

# Doublet-Bodied Gown

A wool version of a quintessential late Renaissance women's garment

*Or, a period-accurate wearable mockup of the gown for a planned **Italian Renaissance x Captain Marvel** mashup*



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## This Project is...

**A women's doublet gown of gray wool**, also known as a 'high bodie'd gown' in Elizabeth I's parlance<sup>1</sup> or a 'French styled gown' to the Italians<sup>2</sup>. The style was popular through much of Europe starting in the late 1550's.

The construction techniques and materials used in this garment are all historically accurate. It is entirely hand-sewn and the only materials used were wool, silk, and linen fabric and silk thread. The hooks and eyes closing the center front are handmade from copper wire.

The doublet bodice pattern and shape is historically correct. The skirt is a divergence from period practice: it is rectangular while period examples are generally shaped. This is a deliberate choice as the gown is a wearable mockup of a future project which does not need to be period-accurate and details of that piece may be easier to execute on a rectangular skirt.

## Inspiration and goals of this particular garment

This garment, while complete and historically accurate on its own, was created as a wearable mockup for part of a less period correct outfit: a mashup between late-period Renaissance Italian portraiture and the costume worn by Captain Marvel in the 2019 Marvel Studios film.

As a wearable mockup, this gown is meant to test the fit of the pattern. It's also an opportunity to test sewing and shaping techniques for the final piece, in a material more forgiving and cooperative than silk. It allows the exploration of certain style decisions (IE a straight skirt and shoulder wings). Finally, it gives me a foundation to test the complicated seam and decoration patterns I'm planning for the final gown.

The crossover ensemble should feel wearable in the Renaissance, but with modern seam patterns to decorate and colors drawing on the modern inspiration. Much like Captain Marvel's costume, I am drawing on decidedly masculine garments of the era, keeping the decoration focused and streamlined. Captain Marvel's costume is practical, without a lot of fancy tools on her belt or a cape hanging off of her shoulders. I aim for a similar simplicity and directness in my final look.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the manual for Margo Anderson's *16th Century Lady's Doublet and Gown*

<sup>2</sup> *Moda a Firenze*, page 95

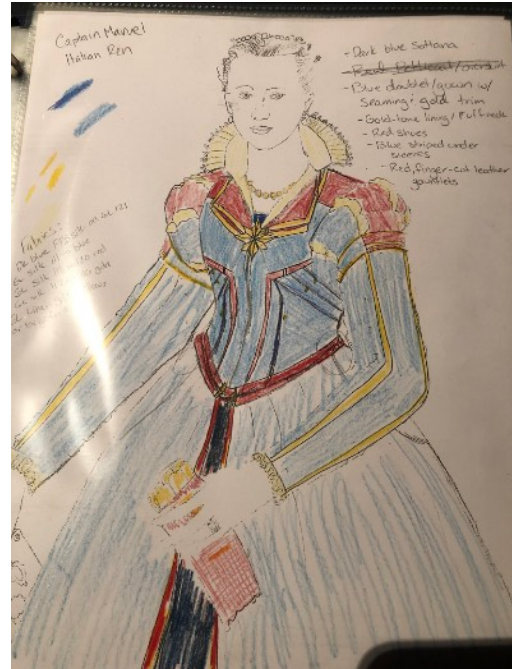


*Isabella di Cosimo I*, Mirabello Cavalori

The historical inspiration of the garment is Cavalori's portrait of Isabella di Cosimo I. The garment is close-fitting and while it is decorated, the decorations don't feel particularly delicate or fragile. The masculine lines of the garment are clear, especially in the pattern of the trim. While the embroidered partlet is pulled wide and frames the face, the gown's collar does not appear to be large and the doublet does not close fully in the front.

The final version of this ensemble will be made of silk, with seams and inserts to echo Captain Marvel's costume. I chose to execute this mockup in a mid-light weight dark gray wool so that it would be a little more wearable in an SCA context. While silk garments are beautiful I find them less practical to wear to events - they are too warm for the summer but aren't quite warm enough for winter, and don't usually hold up well to the outdoor activities and venues we typically inhabit.

The collar shape is one of the simplest I could find in portraiture: wide open, with a minimal grown on collar. Though my initial illustration has puffed sleeves (drawing on the original portrait), I chose to try simpler wings in the mockup as I think they will fit better with the intentions and look and feel of the final piece.



*Initial Sketch for 'Italian Renaissance Captain Marvel'*, Marguerite d'Cheneau/Jacqueline Chenault, 2020

## A Brief History of the “High Bodie’d Gown”

Women’s doublets first began appearing in Italy in the mid-late 1550’s and in the rest of Europe by the 1560’s, becoming widespread by the late 1570’s. They was not adopted by everyone - some thought the wearing of such male clothing was scandalous:

*The Women also there have dublets & Jerkins, as men have here, buttoned up the Brest, and made with wings, welts, and pinions on the shoulder points, as mans apparel is for all the world, and though this be a kind of attire appropriate only to man, yet they blush not to wear it...*

- Phillip Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses in Shakspeare’s England*. 1583

A doublet with attached, open fronted skirt, which could be worn layered over kirtles or doublets, was a popular version of the style. This is the “high bodie’d gown” referred to in the wardrobe inventories of Queen Elizabeth.<sup>3</sup>

Examples of the style are numerous and widespread in portraiture of the era, particularly in Italy. Specific examples include:

- Mirabello Cavalori, *Isabella di Cosimo I*, 1555-1558<sup>4</sup>
- Flemish School, *Flemish bride*, 1555-65<sup>5</sup>
- Florentine School, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1555-65<sup>6</sup>
- Francesco Terzio, *Giovanna d’Austria*, 1564 (German/Flemish)<sup>7</sup>
- Bronzino. *Laudonia de’Medici*. C 1560-65 (Italy)<sup>8</sup>
- Gianbattista Moroni, *Portrait of Pace Rivola Spini*, c. 1570 (Italy)<sup>9</sup>
- Alessandro Allori, *Ritratto femminile*, c 1570-75 (Italy)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Margo Anderson, *16th Century Lady’s Doublet and Gown*

<sup>4</sup> *Moda a la Firenze*, page 99

<sup>5</sup> *Moda a la Firenze*, page 98

<sup>6</sup> *Moda a la Firenze*, page 98

<sup>7</sup> *Moda a la Firenze*, page 39

<sup>8</sup> *2000 Years of Fashion*, page 230

<sup>9</sup> *2000 Years of Fashion*, page 232

<sup>10</sup> *Moda a la Firenze*, page 103

- Pantoja de la Cruz, *The infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia*. 1584<sup>11</sup> (Spain)
- Tournament, tapestry on a cartoon by Lucas de Heere, Brussels, 1582-85<sup>12</sup>

Portraits from the era are generally of the nobility and upper classes, but there is some evidence of doublet-style gowns for the middling sort as well.<sup>13</sup> While having your portrait painted while wrapped in ells of expensive silk was *the thing* for well-to-do folks, gowns for everyday women in England were more likely to be made of woolen broadcloth or other woolen textiles either dyed or the natural color of the sheep's wool.<sup>14 15</sup>

The doublet (and doublet gown) continued to appear in women's clothes into the 1600's, influencing the evolution of clothing in the Jacobean era and beyond

## Design Decisions, Pattern, and Historical Accuracy

### The Doublet Bodice

I used Margo Anderson's *16th Century Lady's Doublet and Gown* as my initial pattern, with slight modifications for fit based on the curved front doublet draft from *The Modern Maker, Vol 2*<sup>16</sup>. As Anderson draws on Gnagy as well as Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion*, I am reasonably confident in calling my base doublet pattern historically accurate.

### The Skirt

The skirt is made up of two rectangular panels and pleated to the doublet at the waist. My research indicates that this was NOT a period technique, and skirt panels would typically be shaped (and highly pieced) to make the most of the expensive lengths of fabric.

I believe the rectangular panels will be much easier to modify for my less-historical mashup garment, and as this is meant to be a wearable mockup I chose to test the rectangular skirt style despite its being less accurate.

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<sup>11</sup> *2000 Years of Fashion*, page 224

<sup>12</sup> *Moda a la Firenze*, page 97

<sup>13</sup> *The Tudor Tailor*, illustration of a Gentlewoman in 1568, page 12

<sup>14</sup> *The Tudor Tailor*, page 36

<sup>15</sup> *2000 Years of Fashion*, page 244

<sup>16</sup> *The Modern Maker Vol. 2*, page 132

## Shoulder Decorations

Nearly all the portraits of doublet-style dresses show intricate shoulders and sleeves, with rolls, tabs, and exquisite trim. However, images of doublets worn by less wealthy women sometimes display a simpler wing. I've opted for a wing in this garment, again aiming to simplify the silhouette in order to test my plan for the final mashup ensemble.

## Techniques

I believe the techniques used in this garment to be period accurate. Padstitching, interlining, basting, backstitch, running stitch and running backstitch, felling stitch, and whipstitch are all documentable to period <sup>17</sup>.

The hooks and eyes are handmade from copper wire. Hooks and eyes are documentable to at least the middle ages, and are captured in portraits during the Renaissance <sup>18</sup>.

## Materials

The materials for this garment are quite simple and all are as period-accurate as can be managed short of weaving my own fabric, spinning my own thread, or refining metal and pulling my own wire. They consist of:

- Top Fabric: Dark gray suiting wool, approx 4 yards 60" wide.<sup>19</sup>
- Lining: Yarn dyed handkerchief weight linen, approx 2 yards.<sup>20</sup>
- Interlining/Foundation: Heavyweight "Warsa" linen, approx 2 yards.<sup>21</sup>
- Padding: Heavyweight melton 100% wool from my stash
- Collar Lining & armscye binding: Shantung Silk, ~1 yard.<sup>22</sup>
- Silk thread in blue<sup>23</sup> and black<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *The Modern Maker Vol. 2*, Appendix A: Hand Sewing Techniques

<sup>18</sup> *Portrait of a Young Woman*, The Met Museum

<sup>19</sup> Source: Mood Fabric, New York, NY

<sup>20</sup> Source: Gray Lines Linen, New York, NY

<sup>21</sup> Source: Gray Lines Linen, New York, NY

<sup>22</sup> Source: Gray Lines Linen, New York, NY

<sup>23</sup> Source: Sil Thread, New York, NY

<sup>24</sup> Source: Burnley and Trowbridge, Williamsburg, VA

- Hooks & eyes: 24ga copper wire<sup>25</sup>

I also used:

- Pattern paper & pencils
- Scissors
- Sewing needles (modern)
- Pins (modern)
- Beeswax
- A tailor's open-top thimble
- Cotton thread for basting
- Pliers to shape wire into hooks & eyes

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<sup>25</sup> Source: Ace Hardware, Washington, DC



# Construction Techniques

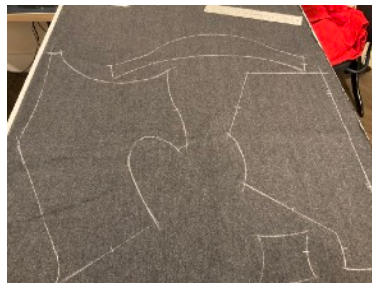
I constructed the doublet using a combination of methods I learned from Matthew Gnagy/*The Modern Maker* and Margo Anderson's *16th Century Lady's Doublets*. All seams were hand sewn and hand finished with thread coated in beeswax. Seam allowances were generally 5/8", with 3/8" at the collar.

In general I pinned pieces together, basted them with wide running stitches, then stitched them as indicated. The basting acts like pins without risking constant sticks with pins, and is a plausible construction method for the period. For specific construction details, see Appendix A

Structured areas (specifically the collar) were pad stitched with a curve to give them some height and support.



Alternating hooks and eyes sewn in to doublet center front



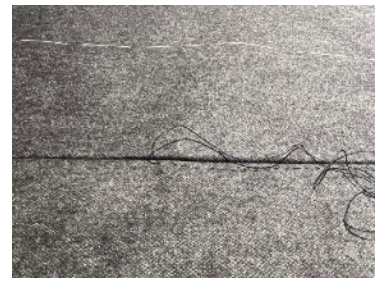
Cutting the traced pattern pieces out of the top fabric



Top fabric and foundation laid on lining before cutting



Padstitched collar pieces



Pickstitched seam

## Final Result & What Comes Next

The doublet gown took roughly 60 hours to complete. I'm pretty pleased with the result. It certainly has fulfilled its goal - I've learned quite a bit about how these garments come together and fixed mistakes that I'm very glad were made on such forgiving wool. While there is a bit of finessing I'll want to do on the fit of the final garment, this piece is a usable, wearable gown that should help keep me warm at cold weather events.

For the full Italian Renaissance Captain Marvel ensemble, my next tasks are to be to finalize the seam patterns and do some technique tests before carving up the doublet pattern and building seamed panels. I am considering making a second doublet, to test how one designed to fully close compares to one cut to remain open. The kirtle is already complete, but I will also need to make sleeves, a partlet, and accessories including a girdle, collar of state (likely with the signature Captain Marvel star), and red leather gloves.

While the ensemble is mainly intended for conventions (who else wants to join the Barony of Storvik at AwesomeCon?), I expect I'll break it out at at least one SCA event. Maybe something in a nice, climate controlled indoor space...



Historical Portrait  
inspiration

*Isabella di Cosimo I*,  
Mirabello Cavalori



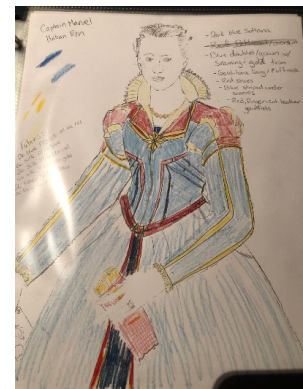
Captain Marvel  
Movie Costume

*Captain Marvel*, Marvel  
Studios 2019



Captain Marvel  
(Kree version)

Photographed by  
Marguerite d'Cheneau,  
MKA Jacqueline  
Chenault. NY 2019



Renaissance Captain  
Marvel Concept Sketch

Marguerite Honoree  
d'Cheneau, MKA  
Jacqueline Chenault.  
Washington, DC 2020

# Bibliography

Anderson, Margo. The 16th Century Lady's Doublet and Gown. 2016.

Sewing pattern created by Margo Anderson, a costumer with over 50 years' experience who is one of the premiere producers of reasonably accurate commercial historical patterns of Tudor, Elizabethan, and Renaissance Italian styles. This pattern and the accompanying instruction manual are written to build a lady's doublet and gown suitable for 1565 - 1600.

Boucher, François. *2000 Years of Fashion: The History of Costume and Personal Adornment*. Harry N. Abrams, 1987.

The expanded edition of the expansive reference on the history of clothing, by the Honorary Curator of the Musée Carnavalet in Paris and the Director of the French Center for Costume studies. Highlights fashion with illustrations and descriptions of styles in various regions of the world.

Chenault, Jacqueline. *Conversations and lessons with Matthew Gnagy*. New York, NY and online, 2016 - 2022.

Conversations and notes from an in-person workshop and subsequent online classes and interactions by the author with Matthew Gnagy, focusing on tailor's hand-sewing techniques that were likely used in the Renaissance. In-person class focused on producing a Cuerpo Bajo or Kirtle. Later conversations ranged into additional drafting and sewing techniques to produce doublets and other period garments as well as deeper exploration of the Bara method of drafting.

Chenault, Jacqueline. *Photographs of Captain Marvel costumes on display in New York*. New York, NY. 2019.

Reference photographs taken by the author of the Kree version of Captain Marvel's costume from the 2019 Marvel movie. The costume was on display in Times Square in New York, NY.

Eleri, Lynn. *Tudor Textiles*. Yale University Press, 2021.

Written by the curator of the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection at Historic Royal Palaces. Focuses on the fabrics used in royal Tudor garments with mentions of what other classes might have worn.

Gnagy, Mathew. *The Modern Maker, Vol. 1: Men's Doublets*. Printed by Creativespace.com, 2014.

A detailed step-by-step guide to produce a men's doublet using tailor's hand-sewing techniques as they might have during the Renaissance. Includes drafting the doublet using the Bara system of measurement, as well as making up the piece, correct lining and interlining material, etc. Written by the current head of the Costume Design Center for Colonial Williamsburg

Gnagy, Mathew, and A. LaPorta. *The Modern Maker, Vol. 2: Pattern Manual, 1580-1640*. Printed by Creativespace.com, 2018.

Explores the techniques of Spanish tailors in drafting patterns using mathematics and geometry using proportional measurements, drawing on the works of Alcega and Burguen.

Huggett, Jane, et al. *The Tudor Child: Clothing and Culture 1485 to 1625*. Fat Goose Press, 2013.

An assessment of the clothes and fabrics of Tudor children, including garments and fabrics that might have been worn by children of varied social classes. Written by the collaborative team behind *The Tudor Tailor*, who who specialize in the social history of dress with practical guidance on reconstructing historic clothing for interpretive projects.

Landini, Orsi Roberta., and Bruna Niccoli. *Moda a Firenze, 1540-1580: Lo Stile Di Eleonora Di Toledo e La Sua Influenza = Eleonora Di Toledo's Style and Influence*. Pagliai Polistampa, 2019.

An intensive study of Eleonora di Toledo's style and influence, with high resolution images of multiple portraits from the era including details of specific decoration and accessories in each portrait.

Mikhaila, Ninya, and Jane Malcolm-Davies. *The Tudor Tailor: Reconstructing 16th-Century Dress*. Costume and Fashion Press, 2015.

An exploration of the clothes worn in Tudor England, written by the collaborative team behind the Tudor Tailor, who who specialize in the social history of dress with practical guidance on reconstructing historic clothing for interpretive projects.

Netherlandish Painter. *Portrait of a Young Woman*. The Met Museum, c 1535. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/110001653>

Unknown follower of Marten de Vos. *Little Girl with a Basket of Cherries*. National Gallery, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/Paintings/Follower-of-Marten-De-Vos-a-Little-Girl-with-a-Basket-of-Cherries>, 1570, National Gallery, London, UK.

# Appendix A: Making Up the Doublet Gown

## Make up the Doublet:

### Cut Pattern Pieces & Prepare Flatlining

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1. Cut out all pattern pieces the top fabric, interlining, and lining, with adjustments at the collar for the silk strip at the neck.
2. Cut padding for shoulders, doublet front edge, and collars
3. Baste padding pieces to front, back and collar foundation pieces.
4. Padstitch collar pieces, back and center front. Trim close to stitching lines to reduce bulk. Pad stitch on a curve to add a little bit of shape.
5. Baste top fabric to foundation pieces.

### Assemble Collar

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6. Stitch collar sides to fronts, stretching collar to fit neck WITHOUT stretching doublet neckline.
7. Press seam open, clipping where needed.
8. Pick stitch 1/8" on each side of the seam line.

### Main Body Seams

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9. Pin center back seams and stitch. Press open, clipping the neckline to lie flat. Pick stitch along each side of the seam.
10. Pin fronts to the back, stitch, press open. Pick stitch along each side of the seam.
11. Pin shoulder/neck seam, stretching front shoulder slightly to fit. Take care not to stretch the back shoulder. Sew, and press seams open.

### The Lining

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12. Begin assembling the lining. Stitch the lining seams and press them open.

13. Pin lining to doublet at CF, right sides together. Stitch CF.
14. Grade seam allowances & press toward doublet. Turn right side out and press again.
15. Catch stitch the neck of the lining to the doublet flatlining.
16. Press collar upper & CF seam allowances to the wrong side
17. Stitch collar lining pieces together along seam line & press open. Press one long edge in - this is the collar's upper edge.
18. Pin collar lining to collar, wrong sides facing, stretching upper edge to fit. Turn lower edge of collar lining under and pin in place, easing fabric into sides and back of neckline and covering catch stitching.
19. Fell collar lining to collar along all edges. Press, shrinking out excess ease as much as possible.

## Finish Armscye

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20. Gather and stay tape armscye to form a curved pocket for the bust. Press such that the gathers shrink out leaving the pocket in place.
21. Bind armscyes with silk facing.

## Shoulder Treatment

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22. Flatline shoulder wing. Press edges to wrong side along seam lines and clip if needed.
23. Press edges of wing lining to wrong side, just inside seam lines
24. Fell stitch lining to wing.
25. Whipstitch the upper edge of the wing to the doublet armscye, just inside the bias facing, matching the large dot on the wing to the shoulder seam on the doublet. There may be a gap between wing ends.

## Front Closures

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26. Using 2 pairs of pliers, bend wire to make small hooks and eyes. Make enough to have roughly 1 set every 1 inch or so along the front of the bodice.

27. Add hooks and eyes to CF. Alternate sides between hooks and eyes, with stitches that catch flat lining wherever possible.

## **Make up the Skirt**

1. Cut skirt panels from top fabric, roughly distance from waist -> floor + 4".  
Cut 2 ~2 inch strips of padding fabric, same height as skirt panels.
2. Baste padding strips to top fabric panels at CF. Wrap CF edge around padding and stitch down with dark thread, taking care not to go all the way through padding to the fashion fabric on the other side.
3. Fold padding strip again, wrapping it in the top fabric. Fell inner edge to skirt with small, regular stitches. Press.
4. Join skirt center back seam, using a running backstitch or backstitch. Press. Pickstitch seam (if you'd like). Finish seam if fabric is likely to fray.
5. Press ~2" to inside of top.
6. For the CF dip, measure a triangle from the highest point of the waistline, squared to the CF, and down to the bottom CF point. Use this to fold the skirt fabric to the inside in a triangle along the line between the CF point and the high point of the waistline.
7. Using dark thread and a running stitch, press lower edge of the skirt to the inside and use a running stitch to hold in place.
8. Gather skirt to doublet bodice bottom. In this case, I pinned it to the bottom, halving the skirt hem and attaching it to the bodice center back bottom, then finding the halfway point of the free part of the skirts and bringing that to the middle point between the bodice front and center back. I continued this pattern, halving the skirt and bringing it to a middle point, until the skirt was gathered to the bodice. This ends up creating something approximating cartridge pleats, but without a drawing thread.
9. Whip stitch each fold to the bodice.
10. Put on doublet gown on top of all layers it will be worn with. Determine hem length and fold the hem to the inside to that length. Fell the skirt hem edge to the skirt with small, even stitches. Press.