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England Am I?: Elizabethan Clothing, Gender, and Crisis in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*

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Abstract
In her final novel, *Between the Acts*, Virginia Woolf placed the self within a national, historical narrative. The novel is rich with the anti-fascist agenda of *Three Guineas*, told through the lens of women's stories and, significantly, their historical clothing. Specifically, Woolf used Elizabethan costume to reflect on the role of dress in women's lives. This article considers *why* Virginia Woolf selected the Elizabethan era as a sartorial and psychological alternative to her present. In a study of both sixteenth- and twentieth-century dress, this article explores how the Renaissance may have posed a more malleable, self-assertive antidote to the pressures of modern fashion—and the systems it upheld.

When Virginia Woolf began her final novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), she saw it as a diversion.[1] She had just finished her anti-fascist polemic, *Three Guineas* (1938) and, in this new text, as she wrote in a diary entry from April 1938, "all" literature would be "discussed in connection with real little incongruous living humour".[2] However, as Woolf worked on *Between the Acts*, the war raged around her: concentrated air raids, invasions, incendiary bombs, constant, pulsating worry.[3] In her diaries, letters, and conversations, she expressed a pointlessness to her work, "but what does it matter, writing too many pages".[4] She tried to coax herself out from a deepening depression; "This trough of despair shall not, I swear, engulf me", and a few sentences later wrote, "I was thinking: we live without a future."[5] If writing *Between the Acts* was a distraction, it was not apolitical; the novel is rich with the anti-fascist agenda of *Three Guineas*, told through the lens of women's stories and, significantly, their historical clothing. The question is: at a time of personal and national crisis, why did Woolf deploy a time-sensitive cultural object, such as fashion, to counter martial, masculine, narratives?

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf placed clothing (and the self) within a national, historical narrative, offering opportunities to reflect on the role of dress in women's lives. Specifically, Woolf used Elizabethan costume to explore womanhood, restriction, and individuality. By the time she finished *Between the Acts*, the text was no longer "to amuse [herself]" but was "almost entirely the Elizabethan play".[6] As she was working on the novel, she conducted historical research on the early modern period, which she located as the time when "the individual emerges".[7] In both

the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, clothing alternately curtailed or advanced women's identities and agency. Contrasting her own sense of sartorial repression with the apparent choices available to her predecessors, Woolf represented the Elizabethan period as less restrictive, allowing for more malleable and occasionally flamboyant expressions of women's selves. Woolf took up this notion of sartorial fluidity, not just in critique of her own time, but also to precipitate a shift in broader societal narratives and trends—if only her contemporaries might reflect on the past.

Written and published when Virginia Woolf was feeling "rattled & distracted" by the onset of the Second World War, *Between the Acts* focuses on the configuration of society and the individual through historical layering.[8] In the text, Woolf set personal and local narratives against national history, looking at the way that history is misconstrued and expressed in daily life, movements, language, and visual culture. Scholars have traditionally read the text as a novel conveying pacifist and matriarchal aims, a rebuttal to "fascism, patriarchy, and the coming of the Second World War".[9] More recently, R.S. Koppen has examined the novel's sartorial aims, observing how *Between the Acts* engages fashion to argue for "Benjaminean modes of cultural memory".[10] Although Renaissance literary influence has been well documented in Woolf's work, it is less understood how Woolf's inclusion of and insistence upon Elizabethan dress offers a social critique of nineteenth- and twentieth-century gender norms, recalling her early modern focus in *Orlando* (1928) and her personal interest in the period.[11] Her exploration of Benjaminean cultural memory here serves as a counterpoint to the "grand narratives" and offers a moment of reflection on how history is formed—how life happens not during the grand events, but in the in-between moments.[12] As Benjamin might have phrased it, Woolf "[regarded] it as [her] task to brush history against the grain".[13]

In a time of Tudor fancy-dress parties, historical pageants, and the repurposing of English Renaissance style in contemporary fashions, Woolf used Elizabethan dress to question a woman's place in the contemporary world and, by extension, challenge how history had been written. How do Woolf's observations in *Between the Acts* constrain and liberate the meanings that accrued to what a woman's body was supposed to signify? What is not only lost, but also preserved or gained, in historical revival? In order to understand the significance of these costumes, I also explore the sixteenth-century garments and arguments with which Woolf was engaging: how and why these garments were seen as transgressive; what they were understood to do to the body; and what it meant when the distinctions between men's and women's dress blurred. Woolf's selection of Elizabethan dress relied on her nuanced understanding of Elizabethan individualism and what existed behind the cultural memory of the sixteenth century. Set within the context of Woolf's layered histories, this article considers the long, active lives of clothing and how—and why—Woolf refashioned Elizabethan dress at a moment of profound, collective crisis.

Act I: Tudor Revivalism

In Between the Acts

"What connection is there between the sartorial splendours of the educated man and the photograph of ruined horses and dead bodies?" asked Woolf in *Three Guineas*.[14] In this incisive passage, Woolf asserted that the clothing of contemporary male dominance—for those in military office and among the intellectual elite—encouraged a "disposition towards war", citing how masculine splendor led to distinctions and superiorities that rendered men "barbarous" and "[roused] competition and jealousy".[15] *Three Guineas* links such patriarchal conventions with

military force, arguing that the internalized norms and external expectations that come with donning a uniform create systemic structures that ultimately lead to violence. *Three Guineas* acts as a springboard for the themes in *Between the Acts*, showing how clothing can be not just political, but also downright militant. *Between the Acts* simultaneously suggests a matriarchal alternative to masculine splendor and outlines why such an alternative had become impossible. *Between the Acts* takes place over the course of a single day—during the staging of a historical English pageant at the middle-sized, impressive-yet-slightly-upstart Pointz Hall (a house owned by the Oliver family patriarch, Bartholomew).[16] The historical pageant developed in the Edwardian period as a kind of "living history" that was "primarily concerned with the past and its representation in the present".[17] The pageants usually showed scenes from local or community history—and, frequently, they featured Queen Elizabeth I (fig. 1).[18] In the interwar period, women's groups used pageants to appeal to women's historical contributions, with the added benefit that the pageants would "disrupt class hierarchies and escape rigid gender roles … and provide opportunities for women to contribute imaginatively to community life and to explore more fully experiences and histories of others" (fig. 2).[19] Woolf had observed these aspirations—and their realities—when she was involved in the staging of the Women's Institute pageants in Rodmell, Sussex and, perhaps unsurprisingly, felt ambivalent toward their agendas.[20]

Figure 1

St. Albans Pageant, 1907: Queen Elizabeth at Gorhambury, photograph. Collection of St. Albans Museum (2008.5530). Digital image courtesy of St. Albans Museum (all rights reserved).

TUDOR LADIES WITH MODERN IDEAS.

An amusing photograph taken at the pageant. "Time's Daughters," given at Radford College.

Figure 2

"Tudor Ladies with Modern Ideas", The Sheffield Daily Independent, 19 May 1930 (Sheffield: Johnston Press, 1930), 7. Digital image courtesy of British Library / British Newspaper Archive (all rights reserved).

In *Between the Acts*, the pageant is performed and attended by the village community, family, and friends. The optimistic reasons for its staging, like breaking down class hierarchies and community-building, also seem to cause its internal tensions. Both the pageant's cast and audience comprise characters whose relations are "strained" due to family dynamics, class frictions, and the mixing of social groups. Misery abounds, politely tucked away in sighs and downward glances.

Before embarking on the pageant's retelling of English history, Woolf reminds readers that the climax of all English history is the contemporary moment (i.e., the war). Early on, Mrs. Giles Oliver, known familiarly as Isa, interrupts Bartholomew in the library where they have different "readings" of the morning newspaper (Isa is married to Bartholomew's son, Giles, an impatient man whom she no longer loves). Bartholomew, who has retired from the Indian Civil Service, unemotionally combs the paper ("he had read his paper") and crumples it into a beak that he then places over his nose to spook his grandson.[21]

The newspaper's presence, on its own, commands both the present's historic nature and history's continued presence. Woolf writes that Isa's generation understood that "the newspaper was a book", a comment that settles and unsettles the mutual layering between past and present.[22] In contrast to Bartholomew, for Isa, the newspaper's contents are troubling; she glances at *The Times* and reads a passage describing a woman raped by troops.[23] Her skimming of the text offers a glimpse at how the worst of the patriarchy is made visible through war, manipulation, and violence against women. The moment also serves to establish that even for those who absorb violence secondhand, the experience is one of first-person awareness and fear. Isa viscerally feels the article come to life, imagining "that was real … on the bed the girl was screaming", and she forgets her present surroundings.[24] In fact, the intrusive observation from Isa mirrors Woolf's own writing process in which air raids would frequently punctuate her concentration ("And I'm writing *P.H.* [*Pointz Hall*, later *Between the Acts*], which leaves a spare hour. Many air raids. One as I walked.").[25]

The pageant arrives about midway through the text, introduced by the assembling audience and their search for chairs, as Woolf mocks the shoddiness of recreating this "island history" and probes at the nationalistic impulse that underscores it.[26] The audience, somewhat unsure if the play is even starting, watches a small girl "like a rosebud in pink" give the prologue.[27] This image of the English rose (not to mention, the Tudor rose) evokes a multitude of gendered, nationalistic dialogues, even before a historic figure graces the stage—she is the symbolic embodiment of England as a virgin isle, stripped of any actual power. But as she declares, "England am I", she forgets her lines.[28] As she keeps going, the music finally starts up, and the little girl is overtaken by the masculine energy of the gramophone ("see the warriors—here they come").[29]

As the pageant continues, Woolf makes clear that although each audience member and participant is a product of this history, they are comically uninterested in learning about, or understanding, it. More people filter into the audience, interrupting dialogue one by one, looking for cushions, and trying to explain the premise to each other. They muse about chronology and talk over the pageant; they already wonder how it might end: "It would take till midnight unless they skipped. Early Briton; Plantagenets; Tudors; Stuarts—she ticked them off, but probably she had forgotten a reign or two."[30] The audience dawdles thus, prompted but not inspired by the pageant, until someone exclaims, "Look at her!" and Queen Elizabeth I emerges:

> *Everyone was clapping and laughing. From behind the bushes issued Queen Elizabeth—Eliza Clark, licensed to sell tobacco. Could she be Mrs. Clark of the village shop? She was splendidly made up. Her head, pearl-hung, rose from a vast ruff. Shiny satins draped her. Sixpenny brooches glared like cats' eyes and tigers' eyes; pearls looked down; her cape was made of cloth of silver—in fact swabs used to scour saucepans. She looked the age in person. And when she mounted the soap box in the centre, representing perhaps a rock in the ocean, her size made her appear gigantic. She could reach a flitch of bacon or haul a tub of oil with one sweep of her arm in the shop. For a moment she stood there, eminent,*

dominant, on the soap box with the blue and sailing clouds behind her. The breeze had risen.

The Queen of this great land …

—those were the first words that could be heard above the roar of laughter and applause.[31]

The first official character in Miss La Trobe's historic recreation, Elizabeth I materializes unceremoniously from the shrubbery. Eliza Clark manages to "appear gigantic", though her semi-divine status fizzles with tension regarding her class. She is bound in the mundane materials of her trade: the sixpenny brooches, the scouring pads. Who can play the role of queen? The audience's response—laughter and applause—seems to be one of enthusiastic recognition, that history has arrived and the shopkeeper has been transformed. In one 1934 image of a tobacconist, the woman appears to almost fade into the shop; her clothes drape without taking up space.[32] One can imagine that the shimmer and magnitude of the Elizabethan costuming would have challenged Eliza Clark's usual movements, how she felt in her clothes and in herself.

Even though Eliza Clark's costume is inauthentic, she manages to look "the age in person". In her description, Woolf's uses the phrase "made up" with double meaning—that this Elizabeth had been not just dressed and "made up" with make-up, but "made up", as in "invented", by the English. Woolf appeals to history's visualization, that the ruff and makeshift cloth-of-silver are enough to provide access to the past. Or, as Koppen writes: "It is the actors' costumes which make historicity available to reflection."[33] Unlike in other art forms, in drama, Anne Hollander noted, "the costumes *are* the drama, the characters are known by what they wear".[34] Hollander even used the Elizabethan period as an example, pointing out that in drama: "So long as Queen Elizabeth's courtiers wear ruffs, it doesn't matter what else they wear."[35] The costume conjures the past because it kicks up a fabricated aura from the period, an instant recognition that has been "made up" by taught histories.

Eliza/Elizabeth's appearance instigates a monologue about the great Elizabethan age—"*Hawkins, Frobisher, Drake*"—that is intermittently interrupted by the present (a mooing cow, a twittering bird, Eliza Clark's swarthy arm). Soon, the costume too is unseated. During the great speech, "the wind gave a tug at her head dress. Loops of pearls made it top-heavy. She had to steady the ruffle which threatened to blow away."[36] The windy headdress ignites an almost drunken merriment, and the crowd descends into vulgar song and laughter. They continue to laugh as Albert, "the village idiot", begins "picking and plucking at Great Eliza's skirts".[37] As the scene winds down, the gramophone blares and a procession dances around the "majestic figure of the Elizabethan age personified by Mrs. Clark, licensed to sell tobacco, on her soap box". Woolf weaves Eliza and Elizabeth together, and they are so fully intertwined by the time that "Great Eliza descended", the two Elizabeths seem to have fused, and the "Elizabethan age", represented and embodied by the tobacco-seller, can pass from the scene.

Woolf's inclusion of Elizabethan dress in this scene involves chaos, glorification, and escapism —yet also truth. While this is happening, Isa, in the audience, wonders if the "plot" even matters, "The plot was only there to beget emotion. There were only two emotions: love; and hate. There was no need to puzzle out the plot."[38] Woolf questions here if the content of history even holds relevance, highlighting the importance of visual and cultural memory to provoke an emotional reaction. Although the costume is shoddy and inauthentic, Miss La Trobe and Eliza Clark have captured how the magnificence and *presence* of the past can provoke an immediate imagining—if not reality—of national memory. For Eliza Clark, the scouring-pad cloth-of-silver is enough for her to embody someone other than the person who is licensed to sell tobacco. She is liberated, seen, and magnified by the costume she wears. The dress is a totem, a symbol that

stretches across time and is "read" in the same way across many centuries. As Vita Sackville-West wrote in *Heritage* (1919), "it all comes down to art in the end; the legend is greater than the fact".[39]

Although it might be tempting to think the past intrudes on the present in this scene, really it is the present that interrupts and complicates the past. In the present, Woolf proposes rereading the past in a Benjaminean act of "[seizing] hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger".[40] If, for instance, one could argue for a different past (a matriarchal one), the present could change in response. The Elizabethan dress in this scene probes how a reconstructed historical memory—developed by finding unexpected glimmers of truth—might provide an avenue for change, an alternative to the perennial entrapment in the cycle of martial behavior in which Woolf's characters find themselves. It is, however, unclear if the audience has experienced any profound shift; they are enthused by the costuming, but are they changed? If the audience does not reflect, there is little chance of changing history or what appears in the daily newspapers. This moment might be one of contingency, if only the audience would seize it.

Tudor Revival at Large

In the text, the pageant appears just as integral to the structure of the estate as its architecture or the grand paintings atop the staircase. Despite its pressing importance, the year feels almost irrelevant, humming constantly is a "This year, last year, next year, never …".[41] The theatrical process is aggressively familiar, and the pageant itself is taken as a given. Its characters, many of whom are middle-aged in the middle of this unprecedented age, would have been raised amidst the pageant just as it was coming into existence and gaining popularity.[42]

In this sense, one might observe that there is little to be gained from examining the Tudor fashions proposed by Miss La Trobe in her amateur production; however, Woolf's attention to Elizabethan dress demands serious attention. Fundamentally, Woolf suggests a matriarchal history through her primary focus on the ages of Queens Elizabeth, Anne, and Victoria (did history not begin with women?), but within the context of Woolf's time, Elizabeth's memory—and the revival of her costume—had a specific set of connotations that she evokes. On a contemporary, political level, Tudor fashions made a near-constant appearance in the world in which Woolf lived. Tudor revivalism has long played an outsized role in the English cultural imagination, beginning the year that the final Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I, died.[43] On the personal level, the choice reflects Woolf's own preoccupations with the early modern period and how the individual came to be.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Tudor styles reappeared within both fantasy and everyday contexts. Woolf's Victorian childhood, coming of age, and adulthood coincided with the rising popularity of fancy dress, which, as noted by Celia Marshik, was visible at social gatherings, as well as represented in films, fiction, and a multitude of print media (fig. 3).[44] In the many editions of Ardern Holt's *Fancy Dresses Described; or, What to Wear at Fancy Balls*, Holt offered detailed descriptions for any aspirational Tudor replication—for Elizabeth ("The bodice is stiff, with deep pointed stomacher"), Mary Stuart, Anne Boleyn, among others, as well as how to dress as England herself ("Skirt of cream bunting").[45] Notably, he did not make any claims of historical accuracy; he merely sought to relay "the favourite and most effective".[46] One realization of these descriptions can be seen in Herbert Norris's 1910s and 1920s costume sketches (fig. 4), which are clearly based on Tudor portraits from the Henrician court and vary in their attention to accuracy (fig. 5).[47]

Figure 3

Bette Davis in The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex, 1939, photograph. Digital image courtesy of Warner Bros/First National/Kobal/Shutterstock (all rights reserved).

Figure 4

Herbert Norris, *Costume Design*, circa 1927, pencil, pen and ink, and watercolour. Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (S.305-1988). Digital image courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

Figure 5

Attributed to Master John, *Katherine Parr*, circa 1545, oil on panel, 180.3 × 94 cm. Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 4451). Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London (all rights reserved).

These costumes possessed clear class restrictions, but also muddled them. Owning such costumes would have only been possible for a certain subset of modern clientele. In 1938, a *Punch* cartoon featured two working-class gentlemen asking their local costume-maker, "'Ave you any Elizabethan fancy gent's suitings?"[48] The punchline is that these men, their condition betrayed by their accents and clothing, would be unable to pull off the costume they seek.[49] Their faith in costume's transformative power (and perhaps their social ambitions) was, as Mashik notes, "simply laughable".[50] Due to the cost of production and the rarefied context in which it would have been worn, fancy dress could become an elite pastime but, at the same time, costume allowed for class transgression.[51] Eliza Clarke's shape-shifting between social ranks symbolizes the potential disruption of fancy dress, though her eventual removal of the costume would restore normalcy. In order for Eliza Clarke to transform, she needs to inhabit an Elizabethan mindset in which clothing can, in fact, shape the wearer (as will be discussed in Act II: Stubbes's Monstrous Bodies).

The elite nature of such neo-Elizabethan attire was also apparent in everyday fashion, tailored to the needs of upper-class women that Woolf often described in her work. In the early twentieth century, Elizabeth Handley-Seymour, a New Bond Street court dressmaker, produced sketches of Tudor-inspired clothing that, while clearly fancy dress, were updated to reflect contemporary preferences for slimmer silhouettes and more generous necklines (fig. 6).[52] Although it is unclear if the sketch was ever produced into an actual garment, she would have created it to show to prospective clients.[53] At this point, couturiers designed both fashion and costume, whereas later

in the century a clear hierarchy would develop (with costume considered the subordinate genre).[54]

Figure 6

Madame Elizabeth Handley-Seymour, *Tudor Lady Fancy Dress Costume*, 1912–1914, pencil, pen and ink, and watercolour, 33.5 × 26 cm. Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (E.4831-1958). Digital image courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

The interest in Tudor allusions also applied to elite dress for everyday settings and special occasions, as seen in examples by American, French, and English designers. Hard-to-place Renaissance-esque textiles resonated with the art nouveau style, resulting in scrolling patterns on rich red velvets (fig. 7).[55] Ruff-like collars and royal ermine also reappeared in evening and day attire for the most fashionable sets (figs. 8 and 9).[56] Most significant among these examples is a circa 1900 evening coat designed by the House of Worth under the tenure of Jean-Philippe Worth (fig. 10).[57] Inspired by sixteenth-century iconography, the silk coat features an alternating Tudor rose pattern, standing collar, smaller ruffs at the wrist, and an alternating black and white pattern that resembles the effect of Renaissance blackwork (fig. 11). A dress Virginia Woolf wore in 1926 bears some resemblance to these styles; it features enlarged, stylized flowers and slightly billowing sleeves (fig. 12).

Figure 7

probably French, *Evening Robe*, 1890s, silk, fur. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Miss Cornelia Van Aukin Chapin, 1953 (C.I.53.60.8). Digital image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (public domain).

Figure 8

C.G. Gunther's Sons, *Accessory Set*, 1890–1899, fur, silk. Collection of the Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Eleanor F. Peck, 1969 (2009.300.478a, b). Digital image courtesy of he Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (public domain).

Figure 9

Attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, *Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I (The Ermine Portrait)*, 1585, oil on panel, 106 × 89 cm. Collection of Hatfield House, Hertfordshire. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images (all rights reserved).

Figure 10

Jean-Philippe Worth for House of Worth, *Evening Coat*, circa 1900, silk. Collection of the Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Mrs. William E. S. Griswold, 1941 (2009.300.94). Digital image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (public domain).

Figure 11

British, *Fragment of Blackwork*, circa 1590, silk and gilt-metal-wrapped thread on woven plain weave linen foundation, 21.6 × 36.2 cm. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, The James Parker Charitable Foundation Gift, 2013 (2013.598). Digital image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (public domain).

Figure 12

Lady Ottoline Morrell, *Virginia Woolf*, June 1926, vintage snapshot print, 11.8 × 6.7 cm. Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG Ax142597). Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London (all rights reserved).

These examples reveal that Elizabethan dress had relevance beyond the pageant stage—Woolf was conscious of an ongoing appropriation of sixteenth-century forms that saturated her world. When she explored these styles in *Between the Acts*, it was with the intention of critiquing the limitations and binaries of twentieth-century dress. The fashion system—and its relationship to gender—has the potential to present people in ways that do not reflect how they live or what they want.[58] Of course, fashion offers potential for the opposite too, that one can express and liberate the self.[59] Elizabeth Wilson wrote that dress "which is an extension of the body yet not quite part of it, not only links that body to the social world, but also more clearly separates the two".[60] In *Between the Acts*, Woolf explored this relationship between the dressed body as a social object and as a separate, self-conscious entity. She asked that we think more closely about its ramifications—good or bad—and how bodies, especially women's bodies, become keepers of time and history, layered upon, interpreted, and revealed. That the pageant audience in *Between the Acts* may have worn and participated in the fancy-dress trends adds a further reflexive element to the costuming.

Beyond the potent early twentieth-century meanings that had accrued to Elizabethan dress, Woolf had a scholarly interest in Elizabethan fashion that she reinterpreted and explored in *Between the Acts*. During this period, Woolf was also working on a critical historical work with a focus on the Elizabethan period.[61] In 1941, Woolf complained, "I am stuck in Elizabethan plays. I can't move back or forwards. I've read too much, but not enough."[62] Woolf was similarly

engrossed in reading about early modern lives—Vita Sackville-West (a writer, as well as Woolf's friend and lover) who was the descendant of Elizabethan aristocrats, commented: "She made me bring as many books as I could on Elizabethan lives, and was full of plans."[63] The two discussed writing a biography of the ambitious Bess of Hardwick, one of the most monumental and wealthy Elizabethan women.

Woolf spent the time that she was writing *Between the Acts* thinking about how each period bled beyond its temporal confines, about the relations between people, about stately homes, about how an audience—and the reception of culture—defines an era. And, yes, she was thinking about Elizabethan clothing and art, what it did to both men and women's bodies. She wondered what it might feel like to use their furniture ("stiff, ornate, angular and uncushioned") while sitting in those clothes. She thought about how the clothes were perceived: the farthingales "that raised the preachers wrath".[64] Indeed, she thought intently about their psychological impact:

> *Elizabethan clothes have had too much attention from the historical novelist, and too little from the psychologist. What desire was it that prompted this extraordinary display? There must have been some protest, some desire to affirm something behind the slashed cloaks; the stiff ruffs; the wrought chains and the loops of pearls. The cost was great; the discomfort appalling; yet the fashion prevailed. Was it perhaps, the mark of an anonymous, unrecorded age to enforce the individual; to make ones physical body as bright, as definite, as marked as possible? Fame must be concentrated on the body; since the other kind of fame, the publicity of the paper, of the photograph, was denied them. Did the eloquence of dress speak, when the art of verbal speech was still unformed?*[65]

Woolf wondered if Elizabethan clothes proclaimed the person. What were their personal aims in wearing this display? Were their clothes a record of the personal or were they meant as a display in protest of their situation? For Woolf, the Elizabethans were whole people, not vestiges of the past, who were at once knowable and unknowable through the clothes.

In this passage, Woolf seemed particularly set on drawing out the self of the Elizabethans—and how the dressed body could represent a kind of individuality. To make their bodies known was to make their multiple selves known. There is an element of "protest", of "prevailing", of "enforcing" that she locates as emerging from the very bodies afflicted by the clothing's physical discomfort. In order to understand Woolf's line of questioning, it is essential to look at what Woolf herself was understanding and reading: slashed cloaks, the preacher's wrath, the eloquence of dress. Her selection of Elizabethan dress relied on her nuanced understanding and interpretation of Elizabethan individualism within the context of its own time.[66]

Act II: Stubbes's Monstrous Bodies

"The age was the Elizabethan", writes Woolf in *Orlando*, "their morals were not ours; nor their poets; nor their climates; nor their vegetables even". Satirical *Orlando* cannot be taken at face value, but, in the Elizabethan age, perceptions of clothing—and what it was understood to do to the body—*were* different.[67] As Anna Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass have asserted, in the early modern period, it was believed that clothing constituted a person and could "visibly imprint" upon the wearer.[68] This imprinting had implications for the notion of "the self", which, as Stephen Greenblatt argues, was not a stable concept, but more akin to "self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process".[69] Because the self was malleable, polemicists, pamphleteers, and preachers were anxious about people who wore the wrong clothes and, by extension, the wrong genders.[70] Instead, they hoped each person would

cling to the clothing that designated their respective social class, gender, profession, and religion.[71]

Phillip Stubbes famously captured the anxieties around this concept in his 1583 text, *The Anatomie of Abuses*. The text, which laments and lambasts contemporary vices, upholds the excessive interest in fine clothes as "more pernicious and damnable than the others", because it "sheweth itself to the world".[72] Worse than adultery, prostitution, or gluttony, "Pride of Apparel" corrupted because, in being so outwardly visible, it had the potential to alter the very constitution of the wearer—and influence formerly convention-abiding subjects to transgress. In particular, he railed against the adoption of men's clothing by women, which he believed degenerated both genders, muddled manhood, and corrupted the lower classes. Stubbes's anxiety was situated in a rapidly shifting society, not unlike the mid-twentieth century, in which moralists hoped the social order might organize itself on English bodies.

Blurring genders was considered an affront in which both men and women across the entire social spectrum could participate, an idea that reveals, above all, that clothing was not neutral, and its use had implications for the self. In an anonymous booklet about the vestments controversy, the writer discussed both sides of the debate. In one passage, he argued that retaining the prescribed apparel was a way for ministers to "recouer the dignitie of their forfathers".[73] In a play written the same year, it was declared that "apparell is a great abusion" that could reveal frailness, pride, and instability, as a "wanton foolysh pleasure", if not used with discretion.[74] The texts, which requested people shape themselves according to their circumstances, prescribed clothing as a regulatory device. In a 1570 sermon, Thomas Drant, for example, used clothing to direct women to obey their spouse, claiming that there was no finer way to dress than offering yourself to your husband: "Put vnder your neckes to your husbands, and ye shalbe well apparelled. Haue alwayes what to do in your handes, and fasten your feete at home, and ye shall be better liked of, then if ye were in golde."[75] For men, it was "good behavior" to be measured in one's approach to apparel, because "that the Attire may not be of one sorte, and the person of another", lest he be mistaken for a "harlot" that "sets her selfe to the sale".[76] Here, sartorial transgression also meant gender transgression—a man could degenerate into a woman, a "harlot", if he did not heed the limits of self-ornamentation.

In a moment of particular distress for moralists, in the 1570s, women began wearing doublets, which were an essential element of a man's wardrobe. The doublet, even as its silhouette changed throughout the century, was a sleeved, close-fitting, padded garment, worn over a shirt. Women traditionally wore a bodice or a "pair of bodies" over their smock, paired with a skirt or "kirtle". But, in the 1570s, women appropriated doublets as an alternative to the bodice. Around the same time, they began imitating men's long jackets (jupes or gaskin coats) for riding, blurring the sartorial delineations of gender.[77] As per usual, Stubbes had something to say about it:

> *The Women also there have doublets & Jerkins, as men have heer, buttoned up at the brest, and made with wings, welts, and pinions on the shoulder points, as mans apparel is for al the world; & though this be a kinde of attire appropriate onely to man, yet they blush not to wear it; and if they could as wel chaunge their sex, & put on the kinde of man, as they can weare apparel assigned onely to man, I think they would as verely become men indeed, as now they degenerate from godly, sober women, in wearing this wanton lewd kinde of attire, proper only to man.*[78]

To Stubbes, apparel "was given us as a signe distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex", so to adopt men's apparel was to contradict God's gift and to "adulterate" one's gender. Wanton and

lewd, the doublet-wearing women became "Monsters of bothe kindes, half women, half men", readily degenerating both genders and, possibly, staging a coup of manhood.[79] His dialectic hinged on the idea of the outward reflecting and shaping the inward, complaining that if women were "faire" enough already, they would not need to "deforme" themselves.[80] For Stubbes, the doublet itself was a monstrous body that could expand into a life beyond its own.

And we know these styles were actually being worn—at least by upper-class women—as Queen Elizabeth I participated in and promoted the adoption of the doublet, in line with her rhetorical wavering between genders.[81] The inventories record that the queen owned at least eighty-five doublets, dozens of which were gifts, some extremely elaborate. In 1575, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, gave her a white satin doublet, garnished with goldsmith's work, diamonds, rubies, and lace.[82] Other courtiers gave the queen doublets in more fanciful styles: a black taffeta and silk doublet embroidered with gold and silver flowers and lace, a white satin doublet embroidered with clouds, flowers, and fruits, and another white satin doublet richly wrought with snakes and ears of wheat.[83] In the *Darnley Portrait*, Elizabeth sports a bright, braid-stitched doublet with frogging; and, in a 1575 portrait, she wears a slashed white satin doublet that was clearly inspired by contemporary men's fashions (figs. 13 and 14).[84] Both doublets match their respective skirts and foreparts, showing the thoughtful integration of the style into the queen's wardrobe.[85]

Figure 13

Fencing Doublet, circa 1580, leather, silk, linen, cotton, 76.2 cm × 60.3 cm × 36.2 cm. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bashford Dean Memorial Collection, Funds from various donors, 1929 (29.158.175). Digital image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (public domain).

Figure 14

Unknown artist, *Elizabeth I*, circa 1575, oil on panel, 98 cm × 133 cm. Collection of Reading Museum (REDMG : 1980.168.1). Digital image courtesy of Reading Borough Council (all rights reserved).

Of course, while men and women may both have muddled gender roles through clothing and were both discouraged from doing so, the stakes for men and women were different. As Margaret Jane Kidnie has observed, "where men risk degenerating into women (the inferior sex), woman

risk degenerating into hermaphrodites (the monstrous sex)".[86] Stubbes feared that men would become womanish and that women would not become men but totally perverted—not least because, by way of whoredom or excessive expenditure, they would "willfully assert their independence from male control".[87]

Stubbes thus echoed other writers who feared transgression—they coded conservative, normative behaviors as etiquette in order to prevent or reduce deviations from that norm. A particular concern was the fear of spending, which was a euphemistic way of demanding men and women not to dress beyond their class—a form of social pressure that stood in for sumptuary legislation. In *The Book of the Courtier* (published in multiple editions in the sixteenth century), Baldassare Castiglione advised women to "have the good sense to discern what those garments are that enhance her grace and are most appropriate to the exercises wherein she proposes to engage at the time".[88] Thomas Beacon asked that women wear apparel "as becommeth a sober Christian woman", and another writer suggested men "labour and studie" without becoming accustomed to "superfluous apparel".[89] In *The Dial of Princes*, the Spanish bishop Antonio de Guevara chastised any spendthrift that would dress beyond their means, for "is it not a goodly sight in ye court, to see a foolish courtier weare a demie cappe … beesides hee is deepe in the marchaunts booke for all those things hee hath taken vp of credit of him".[90]

Early modern writers warned against transgression, forbidding and avoiding travesty brought on by clothes, and, as they did so, they asserted both the power of the objects and the possible agency (however latent) of those at risk. Woolf's interest in the Elizabethan period stems from this sixteenth-century preoccupation with dress and identity. When she was trying to "conjure up" the "atmosphere" of the Elizabethan period, she was examining the confluence of personality, power, and presence that seemed to emerge and was made visible through clothing.[91] Woolf would not have claimed that there was true liberty—not even in dress—in the Elizabethan period. She was instead concerned with the malleable self, the potential of blurring genders, the protest and flamboyant dress that demanded these kinds of regulations, and the thwarted expectations of politeness. And she was interested in those women who presumably continued to wear their transgressive clothes, paying little heed to such critiques. Within this notion is the idea that the self was pliable, that perception could be drawn and controlled in a way that was self-motivated rather than thrust on the wearer by society. Although language might be gendered and women might be lesser, clothing was a preoccupation in all minds.

Act III: Fashion in the Time of Woolf

For Virginia Woolf, "Society—upper middle class Victorian society—came into being" when, at around seven-thirty, she and her family slipped off their "day clothes".[92] Clothing was a transformative presence that not only marked but *made* the transition from day to night. In a passage written in her memoir, "A Sketch of the Past", Woolf wrote of the vulnerability of these occasions:

> *However cold or foggy, we slipped off our day clothes and stood shivering in front of washing basins. Each basin had its can of hot water. Neck and arms had to be scrubbed, for we had to enter the drawing room at eight with bare arms, low neck, in evening dress. At seven thirty dress and hair overcame paint and Greek grammar. I would stand in front of George's Chippendale mirror trying to make myself not only tidy, but presentable. On an allowance of fifty pounds it was difficult, even for the skillful, and I had no skill to be well dressed of an evening.*[93]

The physical discomfort for Woolf was not only in the shivering, the scrubbing, and the bare arms, but in the sense of inadequacy predetermined by her situation. Her experience dressing for the evening was a rote procedure in which her comfort and ambitions were irrelevant—in fact, they made visible her circumstances, that she "had no skill to be well dressed" according to these standards and that her allowance was inadequate. One evening, Woolf stepped downstairs in a "cheaply but eccentrically" constructed home dress made from furnishing fabric. She recalled that despite her apprehension, "a new dress excites even the unskilled". However, when the lights went up, her half-brother George took in the ensemble:

> *By the blazing fire George sat, in dinner jacket and black tie, cuddling the dachshund, Schuster, on his knee. He at once fixed on me that extraordinary observant scrutiny with which he always inspected our clothes. He looked me up and down for a moment as if I were a horse brought into the show ring. Then the sullen look came into his eyes; the look which expressed not simply aesthetic disapproval; but something that went deeper. It was the look of moral, of social, disapproval, as if he scented some kind of insurrection, of defiance of his accepted standards. I knew myself condemned from more points of view than I could then analyse. As I stood there I was conscious of fear; of shame; of something like anguish—a feeling, like so many, out of all proportion to its surface cause. He said at last: "Go and tear it up." He spoke in a curiously tart, rasping, peevish voice; the voice of the enraged male; the voice which expressed his serious displeasure at this infringement of a code that meant more to him than he could admit.*[94]

To dress eccentrically was more than an aesthetic faux pas; it was an insurrection against moral and social codes, driven by fear on both sides. It also put into play the tension between standing out in a refined social context versus standing out at a fancy-dress ball, which *was* appropriate. In Woolf's description, this experience is based on her age, gender, and status as a dependent—her young body being scrutinized and pierced, up and down, by the gaze of the "enraged male" that ultimately determined her fitness and presentability. It ties directly into the Victorian belief perpetuated by those closest to her that "women must be pure and men manly".[95] In Woolf's anecdote, George's gaze suppresses her selfhood and her flexibility as to what a woman could be (i.e., *not* creative, independent, eccentric) (fig. 15). Much like Stubbes centuries earlier, George was a guardian of twentieth-century mores, constantly regulating, intruding, and discomforting the women around him. In adulthood, Woolf would dress with a more independent spirit, though would never lose her "clothes complex"; her sister, Vanessa Bell, helmed the Omega workshop, transforming this "eccentric", artistic identity into the fashions that would become associated with the Bloomsbury group.[96]

Figure 15

Maurice Beck and Helen Macgregor, *Virginia Woolf Photographed in Her Mother's Victorian Dress*, *Vogue*, early May 1926. Digital image courtesy of Condé Nast Publications Ltd. (all rights reserved).

Woolf's perception of modern society was one of policed bodies. If the Elizabethan period threw moralists into fits about corrupted bodies, Woolf was aware that women did not even have the opportunity to *be in public* without first meeting their guardian's approval. If Woolf saw the Elizabethan period as sartorially superior, it was not because she saw anyone as genuinely free but as having the ability to experiment, falter, and protest.[97] As Celia Marshik has demonstrated, representations of objects like evening gowns often figured the objects as "a participant in events and actions that endangered individual women, rendering them vulnerable to murder, rape, and social stigma, as well as … moments of public awkwardness and shame".[98] Woolf echoed other writers, like Elizabeth von Arnim, who wrote in *The Enchanted April* (1922) that the well-dressed, beautiful Lady Caroline "was having a violent reaction against beautiful clothes and the slavery they impose on one, her experience being that the instance one had got them they took one in hand and gave one no peace till they had been everywhere and been seen by everybody".[99] Von Arnim went on to explain how "it was the clothes that wore out the woman—dragging her about at all hours of the day and night", whereas for men, not even the newest trousers "behaved like that".[100]

Likewise, in *Between the Acts*, it is the uncostumed women, those who wear everyday attire, who are most constrained—or even policed—by their clothes. Everyday attire materialized the associations that presumably belonged to each woman, and each woman experiences restrictions according to her position. For Mrs. Oliver:

> *"Abortive", was the word that expressed her. She never came out of a shop, for example, with the clothes she admired; nor did her figure, seen against the dark roll of trousering in a shop window, please her. Thick of waist, large of limb, and, save for her hair, fashionable in the tight modern way, she never looked like Sappho, or one of the beautiful young men*

whose photographs adorned the weekly papers. She looked what she was: Sir Richard's daughter; and niece of the two old ladies at Wimbledon who were so proud, being O'Neils, of their descent from the Kings of Ireland.[101]

Although Mrs. Oliver would like to try on the identity of an androgynous *homme-femme*, her ancestry blunts her ambitions. Woolf highlights how pedigree, the descent of title but also body, becomes a barrier to happiness. Mrs. Oliver feels her body is unruly—although her description is non-judgmental ("thick" and "large" should not be loaded words), it is clear that her figure does not conform, and it is beyond her control to squeeze herself into the form of "Sappho or one of the beautiful young men". Clothing does the work of performing gender and sexuality, and the work they do is seemingly opposite to what Mrs. Oliver wants.[102] It is also worth noting how loaded the term "abortive" is—a medicalization of the perceived failures of her body and, potentially, her perceived failures as a woman. Less concerned with politeness, Mrs. Manresa, one of the few non-Olivers in the cast, finds herself overly feminine, making too much use of the identity that she has been prescribed: "Vulgar she was in her gestures, in her whole person, over-sexed, over-dressed for a picnic."[103]

The pageant prompts each character to consider the relationship between time, clothing, and identity, for as Roman Meinhold described: when the purloined identity that is historical costume has been returned, "it is not restored exactly to its proper place".[104] When the pageant settles, the audience separates into murmurs:

"They're not ready…I hear 'em laughing" (they were saying.) "…Dressing up. That's the great thing, dressing up. And it's pleasant now, the sun's not so hot…That's one good the war brought us—longer days…Where did we leave off? D'you remember? The Elizabethans…Perhaps she'll reach the present, if she skips…D'you think people change? Their clothes, of course…But I meant ourselves…Clearing out a cupboard, I found my father's old top hat…But ourselves—do we change?"[105]

The question is echoed throughout the remainder of the novel, as Mrs. Swithin queries Isa, "Did you feel … what he said: we act different parts but are the same?"[106] The play, considered a vanishing object of sorts, resides as a visual memory, requiring each audience member—each a participant, given the Elizabethan nature of it—to reflect individually on their roles as represented therein. *Between the Acts* can almost be shrunken down into this passage; ellipses reign, it is unclear who is speaking, and the societally imposed roles of each player seem to disintegrate. Do they change? Is it the clothes that have determined who everyone should be or how loud they may be about themselves? Time, nation, and identity can fall apart but the clothes remain.

Woolf thus recalled passages in *Orlando*, in which she considered what clothing—and perception—determined. To what extent can the wearer actively establish any identity? When in the middle of the text, Orlando becomes a woman, after spending centuries as a man, Orlando contemplates how the shift from tightly cut breeches to flowing skirts altered her experience:

Thus, there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking. So, having now worn skirts for a considerable time, a certain change was visible in Orlando, which is to be found if the reader will look at the above, even in her face. If we compare the picture of Orlando as a man with that of Orlando as a woman we shall see that though both are undoubtedly one and the same person, there are certain changes. The man has his hand free to seize his sword, the woman must use hers to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders. The man looks the world full in the face, as if it

> *were made for his uses and fashioned to his liking. The woman takes a sidelong glance at it, full of subtlety, even of suspicion. Had they both worn the same clothes, it is possible that their outlook might have been the same.*[107]

Orlando's behavior is different because of what was (or was not) accessible to her after her transformation. As Nancy Cervetti has established, this passage "represents conflicting points of view".[108] It is unclear if the clothes changed Orlando internally or if the treatment of Orlando changed the way she perceived herself. Pamela Caughie called this passage "a resolution of the problem of the self and the conventional self" in which androgyny finds a non-problematic home.[109]

One wonders if this resolved wholeness was, in part, made possible by Orlando's origin story as an Elizabethan lord. As Patricia Fumerton has argued, in the Elizabethan period, in mediums such as sonnets and miniatures, sometimes one could "only achieve the inner through the outer, the private through the public, the sincere self through self-display".[110] In other words, in the sixteenth century, certain identities were only available to confidantes; external layers of the self could be shed with growing intimacy. Orlando here experiences something similar, as the resolution is not the whittling of selves, but their ability to coexist. In any case, Woolf continued, writing, "Of the complications and confusions which thus result everyone has had experience", suggesting that one of her criticisms of twentieth-century dress is that it attempts to persuade its wearers that there *is* an uncomplicated possibility of clothing, the self, and gender, that there is not room enough for the self in all its layers.[111] Woolf both rejects artifice, pre-determinism, and the pressure of clothing *and* longs for how assertive clothing could be, that, in the Renaissance, one could slip on and layer identities at will.

Conclusion

In *Between the Acts*, Virginia Woolf queried how sartorial shifts shaped clothing's wearers, particularly women, whose fashions have changed dramatically from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. In this sense, clothing is and was "a way of telling time", as clothes designated the shift in decades and centuries.[112] Woolf observed, in her time, the entrapment of modern fashion, how women were subjected to and policed by the gaze of their family members, the public, and society at large. In contrast, the Elizabethan era offered not just a sartorial but also a psychological alternative in which women used their bodies as platforms for self-display. Even if that display was not a "true self" or the most intimate self, Woolf saw resolution in choice, whether they were choices of protest or choices of desire. And although clothing was also regulatory, the fact that men and women were flaunting those rules so much as to torment moralists—and potentially degenerate other people—was a kind of liberation.

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf considers the chicken and the egg—is it the clothing or the people who wear it who determine its meaning? She wonders if the audience, likely comfortable wearing Tudor costume at their fancy-dress parties, could envision themselves as Elizabethans and focus on finding and promoting their *selves*, rather than the advertised superiority she described in *Three Guineas*. In turn, through inhabiting their own frock-consciousness, perhaps the audience could reconstruct the history—and internalized beliefs—that caused the martial cycle and reorient their present. Because objects, even without authenticity, can inspire and change, making perhaps "a slight but definite contribution to the problem before us", through opportunities to embody and reflect on the past.[113] And after all, "there are few greater delights than to go back three or four hundred years and become in fancy at least an Elizabethan".[114]

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About the author

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Footnotes

1. When Woolf was sketching out what would become *Between the Acts*, she wrote she wanted something "I can blow of a morning, to relieve myself of Roger", referring to *Roger Fry: A Biography*. Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1936–1941*, ed. Anne Oliver Bell, Vol. 5 (Boston, MA: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1984), 135 (26 April 1938).
2. Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1936–1941*.
3. Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage Books, 1999), 741.
4. Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1936–1941*, 743 (1 January 1941); and Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 743.
5. Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1936–1941*, 354 (26 January 1941).
6. Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 1936–1941*, 135 (26 April 1938); and Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 351.
7. Brenda R. Silver, "'Anon' and 'The Reader': Virginia Woolf's Last Essays", *Twentieth Century Literature* 25, nos. 3/4 (1979): 385, DOI:10.2307/441326.
8. Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 707; and Patricia Cramer, "Virginia Woolf's Matriarchal Family of Origins in Between the Acts", *Twentieth Century Literature* 39, no. 2 (1993): 169, DOI:10.2307/441837.
9. Ayako Yoshino, "'Between the Acts' and Louis Napoleon Parker—the Creator of the Modern English Pageant", *Critical Survey* 15, no. 2 (2003): 49, DOI:10.3167/001115703782351790. See also Karen Schneider, "Of Two Minds: Woolf, the War and 'Between the Acts.'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 16, no. 1 (1989): 93.
10. R.S. Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 78.
11. Woolf's interest in the Elizabethan period was not restricted to its fashion—her literary interests have been studied by Alice Fox, who noted: "Every single one of [Woolf's] nine novels treats the English Renaissance in some way." See Alice Fox, *Virginia Woolf and the Literature of the English Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 2. Reginald Abbott

explored jewels, specifically in relation to appearances of Elizabeth in "Rough with Rubies: Virginia Woolf and the Virgin Queen", in *Reading the Renaissance*, ed. Sally Greene (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1999), 65–88.

12. Walter Benjamin assessed the limitations of cultural history and studying objects. He wrote, "Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror." In this sense, cultural material, as determined by the victors, is a product of "barbarism". It is also worth noting that Benjamin was a contemporary of Woolf's, and he died one year before her, in 1940. See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2019), 199–200. For the connections between Woolf and Benjamin, see Angeliki Spiropoulou, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
13. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 199–200.
14. Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1966), 21.
15. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 21.
16. Pointz Hall is "too homely" for the guidebooks. Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6.
17. Angela Bartie et al., *Restaging the Past Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain* (London: UCL Press, 2020), 1 and 2.
18. Bartie et al., *Restaging the Past Historical Pageants*, 2.
19. Zoë Thomas, "Historical Pageants, Citizenship and the Performance of Women's History before Second-Wave Feminism", in *Restaging the Past Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain*, ed. Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Alexander Hutton, and Paul Readman (London: UCL Press, 2020), 112.
20. Thomas, "Historical Pageants, Citizenship and the Performance of Women's History", 128, see n. 21.
21. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 16 and 17.
22. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 18.
23. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 18.
24. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 18–19.
25. Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, 329 (16 August 1940).
26. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 69–71.
27. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 70.
28. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 70.
29. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 72.
30. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 75.
31. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 76.
32. This image is accessible from Alamy (Image ID: 2BW3EDT).
33. Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity*, 83.
34. Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 238.
35. Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, 300.

36. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 77.
37. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 79.
38. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 82.
39. Vita Sackville-West, *Heritage* (London: Penguin Random House, 1975 [1919]), 102.
40. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 198.
41. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 193.
42. The community pageant began later than one might imagine, in 1905, when dramatist Louis Napoleon Parker established the highly political, nationalistic form. Parker's civic entertainments became nationwide phenomena, engaging thousands of participants and hundreds of thousands of spectators. See Yoshino, "'Between the Acts' and Louis Napoleon Parker", 49. In *A Shrinking Island*, Jed Esty reduced the medium to its costumes, calling the form "amnesia in fancy dress". See Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 56.
43. See Elizabeth H. Hageman and Katherine Conway, *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in Seventeenth-Century England* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007); and Nadine Akkerman, "Semper Eadem: Elizabeth Stuart and the Legacy of Elizabeth I", in *The Palatine Wedding of 1613: Protestant Alliance and Court Festival*, ed. Sara Smart and Mara Wade (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz in Kommission, 2013).
44. Celia Marshik, "Aspiration to the Extraordinary: Materializing the Subject Through Fancy Dress", *At the Mercy of Their Clothes: Modernism, the Middlebrow, and British Garment Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 103. Fancy dress and masquerades had also been eighteenth-century phenomena, see Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986).
45. Ardern Holt, *Fancy Dresses Described: Or, What to Wear at Fancy Balls*, 5th ed. (London: Benham & Freebody, 1887), 80 and 81.
46. Holt, *Fancy Dresses Described*, 1.
47. See S.305-1988; S.1044-1983; S.1047-1983; S.309-1988; S.312-1988 at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
48. See Marshik, "Aspiration to the Extraordinary", 118.
49. Marshik, "Aspiration to the Extraordinary", 118.
50. Marshik, "Aspiration to the Extraordinary", 118.
51. Fancy dress balls were, for example, a popular pastime among the Vanderbilts and Astors. Guests and performers would commission gowns from important couturiers, like the House of Worth. See Elizabeth Block, "Gowns and Mansions: French Fashion in New York Homes during the Late Nineteenth Century", *The Journal of Dress History* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 41–42, https://dresshistorians.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Spring_2021_issue.pdf. See also Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*.
52. See E.4831-1958 at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
53. Handley-Seymour was not the only important designer to consider fancy dress. In the 1890s, the House of Worth created a Tudor-inspired ensemble—incorporating Italian Renaissance designs, as well—that is now at the Museo del Traje.
54. Block, "Gowns and Mansions", 31.
55. See C.I.53.60.8 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. For additional examples, see later designs by Fortuny, who recreated the effect of Italian Renaissance velvets through

detailed gold stenciling; for example, 2009.300.508 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

56. See C.I.55.1.14a–e; 2009.300.478a, b at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
57. See 2009.300.94 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
58. Andrew Reilly and Ben Barry, *Crossing Gender Boundaries: Fashion to Create, Disrupt and Transcend* (Bristol: Intellect, 2020), 11.
59. Reilly and Barry, *Crossing Gender Boundaries*, 15.
60. Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 3.
61. Silver, "'Anon' and 'The Reader'", which explores not only the text but also notes Woolf's extensive marking up of Elizabethan sources (see n. 14 in the text). Regarding other Elizabethan influences on Woolf's work, see also n. 11 in this document.
62. Silver, "'Anon' and 'The Reader'", 359.
63. Silver, "'Anon' and 'The Reader'", 358.
64. Silver, "'Anon' and 'The Reader'", 388. See, for example, Amanda Wunder, "Women's Fashions and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Spain: The Rise and Fall of the Guardainfante", *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2015): 133–186, DOI:10.1086/681310.
65. Silver, "'Anon' and 'The Reader'", 388.
66. Woolf was an avid reader of sixteenth-century literature and primary sources. In the following section, I have not focused singularly on sources that Woolf mentioned, but instead wanted to highlight the general attitude and atmosphere to which she referred.
67. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*, 3rd ed. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1928), 27.
68. Anna Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of* Memory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4.
69. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 2.
70. Laura Levine, "Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization from 1579 to 1642", *Criticism* 28, no. 2 (1986): 121–143.
71. See Timothy McCall, "Materials for Renaissance Fashion", *Renaissance Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (2017): 1449–1464, DOI:10.1086/695346; and Richard Thompson Ford, *Dress Codes: How the Laws of Fashion Made History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), especially Chapter 1, "Encoding Status".
72. Phillip Stubbes, *Phillip Stubbes's Anatomy of the Abuses in England in Shakspere's Youth*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, Vol. 2 (London, 1877), 84.
73. *An Ansvvere for the Tyme, to the Examination Put in Print, Vvith out the Authours Name, Pretending to Mayntayne the Apparrell Prescribed against the Declaration of the Mynisters of London* (Rouen: printed by Abel Clémence, 1566), 19–20.
74. *A Mery Playe Bothe Pytthy and Pleasaunt of Albyon Knyghte* (London: printed by Thomas Colwell, 1566), B.i.
75. Thomas Drant, *Two Sermons Preached the One at S. Maries Spittle on Tuesday in Easter Weeke. 1570. and the Other at the Court at Windsor the Sonday after Twelfth Day, Being the Viij. of Ianuary, before in the Yeare. 1569. by Thomas Drant Bacheler in Diuinitie* (London: by John Daye, 1570).
76. Robert Crowley, *A Briefe Discourse against the Outvvarde Apparell and Ministring Garmentes of the Popishe Church* (1578).

77. Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd: The Inventories of the Wardrobe of Robes Prepared in July 1600, Edited from Stowe MS 557 in the British Library, MS LR 2/121 in the Public Record Office, London, and MS V.b.72 in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC* (Leeds: W.S. Maney & Sons, 1988),142.
78. Stubbes, *Anatomy of the Abuses*, 73.
79. Stubbes, *Anatomy of the Abuses*, 73.
80. Stubbes, *Anatomy of the Abuses*, 83.
81. See, for example, Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
82. Jane A. Lawson, ed., *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges: 1559–1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, British Academy, 2013), 170 (no. 75.5).
83. Lawson, *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges*, 189 (no. 76.111), 392 (no. 89.115), and 482 (no. 00.13).
84. See, for example, a man's fencing doublet at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (29.158.175).
85. For the Darnley portrait, see NPG 2082 at the National Portrait Gallery, London. For the 1575 portrait, see REDMG: 1980.168.1 at the Reading Museum, Reading.
86. Phillip Stubbes, *Phillip Stubbes, The Anatomie of Abuses*, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie (Tempe, AZ: Renaissance English Text Society, 2002), 33.
87. Stubbes, *Phillip Stubbes, The Anatomie of Abuses*, 31.
88. Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. Leonard Eckstein Opdycke (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903), 180.
89. Thomas Becon, *The Principles of Christian Religion Necessary to Be Knowen of All the Faythful: Set Forth to the Great Profite in Trayning vp of All Youth, by Tho. Becon* (London: by John Daye, dwelling ouer Aldersgate, 1569), L.ii; and Edward Grant, ed., *Teaching the Vertuous Training vp of Children and Holesome Information of Yongmen. / Written in Greke by the Prudent and Wise Phylosopher Chœroneus [sic] Plutarchus* (London: by Henry Bynneman, 1571).
90. Antonio de Guevara, *The Dial of Princes, Compiled by the Reuerend Father in God, Don Antony of Gueuara, Byshop of Guadix, Preacher, and Chronicler to Charles the Fifte, Late of That Name Emperour. Englished out of the Frenche by T. North, Sonne of Sir Edvvard North Knight*, trans. T. North (London: by Richarde Tottill and Thomas Marshe, 1568), 129.
91. Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 398.
92. Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being: A Collection of Autobiographical Writing*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind, 2nd ed. (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 150.
93. Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 150–151.
94. Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 150–151.
95. Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 151.
96. Throughout her life, Woolf expressed deep anxiety about shopping and self-display. In March 1927, for example, she wrote in her diary: "I went to buy clothes today & was struck by my own ugliness." Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf 1925–1930*, ed. Anne Oliver Bell and Andrew McNeillie, Vol. 3 (Boston, MA: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1980), 132. For Vanessa Bella and the Omega Workshop, see Wendy Hitchmough, *The Bloomsbury Look* (London: Yale University Press, 2020).
97. In *Dress Codes*, Ford explores how this concept affected men, too. A 1931 article posited that if men were not disciplined in their attention to clothes, "society [would] fall to pieces"; see

Ford, *Dress Codes*, 139.

98. Celia Marshik, "What Do Women Want?" In *At the Mercy of Their Clothes: Modernism, the Middlebrow, and British Garment Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 26.
99. Elizabeth von Arnim, *The Enchanted April* (London: Penguin Random House, 2012 [1922]), 55.
100. Von Arnim, *The Enchanted April*, 55.
101. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 14.
102. Woolf's characters feel betrayed by their clothes and bodies in other texts, too. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Miss Kilman remarks: "She could not help being ugly; she could not afford to buy pretty clothes." Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway & A Room of One's Own* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), 126.
103. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 37.
104. Roman Meinhold, *Fashion Myths, A Cultural Critique*, trans. John Irons (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 31.
105. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 108.
106. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 108, 193.
107. Woolf, *Orlando*, 170.
108. Nancy Cervetti, "In the Breeches, Petticoats, and Pleasures of 'Orlando'", *Journal of Modern Literature* 20, no. 2 (1996): 171.
109. Pamela Caughie, "Virginia Woolf's Double Discourse", *Discontented Discourses: Feminism/Textual Intervention/Psychoanalysis*, edited by Marleen S. Barr and Richard Feldstein (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 44.
110. Patricia Fumerton, "'Secret' Arts: Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets", *Representations*, no. 15 (1986): 90, DOI:10.2307/2928392.
111. Woolf, *Orlando*, 172.
112. Theodore Martin, "On Time", in *About Time: Fashion & Duration*, ed. Andrew Bolton (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, 2020), 27.
113. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 21.
114. Virginia Woolf, "The Strange Elizabethans", in *The Second Common Reader* (London: Pelican Books, 1944), 7.

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