Dedication

To my mother, who's never failed to encourage me to be myself.
To my father, who has always valued my knowledge.
To my aunt, who has listened for hours.
To my friends, thank you.
I love you all.

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Thank you.

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The Truth Undressed:

The Complex Relationship between Government Legislation, Renaissance Literature, and Women's Writings in late Tudor England

A Thesis in History

By

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Abstract

"The Truth Undressed: The Complex Relationship between Government Legislation, Renaissance Literature, and Women's Writings in late Tudor England" explores the multiple ways women's clothing was used by government legislation, Renaissance literature, and women's writings. This thesis explains that monarchs, such as Elizabeth I, controlled clothing under sumptuary legislation and church homilies as a way to dissuade female power. On the other hand, aristocratic women used clothing to present their significance and power in Tudor society. While aristocratic women had power related to clothing, and government legislation tried to suppress that female dominance, Renaissance authors presented clothing to represent society and government legislation. Some Renaissance writers tried to cement clothing laws, while others gave their female characters some type of power. This thesis uncovers the many ways clothing was both a restriction and power for women in Tudor society. Furthermore, the relationship between literature, legislation, and domestic writing is complex, and reflective of one another. "The Truth Undressed" explains that the public sphere presented clothing as a male dictation, a protection, and an identity. In domestic writing, however, clothing was a way to assert power. This thesis explores the different ways clothing was presented in both public and private Tudor society.

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Introduction

As I began my thesis, I wanted to explore a subject of history that was both familiar and unknown to me. The subject I eventually chose was female clothing as presented in the English Renaissance. I quickly realized, after beginning my research, that this subject was rich and entirely understudied. The analysis of the presentation of clothing touches on three different parts of history: Renaissance history, women's history, and, oddly enough, legal history. I realized that Renaissance art, meaning literary, visual, and theatrical material, and Tudor government legislation intersected at many points and preached similar morals. The sphere of artistic expression in the Renaissance is clearly an instance in which government laws can correlate with societal concerns, as I will explain later. The legislation regarding clothing was heavily restrictive in the late Tudor period, and many Renaissance writers reflected the sumptuary laws in their work. Originally, I wanted to understand Renaissance artists' role in perpetuating clothing norms. However, after research, I realized the true question lay whether this norm was an actual reflection of the greater society. Thus, how did Renaissance artists use clothing to corroborate, or subtly invalidate, a woman's restricted role in the public sphere and how did they succeed in influencing social conditions?

In order to answer this question I compared government legislation and Renaissance artistic works with women's private letters, portraits, and account books. A vital part to this thesis is to understand that clothing as prescribed by government officials

and artists was not a reflection of what took place in the actual lives of women. In fact, quite the opposite took place; women dictated their own clothing "rules." This dichotomy has never been discussed in depth and part of my agenda has been to point to this as a moment where late Tudor culture, specifically the government and Renaissance writers, tried to influence the social roles of women through their clothing. By intertwining social laws and Renaissance literature, I argue that writers such as Shakespeare *tried* to cement poorly enforced sumptuary laws and clothing norms to constrict women's power and fortify the Elizabethan gender structure; however, there was a disconnect between public and private texts' conception of women's clothing which we can map through female correspondence, household accounts, and portraits, that can show Renaissance writers ultimately failed in their attempt to promote clothing laws.

Women of the Tudor period are remembered through three different types of written primary sources. The first is women's letters and diaries, however, those who wrote tended to be nobility.[1] About 10% of the female population were able to read and write.[2] The second and third kinds of texts are court documents and church records. Due to these two latter types of sources, historians have an idea of what laws women broke.

Elite women had advantages that their plebeian counterparts did not. Due to this, mainly elite women are examined in this thesis as they had the means to write. Women of this stature wrote often and published manuscripts. In many of their plays, ballads, and

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[1] Anne Laurence, *Women in England, 1500-1760: A Social History,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 244.

[2] Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 213.

books, the Renaissance authors tend to to model their characters after aristocratic women. Most of the women in the "creative" Renaissance, by which I mean artistic works of the period, are part of the elite class. Elite, especially elite learned women, thus, were idealized in the public sphere, but also spoke for themselves in the private sector. Elite, often aristocratic, women did have more power than their plebeian counterparts, but their power was limited.

Women's lives in the Tudor period were in many ways heavily restricted and were constrained by gender hierarchies. Most Tudor women had limited power because a social system, called patriarchy, established men as the primary authority figures. This patriarchal society encouraged male authority to dominate women in most spheres, including public and work spaces. Society ridiculed any women who acted against these standard social norms, thus there was little a woman could do to escape patriarchy. In fact, the typical experience of Tudor women was in a subservient role to the patriarch, quite often her patriarch was her husband, brother, master, or father. Clothing was one of the instances where patriarchal control was favored over female choice. Historian Edith Snook explains that society dissuaded women from speaking about clothing, because it was not a sphere that belonged to women. She says, "In fact, pedagogies of dress developed by those with institutionalized power often excluded women from thinking and speaking authoritatively or legitimately about clothing."[3] In the late Tudor period, there are very few works written by women, and even fewer of those women spoke

[3] Edith Snook, *Women, beauty and power in early modern England: a feminist literary history,* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 89.

openly about clothing norms. Even Elizabeth I was bound by the rules of the Elizabethan gender structure in spite of her being the anointed Queen.

This is not to say there was no advancement for women during the late Tudor period. In fact, a lot of historians have noted that females began to make progress by working. A rising merchant class emerged throughout Europe, because of the discovery for the New World. These merchant classes began to have different businesses and consumer goods. Furthermore, the Black Death, 200 years prior, created new opportunities for women in the public sphere. Because of the Black Death, women had an ability to run shops and other economic power. New jobs and consumer goods allowed women new freedoms in society. While these women are not aristocratic, they show that there were roles available to women.

As stated previously, clothing in the Elizabethan period has been extensively researched, however not through the lens of my research. Other scholars, like Brian Jay Corrigan, have looked at the way laws were inevitably a part of Renaissance drama, which I will explain below. Some historians, like Wilfred Hooper, have just exposed sumptuary laws and the rise of clothing restrictions in the Tudor period. However, many scholars focus on cross-dressing in the Elizabethan era. Literary critics like Jean E. Howard exposed female characters who cross-dressed and how cross-dressing was a protest amongst women in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. For many academics cross-dressing, whether in real life or on stage, was a point of interest. Others have focused on the clothing choices of Elizabeth I and Mary Tudor and how their clothing

affected their reigns. I combined many of these points in my thesis to argue that representation of clothing in Renaissance art was not a reflection of its society.

In this thesis, I argue that clothing was presented in three very broad categories. Two literary works, Juan Luis Vives's *Instruction of a Christian Woman* and William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew,* represent clothing as male domination. In my understanding of the literature, men chose clothing norms. Other writings, like *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare or Jane Anger's *Her Protection for Women,* elucidated how clothing could protect a woman from society. In these two works a disguise or dressing properly allowed women to escape a harsh community. Furthermore, sumptuary legislation explained that clothing was an unchangeable identity, however this will be challenged in my chapters.

For the chapter divisions, I chose to focus on the genres of the written works. Chapter one focuses on sumptuary legislation and other government works. In Chapter two, I focus on the ways that fictional and non-fictional public works represented clothing on stage and on the page. Chapter three is the most vital as it is the point where I argue that the representation of female clothing in the public sphere was not what happened in domestic life. Chapter three will connect back to the previous sections to show a struggle between the threads of clothing and feminine representation. In the below passage I will explain my chapter divisions more thoroughly.

In Chapter One, I examine the ways that clothing sumptuary legislation and other government documents created an identity that was ordered. The first laws that I

examined for this chapter are governmental laws the Tudor governments passed. Elizabeth I's or Henry VIII's sumptuary laws will explain the ways clothing was restricted to certain class members. They were laws that attempted to regulate the consumption of luxury goods. In clothing sumptuary laws, there were specific regulations that deemed certain clothes acceptable for titled classes, such as earls or counts. Sumptuary laws were not new to the Tudor period; they dated back to the Medieval era. Tudor monarchs, like Henry VIII, reintroduced these laws to English society. While I spend time setting up sumptuary legislation in the Tudor period, I focus on Elizabeth I's legislation primarily because women were absent from sumptuary laws prior to her. A specific law that revolutionized sumptuary legislation was the *Acts of Apparel* in 1574. After I focus on the sumptuary laws, I show that the Elizabethan *Homily Against the Excess of Apparel,* was primarily aimed at women. This sermon used a person's moral standards to force the person to dress properly. These authors used clothing as a tool to persuade women to remain in an appropriate feminine and class identity.

While chapter one dealt with government legislation about clothing, chapter two is about how Renaissance writers presented clothing. Due to the number of sources I use, the chapter is divided by fictional and non-fictional literary works.

The nonfiction subsection will include Juan Luis Vives's *Instruction of a Christian Woman* and Jane Anger's *Her Protection for Women.* Vives's *Instruction* is one of the most important conduct books of the 16th century. Conduct literature was possibly most widely read by females and reminded women of their proper roles. This type of

literature dates back to the middle ages, however, it was still commonly read by women in the Elizabethan era. In Vives's conduct-book, we see how men dictated the correct way for women to dress. On the other hand, Jane Angers' *Her Protection for Women* was a defense written in the late 16th century and also explains clothing as protection. For her, clothing symbolized feminine superiority. The nonfiction pieces, however, informed Elizabethan women how to dress properly and how dress will help them in society.

Fictional work in the Elizabethan period treaded on similar themes as the nonfiction writings. Contrastingly, the sources tended to be in a lighter tone than those of Anger or Vives and are meant to appeal to broad audiences as they were for entertainment. The sources I included in this chapter's sub-section are plays and ballads. They either reiterate the ideal of male domination or used clothing to protect the woman, but this protection was not always a negative subservient position for women.

The fictional works vary in intent. First I explain *Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare, as it takes an unruly shrew and domesticates her. One of the many ways Katherine is tamed, is when her husband denies her clothing. In this sense, *Taming of the Shrew* is an instance in which a husband dictates his wife's clothing. The final two works that are part of fictionalized work is through cross-dressing. In these literary works, clothing, specifically cross-dressing, can give a woman protection from a judgmental society. This is because women who were dressed in male clothing were able to escape their own dismal situations and use their masquerade for protection. In the Elizabethan period, there were an immense number of artistic work that presented women cross-

dressing, even the Queen herself dressed in man's clothing at one point. However, the literature was meant to be a joke, not a form of protest. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Viola is the character who comically turns to male-dress to protect herself but is only rewarded with protection when her femininity is revealed. The ballad of *Robin Hood and Maid Marian* also provides insight into how women used cross-dressing to protect themselves from society. Cross-dressing in Elizabethan period may suggest relaxed gender norms or that women could not be men. It was simultaneously a form of resistance and a form of restriction which will be explored. The Renaissance literary works show that clothing was a large part of women's lives.

The third chapter of my thesis is about the way women used clothing. I keep women's writings in conversation with different Renaissance works, such as Shakespeare's plays or the Tudor government's legislations. It is unsurprising that the primary sources I found from different women differed from many of the clothing norms that were prescribed by either literary works or laws. However, there are not many Tudor women's writings that express their views on clothing. Thus, it is possible that these women were outliers, as they were the elite learned of society. While they may be extraordinary cases, they should be recognized as people who used clothing in ways different than what was presented in public works.

The private account book of Margaret Spencer and the Lisle letters discuss female clothing and the daily routines involving its consumption. This includes the female's role in securing and cleaning clothing. I will argue that while men pushed male supremacy it

was really women who had the power to decide what to wear. In the letters and documents women chose the "fashion trends." These women will show that women had power to choose clothing in the Tudor era.

As we can see through Elizabeth I, clothing became a form of protection and power. Elizabeth I's Defense of Marriage in 1566 explains how clothing was a way to assert and claim her power in society.[4] She never claimed to have control over what she wears, like women in chapter 1, but she declared that her femininity was her way into any society.

The final primary sources I will use are women's portraits as they show how women may not have listened to sumptuary legislation. The fixed identity that was presented by government legislation was not rigid. Women could easily fabricate their identity through garb. The true wanted image of a woman can be seen in portraits. These women chose how they wanted to be represented in their paintings. Quite often, these women presented themselves in clothing that was incredibly elaborate and identified themselves as high status.

While my chapter divisions are important, one must ask if culture and government are actually related. Can culture be affected by the government or vice versa? Brian Jay Corrigan explained in his book *Playhouse Law,* how Renaissance writers like Shakespeare purposefully placed laws into works for various reasons. Corrigan shows the

[4] Obviously, Elizabeth I is an extraordinary case, however I will explain in chapter two how she is a representation of her society. Her image and words in her speech are dissimilar to the standard norms in 1566.

anxieties of the audience, playwright, and culture. He says, "Additionally, these discoveries reveal to us the political, social, and personal concerns that interested playwrights and presumably interested their audiences."[5] To Corrigan, the concerns of the Renaissance writers, or what they specifically spoke of, were concerns that also interested audiences. In his book, Corrigan focuses on legislative matters, such as marriage laws, that were also part of Renaissance productions. The clear difference is that I will focus on the way Renaissance and sumptuary clothing laws intersected and failed to create a female identity.

Did the Renaissance writers purposefully use the Government's rules about clothing or was it a coincidence? Corrigan believes that art and law influence one another. He explains,

> Legal historians, conversely, sometimes tend to view legal history backward: the legal institution makes the law and society obeys. However in a civilization that recognizes some concept of common law, society determines its customs and comportment and legislators attempt to craft language to codify, protect, and enforce those behaviors. The language becomes the law. When that language fails, as it regularly does, society reacts. Literature is often part of that reaction. A study of the literary reaction to law is not always the same as the study of legal history (although too often it is narrowly deemed to be so).[6]

There is, perhaps, no better explanation on how art and law can intersect. They influence one another, or perhaps larger society influences both. However, a central part of my thesis is just exposing that the Renaissance may have been a form of cementing laws that failed. Tudor society was concerned with female clothing, a conclusion drawn from both

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[5] Brian Jay Corrigan, *Playhouse Law in Shakespeare's World*, (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004): 19.

[6] Ibid, 10.

Government legislation and Renaissance literature detailing information on the subject. Improper dress was something feared amongst Elizabethans, and, more importantly, was hard to prohibit.

The question remains, can art actually influence people? The truth is, there may have been an ambiguous, and complex, agenda amongst Renaissance writers. Art may have been both an engine of social change and a reflection of the government. For writers like Vives, women had limited power and should be suppressed. In another case, like Anger's *Protection for Women*, women were more pure and powerful than men. There is no absolute answer to how this society viewed female dress other than the fact that it should be controlled on some level. It is more than possible that Tudor society both controlled and elevated female power, which can be seen in the private lives of women. From the 1529 through 1610, Renaissance writers and government officials tried to regulate clothing, however, they failed to shape their society; women had power.

Chapter 1: Government Legislation

In Tudor England, the government passed sumptuary laws that defined rank, wealth, and age. Clothing was part of these laws and was an unmistakable marker of the person's status in society. Tudor England, of course, was not the first English government to write sumptuary laws; these acts date from the Medieval period. The Tudor laws dictated most aspects of clothing regulation, from fabrics to color. They implemented a hierarchal clothing structure to protect men and women from crossing class and gender bounds. For example, only wealthy, aristocratic women could wear clothing made of velvet fabrics or the color red. While this was just one example, laws clearly stated what a person should and should not wear. In the following chapter, I will explore the identity that was shaped and perpetuated by the Tudor governments; the success of these laws will be explored in further detail in chapter 3. I believe that while the Tudor governments tried to create a structured and hierarchal system, they at times failed; instead, women's identity was fluid and shapeable.

Whether it was Henry VIII in 1515 or Elizabeth I in 1574, each government presented different dress laws that expanded on other monarchs' legislation. The laws that I will focus on in this chapter are Elizabeth I's *Enforcing Statutes of Apparel in 1564, Enforcing Statutes of Apparel 1574,* and *Enforcing Statutes of Apparel 1580.* I will compare these laws with each other and focus on how the laws evolved over time. Following these statutes, I will explore the way the government presented legislation in

other fields, specifically in churches. This sermon was the *Homily Against the Excess of Apparel,* presented at church under Elizabeth I. The Elizabethan *Homily* presented churchgoers with a definition of how to dress appropriately and explicitly denied people certain clothing trends, such as garb that was not from England. The homily and sumptuary legislation provide an insight into the way the government tried to regulate clothing.

I will explicate the changes that took place in sumptuary legislation through Elizabeth I's reign and her adaptions of preexisting laws. Most of the changes I focus on are the way that Elizabeth I modified women's role in the sumptuary acts. At first, there were no women in the laws. However, over time women were increasingly present in sumptuary legislation; by 1574, there was an entire subset of laws solely meant for women. The explanation for this change will be understood while I analyze the laws themselves. However before I focus on the laws, I think it is important to understand what changes took place during the Tudor period that caused sumptuary legislation to be increasingly part of Tudor laws.

Clothing norms were progressively defined because of a changing culture from the Medieval period to the early modern society. Herman Freudenberger explains in his scholarly article "Fashion, Sumptuary Laws, and Business" why clothing and sumptuary laws appeared more often in the Tudor period. He elucidates, "Urbanization and the attendant rise of the bourgeoisie seem to have been major causes…"[7] Freudenberger

[7] Herman Freudenberger, "Fashion, Sumptuary Laws, and Business" *Business Historical Review*, Vol 37 (1963) 39.

means that there were changes from the Middle Ages to an early modern society, which became a more urban environment. There was social mobility, but there was a dramatic shift when a middle-class emerged. He further writes, “Moreover, town life was more gregarious and more socially mobile. A person’s pedigree was not as important as before and his position at a given time carried greater weight. Outward display was therefore a method by which he could give overt expression of his wealth.”[8] New access to wealth in the Tudor period enabled the socially ambitious to express their wealth like never before. Even though similar laws had existed prior, the Tudor regime emphasized class distinctions. In the Tudor society, people could buy or wear clothing that stated a higher status than they were, even if it was against the laws.

The phenomenon of clothing becoming a circulation of goods is discussed in *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* by Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass. In the book, the authors explained that clothing was a signifier of the person. The writers clarified, "Livery acted as the medium through which the social system marked bodies so as to associate them with particular institutions. The power to give that marketing to subordinates affirmed social hierarchy: lords dressed retainers, masters dressed apprentices, husbands dressed their wives.”[9] Here, clothing was a way to control and define the person’s social or employment title similar to the way sumptuary legislation ascribed clothing restrictions to distinguish the aristocratic class. However,

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Rosalind Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2000, 5.

clothing was easily obtainable, and sumptuary legislation could not stop the recirculation of goods in Elizabethan England. At this time, clothing was wealth; rather than having a banking system to keep gold readily available people wore their gold and jeweled trinkets to show their status. Furthermore, clothing became a form of payment. Rather than giving wages to her subjects at court, Elizabeth I often gave clothing as a mean of compensation.[10] Clothing also became readily available at secondhand shops and through pawnbrokers. Pawnbrokers, in this pre-banking society, dealt with people of most ranks, ranging from barons to tailors.[11] Reselling goods was an essential way to make money, whether the persons were aristocratic or plebeian. This allowed for excess clothing to be available to anyone who had wealth in Elizabethan England; in this instance, a lawyer could purchase used goods that once belonged to a knight, which was restricted by sumptuary legislation.

Scholars have recognized that Elizabeth I did much more with sumptuary legislation than her predecessors. P.K. Hughes and J. F. Larkin collected all Tudor proclamations, including sumptuary laws. While there were seven sumptuary laws passed prior to Elizabeth I, the Queen passed nine clothing laws.[12] Historians debate the reasons Elizabeth I passed nine different apparel laws; it could be globalization, her wish to

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[10] Ibid, 18-19.

[11] Ibid. 27

[12] This was tallied by myself through the *Tudor Royal Proclamations* with confirmation from historian Leah Kirtio.

consolidate her power, or a way to stimulate the English economy.[13] The rest of this chapter will explain the Elizabethan legislation and *Homily Against the Excess of Apparel,* and why the government may have felt the need to continue revisions on clothing laws.

While it may be common sense to believe these sumptuary laws were about gender dress, they truly reinforced hierarchal structure of class. Elizabeth's sumptuary laws reiterated, even at times plagiarized, the hierarchal structure of sumptuary legislation that was passed before her. Throughout the 16th century, the use of clothing to define a person's class stature was at its peak. It was inherently linked to the daily interactions between people and was used as a way to automatically dignify certain classes. In other words, clothing was an easy way to differentiate a member of the aristocracy from the working classes. While it may seem that it was easy to detect someone who dressed above or below their stature, there were few offenses actually prosecuted. The few prosecutions did not satisfy Tudor monarchs, and they still feared delinquency amongst their subjects. As Hooper argued, sumptuary legislation was almost impossible to enforce. The language in the laws shows how the Elizabethan government worried themselves with regulating sumptuary legislation, perhaps so they could maintain the hierarchal structure that was rooted in England.

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[13] Wilfrid Hooper, "The Tudor Sumptuary Laws," *English Historical Review*, 30, No 119 (1915): 433 - 449.
While dated, Hooper's scholarly article remains to this day one of the most used background articles on Tudor Sumptuary Laws.

More than any of the monarchs before, Elizabeth I concerned herself with the class system and the ways people should dress. Unlike her predecessors, Elizabeth I made it her objective to make sure the laws were followed.[14] The clear difference between Elizabeth I's and her predecessors' sumptuary laws, except the sheer number of them, was her constant revisions of the laws themselves. Almost every new sumptuary proclamation began with how the previous law failed to produce any reform.[15] The Queen advised her her Privy Council to pass many of Elizabeth I's royal proclamations.[16] Parliament would follow and approve said laws. One of the ways we can see Elizabeth I's compulsive fashion legislation is when she speaks about women.

As I go through the different laws Elizabeth I passed, and her constant recapitulation of her predecessors' laws, remember that the Elizabethan government obviously concerned itself with controlling clothing, for a possible multitude of reasons. To Elizabeth I, it might have been to solely control this new circulation of clothing, but I believe it is much more complex. For one, sumptuary law, similar to playhouse law, responded to changing clothing norms. Historian Alan Hunt explains, "An explanation that fits neatly with this thesis is that sumptuary law simply 'followed' fashion; when male fashion predominated it was the object of sumptuary law and with the rise of female

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[14] Ibid, 437.

[15] "Elizabeth I. *Enforcing Statues of Apparel,* Issued at Greenwich. 15 June 1574.
"The excess of apparel and the superfluity of unnecessary foreign wares thereto belonging now of late years is grown by sufferance to such an extremity that the manifest decay of the whole realm generally is like to follow..."

[16] *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, edited by P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

fashion so the target of sumptuary law changed."[17] One thing that remains interesting is that in Elizabethan England, 1574 became the revolutionary year that upset most traditional sumptuary legislation.

In the first laws dictated by Henry VIII, women were removed from the discussion of clothing restriction; in fact, women were absent from clothing legislation until Elizabeth I was queen. It was unsurprising to find no women in clothing legislation as early Tudor England, especially under Henry VIII, was a highly patriarchal society; women were supposedly ruled by their husbands or fathers. While previous laws dictated class and fashion, Maria Hayward explains that Elizabeth I may have introduced female dress because she was aware of women who dressed above social rank.[18] In addition to following fashion trends, I believe Elizabeth I wanted to control female clothing because she hoped to protect her queenship. Women in the court, specifically lower ranking laborers there, posed a threat because they may have had the means to purchase fabrics and colors above their social rank, such as in the aforementioned pawnshops. Perhaps in Elizabeth's eyes, these women had to be controlled, in this sense the laws were more about class than gender. As the 16th century went on, clothing became more ostentatious because of growing fabric choices available. Elizabeth I tried to control these trends. She did not bring new legislation in effect, instead she reiterated sumptuary laws with new gender meanings.

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[17] Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 235.

[18] Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: Clothing and the Law in Henry VIII*, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009) 45.

In 1559, Elizabeth I reenacted the laws of Henry VIII and Queen Mary. There was no division or preference of gender in either law. Henry VIII's "The Brief Content of Certain Acts of Parliament Against the Inordinate Use of Apparel," from 1533, listed the types of clothing that was restricted to aristocracy. It says, "None shall wear in his apparel any: cloth of gold, silver, or tinsel; satin, silk, or cloth mixed with gold or silver, nor any sables; except earls and all of superior degrees."[19] Notice in Henry's law there is no enactment or mention of women. By Elizabeth I's reenactment of Philip and Mary's law from 1553, there is the mention of "wife" and "daughter," but only as a side note, they are not the focal point of the law.[20] Hunt explains that while in 1483 working women were mentioned in sumptuary legislation, but by 1514 women were no longer present in sumptuary laws.

Elizabeth I's use of past legislation may have simply been to reenforce them under her new rulership. The introduction to the "Enforcing Statutes of Apparel" told English subjects that there would be no toleration for anyone who disobeyed the laws. In this way, Elizabeth I controlled her citizens. Her law proclaimed, "Her majesty chargeth and commandeth that there be no toleration had, nor excuse allowed, after the 20th day of December."[21] Similar to other legislation passed by Elizabeth I, there was no toleration for violators of the law; however, people who diverged from the law were hard to prosecute. Another possibility about the laws in 1559 is that the legislation needed to be

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[19] Elizabeth I, "Enforcing Statutes of Apparel," *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (Vol. 2), #464

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

reiterated to understand a new and changing society, as Hunt explains. Hunt says, "It is entirely possible that these formulations did grasp something of a new reality, particularly in the rapidly expanding metropolis where economic expansion was creating a rapid increase in the number of small traders …"[22] Whether Elizabeth I passed the sumptuary legislation to remind her countrymen and women of the laws or as a reminder for the laws to be abided by, Elizabethan statutes were vastly different from those of the early Tudor period.

Elizabeth I passed the first laws that clearly mentioned women in the 1562 sumptuary laws called "Briefing Statutes of Apparel (Privy Council)." She modifies Henry VIII's law by adding gender to the bill. While the law previously said "None shall wear," Elizabeth I adds certain specifications and made sure to mention women. The law now states, "None shall wear in his apparel any silk of the color of purple, cloth of gold tissue, but only the King, Queen, King's mother, children, bretheren and sisters, uncles and aunts…"[23] While women were mentioned here, it was still about class. It is the Royal Family who are exempted. Elizabeth I, while evoking her father, only mentioned titles, such as "baron" or "earl," but there were additional restrictions that included women. There are no specific regulations that women had to comply with, instead each law is clearly directed at male dress, but all that would change in 1574.

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[22] Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, 315.

[23] Elizabeth I, "Briefing Statutes of Apparel in 1562,"*Tudor Royal Proclamations* (Vol. 2), #496.

In 1574, she specifically broke the law down into three parts. The first part was how to enforce the structure of these laws as a moral defense, the second and third part, on the other hand, is about gender divided into "Men's Apparel" and "Women's Apparel" guide. Hunt explains, "This dramatic move purported to reimpose sumptuary regulation on women after nearly one hundred years of exemption and seems to have gone undetected by earlier commentators."[24] Elizabeth I specifically changed the legislation to restrict women's dress and acknowledged a type of power that gave women their own subset of laws. Not only do Elizabeth's sumptuary laws explain that there was a change over time, but they reveal that she was concerned with female power, perhaps from her biggest rival Mary Stuart.[25]

It is a common belief that Elizabeth I disliked women and tried to strengthen the patriarchal system, but there has been little examination on Elizabeth I's reasons to acknowledge women in the legislation. Was this moment a form of Elizabeth I strengthening the patriarchal system, or was it a form of female power by acknowledging women in law? Obviously, only speculation can be drawn here, and as Hunt explains, "On the basis of available evidence it must remain undecided how we should understand this late attempt to reimpose sumptuary restraints on women after a long period of exemption."[26] While there are many possibilities that can be explored, I would like to focus on two potential reasons.

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[24] Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, 320

[25] Elizabeth I, "Enforcing the Statutes of Apparel,"*Tudor Royal Proclamations* (Vol. 2), #601.

[26] Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, 321.

Perhaps, Elizabeth I wanted to strengthen norms because patriarchy was changing and expanding female roles. Elizabeth I's sumptuary legislation showed that she was concerned with restricting female power, especially in 1574. The Queen may have been aware of changing patriarchal norms, one where females had executive power in certain aspects of life. Hunt explains, "One plausible explanation … attests to the rapidly increasing prosperity of urban merchants which was allowing a flourishing of the female contribution to their conspicuous consumption."[27] As I will explain in chapter 3, women were able to buy and purchase goods. Elizabeth I may have been aware of or wanted to control active female consumerism, especially with growing mercantilism in England in this period. It is possible that Elizabeth wanted to cap this female advancement and a way to do that was to give women specific clothing restrictions.

It is also possible Elizabeth wanted to give more female independence, but due to previous work done by numerous historians we know Elizabeth I did nothing to aid women. In fact, Katherine Butler's article "'By Instruments her Power Appeare': Music and Authority in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I" explains Elizabeth I's gender struggle. She expresses, "Elizabeth had a continuing need to defend her monarchical abilities against misogynist critics."[28] John N. King furthered this argument by explaining that Elizabeth I represented herself carefully as a Virgin idol who could receive the admiration

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[27] Ibid, 321.

[28] Katherine Butler, "'By Instruments her Power Appeare': Music and Authority in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 65, No. 2, Summer 2012, 354.

of her subjects.[29] She carefully played and subverted gender norms to present herself as acceptable to a patriarchal society. Elizabeth needed to defend herself and disclose that, even without a man, she could rule a country. If Elizabeth truly wanted to ascribe new powers to women, then she would have done so, she was Queen after all, but her powers as a woman were limited. The growing restrictions on women in the sumptuary laws shows that Elizabeth I may have wanted, or needed, to restrict her subjects, especially other women. Since Elizabeth I was a woman and ruled a deeply patriarchal country, the Queen may not have wanted to change gender norms any more than necessary. Perhaps, by restricting other women, Elizabeth I was able to keep her power as a woman.

So I must ask, why at this point is Elizabeth I so concerned with including women in her sumptuary legislation? Is it her hope to consolidate power, reject female consumerism, or give women an identity? As I stated earlier, Hunt explained that sumptuary legislation perhaps followed fashions, could another reason for increased sumptuary legislation be reflection of society's concerns with female agency? Could sumptuary legislation not only follow fashion trends but follow what society was concerned about? Hunt explained that there was no outward cry for female regulation, but there was most certainly an increase of female clothing concerns appearing on stage and on page, as will be explored in chapter two. Perhaps Elizabeth I included women because there was a growing fear of female representation, after all Elizabeth I was a queen ruling without a male counterpart, this was a social concern.

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[29] John N. King, "Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen," *Renaissance Quarterly,* 43, No. 1 (1990): 30.

One thing that is clearly recognized in the laws from 1574 to 1580 is the way that Elizabeth I relied on the morality of her subjects to dress properly. Elizabeth I's *Enforing Statutes of Apparel in 1580* states that to dress improperly was an immoral act. Elizabeth I, however, calls on her subjects' good will to defend the laws, which also suggests there were not severe repercussions for those who violated them.[30] A person who dressed improperly was not considered an upstanding English citizen. Elizabeth I also mentions economic value of clothing in both 1574 and 1580 sumptuary legislation. For example, in the law of 1574, Elizabeth I restricts people's class on their yearly income. In the section on Women's apparel, Elizabeth I says, "Satin demask or tufted taffeta (in gowns, kirtles, or velvet in kirtles)… except the degrees and persons above mentioned, or the wives of those that may dispend £100 by the year and so valued in subsidy book."[31] While Henry VIII scantly mentioned economical resources, Elizabeth I mentioned them quite often. In 1571, Elizabeth I passed a different type of government propaganda that indicated this economic and moralistic concerns that pervaded in the 1574 and 1580 sumptuary laws.

Elizabeth I's *Homily Against The Excess of Apparel* reiterated, almost verbatim, Tudor sumptuary laws. It was written in 1571 and was published in the "Second Book of Homilies."[32] While the first anthology of prayers was meant to inform churchgoers about the teachings of the church, the second part perpetuated correct social decorum, with an

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[30] Ibid, 30.

[31] Elizabeth I, "Enforcing Statutes of Apparel" #601

[32] The first book was written in 1547 under Edward VI but did not contain anything about clothing.

entire sermon dedicated to clothing. The entirety of this homily discusses the importance of dressing properly. While the sermon touched on proper male dress, the homily focused on "women's sartorial transgressions."[33] This was a mandatory sermon throughout England's Protestant churches until the end of the 17th century and tried to prevent people from buying foreign clothes.[34] The *Homily* was written three years prior to the first sumptuary legislation that directly mentioned women. This was a precursor to how Elizabeth I would control female clothing norms. Unlike sumptuary legislation, which secured class lines, the *Homily* addressed the moral character of the person, and one must ask whether this was a response to adaptable class lines or a xenophobic English society.

If it does have to do with tensions abroad, the xenophobic society translated clearly into the Elizabethan homily. Reinke-Williams explains, "The Elizabethan homily on apparel attacked Spanish and Turkish fashions."[35] It insinuated that English subjects who wore foreign trends were sympathetic to those of ethnic descent. The homily recited, "She doeth but deserve mockes and scorns, to set out all her commendation in Jewish and Ethnicke apparell, and yet brag of her Christianity."[36] The *Homily* attacked any type of fashion trend that was not primarily English. The only way to be a proper Englishwoman was to dress in English goods, rather than dressing in trends from Italy, Turkey, or Spain.

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[33] Christine M. Varholy, "'Rich like a Lady': Cross-Class Dressing in the Brothels and Theaters of Early Modern England," *Journal for Early Modern England Cultural Study.* 8 (Summer 2008). 34.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Tim Reinke-Williams, "Women's clothes and female honour in early modern London," *Continuity and Change*, 26 : 71.

[36] Elizabeth I, "Homily Against Excess of Apparel," *Short Title Catalogue,* Ed. by Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto, 1997.

The homily attacked women who dressed themselves excessively. It said, "We must have ... one (gown) of the Spanish fashion, another Turkie and to bee brief never content with sufficiant."[37] This is a passage that attacks not only women who purchased numerous gowns, but women who bought fashion trends from other countries. The women who acquired these gowns were most likely wealthy as they had to be able to afford the articles of clothing. Here, the homily hoped to redirect female dress to be more Protestant and patriotic, perhaps because of growing religious tensions and mercantilist economics.

When women bought or commissioned goods, they often designated they wanted the "London fashions," even though these goods adapted clothing trends from other countries. This was mainly because London was the fashion crux of England. It was heavily influenced by Western European trends from Turkey, Italy, Holland, and Spain. Fashion grew colorful and more ornate, which we can see was a concern of the *Homily.* In fact, women who dressed gorgeously were vain and only dressed for the "Divels eyes."[38] Historian Tim Reinke-Williams explained the homily's objective. He said, "Moralists attacked exotic clothing, linking Spanish and Italian fabrics with lasciviousness and popery, and French materials with syphilis and ostentation."[39] He points to work done by historian Roze Hentschell. She said, wool was the ultimate symbol of England. Hentschell explains that wool was identified "With England itself,

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Reinke-Williams, "Women's clothes and female honour in early modern London," 71.

wearing it could signify both nationalist and anti-foreign sentiments."[40] According to Hentschell and Williams, the *Homily* was not only a way to enforce sumptuary laws but also attacked fashion trends. To further his sentiment, Reinke-Williams explains, "godly moralists and rustic parochialism did little to deter women from following London fashions."[41] In addition to xenophobia, the English government might have wanted to stimulate English commerce rather than their trading companies. Promoting Englishwomen and men to buy wool meant giving business to England rather than foreign traders.

England had foreign trade in the Tudor period. The homily asks, "What hath our pride profited us? Or what profit hath the pompe of riches brought us."[42] Those who were wealthy could afford the extravagant, foreign fashion fads that were popular in London. The homily was a tool to persuade people against spending their money on clothing, specifically ones that dressed above their class stature. The homily prescribed an identity through clothing: Good Christians. If a woman dressed appropriately she was a good Protestant, but if she did not she was an ethnic Jew. With xenophobic and class tensions in Elizabethan England the homily sought to prevent the expansion of impractical and overly-zealous trends. Wealth, that grew considerably from market expansion, was now readily accessible. English government favored English products was because they

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[40] Roze Hentschell, "A question of nation: foreign clothes on the English subject," in *Clothing Culture: 1350–1650,* ed. Catherine T. Richardson, (London, Ashgate, 2004), 49–62.

[41] Reinke-Williams, "Women's clothes and female honour in early modern London," 71

[42] Ibid.

wanted to stimulate their economy. While there was a large cash flow, a lot of trade began to move to other countries. English subjects purchased goods that were not from England, and indirectly supported the trade with other nations. A lot of these nations were Catholic. By trading outside the England, we can sense that English goods were not as desired. Foreign goods appealed to masses as exotic, and perhaps that is why the Elizabethan government advocated for English goods.

Protestant fears manifested themselves in clothing because many trends, like the French Hood or Italian laces, came from Catholic nations. However, I believe another reason that clothing was perceived a destructive force in English society had less to do with religion and more to do with the greater population. To clarify, the laws were strict, but English society was adaptable. There was no permanent fixed society, no matter how hard the government tried to create one in sumptuary legislation. Obviously the homily focused on Protestant virtues, as it was presented in church, but it also focused on reputation. How a woman was perceived in public dictated her life. If a woman dressed above her means or wore clothing she was not meant to, the entire hierarchal English society was threatened. Keeping women in proper uniform, whether laborers or duchesses, was difficult for the Elizabethan government and that threatened the English social system. Suddenly, there was a need to attack people who abused clothing because they threatened England's hierarchal system.

The *Homily* attacked a woman's consciousness. The author reasoned that Englishwomen and Englishmen lost touch with God and the English subjects used

clothing as an unholy substitute; in many ways this was similar to what Juan Luis Vives, who will be explained in chapter two, stated 50 years previously. The following passage talks not only of how people disobeyed God but the laws that were disregarded. The Homily says,

> In like maner it is convenient, that yee bee admonished of another soule & chargeable excess: I meane, of apparell, at these days so gorgeous, that neither Almighty GOD by his word can stay our proud curiousity in the same, neither yet godly and necessary lawes made of our Princes, and oft repeated with the penalties, can bridle this detestable abuse, whereby both GOD is openly contemned and the Princes Laws manifestly disobeyed, to the great perill of the Realm.[43]

First, the homily outlines why the homily was published. To dress ostentatiously was a "detestable abuse" that contaminated a precious English society. The people who disobeyed clothing laws not only crossed God in unholy ways, but disregarded and degraded their country. These corrupt Elizabethans were a threat to "the Realm." The *Homily* threatened the morality of its citizens, those who dressed improperly were bad English subjects because they disregarded their country and their God.

The sermon furthered that clothing detailed a person's moral character. While that had been said previously, now any person who dressed ostentatiously had to battle judgement from peers. Vanity was a sin against God, and any woman who dressed ornately was not being a proper Christian. The sermon explained that the "goodlinesse of apparell" does not make a woman "esteemed" but it is the "modestie," and "diligence"

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[43] Elizabeth I, "Homily Against Excess of Apparel," *Short Title Catalogue,* Ed. by Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto, 1997.

that created the approved woman.[44] It is no surprise that these virtues (modesty and diligence) were placed upon women, as they had been since the Middle Ages. However, the homily suggested that virtues were not to be compared to the compilation of "things." This meant that it was not how many gowns a woman owned, rather it had to do with the modesty. Clothing does not make the woman, rather her character. Here, the homily promotes dressing as an identity of the person's nature.

The *Homily* condemned specific fashions women wore and the excess of goods that they purchased. For example, it attacked women who bought a different dress for every season, event, or day. It says in a sarcastic manner, "We must have one gowne for the day, another for the night, one long, another shorte, one for winter, another for summer, one through furred, another but faced, one for the working day, another for the holie day, one of this colour, another of that colour, one of Cloth, another of Silke or Damaske."[45] Here we see that the Homily was against women owning a surplus of clothing, especially those of gowns. It attacked the wearer's character. Someone who acquired an excessive amount of clothing was not a good person. She was vain.

The sumptuary laws very much reflected class and gender anxieties. Sumptuary laws were often disregarded, especially by women. There are instances throughout the 16th century of women purchasing an excess of goods. Furthermore, women bought all types of fashion trends, they rarely only purchased wool goods. The most sought after

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

clothing was often dresses reflecting foreign trends. Historians can note that in portraits there seemed to have been ostentatious fashion choices, rather than bland English wool. Finally, class distinctions were often crossed by women, especially middle classes pretending to be aristocracy.

The question remains why was clothing so detrimental to English society that the Elizabethan government and churches *had* to comment on dress. There are many possible answers. An important reason may be that the Elizabethan government feared increased immigration into England. An influx of people meant more anxiety against Catholic states and the fear they would infiltrate England. The homily explicitly attacked any type of "Ethnick" apparel. England was at odds with Catholic countries, especially Spain. Perhaps, more Catholics entering England meant the greater chance of social upheaval. However, I think an important way to understand the increase of sumptuary legislation and the Elizabethan *Homily Against the Excess of Apparel* is to acknowledge that female clothing was a staggering fear for Elizabethan subjects.

There are numerous reasons why female apparel may have been a government concern as I have explored from the passages above. Women had the ability to spend their wealth and purchase clothing beyond what was deemed appropriate by sumptuary standards. Elizabeth I may have wanted to confine female consumption because people feared changing patriarchal standards. These reasons, however, can not be pinned down to just one. Whatever the reason the Elizabethan government controlled female apparel,

historians can note that female sumptuary legislation in late Tudor England was a subject of increased anxiety, one that pervaded the minds of English Renaissance writers.

Chapter 2: Renaissance

Now that I clarified how the Tudor government increased female representation in sumptuary legislation, I can explain a second side to female dress that was presented to the public. The writers of the English Renaissance were either consciously or unknowingly influenced by this social awareness of female dress and composed literature about women's clothing. This chapter will explore the various ways Renaissance authors presented female dress and why it was presented in these ways.

There are several possible ways this clothing was presented. For example in some literature there were clear religious undertones, such as in Juan Luis Vives' *The Instruction of a Christian Woman.* In other ways, the writings could be for a value of entertainment. A clear example of a secular Renaissance play would be William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, where clothing is an essential tool used in the play. Whether the written works were non-fiction, like Vives, or fiction, like Shakespeare, female clothing was present in Renaissance artists' works.

Due to the many public works I have examined, there will be two sections to this chapter. The first will deal with non-fiction literary publications. Juan Luis Vives' *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* and Jane Anger's *Her Protection for Women* are two literary works that explicate female clothing regulation in the Tudor period. For Vives, female dress was a reflection of the woman's moral and religious character. On the other hand, Anger's pamphlet is a feminist work that uses clothing as protection from men.

Both literary writings will be explored below on how this clothing was presented. The second section of this thesis will be fictionalized publications. Two of these texts will be William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and *Twelfth Night*. *The Ballad of Robin Hood and Maid Marian* presents another representation of fictionalized instances where female clothing is a vital part of its story. In all of these pieces, clothing was a device of the writers to present women in certain positions.

The changes in female representation in public literary works could have to do with the change of monarchs or patriarchal norms. In Vives's conduct book, historians and literary critics can note that women are dependent on their husbands, fathers, or their God. For him this subject is of pure anxiety and a violation to England's virtue. However, he wrote in the 1520s. By the time Shakespeare wrote in the 1580s, even though Vives' book was republished, clothing representation became secular and relaxed. Instead of the strict language Vives used, female clothing became a joke. Here we can see a change of political concerns, one that under a highly patriarchal society in 1529 under Henry VIII changes to a gag by Shakespeare under Elizabeth I's regime.

As I continue with this chapter I will explain how female clothing rarely gave women agency, instead it was a push of outside forces. Clothing was a form of male domination to Vives. Female dress was something that men controlled rather than the woman. To Shakespeare, on a text reading level, clothing was a female choice, but typically ended in her conforming to sumptuary legislation and her patriarchs' expectations. There are times, of course, where women have the control, such as in the

Ballad of Robin Hood and Maid Marian. While reading these sections, I will be sure to recognize which works represent female dress in certain ways and explain the possible reasons why this may be.

Non-Fiction Literature

Non-Fiction literature in the Tudor period ranged from pamphlets to conduct literature. What is specifically important about the literary works I have used here is the way they presented clothing. For Vives clothing was the reflection of a woman's submission. If she was a good woman then she dressed as dictated by her husband and God. Anger, on the other hand, viewed clothing as a source of protection. The following subsection will explore the two ways clothing is presented, not as a form of entertainment, rather as a form of information and instruction.

Juan Luis Vives wrote *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* in 1523, under the reign of Henry VIII. It was first published in Latin and was not translated to English until around 1527 by Richard Hyrde, under the commission of Thomas More.[46] By the end of the 16th century over eight different editions would be published of Vives' highly influential work.

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[46] Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, ed. Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hagemen, and Margaret Mikesell, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 2002), Xv.

As a native Spaniard, but converted Catholic, Vives left Spain after his mother's death to pursue an education at the College of Montaigu, part of the University of Paris.[47] With different influences impacting his work, Vives began to recognize the corrupt society he lived in and became a humanist writer, like many Renaissance scholars. Upon leaving Paris in 1514, Vives began a cordial, although eventually strained, relationship with Erasmus. Erasmus' friendship with Vives caused the Spaniard to become a highly regarded scholar and welcomed amongst the intellectual community. Vives eventually left Paris for Bruges, where he began cultivating relationships that would aid his growing influence as a humanist scholar.

During the 1520s to 1530s, Vives recognized the various realities for women. For one, his sisters called on him to return to Spain after their brother and father were caught secretly practicing Judaism. Vives feared that his sisters would be left alone to testify against their family members and his siblings would need him as a male protector. Another reality Vives realized was influenced by his time spent in Bruges. Throughout his *Instruction of a Christian Woman,* Vives was concerned with the sexual aggression and dress of women. According to scholars like Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman, and Margaret Mikesell, these two factors may have influenced Vives' book. They explain, "The treatise's compulsive insistence on preserving virginity and chastity may thus have been generated by two acute dangers-sensual dangers threatening him in Bruges and religious terrorism linked to his sisters in Spain but concealed unconsciously

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[47] Ibid, xvii.

with this metaphor."[48] This metaphor is Vives' incessant need to proclaim Catholic values and astounding moral behaviors in his conduct book.[49]

Vives' book *Instruction of a Christian Woman* was dedicated to Catharine of Aragon and her daughter, Princess Mary of England. After the publication and dedication, Henry VIII sent a letter to Vives, urging the philosopher to make England his "scholarly home."[50] Eventually, Vives earned a royal pension from the Tudors, although that would end once he moved back to Bruges. The reasons scholars can infer *Instruction* was an influential and widely read conduct book was because of the numerous languages the book was translated to including English, Dutch, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.[51] The book described how a woman should live, whether it be her behavior, speech, food, or clothing. Vives' clothing sections unsurprisingly mirrored sumptuary legislation. Women were absent from sumptuary legislation during Henry VIII's reign, and similarly Vives believed men should dictate the dressing of women.

While reading Vives' literary work, it is hard to ignore the fact that a Spanish male writer dictated the lives of women. Clothing was a compelling, large, and revisited section of his book. While it made sense for Vives to include clothing in a book that covered every aspect of a Tudor woman's life, the way that he contorted the perception of women was quite misogynistic. For his time period, however, he believed in educating

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[48] Vives, *Instruction of a Christian Woman*, xxiv.

[49] Ibid, xxiv. - xxx.

[50] Ibid, xxiii.

[51] Ibid, xv.

women, a shared view with Catherine of Aragon. Whether it was women's responsibility to listen to their husbands or respect God, Vives used classical and Christian holy figures to remind women of their proper place in society.

While Vives believed in the education of women, he classified them as inferior and subservient to their patriarchs. Furthermore, it is important while reading the conduct book to understand that it was read throughout Europe and received praise from other intellectuals like Erasmus and More, even though their religious or nationalistic views differed from the author's.[52] The praise of his works were constantly reiterated throughout the 16th century, although they went through vital revisions that reflected the religious and political changes of England. Furthermore, it appears that other conduct literature throughout the 16th century would reiterate Vives' sentiments. Beauchamp explains, "The indebtedness of Robert Cleaver's *A Godly Form of Householde Government* (1598), one of the few conduct books to borrow verbatim from the *Instruction* exemplifies the nature and scope of its influence."[53] While this is just one of the examples that cites Vives, Beauchamp explains there are more books that may have used Vives as an example to publish conduct literature.

In this essay I examine Vives' first translation of *Instruction*. Perhaps the reason Englishmen were willing to read Vives' book even as England grew resentful towards Spaniards was because it changed so often, remaining current with England's

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[52] England began its transformation from Catholicism to Protestantism by 1529.

[53] Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, xliii.

revolutionizing society. Some of these changes include the omission of certain parts in the book, like the proper way to love, or the certain words that Puritans "considered blasphemous are changed: 'damne' to condemne'…"[54] These changes allowed the book to be extended to audience that may not have been Catholic.

In her article, "Some Sad Sentence: Vives' Instruction of a Christian Woman", Valarie Wayne explained how Vives represented women in his conduct-book and its prevalence throughout the Tudor period. In fact, the book was so popular that it went through eight different published editions in England until 1592, a year that coincides with the first performance of *Taming of the Shrew*. Because of its widespread popularity, we can see that Vives' *Instruction* was an instance in which an author articulated the perceived proper roles of women.[55] Wayne explains, "His standards are not so different from those of other authors, but his purpose is more practical and more popular: …"[56] Wayne meant that while Vives may not have revolutionized conduct-literature in 1524, his book was more popular and widely read than similar conduct-books. Vives believed he protected the naturally "weaker" sex, women, from being corrupted by an immoral society.[57] As Wayne explained, Vives believed himself to be a great advocate for women, he just sought to protect them from a society that would degrade them.[58] I believe this to

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[54] Ibid, lxxxvii.

[55] Ibid, lxxxvii.

[56] Valerie Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence: Vives' Instruction of a Christian Woman*" Silent but for the Word Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, (Kent, Ohio, Kent State University Press: 1985) 23.

[57] Ibid, 20.

[58] Ibid, 28.

be true, when he discussed clothing and women's involvement in dress, it was to make the woman more moral. When a woman obeyed her husband, she was a better wife and, when she obeyed God's laws about dress, she was a better Christian. In this way, Vives sought to project women's clothing as a subordinate subject in a patriarchal society.

Vives explained that women were inferior to the classical and Christian holy figures and their patriarchs. He dictated the types of fabrics and colors to wear. Vives said, "Let her nat be clothed with velvet, but with wollen: nor with sylke, but with lynen, and that course."[59] When Vives wrote *Christian Woman*, he felt that as a man he knew how women should act. His authority stemmed from his gender and social position. The Tudor gender structure placed men above women and Vives' closeness to the court of Henry VIII gave him greater power. Clothing was no exception and was meant to remind women of their place in a changing English society.

For Vives, a woman's fashion choices reflected her consciousness. Vives explained that to dress for pleasure or status was corrupt. It was only meant for women who were unchristian and flaunted their stature. Vives said, "Goodly aparell and clothynge do not agree but for harlottes and comen women…"[60] Vives invoked scripture images and dictated that women should dress to present their reputation and good conscience. The author considered a woman who covered herself in wealthy clothes, make-up, or accessories was doing an injustice to God's image. Vives explains, "... nat

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[59] Ibid, 46

[60] Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, 40.

only maydes, but also widowes and wyves, should be warned, ye and all women in generall, that the worke of god ought nat to be defiled with yolowe, or blacke, or redde colours, layde on hit. For god said: Let us make men after our image and lykenes."[61] A woman who defiled their God given "lykness" was not considered a good "Christian" woman. He elaborated that women who covered themselves with fine products, like makeup, only wanted to be perceived as something they were not. Vives' beliefs about clothing invoked his belief about the body's imagery. By referring to God, Vives forced women to remain dutiful to their born identity.

God represents the ultimate authority for Vives. By invoking Him, Vives forced women to question the way clothing defined themselves. A woman's morality and godliness was meant to translate to their dress. Vives believed that ornate clothing distorted the women's self-image, he alluded to clothing as a "poynt of devillisshe pride."[62] To him, clothing warped women's self-perception. He said, "No beest is prouder than a woman wel apparelled."[63] As stated earlier, Vives believed one who dressed excessively deviated from God's image. While husbands represented the earthly figures of dominion, he knew that Christian women were just as likely to obey God. I believe that by using scripture and God's constant presence in his book, Vives created another male figure that Christian women had to live up to. When it came to cross-dressing he said, "A woman shal nat put on mannes apparell: for so to do is abhominable afore god.

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[61] Ibid, 40.

[62] Ibid, 43.

[63] Ibid, 43.

but I truste no woman wyll do hit, excepte she be past both honeste and shame." [64] While cross-dressing will be discussed more in depth in subsection two, it is important how each argument about make-up, accessories, and clothing used God as a formidable being to live up to. God reminded women of their subordination not only to their husbands, but to a holy figure that promised eternal moral life.

Vives mentioned that married women must listen to their husbands. He said, "Also arayment in lyke wyse as all other thyngs ought to be referred unto the husbands wyll, if he lyke symple arayment, let her be content to weare it."[65] A woman could only dress a certain way if her husband permitted her to do so. In doing this, Vives condemned any women who dressed in a way that was costlier or different than their husbands allowed.[66] What if a husband encouraged his wife to wear expensive clothes, even though this was against God's belief? Well, if the woman is a good Christian, she will do what is moral and listen to God; her husband just permits her to dress the way she wishes. It is a test of a woman's character. They should be good Christians in that God is the ultimate authority, but in his absence, the husband represents a form of power. Stephen Derek Kolsky explained Juan Luis Vives' *The Education of a Christian Woman,* which was written just before *The Instruction of a Christian Women*. By compiling other literary critics and historians, he created a view of the women presented in Vives' conduct-book. Kolsky believed that Vives' women were "enclosed in the private world" of their

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[64] Ibid, 46.

[65] Ibid, 125.

[66] Ibid, 125.

husbands.[67] Kolsky argues that Vives placed all women into the proper role. Kolsky explains,

> The powerful woman is not entirely expurgated from the text but she remains hidden deep in the shadows, emerging only occasionally, framed in a complex grid of classical and Christian exemplary female figures. When she does make an appearance she is hedged about with repressive limitations to her behaviour, and not even the queen is exempted from this.[68]

Vives' believed women who failed to comply with their husbands' demands, failed their roles in society.

Whether it be through husbands or holy scripture, Vives dictated to women how they should dress. He was able to talk about it merely because he was a man. Women responded only to conduct literature that was written by men, mainly because no conduct books at this period were written by women. Instead, women who read these works were forced to read male guidance on their lives, rather than reading other women's words. Kolsky explains that Vives' attempted to "totally envelop women within a single virtue that prevents their participation in social life." In my opinion, Vives failed to demonstrate and encompass all women realities in his literature. Ultimately, he was unsuccessful in preventing women from gaining power because aristocratic women at this time did have power; even at court.

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[67] Stephen Derek Kolsky, *Making Examples of Women: Juan Luis Vives'* The Education of a Christian Woman, Early Modern Culture Online, Vol. 3 No. 1. (2012) 17.

[68] Ibid, 15.

Many scholars believe that *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* influenced William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew,* which will be explored later in this chapter.[69] Vives' book was re-published until 1592, just about the same time Shakespeare wrote *Taming of the Shrew*. While the book changed over time, none of these differences had to do with clothing, rather it was largely about religious changes.[70] What does this say about time from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I? Very little had changed in the prospects of *clothing's* portrayal in conduct-literature, but there was definitely a shift in tone. Wayne explains,

> But Sir Thomas More's interest in Vives' book, its publication throughout the sixteenth century in England, and the likelihood that Shakespeare used it for Kate's last speech in *The Taming of the Shrew* all suggest that the views expressed by Vives strongly reflected and influenced some Tudor expectations for women.[71]

Vives' book remained a relevant ideal representation of women in Tudor England. Here we see just how culturally important Vives' work was because it persisted until the days of Elizabeth I.

To Vives, clothing was a form of controlling women. As stated before, Vives believed men were dominant while women remained moral figures who listened to their superiors. Yet, this was written under Henry VIII in 1523. Thus, how did literature, specifically non fiction, change? Jane Anger's *Her Protection for Women* was published some 50 years later and provides insight on the changing roles of women. For one, she addressed the ways that women had superior powers to men, such as their dignity. Anger

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[69] Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence: Vives' Instruction of a Christian Woman," 19.

[70] Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, xvi.

[71] Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence: Vives' Instruction of a Christian Woman," 19.

spoke of female clothing as an advantage that had to be protected. Perhaps one of the reasons there was a female superiority in non fiction, specifically one written by a woman, could be because of the rulership of Elizabeth I. How could a woman rule all of England, yet other females still be considered subordinate to men? This is just an observation as there is little known on Jane Anger and her defense, but Elizabeth I could have been a catalyst for changing female presentation in the late Tudor period.

Jane Anger used clothing as a protection for women's morality. Jane Anger's *Her Protection for Women* was written in London in 1589. Historians and literary critics know that Anger was most likely a pseudonym; however, it is generally agreed that Anger was a woman. In Linda Vecchi's words, "Anger's *Protection for Women* lays claim to being the first female-authored defense of women published in English."[72] The author attacked an unknown misogynist text and defended women's representation in the written work, however literary theorists do not know which work. *Protection for Women* provides its reader with an insight into the Elizabethan woman's mindset. At the time there were many pamphlets published in London for or against women.[73] Anger is often considered the first feminist of the Elizabethan period because she went to extreme extents to hold men responsible for the plight of women. Her vigorous defense of women may reflect one Elizabethan view of women.

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[72] Linda Vecchi, "Jane Anger Her Protection for Women," in *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550 - 1700,* ed Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Saur, (New York, Routledge, 2004): 57.

[73] Ibid, 57.

While Anger did not dwell long on the specifics of clothing, she used clothing terms to illustrate that women were superior to men. Anger's pamphlet used clothing more as a metaphor of protection, rather than serving as a literal armor for women. In this way, Anger explained that clothing symbolized the way women could protect themselves. Her pamphlet detailed how men took advantage of women and pushed them into their submissive role, even though female subordination was never in God's plans. She says, "If they may once encroach so far into our presence, as they may but see the lyning of our outermost garment, they straight think that Apollo honours them, in yeelding so good a supply to refresh their sore overburdened heads, through studying for maters to indite off."[74] Men believed themselves to be better and more equipped than women, but, in fact, they were the "lyning" of the women's garment. In other words, men are the outermost garment, it's the first item women take off, but at the same time it protects them from elements. No matter how men tried, they cannot suppress feminine power. Anger's entire argument depends on men being inferior to women. In this segment, clothing represents a shell that protected women from being disfigured by men. Men tried to be pure, but instead they merely skirted around women's perfection.

In a following passage, Anger explained that men tried to take women's clothing but if women acted properly they escaped men's corruption. She says, "They have bene so daintely fed with out good natures, that like jades (their stomaches are grown so quesie) they surfeit of our kindness. If we wil not suffer them to smell on our smockes,

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[74] Ibid, 59.

they will snatch out peticotes: but if our honest natures cannot away with that uncivil kinde of jesting then we are coy.[75]" In this quote, the smock and petticoat were two types of undergarments. When Anger mentions "smockes," I believe she intends that the smocks are meant to be pure, similar to a reputation. Anger is telling women to bend to men's rules, somewhat, or they will take the reputation women have worked so hard to retain. In many ways, the petticoat and the smock both were for protection. They kept women warm and were the articles of clothing closest to their bare bodies. While men may innocently take the clothing, women should use their clothing, the smock, to distract males from taking what is not properly theirs. In my opinion, clothing represents a woman's respectability, honor, and person. Even if this is just Anger's analogy, she used clothing for a reason. Clothing was obviously something that women understood, otherwise Anger would not have used it as a symbol.

Furthermore, the petticoat stood for a representation in society, petticoats protected women from ridicule. It created an illusion that women had smaller waists. If men snatched a woman's petticoat, she was no longer the chaste, idealized woman of the late Tudor period. Instead she was a vamp. That was why women had to distract men with their smocks, even though that too was an undergarment. In this passage, Anger explained clothing protects their honor. She advised women to remain coy and play men's games without allowing them the satisfaction of snatching women's purity. While

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[75] Ibid, 60.

dressing properly was a social protection, men easily infiltrated a woman's clothing when she dressed improperly.

Anger was radical. She was not the typical silent and observant women that conduct books preached about. She believed that men were inferior, and she advocated for the education and basic rights of women. She was not alone, some men, like Vives before her, and women, specifically noble women like Catherine of Aragon, agreed with her. Even though she publicly advocated for these rights and her feminist article was published, women did not gain public recognition of their power. Men's clothing was a luxury of their sex. Their clothing was not questioned, in public women were unable to dispute it.[76] Men debated women's clothing, but Anger explains that it was a security that women had to protect. While she may have meant to use clothing as an allegory, clothing kept women from showing "their rudeness."[77] What is most important is why Anger would use fashion for this parable. Clothing was something that could reach all types of women, even if they did not have same schooling as men. Clothing, to Anger, was a way to unite women against a front, it protected them from men. To Anger, clothing created a retrospective identity for women, one that safeguarded a woman's reputation and protection.

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[76] Ibid, 63.

[77] Ibid, 62.

Fiction Literature

Unlike non-fiction literature, female clothing in entertainment work is perceived differently, both in tone and subject. For one, these public texts were meant to reach a much broader audience and not be a harsh reality, but an imagined escape. There are many was fiction literature could influence society in ways nonfiction could not

Similar to non-fiction, fiction works conform to the idea that clothing is either a protection or form of male dictation, although they are not always as oppressive. While Vives explained the non-fiction representation of male supremacy, Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew,* if we read at the line level, follows a similar, but comical representation. Katherine is represented as a woman who must be controlled by the patriarchs in her life, and, through men, she can garner a proper role in society.

As explained earlier, what did change was not the representation of clothing norms, rather *how* they were presented in non-fiction versus entertainment. Vives feared female resistance and translated it through clothing. By Shakespeare's time, in an entertainment sphere, clothing was just a way for a female to be comically manipulated by men, this sentiment will be explored below. Women did not pose threats because female independence was comical. Shakespeare used clothing as a way to show female

power, either power was possible to have or it was controllable. While Vives and Shakespeare both treat female clothing with different attitudes, both reinforce still an example of male supremacy.

As discussed earlier, Anger's pamphlet was a literary work that used clothing as a form of protection. Two entertainment works have cross-dressing female protagonists who use their disguise to protect themselves from society. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *The Ballad of Robin Hood and Maid Marian* are two examples of protection. For Shakespeare, there are of course the comical threads, while *Robin Hood and Maid Marian* exemplifies the escapist appeal that pervaded ballads. Again, both works will be valued at line-level interpretation.

Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare represents an example of comical female agency that shows how men proclaimed supremacy over their wives or daughters. Many literary scholars argue the meaning of *Taming of the Shrew*, as it is one of the most controversial of Shakespeare's plays. The play was written during Elizabeth I's late reign, between the years of 1590 and 1593. It is about a power struggle between a female shrew, Katherine, and her misogynist husband, Petruchio. The play followed the story arc of Katherine, who began as an irritable shrew and concluded as the obedient, domestic housewife.

When Lucentio first sees Bianca he instantly falls in love with her; however, her father informs him that she cannot to be courted until her older sister, Katherine, is married. Katherine is a vicious irritable, shrew who embraces masculinity and defies the

men in her life. Lucentio hires an arrogant suitor, Petruchio, for Katherine. Petruchio, along with Katherine's father, forces Katherine to marry him without her consent. After their marriage, he viciously tames her. He starves her, prevents her from sleeping for days, and denies her commercial goods. The newlyweds return to Katherine's home to attend Lucentio and Bianca's wedding. Following the ceremony, the husbands make a bet on which wife is the most tame. The once spirited Katherine becomes the most domestic. Possibly the most infamous scene of all is Katherine's final speech, which explains the ways women should be loyal wives.

Taming of the Shrew focuses on the concerns of married life between a man and woman. The play takes a strong-willed, tempered woman and turns her into a domestic wife. It emphasizes the "shrews" who were women that undermined the authority of marriage and the men in their lives. Katherine is outspoken and hardly the reserved woman that was written about in conduct literature. Literary theorist Karen Newman explains, "Kate's linguistic protest is against the role in patriarchal culture to which women are assigned, that of wife and object of exchange in the circulation of male desire."[78] In other words, Newman argues that Katherine was a response to a society that believed in female subordination. Perhaps Katherine and this female rebellion was not a threat, because to Renaissance writers women needed men to find satisfaction and

[78] Karen Newman,"Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew," *A Norton Critical Edition: Taming of the Shrew* ed. Dympna Callaghan, W. W. Norton & Company: (1999), 251.

protection in their lives. In this play, a sole female would not survive well in the Elizabethan society because of gender and social hierarchies.

One of the many ways Katherine is constantly reprimanded was through her denial of clothing goods. Many times throughout the play Katherine is given clothing as a gift; however, soon after she receives these precious items, they are taken from her. This is one of the methods Petruchio uses to subdue his wife. In fact, Lena Cowen Orlin's essay "The Performance of Things in 'The Taming of the Shrew'" explains how goods, especially clothing, played a role in Katherine's domestication.[79] In the following passages, I will explain how, for the Elizabethan viewer, Katherine was not a sympathetic character, until she was corrected into her typical gender role thanks to her domestication and denial of apparel.

We first see Katherine as an unruly shrew who does not conform to her domestic role. Katherine's father, Baptista Minola, pushes Katherine to act more like an everyday, aristocratic woman. For example, he interferes when Katherine bullies her sister, Bianca. She goes as far as to bind her sister's arms and hit her. When Baptista interferes and saves Bianca, he tells Katherine, "Go ply thy needle; meddle not with her./For shame, thou hilding of a devilish spirit."[80] Rather than terrorizing her younger sibling, Katherine is told to sew, a typical activity of the Elizabethan women. Throughout the first half of the play, Baptista attempts to push Katherine into prescribed gender roles. Orlin explains,

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[79] Lena Cowen Orlin, "The Performance of Things in *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Yearbook of English Studies,* 23 (1993), 167-88.

[80] William Shakespeare,"Taming of the Shrew," In *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed Irving Ribner and George Lyman Kittredge, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971), II.i..26

"Similarly, when Baptista orders Katherina to 'go ply thy needle,' he refers to the most common of household objects to 'place' and contain her in the context of an occupation socially acceptable for women."[81] Women were meant to sew as a pastime and not meddle in others' affairs. Rather than being the dutiful, submissive daughter, Katherine attempts to attack Bianca again.[82] While this scene is often represented as comedic relief, it showed the Elizabethan viewer that Katherine has no sense of respect or compliance. To the viewers, Katherine represented everything women under patriarchy were not. Additionally, few Elizabethans would find Katherine's character endearing or heroic. People who were against the views of patriarchy and typical gender norms were often shunned by Elizabethan society.[83] Thus, it is possible few Elizabethan women would sympathize with Katherine's character, especially because she stood against everything a woman was believed to be. Katherine's physicality and masculine persona were perhaps most vital in the first two acts because they created Katherine's initial disconnect with an Elizabethan audience. She was so far from the standard gender norms, that she said she would "dance barefoot" at Bianca's wedding.[84] Here, Katherine made a joke of her own lack of respectability.

One of Baptista's primary concerns for Katherine is her unrealistic, masculine persona. Baptista would rather have two old maids than have his younger daughter marry

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[81] Orlin, "The Performance of Things in *The Taming of the Shrew*," 173.

[82] Shakespeare, *Taming of the Shrew,* II.i.

[83] Newman,"Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew," 251.

[84]Shakespeare, *Taming of the Shrew* II.i.33.

before Katherine. He does everything in his power to control Katherine's life. In the end, his desires become Katherine's destiny. Petruchio manipulates Baptista. Baptista gives Katherine and part of his fortune to his new son-in-law. Petruchio's marriage to Katherine shows, that no matter how hard Katherine attempts to be a masculine figure, she is always conquered by the various patriarchs in her life.

Katherine still attempts to disobey her husband, even though Elizabethan society had the belief that men were in charge of women. Petruchio, however, still domesticates her. As Petruchio and Katherine make their move from her home to his, Katherine falls from her saddle and becomes "bemoiled."[85] In other words, her dress is soiled and ruined. Rather than helping her, Petruchio leaves her in the mud to fend for herself. When they arrive at Petruchio's manor, Katherine remains in her soiled clothes and is deprived food. When Petruchio forces Katherine to leave without food, his servant Peter explains that Petruchio "kills her in her own humor."[86] Peter means that Petruchio's domestication tactics are just as unruly as Katherine's character. Petruchio calls his treatment to Katherine as "A way to kill a wife with kindness."[87] In Petruchio's mind, Katherine needs to be reminded of her place in the household. After Katherine is deprived of food, sleep, and new apparel, Petruchio taunts her with the prospects of having these goods. He says, "We will return unto thy father's house/And revel it as bravely as the best,/With silken coats and caps and golden rings,/With ruffs and cuffs and farthingales and things,/With

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[85] Ibid IV.i.

[86] Ibid IV.i.116.

[87] Ibid IV.i. 144.

scarves and fans and double change of brav'ry/With amber bracelets, beads, and all this knav'ry."[88] Here, Petruchio goes into detail about the way they will dress when they return to Baptista's house. Instead, it is actually a diversion to Katherine, whose first chance at a meal is eaten by Hortensio. Clothing is used to manipulate and distract Katherine. As she intently listens to Petruchio's definition of clothing, Katherine's meal is eaten by one of his servants. Most important, it is Petruchio who lists the fashion accessories Katherine will wear, dictating to her what she can do and what she can not.

Petruchio's dictation of Katherine's clothing was also represented when he had clothes made for her. After he promised Katherine all the clothing aforementioned, he denies her the possibility of goods.[89] When Petruchio sees the cap the Tailor makes for Katherine, he is repulsed by the "lewed and filthy" dress.[90] Petruchio, however, is the one who designed the clothing. Instead, Katherine believes the cap to be an accurate representation of what "Gentlewoman" wear.[91] Petruchio and Katherine converse,

> Katherine: I'll have no bigger. This doth fit the time
> And Gentlewoman wear such caps as these.
> Petruchio: When you are gentle, you shall have one too,
> And not Till then.[92]

In order for Katherine to be given the cap that is worn by the average gentlewoman, she must be "gentle." Not only is Petruchio denying Katherine goods that reflect her class,

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[88] Ibid IV.iii.54 - 61.

[89] Ibid.

[90] IbidIV.iii. 65 - 68.

[91] Ibid IV.iii. 66.

[92] Ibid, IV.iii. 70-74.

but he denies her knowledge on the subject of clothing. He even says that she will not receive beautiful or class driven gifts until she submits to his desire. After this scene, clothing is no longer a good that Katherine deserves for being a noblewoman, instead she must receive it on her husband's orders. Here, Petruchio dictates what Katherine knows about clothing; however, Katherine believes she knows more. She says, "Why, sir, I trust I may have leave to speak,/And speak I will. I am no child, no babe." Katherine attempts to gain some type of voice in her character, but she does not achieve any goods from Petruchio. While she claims to be no "child" she must fight to have her voice heard, but her husband does not listen to her. Petruchio ends the discussion by believing that Katherine agrees with him, even though she does not.

When Petruchio reveals Katherine's gown, a similar situation takes place. Once again, it is Petruchio who gave the tailor orders on what type of gown to make. Unfortunately, Petruchio is unhappy with the results. When the Tailor explains that he was told to keep the fashion current, Petruchio responds, "I did not bid you mar it to the time."[93] Petruchio means that he does not want the clothing to be a representation of London fads. When Katherine objects to returning the gown, Petruchio is more adamant about it. He pays the tailor in secret; explaining that Petruchio intended the gown to be made that way, but refuses to give Katherine the pleasure of keeping the gown.[94] Instead, he tells Katherine they will attend her father's house in simple clothes. If clothing was a

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[93] Ibid IV.iii.99.

[94] Ibid IV.iii.160.

reflection of how the individual preferred to be seen in society, then Katherine and Petruchio's simple clothing will show their simple living standards. Thus, Katherine really objects to being seen as something other than upper class. Furthering Orelin's notion, clothing represented the class of society you belong to. She explains, "Objects are necessary, that is, to the construction and perpetuation of status systems."[95] Instead of allowing Katherine to represent her wealth and stature, Petruchio forces his wife into the marred-clothes she already owned.

A primary reason women worked so hard in the house was to show what a good husband they had. Women worked for reputation. When a husband was deemed a good patriarch, a woman's home and self-reputation was considered successful. When Petruchio becomes head of the household, readers are forced to acknowledge that Petruchio's is the patriarch. Petruchio knows that he is in charge of the house, and so when he tells Katherine that he will be responsible for any wrong perception, he takes the blame. He explained, "If thou accoun'st it shame, lay it on me."[96] In this scene, Petruchio talks about how others will perceive Katherine's clothes. He knows that others may criticize Katherine's "poor" and "mean" dress, but he would rather have her submit to him than dress in proper standards. By refusing Katherine her new clothing, he forces her to bring shame upon their household; it shows others that Katherine is not a good

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[95] Ibid, IV.iii. 173.

[96] Ibid, IV.iii. 178

matriarch because of the household's reputation. Katherine's faults reflect badly on both of them, yet it is important to note that it is Petruchio who denies her these goods.

This scene may show a different understanding of patriarchy. It is possible that showing Petruchio as an uncaring patriarch highlights one of Katherine's positive traits. Katherine knows that appearances in society matters and wishes to be shown as the noblewoman she is. This is a positive character trait of Katherine's because she is aware of society. To the viewer, Katherine is denied one of her female powers, and may in fact show that Petruchio is not the positive patriarch. This may be Shakespeare's criticism of patriarchy as a whole. Perhaps women are more socially aware of certain aspects of proper decorum. Even though Katherine is an unruly shrew, she still knows her responsibilities as a noblewoman and wishes to be presented as one.

The most important part of the clothing scene is the fact that Katherine has no clothing responsibilities and is deprived of many "things." When she is first married, clothing is just one of the many objects or goods she cannot have.[97] Orelin explains that the things she is able to control reflect her knowledge. She explains, "Things are gender signifiers (and thus identifiers) through circles of association as well: The objects to which Katherina has linguistic recourse are domestic ones, reflecting the gender-determined sphere of her knowledge."[98] For example, Katherine's linguistic knowledge has to reflect the things she is educated on in the home. Clothing is one of the things that

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[97] Orlin, "The Performance of Things in *The Taming of the Shrew*," 172.

[98] Ibid, 173.

she is not permitted to talk about, or it is something that Petruchio appeared to know more about. Katherine tries to tell to Petruchio that she would like to have the cap or gown, but he takes it from her. This exhibits that Petruchio is in charge of the clothing, not Katherine.

By the end of the play, Katherine becomes a perfect woman in the Elizabethan gender structure. Katherine transforms from a masculine shrew into a domesticated wife. In the final scene, the husbands bet on which of their wives is most obedient. Petruchio is the victor as Katherine is the most compliant. The reformed shrew then gives a long-winded speech on masculine superiority. In one part she says, "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, thy head, thy sovereign."[99] Literary scholar Shirley Nelson Garner explains two possible ways of interpreting this final scene: either Kate has been redeemed to the perfect woman or she is in on the bet with Petruchio. Garner explains that in both ways Kate has lost her voice. If she has been reformed then she is under patriarchy's tight thumb, however, if Kate is in on the bet, then "in order to prosper she must speak patriarchal language."[100] While Katherine's patriarchal oration may seem ironic, she lost her independent voice and has to speak as her own identity. Newman came to the same conclusion that either way, Katherine lost her voice. She states, "The *Shrew* both demonstrated and helped produce the patriarchal social formation that characterized

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[99] Shakespeare, *Taming of the Shrew*, V.ii. 155-6.

[100] Garner, Shirley Nelson. "*The Taming of the Shrew:* Inside or Outside of the Joke." In *'Bad' Shakespeare: Revaluations of the Shakespeare Canon*. Ed. Maurice Charney. London: Associated UPs, 1988. 105-19

Elizabethan England, but representation gives us a perspective on that system that subverts its status as natural."[101] This may show, however, that Shakespeare intended to subvert patriarchal language to show women could be independent as well. I believe that no matter which is the correct way to read the play, Kate has been subdued; however we do not know how *Taming of the Shrew* was performed in Elizabethan England. It is entirely possible that Katherine's patriarchal language is a farce indicating that she is aware of prescribed gender norms. Her knowledge of these conventions may show that Katherine has more knowledge than her husband and could "play" patriarchy's game.

Katherine's compliance is perhaps most noticeable in her view of clothing. In order to proclaim her obedience, Katherine must step on her cap. Petruchio commands, "Katherine, that cap of yours becomes you not./Off with that bauble, throw it underfoot."[102] As Katherine complies, Bianca and the Widow object to her "foolish duty."[103] Katherine has not only brought awe to her husband's control, one that is esteemed by her father, but also challenged all the ladies around her. She becomes the model of the Elizabethan women.

What is clothing's role in the play? According to Orelin it fixes an identity and resists and creates control.[104] Before Katherine has been refused her commercial goods, she was an untamed shrew, afterwards she has "learned" (depending on your

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[101] Newman, "Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew," 253.

[102] Shakespeare, *Taming of the Shrew* V.ii.131

[103] Ibid, V.ii.134

[104] Orlin, "The Performance of Things in *The Taming of the Shrew*," 171

interpretation of the text) her role. Throughout *Taming of the Shrew* clothing represents this male domination. First, it is represented as a source of goods, one that can be granted only by male permission. When Katherine thinks her new cap and gown are beautiful, Petruchio takes them from her. He claims to believe they are unbecoming and he relishes in her agitation when she does not get what she wants. Katherine can only obtain the goods when Petruchio believes she deserves them. Clothing is to be worn with a husband's approval. We see it in her compliance to destroy them under her husband's orders. When Petruchio tells Katherine to destroy her beautiful cap, she does so instantly, even though other women object. The men appraise her compliant actions, and the other women object to it. In this sense, clothing has become something men controlled. In *Taming of the Shrew* women are controlled by the men in their life to represent an ideal woman.

After *Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night*, the story of a woman who turns to cross-dressing to provide herself with protection from a judgmental and patriarchal society. Similar to *Shrew*, *Twelfth Night* engages its characters through a comical turmoil of events. However, due to the play's duplicity and my inability to truly know how the play was preformed, I will use other work done by literary scholars and examine the play through a line-level reading. Furthermore, while *Shrew* was about male domination, *Twelfth Night* is about clothing as a form of protection.

From 1580 to the mid 1600s, there were an unusual number of cross-dressing plays, books, and ballads written. According to Jean E. Howard, in this time frame

"preachers and polemicists" protested against this clothing practice.[105] While it is impossible to say how many women cross-dressed in the late 16th century, there are court records that explain it did happen.[106] These court reports explained that cross-dressing was a punishable offense, and its perpetrators tended to be those of lower-income classes, including prostitutes. Howard elucidated that these women, "may have worn male clothing for protection in traveling about in the city."[107] This "protection," however, may be invalidated with research from aristocratic woman. Cross-dressing was not just limited to plebeian women, instead, several social classes of women did wear men's clothing during the English Renaissance. Thus, from this, I can draw conclusions that cross-dressing not only provided women with an escape from an English state that used clothes to dictate a person's social ranking, but it also enabled their actions in society. Howard explains, "Clearly, cross-dressing had enormous symbolic significance, and the state had an interest in controlling it."[108] The Elizabethan period was notorious for proclaiming sumptuary laws that assigned clothing colors and fabrics to only certain classes of people. In this way, cross-dressing undermined any laws that limited female power, even though cross-dressing was not apparent in the laws. If this clothing trend continued, men and women not only would be dressed similarly, but would have blurred social roles.

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[105] Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4, (1998) 418.

[106] Ibid, 418.

[107] Ibid, 421.

[108] Ibid 428.

Through court records from Bridewell and Aldermen's court, Howard uncovered women who turned to cross-dressing quite frequently. It is important, however, to note that there was, and remains, no exact way to know how many women actually violated these laws. More importantly, cross-dressing permitted women to enter public domains unquestioned. The court records were mainly from women of lower income classes, not because they were the only ones perpetrating them, but because they were more censured and noticeable. Perhaps aristocratic women were less likely to be prosecuted. Furthermore, if it were much more common for lower classes to be caught cross-dressing, then why were the Renaissance's cross-dressed female characters presented overwhelmingly as nobility. Perhaps, the upper class were to be idolized. Aristocratic women may have remained an effigy for the common woman. Furthermore, nobility may have used clothing as a way to implement their societal influence.

Unfortunately, Elizabethan England needed unequal gender roles to function. Howard explained that Renaissance England "needed the idea of two genders, one subordinate to the other, to provide a key element in its hierarchal view of the social order and to buttress its gendered division of labor."[109] In other words, the hierarchal rule of Tudor England depended on dominant males and subordinate females. However, cross-dressing did not publicize the innate differences between men and women. This explains why the Renaissance prominently showed cross-dressing on its stages: it may have been an exaggeration of an occurrence in daily life. Cross-dressing blurred the lines between

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[109] Ibid, 423.

men and women. In other words, Elizabethan anxieties, which included women who undermined the traditional gender system, influenced the Renaissance writers because women may have turned to cross-dressing. However, quite often, these female protagonists, while at times weak or voiceless, have power that is all their own.

The character who obviously encompassed the ideal Renaissance cross-dresser is Viola from William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. As the play progresses, Viola's femininity and desires are increasingly and comically noticeable, even though she parades in a masculine disguise. Viola loses freedom when she lands on the shores of Illyria and turns to her male disguise for protection and renewed independence. In the end, Viola's feminine personality traits, especially while dressed as a man, are more apparent: she is physically weak and unhappy with her situation. Viola's masquerade is originally only meant to protect herself from the harsh realities of society, but her safety is frequently violated and she only becomes secure when she returns to feminine clothing.

Viola only dresses as a man because she is left without any male protectors in society, something that was deemed necessary for women in Elizabethan England. Viola is miraculously saved from a shipwreck, while her brother is believed to be drowned. This left her without any male defenders. Viola, after hearing of Olivia's similar situation, wishes to work for her. She said, "Oh, that I served that lady,/And might not be delivered to the world."[110] Unfortunately, Olivia refuses to see any person, because she wants to mourn her brother's and father's deaths for seven years. Rather than working for Olivia,

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[110] William Shakespeare, "Twelfth Night," In *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed Irving Ribner and George Lyman Kittredge, (New York: John Wiley & Sons 1971) Act 1 Scene ii,

Viola uses the captain to conceal her identity, so she could hide her unprotected state from the judgmental and patriarchal society. She said, “Conceal me what I am, and be my aid/For such disguise as haply shall become/The form of my intent.”[111] Even though it is her decision, her transformation relied on the captain. In this passage we see how lost Viola is without any male protector. Viola does not *actually* desire to be a man, instead it becomes her only option in a world that proclaims female subordination. Howard explained, “Viola adopts male dress as a practical means of survival in an alien environment and, perhaps, as a magical means of keeping alive a brother believed drowned, and of delaying her own entry into the heterosexual arena until that brother returns.”[112] In other words, she does not reveal herself because she is not prepared for her responsibility as a woman. If Viola reveals her true identity, she would, most likely, be shunned from any man’s care and subsequently without a male protector. Viola’s fear of entering a society that depended on female subordination is not misplaced; she was raised to believe that she is not meant to be without a male superior, which is a reason she turned to male disguise.

While disguised as a male, Viola expresses that she has no strength. For instance, when Sir Tobey Belch forces Viola and Andrew to duel, Viola fears that she must reveal herself as a woman.[113] Neither Andrew nor Viola want to fight, but they are pushed into this conflict. Viola tries to use her words to explain that Sir Andrew has no reason to fight

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[111] Ibid, I.ii.50-2.

[112] Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," 431.

[113] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night,* III.iv.197.

her. She reasons, “You mistake, sir. I am sure no man hath any quarrel to me. My remembrance is very free and clear from any image of offense done to any man.”[114] Viola believes she does nothing to warrant Sir Andrew’s rage. When Belch argued there is nothing she can do, Viola tries to reason with both men one more time. She even turns to Olivia to save her, perhaps expressing a type of power women had that will be explored later. She says, “I will return again into the house and desire some conduct of the lady. I am no fighter.”[115] Shakespeare reminds the audience Viola cannot fight because she is a woman. Even though Viola is concealed as a male, she is not masculine. Her innate femininity outweighs her clothing. When she realizes she must fight, Viola reasons that she has to reveal herself. She says, “Pray God defend me! A little thing would make me tell them how much I lack of a man.”[116] Fortunately, Viola never has to reveal her true self. Instead she is saved by Antonio, the man who rescued her brother from the shipwreck. He believes Viola is her brother and intervenes on her behalf. I believe that Shakespeare may have intended to create Viola in a disguise that ultimately did not protect her. It was a form of comically reminding the Elizabethan audience that Viola is a woman. She dressed as a man for protection, but it instead takes a life of her own and creates a situation that lacks salvation. Other than her independence, which may also be invalidated, Viola has limited safety in her male disguise. She became dependent on Lady Olivia or another male to stop her from doing something arguably unfeminine.

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[114] Ibid, III.iv.202-4.

[115] Ibid, III.iv.216 - 17.

[116] Ibid, III.iv. 19

As a man, Viola never finds comfort in her mask, perhaps because irony depends on discomfort. However, I believe Viola caves to her femininity, not to a type of masculine power. She says, “Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness.”[117] There is not a scene where Viola rises to her masculine power, she even allows Olivia to dictate her actions. Viola willingly submits to her own feminine virtues and vexes; she is pure and weak, as she cannot fight. She is also a pawn used by both Orsino and Olivia. Orsino uses Viola to proclaim his love for Olivia, while Olivia, comically, longs for Viola. Viola falls in love with Orsino, but there is no way to act on her feelings while dressed as a man. Her disguise becomes a wicked reminder of limits. She cannot act on her feelings for Orsino because she disguised herself as a man, instead she longs for him from afar. For example, in the midst of a discussion with her master, Viola says, “She never told her love/But let concealment, like a worm I’the bud,/Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,/ And with green and yellow melancholy/She sat like patience on a monument,/Smiling at grief.”[118] While “Cesario” pretends he was talking of his sister’s unfortunate love story, Viola actually spoke about her own unrequited love for Orsino. It is as if Viola is imprisoned as a male. Howard also explains, “Despite her masculine attire and the confusion it causes in Illyria, Viola's is a properly feminine subjectivity; and this fact countervails the threat posed by her clothes and removes any possibility that she might permanently aspire to masculine privilege and prerogatives.”[119] Viola wants nothing as a

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[117] Ibid, II.ii.27

[118] Ibid, II.iv

[119] Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," 432.

man, only as a woman. She remains the feminine ideal of a woman who only wants feminine actions.

While Viola turns to dress for protection from a questionable society, she is instead imprisoned in her disguise. What better way to remind an audience of comically failed female agency than a woman who is thrust into a love triangle with unwanted feelings from a woman and feelings for a man who does not want her. She has to fight and is only saved by a man. In fact, Viola's story only concludes when she returns to proper female dress.

When her brother returns, Viola reveals that she is a woman.[120] Things for Viola and Orsino work out in their favor. Orsino asks if the love Viola proclaimed to him while disguised as Cesario is true and Viola swears it was. She says, "And all those sayings will I overswear;/And all those swearings keep as true in soul/As doth that orbed continent the fire/That severs day from night."[121] Viola proclaims her love for Orsino, but she is still dressed as a man, something Orsino will not tolerate. Orsino then says, "Let me see thee in thy woman's weeds."[122] Even though her identity as a female is revealed, Orsino cannot accept her love until she dresses properly. Orsino says,

> "He hath not told us of the captain yet.
> When that is known and golden time convents,
> A solemn combination shall be made
> Of our dear souls.-Meantime, sweet sister,
> We will not part from hence. Cesario, come,

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[120] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night,* V.i.

[121] Ibid, V.i. 262-65

[122] Ibid, V.i. 267

For you shall be, while you are a man.
But when in other habits you are seen,
Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen."[123]

In this passage we learn two things: they will be married and that Viola must dress properly to be considered a true woman. Orsino cannot accept Viola as a female until she is clothed as one. She will finally gain the protection that she sought for in the first place. Viola can marry Orsino and will gain protection from her husband. She will not be shunned from society or left destitute, as she originally thought.

Olivia is perhaps Viola's foil character. She goes through a similar situation as Viola, except she remains dressed as a woman. I believe, similar to Howard, that while Viola disrupts the gender structure in *Twelfth Night*, it is actually Olivia who remains the ultimate disturbance. Similar to Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew*, Olivia marks the opposite of the ideal hierarchal gender structure in Elizabethan England. She has no male protectors, is in charge of her own finances, and owns her land.[124] Olivia is humorously punished by unknowingly being sexually attracted to Viola. She does not conform to the Tudor society's ideal woman. Her headstrong nature prevents her from being idealized by a society and so she is punished throughout the play.[125]

Olivia, like Viola, is without any male supervisors in society, as her brother and father both recently died. Orsino wants Olivia, so he first sent one of his men, Valentine,

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[123] Ibid, V.i. 376 - 81

[124] Howard, "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," 432

[125] Ibid, 432.

to woo her. When Valentine returns, he gives Orsino bad news that Olivia's family passed on and she vowed to mourn them for seven years. Valentine says,

> So please my lord, I might not be admitted,
> But from her handmaid do return this answer:
> The element itself, till seven years' heat,
> Shall not behold her face at ample view,
> But like a cloisteress, she will veiled walk
> And water once a day her chamber round
> With eye-offending brine-All this to season
> A brother's dead love, which she would keep fresh
> And lasting in her sad remembrance.[126]

Like Viola, Olivia turns to clothing to protect herself from society. She refuses to accept any suitors and instead veils herself in complete black. Olivia dresses in black to mark her seven year mourning period. This attire distinguished Olivia as a mourner in a society that used clothing to identify the person. Olivia also uses clothing to protect herself from male suitors, specifically Orsino. This is perhaps the most important part about Olivia's dress. While she regularly utilizes accessories to transfer affection, Olivia's dress conveys her identity as a mourner, which protects her from advances and unwanted devotion.

If Olivia does disrupt the gender hierarchy of Elizabethan society, then that proves that she has power. Perhaps Olivia is the character who shows an outward display of female power that does not conform to the Elizabethan gender hierarchy. After all she owns land, proposes marriage, and does not have any male protectors until she mistakenly marries Sebastian. Furthermore, she is the character who is both outspoken and continuously seeks companionship with "Cesario." Olivia may be an instance in

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[126] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night,* I.ii.23 - 31

which Shakespeare created a strong-willed female character to show that women had power and could utilize it.

For the two feminine characters in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, clothing becomes a form of protection. For Viola, a male disguise allows her to act in society without a man present. She escapes the harsh realities of society to be protected from a judgmental culture. By cross-dressing, she at the time disrupts the Elizabethan gender structure, but she becomes a representative of the proper Elizabethan culture because she is always alarmingly aware of her femininity. In other words, Viola was accepted by Elizabethan audiences because she always knew of her feminine virtues and eventually rectified herself to proper clothing norms. Olivia uses clothing to protect herself from other people. She deliberately goes against the Elizabethan gender structure and is forced into a situation where she becomes re-subjected to gender. In the end, Olivia marries Viola's brother and thus, no matter how headstrong, becomes a married woman, but the audience does not know whether Olivia ever submits to him.[127] While Viola represents the Elizabethan gender structure by being molded back into an appropriate female standard, Olivia shows that women could have a strong sense of power.

Marian, from the broadside ballad *Robin Hood and Maid Marian*, is another perfect example of a character who uses clothes to provide protection. Broadside ballads were possibly the most common types of literature across England at this time. The ballads, like *Robin Hood and Maid Marian*, were meant to be enjoyed and helped pass

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[127] Ibid, V.i.

the day. They were easily remembered because of their song structure; however, women who read these texts knew they were overly dramatic representations of the everyday life. During the Elizabethan period, ballads flourished. While its date is not entirely known, the *Robin Hood and Maid Marian* ballad dates back to the late 16th century, which makes it an important contribution to the way that women's roles were perceived in literature. Historian Sara Mendelson explains that broadside ballads were often spoken aloud or listened to by women. Mendelson states that women passed their days by speaking ballads aloud to each other.[128] Unlike theater, ballads were read throughout England and explains how the arts responded to a culture that undermined proper female dressing standards in Tudor society.

Broadside ballads would often depict women as robbers or disguising themselves as men to join the navy.[129] Anne Laurence describes why ballads were so popular. She explicates, "Their appeal was that of the challenge to women's traditional roles."[130] Broadside Ballads tried to encourage women to challenge their roles, however this rarely happened, perhaps because ballads were only known as exciting escapist material for women. Women also rarely acted out for fear of being physically assaulted. Laurence elucidates, "The wife of Nicholas Unit was sent to the house of correction for scolding and fighting in the Bear Inn."[131] Women may have stayed in the proper social role for fear

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[128] Mendelson, *Women in Early Modern England,* 213.

[129] Anne Laurence, *Women in England, 1500-1760: A Social History,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 261.

[130] Ibid 261.

[131] Ibid, 257

of their reputation, however if they were dressed in masculine disguises, as was pervasive in this romanticized ballad, they could escape a judgmental society, similar to Viola.[132]

In many ways, Marian was the opposite of the idealized aristocratic women in Elizabethan England. She is sexually active. The ballad says, “With kisses sweet their red lips meet, for shee and the earl did agree; in every place they kindly imbrace, with love and sweet unity.”[133] Even though Mendelson explains that there are many existing court records of women being caught in bed with their future husbands, conduct books, like Vives’ *Instruction for a Christian Woman,* spoke against vulgar actions and praised chastity.[134] Furthermore, Marian disregards the Elizabethan authority and women’s sphere of influence. She flees into the forest dressed as a man. The ballad recites, “Perplexed and vexed, and troubled in mind, shee drest her self like a page and ranged the wood to find Robin Hood.”[135] As Marian wanders through the woods she stumbles upon Robin Hood who also “himself had disguised.”[136] Even if she is granted permission to escape to the forest, Marian crosses not only clothing boundaries, but also spacial boundaries, perhaps this is why Marian paraded as a man. She hoped to protect herself from spacial ridicule, as a man she can enter a space that women were dissuaded from entering. She is protected as a man in the forest, a predominately male escape. While

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[132] Ibid, 261

[133] Francis Child, "Robin Hood and Maid Marian," *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*: (New York, Dover Publications, 2003), 150, 17-20.

[134] Mendelson, *Women in Early Modern England,* 227.

[135] Child, "Robin Hood and Maid Marian,"29-30

[136] Child, "Robin Hood and Maid Marian," 37

dressed as a man she gains protection and is liberated from her feminine characteristics. Like Viola, Marian uses a disguise to protect herself from a society that did not permit women.

However, unlike Viola, Marian can and did fight men. After she found Robin in the forest they verbally sparred. This interaction is followed by a duel between the two, as Robin thought she was a man and Marian had no idea Robin was disguised. The ballad retells that it was "At least an hour or more" until Robin Hood stops the fight. Marian had driven him to a draw, however Robin is the one to express "hold thy hand, hold they hand."[137] This promotes the idea that women are strong and could fight while in disguise. In this ballad, Marian is the one who has power, not Robin Hood. It is through the ballad, that a reader can discover who Maid Marian is. She was not the chaste woman, stuck in Nottingham Castle. In fact, she disregards authority while dressing as a male page and heading to the forest. It may have been her love that drives her to the forest, but it is her boldness which defines her character, unlike other female protagonists of the Elizabethan period.

This ballad is still a romanticized work that has a certain escapist appeal, and as a genre appealed to a broader and wider readership. Unfortunately, Marian never rejoins her society and lives the rest of her life in the Nottingham forest with Robin. She is also branded an outlaw and must remove her aristocratic title. They are both outlaws and she is shunned from society, similar to the way Viola would have been if she had never

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[137] Child, "Robin Hood and Maid Marian," 37

revealed her disguise. The vital difference, however, is that Marian never regrets her masquerade. Marian may represent what Elizabethan women wanted. For women who worked through a trivial existence, they may have dreamt escaping into a dangerous forest as the heroine to their own story.

The ballad presents the idea that not all women, like Viola, are happy to return to their proper dressing roles and conform to society. For Marian, she is happy to be without a dictated role. Sure, no Elizabethan woman may have *wanted* to live in the forest, but Marian the character is comfortable living as an outlier. Perhaps the ballad shows that there were changing and idealized roles for a feminine hero. This role may present the idea that compared to Vives, women could, in a highly romanticized way, escape patriarchy. She did not need to be condemned to a life under her patriarch's thumb, as was idealized in Vives or promoted in *Taming of the Shrew*. Instead, Marian could be her husband's equal.

As this chapter has shown, when it came to Renaissance works there were a multitude of ways to represent female clothing. In a non-fiction sense it was strictly in need of regulation, while in Renaissance literary works it could be comical or romanticized. There was also a clear way that the view of clothing shifted over time. During Vives' time it was very religious and not controlled by women, however when Shakespeare wrote about Viola, he chose to disguise herself in a man's wardrobe.

The way that clothing was represented explains that there may have been altering views of fashion. Unsurprisingly, as women gained more social roles in Tudor England,

female clothing represented in Renaissance literary work changed. Anger is vexed and protested female subjection, Olivia, on the other hand, does not receive vehement protest against her various powerful roles. So as clothing representation changed throughout Renaissance writings, moving with cultural changes, women should have received some type of new recognition in society.

Chapter 3: Female Authorship

Now that I have analyzed the different types of literary works and legislation meant for public audiences**,** I have to wonder whether these works invoked a sense of reality that reflected what women actually did in this time period. Obviously, there is no way to definitely say women did or did not conform to the government or Renaissance authors' influence. Furthermore, to say that all women conformed to a certain identity is inaccurate. Some women did conform to sumptuary legislation and others may have been persuaded to live their lives in ways similar to Renaissance female protagonists. Variety is an aspect of any culture, but many of the writings depicting women's lives do not reflect the ideals idolized in sumptuary legislation or Renaissance literature.

I searched for women's writings or portraits that might explain how women did or did not conform to what was promoted by authors or government officials. Some may be an exception, like Elizabeth I, who was Queen and could present herself with little criticism due to her monarchy. Others, like Lady Honor Lisle or Margaret Spencer, were able to spend their wealth and trade with, or without, their husbands' consent. Finally, I used women's portraits to juxtapose the Elizabethan Homily and sumptuary legislation. The portraits show that while women dressed within their class structure, they did not dress as modestly as the *Homily* tried to influence them to. These women are extraordinary cases, and all are of upper-class means, but with what is available from the Tudor period, these works stand as the most accessible because there are few records

containing women writing in the late Tudor period that were meant to record their daily lives.

As I move through this chapter, please note my organization. I began with Lady Lisle because her letters were written first. In her passage I focus on the ways that she was quite independent when it came to purchasing or commissioning her clothing items. Furthermore, I touch on the ways that Lady Lisle bought excessive amounts of goods, even though Tudor government laws tried to enforce English subjects to buy fewer items. I argue that appropriately dressed women, as set by Anger or comically endorsed by Shakespeare, are different in the domestic sphere. Elizabeth I's Marriage Speech of 1566 elucidates her belief that woman can dress any way, even in minimal clothing, and still be accepted in society. I also show how Elizabeth I bought excessive amounts of clothing. Furthermore, because of her rulership, she gave a lot of her clothing to those around her. Following Elizabeth I, I explain how Margaret Spencer's account book showed she commissioned goods outside of England, refuting the *Homily*'s urge to stay away from ethnic apparel. Spencer also was in charge of her family's financing, explaining that she, rather than her husband, controlled finances. Finally, I explore two portraits that show the superfluous spending habits that may have been common amongst nobility in late Elizabethan England. These sources give a third dimension on how women actually may have used clothing in the late Tudor period.

Lady Honor Lisle's innumerable letters between her and her employees explain her role as a woman. The Lisle Letters, also referred to as Lisle Papers, were letters

received by Arthur Plantagenet, 1st Viscount Lisle, and his wife Honor Plantagenet, Viscountess Lisle. The letters contain material about all aspects of domestic life in early modern society including, but not limited to, clothing, food, and finances. The letters were collected from hired help, royal officials, family members, and friends. Thus, the letters explain what the Lisles did through the letters they received. Lady Lisle was a remarkable trader of commerce. She always exchanged goods between people for other goods. Her letters span from 1533 to 1540 and she lived just to the beginning of the Elizabethan period. Her letters, to male commissioners who bought her requested goods and other aristocratic women, show that she had an active part in commissioning clothing.

While we do not know if Lord Lisle told her what to buy, it was never mentioned in Lady Lisle's letters. If he did tell her what to purchase, the artisans never contacted him on what his wife had commissioned. In fact, Honor Lisle and his wife both commissioned different goods. If Honor Lisle did buy an article of clothing, the tailor or shopkeeper contacted him, and the same if it were Lady Honor Lisle. Furthermore, there was an equal amount of correspondence between clothing makers and the Lord and Lady Lisle. Thus, if Lord Lisle preferred to control his wife, he would have limited the purchases that gave her communications to the outside world. He depended on her to buy and give gifts.

Lady Honor's role in the Early Modern society was recently questioned. In her scholarly article, Barbara A. Hanawalt clarified Lady Honor Lisle's role in politics, religion, and the everyday life of the Tudor society. She explains,

> For the most part, Honor's power lay in the domestic realm of family, friends, household, and lawsuits related to family lands. It is difficult to demonstrate how far her influence extended into the public sphere. The confidence that Arthur placed in Honor led some contemporaries to feel that she took too active a part in the official business of Calais.[138]

Hanawalt explains the Lady Lisle may have had more power than the typical woman, but that has more to do with her class than her role as a woman. She was, however, very capable of managing household accounts, her estate, and the market.[139] Lady Lisle did participate in the home sphere but had control outside of it as well, this included her power to purchase clothing. In comparison with Lord Lisle, Lady Lisle had more correspondence with clothing-makers. Clothing was Lady Lisle's extraordinary sense of wealth, whether it be to other artisans or women of her own rank. Clothing gave Lady Lisle a way to trade with people outside her household.[140]

For instance, she contacted John Husee. Husee, on more than one occasion, would obtain domestic goods from other merchants and then send the goods Lady Lisle wanted. Husee, however, did not just buy goods for Lady Lisle, he did the same for Lord Lisle. At first, Husee seemed like he was a man to guide Lady Lisle, however, he merely was a

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[138] Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence," *Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* ed. M. Erler and M. Kowaleski, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988) 205 - 206.

[139] Ibid, 209.

[140] Ibid, 209.

personal *shopper* for the Lisles. He was given a list of goods to buy and told the Lisles when he found them. For example, Husee says, "I have searched for the black velvet gown but I can yet hear of none. If I can find any that is likely I will lay earnest on it."[141] Even though a man procured the goods, it was Lady Lisle who told Husee what to purchase. It was no different between Lord Lisle and Husee. Lisle would tell Husee to purchase stockings and Husee would find and send the goods to his lordship.[142] Husee wrote, "Pleaseth your Lordship to be ascertained that I have sent you by this bearer, Harry Drywry, first vj pair of hosen for your lordship."[143] Husee's respect was not limited to Lord Lisle as he often greeted Lady Lisle with the same treatment. This shows that he regarded their patronage above gender. There was no difference when it came to talking to Lady or Lord Lisle, especially considering Lady Lisle was a primary contractor for goods.

Leonard Smith also purchased goods for Lady Lisle. Similar to Husee, Smyth greeted Lady Lisle with respect and doted on her every request. On 22 November 1533, Leonard Smyth secured clothing that his ladyship requested. For example, she asked for a "lettice bonnet for Mrs. Frances."[144] Mrs. Frances was Lady Lisle's oldest daughter and wanted a Lettice bonnet, which happened to be a large trend in London at this time.

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[141] Muriel St Clare Byrne, "#109 John Husee to Lady Lisle 7 January 1534." *The Lisle Letters (Six Volume Set)* Vol 2, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1981); 20.

[142] Muriel St Clare Byrne, "#387 John Husee to Lord Lisle, 8 May 1535, *The Lisle Letters (Six Volume Set)* Vol 3, (University of Chicago Press: 1981).

[143] Ibid.

[144] Muriel St Clare Byrne, "#81 Leonard Smith to Lady Lisle 22 November 1533 *The Lisle Letters*. Byrne.." *The Lisle Letters (Six Volume Set)* Vol 2, (University of Chicago Press: 1981).

Lisle's request of Smyth was nothing out of the ordinary as she often asked for clothing that was trending. What was most impressive is the way that women perpetuated fads. If men were truly in power of clothing, securing or manipulating its market, women would not be able to create fashion trends. Lady Lisle also had more than one person to purchase goods. This demonstrates that different people worked for her, mainly because she was an aristocrat, however they were men. These men responded to Lady Lisle and did things she asked of them. This provided insight into an aristocratic woman's role in a commercial sphere. Others may argue that she only did this because her role was inherently limited so she used men to gain access to a commercial sphere, but I believe the opposite. I believe Lady Lisle's class kept her from the public sphere as she was an aristocrat and did not have to go buy at markets. Mingling with common women was above an aristocrat.

These men also came to her for finance problems, both for debt or a surplus of payment. For example, John Husee reached out to Lady Lisle when she had not paid him after an extended period of time. He said, "Wherefore I desire your ladyship to be good unto me that am a poor man, that I may receive the rest of my money. I have sent many bills unto your ladyship before this, but I think they never came at you..."[145] We see here that Lady Lisle was in charge of her own finances and it was her responsibility to pay the commissioners. What is important is the fact that Lady Lisle was responsible for paying those who worked for the estate. Husee would also reach out to Lord Lisle when he did

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[145] Byrne, "#106 Robert Tarbocke to Lady Lisle 9 June 1533." *The Lisle Letters (Six Volume Set)* Vol 2, (University of Chicago Press: 1981);

not pay. However, Husee, who also worked for Lord Lisle, would first reach out to Lady Lisle. This explains that he knew Lady Lisle was the one meant to pay him. Thus, Lady Lisle, like Spencer, did have control of finances even back in the 1530s.

Furthermore, Lady Lisle traded with women of her own rank. For example, Lady Jane sent a diamond gold ring to Lady Lisle, after Lisle had sent her a gift. There was no hint of animosity between Lady Ryngeley or Lady Lisle. Transcriber Muriel St. Claire Byrne suggests, "Lady Ryngeley in particular suggests an atmosphere of friendliness and pleasant intercourse on a personal, feminine level, in spite of the fact that her husband was one of Lisle's most difficult colleagues."[146] Additionally, Lady Ryngeley was just one of the many ladies of Calais to correspond with Lady Lisle. This illustrates that there was an abundance of feminine correspondence between the gentlewomen who lived in Calais, even if their husbands did not get along. The women used their relationships to gain goods, especially clothing. Their friendship shows that women made relationships of their own and used it to their advantages.

Take for example Lady Ryngeley and Lady Lisle's correspondence on May 18, 1535. She wrote,

> Right honourable and my singular good lady, After all due recommendations, I have me heartily recommended unto your good ladyship, evermore thanking you of your manifold kindness toward me at all times. Madam, please it you to be advertised that I received your bedes of coral, with a heart of gold, which was to me a great comfort, I knowing that you loved them so well, for you were wont to wear them about your arm. [147]

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[146] Byrne, *The Lisle Letters* Vol. 1, 94.

[147] Byrne "#390 Lady Ryngley to Lady Lisle May 18, 1535," *Lisle Letters* Vol 3.

In this short passage we see a complex, adoring relationship between the two gentlewomen. First, Ryngeley greets Lisle with adoration and awareness of the other woman's kindness. She knew how important the beads were to Lady Lisle, and Lady Lisle still gave them to her. Further into the passage Ryngeley brings up other ladies in their social circle, which shows that there was a group of women who were close to one another. As much as the gentlewomen call their goods "gifts," I believe that it was a network of trading certain commodities for other goods. Lady Lisle gave Ryngeley beads, while Ryngley gave her a diamond ring.[148] This explains that women used their own goods to trade and circulate wealth. There is no mention of the either husband in the correspondence, thus we do not know if the trading was encouraged; however, we do know that Lady Lisle was involved more in the politics of court than most other women.[149] Lisle's husband did not control much of her communication with other people.

Through Husee, Smyth, and Ryngeley we can see there was no pretext of gender trading fixed for Lady Lisle. If anything, she was more domineering to Husee and Smyth, even though they were men. These men were of a lower class than the gentlewoman and in fact worked for Lady Lisle. If this is the reason for Lady Lisle's assertive behavior, how was it that Elizabethan clothing laws justified male dominance? The sumptuary laws also regulated clothing by wealth and class. Women who were nobility were able to wear things that men of lower classes could not. This is the strongest dichotomy of the

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[148] Ibid.

[149] Byrne, *The Lisle Letters* Vol. 1, 94.

domestic sphere. When it came to clothing and household goods, women were in fact the drivers of society's commercial culture. Women, at least in the aristocratic class as I have presented through Lady Lisle, were responsible for obtaining goods for their household. This was an important responsibility for them, one that may have questioned men's roles in society.

Perhaps women like Lady Lisle used their clothing as a gateway. For example, Lady Lisle spoke openly about many things pertaining to managing her estate, but she frequently extended herself into society and bought clothing. She was present in politics and public spheres of influence. While she was under control of her husband, she exhibited that aristocratic women did not *need* to be protected. Instead, she showed that she had the power on her own to enter a public debate. She bought what was necessary without direction from her husband. Clothing for Lady Lisle was not protection or a way to present herself, instead it was a power and privilege to enter into society openly.

The question remains: Did Renaissance authors actually reiterate the ways women used clothing to protect themselves from men? It was true, many plebeian and aristocratic women used clothing as a ruse to escape defined norms; however, it was not in the way Renaissance writers intended it to be. There are many morals that rose from the literary works I presented. Authors, like Anger, tried to rationalize that dressing properly allowed women to be more pure and protected than men. Other writers, like Shakespeare, showed, that cross-dressed woman were rarely content in their disguise until they dressed properly.

Clothing was not a protective measure of the person, in fact, many women used clothing to show they already had power to present themselves in society. Dress was not just for protection, but also was a way to perpetuate a class and malleable identity. Aristocratic women did not need to use protection to escape from the suppressive patriarchal system. Instead, they used their voices. While Anger showed clothing as a protection, she herself used her voice and agency to proclaim independence from male subordination. There is little evidence in the nobility class that women used clothing as protection; perhaps conclusions can be drawn from there. Women used dress to present a shapeable identity, but there is no mention of women wearing clothing to protect themselves. If that were the case, then there may have be even more instances in aristocratic cross-dressing.

I believe that noble women already were protected. While dressing properly in the public sphere was presented as a protective substance, women used other forms to be safe, like their husbands or wealth. While cross-dressing in the ballads and plays may seem like the representation of protection, we can see that women were protected, not only by their husbands, but by their class stature. At times, aristocratic women were in government and controlled family funds. I would like to argue, that while it may be nice to agree that women used clothing as a protective measure, it was instead used as a form to assert themselves into power. This can be seen in Elizabeth I's "Marriage Speech of 1566", more famously dubbed as the "Petticoat Speech."

The "Marriage Speech of 1566" is perhaps the greatest example of Elizabeth I placing her unquestionable sovereignty into words. In 1566, Parliament urged the Queen for the second time to marry. Her Scottish cousin, Mary, just gave birth to her son James and Parliament feared the female sovereign would never marry or have children. Elizabeth I addressed parliament animatedly about her divine right. She felt they encroached her divine authority. Elizabeth I's response to the Parliamentary delegation showed her awareness that she was not only a woman, but a woman with power. Throughout the speech, Elizabeth I referred to herself as the Queen and head of England, but she also reminded Parliament that even without her title she had power as a woman, showing again that elite women had public power. Elizabeth I, while Queen, and perhaps an exception, only used clothing to present herself to the public in a certain way. It was never a protective measure.

Perhaps the most noteworthy statement in the speech was when Elizabeth I spoke of her femininity. She says, "I am your anointed Queen. I will never be by violence constrained to do anything. I thank God I am indeed endowed with such qualities that if I were turned out of the realm in my petticoat I were able to live in any place in Christiandom."[150] No matter how Elizabeth I presented herself, it was as a woman with power. Even if she were forced out of England dressed in indecent clothing, Elizabeth I was able to find refuge. She believed herself to be endowed by the "qualities" that gave her this power. In this speech, Elizabeth I used her position as Queen to represent her

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[150] Elizabeth I, *Response to Parliamentary Delegation on her Marriage, 1566,* Hanover University, online.

authority. Sometimes throughout her reign, Elizabeth I proclaimed her likeness to men; however in this instance we see how she embraced the strength of femininity.

In her scholarly article, "Female Monarchy: A Rhetorical Strategy of Early Modern Rule," Cristy Beemer explains how it was ordinary for women rulers in the late 16th century to use femininity as a ruse to exploit their power. She explains the petticoat speech as one of the instances where Elizabeth I used her femininity to display her masculine strength. There is no question of her ability to rule, and clothing provides one of the ways that Elizabeth I distinguishes herself as a woman and Queen. It provided her with an argument that, no matter what she wore, she did not need to be protected or dressed appropriately because she was resourceful enough to survive in a patriarchal society as a woman. She explains,

> Elizabeth uses her female body as a strategy to establish her authority. Here she does not apologize for her gender; she does not deny it. She is not an extraordinary queen; she is everywoman,' who could go anywhere and still be powerful. Elizabeth throws off the trappings of royalty, and what is underneath is not the prince, but the woman—powerful and ruling.[151]

Beemer explains that Elizabeth I's authority was established through her feminization. "Everywoman" could be accepted in this patriarchal society, even dressed as an almost naked woman. Elizabeth I used her "petticoat" as a form of her bareness, if she were stripped to nothing but her undergarments it would be the same as being dressed as a Queen, she was still powerful. Here, the clothing was not a form of protection; Elizabeth

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[151] Cristy Beemer, "The Female Monarchy: A Rhetorical Strategy of Early Modern Rule" in *Rhetoric Review,* Vol. 30, No. 3, (2011), 258.

I did not need her clothing to protect her from society. Even in limited clothing, she was strong enough to overcome a patriarchal or foreign society's obstacles.

Obviously, this speech was not meant to represent the situation Elizabeth I and other women found themselves in; however, the monarchs of England usually presented themselves in a way that was recognizable and accepted by their people. Thus, if Renaissance writers tried to persuade women that dressing in proper form allowed them an extent of protection, it didn't take into account the way women actually viewed clothing. While Elizabeth I distorted the images society accepted, perhaps the themes of her speech resonated with her audience. Beemer explains that the monarch was a representative of England. She explains, "In a similar rhetorical strategy, reigning women reflected back society's expectations for gender roles while they subverted them."[152] Was a woman dressed bare while retaining power a typical norm of the Elizabethan society? Most likely not; however, we can see that without intending it, Elizabeth I may have explained that women's clothing provided them with a way to assert themselves in society. No matter where Elizabeth I expelled herself to, she remained a vital representation of her society, even if she was dressed bare and improperly.

It is possible that Elizabeth I represented the notion of the everyday woman. Elizabeth I, herself, was able to escape prescribed gender norms because she was the Queen of England, but the way she visually and rhetorically presented herself was similar

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[152] Ibid 258.

to the image most Elizabethan and greater Tudor woman had to live up to; the virgin or the mother.[153]

In many ways, Elizabeth I's proclamation to Parliament broke down each argument presented by the writers of the Renaissance. She represented and perhaps mirrored the views of her aristocratic counterparts. Take for example women who crossed class dressing norms. It was quite often not protection, but instead it was a representative of the person in society so they could obtain a power that otherwise eluded them. This disguise allowed women to be in accepted in society, not protected from it.

Elizabeth I also had excessive amounts of clothes. Obviously, Elizabeth I was a special case: because she was not subjected to the laws in ways that other women were. However, Elizabeth I's excessive amount of goods found their way into her handmaidens' hands. Elizabeth had so many gowns that she would give them as gifts to her servants.[154] In *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* Jones and Stallybrass explain to have a surplus of gowns was quite common because servants often used clothing as payment.[155] They explain,

> Gifts of clothes by Elizabeth to the women attending on her included her own purple velvet gown, given to Mary Howard, her own French gown and kirtle, refashioned for Lady Anne Russell, six yellow satin gowns with green velvet and silver lace, a French gown of black velvet with laces of Venice silver, eleven

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[153] Ibid 258.

[154] Rosalind Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2000, 18.

[155] Ibid 18.

> identical gowns made of crimson velvet, blue taffeta, murrey satin and 42lb. 4oz of lace.[156]

Here we see the sheer number of gowns Elizabeth I received or commissioned. I do not pretend that the *Homily* was specifically addressed to Elizabeth I; however, I believe we can at least note the amount of clothing she owned, eleven of which were "identical." Additionally, Elizabeth I's gowns were French and Italian. Although these gowns were from Catholic countries, Elizabeth I still owned them. The *Homily* warned against lavish living conditions, but here Elizabeth I gave her clothes in large quantities to her ladies-in-waiting. While these clothes were given to aristocratic women, these girls were far below Elizabeth I's own rank. Clothing was interchangeable between people. She was the exception to the rule, but why did she pass so many laws if only to break them herself?

Perhaps Elizabeth I broke own her rules because she was a divine ruler and was able to break them. Elizabeth I's rules did not apply to herself. They did apply to the countless women who were directly subordinate to her, like her ladies-in-waiting. Clothing, perhaps, was a way for Elizabeth I to consolidate her power. If Elizabeth I granted power to other women, there would have been skeptical male critics like John Knox who may have viewed Elizabeth I's laws as subverting gender norms and corrupting English society. These skeptics may be why Elizabeth I concentrated on sumptuary laws. Her laws were a way to control her subjects and remain in power; if she gave power to those below her she may have been criticized for her lax gender regulations amongst a patriarchal and hierarchal society. Even though the Queen may

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[156] Ibid 18.

have been able to stratify gender norms, she was the Queen and leader of the English people; her words were law as she was a divine ruler and direct descendent of God.

Historians like Edith Snook questioned: if clothing legislation was a projection of the person then how did it keep women in a subordinate position? In other words, aristocratic women were given more liberties than those were below them, yet these laws still proclaimed male domination. Women throughout the 16th century could slide in and out of their prescribed identities as seen through Margaret Spencer and portraits of aristocratic women.

A bit after the Elizabethan period ended, Margaret Spencer kept a list of things her household spent her money on. Finances since about the 15th century were sometimes considered a woman's job. In her book, *Women, Beauty, and Power in Early Modern England*, Edith Snook explains how clothing and gender may have actually been perceived at the turn of the 17th century. Snook explains, "The references to clothes in Margaret Spencer's account book also denote a version of female inwardness that extends beyond chaste, gendered subjection to encompass economic and social status."[157] Here, we see a wealthy gentlewoman managing her family's finances; similar to Lady Honor Lisle's accountant responsibilities who came decades before her. While Snook explains that women handling finances may have changed with the ascension of James I, historians can see Lady Honor Lisle controlling finances in the 1530s.

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[157] Edith Snook,*Women, beauty and power in early modern England: a feminist literary history, (*Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 78.

Margaret Spencer's account book shows that she ordered a vast amount of clothing. Many of her gowns were fashion trends from elsewhere in Europe, especially French and Spanish decent.[158] Some of these goods she distinguished as French included her petticoat. Snook explains, "She acquires pieces that are identifiably foreign, both explicitly in their style and implicitly in their cloth."[159] While this account book took place at the turn of the 17th century, we can see that clothing consistently remained something a symbol of wealth. When James I ended sumptuary legislation, it was not because clothing became a controlled substance or that there were no anxieties surrounding dress anymore. In fact, this had more to do with James's wish to reinforce his divine leadership and prove his word was enough to control English subjects.[160] Snook asserts that the items Spencer purchased could have been produced in England, however, she wished to purchase her extravagant clothes from distant retailers.[161] Spencer's self-indulgent dress norms were not conceivably permissible by the *Homily* which was still read aloud in churches during the time Spencer kept this account book.

Tim Reinke-Williams points to aristocratic women's clothing as an example of sumptuary law's failures. For example, in 1562 Alessandra Magno observed that London women wore the "French style."[162] The French style was immensely popular in the 16th

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[158] Spencer Accounts: MS 62092, British Library.

[159] Edith Snook, *Women, beauty and power in early modern England,* 81.

[160] Ibid 90.
After the failure of his proclamations, James I did pass Sumptuary Legislation similar to Elizabeth I's in 1610.

[161] Ibid, 80.

[162] Reinke-Williams, "Women's clothes and female honour in early modern London," 71, 12.

century. Many women, mainly aristocratic, had clothing imported from foreign countries. Previously, I noted that Elizabeth I had French gowns and Italian fabrics. Reinke-Williams also explains how common women used aristocratic clothing, which was meant to only be sold to noble women. However, these rich textiles were easy to procure and plebeian women used high status clothing as a means to change their identity, class, or even prospects.[163]

Women did not paint their own pictures in the Elizabethan period, however, they did choose how they wanted to be presented. Art work was meant to be hung in the home and looked at. The subject's clothes in the artwork were meant to represent the person and their moral content. The *Homily* and sumptuary legislation proclaimed that a good moral character dressed modestly and in English fabrics. A majority of Elizabethan aristocratic portraits presented women in outlandish and popular, but not English, fabrics or styles. The two portraits introduced the different ways in which women ignored fashion sumptuary laws.

One might argue that the homily or sumptuary laws did not intend to restrict aristocratic figures, rather it was meant to prevent lower classes from crossing hierarchal bounds. However, a majority of the issues were based how wealthy the person was. To buy foreign and excessive amounts of clothing meant the person had to have been wealthy. No laborer would be able to own the numerous gowns talked about in the

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[163] Ibid, 12.

Homily. Thus, I believe that many of the passages for the *Homily* and sumptuary laws focused on aristocratic women, especially their flamboyant fashion trends.

John Bettes painted the portrait of the Lady Chandos, the Duchess of Chandos in 1579. The duchess is dressed within the proper clothing norms, however she wore trends and fabrics that were foreign styles. The woman wore laces, and a French style hood and sleeves. Obviously the "French Hood" was extremely popular in Tudor period. The foreign fashion was so popular that most portraits pictured a woman wearing the fashion accessory. Portraits were meant to show how the woman wanted to be presented in society, but here the woman is draped in foreign goods. She wore velvet, and while it impossible to know for sure whether Chandos' outfit had wool in it, it appears to be more ethnic with lace and extreme detail. Many of these details, including the lace, are frowned upon in the Elizabethan *Homily Against the Excess of Apparel*. Here, Chandos did not break any laws, however, she went against the widely known sermon's advice. Lady Chandos chose to be seen in foreign fabrics, because it most likely signified her wealth. The Lady could afford these fabrics and extravagant gowns. Her presentation to society meant more than the sumptuary norms that suppressed this type of superfluous clothing style. This is a direct violation to what was presented in the *Homily,* Chandos presented herself in foreign trends, even though the Elizabethan officials favored English products.[164]

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[164] John Bettes, *Lady Chandos,* 1579 found in Hathitrust.org.
Appendix 1: See Portrait below.

In 1595 Marcus Gheeraets II painted the "Portrait of an Unknown Lady." While historians can only speculate about the true identity of the woman presented, scholars and art critics gather that the woman was high status. She was dressed in what appears to be silk with elaborate pearl beading. Similar to Chandos, the unknown Lady appeared to not be dressed in English fabrics or style. Her extensive beading and silk gown shows that she, too, was not one to modestly refrain from detailed clothing.

One could argue that it would make sense for these portraits to present women in such elaborate dress; as these women wanted to be noticed for their wealth and stature. However, this also showed they knowingly disregarded law in favor of social recognition. Technically their dress was not against the law since they were likely from the aristocratic class, however they did disregard the *Homily Against the Excess of Apparel*, and other Elizabethan sumptuary laws that promoted English products above foreign trends. These women *wanted* to be recognized as wealthy.[165]

Elizabethan sumptuary laws restricted many people and signaled out female dress as an aspect of control. Elizabeth I made special conditions to include women in her laws. Her enactment of women was meant to be followed. The Elizabethan sermon similarly called against women who excessively dressed themselves, but women like Margaret Spencer obtained clothing from other countries. Furthermore, Elizabethan portraits show that women dressed ornately. Portraits were the unmistakeable explanation of how women wanted to look. They allowed women a way to present themselves as they wished

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[165] Marcus Gheeraets, "Portrait of an Unknown Lady," Hathitrust.org 1595.
Appendix 2: See Portrait Below

in this society. While women did not paint their own portraits, they were able to choose how they wanted to be presented.

All in all, the women I have examined did not conform to sumptuary legislation, the Elizabethan *Homily*, or some of the Renaissance works. They controlled clothing commerce. For them, clothing was a gateway into society, one that they controlled. The differences will be contrasted in the conclusion, but women did have power. Their clothing was arguably their own trends.

Furthermore, clothing was not a type of protection that Jane Anger promoted. For Elizabeth I clothing showed that she had power, but it was not proclaimed as a protection. Elizabeth I discussed the way that clothing identified her as a woman while retaining power that she divinely had. Lady Lisle, too, had power to buy goods as presented in the chapter before this. However, we can see that she was an early version of woman. She did not need clothing to protect herself. Instead, she could, like Elizabeth I, insert her influence in society.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I researched how clothing was represented in the public versus domestic sphere. The two spheres illustrated a new understanding of female clothing during the Tudor period. As expected, women were not entirely suppressed, even though this was a patriarchal society that appeared to institute female subordination. The relationship between the various types of writing is complex and at times ambiguous.

As stated throughout my paper, clothing was a woman's sphere; however, many Renaissance sources focused on how husbands chose their wives' clothing. Vives explained that a husband chose women's fashion, while Shakespeare told the story of a shrew who was domesticated because her husband refused to give her clothing. Both Katherine and the intended readers of Vives' book are controlled by their husbands wants. Of course they are given the choice to disobey but were meant to be moral Englishwomen. However, we know men did not always choose clothing norms because Lady Lisle was able to purchase her own clothing, separate from her husband. Lisle showed that women, if they had the wealth, were able to control their own clothing trends.

To some writers, clothing may have protected women from the outside world. Shakespeare told the story of Viola who cross-dresses to protect herself from a patriarchal and hierarchal Elizabethan society. While Viola is in control of her dress, her disguise becomes riddled with burdens. The protagonist eventually returns to correct female

clothing with the ultimate source of protection: a husband. Meanwhile, Jane Anger explained that clothing could protect a woman's reputation when properly worn. Both Shakespeare and Anger advised that clothing can lead to protection. On the other hand, in 1566, Elizabeth I explained that women could dress in bare clothing and still find safety in society. To her, being a woman was a strength. While Renaissance writers may have promoted clothing as protection from a judgmental society, other women, especially nobility, were already protected by their social rank.

Finally, clothing was a source of unchangeable identity, as explained by government legislation. In chapter 1, I explained that the Tudor government tried to create sumptuary legislation to perpetuate a permanent social identity based on clothing. Furthermore, the Elizabethan *Homily* expressed that women should dress modestly and in English fabrics. This identity was meant to be followed, however from Margaret Spencer and the women in the portraits, we know women often imported fabric choices and clothing trends from other countries. These laws were also impossible to enforce and were rarely followed. Thus, this identity that was meant to be unbendable, was rarely followed.

While these three divisions explain the ways clothing was presented, there were also outliers to the rule. For example, Marian was able to dress and act how she wished without severe repercussions. To female readers, Marian may have represented an idealized version of themselves; she certainly had an appeal that allowed women to escape into another romantic reality. Similarly, Olivia has female power, wealth, and her

own land; perhaps Olivia represents women who did have power in Elizabethan England; after all there was a Queen who refused to marry. I believe Elizabeth I's sole rulership psychologically impacted the Renaissance writers' perception of women. Additionally, when Elizabeth I included women in her sumptuary legislation it was a recognition of the ways that women could dress. Previously, women were not even recognized in the laws, perhaps marking the strict Tudor patriarchal society under Henry VIII. If women were recognized in laws, this may have shown the shift of dressing norms that provided women with regulated power. In all these ways, the Renaissance authors undermined the traditional patriarchal structure.

There are many ways this thesis could proceed further. For one, there are many manuscripts that exist at the British Library that would provide this work with a firmer grounding in women's writings. Additionally, I would continue to explore the ways that writing in Elizabethan England may have been dualistic, both conforming to patriarchy and promoting female advancement. If I had more resources at my disposal, I believe I could conjure a more complete picture of the different instances of how clothing was represented in the Elizabethan society.

I could not find another scholar that compiled Renaissance works in the way I have. No source used clothing as a way to illustrate the complex relationship between Renaissance writers, government legislators and aristocratic women. It appears that most scholars may have overlooked the way clothing cultivated a female strength in Elizabethan England. What is most important about this thesis is that I utilized a variety

of sources from the late Tudor England and tried to understand how culture, government, and the daily lives of people related to one another. In fact, this complex relationship adds a new understanding of the frequently studied Tudor period. Artists and government officials, in their search to either create or disband clothing norms, did not reflect the actual society aristocratic women participated in.

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