferred by an older clientele. Also, this particular painting has been described as part-fancy, certainly as far as the architecture is concerned, and more theatrical than realistic, typical of his later style.⁸⁵ It shows one lady already mounted, while a second is accompanied down a flight of steps towards her waiting horse (the gray on the right). Her saddle is of the old style; a thickly padded cushion covered in velvet rather than leather, with a matching saddle-cloth. Its front is hidden, but only one, upright pommel would have been on this model. The horse, with its tail braided rather than cut short, is equally groomed according to an older fashion. The two ladies' riding habits, too, are less masculine in cut and show a low neckline.⁸⁶ This is juxtaposed with a tricorne hat, which here is worn with the ladies' natural hair, left long and tied at the back.

If the comparison between the Seymour and Wootton works suggests that both types of sidesaddles may have been used alongside each other for a considerable period, comparing Seymour's gouache to Thomas Gooch's⁸⁷ double portrait of *Marcia Pitt and her Brother George Pitt* of 1782 [cat. no. 7] reveals that certain traditions of equestrian portraiture prevailed. The sidesaddle depicted here is an identical model to the one seen in the earlier painting. It is equally secured by a crupper, if not a breast strap. By now, black had come in vogue for a lady's horse,⁸⁸ and its ears as well as its tail have been fashionably docked. The same type of saddle can be seen in full detail in Benjamin Marshall's portrait of *A Lady's Hunter* of 1799 [cat. no. 11].⁸⁹



Fig. 16: (after) John Collett (British, ca. 1725-1780), *A Soft Tumble After a Hard Ride* (one of a series of satirical prints), c. 1790, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

While the shape with the high “cradle” was the most popular in Britain in the second half of the 18th century, the French favored a type with two lower pommels and a handhold or a supporting railing on the off-side. François Alexandre de Garsault first depicted such a saddle in his *Le Nouveau Parfait Maréchal* [Fig. 15], which saw a number of editions between 1741 and the 1780s.⁹⁰ Similar models can be seen in use in a number of paintings and drawings by Louis-Auguste Brun (1758–1815), mostly famous today for his two equestrian portraits of Marie Antoinette.⁹¹ In French, this type of saddle is called “selle à rampe.”⁹²

As for dress, Gooch’s double portrait demonstrates that gold was no longer in evidence and the elegance of both his and her coats relies on their cut. Hers is cut away from the front, following the latest male fashion.⁹³ The lapels also mirror her brother’s, but her cravat is frillier and her hat is decorated

with an abundance of feathers, softening its outline. Alongside Hussar red, pale colors, though impractical, were in vogue again. A close-up view of this style of riding habit is provided by Francis Wheatley’s portrait of Mrs. Stevens [cat. no. 10]. She is depicted in a park, musing over a book, and is apparently wearing her riding habit as a morning suit. This had become highly fashionable at the time, even for ladies who did not ride at all. Fashion plates of the period often show a riding habit as an alternative style alongside a more traditional version of morning dress.

Yet even in this revolutionary age, when the very foundations of society seemed to shift, criticism was rife. The pseudo-masculinity of this fashion (and the freedom of posture and movement such dress encouraged, as seen in the earlier Kneller portrait) came under even more attack than the riding habit had when it first emerged a century earlier. “Young ladies out of women’s dress” – that is, young ladies fashionably wearing riding habits as day dresses – were not admitted to Edinburgh’s most prestigious Assembly Rooms.⁹⁴ And satirical prints lampooning horsewomen abounded. John Collett, in particular, made a successful career out of such prints, ridiculing female riders either as shockingly domineering or else as too easily available (“fast” and “racy” are the evocative epithets).⁹⁵

Riding as a Feminine Accomplishment and the Introduction of the “Leaping Horn”

Thomas Rowlandson was more even-handed when poking fun at hunters, male or female. His delightful watercolors of hunting scenes [cat. nos. 12, 13, & 14] reflect the fact that, despite such criticism, women regularly took part in the field, if in small numbers. The mini-series of hunting scenes, like Dean Wolstenholme Sr.’s *A Trying Course*, set of four [cat. nos. 9a-d], that gained lasting popularity during this period, tell the same story.

This also meant there finally was a market for riding manuals directed exclusively at women. The first of those is not, as commonly assumed, Carter’s

Instructions for Ladies in Riding of 1783, but an equally slim German volume, Johann Gottfried Prizelius’ *Etwas für Liebhaberinnen der Reiterey*, published in 1777.⁹⁶ John Adams’ *An Analysis of Horsemanship* of 1805 offers an extended chapter “On Ladies’ Riding.”⁹⁷ This was quickly followed by the first French riding manual for ladies, published by le Duc de Pons d’Hostun, in 1806.⁹⁸ Then there appears to be a gap of about two decades, with the second French riding manual for women, Henri Le Noble’s *Traité d’Équitation à l’Usage des Dames*, published in 1826. This had been preceded, a year earlier, by John Allen’s *Principles of Modern Riding for Ladies*.

Closer analysis of these manuals is illuminating. While the earlier German and French examples both strongly advocated riding astride, this was no longer an option even worth mentioning for Le Noble 20 years later. Carter, writing in the British tradition, had not considered any alternative to the sidesaddle in the first place. His teachings (on paper and in his commercial riding establishment in London, where he may have been the first to offer all-female classes)⁹⁹ were all about achieving “grace, beauty and ease.”¹⁰⁰ Far from producing the potentially man-eating viragos evoked by the satirical prints, his schooling was supposed to perfect these “quintessentially feminine attributes.”¹⁰¹

Fifty years later, this aspect was fully developed: John Allen extolled the qualities of the feminine hand as to be simultaneously “firm, gentle and light,”¹⁰² and this became a key theme in the numerous ladies’ riding manuals that followed. Allen continued, “... as she begins to collect and unite her horse, so she collects and unites herself.”¹⁰³ Governing a horse was thus considered perfect training for governing a household (and a husband). And as a school of feminine domesticity, riding was yet another accomplishment that might help secure a suitable husband. The frontispiece of Le Noble’s manual, which shows a lady in flowing skirts riding out in the company of a gentleman, subtly asserts this point.

Once riding had become an appropriate as well as fashionable feminine recreation that many aspired to, it needed to become safer. The result was the

development of a new type of sidesaddle. Opinions differ whether this was invented in Britain or France, but the date is undisputable:^{104, 105} in the early 1830s, shortly after the publications of Allen and Le Noble, the downward-pointing third pommel, “leaping horn,” was introduced. This meant that the rider’s left leg, so far only supported by the stirrup, now could get as firm a grip as the right. At first the leaping horn was simply added as a third extrusion [cat. no. 24]. The logical next step was to eliminate the first horn, creating the type of sidesaddle still used today [cat. no. 31].

It took several decades for the new invention to fully spread. Queen Victoria, for example, an avid horsewoman whose passion for the sport contributed much to make it fashionable among young ladies, kept on using the forked two-horned sidesaddle, as both surviving saddles and equestrian portraits of her demonstrate.¹⁰⁶ In fact, all three types of saddles – forked two-pommeled, three-pommeled and the two-pommeled in the new formation with the downward pointing leaping horn – were still being advertised together at the end of the 19th century.¹⁰⁷ Horsewomen had to weigh up the advantage of the firm grip the leaping horn provided against the risk of not getting out in the event the horse fell.

We cannot say for sure whether the vigorous and energetic young ladies portrayed by James Loder of Bath or Henry Thomas Alken in the 1840s [cat. nos. 18 & 20] were seated in a forked two-horned saddle or already using the leaping horn, as those details yet again are covered by their riding habits (all now fashionably black).

When women finally started riding astride again in the 20th century, this was rightly celebrated as liberating, both literally and symbolically. It is only in recent years that perspective has changed, with the recognition that – like Ginger Rogers – horsewomen in the sidesaddle achieved everything their male peers did, except “backwards in high heels.”¹⁰⁸ Today, Gloria Allred, the famous feminist lawyer, displays two sporting prints of the 1840s on her office wall which prominently feature ladies in the sidesaddle.¹⁰⁹

Jan Wyck
(Dutch, c. 1645 - 1700)

Hare Hunting, c. 1690

oil on canvas, 56 x 48 inches

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Jan Wyck was one of the most important of the first-generation sporting artists. Born in the Netherlands and trained in the Dutch landscape tradition, he came to Britain in about 1670, where he helped shape the emerging genre of sporting art.

In this scene, three riders survey the landscape from the vantage point of a hill. Although the figures only take up part of the frame, they dominate the painting. The horseman on the white steed has assumed the pose of a military leader, as in one of those battle scenes at which Wyck excelled. Yet these riders are enjoying themselves, and the lady in their midst seems to have no problem keeping the pace. Her seat looks firm, and so does her hand on the reins. Unlike her companions, she is using a curb bit. No detail of her saddle can be seen except for the lavish velvet saddlecloth, but it seems to be held in place by both a breast and crupper strap. The female rider's dress and headwear highlight her femininity; the fashion for masculine-style riding habits was yet to come.





2

James Seymour
(British, 1702 - 1752)

A Lady and a Gentleman Riding Out, c. 1740

gouache on paper, 5 5/8 x 7 1/8 inches
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

James Seymour, the son of a goldsmith and diamond merchant who supplied racing trophies, may have been self-taught as a painter. He became famous for his precise and lovingly detailed portraits of horses and depictions of hunting scenes. Perhaps his greatest talent lay in sketches and drawings. This lovely gouache is an excellent example. It is so meticulously observed that one expects to touch fur and muscle and to hear the horses snort. Every detail of the lady's riding habit and her saddle have also been realistically depicted. An important composition dating from the 1730s or 40s, the gouache provides one of the earliest images of a two-horned or forked sidesaddle. As it is shown from the offside, every feature of how it was fixed, including the three-part girth and the breast and crupper strap, is clearly displayed. It also shows how much room the seat needed to provide to accommodate the lady's sideways position. Her fashionable red habit is cut in a masculine style along the lines of a military uniform, with silver trimmings fully buttoned up. She is wearing her hair tied up under a black hat that looks remarkably like today's riding caps. Her seat looks firm and she is in full control of the horse, a gray gelding, which she governs with a double bridle.



John Wootton
(British, 1682 - 1764)

Preparing for the Hunt, c. 1745

oil on canvas, 47 x 49 inches
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

A pupil of Jan Wyck (Dutch, c. 1645 - 1700), John Wootton gained great fame as “the painter who draws landscape and horses,” as the writer Jonathan Swift noted in a letter in 1727.¹ Frederick, Prince of Wales, was his most important patron, and Wootton worked on large commissions for many great country houses portraying some of the most famous racehorses of his time, often life-sized. He was considered to be the best-paid painter of his generation in England, and much of the artist’s work was engraved.

Wootton’s later hunting scenes can sometimes be rather fanciful and are possibly less anecdotally realistic. This composition with its large fountain and staircase almost looks like a stage set. It shows two horsewomen. One is already mounted and seen from the nearside, so we do not get a glimpse of her saddle beyond the fact that it required a breast and crupper strap to hold it in place. The second horsewoman is only just descending the stairs. Her horse, another gray, is being held by a groom and looking toward her with attentively pointed ears. The lady’s saddle consists of a thickly padded cushion and large saddlecloth in blue velvet with gold trimmings. It would have had one padded pommel at the front. In the 1740s, this type of sidesaddle was considered old-fashioned.





4

George Stubbs
(British, 1724 - 1806)

**The Countess of Coningsby in the Costume of
the Charlton Hunt, c. 1760**

oil on canvas, 25 x 29 1/4 inches
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

The most remarkable and original of the 18th century horse painters was George Stubbs. He conducted intense anatomical research, and after 18 months of meticulous dissection published *The Anatomy of the Horse* in 1766, a work that was both artistically and scientifically ground-breaking. His astoundingly life-like horse portraits, however, are also based on detailed character observation. He had an excellent eye for portraying people as well, as demonstrated in this likeness of Margaret, the second Countess of Coningsby. She sat for him in 1760, the year before her death at only 52, and it is she rather than her mount who is the focus of this painting. The elder daughter of the first Baron of Coningsby, she had succeeded her father as Countess of Coningsby in 1729 since there were no male heirs to the title. This may well explain why she commissioned herself to be portrayed so splendidly as a horsewoman. This format of equestrian portrait was normally reserved for gentlemen, while ladies on horseback would usually be part of a group in paintings of the period. The Countess also bred her own racehorses. Here she is shown holding a hunting whip and wearing the blue costume of the Charlton Hunt, one of the earliest and most famous hunts in England.



Johan Joseph Zoffany
(German, 1733 - 1810)

The Drummond Family, c. 1769

oil on canvas, 41 x 63 inches

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Born in Frankfurt, Germany, Johann Joseph Zoffany came to Britain in 1760. Within only four years, he enjoyed the patronage of the royal family. The artist is rightly famous for his wonderfully subtle, detailed, and generous character studies, and he is the unsurpassed master of the “conversation piece.” These were seemingly informal, yet carefully orchestrated group portraits, often showing their subjects in the outdoors, which were popular in Britain since the 1720s.

The Drummond Family is one of Zoffany’s earlier conversation pieces and thought to have been painted in 1769, the year that Scottish goldsmith, banker, and family patriarch Andrew Drummond died. His commemorative portrait is central to the painting. In the grouping to his right is his son and heir John Drummond who has lifted Andrew’s grandson, John, Jr., onto a hunter. Little boys were customarily dressed in skirts at the time until they were about four years old. Little John looks a little bit unsure seated sideways on his father’s horse while a groom holds him around his waist and his father holds his hand, watching him sternly. His older sister Jane, about to accompany her father on a ride, seems more benevolently amused. She is seated with assured confidence, wearing a splendid pale blue riding habit, with her coat unbuttoned to show off a white waistcoat lavishly embroidered in gold. She is using a double curb bit, and some detail of her horse’s saddle and its girth are visible. At the time, gray still was the most fashionable color for a lady’s horse. Additionally, as is evident from this composition, Seymour’s gouache [cat. no. 2], and Gooch’s double portrait [cat. no. 7], a lady’s mount was no smaller or lighter than a gentleman’s.



5



6



Henry Walton
(British, 1746 - 1813)

Elizabeth Bridgman, Sister of the Artist, 1771 - 1775

oil on canvas, 13 5/8 x 11 5/8 inches

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Henry Walton was a pupil of Johan Joseph Zoffany [cat. no. 5] and specialized in portraits. This painting is of his youngest sister Elizabeth, born in 1752, and was probably painted shortly after she married Edward Bridgman. Her brother depicted her in a charcoal gray riding habit, lightened only by its pale blue collar which matches a pale blue cravat. The coat, long at the back, is cut back in front in a straight line at the hips to reveal the long, light gray waistcoat that Elizabeth is wearing underneath. Her somber habit almost exactly matches the color of her horse, black by then having come in vogue for a lady's mount. The painting only allows a glimpse of her saddle, cutting off just prior to a point where technical details would be visible. The fact that Walton chose to portray his sister as she was about to go riding demonstrates how popular and fashionable the sport had become for ladies at that time.



Thomas Gooch
(British, 1750 - 1802)

**Marcia Pitt and Her Brother George Pitt,
Later second Baron Rivers, Riding in the Park
at Stratfield Saye House, Hampshire, 1782**

oil on canvas, 27 1/8 x 25 1/8 inches

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Today, the animal painter Thomas Gooch is mostly remembered for his series of paintings, *The Life of a Racehorse*, which he exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1783. The set shows the sequence of the happy foal and then the race course winner; subsequently used as a hunter, it is finally sold off as carthorse and driven to death. The series marks the beginning of a wider discussion of animal welfare and was reproduced in prints at least eight times over the next several decades.

Few of Gooch's other paintings survive. This double portrait of siblings Marcia and George Pitt, displayed at the Academy in 1783, is an indication of Gooch's great talent. The composition is very similar to Seymour's gouache [cat no. 2], showing Marcia and her brother George riding on the grounds of their father's estate. Marcia Pitt is portrayed as a competent horsewoman easily in control of her mount. She is wearing a stylish, dun-colored riding habit very similar to the one favored by Mrs. Stevens, a female contemporary portrayed by Francis Wheatley [cat. no. 10]. The attire's masculine lines are offset by the soft feathery decoration of Ms. Pitt's hat. By the 1780s black, rather than gray, had become the most fashionable color for a lady's horse. The ears as well as the tail of her horse are shown severely docked, again following contemporary fashion. The painting provides a detailed view of her saddle from the offside, displaying the right of the two pommels forming a cradle for her right leg and the two additional leather straps which, along with the girth, hold the saddle in place.



7



8



George Morland
(British, 1763 - 1804)

The Squire's Door, c. 1790

oil on canvas, 15 ⁵/₁₆ x 12 ⁷/₈ inches

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

George Charles Morland exhibited his first sketches at the Royal Academy at the age of 10 and trained in the workshop of his father, a portrait painter. He quickly established himself as a highly productive artist of elegant, if sometimes sentimental, genre scenes. Equally quickly, he gained a reputation for his extravagant drinking and spending habits, and he died at the early age of 41. When he did manage to escape his creditors, he greatly enjoyed hunting to hounds.

The Squire's Door is not a portrait but another genre scene. It shows a buxom lady on her doorstep about to go for a ride, accosted by a beggar boy. She is wearing a bright-red riding habit which follows the style of a man's greatcoat of the period. Full-skirted, short-waisted, and double-breasted, it is tailored to show off her womanly figure. This style of riding habit is called a "redingote;" the French adaptation of the English word for riding coat having been re-anglicized. Redingotes or "greatcoat dresses" were a popular form of morning and outdoor wear in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, even for ladies who did not ride. Note also the length of the dress, which leaves the hem trailing on the ground. This was necessary to ensure that the lady's legs would remain fully covered once she was mounted, with only her feet poking out daintily.

A groom is waiting in the background with two horses; the one in front is watching the beggar. Behind the groom's head, the two large pommels on the side-saddle that form the cradle for the lady's right leg can be seen.

The canvas still shines through the thinly applied layer of paint, a testimony to Morland's quick and assured working process. The scene served as the model for at least two different prints, the first published in the 1790s, and the second about a century later.



10



Francis Wheatley
(British, 1747 - 1801)

Mrs. Stevens, c. 1795

oil on canvas, 26 x 18 1/2 inches

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

This sensitive portrait of a lady at her leisure reading in the outdoors demonstrates that by the end of the 18th-century, the riding habit was used widely as informal and practical daywear, not just for riding. Mrs. Stevens' attire is of a light and somewhat dull gray wool; such subdued colors were the height of fashion at the time. Coats were cut so tightly that they could only be fastened edge to edge. This masculine-style of coat with its large lapels was worn with a ruffled shirt, adorned with only a small pin. Mrs. Stevens' hairstyle, too, would have benefitted a man, as with the black hat braided with gold that is on the ledge beside her.

Benjamin Marshall
(English, 1768 - 1835)

**A Lady's Hunter and Her Black and Tan,
and a Pug Dog on an Estate, 1799**

oil on canvas, 28 x 36 inches
Private Collection

Benjamin Marshall was one of the most prolific and popular horse painters of the late 18th and early 19th centuries in England, and he was considered to be at his absolute peak in 1799. The Philadelphia Museum of Art holds another portrait of a lady's hunter of the same year. Both show their subjects gleaming, well-muscled, and extraordinarily lifelike; they seem to be ready to step out of the frame. This painting also shows an endearing interaction between the lady's favorite horse and dog. Also, true to the artist's style, every detail of the saddle has been faithfully depicted. It is of a two-pommel or "forked" type, with a particularly wide and comfortable cradle for the right leg.



[Not in exhibition]

Favorite Chestnut Hunter of Lady Frances Pierrepont

Benjamin Marshall, English, 1768 - 1835

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Centennial gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Norris, Jr., 1977



12

Thomas Rowlandson
(British, 1756 - 1827)

The Return from the Hunt, 1787

watercolor on paper, 7 5/8 x 11 9/16 inches
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Even among the field of highly-polished caricaturists of late-18th century Britain, Thomas Rowlandson stands out, both for his wit and fertility of imagination and his outstanding draftsmanship. His sketches, quickly executed in pen and ink, are full of life and energy. As much as they look like rough sketches from nature, however, closer analysis reveals that they are carefully composed; the “notes” he must have taken in his sketchbook where thoroughly worked up in the studio.

This sketch of the *Return from the Hunt* is a particularly good example of this process. It was a preliminary study for a large drawing in pen and watercolor, now preserved at Birmingham city Museum and Art Gallery, which in turn served as the model for an etching. Rowlandson etched and published a set of six hunting scenes in 1788, said to have been executed for the Prince of Wales. The composition may look as if it was taken straight from nature, but in fact it is based on Rembrandt’s famous etching of *The Good Samaritan*. Rowlandson, who was an art collector, clearly enjoyed such references, and so would his patrons and customers: part of the humor of the scene lay in this comic transformation from the biblical to the mundane.

Dismounting from a sidesaddle was (and remains) difficult; 19th-century writing manuals for ladies spend considerable time explaining how to do this safely, with or without assistance. The former obviously offered opportunities to the gentleman, whether they were welcome or not. In the sketch, the lady is shown dismounting on the off-side, but the print made from it would show the entire scene laterally reversed.

Thomas Rowlandson
(British, 1756 - 1827)

How to Twist Your Neck, 1809

watercolor on paper, 3 ¹³/₁₆ x 5 ¹³/₁₆ inches
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

From around 1808, Rowlandson produced a series of sketches for caricatures which were quickly etched and cheaply published in London by Thomas Tegg for a shilling a piece. They proved highly popular. Quite a few of them address sporting subjects, and 16 of these were used to illustrate a volume of hilarious "anecdotes" of sporting life, published in 1809, again by Tegg, under the title *Advice to Sportsmen. Rural or Metropolitan, [...] Selected from the Original Notes, &c, of Marmaduke Markwell, Esq.* The third image in this sequence, inserted next to page 6, was entitled *How to Twist your Neck*. It illustrates the dangers of pursuing a lady if you cannot actually keep up with her. The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Centre at Vassar College holds another version of this sketch which is slightly more detailed and more carefully colored and, therefore, probably represents the second stage of the design. All the key elements are, however, already present in this lovely drawing, which as with Rowlandson's other works manages to look as if it had been sketched immediately from life and in the field, although it was most likely to have been devised in his studio.

The Vicar of Wakefield: The Departure from Wakefield, c. 1817

watercolor on paper, 4 ¹/₂ x 7 ¹/₂ inches
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Rowlandson provided illustrations for works by some of the most popular novelists of his time, Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne among them. The best known among these are the 24 plates he executed for Oliver Goldsmith's highly popular sentimental novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*. In this scene we see the benevolent vicar and his family on horse back. His wife is riding pillion behind him, while his fashionably dressed daughters have their own mounts. The family later fell on hard times and was forced to leave their home. In a later scene, the vicar is shown strapping on a pillion for his wife, while the daughters also had to share a horse.



13



14



15



George Chinnery
(British, 1774 - 1852)

Lady Louisa Duncombe on Horseback, c. 1824

graphite, 7 x 9 7/8 inches

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

George Chinnery was born and trained in London but spent most of his life in Bengal and in Canton, finally moving to Macau. He was a prolific artist and his work provides a detailed record of life in those colonies.

This lovely and assured sketch dates from his last years in Bengal. It demonstrates that the young ladies in the colonies dressed according to the latest European fashion. Lady Louisa Duncombe is wearing a dark, one-toned riding dress, fully buttoned up and with a very long, flowing skirt. The two drawings show her in different headgear, one a high-top hat, the other a softer, plumed concoction. They also record her considerable riding skills and her excellently firm seat. She is using a double bridle and a martingale, and her lively horse appears to be of the Arabian type.



William Barraud
(British, 1810 - 1850)

Lord and Lady Twemlow, late 1840s

oil on canvas, 27 3/4 x 35 1/2 inches

Yale Center for British Art, Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Peter L. Malkin

William Barraud first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1828, when he was just 18. Beginning in 1835, he shared his studio with his brother Henry in central London, and the two regularly collaborated, with Henry specializing in portraits and William in animals. The latter died from typhoid fever aged only 40.

The large-scale double portrait of Lord and Lady Twemlow remains a bit vague in terms of location. The couple seems to be about to go for a ride, accompanied by two dogs. Not yet mounted, the lord is in full uniform. It is the lady's elegant mare, of a slightly darker chestnut color, rather than his lordship's horse, whose attention is on the husband, while the lady gazes into the distance. She is fashionably dressed in an entirely black habit, offset by a simple white collar and her pale gloves. A top hat completes the ensemble. Underneath it, her hair is tied into a bun, and her only jewelry is a pair of earrings.



Endnotes

Backwards in High Heels

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1. For a detailed exploration of this topic see Kate van Orden: *From Gens d'armes to Gentilhommes: Dressage, Civility and the Ballet à Cheval*; in: Karen Raber and Treva J. Tucker (eds): *The Culture of the Horse. Status, Discipline and Identity in the Early Modern World*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York 2005, pp.197-224 and Treva J. Tucker: *Early Modern French Noble Identity and Equestrian "Airs above the Ground"*; in: Raber/Tucker 2005, pp. 273-310.
2. This concept was first expressed in Baldassare Castiglione's seminal *"The Book of the Courtier"* of 1528. The first Haute Ecole riding manual to be published was Federico Grisone's *"Gli Ordini di Cavalcare"* of 1550.
3. For his biography see Anja Henn, *Über die pferdekundliche Handschrift des Joachim Christoph Zachen aus dem 18. Jahrhundert nebst einer Würdigung des Georg Simon Winter von Adlersflügel*. Veterinärmedizinische Dissertation Berlin 1999, pp. 278-284 and Pia F. Cuneo: *Das Reiten als Körpertechnik, als Sport und als Kunst. Die Körpertechnik des Reitens und gesellschaftliche Identität im frühneuzeitlichen Deutschland*; in: Rebekka von Mallinckrodt (ed.): *Bewegtes Leben. Körpertechniken in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2008, p. 187f.
4. Published by Wolfgang Moritz Endter and Johann Andreae Endters Sel. *Erben at Nürnberg*. This was Winter's fifth book, covering both the training of horsemen and of horses. The relevant section is Chapter 46, pp. 65-67.
5. "Sondern auch den Damen mit Bericht aufwartet/ wie sie sich/ zum Spatzier- oder Land-Ritt füg- und zierlichts haben zu bequemen." - This and all following translations by the author.
6. For more detail, see Donna Landry: *Noble Brutes. How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2009, p. 164ff.
7. Winter von Adlersflügel p. 65.
8. Winter von Adlersflügel p. 65f.
9. Winter von Adlersflügel p. 65.
10. The following is a brief list of the most important literature on the side-saddle:
Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc: *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français de l'époque Carolingienne à la Renaissance*, 6 vols, Paris 1871-1874 (seminal remarks on the early history of the side-saddle); Jules Theodore Pellier: *La Selle, et le Costume de l'Amazone*. Jean Michel Place, Paris 1897 (the first monograph, unreliable, but widely used); Emile Toebusch: *Amazones, Cavalières et Femmes à Cheval*. Ets Pauwels Fils, Brussels 1968 (relies on Pellier); Lida Fleitmann Bloodgood: *The Saddle of*

Queens. J. A. Allen & Co., Letchworth 1959 (based on an extensive collection of images, now housed at the National Sporting Library and Museum, but without references and not always reliable); Charles Chenevix-Trench: *A History of Horsemanship*. Doubleday, New York 1970 (with a section on the side-saddle, providing some good examples but no references); Christian-Henry Tavad: *Sattel und Zaumzeug. Das Pferdegeschirr in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*. DuMont, Köln 1975 (the French original dates from the same year; the section on the sidesaddle relies on Pellier); Rosamund Owen: *The Art of Sidesaddle*. Trematon Press, London 1984 (entirely based on previous literature); Rhonda C. Watts Hettinger: *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Sidesaddle*. Sidesaddle Source, Wilton 2009 (no references, but comprehensively based on practice, with excellent examples of tack etc.); Isabelle Veauvy, Adélaïde de Savray and Isabelle de Poton d'Amécourt: *Cavalière Amazone. Une Histoire Singulière*. Swan Editeur, 2017 (comprehensively researched, especially for the French 15th and 16th century).

11. Walter Koschorreck and Wilfried Werner (eds): *Kommentar zum Faksimile des Codex Manesse: Die grosse Heidelberger Liederhandschrift*. Graphische Anstalt für Kunst und Wissenschaft Ganymed, Kassel 1981.
12. Kathryn Smith: *The Teymouth Hours. Stories and the Construction of Self in Late Medieval England*. The British Library and University of Toronto Press, London 2012. Comprehensive bibliography at <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8148&CollID=58&NSTart=13>; 5 June 2018.
13. Katharina Fietze: *Im Gefolge Dianas. Frauen und höfische Jagd im Mittelalter (1200-1500)*. Böhlau, Köln 2005, p. 43.
14. The earliest examples of such practice can be found in Italy, Spain and Southern France, see *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Sidesaddle 2009*, p. 195.
15. As has been pointed out in the most recent, thorough study on side-saddle riding, *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 41f., with reference to Alfred Thomas: *A Blessed Shore: England and Bohemia from Chaucer to Shakespeare*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca/ London 2007, p. 201. On Baron Waldstein's journal see <https://www.historytoday.com/al-rowse/diary-baron-waldstein>; 9 June 2018.
16. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier*, vol. 3, p. 442 ("dès le commencement du XV^e siècle les dames abandonnèrent l'usage d'enfourcher les cheveux").
17. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier*, vol. 3, p. 438. For a discussion of the term "sambue", which in some sources was also used to describe the entire saddlecloth, see *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, pp. 49-53 and p. 263.
18. On the types of medieval horses see Andrew G. Miller: "Tails" of Masculinity: Knights, Clerics, and the Mutilation of Horses in Medieval England; in: *Speculum*, 88, 2013, p. 969.
19. For an introduction, see Julie D. Campbell: *The Querelle des femmes*; in: Allyson M. Poska, Jane Couchman and Katherine A. McIver: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate 2013, p. 362ff.
20. Elizabeth Ewing: *Dress and Undress. A History of Women's Underwear*. B.T. Batsford, London 1978, p. 21ff., mainly based on British examples, drawn from funeral monuments.
21. See, for example, the month of October from the Sforza Book of Hours, c. 1490 (British Library), which shows a couple hawking; or a scene from a Treatise on Falconry painted, again, for the Dukes of Sforza in 1459 (Musée Condé, Chantilly; see Caroline Bugler: *The Bird in Art*. Merrell, London and New York 2012, p. 125).
22. Emma Griffin: *Blood Sport. Hunting in Britain since 1066*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2007, pp. 49-66, for the

development in Britain.

23. <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-devonshire-hunting-tapestries>; 5 June 2018.
24. As, again, already suggested by Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier*, vol. 4, p. 316; see also *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 53, footnote. 68.
25. Both Tavad 1975, pp. 75-82 and Axel Gelbhaar: *Mittelalterliches und frühneuzeitliches Reit- und Fahrzubehör aus dem Besitz der Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg*. Olms, Hildesheim 1997, p. 184f. are vague about dates.
26. http://www.ling.fi/RATS/BAUCHER_FR/JulesCharlesPellier.html; 10.7.2018.
27. Pellier 1897, p. 49.
28. The first to thoroughly challenge this myth are the authors of *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, pp. 58-64.
29. C. 1540-1614, this work published posthumously in about 1666. See Ludovic Lalanne (ed.): *Oeuvre Complètes de Pierre de Bourdeille Seigneur de Brantôme*. Publiées pour la Société de l'Histoire de France, 11 vol., Paris 1864-1882.
30. "...ayant esté la première qui avoit mis la jambe sur l'arçon", as quoted by *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 58. - Antoine Varillas, in his "Histoire de Charles IX" of 1684, added the fanciful explanation that she did so to show off her pretty ankles (cp. *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 58). This, in turn, was quoted as a fact by Pellier 1897, p. 49, and subsequently by most of the literature on the side-saddle.
31. Lalanne, *Oeuvre de Brantome*, vol. 9, p. 621; cp. Jean-Hippolyte Mariéjol: *Catherine de Medicis*. J. Tallandier, Paris 2005, p. 60. - Christine had first been married to Francesco II Sforza in 1534. Widowed after just a year, her second marriage was to the Duke of Lorraine in 1541. When her second husband also died (in 1545), Christine governed the Lorraine for seven years while her son was a minor.
32. Marie of Hungary, Regent of the Netherlands since 1530. - Cp. Helmut Georg Koenigsberger: *Monarchies, States Generals and Parliaments: the Netherlands in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, pp. 123-171.
33. *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 63f.
34. Chenevix-Trench 1970, p. 275.
35. Unless it was additionally provided with some form of railing, something which seems to have been more common on the Continent than in Britain.
36. Saddles set up to be used for either form of sitting sideways can occasionally still be found much later, for an example see *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 96.
37. George Turberville (or Turberville) has traditionally been seen as the author of this book, which is now thought to have been written by George Gascoigne (1534/5-1577), see <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-noble-art-of-venery-or-hunting-by-george-turberville-1575>; 22/07/2018. - On the symbolism of the scene depicted see Stephen Deuchar: *Sporting Art in 18th century England. A Social and Political History*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1988, p. 4.
38. Hill Hall in Essex, was the country seat of her Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Smith. - For the saddle, see Patricia Connor (ed.): *All the Queen's Horses. The Role of the Horse in British History*. Exhibition at the Kentucky Horse Park, Lexington 2003, cat.no. 26.2.
39. <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-100-objects-side-saddle/>; 20/07/2018 (the blog wrongly states that the rider would have sat fully sideways on this holding on to the pommel). - Pictured in *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 264.
40. Pellier 1897, p. 49.
41. Pellier does not reference the example he provides for the period of Henri II (Pellier 1897, p. 35).
42. Tavad 1975, pp. 243-272.
43. Tavad 1975 p. 252 (where he confuses Catherine with Marie de Medici).

44. This observation has recently been confirmed by the research of *Cavalière Amazone 2017* (p. 64).
45. From this early period, it is mostly 'the saddles of queens' (to paraphrase the title of Lida Fleitmann Bloodgood's study) that survive, having been preserved as treasures because of their illustrious owners.
46. There is a little nub visible by her right thigh, but there is not enough detail or other pictorial evidence to be used for corroboration to determine whether this is part of the pommel.
47. See, for example, the "Flight into Egypt" by Fra Angelico, part of a cabinet preserved at the Museo di San Marco, Florence, of c. 1450, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fra_Angelico_005.jpg; 20/07/2018.
48. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier*, vol. 4, 1873, p. 316 ("presque assises à califourchon"); cp. *Cavalière Amazone*, p. 53. <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/search#/16/collection/405887/anne-of-denmark-1574-1619>; 15.7.2018.
49. There is only one known woodcut depicting Catherine de Medici on horseback. It is likely to have been made during her lifetime, but certainly not to official commission, and in her native Italy. The copy held at the Musée Condé, Chantilly, is depicted in *Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 58. And in this depiction Catherine is not actually sitting facing forward, but seems to be using a chair settle and planchette (*Cavalière Amazone 2017*, p. 65).
50. <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/404771/charles-i-and-henrietta-maria-departing-for-the-chase>; 15.7.2018.
51. On the fashion for female riding hats see Callie Blackman: *Walking Amazons: The Development of the Riding Habit in England during the 18th Century*, in: *Costume. The Journal of the Costume Society* 35, 2001, p. 56f.; and Jane Ashelford: *The Art of Dress. Clothes and Society 1500-1914*. National Trust, London 2002, p. 131. - On the particular importance of headgear for gender impersonation see Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass: *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 79ff.
52. The most comprehensive overview on the subject still is provided by Janet Arnold: *Dashing Amazons: The Development of Women's Riding Dress, c. 1500-1900*, in: Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson (eds): *Defining Dress. Dress as Object, Meaning and Identity*. Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York 1999.
53. Or alternatively "en tenue Amazone". Arnold 1999, p. 16 states that the term was used from the late 17th century; *Cavalière Amazone 2017* date the first appearance of the term "l'habit d'Amazone" to the 1690s (p. 78).
54. Quoted by Arnold 1999, p. 16f.
55. 29 June 1711, no. 104; quoted by Arnold 1999, p. 16.
56. Sigrid Metken: *Der Kampf um die Hose: Geschlechterstreit und die Macht im Haus. Die Geschichte eines Symbols*. Campus, Frankfurt and New York 1996, pp. 37-88.
57. 29 June 1711, no. 104; quoted by Arnold 1999, p. 16.
58. Before British painters took up the genre, Dutch and Flemish hunting scenes were imported to Britain. On their popularity in the late 17th century see Deuchar 1988, p. 33. The term "sporting art" only gained currency during the 1750s (Deuchar 1988, p. 8).
59. This was not the case at the Orange court only a few decades earlier, as there are a number of images showing ladies riding astride; see for example Adriaen van der Venne's *Drawing of The Winter King and Queen out hunting on Horseback*, part of an album of 1625/26 now at the British Museum, or Hendrick Ambrosius Pax's large painting of *The Nassau Princes at Buitenhof*, of c. 1621, at the Mauritshuis, The Hague (see Marika Koblusek and Jori Zijlmans: *Princely Display. The Court of Frederik Hendrik of Orange and Amalia van Solms in The Hague*. Exhibition catalogue. Haag's Historisch Museum, The Hague 1997, fig. 81 and 83).
60. For the following, see Griffin 2007, p. 110ff., and in particular p. 110. See also Deuchar 1988, p. 5f.
61. On hare-hunting, see Griffin 2007, p. 117ff.
62. For this and the following argument see Donna Landry's ground-
- 63.

- breaking analysis (Landry 2009). For the political implications and symbolism of the English hunting seat, see particularly pp. 51-73. On this term see Peter J. Cain and Anthony G. Hopkins: *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914*. Longman, New York and London 1993, p. 12.
64. Desmond Shawe-Taylor: *Ruling a Free Nation*. In: Desmond Shawe-Taylor (ed.): *The First Georgians. Art and Monarchy, 1714-1760*. Exhibition catalogue, Royal Collections Trust, London 2014, p. 19.
65. On the subject of the history of masculinity and individualisation see Robert W. Connell: *History of Masculinity*. In: Rachel Adams and David Savran (eds): *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Blackwell, Malden 2002, pp. 246-48.
66. Most of them today at the Royal Collections Stockholm (Skokloster, part of Livrustkammaren) (http://emuseumplus.lsh.se/eMuseumPlus?service=RedirectService&sp=Collection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=1&sp=3&sp=Slightbox_4x5&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F;5.7.2018). Their format is not listed, but they appear to be of an intimate scale.
67. Valerio Zanetti, supervised by Prof Ulinka Rublack (<https://profiles.ahrc.dtp.csah.cam.ac.uk/directory/valerio-zanetti;4.7.2018>).
68. Cavalière Amazone 2017, p. 71 provide an image, but no mention in the text.
69. For an excellent introduction, see Bettina Baumgärtel and Silvia Neysters (eds): *Die Galerie der Starken Frauen. Regentinnen, Amazonen, Salondamen*. Exhibition catalogue Düsseldorf and Darmstadt, München 1995. In particular the articles by Margarete Zimmermann ("Vom Streit der Geschlechter", here see p. 33) and by Silvia Neysters ("Regentinnen und Amayonen", here see p. 102f.)
70. Marie Anne Mancini, Duchess of Bouillon was portrayed by Parrocel as part of the equestrian series, while her sister Olympe Mancini, Countess of Soissons was portrayed by Mignard or his workshop as Minerva (a painting now also at Stockholm, see *Galerie der Starken Frauen* 1995, p. 113).
71. Pictured in *Cavalière Amazone* 2017, p. 79.
72. Charles Dumas (introduction): *In het Zadel. Het Nederlads Ruitersportret van 1550 tot 1900*. Exhibition cat. Fries Museum Leeuwarden, 1979-1980, cat.no. 18, pp. 58-59.
73. For more information, see <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.1152.html;6.7.2018>.
74. This is the invention Jules Pellier wrongly ascribed to Catherine de Médici (see above). And cp. *Cavalière Amazone* 2017, p. 258.
75. On the wider context of the term beyond horsemanship see Josephine Grieder: *Anglomania in France, 1740-1789: Fact, Fiction and Political Discourse*. Geneva 1985; Jan Buruma: *Voltaire's coconuts: or, Anglomania in Europe*. Phoenix, London 1999.
76. The illegitimate daughter of William Cavendish, 2nd Duke of Devonshire, Henrietta was married to Lionel Tollemache, Lord Huntingtower in 1706. She died in January 1717 or 1718. (<http://www.thepeerage.com/p26027.htm#i260270;6.7.2018>). The painting is now in the care of the National Trust at Ham House in Surrey (<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1139648;6.7.2018>).
77. Now at the Portland collection, Wellbeck Abbey.
78. Now in the care of the National Trust for Scotland at Alloa Tower (<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/frances-daughter-of-evelyn-pierpont-1st-duke-of-kingston-195726;7.8.2018>). Alexander Hay produced a mezzotint portrait of her, head only, after Kneller (<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/97646/frances-erskine-n%C3%A9e-pierrepont-countess-mar1690-1761-wife-john-erskine-22nd-or-6th-earl-mar;7.8.2018>). All three portraits clearly reference the tradition of British female equestrian portraits initiated by Paul van Somer's painting of Anne of Denmark.
79. Arnold 1999, p. 19f.
80. Ian Gray in the *Guardian*, no. 149, 1713, quoted in Arnold 1999, p. 20.
81. On Seymour see Judy Egerton: *Sport in Art and Books*. The Paul Mellon collection. *British Sporting and Animal Paintings 1655 to 1867*. The Tate Gallery, London 1978, p. 41; Sally Mitchell: *The Dictionary of British Equestrian Artists*. Antique Collectors' Club, Woodbridge 1988, pp. 383-386.
82. On Wootton see Egerton 1978, p. 10f. (for biography) and no. 30, p. 28; Mitchell 1988, pp. 469-474.
83. According to the Earl of Egremont, quoted (but not referenced) by Mitchell 1988, p. 469.
84. Egerton 1978, no. 30, p. 28.
85. Egerton 1978, no. 30, p. 28 even doubts these are riding habits.
86. On Gooch see Egerton 1978, p. 146f. (for biography) and no. 141, p. 147f.; Mitchell 1988, pp. 238-240.
87. "Cette mode, fort en vogue en Angleterre et en France", as the Markgravine Elisabeth Fredericka Sophie of Brandenburg-Bayreuth noted, as quoted by *Cavalière Amazone* 2017, p. 96.
88. On Marshall see Mitchell 1988, pp. 312-315.
89. "Le Nouveau Parfait Maréchal, ou, La Connoissance Générale et Universelle du Cheval". Paris 1741, pl. XI.
90. Anne de Herdt: *Louis-Auguste Brun 1758-1815. Catalogue des Peintures et Dessins*, Geneva 1986, esp. p. 99f.; Martine Hart and Helen Bieri Thomson (eds): *Louis-Auguste Brun, Peintre de Marie Antoinette*. Exhibition catalogue, Musée Nationale Suisse Château de Prangins, Lausanne 2016, esp. p. 25ff.
91. *Cavalière Amazone* 2017, p. 109 and 117.
92. Arnold 1999, p. 21.
93. Linda Colley: *Britons. Forging the nation 1707 to 1837*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2012, p. 247.
94. He also ridiculed women in other sporting activities. Patricia Crown saw him as essentially a liberal, revealing "little or no moral judgement" (Patricia Crown: *Sporting with Clothes: John Collet's Prints in the 1770s*, in: Sharon Harrow (ed.): *British Sporting Literature and Culture in the long 18th Century*. Ashgate, Farnham 2015, p. 64), but most of the costumers of the prints produced to his designs will simply have relished their vulgar connotations.
95. Johann Gottfried von Prizelius: *Etwas für Liebhaberinnen der Reiterei*, Leipzig 1777. Charles Hughes, in "The Compleat Horseman; or, the Art of Riding made easy" (F. Newbery, London 1772) had already advertised "Directions to the Ladies to sit gracefully, and ride with Safety" in his subtitle. But his section on women is only three pages long (pp. 59-61) and these are only in regard to mounting.
96. John Adams: *An Analysis of Horsemanship. Teaching the Whole Art of Riding, in the Manège, Military, Hunting and Racing and Travelling System*. 3 vols., James Cundee, London 1805, here vol. 2, pp. 85-108. - The first Italian riding manual for ladies was published in the same year (claiming to be the first ever): Federigo Mazzuchelli: *Scuola Equestre*. Gio. Pietro Giegler, Milano 1805.
97. Pons d'Hostun: *L'Ecuyer des Dames, ou Lettres sur l'équitation contenant des Principes et des Exemples sur l'art de monter à cheval*, Paris 1806, and republished in 1817 and 1829.
98. On Carter as embodying the new breed of commercial horsemen see Monica Mattfeld: *Becoming Centaur, 18th-century masculinity and English horsemanship*. The Pennsylvania State University Press 2017, p. 97.
99. Quoted according to Mattfeld 2017, p. 102.
100. For this interpretation, see Mattfeld 2017, p. 102.
101. John Allen: *Principles of Modern Riding for Ladies*, London 1825, p. 61, as quoted by Amanda Gilroy: *The Habit and the Horse*; in: Amanda Gilroy (ed.): *Green and Pleasant Land. English Culture and the Romantic Countryside*. Dudley 2004, p. 54.
102. Allen 1825, p. 46.
103. Tavad 1975, quoting Pellier, says it was a French invention; Chevenix-Trench 1970 names a British professional huntsman called Thomas Oldaker as the inventor; neither provide references.
104. Owen 1984, p. 14 claims the leaping horn was introduced in the late 18th century (by Tomans Oldaker), but this cannot be substantiated through images or other sources.
105. See Sir Edwin Landseer: "Queen Victoria in Windsor Home Park", dated 1865, at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, and a saddle she reportedly used in 1856, at The Museum of Leathercraft in Northampton (cat. 48.1 and 48.2 in *All the Queen's Horses* 2003, p. 194f.).
106. For an example in Alphonse Camille Jeune's catalogue "Sellerie

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108. For this quote from the 1982 "Frank and Ernest" cartoon by Bob Thaves, see <http://www.reelclassics.com/Actresses/Ginger/ginger-article2.htm;9.7.2018>.
109. As portrayed by Barry J. Holmes for the *Observer* article of 9th July 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/09/who-is-afraid-of-gloria-allred-trump-feminist-lawyer;5.6.2018>).

From Equestrienne to Equestrian

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