

Men's Costume and Masculinity on Screen in Period Dramas
From the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century.

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I am going to explore men's masculinity through costume on screen through different television period dramas. Within the project title I will be looking at three different areas: History on Screen, Costume Execution and Masculinity. I will draw on existing work by academics such as Hannah Greig and Jerome De Groot to add and extend what has previously been written on the subject. My contribution to the current discussion will be from interviews I have conducted with those normally left out from the conversation, actors, and costume designers, about how they use costumes to tell the story of characters on screen. I have also looked at men in a range of social status' not just the elite which is what I found normally to be done. Overall, I am hoping to analyse and evaluate the importance of costume to not only the viewer to understand the period they are currently watching, but also for the actor to be able to bring the character they are playing to life.

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I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction.

When doing my thesis preliminary research, it became clear that most current discussions of costume on screen happen around film rather than television shows and are mostly discussing the accuracy of womenswear on screen. The reason why I am looking at men's costumes is that I feel there is a gap in this research, there are many books written about fashion history but generally, they are filled with women's fashion¹ but for men there is very little to find. What I could find was all about real historic clothing but nothing about costume on screen that have used historic dress as influence for the productions. Within the project title I will be looking at three different areas: History on Screen, Costume Execution and Masculinity. Period dramas also tend to show different characteristics of their male leads through how they can be observed as a 'tortured' soul which can be reflected in how they dress, something that runs throughout the different dramas I will look at. I am hoping will be a continuous subject through my chapters. One thing I have learned from reading *Conflicting Masculinities*, edited by Katherine Byrne, James Leggott, and Julie Anne Taddeo when period drama's focus on a man as a main lead there is often cause for the television show to focus imagery on the female gaze. Meaning it can reflect female attitudes, either because of the creator's gender or because it is deliberately aimed towards a female audience. Stating 'Our collection is full of desirable men, often topless, frequently naked, offered up for the viewing pleasure of their audience. This is arguably the most crucial factor for success of any period drama today, given that the main audience will be female.'² When researching the television shows I'm looking at most of the lead characters are men and are often seen undressed or in 'sexy' situations where they might be generally more appealing to a female audience's gaze over a male audience's gaze. Costume plays a key role here. As the examples I will explore demonstrate, details such as leather are used to represent masculinity.

¹ Sharon Sadako Takeda and Kaye Durland Spilker, *Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700-1915* (New York: Prestel 2010). Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim, *The Dress Detective* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic 2015).

² Katherine Byrne, James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo, ed., *Conflicting Masculinities Men in Television Period Drama* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2020) 8.

While the role of men's costume in period drama remains underexplored, the role of dress has already been noted in studies of history on screen. As Hannah Greig states 'If anything puts 'period' into a period drama it is surely material culture. In film and television productions, costumes, sets and props make the past look suitably distant, whilst at the same time their visual cues help the audience establish precisely where in the past the drama is set.'³ The point made by Greig highlights not only the importance of material culture on screen but that of the role costumes play in helping the audience understand the historical world they're watching. What period drama does is make the characters on screen 'celebrities', they are usually played by men who are much more handsome than the real-life person and so draw in the audience. Greig's work has been massively influential to my research, especially when thinking about the role of a period drama in teaching history and the difference between the accuracy of a documentary and the artistic licence used in television drama. Adding to this I want to investigate how costume also helps the actors partaking in these genre shows understand their characters and how costume influences how they bring these characters to life.

In a similar way to Greig, Jerome De Groot also looks at how an audience interacts with history, in particular the audience and historical television and how drama series aren't made for historians but for entertainment, stating 'The classical serial in general obliges the audience to keep two separate concepts in tension – the idea of authenticity and that of fiction.'⁴ While Greig states, 'It is often presumed by filmmakers, audiences and critics alike, that the essence of historical authenticity lies primarily (if not exclusively) in material detail.'⁵ However as I discovered and evaluated through this thesis this isn't entirely the case, especially by the costume designers and the actors involved in the show. One of the reasons why I am looking at television series' is that they run over a longer period of time than a film and so there is more scope for costume to develop and change over time in a similar way to character development does. And while all the shows I am looking at belong to the genre of period drama and, despite claims to accuracy in some instances, are

³ Hannah Greig, "As Seen on the Screen: Material Culture, Historical Accuracy and the Costume Drama," in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (USA: Bloomsbury Academic) 303.

⁴ Jerome De Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London: Routledge 2016) 225.

⁵ Greig, "As seen on Screen" 303.

primarily for entertainment which impacts on the role and use of costume. De Groot also explores the role of actors re-enacting the past and making it a part of the human experience, explaining the reason why viewers are drawn to period dramas. Quoting Sarah Cardwell 'Although the audience recognises the stories as fictitious, it accepts the validity of the programme's representations of the past.'⁶ 'Adding to the role of accuracy and talking with *The Musketeers* costume designer Hayley Nebauer I also found that not only do period dramas not aim to be historically authentic but neither do the costumes, something that hadn't been talked about before.

While these two works explore history on screen, *Conflicting Masculinities* edited by Katherine Byrne, Julie Anne Taddeo and James Leggott examines the lives of men in period dramas, and the role of an actor in portraying often traumatised and troubled characters. This book has been an influential collection for my research especially exploring tropes across the different shows I'm looking at and considers how the audience responds to historical men on screen. This is something I have found in my own analysis, identifying similar themes and tropes across the shows in different centuries, as stated in the book's introduction 'Despite the diversity of material discussed, certain Key preoccupations emerge across the chapters.'⁷

The presentation of masculinity in period dramas can impact our understanding of the past, even if the show departs from the historical record. In the words of Alessandro Michele creative director of *Gucci* 'In a patriarchal society, masculine gender identity is often moulded by violently toxic stereotypes. Any possible reference to femininity is aggressively banned, as it is considered a threat against the complete affirmation of a masculine prototype.'⁸ I am looking at masculinity because some of the characters that I am looking at can have moments where their perceived masculinity is challenged or changed throughout the series, we can also see these changes through their costumes. Currently the Victoria and Albert Museum is showing an exhibition looking at masculinity through dress,

⁶ De Groot, *Consuming History* 225.

⁷ Katherine Byrne, James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo, ed., *Conflicting Masculinities Men in Television Period Drama* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2020) 4.

⁸ Rosalind McKeever & Claire Wilcox with Marta Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear* (London: V&A Publishing 2022) 8.

their opening states, 'Do clothes make the man? For centuries, masculine fashion has been a vital mechanism for imposing conformity or expressing individuality.'⁹ This exhibition also looks at some of the points that are covered in my chapters when it comes to looking at how colour is used to show how masculinity can change a viewer's perception, saying 'For centuries, Europeans wore pink clothing as a sign of wealth and power, rather than gender. As a shade of red, pink shared its connotations of vigour and was freely enjoyed by fashionable men.'¹⁰ This was something that I saw when looking at the television series 'Medici' through the lead character Lorenzo, who is seen wearing a pink shirt in one of the episodes. Masculinity played an important role in my analysis of the television show 'Versailles' especially when looking at the character Philippe, and therefore I wanted to explore if any of the other shows I was looking at showed differences in masculinity. As stated in the V&A Museum 'At the European courts, function sometimes mattered less than show. The opulence of masculine fashions coming from France caused outrage to many English men.'¹¹ This is similar to some of the thoughts of the actors that I interviewed throughout my thesis, especially when it came of the costume they wore and how style and look outweighed comfort for the actor.

Since I am looking at men on screen it was important for me to engage with work on masculinity, not just regarding history on screen but across the different periods I'm looking at. Derek G Neal's work on masculinity in late medieval England helped push the fact fashion history is usually concerned with female costume, and how we don't get to hear the opinions of men from the time. Saying 'We tend to think of costume as a primarily feminine concern...we cannot properly understand the meaning of bodily adornment through the words of those who do not participate in it.'¹² This is important to my own research because it is central to the representations and understandings of masculinity, especially when looking at men on screen.

⁹ *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear*, V&A South Kensington, London, 2022.

¹⁰ *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear*, V&A South Kensington, London, 2022.

¹¹ *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear*, V&A South Kensington, London, 2022.

¹² Derek G. Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press) 170.

Vern and Bonnie Bullough's work on cross dressing helped my early research for *Versailles* and Philippe's choice to dress in male and female clothing, both in real life and in the television show. Bullough finding, 'Even when he was dressed as a man, he appeared different from other men. One observer described Philippe at age fifty as always adorned like any woman.'¹³ This was certainly something that had been explored in *Versailles* and one that actor Alexander Vlahos was certainly aware of playing the character, even describing why he felt it was important to show this happening on screen.

A lot of the existing work on masculinity generally focuses on one particular period, Elizabeth Currie's work does just this, *Fashion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence* was important for my consideration of the television series *Medici*. Describing how Italy's elite lived and used fashion to assert their dominance and rule over Florence. Currie also links how fashion can be used to show masculinity for men at court by stating, 'Although it has been argued that the heightened focus on dress at this time reflected an underlying lack of real masculine power, fashion nevertheless constituted one of the most efficient tools available to carve out a role within court society.'¹⁴ We also see this in the series *The Borgias* and *Medici* with how much more opulent the leading characters dress compared to others in the show. Adding to this conversation on this topic my own work looks at how period drama costume can help project a character's masculinity either by the colours they wear, or how the costume can make an actor walk in a more powerful way such as the long coats of the *Peaky Blinders* or the used of leather in *The Musketeers*. While my research draws on and engages with historical works on masculinity, the masculinity represented through costume in period drama doesn't always conform to this, period dramas may actually conform more to modern understandings of masculinity, even though they might challenge them at times.

Since costume on screen is the focus of this thesis, it engages with work on costume history to understand the different periods and styles I am analysing. These may even be some of the same sources costume designers draw on when doing production research.

¹³ Vern L. and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press 1993) 105.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Currie, *Fashion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2017) 147.

While there isn't specific work that looks at men's costumes in period dramas there is research on what men wore in the past that I was able to use to understand costume. When looking at Saxon history Gale R. Owen-Crocker's research on *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* gave me the knowledge on men's fashion which I was able to expand on when looking at the costumes of *The Last Kingdom*. This was a great detailed account of dress from a time where the lack of surviving clothing influences how we look at lives in the distant past. In her introduction Owen-Crocker acknowledges this saying, 'Many books had been published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the history of costume, yet the dress of England in the Anglo-Saxon period lacked a full treatment.'¹⁵ As I found in my examination of this period on screen, this lack of evidence allows costume designers to have more freedom when making costumes for a production set in this era.

When thinking about men's fashion throughout different centuries Richard Thompson Ford looks at how dress codes set by the ruling class influenced what people wore, in particular the rules set for men. Going on to describe how those such as the Tudors knowing how important dress was to convey their status and power. Ford argues, 'Fashion is a way of communicating ideas, values, and aspirations through clothes. Through our attire, we announce who we are, what we care about and where we belong.'¹⁶ Something I certainly found across my chapters on different centuries, characters such as Philippe in *Versailles* dressed in the clothes he wanted, and Cesare in *The Borgias* preferring to wear anything other than his secular 'uniform.'

The issue generally with costume history is that a lot of the research been done is about the elite and the rich, not about what the everyday man would be wearing therefore costume designers must have issues when designing for lower class characters. Therefore, I have tried to look at men from a range of social backgrounds, from the royals of *The Tudors* to the soldiers of war in *Peaky Blinders*. It also means that costume designers are left to fill in the missing blanks of costume history and the audience are left to decide if they believe what they see as real or if it's an interpretation of that period. From the costume designer's

¹⁵ Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press 2010) 1.

¹⁶ Richard Thompson Ford, *Dress Codes: How the Laws of Fashion Made History* (New York: Simon and Schuster 2021) 11.

insights what appeared from several of the statements is that the designers generally do not make a costume to be authentic to the era they are representing. While they do historical research for inspiration, they tend to design something that fits the show's storyline and the image of the characters, unless there are characters that are based on real living people where the audience might expect to see certain looks. While emphasis is often placed on the 'authenticity' of costuming in period dramas, from my research I found this is often subordinate to other demands, for example character and even practicality. There also were the similarities that I found in the use of colour throughout all the shows in how they displayed familial alliances as well as the difference between the hero and villain characters. My findings about colour demonstrate the importance of costume as a visual language, not just one that signals detail about the period a show is set in but about characterisation.

My main source for these subjects will be coming from different period dramas that have been screened on TV, from *BBC's Versailles*, *The Tudors*, *The Musketeers* and *Peaky Blinders*, *Netflix's The Last Kingdom*, *Medici* and *Bridgerton*, *Showtime's The Borgias*, *ITV's Victoria*, *HBO's Game of Thrones*, and *Amazon Prime's The Spanish Princess*. Through the shows I will also be able to look at how masculinity is shown through what the characters are wearing and how the heroes and villains of the show are portrayed in relation to others that appear on screen with them. A key contribution of this project is that, while much of the literature on history on screen tend to focus on one era of time, with the most popular being the Georgians¹⁷, The Tudors¹⁸ and The Victorians¹⁹ I am going to look across different periods which have previously not been discussed before. Looking across periods enables me to identify both similarities and differences and look at the way in which masculinity in different periods has been represented. I have sought interviews with actors and costume designers which grant a different perspective. These interviews were conducted via email and video calls on zoom, each of which had their own challenges and merits. First there was the challenge of who to ask and then it was how they were going to answer my questions,

¹⁷ Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013).

¹⁸ William B. Robison, ed., *History, Fiction, and The Tudors: Sex Politics, Power, and Artistic License in the Showtime Television Series* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

¹⁹ Iris Kleinecke-Bates, *Victorians on Screen: The 19th century on British Television 1994-2005* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

while some were happy to do a zoom call most preferred to just answer via email. Even though these interviews played an integral part to my thesis research, it could be argued that reliability of what the people said isn't fully accurate. For one most of the television shows I am looking at happened a few years ago and so people's memories of their experiences may not be quite what happened, they are also critiquing their own work and biased opinions could influence what they say. While the actors were very open answering the questions I asked them, some certainly went more in depth with their answers than others. Alexander Vlahos gave me so much information about his role as Philippe in *Versailles* especially about his characters masculinity whereas actor Ian Beattie from *Game of Thrones* concentrated more on how the costume was hinderance to him. Considering the perspectives of actors and designers has enabled me to move beyond just analysing representation on screen and consider the differing ways in which costume contributes to understandings of a period.

My first chapter looks at the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For the fifteenth century I am focusing on the ruling Italian families the Medici's and the Borgias, and for the sixteenth century I am looking at the early Tudor years through the life of Henry VIII. In this chapter I will look at how costumes show the difference between the hero and villain characters to the audience and how masculinity between brother characters can define their storylines. The television programmes I will use for this chapter research will be the *Netflix* series *Medici*, the *Showtime* production *The Borgias*, the *Starz* series *The Spanish Princess* and the *BBC* production of *The Tudors*. I choose the two shows *The Medici* and *The Borgias* because they both show powerful Italian families and the similarities in how the costumes show familiar loyalty and differences in colours. The sixteenth century productions show Henry VIII at two different stages of his life but still how similar costume styles and colours represent Henry's mood for the audience to know how he is feeling without the character having to tell them.

For chapter two my focus is on seventeenth century France and the very different lives of the musketeers and the royal brothers King Louis XIV and Philippe Duke of Orleans. For this chapter, I will use the *BBC* productions *The Musketeers* and *Versailles* for representations of the seventeenth century on screen. The reason why I chose these two productions is

because they both show masculinity in different forms, *Versailles* showing a male character in a dress and *The Musketeers* in leather. I have also interviewed the costume designer from *The Musketeers* Hayley Nebauer and actor Alexander Vlahos from *Versailles* to find out their experiences of working on period dramas and how they create characters.

In chapter three I look at the *Netflix* series *Bridgerton*, the *ITV* series *Victoria* and the *BBC* series *Peaky Blinders* all series' that are set in England between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through *Victoria* I will focus on how male characters deal with masculinity when they aren't the lead characters on screen as well as how actor David Oakes feels he can use costume and his relationship with costume designer Rosalind Ebbutt to portray the role of Ernst. For *Bridgerton* and *Peaky Blinders* I will look at how they represent a new style of period drama by mixing the historical with the modern in design features like clothing and music to attract new audiences. These productions reflect different forms of masculinity, through the two centuries as well as showing the hierarchy between the male characters of each show.

For my final chapter I am going to look at how television shows that are set in the distant past and fantasy worlds use historical clothing for influence to dress their characters. Using costumes to distinguish between the different families of *HBO* series *Game of Thrones* and the battling sides of Danes and Saxons in *Netflix* series *The Last Kingdom*. Using interviews with actors from both productions I will use my findings to see how modern-day actors portray characters that had very different lifestyles to their own, especially through costumes that are very different to what they normally wear. Like in the other chapters before them both these productions represent different families on different sides, one been the hero of the story and one been the villain. They also both show different representations of nationality between different groups of people and how the audience can tell which character is allied with who.

The reason why I am looking at my research in chronological order is to see how the television shows made at different times treat history of the same era, it also will allow me to see if any similarities would be drawn out across the chapters. This order also allows the research to show there are changes in costume masculinity throughout the different

centuries and how the use of leather is used across the shows set in earlier centuries compared to the shows which could be considered more modern.

What this research ultimately contributes is a greater understanding of the relationship between costume and masculinity as depicted on screen, as well as a more nuanced picture of the priorities, decisions, and aims of costume design across different periods of time.

The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century on Screen.

Introduction.

It could be argued that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are the most popular to be shown on screen with many adaptations of each in film and television. However, there is much debate about what we can learn about these periods in time from these adaptations, and how accurate the perceptions of the people shown in them can be. Most of these productions do tend focus on England and the ruling families House of York and House of Lancaster and the Wars of The Roses, eventually leading to the ruling Tudors. This could be because they are known all over the world not just by scholars but also because they have such interesting infamous stories that can be made for great dramatic on-screen storylines. And while fifteenth century countries outside England are shown less on screen the ruling Italian families are just as infamous and dramatic for onscreen stories. However, I am looking at period dramas through a very western lens, with primarily British and North American audiences. Through films and television productions these stories are more widely spread and help not only audiences new to the history but also can help scholars that want to understand the eras in a visual way, as Sue Parrill and William B. Robison state 'Most historical films have a far wider audience than scholarly works on the same subject... Film encourages interest, stimulates critical thinking, and reinforces memory.'²⁰

There were many 'noble' families in fifteenth-century Italy, however in Italy two family names really stand out: The Medici of Florence and The Borgias of Rome. Both powerful and notorious they strived and succeeded in making sure their names and stories would last through the ages. Both families use their political influence to help them succeed in life and to get it they often use pay-outs and bribes to gain allies for their cause, the Medici family wanting to rule Florence and the Borgias to get Alexander the Papal throne. In this chapter I will look at the 2019-2020 *Netflix* series *Medici: The Magnificent* and the 2011-2013 *Showtime* series *The Borgias*. As well as using the work by Carole Collier Frick and Elizabeth Currie alongside article interviews with costume designers Alessandro Lai from *Medici* and

²⁰ Sue Parrill and William B. Robison, *The Tudors on Film and Television* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company Inc, 2012), 1.

Gabriella Pescucci from *The Borgias* this chapter will explore how costume and masculinity can portray the lives of Italian Renaissance men on screen.

The sixteenth century is something that has been adapted for on screen many times over history, especially when it comes to the family name Tudor. As journalist Mariana Fernandez has argued, 'Everybody loves a good period drama. And even more so when it's inspired by true events! No other dynasty has resulted in so many television shows, movies, and documentaries quite like the Tudor dynasty.'²¹ This is something that William B. Robison also states, 'The Tudors have excited the interest of filmmakers and movie-goers since the development of movie-making technology in the 1890's, and they have exercised a similar appeal on the small screen.'²² The life of Henry VIII and his wives, in particular Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn has been told in many different films such as *Henry VIII* from 1911 and *The other Boleyn Girl* in 2008. Television adaptations include *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* in 1970 and *Wolf Hall* in 2015, alongside documentaries by historians Lucy Worsley and David Starkey. It seems in every decade there has been a version of Henry VIII on screen or stage for audiences to enjoy. Even now there are new ways in which the Royal Tudor lives can be explored like the 2017 debut of *Six* that turns Henry's wives into modern day pop stars telling their side of the story.

In this chapter however I have chosen to look at the 2019-2020 *Starz* show *The Spanish Princess* as well as the 2007-2010 *BBC* production *The Tudors*, both show Henry starting his rule of England as a young man rather than the image of the fat old man that is associated with him from Holbein portraits, it's even said at the start of *The Tudors* credits "You think you know a story but you only know how it ends, to get to the heart of the story you have to go back to the beginning."²³ As said by William B. Robison and Sue Parrill 'We recognize that the Tudors' continuing popularity as a subject for filmmakers guarantees that there will be more films to come.'²⁴ Using works by Maria Hayward, Thomas Betteridge and William B, Robison I will investigate how Tudor men are presented on screen and how different

²¹ Mariana Fernandes, "The Tudors: 10 Hidden Details About the Costumes You Didn't Notice," *Screenrant*, August 29th, 2019, accessed September 2nd, 2021, <https://screenrant.com/tudors-costumes-details-hidden/>

²² Parrill and Robison, *The Tudors on Film and Television*, Introduction.

²³ Quote by actor Jonathan Rhys Meyers at the beginning of each episode of *The Tudors*.

²⁴ Parrill and Robison, *The Tudors on Film and Television*, 1.

costume designers show their masculinity through their clothing at different stages of Henry's life. I chose these shows as they all represent a notorious ruling family in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and they all seem to show masculinity in the same way even though they represent different centuries. They are also all based on real historical figures and so it will be interesting to see how costume designers deal with having to recreate looks that are so recognisable especially for an era where clothing still exists and can be seen in museums.

The Costumes of the Heroes and Villains of *Medici*.

Colour seems to have played a big role in the *Medici* television series to distinguish the different families and allegiances on screen, it also helps the audience distinguish between characters and which family they come from or are allies to. Nick Vivarelli talked to costume designer Alessandro Lai about his work on the show, 'Costume designer Alessandro Lai seized the "Medici" opportunity to work with Tuscan clothing manufacturers and fashion houses, and not just showbiz costume companies. Soft leather came from designer bag maker Bottega Veneta, while Fendi furnished the same type of mink fur trims as those of the times.'²⁵ This shows that even though it is a period drama Lai felt it was important to use visual aspects that a twenty-first century viewer would recognise as well as still using an elite form of clothing that would show the sumptuous wealth the characters had, as well staying true to the Florentine manufactures that would have been used in the Medici era.

The Lead character Lorenzo de' Medici's costume is made up from a lot of bright blues, reds, this reflects the Medici family coat of arms colours of five red and one blue balls. These colours also reflect the money that the Medici family have as Frick describes, 'In the fifteenth century, the highest quality dyestuff for crimson red was chermisi, it was also the most expensive, used in Florence for silk velvets and the best-quality woollen fabrics. The only colour that could rival the cost of red chermisi was alessandrino.'²⁶ We even sometimes see Lorenzo wearing some purple when he starts to take power as head of his family, this

²⁵ Nick Vivarelli, "Will Netflix's English-Language 'Medici:Masters of Florence' Rescue Italy's TV Biz?," *Variety*, January 5th, 2018, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <https://variety.com/2018/artisans/production/netflix-medici-tv-series-1202651265/>

²⁶ Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press 2002), 101-103.

colour is most associated with royalty which in Florence the Medici's thought themselves to be. At the beginning of series two his clothes are made from cloth but when there are special occasions such as his wedding or matters of state the costume is made from finer silks. As his character develops and the family becomes richer, he starts wearing more elaborate flocked silks and velvets especially in series three when he is an older gentleman. His wealth throughout the series is shown in his costume using silver buttons as well as the amount of them instead of the usual jewellery that later century men tended to wear.



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Unlike the wealthy Lorenzo another character artist and friend to Lorenzo, Sandro Botticelli is dressed less finely, however his costume still does have more detail than the poorer class of people in the series. His costume colour tends to be of oranges and reds which make him a stark contrast to the Medici leading characters. However, his costume does fasten with brass buttons and does contain hints of wealth such as fur lined jerkin, possibly to show that

²⁷ Alex Fletcher, "Sarah Parish and Daniel Sharman on dynasty dramas, lockdown and the final series of Netflix's epic Medici: The Magnificent," *bt*, May 4th, 2020, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <https://www.bt.com/tv/drama/medici-the-magnificent-daniel-sharman-sarah-parish-cast-interview>

while he is not part of a 'noble' family he is close friends with Lorenzo who often helps him get work therefore may also gift him with funds to rise his station to those around him. We see similar in Lorenzo's other companions; they are also often dressed in finer clothing to the lower classes of Florence, as well as their costumes being in the same blue colours to the Medici men possibly reflecting their allegiance to the family. Discussing the difference in dress between the higher and lower classes of Florence Elizabeth Currie says, 'During his lifetime Cosimo de' Medici (Lorenzo's grandfather who series one focuses on) issued a series of sumptuary laws which restricted what certain people could wear, an attempt to install a sense of order and hierarchy.'²⁸ This shows that even though Florence didn't specifically have a 'royal' family there were families that had more importance than others such as the Medici's.

Alongside the Medici family in series two the other major family we get to see are the Pazzi's, they are similar in station to the Medici's having set up a successful bank in the city of Florence. The difference with them is that the Pazzi family do come from noble blood and therefore really should be dressed much more elaborately than the Medici's, however since they are not the leading characters their costumes are less vibrant and eye catching to the audience. The distinction in their costume on screen is that they are dressed in darker reds and greens, the costume fabric also is different in the sense that more of it is made from leather rather than the softer cloth and silk looks the Medici's favour. The looks of the different family costumes can also help the viewer understand who the heroes and villains of the show are. The brighter colours of the Medici in comparison to the dark Pazzi clothing colours reflects the fact that the Pazzi's are the main antagonists and villains to the leading hero family of the Medici's. The clothes of these characters are not the only visual differences between the two families, Lorenzo despite always being in danger of plots and threats against his life doesn't carry a sword preferring the diplomatic way of avoiding conflict. In comparison the two main Pazzi men Jacopo and Francesco are often seen carrying weapons, gravitating to more violent ways to get the power and status they want, and are the ones who cause the threats to the Medici in the first showing they are the more

²⁸ Amber Butchart, "The Art of Power Dressing in Renaissance Florence", *frieze*, June 4th, 2019, accessed September 2nd, 2021, <https://www.frieze.com/article/art-power-dressing-renaissance-florence>

aggressive characters. The way they look after their looks slightly differs between the hero Medici family to the villain Pazzi family, where Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano in series two are clean shaven and have short hair Jacopo and Francesco have longer often untidy hair. The one difference is that we see Francesco slightly change in the middle part of series two when he becomes closer to Lorenzo, he starts wearing clothes in lighter colours such as paler reds and slightly brighter greens reflecting happier times with the leading hero characters. Similarly in series three Lorenzo's costume changes to darker colours especially in darker blues and purples when he is grieving the loss of his brother Giuliano and his characteristics start changing to want to find and kill all his past enemies. These costume changes give the viewer an understanding of character development particularly the inner darkness they are facing, they display that even though the lead characters are seen as the heroes can become villains of their own story.



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Character Masculinity in *Medici*.

Lorenzo de' Medici does not conform to the typical masculine character of the Renaissance era, particularly those discussed by Currie as 'action, efficiency, personal strength and

²⁹ Samuel Spencer, "Medici The Magnificent on Netflix: What was the Pazzi conspiracy?", *express*, January 28th, 2019, accessed September 2nd, 2021, <https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/1079198/Medici-the-magnificent-Netflix-season-2-what-was-pazzi-conspiracy-plot-real-history-died>

order.³⁰ While the Pazzi family prefer conflict and wars Lorenzo would rather use his political skills to resolve issues. He is a great patron of the arts and commissions many works from the up-and-coming artists as well as reading books in different languages which tells the audience that he is well educated but focuses his learnings in other ways. We do see in flashbacks of series three that Lorenzo as a child was taught how to joust and we see this skill when he beats Francesco de'Pazzi in series two of the television show. He is also a skilled swordsman and fighter which he proves in the final episode of series two when him and his brother are attacked in the Pazzi Conspiracy which he survives and hunts down and duels with Jacopo killing him. Lorenzo's clothes could be seen as a reflection to his masculinity as he is dressed in soft fabrics as well as seen sometimes wearing pink. Typically, this is associated with females but in the fifteenth century it was considered a colour for male born children as it was a stronger colour than blue tones. As said by Niccolo Machiavelli in 1526, 'Two yards of pink cloth can make a gentleman.'³¹ In contrast his brother Giuliano can be seen as the more masculine of the two as he like to show his skills in jousting tournaments as well as often getting into physical fights with the Pazzi family members.

³⁰ Elizabeth Currie, *Fashion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2017), 8.

³¹ McKeever & Wilcox with Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 82.



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As Currie says when looking at masculinity in Renaissance Florence, ‘Soldiers were increasingly viewed as fashionable, sexualised figures, feared for their corrupting influence upon the male populace at large.’³³ And while the *Medici* men are certainly not soldiers, it is surprising Lorenzo as the leading male character chooses not to partake in wars and battle unnecessarily. Although because the actor playing him can be considered to have an appealing look, this may not matter to the viewer it’s more about how the costume fits the body and shows the muscles of the character not how he proves his male dominance.

The Costumes of the Heroes and Villains of The Borgias.

The difference between *Medici* and *The Borgias* is that while the costumes of *Medici* show the difference between the different families *The Borgias* use costume to show the

³² Jim Halterman, “Medici: The Magnificent’ EP Talks Casting Lead Daniel Sharman & the Season 2 Time Jump, “*tvinsider*,” January 25th, 2019, accessed September 2nd, 2021

<https://www.tvinsider.com/746462/medici-the-magnificent-daniel-sharman-time-jump-netflix/>

³³ Currie, *Fashion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence*, 52.

difference in characters of the same family. Like the Medici family wearing their family colour 'Medici Blue' the Borgias family similarly choose to have one colour that becomes synonymous with their name: 'Borgias red.' Talking about her costume design for the male characters on the show Gabriella Pescucci has described them as 'Quite sexy. Key pieces include velvety tights with a co-piece — commonly known as a braghe during the Middle Ages — as well as tight leather boots and short corsets that are worn as jackets. The corsets shaped the men in a very sexy way.'³⁴ This is something that could be argued as part of a designer thinking about the audience in particular the female audience's gaze on a male character that is described in *Conflicting Masculinities*.

The main male lead of the series Cesare Borgias spends most of his time in series one and two of the show in ecclesiastical costume therefore wears first the purple robes of an archbishop then red robes after being made cardinal by his father when he becomes Pope. When not in his vestment 'uniform' Cesare often wears doublets in greens, blacks and dark purples which show his family's wealth and status. Even when wearing his vestments, they are more decorated than any of the other bishop and cardinal robes with gold trims made from silk and printed with pattern, again showing his family's position and wealth. His doublets are often heavily detailed with gold threading and piping as well as sometimes having a similar look to gambeson armour, possibly reflecting his want to be in armour not religious robes. Like the Medici men Cesare's character often shows his family's wealth in subtle ways, he wears jewelled rings and livery chains but they're not overly flashy he chooses to use his influence and mind speak for him rather than his clothes. His costumes often compliment other characters he is on screen with, in particular the female characters like his mother and sister, this shows the characters family unity through costumes. In the third series however, Cesare seems to really stick to wearing all black with small hints of red in his clothing, he has effectively given into sin and the darkness; he's killed his brother and is being seduced by his sister, so his clothing starts reflecting these darker characteristics with more hints of leather and armour style details.

³⁴ Karyn Monget, "Costume Designers Behind 'The Borgias,' 'Game of Thrones,' and 'Boardwalk Empire,'" *wwd*, July 30th, 2012, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <https://wwd.com/business-news/media/costume-designers-behind-the-borgias-game-of-thrones-and-boardwalk-empire-6121950/>



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In contrast to Cesare, his brother Juan dresses excessively in reds and golds that are his family's colours, he is the favoured son by his father Alexander and is more in the spotlight compared to Cesare being the one to lead the papal army. His costumes are entirely made from sumptuous velvets that are heavily embroidered with lots of detail, this shows his love for glamour and luxury; he is quite comfortable showing his family's wealth and power through dress. Like Cesare Juan's costumes compliment other family characters but is heavily influenced by his father's dress, he relates more since he is the favourite son, and the red shows his loyalty to his father's cardinal and Pope vestments. Even the hero characters of the show which technically would be the Borgias family can often be seen as villains themselves, Juan not only undermines Cesare since he is only a cardinal and not an army leader but once he is injured in war starts to torment his younger siblings Lucrezia and Gioffre. His clothing also turns from the luxurious velvets made of bright colours to drab and

³⁵ u/alumnieb, Cesare Borgias costume, *reddit.com*, September 2020, accessed September 2nd, 2021, https://www.reddit.com/r/LadyBoners/comments/h9r5oj/francois_arnaud_the_borgias/

dreary looking costumes almost similar to someone of low birth. Its him falling out of favour with his family and how his high lifestyle is becoming undone and matted like his hair whereas his family around him are clean and still well put together flourishing in their new power and influence.



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One character that is vastly different to the two brothers in *The Borgias* is Micheletto, Cesare's spy, and assassin. He comes from nothing and is a mercenary for hire when he meets Cesare, when he first appears in series one, he is wearing very cheap, dirty clothing however once he serves the Borgias his clothing starts to change. His costume which seems to be leather as a basic protective armour is in dark earthy browns and blacks that help him blend into the shadows which he needs to use to effectively do his job. Again, just like the Borgias brothers Micheletto's costumes compliment the characters he is associated with, when Cesare starts to really trust him, he starts adding hints of red into his doublets and cloaks which show his allegiance to the Borgias family. As discussed in series three we see that Cesare donning more black clothing as he descends into darkness, Micheletto's clothing

³⁶ Gabri3la, Juan and Cesare Borgias costume showing the difference in their character styles, , *fanpop.com*, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <https://www.fanpop.com/clubs/cesare-borgia/images/30961002/title/cesare-juan-photo>

is very similar in style since this is where his character has always been, and it equals how their characteristics have been moulded by the influence of being murderers.



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For costume designer Gabriella Pescucci to get the right look for the characters she turned to museums and online archives to help with research on how different classes of people dressed, saying, “A lot of painters’ work from that period are in museums and online. Little by little, we made photocopies to get the women’s faces, hairstyles, clothing, also the clergy and the soldiers. There are also a lot of paintings of crowds, people working in the streets... If you are looking in the right way, you are always surprised by something you find, something you didn’t think would be in that period.’³⁸ This is something that Frick also explores in her work looking at dress in renaissance Florence stating that history of costume has been central to her own work. Saying that ‘This field of inquiry has been built to a large extent on a necessarily uncertain visual foundation, using Renaissance paintings and fashion books as transparent texts. The difficulty is the inability to lay hands on any real Renaissance clothes.’³⁹ Because there is a lack of surviving clothing from the fifteenth century it allows costume designers like Gabriella Pescucci more artistic freedom when it comes to making something for the series. As we will see in future chapters, as period dramas move closer to the present the abundance of sources impacts on the costume designer's work.

³⁷ Cesare and Micheletto wearing very similar costumes, “Dressing The Borgias: The Men,” *armchairanglophile.com*, accessed September 2nd, 2021, <http://www.armchairanglophile.com/dressing-the-borgias-the-men/>

³⁸ The Deadline Team, “EMMYS: Gabriella Pescucci of ‘The Borgias,” *deadline*, August 19th, 2011, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <https://deadline.com/2011/08/emmys-gabriella-pescucci-of-the-borgias-157312/>

³⁹ Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence*, 6.

While *The Borgias* have many characters that are enemies and villains to the leading family, the main antagonists are anyone who opposes the power the Borgias or anyone who wishes any ill will on the women in the family particularly Lucrezia. When she is introduced to her future husband Giovanni Sforza, he is wearing soft fabrics like velvet in Borgias red, possibly to make the viewer think that he is trying to fit in with her family and make her feel safe and secure by wearing a colour she would recognise as her family's own. However, once they are away from her family his true horrific characteristics start to show, he beats and rapes her because his character believes it is his husbandly right. His clothing also turns darker and more sinister looking going to dark brown leather that also reflects his love for hunting allowing him to blend into his surroundings which helps give him a more villainous look in the show.

Character Masculinity in *The Borgias*.

In *The Borgias* Cesare is portrayed in a much more masculine way than Lorenzo in *Medici* even though he has a less traditional masculine position as Cardinal his love for war and conflict make him a stronger male character in a period drama role. While Cesare's cardinal robe may resemble a dress and therefore not a masculine silhouette, he is still able to brandish a sword and defend his brother Juan on the streets of Rome. He proves his masculinity throughout series three once he has taken charge of the papal army and successfully defends Rome from many enemies unlike his brother before him, not a bad skill from a ex cardinal. Probably the standout male character that goes against the typical Italian renaissance masculine image is Micheletto. As previously discussed, he is a character that sticks to the shadows as an assassin and spy however come series three the viewer sees him fall in love with a man, Pascal. This is a surprising choice in the production since Micheletto's character is a vastly stark contrast to what could be associated with homosexual men, with this new relationship not only does Micheletto's character become softer so does his clothing. From the hard looking leather 'armour' of the first two series the third often has Micheletto out of his outer doublets and instead in his under shirts, this 'undressing' helps represent his vulnerability to his male lover in a way the viewer hasn't seen on the show before.

What *Medici* and *The Borgias* has shown me is the way in which costume designers use colour to distinguish hero and villain characters on screen and why it is an important part to help audiences understand characterisation. Both also display the difference between brother characters in a similar way, one is often considered more masculine because of his interests, and the other must eventually deal with his inner darkness after the death of his sibling which is shown through costume changes for the character.

Sixteenth Century Costume and Masculinity in *The Spanish Princess* and *The Tudors*.

As we move into the depiction of the sixteenth century on screen, it is the Tudors who dominate. The beginning of *The Spanish Princess* is set in the year 1501 and so we meet Henry still as a Prince and not as the next in line to the throne. He is dressed in rather plain, simple clothing as a Prince often in just black trousers and white shirts with little decoration or regalia. However, once he becomes sole heir to the throne after the death of his elder brother Arthur, he tends to wear more elaborate clothing fit for someone of his station. We see him in more velvet fabrics and full costumes including doublets which are trimmed in golds and have studding or more decoration on them. In the second series which is set in 1511 two years after his coronation Henry is seen in more red and gold colours as well as more tan coloured leather instead of his old black colour choice. This could reflect not only his higher station, but it also helps him stand out at Court as well as on screen compared to the other characters. Another costume characteristic in *The Spanish Princess* that Henry has is that when him and Catherine of Aragon (the actual lead of the show) are happy, in love and agree with each other their costumes also reflect this, Henry then tends to wear brighter colours of red and green when in Court. This could be a nod to Catherine's Spanish upbringing and her favour to wear these colours in the series or just like in the *Medici* and *The Borgias* television productions its showing loyalty to each other's families and unions.

As mentioned above the Spanish characters are usually seen wearing clothing in vibrant reds, saffron yellows, golds, and teal greens in light fabrics that are highly decorative, this is possibly a reflection of the affluent country as well as the African 'Moor' influence. This is a very different look to the other country that is highlighted in the series; Scotland, we don't really get a good look at the Scottish court until series two of *The Spanish Princess*. There are a few different colours of clothing between the Scottish characters as the Court is made

up from different clans that are trying to be united under the rule of James IV. In a similar way to the rival families in *Medici* the Pazzi and Medici wearing different colours to show their family loyalty, the *Spanish Princess* shows the rival families of Stewart and Douglas. The Douglas family are seen wearing the family tartan of green and blue check, whereas the Stewarts wear a check of red and green tartan plaid, under this they wear heavy velvets in blacks and greys that don't really distinguish the different clans for the viewer. While James IV himself is a Stewart he doesn't wear the family tartan, instead he sticks to velvets with little detail and leather also in blacks. This could be either a reflection of the cold and dreary weather that Scotland has or it's a way of the series trying to show a 'united' Scottish Kingdom.



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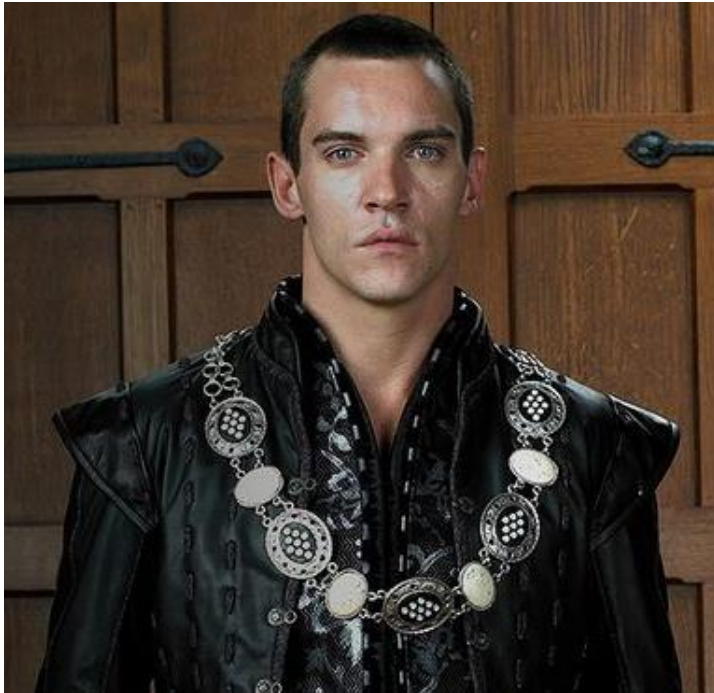
⁴⁰ Maureen Lee Lenker, "Spanish Princess recap: Catherine and Henry walk in fields of gold – and other historical observations," *ew*, November 15th 2020, accessed September 2nd, 2021
<https://ew.com/tv/recaps/spanish-princess-season-2-episode-6/>



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The Tudors television series starts around 1530, Henry VIII has been King for 21 years and although it is set 29 years after *The Spanish Princess*, Henry is still shown as a young man despite his true age being 39. The costume of *The Tudors* Henry VIII differs from that of *The Spanish Princess* in that since he is an established King Henry tends to wear more vibrant reds, blues, and purples the colour most associated with royalty. The fabrics are generally heavily embroidered and embossed velvets, and his trousers tend to be leather, while in private he seems to favour a simpler style in black. If he is doing court duties, he wears more colour especially red when meeting other royals from other countries; in series one he wears a 'English' red to discuss a treaty with the blue wearing French. In the same way as Henry in *The Spanish Princess* Henry of *The Tudors* wears different colours that reflect his mood, if he's in distress or is sad he favours a darker colour than in times of happiness such as when he falls in love with a new wife or he is expecting an heir. In the final two series costume colour is also used to show that Henry is aging, actor Jonathan Rhys Meyers didn't want to wear a fat suit in the role of Henry and so the costume helps with the process. Instead of the reds, golds, and blues, he is shown in olive greens, silvers, and greys. He has had a mostly successful reign but isn't in great health so is possibly trying to find peace and doesn't need to be the centre of attention in the same way as a young ruler might.

⁴¹ The tartan costumes of the Scottish families Stewart and Douglas, *tumbral*, accessed September 2nd, 2021, <https://www.tumbral.com/tag/markrowleyedit>



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In *The Tudors* we see Charles Brandon go from a normal humble living to a Duke and member of the privy council, and with this life elevation his clothing also changes to suit his station at court. In the first series he wears brown leather doublets over blue shirts, however he is also shown wearing highly decorated doublets in silver and blues when on business with Henry. As he starts to gain more titles his clothing starts to get more elaborate and we see him starting to wear more velvets and silks, however when he is not in favour with the King, he chooses to wear more simple relaxed clothing consisting of black leather trousers and white linen shirts. This could be used as a way to tell the audience that he is no longer receiving money from the King or that because of his simple background that he is just more comfortable in that style of dress. In the same way the series didn't age Jonathan playing Henry VIII, they also didn't age Henry Cavill who played Charles, instead his clothing once again shows the change in years of the character. In the fourth and final series like Henry, Charles tends to wear less vibrant coloured clothing, while still elaborate in decoration they are more of burgundy reds and browns in colour, again showing that he isn't trying to attract attention to himself. Maria Hayward describes the older man Charles

⁴² Fernandes, "The Tudors: 10 Hidden Details About The Costumes You Didn't Notice,"

Brandon costume as, 'He quite often does wear the fur-lined, fur-guarded gown that was associated with the mature man in the 1530s and 1540s.'⁴³



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Just like the costume designer Gabriella Pescucci of *The Borgias* both Pam Downe costume designer of the second series of *The Spanish Princess* and Joan Bergin costume designer of *The Tudors* relied on historical research when coming up with how the characters would dress. While also thinking about how much they could change so that they were not having to produce something that was historically accurate which could become expensive or uncomfortable for the actors wearing them. With Downe saying 'For inspiration I used many references, starting with paintings, drawings, and woodcuts from the period. I also read a lot

⁴³ Maria Hayward, "Fashionable Fiction: The Significance of costumes in *The Tudors*," in *History, Fiction, and The Tudors: Sex Politics, Power, and Artistic License in the Showtime Television Series*, ed. William B. Robison (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), 301.

⁴⁴ Charles Brandon's costume showing his aged appearance, *fanshare*, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <http://german.fansshare.com/gallery/photos/11661581/the-tudors-season-henry-cavill-the-tudors/?displaying>

of texts that were written about the English court at the time.’⁴⁵ While Bergin says, ‘I’m a great believer in research, especially the social history. So as Henry ransacked more and more churches and monasteries, I imagined him spending more on his own wardrobe. So, his clothes became more and more opulent.’⁴⁶ However as previously stated neither of the designers stuck to historical accuracy when designing something Tudor for the screen productions, just like *The Medici* and in particular *The Borgias* leather was used a lot more for the costumes than there probably would have been at the time. This is most likely due to the production highlighting the ‘sexiness’ of the actors on screen rather than wanting characters to stay true to the real historical figure.

As previously discussed, the Jonathan Rhys Meyers who played Henry VIII in *The Tudors* chose not to wear a fat suit and so the costumes for Henry become more favourable to the modern audiences’ eyes. Even Bergin has emphasised this point saying, ‘I wanted to be historically accurate, but with a twist, I also wanted people to think, how foxy, how sexy – because it was.’⁴⁷ This is also something that is discussed by Hayward in her work exploring the costumes of the series saying, ‘The costumes of *The Tudors* were never intended to be an authentic depiction of what was worn at Henry VIII’s court. Rather Bergin aimed to create costumes that conveyed a sense of the court while appealing to modern audiences.’⁴⁸ This statement seems to not only show how a period drama could be appealing to the viewer through costume but can also tell us what a costume designer must do as part of their job in helping an actor find the character through clothing and fabrics that they are more familiar with. Unlike the lack of surviving clothing from the fifteenth century there are a few surviving garments belonging to royals from the sixteenth century. There are also many more paintings depicting Tudor royals that are well known around the world which viewers may expect to see on screen.

⁴⁵ Ludovica Mucci, “In conversation with costume designer Pam Downe,” *latestmagazine*, October 31st, 2020, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <https://www.latestmagazine.net/post/in-conversation-with-costume-designer-pam-downe/>

⁴⁶ Hilary Alexander, “Henry VIII: Dressed to Kill,” *fashion.telegraph*, March 31st, 2011, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG8416732/Henry-VIII-dressed-to-kill.html>

⁴⁷ Alexander, “Henry VIII: Dressed to Kill”

⁴⁸ Hayward, *Fashionable Fiction: The Significance of costumes in The Tudors*, 303.

One surprising thing that links *The Medici*, *The Borgias*, *The Spanish Princess*, and *The Tudors* is the reuse of the same costumes throughout the shows, some even repeating for different characters in the same series. However, this is generally seen for the female rather than the male characters, especially when it comes to accessories probably due to them being less obvious on screen. It is interesting to see how the costumes are changed from production to production as well as the different classes that share them, it's also interesting to see how the costumes can be used in productions that are based in different countries that are not just decades apart but also centuries. What we can also learn for the reuse of these costumes is that even though something might be made for a specific production, costumes are then shared among other productions of a similar nature and yet the original designer doesn't get the recognition each time. *The Spanish Princess* is the series that has reused costumes the most, this is most likely due to the show made long after the other series and so viewers have had time to forget that they have seen them on screen before.



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In the first series of *The Spanish Princess* the focus is not on Henry VIII's marriage but the marriage of his elder brother Arthur to Catherine of Aragon, since he is the heir to the

⁴⁹ The same costume for two different characters in *The Borgias* and *The Spanish Princess*, *recycledmoviecostumes*, accessed September 2nd, 2021,

<http://www.recycledmoviecostumes.com/tudorelizabethan124.html>

⁵⁰ The same costume for two different characters in *The Borgias* and *The Spanish Princess*, *recycledmoviecostumes*, accessed September 2nd, 2021,

<http://www.recycledmoviecostumes.com/tudorelizabethan184.html>

throne. His character is very shy, quiet, and not very worldly, not what is typically traits that make good Kings unlike his brother Henry who is arrogant and very forward with his affections. And as Catherine discovers the person who she has been writing her affections to is the wrong brother, she finds Arthur not as appealing as Henry and that he lacks understanding of her wishes. Once Arthur finds out that Henry has been writing to his intended, he says that she is Henry's and that she has been spoiled by them 'making love' through their letters. This must go against Arthur's masculinity as it shows that he is not suited for marriage and possibly not fit for rule, we also see that on Arthur and Catherine's wedding night he is not willing to consummate the marriage. However once Henry becomes King, he does start to show his masculinity through his clothing especially when his want and need for a male heir is apparent, this is described by *The Spanish Princess* series two costume designer Downe 'His desperation that he has no male heir deepens as the story progresses and he starts to compensate with public displays of wealth which become outward symbols of his virility.'⁵¹ In the same way Currie describes how the Renaissance soldier were seen as fashionable, sexualised figures Hayward also describes Tudor masculinity through armour saying, 'Another way of expressing masculinity, wealth and status was wearing high-quality armour. This is conveyed well in *The Tudors* with the armour worn by Henry VIII, Charles Brandon, and Sir William Compton.'⁵²

One of the major masculine traits of the Tudor period is the use of codpieces, there are many paintings depicting men of the era, in particular Henry VIII with obvious codpieces on display. As stated by Currie, 'Until its demise towards the end of the sixteenth century, the codpiece was designed in a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes that encapsulated the very essence of flaunting,'⁵³ Throughout the period codpieces were used to show a man's virility and ability to produce children – in Henry's case a male heir, they even grew eventually becoming so large they later became subject to ridicule. As *The Tudors* costume designer Bergin has said 'If codpieces were included, the bosses thought that the [viewers'] eyes would never move to the actors' faces.'⁵⁴ This is something that is also discussed by

⁵¹ Mucci, "In conversation with costume designer Pam Downe".

⁵² Hayward, *Fashionable Fiction: The Significance of costumes in The Tudors*, 300.

⁵³ McKeever & Wilcox with Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 110.

⁵⁴ Alexander, "Henry VIII: Dressed to Kill"

Hayward with her saying, 'His (Henry VIII) costumes lack the prominent codpiece that was an integral part of men's hose. It was an expression of masculinity and was designed to attract the gaze of others.'⁵⁵ These are interesting comments as tv productions are often made to attract the female audience's gaze, it also helps the notion that period costumes are often designed to look like modern pieces that are geared towards the modern gaze. This suggests that historical understandings of masculinity may be unappealing or even strange to modern audiences, something that impacts on the role of costume in a period drama. Instead in *The Tudors* Henry VIII's masculinity is shown through his love for war and his need to prove to others that he is a strong leading man that will not be pushed around by his wives, his court or from foreign rulers. In the early series as a young fit man Henry actively takes part in tennis matches against his closest friends. He enjoys going on hunts and proves he is a great jouster; he is even shown taking on King Francis I of France in a wrestling match at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. As Robison has described in *The Tudors* Henry VIII on screen is shown less masculine than the real historical figure would've been saying, 'As especially glaring omission from *The Tudors* is Henry's role as a warrior. True, he participates in peacetime substitutions for battle, but he often jousts against fictitious opponents, and while he talks about hunting, viewers rarely see him doing it.'⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Hayward, *Fashionable Fiction: The Significance of costumes in The Tudors*, 300.

⁵⁶ William B. Robison, "Henry VIII in *The Tudors*: Romantic Renaissance Warrior or Soap Opera Playboy?" in *History, Fiction, and The Tudors: Sex Politics, Power, and Artistic License in the Showtime Television Series*, ed. William B. Robison (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), 29.



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As the leading man of a period drama Henry is also often seen in very little clothing, showing his physical fitness and attractiveness to the female characters as well as the female gaze from the viewers. This is something that Thomas Betteridge has looked at in the television series stating that, 'Henry is aggressively masculine outside the court, but inside he becomes strangely feminine through his sexualised displayed body.'⁵⁸ If you have all these features for a character one way to show their masculinity through gaze is through their costume. As Bergin said 'One of the things about Jonathan is that he has a presence, like Bono or one of the Rolling Stones, walking into a room. This was the effect I wanted to recapture with Henry, as a rock star of his time, with costumes that would convey that charisma.'⁵⁹ Saying this Bergin makes the point that this image of Henry VIII is important to the viewer and for those around him as it is what gives him power, he is able to use his image to gain the attention he wants and needs to be a successful ruler. This quote by Bergin underlines the issue of making historical TV for modern audiences is more about how everyone watching can engage with the show not just history scholars. *The Tudors* cast are young and attractive which helps draw a more varied audience to watch, as said by *Firstpost*

⁵⁷ King Francis I of France wearing the blue colour associated with his character, *tudorsfandom*, accessed September 2nd, 2021, https://tudors.fandom.com/wiki/King_Francis_I

⁵⁸ Thomas Betteridge, "The Tudors and The Tudor Court: Know Your Symptom," in *History, Fiction, and The Tudors: Sex Politics, Power, and Artistic License in the Showtime Television Series*, ed. William B. Robison (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), 199.

⁵⁹ Alexander, "Henry VIII: Dressed to Kill"

'Portraits by Hans Holbein of Henry VIII in his later years and early screen depictions are of a corpulent king and bejewelled monarch. Bergin's costuming of Jonathan Rhys Meyers's Henry VIII in *The Tudors* instead included lots of leather, tight doublets, and open shirts.'⁶⁰ And by adding extra dramatic scenes or adding more scenes depicting a sexual nature it keeps the viewer engaged, wanting to keep watching week after week to see how much more the show can produce. As Robison states, 'It is quite possible that many viewers of *The Tudors* excuse Meyers' Henry not because he is funny or over the top but because he is sexy.'⁶¹

Villain Costumes of *The Spanish Princess* and *The Tudors*.

Unlike the villains of *The Medici* and *The Borgias* who are very obviously dressed in a different colour scheme to the lead and hero characters, villain characters in *The Spanish Princess* and *The Tudors* dress in much the same way as the heroes. Throughout both series about the Tudor dynasty the villains of the story change from being foreign countries such as Scotland and France to characters that we see at court and even sometimes friends to the King. The most notable villains of these two series would be the King of Scotland James IV in *The Spanish Princess* and King Francis I of France in *The Tudors*. While they are trying to invade England or take land from the English throne their costumes don't show that they are the villains of the story in the same way that we see the costumes of *The Medici* and *The Borgias* present the villains of those shows. However, there is possibly a way for the audience to see a character's fate through costume styling changes, for instance even though she is the lead role of *The Spanish Princess* Catherine's clothing goes from bright happy colours at the start of her relationship with England and Henry to dark blues and eventually black towards the end of series two. She continues to wear these darker colours in *The Tudors* which leads to her divorce from Henry and banishment from Court and her daughter, the darker colours seem to foreshadow her unhappy end and her becoming Henry's 'enemy' for not producing him a living male heir. We also see this in other

⁶⁰ The Conversation, "From The Crown to The Tudors, how costumes in period dramas shape viewers' perceptions of royalty," *firstpost*, May 22nd, 2021, accessed September 2nd, 2021 <https://www.firstpost.com/art-and-culture/from-the-crown-to-the-tudors-how-costumes-in-period-dramas-shape-viewers-perceptions-of-royalty-9645311.html>

⁶¹ Robison, "Henry VIII in The Tudors: Romantic Renaissance Warrior or Soap Opera Playboy?" in *The Tudors on Film and Television*, 50.

characters across the two productions, while not an enemy of Henry in *The Spanish Princess* Charles Brandon's costume changes in style and colour when he is not in favour with the King in *The Tudors*. His character also tends to wear black when he is doing the work of the King that he doesn't agree with, such as when he goes to tell Catherine she would be stripped of her title as Queen and would no longer receive an income from Henry. We see this again when he is sent to tell Anne Boleyn that she would be sent to the Tower of London for adultery and treason against the King, even though he himself played a role in her demise, his difference in opinion to Henry should make him the series 'villain'.

Conclusion.

In this chapter I set out to see how masculinity in the Renaissance and Tudor eras is shown through costumes on screen through four popular television shows and how the perception of real historical people can change for onscreen dramatisation. From looking at costume details, and quotes made by the costume designers as well as others, I have found that the costumes can tell us more about the how the character is feeling than what position of power they hold. Not only does it have to reflect the character, look interesting on screen but it also must be able to let the actor move easily in it. What seems to drive the need or want of period dramas is how audiences can ultimately feel and understand the characters on screen, as said by Thomas S. Freeman 'An important part is for the scriptwriters to create characters that the audience can understand and with whom they can empathise.'⁶² All the four shows I looked at in this chapter use modern clothing as influences for costumes rather than sticking to historical accuracy. Although some of the costume designers claimed to also take inspiration from historical research. This helps the audience immerse themselves in the show and helps them understand characters whereas if the clothing was accurate for the century, it would be so unrecognisable to the viewer and would distract them from the story. As stated by Jerome De Groot looking at authenticity in sixteenth century television shows, '*The Tudors* draws on the past as inspiration and imposes a sensationalist reading of events, emphasising sex, power, and violence. It is a kind of impressionistic version of the past.'⁶³

⁶² Thomas S. Freeman, "Introduction: It's Only a Movie," in *Tudors and Stuarts on Film*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2009), 17.

⁶³ De Groot, *Consuming History* 236.

Both *The Borgias* and *The Tudors* also have similarities in costume by using leather to give their characters a sexy bad boy look, it also gives them a more masculine image when some of the other costume pieces might reflect the opposite. The most surprising outcome from researching the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries on screen is how all the productions use colour or motifs to reflect the different families, whether it's check for the Scots in *Spanish Princess* or the colour blue for the Medici family in *Medici*. This shows that in some instances considerations such as colour and the visuality of costume on screen takes precedence over the design of a costume.

The Seventeenth Century on Screen.

Introduction.

Fashion was very important to the French economy and its people by providing work for its people in the seventeenth century as well as enabling the French monarchy to hold power over them. Both *The Musketeers* and *Versailles*, two period dramas set in seventeenth-century France, show Paris as very fashionable places of the time and how Louis XIII and Louis XIV used sumptuary laws to rule, eventually leading to France becoming the fashion capital of the world. As Louis XIV minister of France Jean Baptiste Colbert said in 1665, “Fashion is to France what the goldmines of Peru are to Spain.”⁶⁴

Alexandre Dumas wrote *The Three Musketeers* in 1844 and so it is not an account originating from the period of France in the 1620s. However, his characters are partially based on the actual Seventeenth-century musketeers Charles de Batz de Castelmore d’Artagnan, Henri d’Aramitz, Armand d’Athos, Isaac de Porthau and Jean-Armand du Peyrer de Troisville. There have been many different adaptations both in film and TV from the 1920’s silent film starring Douglas Elton Fairbanks to the 2014 BBC television adaptation starring Tom Burke, Santiago Cabrera, Howard Charles, and Luke Pasqualino which is the version I will discuss in this chapter. Each adaptation has their own distinct look for the lead characters, we see in the 1921 film the musketeers have a look that is certainly styled on Seventeenth century clothing. The 2011 *The Three Musketeers* film costumes have moved forward in time, and we see a half leather half fabric individual look and the BBC show has the characters wearing full leather uniforms.

While there have been quite a few different adaptations of *The Three Musketeers* there haven’t been many on screen adaptations of Louis XIV, there have been a couple of films that have attempted to tell part of his story such as the 2016 film *The Death of Louis XIV* and the more famous 1998 film *The Man in the Iron Mask*. However, it wasn’t until 2015 when the BBC and Canal+ produced *Versailles* that Louis and his brother Philippe were thrown into the spotlight successfully, making a three series long TV show that introduced a modern audience to French history. And while the show isn’t faithfully based on historical accounts

⁶⁴ Amanda Vickery, “18th-century Paris: the capital of luxury,” *The Guardian*, July 29th, 2011, accessed July 13th 2021, 20:51pm, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/jul/29/paris-life-luxury-getty-museum?fbclid=IwAR0aSZpbESXte1XGz0qtlmtlwNHwOOLw0hEaAoGW2aZL86wfljcnN7B5wls>

it has enough drama to keep the audience entertained while also giving them an idea of what living in France at court was like in the Seventeenth century. As argued by Sarah Betts in the book *Conflicting Masculinities* 'The BBC emphasise their educational credentials in showing these dramas, whilst also recognising that the period portrayed is less familiar to viewers than stories of Henry VIII, his family or even the Reformation.'⁶⁵ This point I do agree with, even the BBC have adapted two versions of Henry VIII's story firstly in *The Tudors* and then *Wolf Hall*, even in school Tudor history is taught from a very young age whereas I have yet to encounter an English person who was taught seventeenth-century French history under university age.

First, this chapter offers an in-depth exploration of the *Musketeers*, looking at the processes and decisions behind the costume design, exploring the role of costume in representing the masculine qualities and characteristics of the main protagonists, and its role in visually establishing the heroes and the villains of the show. It then moves on to consider *Versailles*, focusing in particular on the costume of the character Philippe to look at masculinity and costume in this context, as well as continuing themes of heroes and villains.

Through discussions with costume designer Hayley Nebauer of *The Musketeers* BBC series, and actors Alexander Vlahos and George Webster from the BBC series *Versailles* I will discuss how the costumes of the productions develops the characters, what the costumes can tell us about how masculinity is portrayed on screen and how the look of the costumes were designed. While also thinking how designers deal with the 'image' of importance of historical accuracy needs to be in a television production. Drawing on the work of Betts focused on depictions of the seventeenth century on screen, Richard Thompson Ford's work into fashion and masculinity, and Vern L. and Bonnie Bullough's work looking at crossdressing through the centuries this chapter will explore how masculinity in the *Musketeers* and *Versailles* is shown to a modern audience and how we can use this to engage with the characters on screen. With particular focus on how the role of costume can depict seventeenth-century masculinity and why this characterisation, particularly in Philippe is important to show on screen to a modern audience.

⁶⁵ Sarah Betts "Power and passion: Seventeenth-century masculinities dramatized on the BBC in the twenty-first century", in *Conflicting Masculinities: Men in television period drama*, ed. Katherine Byrne, James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo, (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2020), 72.

Costume Design and Execution in *The Musketeers*.

According to the show's series three costume designer Hayley Nebauer the production was never intended to be historically accurate with anything and when she joined as crew, she was fully aware of what was wanted by the showrunners. She also agrees with the notion that a period costume drama does not have to have a goal of providing a historically accurate show, they are made for entertainment purposes and allow the audience to escape their reality for a small period of time. "I don't think people should look to period dramas for being educational, they're drama you should experience something you haven't experienced before from a time you don't live in. If you get interested in a period and want to go look more about it, then that's wonderful."⁶⁶ This is an interesting point made by Nebauer, the fact that a TV show that aired on a Sunday evening at 9pm could inspire the age demographic of 12 upwards for the first series and 15 upwards for series two and three to learn more about the seventeenth century is quite a big ask.

Nebauer also has the opinion that the show will have aspects of the modern world era it was made in because of what materials are available or safety regulations that the show have to follow that may change for future productions. Alongside the fact that a period drama is made to entertain the audience there are other issues faced by those involved in the show that sometimes doesn't allow for historical accuracy to be considered such as cost of the production as well as the thoughts from producers, writers, costumers and even the actors who might all have different opinions on what should and what shouldn't be accurate focal points for history on screen. 'You've got different executives, producers, directors the actors have ideas themselves so it's a balancing act to bring all that together in a look.'⁶⁷ This is probably an issue that is overlooked by the audience watching and judging the show. The actor has thought about and possibly researched that character and has been through stunt training and so know their own physical limitations as well as how they want to project that character on screen, which could directly interfere with how a costume may look or how it's made to fit the body. This point made by Nebauer is rarely explored or

⁶⁶ Hayley Nebauer, Zoom interview with author, February 17th, 2021.

⁶⁷ Hayley Nebauer, Zoom interview with author, February 17th, 2021.

acknowledged in existing work on history on screen by scholars or even highlighted by those in the media writing articles about period drama shows.

Designing something for a period show Nebauer approaches research much in the same way an academic would, she looks through books and searches online to find inspiration for style and to see what was used in that particular century. However, she often does find the same struggles as historians do especially for lower class characters where their history wasn't recorded in detail. As she has described, "I start my research with the same way as anybody else, going through books, looking online, starting in obvious places and then it branches out from there. Challenges always come up because there's always areas that aren't covered, historical references for lower classes, persons in particular trade often weren't documented."⁶⁸ The fact the audience only see the final costume on screen the work a costume designer has to actually do before even producing a look can often go unnoticed.

Nebauer started working on *The Musketeers* during the third and final series and so the main characters had their costume style already set and that they were already popular with the audience. With Nebauer saying, "They (The BBC) loved the looks Phoebe De Gaye the series one and two costume designer had done, and it had been loved by the fandom, what they wanted for series three was something which embraced and included all those looks but wanted it to have something to show there had been a change that affected the characters."⁶⁹ This is an interesting view that the show took, it seems they wanted to please the audience through character looks in particular the costumes rather than have Nebauer the costume designer bring something new to the series. However, it could be in historical shows looks and ideas about the characters can become entrenched in the audience imagination, and the costume plays a key role in this, there could also be the argument that an actor maybe more comfortable in a costume they already know which allows them to project the moment they want for their character.

⁶⁸ Hayley Nebauer, Zoom interview with author, February 17th, 2021.

⁶⁹ Hayley Nebauer, Zoom interview with author, February 17th, 2021.

As previously discussed, Nebauer knew that she didn't have to produce a costume that was going to have to follow rigid historical accuracy as that was never the intention of *The Musketeers* show and therefore, she was able to incorporate a lot of her own style and flair into how the looks would be worn. Nebauer has said "Accuracy was never a strong consideration in the show, they (the BBC) were more interested in dynamic design and keeping it exciting and interesting...make things look a bit prettier, sexier or cooler."⁷⁰ In the twenty-first century, existing historical television has already established that male actors in historical dress should look a certain way, and a large part of this involves undress. Having the characters wear leather which gives off more of a 'bad boy' image makes them seem cool and dangerous in comparison to softer fabrics such as velvet or silk. Jerome De Groot has argued that 'seventeenth-century people were different from twenty-first-century actors: shorter, thinner, and often disfigured by disease and bad teeth. Actors portraying actual historical persons usually have scant resemblance to them.'⁷¹ Although the BBC did cast relatively unknown actors at the time some viewers would recognise the faces of Santiago Cabrera (Aramis) from the BBC production of *Merlin* and Luke Pasqualino (D'Artagnan) from the period drama *The Borgias*. Meaning that their faces or arguably their younger, handsome looks helped draw in the audience to watch the show, unlike productions of the past where actors of a more mature age were commonly chosen.

Obviously, the main difference between what the musketeers would most likely have worn and the costume in the show is that of fabric. The BBC production chose to use all leather looks for the main characters whereas in reality they would probably have been fabric breeches and doublets with hose, a lace collar and hat, that we would recognise as worn by Louis XIII of France or Charles I of England. As said by Betts 'Leather is used extensively to define masculinities in characters. Each musketeer has their own distinct style with the exclusive use of leather and regiment badge being the unifying factors. The defensive armour-like look and sound of their costumes in action increase the sex-appeal and 'real' outdoor credibility of the characters.'⁷² This fabric is something that a modern audience can

⁷⁰ Hayley Nebauer, Zoom interview with author, February 17th, 2021.

⁷¹ Jerome De Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture*, (London: Routledge 2016), 119.

⁷² Betts "Power and passion: Seventeenth-century masculinities dramatized on the BBC in the twenty-first century," 84.

engage with in a much better way than they could to the style of actual seventeenth century clothing. The leather jacket has been a staple in people's wardrobes for decades and having historical figures wear them can help audiences relate with the characters as it's something that they are used to seeing in their own lives.

One of the more surprising aspects that came out from talking to Nebauer was that she doesn't find designing something for a period show any more challenging than designing something for a contemporary production. The main difference is that there are very few people who would notice if something in a period costume doesn't fit with that aesthetic whereas we all wear modern day clothing and so more people can have an opinion on what that costume should look like. "Everyone you're working with on a contemporary production has an opinion, and is to a degree I wouldn't say expert, but is informed, we all wear contemporary clothing. It's much more fine-tuned and subjective than it would be on a period production where most people don't know what people wore and who wore what."⁷³ This contributes to the thought of accuracy in period drama productions, historical accuracy may be less of a priority for dramas set in the more distant past, whereas audiences are likely to have direct experiences of dramas set in the 1960s or even the 1930s.

Masculinity Through Costume in *The Musketeers*.

As stated by Bilal Hafeez the art of chivalry can be broken down into three key areas; Serve the liege 'Lord in valour and faith', respect the honour of women and protect the weak and defenceless.⁷⁴ In the BBC *Musketeers* show the characters do follow these set rules – they are loyal to their king, each other and even people from their past and present that they consider as family. They respect the women they encounter stepping in to help when needed but also stand back and not interfere when they are not needed and let the women fight their own battles without belittling the woman's feelings. And they protect the weak and defenceless as part of their job but will also help anyone in need that they may come across on their travels or even if they see someone being mistreated in the city of Paris. In

⁷³ Hayley Nebauer, Zoom interview with author, February 17th, 2021.

⁷⁴ Bilal, 'How to be chivalrous', *Bilal Hafeez*, January 8th, 2021, accessed July 8th, 2021, 16:04pm, <http://bilalhafeez.com/the-art-of-chivalry-3-min-read/>

the show the musketeers seem to think the main qualities they should be are to be heroic, to be gentlemanly and chivalric, to be manly and to be a skilled fighter, each musketeer brings at least one of these qualities to the group. Athos and D'Artagnan are the most skilled in sword fighting while Aramis is considered the best shooter and Porthos has the better fighting power preferring to use his whole body as a weapon rather than military equipment. We see a little of this in their individual costume style. Aramis is the musketeer that wears a hat the most out of the group, as this helps protect his face from any spark or loose gunpowder from when he fires his musket.



Porthos tends to have a higher neck protection on collars with more metal detail as well as a larger pauldron in the third series than anyone else giving him more protection when favouring using his body as a weapon. Athos and D'Artagnan have a costume that allows easy sword movement without any unnecessary extra fabric that could hinder them in battles or fights, they dress more for function rather than style. Phoebe De Gaye the costume designer of *The Musketeers* first two series has emphasised the importance of ideas about masculinity to the costumes, saying that, "Masculinity and getting down and dirty with it and mud and leather and there's a lot of wear on the leather, and you see all of the marks of their past battles."⁷⁶ However, while they are gentlemanly towards the female characters by respecting their positions and not seeing them as complete damsels Aramis

⁷⁵ Mary McNamara, Costume for Aramis series one, "Review: 'The Musketeers' Captivates in swordplay, intrigue, on BBC America, *LA Times*, June 21st, 2014, accessed July 8th 2021, 15:06pm, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-et-st-the-musketeers-review-20140621-column.html>

⁷⁶ Phoebe De Gaye, Series 1 DVD extra Creating Their World: Muskets, leather, corsets and swords, *BBC* 2014.

and D'Artagnan have had less than noble relationships with a female. Aramis although well known for being a lady's man gets involved first with Cardinal Richelieu's mistress Adele which leads to her eventual death and later, he has a relationship with King Louis' wife Anne and is identified as the father of the Dauphin. This quality in can be argued is shown in his costume, De Gaye explains his costume as, "A long coat seemed a good approach for Aramis, Aramis has got this long almost frock coat like length to him. He's quite elegant and he's quite sensual so his leather is quite soft."⁷⁷ Aramis's costume is therefore important in conveying the visual perceived masculinity of his character.



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The Three Musketeers Alexandre Dumas describes what Porthos was wearing as 'He was not, for the moment, wearing a uniform tabard, which in any case was not obligatory in that time of lesser freedom but greater independence, but a sky-blue jerkin over this garment a magnificent baldric, embroidered in gold. A long cloak of crimson velvet fell gracefully from his shoulders.'⁷⁹ This is the image that is probably most associated with the musketeers and how many of the earlier film adaptations have shown musketeers on screen. This was also

⁷⁷ Phoebe De Gaye, Series 1 DVD extra Creating Their World: Muskets, leather, corsets and swords, *BBC* 2014.

⁷⁸ Hayley Nebauer, Costume detail for Porthos series 3, accessed July 8th, 2021, 14:59pm, <https://www.hayleynebauer.com/the-musketeers-2016-bbc/>

⁷⁹ Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers* (London: Penguin Group 2008), 27.

found by Rene Chartrand in his book *French Musketeer 1622-1775* where he found 'Possibly the earliest written description appears in the 1642 *Etat de la France* that states the Kings Musketeers wear blue cassocks distinguished with silver crosses.'⁸⁰ The BBC series changed this image dramatically, instead using a style that is more recognisable to a modern audience and set itself apart from the traditional image.

⁸⁰ Rene Chartrand, *French Musketeers 1622-1775* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing 2013), 38.



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The costumes for the characters in the first and second series have a 'uniform' look for the most part, they all wear a blue leather cloak with brass buttons worn over one shoulder, they all wear a colour scheme of brown and blue and they all have a pauldron on their right

⁸¹ The Three Musketeers 1921 film, "The Three Musketeers 1921. Directed by Fred Niblo," *MoMA*, accessed July 8th, 2021, 14:48pm, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/3945>

⁸² Stephanie Chase, The Musketeers series three 'uniform', "BBC iPlayer is adding The Musketeers series 1-3 as a box set this week," *Digital Spy*, July 11th, 2018, accessed July 8th, 2021, 15:08pm, <https://www.digitalspy.com/tv/a861416/the-musketeers-bbc-iplayer/>

arm with the Kings Fleur de Lis emblem. For the third and final series the musketeers still have some individual style on them but it's not quite as obvious as it had been in the previous series. However due to the individual nature of the characters each emblem differs in the way they are decorated to represent the style of fighting the character uses and how they present themselves to others. For example, Athos used to be noble and so his pauldron shows the Fleur de Lis in a shield very similar to a coat of arms that has been damaged just like his past as a Comte, whereas Aramis has his highly decorated and is more elegant just like how he presents himself; he commands attention and is very skilful in his fights using various techniques. Porthos and D'Artagnan have the more subtle and unassuming pauldrons out of the musketeers, D'Artagnan is new into the job and is highly proud to be part of the regiment so is less inclined to have his damaged in anyway. Porthos is from a poor background not knowing his family so his could represent his lack of money and belonging, he is also the one who tends to use his whole body in a fight not just his sword needing it more for protection than style. This small visual costume detail can help the audience understand what the personality of the character is, even without any backstory given by the dialogue. It also helps give the character history as it can show hardships that they've had to face in their past and in the future series remind the audience what the group has done in previous episodes such as battles that may have happened.



⁸³ Pauldron Detail for D'Artagnan and Aramis, *tumblr*, accessed July 8th, 2021, 14:56pm, <https://samhawke.tumblr.com/post/126776459786>,



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The musketeers are seen to respect women to a higher level than other male characters in the show, they are willing to listen to advice from women of all backgrounds not just the Queen who has a position of power. In the third series when the men have returned from war, they find that Constance has become a member of the musketeer's garrison and is considered to be part of the leaders helping to train the new recruits in the absence of the more seasoned Athos, Aramis, Porthos and D'Artagnan. They don't even think to question her position when they return they just acknowledge that since they were gone to fight the battles women couldn't they had someone who they could trust and who had some knowledge of what the job entails take up the important mantle that was left behind. As said by Betts about the musketeer characters 'The drama's male protagonists not only rescue the women, but also help them find the strength and skill to independently defend themselves from future attack, reaffirms the rightfully empowered position of modern women, and simultaneously celebrates the anti-chauvinistic contemporary appeal of the heroes, secure in their own masculine identities that fit neatly with the types of behaviour expected of the modern man.'⁸⁵ This point made by Betts is seen in the television show and as I found costumes can highlight this not just with the male characters. Throughout the shows longevity Constance's costumes change to become similar in style to those worn by

⁸⁴ Greg Ellwood, The Musketeer series three costumes, "The Musketeers 3X09 The Prize Preview," *Entertainment Focus*, July 30th, 2016, accessed July 8th 2021, 14:53pm, <https://entertainment-focus.com/2016/07/30/the-musketeers-3x09-the-prize-preview/>

⁸⁵ Betts "Power and passion: Seventeenth-century masculinities dramatized on the BBC in the twenty-first century" 81.

the male musketeers, she wears more leather as well as the colour pallet suiting the colours worn by the men.

How Costume Contributes to the Heroes and Villains of *The Musketeers*.

As with many other examples of historical television like *Medici*, one of the major tropes in *The Musketeers* is that of Heroes versus Villains, in the show the Musketeers are very obviously portrayed as the heroes of the story, they're loyal to the King and his wife while also standing up for and protecting the citizens of France who may otherwise not be able to do so. The main rivals of the musketeers are the red guards who serve Cardinal Richelieu the villain of series one, Rochefort in series two and the Marquis de Feron in series three; throughout the show there is a constant rivalry between the two sides due to the fact the red guards often try and derail the assignments the musketeers are sent on to make them look incompetent which always fails as in stories good always triumphs evil. The costumes of the musketeers and red guards are very different, whereas the musketeers have an almost 'Royal' colour scheme the red guards have a dark red and black ensemble, this gives the audience the impression that they are the bad guys even before they have interacted with any of the other characters, it also helps the audience to easily identify who is who when the two sides battle each other.

Even the style of clothing differs between the two sides, where the musketeers have soft buttery looking leather costumes the red guards' uniform has a stiffer looking silhouette with more fabric than leather used for their plackarts. And while the captain of the red guards Marcheaux has quite a bit of decoration on his clothing with a heavily embroidered doublet it is styled in a way that has sharper edges and more details on the leather work that looked like reptile skin which is often perceived as a distrust worthy identity. The reptilian look is also seen in the costume for Cardinal Richelieu, his whole costume is all black in colour, and the leather is printed with scale details, gathered sleeves and a high neckline along with a long cape lined in a red silk that billows while the actor walks making his image the obvious villain.

In contrast to both the Musketeers and the Red Guard, the clothing of the royal family especially the King who is seen in more pastel colours such as light blues, creams and golds

thus showing him as the light of the show and the ally of the musketeers. This shows the importance of costume in the show and how it has been used to visually communicate the status and characteristics of the characters. As De Gaye has said, “The King is the most sort of period looking, we see him in the big lace collars, elaborate gold outfit and things.”⁸⁶ Actress Alexandra Dowling who plays Queen Anne has her own thoughts on the Royal’s costumes saying, “You sort of start getting a bit oh is that costume better, you sort of think you should have the best costume because you’re the Queen or King.”⁸⁷ This distinction between the two opposing sides allows audiences to see how even the past can reflect contemporary social issues.



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⁸⁶ Phoebe De Gaye, Series 1 DVD extra, “*Creating Their World: Muskets, leather, corsets and swords*,” BBC 2014.

⁸⁷ Alexandra Dowling, Series 1 DVD extra, “*Creating Their World: Muskets, leather, corsets and swords*,” BBC 2014.

⁸⁸ Justyna Kubica, Louis XIII Costume from series three, “The Musketeers ‘The Queen’s Diamonds & To Play the King’ – Review”, *Spoilertv*, July 10th, 2016, accessed December 27th, 2021, 14:06pm, <https://www.spoilertv.com/2016/07/the-musketeers-queens-diamonds-to-play.html>



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⁸⁹ Marcheaux Costume from series three, *BBC*, accessed July 8th, 2021, 14:51pm, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/206M9gtFVkJ8ZZgwkTPRgS1/marcheaux>



Character Costume and Masculinity in *Versailles*.

Fashion played a major role in the reign of King Louis XIV, with the King himself setting new trends and making Paris and France the fashion hub of the world, Louis believed that through fashion he could control his courtiers and by doing so strengthening his power and rule. By making his courtiers follow the set rules of buying fabrics from France rather than places such as Italy or Spain he made sure his country was gaining from increasing economy

⁹⁰ Costume for Richelieu series one, BBC *Youtube*, February 26th, 2014, accessed July 8th, 2021, 15:13pm, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SollAeH1YZk>

⁹¹ Genevieve Hassan, Costume detail for Richelieu, "Musketeers Return for 21st Century Audience," *BBC*, January 19th, 2014, accessed July 8th, 2021, 15:04pm, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-25680450>

as well as providing more jobs for his subjects which gained him more favour among the poorer classes. Madeline Fontaine the costume designer of *Versailles* series one and two has also described this in an interview with *TV Worth Watching*, “Fashion was very present in Versailles, but in this show, its role is to serve the characters – and not only the royal family. The way we dress the lesser characters gives depth to the story. It shows the social conditions and gives a context of who everyone was. The position of all the people is important to tell the story.”⁹² In his court Louis XIV set rules on what a noble was able to wear depending on his or her rank in society, this allowed everyone know who held the most power and in turn who had either gained or lost favour with the King through what their clothing would look like. Betts also describes this in her essay, ‘Historically both courts (also Charles II) were renowned for fashionable conspicuous consumption, something clearly reflected particularly in *Versailles*, where Louis and Philippe deploy seemingly menial and emasculating attention to fashion, ballet and etiquette to control the nobility.’⁹³

In the previous centuries the ruff had been a staple of court fashion followed by a large lace collar, however under Louis’ rule the cravat or a lavallière became the popular way for men to dress. Possibly the most popular trend Louis XIV started was the red heeled shoe, this became his signature and other rulers such as William of Orange followed, and it soon spread around Europe. As stated by Elizabeth Gerner, ‘Louis XIV restricted their wear to the nobility of the French court.’⁹⁴ Richard Thompson Ford has also explored this point saying, ‘Louis XIV made the high-heel shoe an elite status symbol; he eventually decreed that only members of his court could wear shoes with red heels.’⁹⁵ As *Versailles* actor Alexander Vlahos said in his interview “The shoes changed your gait, your stance and your posture it was such an easier way to have status. The costume gave you presence, to have this sort of swag and sway.”⁹⁶ In the TV series of *Versailles*, we don’t see Louis discussing

⁹² David Hinkley, “Madeline Fontaine, The Oscar-nominated costume designer for Versailles, on dressing paupers and kings,” *TV Worth Watching*, August 30th, 2017, accessed July 8th, 2021, 20:52pm, <http://www.tworthwatching.com/post/Madeline-Fontaine-the-Oscar-nominated-Costume-Designer-for-Versailles-on-Dressing-Paupers-and-Kings.aspx>

⁹³ Betts “Power and passion: Seventeenth-century masculinities dramatized on the BBC in the twenty-first century” 83.

⁹⁴ McKeever & Wilcox with Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 102.

⁹⁵ Richard Thompson Ford, *Dress Codes: How the Laws of Fashion Made History* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2021), {image 17} 240-241.

⁹⁶ Alexander Vlahos, Zoom conversation with author, May 26th, 2021.

these fashion introductions as part of the storyline, but we do see that Philippe comes up with the idea of court etiquette and which nobles held more power over others such as been able to help dress the King. As in real life and the show, fashion or costume is used as an important tool that allows a viewer to understand social rank and helps the wearer understand the significance of what was expected from them in these positions of class.

Though set in the same century as *The Musketeers*, *Versailles* has a stark contrast in the way it deals with a character's masculinity, where Athos, Aramis, Porthos and D'Artagnan are swaddled in full leather uniforms the men of *Versailles* live out their days in printed silks and heels. While both are seen as strong capable leaders in their own right, Louis as King and Philippe as a military man, they have very different views of what it means to be masculine. As King Louis even though married still has many mistresses – including his own sister-in-law and often regards them more highly than his wife, however this is something that was expected from a ruler in the seventeenth century especially if the wife was pregnant. Philippe also has a similar fate with his own wife taking on other lovers instead of being faithful to her, the difference however is that while Louis has female mistresses Philippe is in a very committed relationship with another man the Chevalier de Lorraine. Philippe had always struggled with his position and image all through his life even being dressed in dresses as a child so he didn't outshine his older brother who would be King, as described by Betts, 'Philippe as a child was dressed as a girl and humiliated to bolster Louis's masculinity by comparison, is frustrated by his brothers failure to entrust him with power.'⁹⁷ We see this in paintings of Philippe as a child, and even in *Versailles* this is explored through the costume of the character which to an viewer watching is probably the most factual evidence they could have. This must have had a lasting effect on him as we see in both series one and series two, he publicly wears a woman's pale silver brocade corseted dress to court. Vlahos who plays Philippe describes this particular costume, "When Philippe wore the corset, it was the most amazing bit of a creation, it was a dress that could unclip. The corset was specifically made for someone who is flat chested, that didn't have the restrictions corsets have for ladies. He unclips the costume to have a fight and that was

⁹⁷ Betts 'Power and passion: Seventeenth-century masculinities dramatized on the BBC in the twenty-first century' 82.

months of preparation. What would happen if someone was a crossdresser, who was also a warrior, how would you manage these characteristics.”⁹⁸ And while it has all the parts of a normal seventeenth century dress the corset would’ve been modified for a male to wear it. The sleeves are very different to the dresses worn by the female characters in the show, possibly allowing for the scene in series one to work where Philippe draws a sword on another courtier so more freedom for movement than the females needed. The dress is also very similar to the one worn by Philippe as a small child in the Charles Beaubrun painting, showing that the costume designer Madeline Fontaine must have done some research into the characters. In an interview Fontaine describes her process as, “I researched literature and paintings on the Seventeenth century and adapted the costumes to today’s bodies, made them lighter, more liveable for the actors.”⁹⁹

We see Philippe wear another dress in series two which is a different style and more closely resembles the dresses worn by the female characters on the show, this is possibly a dress that he has borrowed from his second wife who was much more understanding of his bisexuality and cross dressing than his previous wife. And even though there have been representations of male actors wearing dresses on screen in the past they have been more in film than TV, Robin Williams in *Mrs Doubtfire* Dustin Hoffman in *Tootsie* they are often used as disguises rather than lifestyle choices. Even modern fashion designers are exploring the role of a dress on men, Edward Crutchley even designing a corseted dress for his Spring/Summer 2022 collection.

⁹⁸ Alexander Vlahos, Zoom conversation with author, May 26th, 2021.

⁹⁹ Laure Guilbault, “Madaline Fontaine on Designing Costumes for French TV Series Versailles,” *WWD*, October 8th, 2015, accessed July 8th 2021, 20:45pm, <https://wwd.com/eye/people/madeline-fontaine-costume-tv-versailles-10255110/>



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¹⁰⁰ Charles Beaubrun portrait of Louis XIV and Philippe as children, accessed June 28th 2021, 14:53pm, https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_young_King_Louis_XIV_with_his_brother_the_Duke_of_Orléans_attributed_to_the_Beaubrun_brothers.jpg

¹⁰¹ Aelarsen, Philippe's court corset dress from series one, *wordpress*, July 20th, 2018, accessed June 28th 2021, 15:02pm, <https://aelarsen.wordpress.com/2018/07/20/versailles-the-man-who-would-be-queen/>



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Although he is teased and ridiculed for doing this by other men at court, he does act by pulling a sword on one of them to show that he still is a person of immense power and position. In the seventeenth century we must remember that any homosexual relationships were not accepted and would result in the persons been condemned to death and yet Philippe and Chevalier are able to be open with their relationship because of Philippe's station and being the Kings brother. As stated by Richard T. Ford one woman was charged with heresy for dressing like a man by 'citing the biblical proscription "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do are an abomination to the Lord your God."'"¹⁰³ This tell us under normal circumstances of the time anyone like Philippe would be killed for cross-dressing but because of his station he managed to escape this fate. This is similarly considered by Vern L. and Bonnie Bullough, although their evidence does look more into how female cross dressers were treated rather than men. 'The case of Elena, as she was known...Sentenced to receive two hundred lashes at a public whipping for her impersonation, Elena also had to

¹⁰² McKeever & Wilcox with Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 250.

¹⁰³ Thompson Ford, *Dress Codes* 68.

serve ten years in a public hospital.’¹⁰⁴ This is also backed up by Jeffrey Merrick saying, ‘In the seventeenth century, as in the sixteenth and even more so in the eighteenth centuries, magistrates prosecuted sodomy sporadically and selectively...Most same-sex relations, especially involving members of the privileged classes, did not result in prosecution.’¹⁰⁵ Vlahos sees his character as a very important and influential person in history since he was one of the first high ranking public figures to be openly gay and a cross-dresser. Which in the twenty-first century has helped many audience members thank him for portraying a character that chooses to wear nonbinary costumes that they felt had finally shown them that they are normal and can be accepted in a society even if it’s not what they are expected to follow. He says “You have to do these people justice because they existed, me and Evan (Williams) who played Chevalier made a specific pact with each other, we would treat these characters as truthful and give it everything we had. Being able to show that on screen (an openly gay relationship) and have the audience react the way they did was important.”¹⁰⁶ We are so used to period dramas which adhere strictly to gendered binaries, however costuming for Phillippe brought modern social ideas to the front of the discussion of how masculinity could be shown through costume on screen and how well the audience would respond to them.

Philippe as the second son still dresses very much as a royal would with sumptuous fabrics with heavy embroidery and lots of lace. We often see Philippe wearing costumes in silvers, dark greys, and blacks; his clothes still clearly conveying that he is of royal birth, but the muted colours allow him to not upstage his brother the King. As Vlahos describes, “I was sort of let free rein, we talked about the Sun King and his colours, the golds, the reds so to be the opposite of him to contradict him I always asked to be in greys, silvers and black. There was a complete visual antithesis that you knew which brother was which.”¹⁰⁷ The character also looks a lot more relaxed in his clothing, he very rarely wears a sash around his waist allowing more freeing movement, quite possibly due to less confined place at the

¹⁰⁴ Vern. L and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press 1993), 95.

¹⁰⁵ Jeffrey Merrick, "Chaussons in the Streets: Sodomy in Seventeenth-Century Paris," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 2 (2006) 168, accessed July 21st, 2021, 12:15pm, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4629651>

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Vlahos, Zoom conversation with author, May 26th, 2021.

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Vlahos, Zoom conversation with author, May 26th, 2021.

Palace or allowing him to easily remove clothing while conducting his affairs. Vlahos has similar thoughts on his costumes “Philippe was always half naked because he was always having sex with Chevalier so we would have to talk in length about what costume and what bits they could take off themselves and what would be taken off by the dressers.”¹⁰⁸

Philippe’s armour we see him wearing in battle also follow these colour patterns consisting of a black jacket with cream embroidered cuffs, a breastplate and a blue and gold sash across the body which shows he’s the family of royalty. Vlahos has also described Philippe’s thoughts on his battle armour “The factual stuff they brought into the show like yes he would wear this because he wanted people to know that the brother of the King was leading the charge.”¹⁰⁹ Alongside this Philippe does enjoy hunting as a sport which could be considered to be one of the most masculine traits a man could have in the seventeenth century, whereas King Louis enjoys dancing even choreographing his own in series one however because he is King no one questions his masculinity when he does this.

Versailles while shows the audience a different view of masculinity on the seventeenth century it doesn’t give us the most accurate representation of every person who might have challenged the heterosexual norms. As Bryant T. Ragan Jr has argued ‘Homosexual sodomy, especially between men, was indeed quite common before the early eighteenth century. At the same time, there were few people, men, and women, who engaged exclusively in same-sex sexual relations.’¹¹⁰ This is generally shown in the show as Philippe and Chevalier are the only two characters that actively represent this and are still ridiculed by fellow courtiers, however the fact that they aren’t punished is different to the experiences of actual homosexual people in the seventeenth century. Even today these masculinity trends aren’t always welcomed by society, and we still see those in higher profile places such as celebrities been treated better than the normal person on the street.

Philippe and Chevalier’s relationship even though dysfunctional is the one relationship that seems to be the most loving and pure in the show, while many do not agree with it, they seem to be the only characters that truly care about each other throughout all the series.

¹⁰⁸ Alexander Vlahos, Zoom conversation with author, May 26th, 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander Vlahos, Zoom conversation with author, May 26th, 2021.

¹¹⁰ Bryant T. Ragan Jr, *Homosexuality in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), 11.

Even after Philippe is forced to marry his second wife Liselotte Palatine, they carry on the relationship which is eventually accepted by Philippe's wife once she realises how much they do love each other, and she also accepts Philippe when he wants to dress as a woman even proudly walking into a court meeting hand in hand with him showing her support. Vlahos's thoughts on the show's masculine image of Philippe are, "What I loved about what our show did was that we never used the word homosexual or gay, they were treated as possibly the best love, the best loving relationship in the whole show. Louis had women, and women and was using them for different means whereas the true relationship in the show was these two men."¹¹¹ Even though Philippe is openly gay and seems to be less physically dominant than his male lover Chevalier he is more mentally dominant and is quite happy to go fight in the wars for Louis, practically begging to be sent in series two however Philippe returns from the war a changed man and he becomes more physically dominant over Chevalier. This masculine trait often means he has conflict with the King as Louis stays behind at the Palace of Versailles to stay safe and yet he is the one who gets the recognition and glory for the successful battles, to Philippe this is seen as cowardly, and he reminds Louis that without him France and his reign wouldn't be as stable. Philippe and Chevalier are often seen throwing lavish parties in the Palace where gambling, drug taking and whoring is a common theme, Philippe also shows an interest in the arts in particular theatre which isn't necessarily classed as masculine traits they were part of a courtier's life in the seventeenth century.

In the show Louis as King is dressed heavily in reds and bold blues heavily embroidered with gold details reflecting his position as 'The Sun King' and very rarely without some sort of silk sash tied in a very elaborate bow. We do see Louis dress up in costume as Apollo the sun God in series one episode seven where he presents his new ballet style dance to the court, but he doesn't deviate too much from his signature style and colours unless he is riding and hunting and seems to favour a darker pallet to blend into his surroundings. As Fontaine has said about Louis costume, "For official occasions, the king wore embroideries that were made with silver, gold, and gems. There's the red, blue, and gold garment, the monarchy's colours. For these, it was important to be faithful to historical imagery. His reign was based

¹¹¹ Alexander Vlahos, Zoom conversation with author, May 26th, 2021.

on pageantry. For other pieces, I allowed myself some freedom with history.”¹¹² By saying this Fontaine is telling us that while she has clearly done her research to make her costumes look accurate especially for the more prominent figures. The characters who are seen less on screen or are background historical accuracy doesn’t really matter, the central characters are the ones the audience use visually to bond with the show.



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¹¹² Guilbault, “Behind the costumes of France’s most ambitious TV series Versailles,” <https://wwd.com/eye/people/madeline-fontaine-costume-tv-versailles-10255110/>

¹¹³ Philippe in his war armour costume, photo authors own.

¹¹⁴ Greg Jenner, Louis XIV dances dressed as Apollo in Versailles, “Versailles TV drama on BBC 2: The real history behind the show,” *Greg Jenner*, August 11th, 2016, accessed June 28th 2021, 15:09pm, <https://www.gregjenner.com/real-history-behind-versailles-tv-drama/>

Difference in Costumes of Heroes and Villains in *Versailles*.

In *Versailles* the heroes of the show are Louis, Philippe and Fabien with the obvious villain being William of Orange from series two as he is the other major royal to feature that stands against Louis for rule and Kingdoms. Other characters that are seen as the villains include the Duke of Cassel and Anatole Montcourt, both are disgraced after they cannot prove their nobility and decide to try and overthrow Louis. Similarly, to *The Musketeers* *Versailles* has a way for the audience to easily identify the difference between the hero and villain characters by the way they are dressed. While the heroes wear bold bright colours of expensive fabrics; aside from Fabien the Kings Musketeer who wears dark leather fit for his role in court the villains are seen to wear black dreary fabrics that often look unclean, their hair also has a different appearance to the hero characters. This is described in *Conflicting Masculinities* by Betts 'Versailles's Cassel and Montcourt are identified and belittled as villains through plot, dialogue and visually through their 'greasy' and less maintained hair in comparison especially with the royal brothers.'¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Betts "Power and passion: Seventeenth-century masculinities dramatized on the BBC in the twenty-first century," 83.



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Fabien has a more practical look that works for his job. Essentially as Louis's spy and almost Musketeer Fabien wears dark colours such as brown and forest greens which help him blend into the background with very little detailing apart from a few brass buttons and velvet bowtie, in the same way Micheletto's costume in *The Borgias* suits his role. Unlike the characters from *The Musketeers* his uniform is made from expensive velvet fabric and not the full leather that their costume favours. This could be because he is seen more at the Palace and therefore it matches more with the Louis XIV court look. His jacket is waist length instead of the longer knee length favoured by the other courtiers and he is constantly wearing his riding boots even when indoors instead of the heels that Louis introduced. He is also the only character we see wearing a riding cloak, Louis and Philippe instead wear jackets this gives Fabien a more sinister look about him that often makes others not trust him but also makes him look a bit like a villain. This 'villainous' look is possibly used as a way of showing that Fabien is doing Louis dirty work and represents the bad parts of Louis's

¹¹⁶ Image of Cassel and Montcourt's costume, *BBC*, accessed June 28th 2021, 15:26pm, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/jCZk8s58Nf9ghGwCWSScNx/montcourt-and-cassel>

character. His costume also tells the audience that Fabien is not settled at court and is ready at any moment to be called on by the King to go do his job he wouldn't need to change first, he is always on the move and so dresses in a way that enables him to become any type of man that is needed to do the job that is asked by the king whether it's a spy, a courtier or torturer.



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In comparison to this 'French' style in the show we see the Dutch William of Orange – Louis's main rival in the show thanks to their different religious and territorial views in quite a different look. In *Versailles* we see a younger William wearing a white ruff collar and shirt under a green waistcoat and an orange-red jacket trimmed in gold piping. In reality portraits show William wearing a dropped lace collar and either in military armour or his coronation robes. For actor George Webster who played William in *Versailles* playing a real historical character is exciting and the costumes help him separate the character from his own everyday life. About his character in the show he says, "The costumes were based on paintings of William III, the fabrics were also I believe of the time, with real fox furs and

¹¹⁷ Costume of Fabien, *BBC*, accessed June 28th, 2021, 15:14pm, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/1ZQ8IPfksLKxBHc1S6nMFLZ/fabien-marchal>

things like that.”¹¹⁸ Webster also has similar thoughts to Vlahos about the heels the characters had to wear although he found them more of a challenge than something that helps form the character saying, “The shoes in Versailles were quite different, and certainly changed how you moved.”¹¹⁹ These colours chosen for the character costume could have been used to represent his name and place of birth or as a reference to the future victory at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland – the costume designer using the colours associated with the Irish flag. Webster also thinks that costume does play a role in helping him become the character on screen saying, “There’s nothing quite like wearing historically inspired clothing, in a real seventeenth century castle. I find it helps me to bring history very much to the present. You gain a real empathy and understanding that people in history were built of the same stuff we are. That’s the best thing about working on period productions for me, bringing the past to life.”¹²⁰ These visual aesthetics highlight, for Webster that costume has probably the biggest impact on him finding his character particularly for a period drama where the clothing is so drastically different to what he would wear in everyday life.



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One thing that actors Alexander Vlahos and George Webster of *Versailles* agrees on is that the costumes were not the easiest to work with or the most comfortable to wear with

¹¹⁸ In an email from George Webster to the author, December 29th, 2020.

¹¹⁹ In an email from George Webster to the author, December 29th, 2020.

¹²⁰ In an email from George Webster to the author, December 29th, 2020.

¹²¹ William of Orange Costume detail, in an email from Daniel John to the author, April 19th, 2021.

Webster saying, “Comfort doesn’t seem to be something people associated with fashion back then”¹²² and Vlahos also saying, “The chain mail was heavy and was rubbish in the rain, rubbish in the sun which I imagine the chain mail was like.”¹²³ This was something that as the costume designer Fontaine has acknowledged in past interviews as well, “Comfort was not the first prerequisite, most of it was not comfortable at all.”¹²⁴ It seems while costume is important to represent a historical period in time designers feel like costume is more for appearance than actor’s enjoyment or luxury, whereas actors seem to agree that this was more of a hinderance to them getting into character. While the actors of *Versailles* thought this, other actors that I have spoken too in other chapters of this thesis have had the opposite opinion and some like David Oakes of *Victoria* find the lack of costume comfort helps them step away from their normal life and makes them understand the character better. The experiences of actors themselves and the impact of this on the representation of a period is rarely considered in work on historical television but is clearly important to the processes behind costuming as well as the final product.

Conclusion.

Betts’s work looking at masculinity in the seventeenth century has been the backbone of this chapter and while we both look at the same BBC productions of *The Musketeers* and *Versailles*, I have tried to look more in depth at how costume is the most significant way an audience learns from a period drama set in this century. Considering the opinions of those involved in these productions has helped me understand that costume has much more of an impact to those wearing them than it just looking ‘pretty’ on screen or how in fact accuracy doesn’t need to be the important factor for viewers to enjoy a show. While *The Musketeers* and *Versailles* have very different styles of costume that represent Seventeenth-century clothing and history there are some similarities between the two shows. The full leather costumes designed by De Gaye and Nebauer to represent masculinity in *The Musketeers* are

¹²² In an email from George Webster to the author, December 29th, 2020.

¹²³ Alexander Vlahos, Zoom conversation with author, May 26th, 2021.

¹²⁴ David Hinkley, “Madeline Fontaine, The Oscar-nominated costume designer for Versailles, on dressing paupers and kings,” *TV Worth Watching*, August 30th, 2017, accessed July 13th 2021, 20:48pm, <http://www.tvworthwatching.com/post/Madeline-Fontaine-the-Oscar-nominated-Costume-Designer-for-Versailles-on-Dressing-Paupers-and-Kings.aspx>

a drastic comparison to Fontaine's choice for the characters of Louis XIV's court, where velvet and silk is primarily used. Even though *The Musketeers* and *Versailles* show seventeenth-century masculinity in different ways, costume has arguably the biggest visual influence on an audience on how a character is going to be presented. Both designers use costume as a way for the audiences to effectively distinguish who the villains of the show are using dark sinister colours in comparison to decorative and bold costumes of the hero characters.

And while some historians and viewers think a period drama should be historically accurate, Nebauer and Fontaine as costume designers have also agreed that when designing for their production historical accuracy was not their main focus. With Fontaine saying, "I don't think we had the mission to be historically perfect. I think we have to take both actors and public into a respectful feeling of a period, to make it believable and true, to use the reality of the body's constraints which determined a language, adapting it to current physical ways of communicating and habits."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Jessica, "GFY Interview: Madeline Fontaine, costume designer for Versailles" *Go Fug Yourself*, September 27th, 2016, accessed July 13th 2021, 20:43pm, <https://www.gofugyourself.com/gfy-interview-madeline-fontaine-costume-designer-for-versailles-09-2016>

The Nineteenth and Twentieth Century on Screen.

Introduction.

In this chapter I will look at how the nineteenth and twentieth century are portrayed on screen. While the other chapters in my thesis are in chronological order, this chapter I have decided to look at *Victoria* the more traditional historical style period drama followed by the newer modern influenced style *Bridgerton* and *Peaky Blinders*. First, I will focus on the ITV production *Victoria* that started in 2016 and use this to see how costume is used to portray the male characters of the show. The chapter will also look at how masculinity is shown when the lead of the production is a female, and they are secondary characters unlike most of the other series' I have previously looked at. Secondly, I will look at how *Bridgerton* shows historical costume on screen by using a modern twist to engage the audience and why this tactic makes it so popular with the viewer. As well as how the use of colour is once again used to distinguish between the different families and their standing in society. And finally, I will look at how the everyday British working-class great war survivors are shown on screen through the hugely popular 2013- BBC television series *Peaky Blinders*. While also exploring why the show has had so much popularity with its viewers and on clothing for the modern man, and how the creators of the show have used modern influences like the music to represent the dark themes of the past it is reflecting.

Victoria.

There have been many screen adaptations about queen Victoria's life, such as *The Young Victoria* from 2009, *Mrs Brown* from 1997 and *Victoria and Abdul* in 2017. However, they usually focus on Victoria's life after the death of her husband Albert and don't tend to include other important events during her early reign. As argued by Iris Kleinecke-Bates, 'Previous work on representations of the Victorian past has often primarily concentrated on adaptation and has also often prioritised film over television.'¹²⁶ The popularity of the era could be because there seems to have been so much research done around the 19th century and so more people are aware of what was happening at the time. Describing Victorian life as thought by the modern viewer Iris Kleinecke-Bates states, 'The period is perceived as at

¹²⁶ Iris Kleinecke-Bates, *Victorians on Screen: The 19th Century on British television 1994-2005* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 11.

once distant and modern. Victorian Britain is suspended between past and present, too modern to unproblematically fall into the realm of nostalgia yet distant and too alien to be collapsed into the present.¹²⁷ Through an interview carried out with *Victoria* actor David Oakes and I will also explore how costume can help an actor become and understand their character to portray them on screen in a way that feels authentic to the period and help the audience also feel like they are living in the same world.

Costume in *Victoria*.

Victoria costume designer Rosalind Ebbutt has talked about the process of making the costumes for the show as, 'I aimed to remain true and historically accurate, while not losing the narrative sweep of her storytelling. There is plenty of reference for them, but also one wants to make them believable as people, and for the actor to be happy in the costume and feel right as the character.'¹²⁸ Since *Victoria* is based on real people that are very well known some costumes would have to look almost identical to real clothing pieces such as Queen Victoria's wedding dress. Actor David Oakes who plays Ernst in *Victoria* thinks that this is something that is an important part of the period drama television culture and something that needs to be looked at, but that cannot always be historically accurate depending on a production's budget. As Oakes describes, "It's always lovely to appear in a scene that has been designed to directly mimic a painting of a moment, but unless you've got an infinite budget exact duplication of period fashion has been smudged a little."¹²⁹ This statement reflects on other opinions on historical accuracy for period drama costumes such as Hayley Nebauer costume designer for *The Musketeers*. Costume designers often don't create something to be historically accurate but if the costume looks like they could belong in that era and feels authentic to the audience then the designer has played their part. Another way costume can help costume designers develop characters through costume is through collaboration with the actors. Oakes recalls on *Victoria* he and costume designer Rosalind Ebbutt would discuss and choose fabrics together. "Ros was particularly keen to ask me if I

¹²⁷ Kleinecke-Bates, *Victorians on Screen*, 6.

¹²⁸ Laura Morgan, "Victoria's Costume Designer Shares a Sneak Peek of the New Series", *Town and Country Magazine*, December 14th, 2016, accessed November 12th, 2021 18.36pm, <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/news/a8864/victoria-costume-designer-interview/>

¹²⁹ In an email to the author from David Oakes, January 15th, 2021.

liked fabrics for waistcoats etc...as she expected, I would always back her up on leaning towards the more eccentric choices. I miss that mallard duck waistcoat.”¹³⁰ This doesn't seem to be a very common thing on the other shows I have previously looked at. The exception being Alexander Vlahos from *Versailles* who had discussions with the costume designer of the show about the colours his character would wear in comparison to Louis.

The leading male character of *Victoria* is Prince Albert, when we first meet him, he is wearing the German state uniform of red breeches and jacket, though once he is settled into the British court, we see his style change to match those around him. Ebbutt also notes this change saying, 'Albert's clothes have to show the journey he made from German to English prince. When he first appears, he is wearing a hussar uniform. There is a painting of Prince Albert in this uniform, but we streamlined the look a little.'¹³¹ This style of clothing however portrays Albert looking uncomfortable and very rigid which is how other characters often describe his characteristics and mannerisms. For less formal events Albert is usually dressed in full dark blue or black suits with embroidered silk waistcoats in burgundies and a black cravat. However, we do also see him dressed more relaxed quite often where he is seen in just his breeches with suspenders and a billowing sleeved white shirt, this is a look that we don't often see on screen in Victorian period dramas especially on a royal, generally Victorians are seen as stiff, rigid serious people especially in paintings and early photographs. As described by Claire Wilcox, 'Anxieties about over-fashionable men have been a recurring theme in the history of menswear. One of the most visible upholders of propriety in the nineteenth century was Albert, Prince Consort.'¹³² One interesting comment made by the character Albert is that he feels more relaxed and freer when out in forests, and when we see him in this setting, he is wearing a dark green long riding jacket that allows him to blend into his environment. Katherine Byrne, James Leggott, and Julie Anne Taddeo in *Conflicting Masculinities* however say this Albert is more hipster modern than how we would and should expect to see a Victorian Prince, he has long shaggy hair that is often unkempt that is more relatable to the modern audience. Stating 'The young Prince Albert,

¹³⁰ In an email to the author from David Oakes, January 15th, 2021.

¹³¹ Morgan, "Victoria's Costume Designer Shares a Sneak Peek of the New Series", <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/news/a8864/victoria-costume-designer-interview/>

¹³² McKeever & Wilcox with Marta Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 125.

royal consort in Victoria, exudes hipster appeal for younger viewers.¹³³ In a similar way to *Bridgerton* this allows the audience to see something familiar to them, where in *Bridgerton* the costumes have a more modern look Victoria shows the audience a hairstyle that is modern so they can engage with the character. On the costumes of his character actor Tom Hughes who plays Albert has said, 'I don't feel remotely like me when I put my costume on and walk on to that set.'¹³⁴ This is something that actors in other chapters have also found, even Oakes who plays Albert's brother Ernst describes how the costume helps get them into character and feel so unlike themselves.



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¹³³ Katherine Byrne, James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo, *Conflicting Masculinities: Men in Television Period Drama* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2019) 9.

¹³⁴ Sophie Hines, "Tom Hughes talks about playing Prince Albert in Victoria", *Good House Keeping*, September 7th, 2017, accessed November 12th 18:40pm, <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/uk/news/a571500/tom-hughes-talks-about-playing-prince-albert-in-victoria/>

¹³⁵ Morgan, "Victoria's Costume Designer Shares a Sneak Peek of the New Series", Costume photo of Albert in his hussar uniform <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/news/a8864/victoria-costume-designer-interview/>

¹³⁶ Morgan, "Victoria's Costume Designer Shares a Sneak Peek of the New Series", Costume photo of Albert in his English costume <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/news/a8864/victoria-costume-designer-interview/>

Albert's brother Ernst dresses in a similar way to Albert are in brighter colours and his waistcoats are slightly more decorated compared to his younger brother. He also tends to look more relaxed when wearing state dress such as the Windsor uniform, this could be because he is a ruler in his own right and therefore wears it more often or because it reflects his more easy-going characteristics. While Albert wears waistcoats of coloured silk Ernst is usually seen wearing waistcoats in printed fabrics such as tartan and flowers. Oakes has described his character as 'A cad, bounder, socialist, philanthropist, explorer, composer and bon vivant. Basically, the opposite of Albert, who was more reserved,'¹³⁷ which this costume choice also reflects in comparison to Albert's muted plainer looking choices. This is something that seems to be reflected across many of the period drams I have looked at, in *Versailles* Louis and Philippe have very different styles as does Cesare and Juan in *The Borgias*, costume is not just used to represent the period but to point out differences in characterisation between brothers. On how the costume helped him become the character Oakes said, "Wearing period clothing takes a certain amount of readjustment of posture...getting familiar with one's new wardrobe is as essential as learning how to adapt one's body shape to these new clothing shapes."¹³⁸ This is interesting to find out as it shows that while most of clothing worn by Victorian men is recognisable to a modern person, they still made a modern wearer stand and walk in a different way, and so is still enough to show that costume does impact how someone of a different social class stand out. Oakes also explains that costume does heavily influence how a character is seen by the audience and is often judged on how they are visually represented, even saying this is often the first impression the actor portraying the character has of them. Saying, "The choices of wardrobe are all about character, much of what makes the character is decided by others, subsequently as an outsider judges a character on what she/he looks like. The actor who plays the character has to create the character from what the designer has made the character look like."¹³⁹

¹³⁷ "Behind the Scenes of ITV's *Victoria* with David Oakes", *English Heritage*, September 9th, 2016, accessed November 12th 18:50pm, <https://blog.english-heritage.org.uk/behind-scenes-itvs-victoria-david-oakes/>

¹³⁸ In an email to the author from David Oakes, January 15th, 2021.

¹³⁹ In an email to the author from David Oakes, January 15th, 2021.



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As with costume in period dramas certain challenges may occur for the actor or actress wearing them, this is something that actor George Webster of *Versailles* described saying how costume is not made for the comfort of actors but to look good on screen and to work for the character. Oakes also describes issues usually faced by actors wearing period clothing that is different to what they are used to in modern clothing, however where Webster thought his costume as a hindrance Oakes enjoys wearing something so different to his everyday clothing. Saying, “The main thing a modern actor needs to get used to in period costume is the lack of usable pockets. I find it liberating...Victorian attire of the upper classes especially pushes one’s body, and characterisation, up and out – its wonderfully front footed.”¹⁴¹ Oakes reflects this though on other period shows he has been a part of and how costume designers use what is available to them to recreate a character look. With him describing historical authenticity of costumes as, “For the lead actors certainly. Ros on *Victoria* worked tirelessly to recreate a true representation...for *Victoria* clothing, pictures,

¹⁴⁰ Minnie Wright, “Victoria season 2 spoiler: No happy ending for THIS character as star reveals lonely fate,” *Express*, August 27th, 2017, accessed November 12th <https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/845566/Victoria-season-2-Prince-Ernest-no-happy-ending-Tom-Hughes-Jenna-Coleman-Lord-Melbourne>

¹⁴¹ In an email to the author from David Oakes, January 15th, 2021.

patterns, and real clothing still exists to mimic and recreate.”¹⁴² Oakes also described how he even does his own research on a character which gave him some surprising results especially when it came to German Victorian design. “I was struck by the wide ranging and bold colours, and by the flamboyance of design. Far from being, stoically German or stuck-up Victorian, it was more in keeping with the hyper colour t-shirts of the ‘80s.”¹⁴³ These colours that Oakes discovered in his own research is reflected in the *Victoria* series where we see characters wearing bright purples, pinks, and greens, as well as printed waistcoats for the men.

Masculinity in *Victoria*.

In *Victoria* masculinity revolves more around the fact that the show is built around a female lead in the same way *The Spanish Princess* is and unlike many of the other period dramas I have previously looked at. For Victorian men masculinity came in the forms of strength, athleticism, spirituality, and knowledge; the technological and political advancements during this period probably led these ideals. In the show *Victoria* we do see Albert taking part in many of these traits, he is fascinated with new advancements in the rail industry as well as being the led instigator for the Great Exhibition of 1851 where many works of all industry were on display for all to see. In series one of the show, we also see Albert actively get involved with the politics of the abolition of slavery in the USA when the Queen is unable to attend. Albert is also shown to have a keen interest in physical activities, he is often shown riding his horse through Windsor’s grounds and enjoying hunting when in Scotland. Both Albert and Ernst are seen showing their skills in fencing; usually against each other, however it seems Albert uses this as a method for anger and frustration. It does however give Victoria as well as the audience the chance to view Albert in a different way other than in his constrictive clothing. Conflicts in masculinity in *Victoria* show between Albert and Victoria because he is her consort and not ruling at her side as King which he shows his grievances to many times. He wants to be Victoria’s equal in the marriage and have enough of an income so that he can financially be independent of her which slows him to have his own enjoyments. Sometimes his costume does reflect this conflict between the

¹⁴² In an email to the author from David Oakes, January 15th, 2021.

¹⁴³ In an email to the author from David Oakes, January 15th, 2021.

royals, when Albert is happier his clothes look less constrictive and more free flowing compared to when there are issues between him, and Victoria and his clothes are tightly buttoned up and bound as well as taking on darker shades of colour. This could also be seen in characters such as Cesare in *The Borgias*, his movements when he is dressed as a cardinal are much more uncomfortable compared to those in the later series when he is allowed to become head of the papal army, and he gets to wear his leather trousers. Again, this shows that costume can play a central role not just in establishing historical period but communicating details about character development to the audience.

Bridgerton.

When it comes to the regency period on screen there have been many adaptations of popular novels such as *Vanity Fair* and many of Jane Austen's works, these novels have had many on screen adaptations both on TV and in film. However, it was in 2020 that Netflix gave us a new style of regency show in the form of *Bridgerton*. The show was also originally a book series by Julia Quinn focusing on the London elite of 1813, and unlike the other shows I have looked at *Bridgerton* is unapologetic in its aim not to be like any other period drama that has come before. Instead portraying itself in a real historic setting but having a fantastical aspect which allows the production to have more liberty over historical accuracy especially when it comes to the costumes. This new style of period drama helps attract a younger fresh audience that might normally find a historical drama boring or stuffy, although it's not the first to do this, the 2006 film *Marie Antoinette* also mixes the modern with the historical to attract a younger audience.

Costume in Bridgerton.

There are three stand out male characters in the *Bridgerton* series that have very different styles in costumes, they all have individual looks in the same way the brothers of *Peaky Blinders* brothers do but with a similar colour scheme. With many men in the *Bridgerton* family it was hard to choose which to talk about, but it is the second born son Benedict that has the more interesting style of clothing. Next is Simon the Duke of Hastings who is the main focus for the female gaze and finally Lord Archibald Featherington who is seen as the foolish male character. Out of these characters Benedict dresses in what could be considered to be the most historically accurate costume of the period, his shirts have a high

collar and with it he wears a wide cravat for court balls. His suits are usually dark blue in colour which can appear black on screen; however, he tends to wear bright and bold waistcoats in golds, yellows, and greens underneath. These waistcoats are often printed with flowers or bees, the bees in the show are used to represent the Bridgerton family. The bee motif shows the audience of Benedict's family loyalty. Benedict as the second son isn't as serious as his older brother Anthony and so is allowed to have more fun, this can be seen through his clothing as he looks more relaxed in what he's wearing as well as items been looser and more carefree than Anthony's stiff always perfectly put together costume. Talking about the costumes for the Bridgerton family costume designer Ellen Mirojnick says, "They're *the* prominent family of the social season so we wanted their colour palette to be powdery — these pale blues, silvers and greens that feel like whispers of colour."¹⁴⁴



Simon the Duke of Hastings costume differs from Benedict's as it should, he has a much higher title with a very different background to that of the Bridgertons as well as storyline and purpose in the show than Benedict. When we first see him on screen Simon arrives on horseback wearing a dark purple waistcoat, black suit and long black cape that gives him a mysterious almost villainous look – at this point he is a mystery, the audience are unaware

¹⁴⁴ Radhika Seth, "The 'Bridgerton' Bonnet-Ban and Every Intricate Detail Behind Its Gaudy, Decadent Costumes", *Vogue*, December 24th, 2020, accessed November 10th, 2021, 18:45pm, <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/bridgerton-costume-designer>

¹⁴⁵ Joe Reid, "Matchmaking the *Bridgertons*", *Primetimer*, January 19th, 2021, accessed November 10th 18:52pm, <https://www.primetimer.com/features/matchmaking-the-bridgertons>

of who the character is. For court he often wears lighter greys, bold reds and turquoise blue velvet jackets which shows he has a great wealth and high status compared to those around him who are wearing the standard black coattails. While Simon's shirts do have high collars, he very rarely wears them done up with a cravat, in fact he often looks more comfortable and relaxed in his clothing than any of the Bridgerton men. It also gives him the look of indifference which is reflected in his thoughts on the *ton* season and the debutante marriage market. This costume decision reflects his mood throughout the series, at first, he sticks to dark colours that should allow him to fade into the background which is what he wants. However, once he becomes involved with the Bridgertons, in particular Daphne, he starts wearing more colourful clothing that allows the costume designer to let the audience know he is happier and how his feelings change through clothing choices. This change in colour is also reflective of his involvement with the Bridgerton family as once he and Daphne are married, he starts wearing more blue tones which is the colour most associated with the Bridgerton family, and Daphne starts wearing more purple and violet colours which is a combination of her blue colours and his reds. This is something that I have also discovered with other characters in previous shows I researched, costume designers use colour to define the families of *The Borgias* and *Medici* in the fifteenth century as well as *The Musketeers* in the seventeenth.



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Unlike the well-dressed Benedict and Simon, Lord Archibald Featherington's costume consists of suits in very bright garish colours such as bright purples, yellows, and lime green, which is the colour most associated with his family. This makes him and the rest of his family stand out unlike other characters similarly to how the characters want to get noticed during the debutante season. It is however often commented on by other characters how bad the family style is, most of the time by Featherington's daughter Penelope who very much dislikes been made to wear yellow by her mother. As described by Erica Gonzales in *Harper's Bazaar* 'The Featherington family wears floral prints in bright pinks, yellows, and oranges, which feel more 2020s than 1810s.'¹⁴⁷ Lord Featherington's character is also quite loud and boastful and so his clothing matches his nature, whereas Benedict is quiet and reserved and Simon is mysterious and self-loathing. One thing that all three of the characters have in common when it comes to their clothing is that they all reflect parts of

¹⁴⁶ Jessica Sansome, "Bridgerton fans blast 'unacceptable' announcement on Duke of Hastings as he'll not return to show," *Manchester Evening News*, April 2nd, 2021, accessed November 10th 19:00pm, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/tv/bridgerton-fans-blast-unacceptable-announcement-20312880>

¹⁴⁷ Erica Gonzales, "Bridgerton Features 7,500 Glorious Costume Pieces," *Harpers Bazaar*, December 25th, 2020, accessed November 10th, 2021 19:10pm, <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/film-tv/a35061153/bridgerton-costumes-interview/>

their characteristics through costume as well as family loyalty through matching colours or motifs. In the words of costume designer Ellen Mirojnick, “We knew it needed to be an adaptation of the period, a fictionalised romance story of the regency period. But not a historically precise period piece.”¹⁴⁸ This is something that was brought up in my interview with costume designer Hayley Nebauer when she discussed the costumes for *The Musketeers*, there is more to a costume than making it look authentic for the screen. It was also something that I found while researching about the *Tudors* television show, audiences are drawn to the sexiness of a character and not the authenticity of a costume and so a character like Simon is presented a certain way for the female gaze instead.



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¹⁴⁸ Connie Slater, “In conversation with Ellen Mirojnick, Bridgerton’s Costume Designer,” *Costume Society*, accessed November 10th, 2021 19:30pm, <https://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/in-conversation-with-ellen-mirojnick-bridgertons-costume-designer>

¹⁴⁹ Mollie Mitchell, “Bridgerton season 2: Will Ben Miller return as Lord Featherington in Bridgerton series 2?,” *Express*, February 24th 2021, accessed November 10th 2021 19:45pm, <https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/1401921/Bridgerton-season-2-will-ben-Miller-return-Lord-Featherington-dead-alive-series-Netflix>

Masculinity in *Bridgerton*.

Masculinity in *Bridgerton* isn't necessarily shown through a character's costume, however the men of the show do have different masculine qualities about them and show them in different ways. As expected, all the leading male characters have the masculine qualities of a regency man would be presumed to have, they box, ride and fence as well as knowing the rules of a duel even though it is illegal in 1813 when the show is set. We hear Simon is from a young age proficient in riding and fencing which he tries to use to impress his father since he has a stutter that otherwise in his father's eyes makes him incapable of taking over the Dukedom. We also often see Simon boxing, a way of showing the characters masculinity through a brutal sport, even challenging Anthony Bridgerton and Lord Berbrooke and winning. While it is mentioned Benedict would do a bit of fencing with his brother Colin, he is more invested in the arts and practicing becoming an artist himself, even though a gentleman would have an interest in looking at and critiquing art for one to want to make a living out of being an artist would most likely be frowned upon.

A surprising outcome to Benedict's artistic talent is that of the friendship and admiration of Henry Granville and his way of living, it could even be argued that there is an attraction between the two. Although later when Benedict witnesses Henry with another man that he really starts questioning what it means to be in love and who is allowed to love who, and therefore sets in motion the result of him not acting on these feelings. In contrast Lord Featherington is seen as a fool because he has gambled all his family's money away and therefore cannot provide for them. And Lord Nigel Berbrooke is called bumbling by another character in the second episode of the series, he often loses out to Simon when it comes to courting Daphne and trying to force himself on her knowing she wouldn't choose his hand in marriage because of his lack in gentlemanly skills. Unlike the Bridgerton family who even though struggle with their leadership at times, with Anthony being the eldest and Benedict the second son and neither wanting to be in that position they are still stable and seen as the family everyone wants to be a part of.



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With *Bridgerton* being the newest show that I've looked at it differs from most other period dramas that have been produced. It is one that isn't afraid to push boundaries by showing history on screen in new and exciting ways, even described by Nicola Coughlan one of the stars of the show as, "This isn't your granny's period drama. It's something really different and exciting."¹⁵¹ The popularity of the show has brought up a lot of conversation about how period dramas in the future should be done, especially when it comes to casting. This period drama may not be the first to highlight other ethnicities in high society, the musical *Hamilton* does this very well, but for the year it was released in 2020 was a huge talking point in the media with the beginnings of the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign. To have a period drama that has all these representations on screen helps engage a wider audience and allows more people to see someone who looks like them on screen in something where they aren't shown as the lower class where previously they had been. In an interview with Harper's Bazaar costume designer Ellen Mirojnick says, 'Also making the show more modern

¹⁵⁰ Valentina Valentini, "Meet the Men of Bridgerton," *Shondaland*, December 16th, 2020, accessed November 11th 18:42pm, <https://www.shondaland.com/inspire/a34907331/meet-the-men-of-bridgerton/>

¹⁵¹ Ellie Phillips, "This isn't your granny's period drama! Nicola Coughlan takes fans behind-the-scenes of Bridgerton during a day of filming after being picked up at 4am," *Daily Mail*, January 29th, 2021, accessed November 11th 18:50pm, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-9202563/Nicola-Coughlan-takes-fans-scenes-Bridgerton-day-filming.html>

and relatable is its diverse cast, which places representation in a genre that's been historically white-washed.¹⁵² The subject of period dramas 'white-washing' history was a big conversation topic for the show, even the show's executive producer Chris Van Dusen, asserted, "The show thrives in the space of being relatable to whoever's watching, no matter who you are...Race is as much a part of the show's conversation as class and gender are."¹⁵³

Bridgerton is one of the very few period dramas that mixes the old with the new, particularly in how it uses music to engage with its audience. By using popular songs by people like Taylor Swift and Billie Eilish in the style of old music the show can attract a younger audience that might not have otherwise engaged with the style of show. The colours are brighter and more inviting, and the language used is easily recognised as something modern day audiences would understand and use themselves so it can help the audience feel like they are part of the *Bridgerton* world. What can be argued is that the conversations around *Bridgerton* have moved us beyond conversations about accuracy in material details.

Peaky Blinders.

When looking at the 1920s on screen there are many ways in which the decade is represented, however, most of them show the period as a flamboyant, glitzy party scene where there was joy and often only show the wealthy as people who existed at the time. For British life there is the image of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, *Mr Selfridge*, and *Downton Abbey*, for American life it's the *Great Gatsby* and *Boardwalk Empire*, and while they do show the different social classes its often one of the elite and the servant, political entities, or gangsters such as Bonnie and Clyde or Al Capone. *Peaky Blinders* focuses on working class characters, unlike many of the other period dramas I have looked at, and therefore represents a different understanding of masculinity. Drawing on work by Mark Fryers and Julie Anne Taddeo, as well as the accompanying TV series book and interviews with the

¹⁵² Gonzales, "Bridgerton Features 7,500 Glorious Costume Pieces,"

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/film-tv/a35061153/bridgerton-costumes-interview/>

¹⁵³ Kerry Sinanan, "Unsilencing the Past in Bridgerton 2020: A Round Table," *Kerry Sinanan*, January 9th, 2021, accessed November 11th, 2021 19:10pm, <https://kerrysinanan.medium.com/unsilencing-the-past-in-bridgerton-2020-a-roundtable-792ecffd366>

costumes designers and cast members through articles my aim will be to explore how post war masculinity is portrayed by the characters in *Peaky Blinders* and through dress on screen.

How Costume Contributes to Characterisation, Heroes and Villains in *Peaky Blinders*.

One of the most important aspects of *Peaky Blinders* is the look of the show, and especially the costumes which give the characters the iconic style. The Birmingham based 'Shelby' gang relies so much on the clothes they wear to project their power and influence over the city, the costumes needed to link each of its members so the audience can easily identify who were the main characters are as well as their allies. Two of the most iconic pieces of costume for the Shelby family men is the long coat that they favour as well as the flat cap with hidden razor blades in the peak. This is the weapon of choice for the Shelby gang and the one that gives them their *Peaky Blinders* name that they often use it to cause harm to others, which the audience see them do on many occasions. Each member of the family has slight differences in the style of these items, but they are the important items that tell the audience who are members of the gang and where the character wearing them lie within the family. Another important feature of the Shelby *Peaky Blinders* gang is their hair cut, a very close shaved to the head sides that with a different style on top for each individual character that is revealed when hats are removed. As Said by Actor Finn Cole who plays Michael Gray in the show says, "It's actually the haircut that really gets me into character. I start to feel totally different as soon as that's done. I'm so aware of it, and the style that Loz (hair and make-up designer) has put together really signifies the *Peaky Blinders* for me."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Matt Allen, *By Order of The Peaky Blinders* (London: Michael O'Mara, 2019) pg 185.



The main character of *Peaky Blinders* is Thomas (Tommy) Shelby, the second eldest brother of the family however has taken the position of head of the family over his eldest brother Arthur. Tommy is the first Shelby man we see on screen and his costume sets the tone for the rest of the family as well as the series. Tommy's costume always consists of a three-piece suit in a grey tweed and in the early series' he sticks to the working man lace up boot and doesn't wear a tie very often, his shirts are either white or subtle pinstriped with detachable starched rounded collar and a gold pocket watch to accessorise. The colours of Tommy's clothing often reflect the gloomy dark look of the show, just like in *The Borgias* and *The Spanish Princess* costume is used to highlight character development. Although he is a successful businessman, he still reflects the working man's colours and style of where he came from. In the later series' when he has gained a bit more power and money, we see him wearing more blue tone suits as well as wearing a tie more frequently as well as

¹⁵⁵ "Peaky Blinders Haircuts For Inspiration (The Definitive Guide)," *Hairmanz*, accessed November 22nd, 2021, 19:00pm, <https://hairmanz.com/peaky-blinders-haircut/>

dressier shoes that is seen on the more elite social class. This is something that costume designer Alison McCosh has explained describing, “In season four, he’s (Tommy) getting into politics, so that’s conveyed through the sharpness of his hat, his suit, the colours, and the textures. I’ve also included a move into bluer tones to reflect the fact he’s getting into higher society now.”¹⁵⁶ Tommy’s iconic coat is knee length and black in colour but has hints at his wealth by having a wool velvet trimmed collar and lined with a bright red silk which isn’t seen on others who wear the same look. His cap also slightly differs to other characters as generally they wear a light grey tweed style Tommy has a grey pinstripe detail again showing his wealth compared to others.

In comparison to Tommy his elder brother Arthur’s clothing tends to favour lighter colours of grey and sometimes more olive tones of tweed for his suits, they also look a bit more like suits men would wear in the country rather than the city look of his brother possibly showing that he is less involved with business matters. Arthur also adds colour to his suits in the form of coloured ties often in red but also light blues as well as choosing to wear bow ties as his main accessory. This detail tells the viewer that he is the eldest and head of the family as this was a staple piece for men in the 1920’s however as we learn, this is in fact not the case in the series. As reporter Meah Peers has described, ‘This is another pretty small detail, but Arthur is really the only Shelby brother to ever be seen wearing a bow tie. During this time in Britain, the head of the family would likely be the one to wear a bow tie.’¹⁵⁷ This shows that costume designer Alexandra Caulfield has done some research into the period and what family hierarchy there would be, research is something that *Victoria* costume designer Rosalind Ebbutt also considers an important part of designing for period dramas.

¹⁵⁶ Megan McEachern. “Peaky Blinders costume designer reveals secrets of TV’s most dapper mobsters as they hurtle towards series climax,” *The Sunday Post*, September 22nd, 2019, accessed November 22nd, 2021, 19:10pm, <https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/peaky-blinders-costumes-i-loved-putting-her-in-trousers-just-to-make-a-statement-peaky-blinders-stylist-on-giving-her-dedicated-followers-of-slashin-a-brand-new-look-wardrobe-guru-r/>

¹⁵⁷ Meah Peers, “Peaky Blinders: 10 Hidden Details About the Costumes You Didn't Notice,” *Screen Rant*, August 15th, 2019, accessed November 22nd, 2021, 19:15pm, <https://screenrant.com/peaky-blinders-hidden-costume-details/>



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In series two of the show, we are introduced to one of the main rivals to the Shelby gang, Alfie Solomons, Alfie's character is very different from any of the Shelby brothers he's a Jewish London gangster that has made profit in the making of prohibited alcohol. Unlike the very clean tailored look of the Shelby's Alfie's look is one that is very dishevelled, rumpled, and ill fitting. His costume consists of a large white shirt, a dark corduroy waistcoat that again hasn't been looked after and is too large for him, and a wide brimmed brown fedora style hat. Alfie's clothing portrays him as a worker and getting involved with the hard work rather than always sitting behind a desk, as well as not mixing with the higher social classes like Tommy tends to mix with. Another key rival that the audience is introduced to in series four is Luca Changretta, he is possibly the only character that could compete with Tommy for style of costume. Because Luca is from an Italian family, he does take pride in the way he dresses, however his clothing looks more like how gangsters are generally portrayed on screen with a pinstripe dark suit, tie, trilby, and polished oxford shoes however he also dons

¹⁵⁸Ronan McGreevy, "Real-life Peaky Blinders: How the IRA sourced guns from the 'Birmingham mob,'" *The Irish Times*, January 8th, 2021, accessed November 22nd, 2021 19:30pm, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/real-life-peaky-blinders-how-the-ira-sourced-guns-from-the-birmingham-mob-1.4452366>

a long black coat very similarly to Tommy's. Luca's costume does give him a sinister look as he is able to blend into the shadows and his hat helps conceal his face so that it's not always clear what he is thinking, allowing the audience to understand that he is the villain of the series.



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Each series of *Peaky Blinders* has a different antagonist for the lead characters to face whether it is Inspector Campbell, Luca Changretta or Oswald Mosley, however it's very clear that the heroes of the show are the Shelby brothers, and anyone who stands against them, or their loved ones and allies are the villains of the series. Still, in the world of *Peaky Blinders* the roles of heroes and villains is not as easy to spot as it is in other period dramas I have previously discussed like *Versailles* or *The Tudors*, all the male characters do something that makes them a villain to someone else. This is explored in *Conflicting Masculinities* in the introduction '*Peaky Blinders*, invite the audience to align with the rebels and criminals,

¹⁵⁹ *Imdb*, Character costumes of Tommy Shelby and Alfie Solomons, accessed November 22nd, 2021, 19:42pm, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6227892/mediaviewer/rm2558087680/>

suggesting that it is through resistance, not compliance, that ‘true’ masculinity is constructed.’¹⁶⁰

Whereas the character of Alfie is first shown on screen with his ill-fitting clothes and untidy beard and hair, as well as him having psoriasis so he is not as comely as the lead Tommy giving the audience an indication that he would be a villain in the story. And while Alfie and Changretta are characters that stand out as villains by the way they look, even family members can become enemies of Tommy and the rest of the family such as Michael in series five. When first introduced Michael arrives from a small country village dressed in light colours like tan and greens that match with the light and airy countryside. However, as he starts to get more and more involved with the family business, he starts dressing more like the other Shelby’s and finally ending up in a dark coloured version of Tommy’s suit when it’s revealed in series five that he wants to take over the Shelby company and get rid of Tommy.

The Shelby brothers are certainly portrayed as more the anti-hero trope than taking on the form of a classical hero of the knight that characters, I’ve previously looked at have done in other period dramas. Even Julie Anne Taddeo has found issues with the fact the Shelby brothers are portrayed as the heroes of the show, saying, ‘Finding heroes among the Shelby brothers, who with their gang of ‘Peaky Blinders’ rule the dirty, violent streets of post-war Birmingham, prove problematic.’¹⁶¹ One major difference in *Peaky Blinders* compared to the other period dramas that has been explored in previous chapters is the use of leather for character costumes, especially for the villainous characters. There are clothes from the 1920’s and 1930’s that still survive, and people may have photos of family members wearing them so costume designers must keep the looks more authentic than something like *The Musketeers* or *The Borgias*. Besides as it turns out not everyone needs to be wearing leather to look cool or like a bad boy, if the character has the attitude and wears something that makes them stand out like a dusty black coat it gives them a presence on screen. Showing

¹⁶⁰ Byrne, Leggott Taddeo, *Conflicting Masculinities* 6.

¹⁶¹ Julie Anne Taddeo, “The war is done. Shut the door on it! The Great War, Masculinity and Trauma in British Period Television”, in *Conflicting Masculinities: Men in Television Period Drama*, ed Katherine Byrne, James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo, (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2019) 178.

the audience expectations and understandings of masculinity change as we move closer to the present.

Twentieth Century Masculinity of Post-war men in *Peaky Blinders*.

Tommy is a decorated soldier however it's not something he wants to be remembered for, even going as far as throwing these medals into the Birmingham canal. Something that is shared with other characters in the series, they volunteered to join the army and fight for their country however upon returning home the medals are the only thing they are left with for their recognition. *Peaky Blinders* is one of the only period dramas that really show the aftereffects of men at war, especially those dealing with PTSD or shell shock as it was known then, and how they emotionally and physically deal with their trauma.

In the first series we see Tommy dealing with his war memories by smoking opium to forget the noise of the shovels he would hear when digging the tunnels during his time in the war. He only finds silence when he meets Grace and they make love, and while he does find this solace, he still carries out the gang assaults since war and violence is all he's known for the past four years. With characters even commenting that he came back from the front a different man to the one who left, the hardened businessman who exudes all his power through his suit is on the inside still quite a broken man. Tommy even keeps a photo of himself in his war uniform on his office desk throughout the show, either to remind others he fought for his king and country or as a reminder to himself that he survived something as traumatic as war and came back a stronger more powerful man. A uniform that turned boys into men in the eyes of others, in particularly the female gaze, something that seems to run through the ages. A heroic soldier is often romanticised in period dramas set in this era and yet as a leading male character Tommy Shelby goes against this soldier trope.

His brother Arthur however deals with his PTSD in a very different way, at first Arthur relishes in his broken mind and quite enjoys the violence that comes with his new position in the Shelby gang. At first, he turns to alcohol and women to channel his inner anger and when these don't help, he turns to cocaine and finally religion with the help of his wife Linda in series three. However just like before neither of these prove to be successful ways for Arthur to forget his time in the war. In the first two series Tommy seems to show that he

wants to help Arthur to get over his PTSD even though his idea of doing this is for them to push the trauma down instead of dealing with it in a healthy way even going as far to say 'The war is done. Shut the door on it, like I did.'¹⁶² However, when he needs Arthur to do a job, he tends to exploit his animalistic violence and actively encourages Arthur to dig into his darkness to help the Shelby 'company'. We even see minor characters like Danny Whizzbang showing how their war trauma has affected their life once they've returned home, his introduction on the series sees him barrelling into the Garrison pub destroying tables and glasses while chanting had to go bang, had to go bang. These emotional and nonvisible psychological injuries really started questioning ex-soldiers' masculinity as it was seen as a similar burden to women's hysteria, something that is explored by Elaine Showalter stated by Taddeo in *Conflicting Masculinities* saying it was 'a crisis of masculinity and a trial of the Victorian masculine ideal, signalled an unconscious protest not only against the war but against the concept of "manliness" itself.'¹⁶³ The regimental style of the suits of the Shelbys and their allies wear almost reflects the military uniform they wore during the war, it reflects their strength and resilience that they survived and made it home mostly in one piece.

Peaky Blinders also shows the rivalry between the soldiers that fought on the front and the officers who sent them there, in series three at Tommy and Grace's wedding we are shown what the Shelby's think of the cavalry officers that show up wearing their uniforms. In the opinion of Tommy, Arthur, and their younger brother John these war 'heroes' don't actually deserve the recognition they have received because they left the soldiers at the front vulnerable and without support during the war instead playing bridge. We also find out that Inspector Campbell didn't serve and this in Tommy's eyes makes him less of a man and in fact beneath him, since he himself fought for his King and won medals over his superiors - even though he gets rid of them as soon as he's home. As said by Julie Anne Taddeo 'War, as many scholars have argued, was and still largely is one of the seemingly "natural" homelands of masculinity.'¹⁶⁴ And *Peaky Blinders* certainly shows the audience how men at war even in a more 'modern' world like the 1920's still holds the old construction of

¹⁶² "Series 2, Episode 2," *Peaky Blinders*, October 9th, 2014, television broadcast.

¹⁶³ Taddeo, "The war is done," 171.

¹⁶⁴ Taddeo, "The war is done," 181.

ultimate masculinity. Even characters like Cesare Borgia from *The Borgias* and Philippe Duke of Orleans from *Versailles* are seen and feel more masculine after their time at war. Throughout the different shows I've looked at this seems to be a running theme and so shows the importance warfare is considered the important factor to show masculinity. The clothing worn by the *Peaky Blinders* characters can be seen as an extension of their military uniform, as stated by Miriam Phelan, 'As the war dragged on, men were united across class boundaries in their experience of war, and recruitment drew on this idea of a singular military masculinity.'¹⁶⁵ Further explaining how once the men left military service the return to their normal lives was a struggle going back to the class divide through dress, 'Following a war that focused public attention on men's clothing through recruitment and demobilisation, men of all classes were self-conscious about their position in society out of uniform.'¹⁶⁶

As stated in the *Peaky Blinders* TV show accompanying book, 'Such is the astonishing impact of *Peaky Blinders* intricately constructed, and expertly researched, sartorial design. Six years on from its launch, the show's influence on modern fashion has been undeniable, particularly within men's styling.'¹⁶⁷ The popularity of *Peaky Blinders* has had a lasting effect on modern audiences in many ways, whether it be the iconic suits and haircuts or to the modern music that frames the historical looking background, the show has become a cult hit. Unlike any other period dramas set in the early twentieth century *Peaky Blinders* has managed to mix the modern with the past by using modern music as part of the backdrop to the show. Even getting artists to suggest the production to use their music because they are fans of the show, such as David Bowie and Iggy Pop as well as introducing the audience to lesser-known artists like Ane Brun. This can help the audience feel more like they are a part of the show because they can recognise something that they would normally hear on the radio, it also allows the show to feel less like a period drama unlike other early modern period dramas such as *Victoria*.

¹⁶⁵ McKeever & Wilcox with Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 188.

¹⁶⁶ McKeever & Wilcox with Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 188.

¹⁶⁷ Allen, *By Order of The Peaky Blinders*, 177.

The style of *Peaky Blinders* has had a huge effect on the modern man, with fans recreating the looks of the Shelby men, and it's not just the working-class man that has started to wear the look but also celebrities like David Beckham have embraced the Peaky style. Maybe because it's so close to what modern clothing is like or because the show and actors make the style look cool there has been a re-emergence of the three-piece tweed suit with flat caps. Many high street brands such as *Suits Direct* and *Moss Bros.* have recreated looks for the everyday man that is inspired from the show. Even creator and writer for *Peaky Blinders* Steven Knight has turned to creating a fashion line based on the show called Garrison Tailors – named after the pub the Shelby brothers own in the series. As said by *Peaky Blinders* creator Steven Knight 'Lots of people seem to admire the way the Peaky boys look, our intention is to make clothes for the present day. These are not costumes; they are part of a wider trend toward a new kind of men's clothing.'¹⁶⁸ This imitation is probably due to the costumes of *Peaky Blinders* reflecting a very similar style to the modern-day clothing that men can wear today without drawing too much attention to themselves. This is unlike the costumes of other shows such as *Versailles* where clothing is more reflective of a feminine style with ruffled shirts and heavily jacquard jackets. However, some designers like Joshua Kane are trying to bring these looks back so maybe there will be a resurgence of some men bringing this style to the high street soon.

¹⁶⁸ Steven Knight, *Garrison Tailors*, accessed November 22nd, 2021, 19:45pm, <https://www.garrisontailors.com/peaky-blinders-clothing-steven-knight/>



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Conclusion

What I have learned about the nineteenth and twentieth century on screen is that historical accuracy is more of a preoccupation amongst costume designers, actors, and potentially audiences as they are set in a time where clothing still survives and so designers have more to base costumes on. The clothing is also so like modern men's clothing the audience can relate to the lives of the characters in a more realistic way compared to something like the lives of the Medici or the Tudors families. It has also been interesting to see how masculinity in the elite of the nineteenth century compares to masculinity of the working class in the twentieth century. Where characters in *Victoria* and *Bridgerton* are considered masculine because they fence and know how to conduct society politics in *Peaky Blinders* because the characters have been to war, and some have leading position this is considered the most masculine activity they could do. The way costume designers have

¹⁶⁹ "Style Guide: Peaky Blinders," *Suits Direct*, September 6th, 2019, accessed November 22nd, 2021, 20:00pm, <https://www.suitdirect.co.uk/styleguide/features/style-guide-peaky-blinders>

treated these four shows is also quite different, because *Victoria* is based on a real historical figure designer Ebbutt felt it was necessary to keep costumes accurate. This is something that also applies to the costumes of *Peaky Blinders* show creator Steven Knight wanted to keep everything as authentic as possible because he had grown up with the stories of the real Peaky Blinders as had many others. In comparison *Bridgerton* didn't strive to be accurate it is more about engaging the audience to watch and start conversations. As Ellen Mirojnick costume designer for *Bridgerton* says, "It's the feelings of the adaptation and the illusion of the period. Things in our show, in fact, the whole entire show is based on solid research, a solid foundation of the Regency period. It was our interpretation of that period that we ran with."¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Slater, "In conversation with Ellen Mirojnick, Bridgerton's Costume Designer," <https://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/in-conversation-with-ellen-mirojnick-bridgertons-costume-designer>

The Distant Past and Fantasy Genre.

Introduction.

This chapter will look at men's costumes in fantasy shows and shows set in the distant past, how they represent a character's masculinity, social class and how they can symbolise parts of history to audiences through a different medium than the other period dramas discussed previously in this thesis. Because even though these shows veer into fantasy they still borrow deliberately from historical menswear. Using books by Michele Clapton costume designer of *Game of Thrones*, academics who specialise in medieval history and interviews conducted with actors from both *Game of Thrones* and *The Last Kingdom* about their costume's contribution to the show and the history the shows represent.

The costumes can help an audience understand the world they're watching as well as give insight to a character's social class and sometimes give clues into their views of masculinity and ideologies. The male image in fantasy shows is shown as capable warriors that often lose their status in power and therefore the view of strong masculinity changes in their eyes, however this doesn't change in the viewers eyes they are still seen as a 'leading man.' Neither *Game of Thrones* or *The Last Kingdom* have set 'heroes' or 'villains', everyone thinks they are the hero of their own story. In *The Last Kingdom* Uhtred switches sides to suit the narrative and *Game of Thrones* often kills off the likeable main characters with the men generally suffering in the more violent ways.

Both *Game of Thrones* and *The Last Kingdom* are adaptations of a novel series that were written at different times to when the shows aired. George R.R. Martin's first book *A Game of Thrones* was released in 1996 by the TV show didn't start until 2011, Bernard Cornwell's *The Last Kingdom* was published in 2004 and the TV adaptation started in 2015. These 'Historical Fantasy' genre shows followed the popularity of those similar before them, *Game of Thrones* came the year after *The Tudors* had finished and the similarities in the battling families of Westeros are reminiscent of the family battles in the Wars of the Roses. It also not only represents or references historical times but even has modern day comparisons such as the social divide and also tackles the issues of gender and race we still see today. *The Last Kingdom* came at a time when *Game of Thrones* was at its height of popularity and

followed in the footsteps of the popular TV show *Vikings*, there seemed to be a need at the time for people to escape from their normal life into a world of fantasy. However, this chapter will not be focusing on the book series as the show helps the audience understand the worlds in a more vibrant setting, you can imagine the world while reading a book, but you can fully immerse yourself in the imagery presented and intended on screen. They also allow the audience to understand how costumes and settings work together in a production along with understanding how somebody may have moved in the clothing at the time the show was set, in particular a show like *The Last Kingdom* where clothes from the period haven't survived. As said by Jerome De Groot, '*Game of Thrones* takes place in a fantastical land called Westeros. However, the setting is recognisably part of a kind of dirty, grim, irrational medievalist discourse. It is fantasy history, combining the representational tropes of the medieval and early modern past with magical elements.'¹⁷¹

I think there is an importance to acknowledge the role fantasy shows play in using history for inspiration as well as getting an audience interested in the real historical stories that the shows use whether it be a fictional series, or a series layered in fact but with dramatisation to hook an audience. Scholars such as Carolyne Larrington¹⁷² have used academic knowledge of the Medieval period to look at these distinctions in both the book series as well as the television production. These books however do tend to look at religion, power, and the roles of women in society and the comparisons to the same areas in history. They don't look into the costumes, especially the male costumes on the show and what can be learned from them about the roles of masculinity in history leaving the area less researched which will be explored in this chapter.

Bernard Cornwell has been noted describing his books "as a gateway into the study of real history, and Ryan Lavelle (historical advisor for *The Last Kingdom*) hopes the TV series is the same,"¹⁷³ showing that people tend to engage with characters on screen but maybe not the

¹⁷¹ De Groot, *Consuming History* 237.

¹⁷² Carolyne Larrington, "*Winter is Coming: The Medieval World of Game of Thrones*," in *Essays on Power, Gender, Death and Performance in HBO's Game of Thrones*, ed. Lindsey Mantoan and Sara Brady (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers 2018).

¹⁷³ Louisa Mellor, "The Last Kingdom's Historical Advisor on Accuracy", *Den of Geek*, November 30th, 2020, accessed April 6th, 2021 17:15pm, <https://www.denofgeek.com/tv/the-last-kingdoms-historical-advisor-on-accuracy-its-a-constant-compromise/>

actual historical figure. One of the considerations in these two shows is how history is portrayed to an audience that might not necessarily enjoy the subject. *Game of Thrones* isn't quite as obvious about its historical undertones can still spark conversations about the military styles used in different countries and the diverse cultures seen around the world for clothing and system beliefs on gender and identity roles.

The *Game of Thrones* world has used many influences: Westeros can be compared to England in the Middle Ages and Dorne is desert like and heavily influenced by India, even the way the series ends is with a similar set up to the Saxon Witan as a way to rule the land. There are other historical references that can be seen in *Game of Thrones* such as the battles between the Lannister and Stark families are very similar to the battles between the York's and the Lancaster's in the Wars of the Roses of the 15th century. Even the Dothraki people are very similar to the Huns and Genghis Khan, and the ice wall that separates the Northerners of Westeros and the Wildlings is like Hadrian's wall near to the English and Scottish border. As Brian A. Pavlac has written 'He (Martin) has built a world that links together pageantry, war, and glamour. Westeros and Essos may come across to viewers as authentically medieval. Fictional medievalism, however, is seldom an accurate depiction of the Middle Ages.'¹⁷⁴

On the costumes of the show actor Eugene Simon who played Lancel Lannister has said "Various armours were all constructed in a way that paid homage to the sigils of each house, which is a theme in a lot of medieval English history. There was enormous influence from a massive variety of cultural influence...History is essential to fantasy regardless of being fiction."¹⁷⁵ Which was also described by Pavlac 'In *Game of Thrones* Martin carefully distinguishes each family through distinctive insignia. Each dynasty has its own form of medieval heraldry, which includes a kind of coat of arms called a sigil.'¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Gillian Polack, "The Medieval-esque World of *Game of Thrones*", In *Game of Thrones Vs History*, ed. Brian A. Pavlac (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2017) 251.

¹⁷⁵ In an email from Eugene Simon to the author, February 1st, 2021.

¹⁷⁶ Polack, "The Medieval-esque World of *Game of Thrones*", 253.

The Saxon and Viking history on *The Last Kingdom* does have some similarities to what really happened however the historic timeline moves quicker so that characters don't age in the way the real person would've have. Some characters are also made to be more prominent in the show for added dramatic effect, and some are simply based on real people like Cnut but aren't in the right era so people can recognise names in battles even though they wouldn't have been involved in them. This also is the same for major historical events that we see on screen, to keep the story moving the show includes many battles many which are to antagonise the characters, but certain real historic battles do have to be included such as the Battle of Cynwit. Even the actors themselves have turned to history to help them play the role they have, to play the character Finan in *The Last Kingdom* actor Mark Rowley said, "I ended up doing fight re-enactment classes for two years with actual Viking guys who have re-enactment groups."¹⁷⁷ And to play the role of the real King Edward actor Timothy Innes said, "I researched the real life of King Edward and Alfred and read about the Saxon and Danish invading's of the 9th century."¹⁷⁸

Costume and Masculinity in *Game of Thrones*.

The different families of the show not only represent different period of history, but they also show different types of masculinities as well as how these characteristics are viewed by others in society, each man has a 'image' they are expected to embody and when the dynamics of this image change so does the response from other characters as they challenge the norm. Jaime Lannister is considered to be the greatest knight in the show and when he loses his position after his sword hand is cut off, he feels emasculated and is often reminded that because of his he is effectively useless, his view is that because he has lost his power, he has lost his masculinity. In Westeros there are stereotypical models to follow, the eldest male should be the head of the family and make decisions about marriages and alliances, this is a common idea throughout history, elder sons gained the titles and position from their fathers whereas the second or third sons would join monasteries or took on a military position that the first-born son couldn't risk doing. However, in the Tyrell family even though Mace is classed as the head of the family his mother Olenna really holds the

¹⁷⁷ Mark Rowley, Zoom conversation with author, January 15th, 2021.

¹⁷⁸ In an email from Timothy Innes to the author, January 12th, 2021.

power and influence, even when he has a position on the high council nobody listens to his opinions and ideas his mother even does this to his face saying, “Not now Mace, Lord Tywin and I are speaking.”¹⁷⁹

One of the most surprising things is the view of characters that are of noble birth or are in high-ranking positions but don't follow the 'masculine norms' such as Oberyn Martell. He is a Prince of Dorne and a skilled warrior but doesn't have the typical family that is expected to be followed in the country, he has many children but isn't married to his lover and he also has relations with men which is frowned upon in Westeros but in his city, it is accepted where everyone is treated as equals. Oberyn's eventual downfall in series five during combat happens not because he faces a better fighter but because he lets his emotions get the better of him, a thought often associated with women throughout many periods of time. 'At the wrong moment, he allows his feelings to get the better of him, despite being a skilled fighter – and this proves fatal for him.'¹⁸⁰ Another character, Loras Tyrell is also not taken seriously as a man because of his sexual orientation even though he helped win the battle of Blackwater and is a skilled warrior, he is often ridiculed by other male characters about his lifestyle “You weren't Renly's type, I'm afraid. He preferred curly-haired little girls like Loras Tyrell. You're far too much a man for him”¹⁸¹

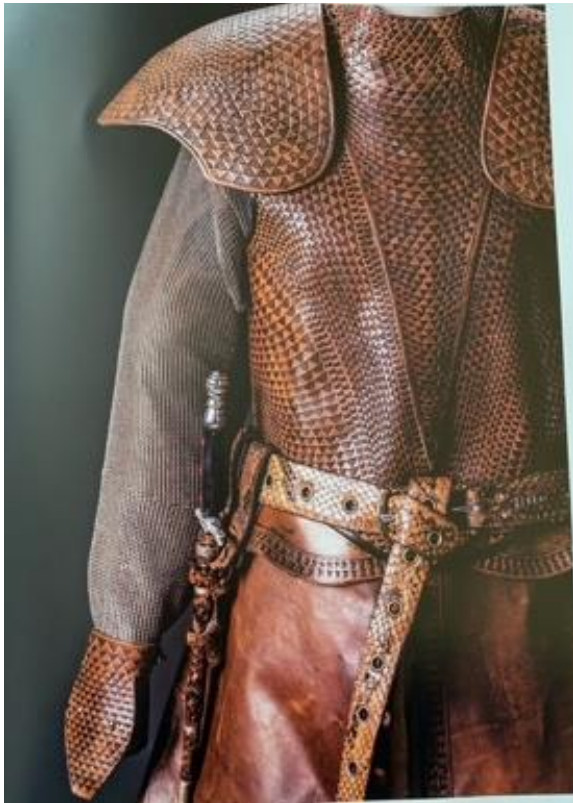
Oberyn Martell is a Prince of Dorne and so his clothing is very different to the rest of the characters in *Game of Thrones*, his costume is heavily based on Indian influences in style and colours. His robe is a golden yellow colour embroidered with sunspear his family's sigil and a silk trim with an orange linen shirt underneath, his armour is a chestnut colour leather printed in a snakeskin design styled after his fighting name 'Red Viper' and his use of poison on his weapons. His ostentatious clothing shows he has wealth and has a high-power position in society; however, the cut is not the typical male style that we see all the other men in the show wearing, the costume designer Michele Clapton has said “The robes are

¹⁷⁹ “The Lion and the Rose,” *Game of Thrones*, HBO, April 14th, 2014, television broadcast.

¹⁸⁰ Halle Kannik, “Power Play and Family Ties: Hybrid Fantasy, Network Narrative, and Female Characters,” In *Women of Ice and Fire: Gender, Game of Thrones and Multiple Media Engagements*, ed. Anne Gjelsuik, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016) 141.

¹⁸¹ “Dark Wings, Dark Words,” *Game of Thrones*, HBO, April 8th, 2013, television broadcast.

feminine in silhouette, but as soon as Pedro (the actor) put them on, he wore them in a masculine way that was perfectly suited for the character.”¹⁸²



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¹⁸² Michele Clapton, *Game of Thrones: The Costumes*, (Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers, 2019), 269.

¹⁸³ Clapton, *Game of Thrones: The Costumes*, 277.

¹⁸⁴ Clapton, *Game of Thrones: The Costumes* 271.

¹⁸⁵ Tunic 1855-1879, V&A Museum, June 25th, 2009, accessed April 7th, 2021, 14:55pm, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O475965/tunic-unknown/>

Meryn Trant is a member of the Kingsguard, the royal bodyguard and some of the most skilled knights in Westeros. His 'uniform' is made of a biscuit-coloured leather knee length tunic, gold steel looking armour detailed with three swords in the shape of a crown on the breastplate showing that he is protection for the King, the pauldrons and tasset have extra detailing of leaves that are layered that also help give extra protection as well as showing the position he has, there is also a long white cloak that was the main part of the uniform that told the audience what position of power the character had, this was also part of the costume that George R.R. Martin had described in his books. On wearing the costume actor Ian Beattie said, "The moment I donned the Kingsguard costume I could feel the character, his arrogance, his sense of being invulnerable and the splendour that the outfit imparted to him."¹⁸⁶ As Clapton said in her book describing her costume designs, "I wanted to integrate different types of armour from around the world into one cohesive look, and in the end, I arrived at something that brought together traditional samurai armour with European styles from the Middle Ages."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ In an email from Ian Beattie to the author, January 12th, 2021.

¹⁸⁷ Clapton, *Game of Thrones: The Costumes*, 174.



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¹⁸⁸ Ian Beattie image, *IMDb*, accessed April 7th, 2021 15:03pm, <https://www.imdb.com/imdbpicks/game-of-thrones-stars-in-out-costume/rg801348352/mediaviewer/rm748163072/>

¹⁸⁹ Clapton, *Game of Thrones: The Costumes*, 175.

¹⁹⁰ Armour 1500-1599, *Leeds Armouries*, accessed April 29th, 2021, 12:30pm, <https://collections.royalarmouries.org/object/rac-object-46053.html>

Janos Slynt the leader of the City Watch is eventually disgraced and is made to join the Night's Watch instead of having a uniform of golden steel he is forced into the black clothing that goes alongside his new role. The Night's Watch costumes consist of black leather tunics that are buckled to the neck that maybe plays into the role of the men taking a vow of chastity, there is also a lot of furs used as their stronghold is so far north and they work on a giant ice wall, so they need to be warm rather than stylish. Actor Dominic Carter after wearing both felt "The second costume was a series of leather tunics and waistcoats, was constrictive and uncomfortable – just like being a member of the Night's Watch."¹⁹¹ He also noted that his first costume that included a cloak was "very heavy but easy to move in, a cloak always makes you walk with a swagger."¹⁹²



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¹⁹¹ In an email from Dominic Carter to the author, January 15th, 2021.

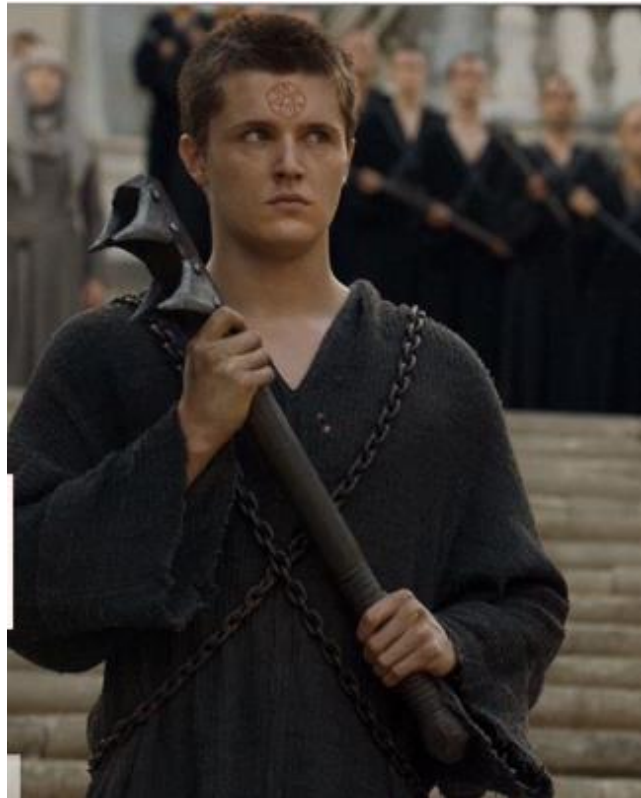
¹⁹² In an email from Dominic Carter to the author, January 15th, 2021.

¹⁹³ Saejima, *Fanpop*, accessed April 7th, 2021 15:01pm, <https://www.fanpop.com/clubs/game-of-thrones/images/37006283/title/season-4-episode-4-oathkeeper-photo>

One of the characters that goes through a big change not only socially but also costume wise is Lancel Lannister, he starts as a high born and eventually ends up as a member of the Faith Militant meaning he loses all the power and money that his family holds. In the first couple of seasons of the show Lancel wears a tunic in red leather the colour of his family name, it is well studded showing he has some wealth and is probably more for decoration than safety as he is just a squire, he also wears a red cape that he drapes around his neck in a similar way the Saxons did. When in his more natural clothing Lancel wears a long tunic of gold that is heavily printed with a red sash and red ruffled shirt underneath with a red leather belt that is studded with lion heads showing his family pride. Once he becomes part of the Faith Militant Sparrows, he leaves this behind and wears a simple long grey robe that doesn't look like the most comfortable fabric and eventually adds chains across his chest which added to the very different look he had at the beginning of the show. Actor Eugene Simon describes his character as "Lancel in seasons one and two had a stifled feel to him...a rigid man who was trying to someone or something. In season five and six it felt like Lancel had let go of some superficial part of himself."¹⁹⁴ Simon has also gone on to say, "One of the most important aspects of a costume is the weight, and how it makes you feel."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ In an email from Eugene Simon to the author, February 1st, 2021.

¹⁹⁵ In an email from Eugene Simon to the author, February 1st, 2021.



The Tyrell family are one of the more ostentatious families in *Game of Thrones* and this shows in their costumes, Mace Tyrell the head of the family is seen wearing a printed silk tunic with a brigandine armour style fastened with several gold clasps showing that he is very wealthy, he also is often seen wearing a cravat that is folded into the shape of a rose the family sigil. Talking about his costume Roger Ashton-Griffiths said, “Wearing the costume I find is an essential part of discovering the character, wearing Mace Tyrell’s clothes help me feel like the head of a great house.”¹⁹⁸ Clapton describes Mace Tyrell’s costume “We also worked out how to tie his cravat so it would appear to be in the shape of a flower.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Curt Wagner, “Eugene Simon’s ‘Game of Thrones’ role more than kissing cousin”, *Chicago Tribune*, April 18th, 2012, accessed April 7th, 2021 15:07pm <https://www.chicagotribune.com/redeye/redeye-eugene-simon-interview-game-of-thrones-house-of-anubis-20120418-story.html>

¹⁹⁷ Eliza Thompson, “72 minor ‘Game of Thrones’ characters whose names you’ve forgotten”, *Cosmopolitan*, August 23rd, 2017, accessed April 7th, 2021 15:10pm <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/tv/g12022444/minor-game-of-thrones-characters/?slide=66>

¹⁹⁸ In an email from Roger Ashton-Griffiths to the author, January 16th, 2021.

¹⁹⁹ Clapton, *Game of Thrones: The Costumes*, 266.



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While all the actors have said that the costume helped them find the character they were playing they weren't without challenges for them; actors Beattie and Carter both stated "There must be style over practicality in costume because it's what you see on screen that matters not whether an actor can cartwheel in it,"²⁰¹ and "style definitely outweighed substance, the sheer weight of the outfit (28 kilos) made out of brass and leather meant I got cooked every time I wore it in Croatia."²⁰² Although Simon found his costume challenges an asset in helping with the change social status his character goes through, "The Sparrow costume was light, incredibly comfortable and gave a feeling of bliss – however when chains were added the weight of real metal chain gave the feeling of sadistic vein flowing through him."²⁰³ These comments on their costumes reflects what other actors have said in previous chapters such as Alexander Vlahos from *Versailles* and David Oakes from *Victoria*.

Simon and Carter have both commented on the use of history in the show and how the costumes fit into the theme of history on screen as well as historical use in costumes outside the historical period drama television show. Carter said "From the outside I felt there were lots of cultural references to the costumes. My gold cloak helmet looked like something a Japanese Samurai might wear. The costumes were very much informed by the climate the

²⁰⁰ Clapton, *Game of Thrones: The Costumes*, 267.

²⁰¹ In an email from Dominic Carter to the author, January 15th, 2021.

²⁰² In an email from Ian Beattie to the author, January 12th, 2021.

²⁰³ In an email from Eugene Simon to the author, February 1st, 2021.

characters were from, based on weather and social class.”²⁰⁴ Simon agreed that the show used history as an influence saying, “Various armours were all constructed in a way that paid homage to the sigils of each house, which is a theme in a lot of medieval English history. There was enormous influence from a massive variety of cultural influence... history is essential to fantasy regardless of being fiction.”²⁰⁵ This is important to thinking how history can influence shows that are targeted at a different audience than the typical period drama.

Masculinity in *The Last Kingdom*.

The main theme running through the show *The Last Kingdom* is the brotherly bond between the characters along with the sense of belonging somewhere, Uhtred’s group are all made up of men from different backgrounds and social status’ who feel they didn’t have a home. Uhtred himself was born a Saxon but was raised as a Dane after his home is raided by Ragnar the Elder and he’s taken with them, this conflict is one of thing things that he continually struggles with throughout the show never knowing where his loyalties should lie. Sihtric is a bastard son of a ruling Dane but has no loyalty to his father who doesn’t treat him with the same respect as a legitimate child would get and is quick to join Uhtred’s team after he is captured by him and promises to help him defeat his father. And although Finan is Irish he meets Uhtred while they were slaves, and once they are rescued by Uhtred’s adopted brother Ragnar, he joins Uhtred rather than go back home since it had been three years since he had been there.

Saxons do tend to have the stereotypical view on masculinity, the men fight wars and engage in politics, whilst the women are at home with children being devoted to God. Haesten who is a Dane does sometimes slip into this ideology especially when he kidnaps King Alfred’s daughter Aethelflaed, he very much views women as a prize to rape and be rewarded with after battle. While the Saxons have the typical belief of men being the strongest the Danes show that they are willing to follow a woman if she is a strong leader, we see this with the character Brida when we first see her in a high-power position, she is

²⁰⁴ In an email from Dominic Carter to the author, January 15th, 2021.

²⁰⁵ In an email from Eugene Simon to the author, February 1st, 2021.

fighting alongside Ragnar but is treated with the same respect he has. In later seasons when travelling alone other male Danes recognise her from stories, they have heard about her successful raids not because of who her husband was. In comparison Aethelflaed who shows that she is skilled both in military strategy and on the battlefield is often pushed aside by her husband and brother because she is a female and therefore, they hold the power and knowledge to win the battle even though they lack the skills as leaders. Aethelflaed's brother Edward while the legitimate son of King Alfred and next in line for the throne isn't as favoured by those around him as his father was, often due to his impulsive decisions. He also tends to listen to people close to him such as his mother and father-in-law's advice on matters even if it is considered bad rather than using his own mind and coming up with his own ideas which would give him better leadership and more masculine values expected from a King. In the show men's rash decisions made out of anger often make volatile situations worse, rather than listening to the level-headed ideas made by the female characters in the same situations.

Clothing in the Distant Past Recreated on Screen.

The Saxon Finan is the right-hand man to the lead character, he wears a checked tunic that represents his Irish background in greens and browns under a well-worn brown leather tunic that he uses as armour this is held together by a buckle and golden clasp embellished with a Celtic design. As stated by Gale Owen-Crocker 'In earlier centuries of the Anglo-Saxon era...it was not unusual to fight without protective clothing.'²⁰⁶ In the later seasons we see that his costume has evolved to include chain mail, this could be a result of the character gaining more money or that the first 'armour' we see him wearing is most likely a result of him stealing it from someone on the battlefield. Actor Mark Rowley has said this is the direction he wanted to take for his character, "That was the first thing that I wanted to do with my character I was like I would love to take things from other people and that's why I have different vambraces."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 193.

²⁰⁷ Mark Rowley, Zoom conversation with author, January 15th, 2021.



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A very different Saxon in the show is Edward the son of King Alfred, when we first see him, he is a child we see him mostly in an intricately platted black leather tunic with short vambraces which shows that he still isn't a fully skilled warrior. After his father dies, he does seem to adopt his father's choice colour of red particularly in battle; this colour seems to be linked to the Wessex family, when he starts to become his own person, he generally wears green coloured 'robe' tunics which is usually linked to the Mercians where his mother is from embroidered with gold trims showing his wealth. The actor Timothy Innes has said the costume "Informed the way I walked and moved in character, wearing a crown gives you a sense of power needed to play a King."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Molly Emma Rowe, *Instagram*, May 11th, 2020, accessed April 7th, 2021, 15:24pm, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CACi8rwAVcO/>

²⁰⁹ In an email from Timothy Innes to the author, January 12th, 2021.



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The Danes on the show do have slightly different styles to the Saxons in the way they dress and one who does have a difference in clothing through the seasons is Sihtric, when we first meet the character Sihtric he is part of his father's army and is wearing a recognisable Dane costume consisting of a short leather tunic under a fur lined leather doublet that is highly studded and detailed which is often associated with the wealthy. Evidence found by Owen-Crocker says, 'Literary evidence makes it clear that fur and animal hair were used for luxury clothing.'²¹² When he joins Uhtred his clothing does change, the tunic becomes longer like the Saxon look, he still uses the same vambraces however they have lost the fur lining and his doublet has less straps and buckles which gives the impression he feels less constrained in his new life compared to how he felt with his father. Unlike Finan in the later seasons Sihtric still doesn't wear chainmail, this could be because he is often sent to spy on the

²¹⁰ Rowe, *Instagram*, April 12th, 2018, accessed April 7th, 2021, 15:27pm, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bq-btk9h33z/>

²¹¹ Rowe, *Instagram*, May 27th, 2020, accessed April 7th, 2021, 15:29pm, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CAtDLRkJoA7/>

²¹² Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, 182.

enemy and has to fit in with their camps and so keeps his 'uniform' simple and in the Dane style.



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Haesten is one of the main antagonists in the show and we see him in various styles of costume, we first see the character wearing a long sleeve terracotta colour leather tunic under a layered brown leather doublet that resembles fish scales. In the later seasons his costume changes to a blue short-sleeve cloth tunic and his doublet has got more of a blue tone rather than the original brown colour, however the layered scale now has Nordic runes etched into them for wealth and knowledge – possibly to reflect what he wants to gain from raids. Haesten has two different style vambraces; the one he wears on his right arm is made

²¹³ Rowe, *Instagram*, May 12th, 2020, accessed April 7th, 2021, 15:30pm, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CAFUsofAJtW/>

of leather with the Nordic rune M which symbolises adventure, but his left looks to be made from a golden colour steel with a cross pattern, he could have stolen this from a Saxon he had killed in battle as it seems unlikely a pagan Dane would wear something that shows Christianity. As Owen-Crocker describes the Viking look in her book, 'Leather sheaths for scramasaxes, and one for a knife, survive from Anglo-Viking York, dating from the ninth century onwards. Elaborately decorated with geometric and zoomorphic devices, they are rare evidence of a flourishing fashion in personal adornment.'²¹⁴



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The things that both the Saxons and Danes do have in common in their clothing choices is that of religious imagery and the use of hair beads, both Finan and Sihtric wear a necklace showing their beliefs; Finan a Celtic cross and Sihtric Thor's hammer. This not only helps the

²¹⁴ Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, 201.

²¹⁵ Rowe, *Instagram*, May 28th, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CAvmrmpJT2z/> accessed April 7th, 2021, 15:32pm.

²¹⁶ Amanda Spence, "What Do Fans Think of Haesten in Season 4?", *Showbiz CheatSheet*, Close up of Haesten Costume, May 22nd, 2020, accessed April 7th, 2021 15:34pm, <https://www.cheatsheet.com/entertainment/the-last-kingdom-what-do-fans-think-of-haesten-in-season-4.html/>

audience know if the character is a 'hero' or 'villain' but also helps them to understand some of the internal moral struggles the characters have to face throughout the show especially for the lead character Uhtred. Another similarity between the two identities is the use of hair beads, in the early seasons hair styles seem to reflect where the character is in his life such as a young man that hasn't experienced a lot yet and in later seasons their hair has become more intricate or details such as beads have been added. It could also reflect the familiar bond between characters; it would be fair to assume Uhtred, Sihtric and Haesten would wear beads in braids as this is an identification for them as Danes but we eventually see Finan a Saxon also start wearing them so this could be him showing that while he doesn't identify with Dane culture his closest friends do so he adopts a similar look showing support to them.

One of the points that Rowley has made is that *The Last Kingdom* is first and foremost a television show and that means they aren't necessarily made to look exactly like what Saxons would have worn. The costumes also change through the different series because there are new costume designers every few years, "At the end of the day in the TV filmmaking world you want to give it some sort of style and edge, each costume designer put their own flair in."²¹⁷ This is something that *The Musketeers* costume designer Hayley Nebauer had also talked about when she took the job on the show. Both Rowley and Innes have said the costumes did allow them to get a feel for what people in the ninth century would be wearing and how things such as the weather affected the way of living through clothing, with Innes saying, "Wearing a period you become aware of the challenges that people at the time had to deal with"²¹⁸ and "In battle scenes the furs in the lining of the costume were a blessing in winter but more of a challenge when filming in summer."²¹⁹

In a similar way to the shows *The Borgias* and *The Spanish Princess*, *The Last Kingdom* have also reused costumes for different characters. In series five we see the female character Brida wearing the costume of character Sihtric from series two, this is also the same for series five-character Aethelstan who is seen wearing the costume of series three (check)

²¹⁷ Mark Rowley, Zoom conversation with author, January 15th, 2021.

²¹⁸ In an email from Timothy Innes to the author, January 12th, 2021.

²¹⁹ In an email from Timothy Innes to the author, January 12th, 2021.

character Aethelred. While the other shows have done this, they didn't do it in the same series, and they had slightly altered the costumes to fit the era of the show while also allowing them to look different which would make them less noticeable as reused costumes to the audience. Whereas *The Last Kingdom* using them in their own show even on different sex characters in the case of Brida and Sihtric is more obvious to the viewer and could distract them away from the storyline.



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²²⁰ Character costume of Sihtric series two *The Last Kingdom*, thelastkingdom.tlktv, *Instagram*, August 20th, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BYADG9Fn3kh/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=szspj9b1dn41&epik=dj0yJnU9V1Z3YTIrUV8xSDFqOXRJb2RsWVBMMFg4ekROaDY2YUImcDQwJm49WjBYVUZLbIBzdHFRcG5YZEizYzVFQSZ0PUFBQUFBROxaaFQ4 accessed July 21st, 2022 18:30PM.

²²¹ Character costume of Brida series five *The Last Kingdom*, Meghan O'Keefe, "The Last Kingdom Ending Explained: Does Uhtred Die? What happens to Brida? Who is Osbert?" *Decider*, March 9th, 2022, <https://decider.com/2022/03/09/the-last-kingdom-season-5-ending-explained/> accessed July 21st, 2022, 19:45PM.



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Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore how in distant past and fantasy television show costumes are used to represent characters social class and masculinity as well as how they tell history on screen to an audience. Through in-depth examination of the costumes themselves, ideas in existing literature and interviews with actors, the chapter found that the costumes can give the audience an idea of what masculinity and social status was like in the past.

However, for *Game of Thrones* they are just borrowed for influence rather than showing exactly what was happening at the actual time and while the costumes of *The Last Kingdom* don't show a character's masculinity, they can tell us about a character's social class in the same way the *Game of Thrones* costumes do. Leather is generally used for the 'working man' and finer fabrics are largely associated with the wealthier ruling class or royals. This however is different to the higher status characters I've looked at in programmes such as

²²² Character costume of Aethelred series two *The Last Kingdom*, Fanpop, <https://www.fanpop.com/clubs/toby-regbo/images/40329764/title/toby-aethelred-last-kingdom-photo> accessed July 21st 2022 8:00PM.

²²³ Character costume of Aethelstan series five *The Last Kingdom*, Shanique Joseph, 'The Last Kingdom Season 5: Netflix Release Date, Cast, Trailer and Plot', *Newsweek*, March 7th 2022, <https://www.newsweek.com/last-kingdom-season-5-netflix-release-date-cast-trailer-1685447> accessed July 21st 8:40PM.

The Borgias where leather is used quite extensively for most of the male lead characters. The costumes design of both productions also show that the style of a character out ways the comfort of the actor wearing it. This includes the challenges faced in different weathers and the way they allow the actors to move. Both series' show male characters as conflicted characters, each one has the leads often deal with complex moral issues that have them questioning the path they are expected to follow, which is explored in the book *Conflicting Masculinities*. 'Most of the other male characters are 'troubled' by an ideal of masculinity- strong, viral, and powerful – which they either cannot obtain, or once possessed can no longer contain.'²²⁴

What we can learn from distant past dramas and fantasy shows is that while the 'history' they rely on is important it's the visual world like the costumes that draw the audience in. In the words of De Groot, 'These texts are not 'historical' but they channel a kind of historio-entertainment discourse that is profoundly influential in the way that the past is imagined. They are also increasingly part of a globalised television culture where historical specificity is unnecessary, or unwanted.'²²⁵ From the research on shows set in the distant past and of the fantasy genre, I found that it is important to consider them alongside the period dramas set between the fifteenth and twentieth century as we can see the same tropes and themes being used in the same way.

²²⁴ Katherine Byrne, James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo, *Conflicting Masculinities: Men in Television Period Drama* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2019) 4.

²²⁵ De Groot, *Consuming History* 237.

Conclusion.

As said by De Groot, 'These texts – films, novels, TV series – have enormous influence on the way that the past is imagined, pictured, conceptualised, and understood. They contribute to historical awareness, but they are at the same time simply entertainment.'²²⁶ The shows I have looked at in this thesis all represent aspects of the past in different ways, but what they have in common is the centrality and importance of costume.

The reason why I choose to look across different centuries is so that I could determine if there were any similarities that would show up across each chapter, whether it was how each series presents history on screen, how masculinity was shown through costume of the characters and what role costume plays for the actors involved in the production. While all eleven shows discussed in my research don't rely on historical accuracy for costume design, I found those based in more modern history do favour a more accurate look, such as *Victoria* or *Peaky Blinders*, concluding that there may be a point where accuracy does need to be considered for an era that people remember more vividly. Historical research did come up as important in some of my interviews with costume designers and actors, however, I also found that in many instances other concerns such as design, characterisation, and modern understandings were just as if not more important than this. This tells us that our discussion of costume should move beyond ideas of accuracy and focus instead on how these different factors impact on the representation of the past. As said by De Groot, 'The ways in which contemporary culture engages with the past are hybrid and complex, and in this teeming diversity lies the challenge and the concern for historians.'²²⁷

The research I conducted across all the centuries is important because existing research generally looks at one era²²⁸ and usually it is focused on eighteenth and nineteenth century, and so my findings can add more information to missing eras. I also feel by looking at menswear I have added knowledge missing to historical costume after finding that the

²²⁶ De Groot, *Consuming History* 222.

²²⁷ De Groot, *Consuming History* 312.

²²⁸ Elizabeth Currie, *Fashion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017). Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* (The Boydell Press, 2010).

conversations happening around period costume is usually about what women wear not just on screen but also in fashion history research. As said by Rosalind McKeever, 'For all the portraits of 'great men' flaunting their sartorial mores...the topic has received less attention from fashion historians than its supposedly more glamorous sister. In recent years menswear has stepped out of the closet.'²²⁹ A surprising factor that I had not considered before researching the topic was the female gaze from the audience, yes, the costumes are important to character visual but sometime an audience wants less to see the 'sexiness' of that character. As quoted by *FANdemoniumNetwork* while talking to Molly Emma Rowe costume designer of *The Last Kingdom* 'Why did Sihtric's costume have sleeves this season?' to which Rowe responded with, 'You know what sometimes it's, it's also to do with hiding stunt pads and things like that sometimes.'²³⁰ This shows while a costume designer has one thought that works for the production, the female fans of the shows can often have other ideas of how they want to see a character on screen, based on the looks of the actor.

The interviews I conducted with both costume designer Hayley Nebauer and the actors from the shows were invaluable to my thesis, getting the inside knowledge of film industry people has helped me add to the research that is already been conducted by the likes of Hannah Greig²³¹ and Sarah Betts²³². I learned a lot more from what they said about costume in TV than I thought I would, they also gave me new ideas to explore such as masculinity of a character through dress like Philippe from *Versailles*. Even interviews I didn't personally conduct by other costume designers I found online were very helpful to my research as they showed that many of the same ideas of accuracy in costume design were not the focus of what designers need to do for on screen adaptations. They were also valuable because they are among those who aren't normally asked about their opinions for academic work, actors can somewhat give opinions in interviews, but costume designers are rarely asked about how their work contributes to characterisation which can be influential on the work an actor

²²⁹ McKeever & Wilcox with Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 10.

²³⁰ FANdemoniumNetwork, 'Molly Emma Rowe Interview – The Last Kingdom Costume Designer', *Youtube*, June 3rd, 2020, accessed July 30th, 2022, 20:30PM <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G17uQrlsLU>

²³¹ Hannah Greig, "As Seen on the Screen: Material Culture, Historical Accuracy and the Costume Drama," in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (USA: Bloomsbury Academic) 303-319.

²³² Sarah Betts "Power and passion: Seventeenth-century masculinities dramatized on the BBC in the twenty-first century", in *Conflicting Masculinities: Men in television period drama*, ed. Katherine Byrne, James Leggott and Julie Anne Taddeo, (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2020) 71.

does for character projection. Therefore, these interviews were important to me, hearing first-hand accounts from those who are actively involved in developing characters also gave me insight in to how they behave and interact with others on screen. Through my research I didn't come across any other works that had spoken to actors who become these people on screen. Previous scholars had analysed what image the characters project to the audience and how the audience responds to them, but no one had asked actors or costume designers how their work influences what we see on screen. The significance of this is that I am contributing new research to the conversations happening about costume in period dramas from a new perspective as well as contributing evidence to the conversations around costume historical accuracy. As argued by Greig, 'Although visual interpretations of history – whether through documentary or drama – are now long-established and highly successful genre of filmmaking, many academic historians remain uncomfortable with them and unsure about film's analytical merit.'²³³

What I have learned from my research is that it doesn't matter what century you look at there are common themes that run through historical costume on screen. Colour plays a big part of distinguishing between characters throughout most of the shows I have looked at, whether it is between families or hero and villain characters they have distinct costume features that tell the audience who they are. As I found in the shows *Medici*, *The Musketeers* and *Versailles* the villains are shown on screen in dark colours usually black and generally don't look as put together as the hero characters so that the audience can recognise who they are through the costume design. In a similar way characters in *Bridgerton*, *The Borgias* and *Peaky Blinders* are dressed in a specific way so that the audience can see the familial alliances and again colour and motifs are used to represent different families and their allies. By focusing on the role of individual characters and the role of costume in characterisation I have been able to move past discussions of accuracy and instead understand historical costume in a more nuanced way. It has also highlighted similarities between shows set in different periods, such as the use of colours or how small detail changes can age a character without changing the visual look of the actor. In the shows that are depicting more distant history such as *The Last Kingdom*, *The Borgias*, and

²³³ Greig, "As Seen on the Screen: Material Culture, Historical Accuracy and the Costume Drama," 304.

The Musketeers the use of leather in costume design is one major theme the designers have used. This design choice not only gives the characters a sexier look but also a more modern look that is recognisable to the audience, while also not just representing the historical but also different alliances and indicating who is good and who is evil. It also provides better protection for the actors during stunt work which was something that I hadn't thought about until I did an interview with Nebauer. Alongside the use of more modern looks in costume design, the use of modern language in describing characters such as Prince Albert in *Victoria* as 'hipster' it allows the audience to again feel like they can understand and relate to a character's style while also visually recognising that what they are watching is something from the past.

Another point that was made by many of the actors I interviewed about costume was how the costume really helped them get into character, whether it be a King or a soldier. Most found the costume not comfortable but did think it looked good on screen and projected what they thought was the vision of the show, while actor David Oakes liked the costume challenges since it took him away from his normal style. The comments made by the actors about the costume helping them become their characters proves how important research into the field is, as well as engaging with people who work outside the academic field of research. What I did find surprising from talking to Nebauer and reading other testimonials was that historical accuracy barely plays a role in costume design for period dramas. By looking at men's costume on screen from a range of different perspectives, we can gain a greater understanding of the role of material culture in period dramas. In the words of Gus Casely-Hayford 'Men's fashion has offered a window onto our dreams and fantasies...perhaps its greatest instantiation, the suit, was never just a garment, but a suit of armour, a weapon of sexual politics...through which we might understand something of the contested story of us.'²³⁴

²³⁴ McKeever & Wilcox with Franceschini, ed., *Fashioning Masculinities* 249.

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