

# THE WHITE NETHERLANDISH HOOD: ITS HISTORY AND RE-CREATION



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## What is a Hovetcleet?

In short, it is a white hood/veil which appears in the artistic record around 1480 and continues to be worn in various forms throughout the 16th century. It seems to have been worn exclusively by Dutch and Flemish women until around 1550, when it crosses the sea and appears in England as an 'attifet'.

It starts its life as a veil worn over a truncated hennin, which then becomes more structured and styled as the century progresses. It is truly a good example of the transition of fashion from the Medieval to the Early Modern in the Low Countries.

It seems to be worn by married women, as a couple of examples show a female donor with her daughters. She is wearing the hood while her daughters wear the formal black hood". Widows also wear the hovetcleet with a wimple to hide their necks. The most iconic example of this combination is Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands, known as "Dame de deuil" (Lady of Mourning) as she was widowed twice at an early age and never married again". It is also worn by women of all social classes, as we see the Regent of the Netherlands and sister to the Holy Roman Emperor wearing it, as well as a group of women in a brothel and many of Breughel's peasant women.

Its most characteristic feature is the heart shaped frame around the face. This frame shape can range from an inverted fold in the centre of the veil with an oval shape for the rest of the veil, through to a shape with distinct lobes held stiffly out from the crown of the head.

Hovetcleet literally means "headcloth", and I'm told it's an Old Dutch word that most modern Dutch people wouldn't recognise today. In modern Dutch this garment is referred to as a sluierkap (literally: veil cap), which is useful information when hunting for images.



Margaret of Austria, Regent of the Netherlands, Bernard van Orley, early 16th century



\*With the exception of one portrait titled "Anne Stafford, which I personally think is a mis-named Flemish portrait, rather than an English one.

\*\*the formal black hood is my term for the hoods that appear in the late 1400s and morph into the item commonly known as a French Hood.

\*\*\*see Wikipedia's article on Margaret of Austria for more information





## Overview of Style Progression

The hovetcleet first appears in the 1480s and shifts substantially in shape every decade after this. The following section gives a sample of images from the period beginning in 1480 to the end of the 1570s to demonstrate the shift.

What we see is a transition from a soft veil draped over a truncated hennin (1480s & 90s) to an opaque hood-shaped veil with a clearly defined heart shape around the face (1500s & 10s), through a veil which rests at the jawline and is worn closer to the back of the head (1520s & 30s) through to a version which loses the heart-shape for a rounded shape (1540s) and finally highly styled lobes shaped over a lace cap (1550s-70s).

This implies that the construction of the elements that create the hovetcleet shifts over time. I can detect a break sometime in the 1510s, and again in the 1540s. This is explored on pages 13-15.

### 1480s-1490s



Hans Memling, Moreel Family Triptych, 1484, right panel



Festival of Archery 1493, Unknown Master





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“The Ill-Matched Lovers” from the studio of Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen, late 15th century



Detail of female donor and supporters from “Triptych of the adoration of the Magi” by Oostsanen



1485: Master of the Holy Kinship Portrait of a Lady



Duits, 1480-1485



Sickness Spears the Stag and Death Sounds his Horn, Tapestry series The Hunt of the Frail Stag, c1495-1510



Unknown





## First Decade of 1500s



Detail from Heilige Dymphnareeks, 1504-1505, by Goswin van der Weyden



Portrait of a woman about 1508 Lucas Cranach the Elder



Detail of Virgin among Virgins, Gerard David, 1509



Two Detailed Views of Marriage at Cana, c. 1500, Gerard David



Detail from exterior panel of the Baptism Triptych, Gerard David, 1502-08





# 1510s



Eight kneeling foundresses, 1514, Jan van Coninxloo



Saint Paul and a Donatrix, 1515, Follower of Gerard David



Margaretha Boghe, Wife of Joris Vezeleer, probably 1518. Joos van Cleve artist



Detail of The Fortune Teller, Lucas van Leyden



Three women kneeling in prayer, Anonymous, 1510-1515



Josina Mengiaert and her Daughter, 1516, Goswin van der Weyden





## 1520s

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Agatha van Schoonhoven by Jan van Scorel date 1529



Portret van een onbekende vrouw, Anonymous, 1520-1530



Portret van een vrouw, Jan Jansz Mostaert, 1525



Picture sketched by Durer during his trip to the Netherlands in 1521



Detail of The Card Players, Lucas van Leyden, 1520



Right wing of "Portrait of a Man and a Woman", Joos van Cleve, 1520-1527





# 1530s



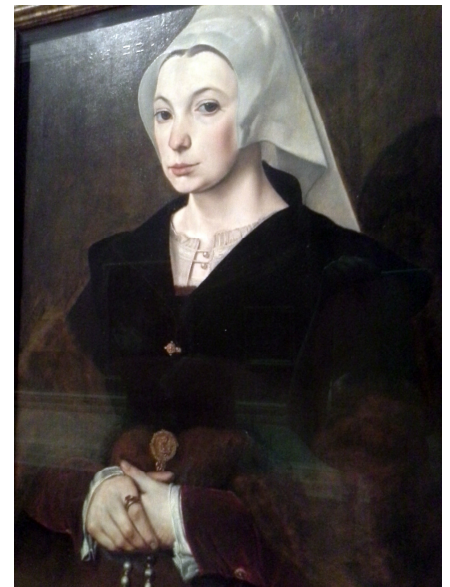
Portrait of a Lady Spinning, Maarten van Heemskerck, ca. 1531



1535 Ambrosius Benson (1490-1550) Anne Stafford (?)



Detail, The draper's market in 's-Hertgenbosch, artist unknown, circa 1530



Portrait of a Young Woman, Artist unknown 1541, Art Gallery of NSW

# 1540s



Portrait of a young woman, Master of the 1540s



Portrait of a Lady Holding a Cat, ca.1519-1550, follower of Ambrosius Benson



Catharina van Hemessen, 1548-1549





## 1550s & 60s



Anthonis Mor, Portrait of a Lady, 1555-60, Art Gallery of Victoria



Portrait of Jacquemyne Buuck-1551



Ecce Homo Triptych, Maarten van Heemskerck, 1559-60



Portrait of a Young Woman by Joachim Beuckelaer, 1562



Aertsen, Pieter -- Market scene, around 1560. Kunsthistorisches Museum





# 1570s



Kenau Simonsdr. Hasselaer, ca. 1573, unknown artist.



Frans Pourbus I, Portrait of Lady, 1578



1560-70 Scene in a Tavern Brawl, Brunswick Monogramist





## Tailed caps, from paintings by Maerten van Heemskerck .1498 – 1574 Haarlem







# Unstructured Veils - Breugel and Bening



Detail from Netherlandish Proverbs



Dance in a Barn, ca.1616, Pieter Breugel the Younger



Scene from the Golf Book, Simon Bening, 1540



The Wedding Banquet, Pieter Breugel the Younger





## How is it constructed?

Firstly, a hovetcleet is a veil, probably rectangular in shape, which is manipulated, folded and draped over various bands, caps and dressed hair to achieve its shape and form.

After examining a variety of pictures I think there are two distinct phases of under-veil construction:

- with a truncated hennin and
- with white band and net/cap.

I have only looked into Hovetcleets up to 1540 in detail but the preceding survey of styles shows a 3rd shift around 1550.

### WITH TRUNCATED HENNIN: 1480-1510

If you look at the change in headwear at the end of the 15th century its reasonably clear how the hovetcleet evolved\*. The fashionable headwear of the mid 15th century was the hennin. Towards the end of the 15th century those hennins became shorter and stumpier. At the same time the veil that covered them became more opaque and developed a fold in the centre front. This is seen across both France and The Low Countries. In some styles a black lappet is added which eventually becomes the formal black hood. In the Netherlands it seems the black lappets were not embraced.



The two images at right are from the 1490s and clearly show a stiffened hennin structure under a draped veil with a peaked fold in the centre of the veil.

The first image, taken from the Festival of Archers painting, which has a number of lovely examples of early Hovetcleets still shows the black loop that was so popular in the mid 1400s worn in the centre of the forehead



In the second image you can clearly see an opaque structure under the veil creating shape at the back of the head. Possibly analogous to the 'paste' seen in English accounts of the time.

Two images from a manuscript in the British Library of the Romance of the Rose gives us the final confirmation of what was worn under the hovetcleet at the turn of the 1500s. On one page we have a lady wearing a hovetcleet and transition style gown sitting demurely, a few pages later we have a woman being beaten by her husband, with

Scenes from Romance of the Rose, British Library.

\*For a year by year overview in the changing fashion of the 15th century I highly recommend Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands, 1325-1515 by Anne van Buren. It gives in depth analysis of the changes in fashion in France and the Netherlands between 1325 and 1515





her hovetcleet flung off in three pieces:

- A veil that has retained its shape,
- a black truncated cone cap and
- a black band.

I made a hovetcleet based on these images, see page 17 for photos and analysis.

## WITH WHITE BAND AND NET OR CAP: AFTER 1520

About 1520, as the fashionable shape in Europe moves further away from the Burgundian Gothic aesthetic and into the style we commonly call 'Tudor', the hovetcleet shifts in style. The visual record shows a softer line through the back of the head, a shorter length around the face, and a distinct white band worn under the veil. Some images also show a cap or net structure over the back of the head. This is clearly seen in the two images at right.

### How was the hair dressed?

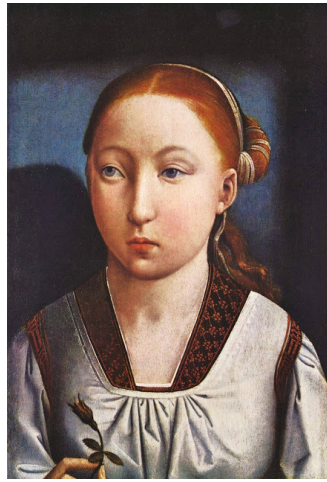
As with many styles in the early 1500s hair was probably plaited and secured around the crown of the head possibly with hair taping. Some images of women without a hat one are shown below:



Right wing of "Portrait of a Man and a Woman", Joos van Cleve, 1520-1527



Portret van een vrouw, Jan Jansz Mostaert, 1525



### Use of pins

A portrait (purportedly) of Anne Stafford shows extensive use of pins in her hovetcleet.

It's interesting that that only known (to me) image of pins in a hovetcleet is also the image with a highly translucent, and therefore light-weight veil.

\*A high res image of this painting is available on Wikimedia commons: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait\\_of\\_Anne\\_Stafford.jpg?uselang=en-gb](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_Anne_Stafford.jpg?uselang=en-gb)







## OORIJZERS (EAR IRONS)

With thanks to the research on the Elizabethan Costuming Group for first alerting me to this item and collating images and translations.

Sometime in the late 1400s or early 1500s, a piece of wire was incorporated into Burgundian headwear to give shape to veils and potentially to keep the high padded caul headdresses balanced. This wire then develops into the oorijzers that appear in the archaeological record from the early 1500s.

There are 5 extant oorijzers from the 16th Century in the Boijmans database, two of them are shown below.

After the existence of this item was pointed out to me on the Elizabethan Costuming Group on Facebook I took a closer look at some hovetcleets and I agree with Louise Pass's findings that these items were likely worn with the hovetcleet, helping to create and maintain the very sharp corner near the cheek that you see in some images, and the shaping around the face.



Possible oorijzers in 16th century



Possible precursor to oorijzers in 15th century.

Detail from *Portrait of a Female Donor*, 1450, Petrus Christus,

## THE SHAPE OF THE VEIL FROM BEHIND

I have one clear view of the hovetcleet from the back, from the painting "The Card Players" from the School of Lucas van Leyden. This image shows a very neat folded veil, possibly starched and pinned.



Detail of *The Card Players* by unknown artist of the School of Lucas van Leyden

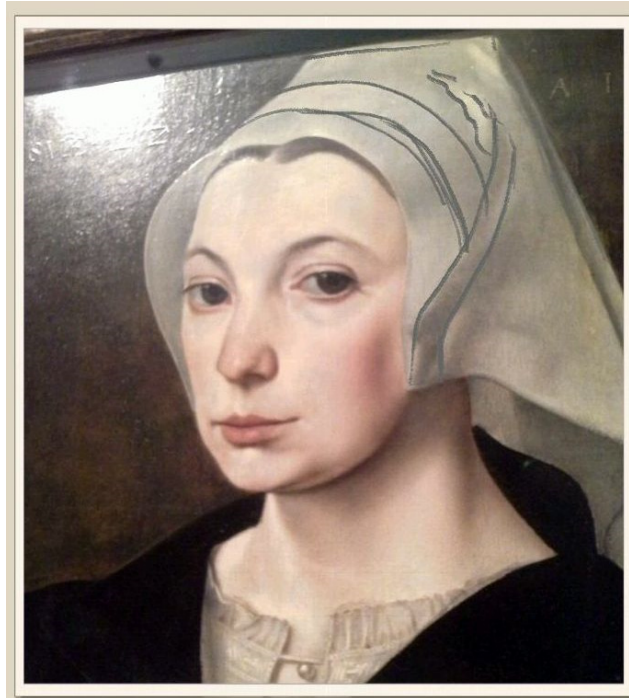




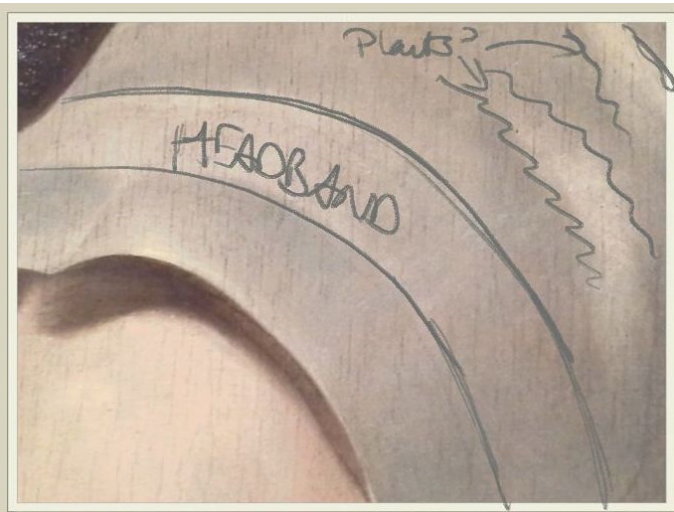
## Up Close Analysis - Portrait of a Young Woman

The Art Gallery of NSW has a portrait of a Dutch woman of the 1530-40s. Since they allow photos of images in the general galleries I took a variety of close-ups of details I could see while examining the painting in person. The full portrait can be seen on page 8

Here's the results of that analysis. The grey lines represent the various changes in shadows and shading that I could see under the veil.



There seemed to be some distinct shapes over the crown of the head, and a definite strip down the side of the head from the back of the skull. These shapes are shown in the two close-up images below.



This image shows what I think is happening over the Crown of the head. There is a strong white band similar to that seen in a number of portraits in the 1530s and 40s. There are also some fuzzy highlighted areas at the back of the head which could be plaits or taped hair as seen in other styles in Western Europe at the time.



This image shows an area near the jawbone. In the painting there is a change in the shadowing which could indicate a change in the angle of the fabric. This shadow is in a solid band slimmer than the band over the crown. I suspect it represents an oorijzer worn under the veil, and secured on the back of the skull, possibly in plaits





## Hovetcleet Construction Theory 1: Is it a wired veil?

This version was made in 2004, based on the styles seen in the 1490s, specifically the women in the Festival of Archers painting (see page 3).

It is made from an opaque linen cloth measuring 70cm x 70cm square. One edge is wired and bent to make the iconic heart shape of the hovetcleet. The back is shaped by a truncated hennin made of buckram, and is held on my head with a black velvet band.

The back of the veil is pinned up into shape:

1. One pin at the nape of my neck to create the shape around the head and hennin,
2. The centre of the drape of veil is pinned into the nape of the neck to create a clean edge,
3. The two remaining corners are turned in on themselves and pinned to make a final kite shape.

The photos below show the hennin just after its been slipped off my head so you can see the interior and folds.

As a first try and test of a theory it worked really well. However I don't think the edges of the veils were wired. The fold in the centre of the face is not crisp enough, and I've yet to see an image with a corresponding dip behind the wired edge.







# Hovetcleet Construction Theory 2: Starch!

After looking at lots of portraits and doing some research into material culture, I wanted to build Mark II do the following:

1. Build a shorter hennin, or a small cap OR
2. Use a white headband and a fake bun and plaits combo
3. Use a lighter-weight linen for the veil
4. Create the heart-shape through starching
5. Make ooiijsters to get the sharp points at the cheeks
6. Play with folding the back of the veil to achieve a variety of styles

This version was made in 2014, based on the styles seen in the 1520s and 1530s. It is made from a more translucent linen cloth than version 1, and is shaped by starching over a heart-shaped gift box. It addresses points 1-4

I started to make an oorijzer, but realised I didn't need it with this starching method. I'll be building Mark III to play with this item later this year.

## Construction Method

- Make a rectangle of white linen 80cm x 60cm, with a rolled hem.
- Find a heart shaped form—I used a cardboard gift box
- Prepare a starch gel and apply it about 10cm deep along the front of the veil (the 60cm edge). I followed [katafalk's instructions](#) for making up a starch gel.
- Drape the wet fabric over the heart-shaped form and place it somewhere to dry. Try to get the starched section as parallel to the form as possible.
- When it is dry gently remove it from the form
- Dampen and re-shape any starched section that has a sharp dent or is wrinkled so that you get a straight profile though the crown. I used a spray bottle to dampen a small section to be re-shaped, placed it over a tailor's ham and used a medium iron to re-set the veil into its final shape
- Make a white hair band between 1-1.5" wide. I used a cotton tape and closed with a skirt hook
- Put your hair up, either in plaits over the crown of your head, or in a large bun (I bought a fake bun to put over my puny one – tip from looking at hijab wearing tutorials on YouTube, since there are so many similarities)
- Place the veil over your head, centre the dent in the heart on your forehead and pull it forward so it's slightly forward of your



Starched Hovetcleet—Finished version



Components for this version of a hovetcleet. White headband, fake bun, starched veil. Not shown: pins



Wet starched veil drying over the heart-shaped form



First test of the post-starched veil. Note the sharp drop off at the crown of the head.





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forehead. Pin the top of the veil into the white band

- Make the veil meet at the nape of your neck, and pull it gently so that it's at the right depth compared to your jawline, and lightly pulled in. Place a pin at this point.
- Gently push the veil in at the back of your head to create a separation between the head of the 'hood' and the tube of the veil. Place a pin here.

And you're done. Wear with pride, but not in a rain storm.



Post-starched veil shaped over a tailor's ham to remove the sharp crease in the crown. Note pin placement



Veil not yet re-ironed, worn with fake bun



Finished version, looking very similar to the version worn by the woman of 's-Hertgenbosch at bottom right of the Draper's Market painting from 1530



Detail, The Draper's Market in 's-Hertgenbosch, artist unknown, circa 1530





## Future Experiments

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I like version 2 and it's a strong improvement on version 1, but it's not yet perfect.

Mark 3 will have

- An oorijzer
- The back of the veil folded properly, or cut differently to get the points/tails that you see in some images and may be what creates the kite shape in the back when they are folded up.
- A shorter length around the face