University of Hertfordshire

Colour, Dress and Modernism: The significance of colour in representations of clothing in modernist literature by women.

Jennifer Kathleen Cameron

Submitted to the University of Hertfordshire in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Submitted: December, 2022.

Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to my supervisory team, Dr Anna Tripp and Dr Rowland Hughes. Your never-ending support, encouragement and belief in me, alongside hours of fascinating discussion and a new-found enthusiasm for colour and clothing gave me an amazing experience and fantastic memories.

I would also like to thank all my colleagues from the University of Hertfordshire's English Literature department for their advice, support and encouragement.

Alex, you were right, I have loved every minute of this journey and thank you Annie for the proofreading and encouragement. To all my other friends - thank you for being interested and patient.

To Ruairidh and Iris, you are my favourites. Thank you for everything. Without you both I could not have achieved this ambition. And finally to George, who has listened to this dissertation read out loud many, many times. If only you could talk.

Abstract

This dissertation explores the significance of the colour of dress in modernist literature written by women from the beginning of World War I to the start of World War II (1914–1939). It establishes the closely interwoven connections between fashion, dress and modernist writing, and investigates the ways in which modernist literature written by women uses clothing, with a focus on colour, to represent and interrogate contemporary society and culture. It does this by drawing not only on literary criticism and fashion theory but also historical research and elements of cultural studies. Building upon previous scholarship which has explored the significance of dress and fashion in modernist fiction, this thesis demonstrates that an attentive reading of the non-essentialist nature of colour symbolism and the constant evolution of meaning allows for a still more nuanced, complex understanding of the self, contemporary modernist culture and societal concerns of the time.

The thesis concentrates on the novels and short stories of Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and Jean Rhys published between 1914 and 1939, in addition to Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and Nella Larsen's two novels *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929). These texts are chosen not only because of their similar stylistic approaches and thematic concerns, but also because they were produced in the three 'fashion capitals' of the world at the time – London, Paris and New York – and are particularly attuned to questions of fashion and dress. Although the focus is on these women and their work, I have included, where relevant, reference to their contemporaries, both male and female.

Since colour is the primary focus, this dissertation is structured into seven chapters each concentrating on a different colour: brown, yellow, red, green, blue, white and black. For each colour I have identified key items of clothing and discuss their interpretation primarily through the lens of colour. Furthermore, I demonstrate the importance of reading

the layers of meaning in dress by an examination of not only the colour but also the style, fabric and finer details of these key garments.

Contents

Introduction

Every day the vast majority of the world's population gets dressed in one way or another. The significance of what they choose to wear, even when the wearer believes they do not consciously select clothing to portray a particular image, is a product of the contemporary culture and society in which they live and can be interpreted by others in accordance with these cultural and societal preconceptions. Dress is a demonstration of one's identification of self; even the decision not to be interested in what one wears makes a statement in the eyes of others. Oscar Wilde, a true believer in the importance of dress, wrote in his novel *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1890) that '[i]t is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible' and Elizabeth Wilson explains that 'everywhere dress and adornment play symbolic, communicative and aesthetic roles'.[1] Both writers emphasise the importance of the interpretation of dress and what it can tell us about the wearer's personality, social class, occupation, gender and more. Consequently, dress can and does communicate a wealth of meaning and is an unwritten, unspoken language which can be interpreted and read by others. And if dress is a language, then its variations in vocabulary, grammar and dialect can be found in the style, material, decoration and, importantly, the colour of the garment. In literature, these elements of a character's dress provide layers of meaning which can be read in relation to contemporary cultural attitudes to gender, sexuality, class, age and race.

This dissertation investigates the significance and interpretation of the colour of dress in modernist literature written by women from the start of World War 1 until the start of World War 2. Ilya Parkins, in her consideration of the importance of fashion as part of

[1] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 24; Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2017), p. 3.

modernist culture, describes 'fashionable dress as a material embodiment of the spirt of modernity'.[2] The continuous evolution of fashionable dress and a sartorial desire for novelty is reflected in the literary sphere with Ezra Pound's frequently quoted edict 'Make it New'. His edict, directed to his fellow writers, epitomises not only what the modernist movement stood for but also underpins the nature of the novel and the continuous evolution of dress due to contemporary fashions. The modernist movement moved away from nineteenth-century realism and its notions of the fixed, stable self by embracing experimental literature and exploring the concept of a more fluid, fragmented self. Furthermore, Garrity concludes that this 'enables us to draw attention to certain unacknowledged parallels between modernist aesthetics and the dynamics of fashion'.[3] These parallels allow for an in-depth and highly relevant exploration of the cultural significance of dress and fashion in modernist works.

The difference between dress and fashion is an important distinction. Dress is commonly identified as the clothes or garments which one wears on the body whereas fashion is dress which is constantly in flux; the key feature of fashion is that it is constantly changing. This continual change in fashion mirrors the nature of modernity which Andrew Thacker in *Moving Through Modernity* (2009) discusses as having 'characteristics of movement, speed and the furious restructuring of spaces'; Thacker describes a world constantly in flux as a typical element of modernist literature.[4] Wilson explains that '[f]ashion, then, is essential to the world of modernity, the world of spectacle and mass-communication. It is a kind of connective tissue of our cultural organism'.[5] Jane Garrity expands further on this idea and considers together the cyclical nature of both literature and fashion, noting that

[2] Ilya Parkins, 'Fashion', *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Culture*, ed. by Celia Marshik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 96.
[3] Ibid., p. 266.
[4] Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 47.
[5] Wilson, p. 12.

> Woolf's essay ['Modern Fiction' (1925)] implicitly acknowledges that fashion's obsession with change, and its endless search for continuous innovation, give it a formal similarity with the novel.[6]

This dissertation builds upon previously acknowledged similarities in nature between modernism, the novel and fashion. It then develops and enriches our understanding of the relevance and significance that colour of dress plays in depicting character and in interrogating contemporary culture.

My consideration of dress as a compound item, with many interwoven elements which need to be interpreted together, with a focus on colour, results in a fresh perspective which builds upon previous scholarly studies and produces more complex and multi-layered readings. Colour symbolism is constantly evolving across time, place and cultures, and there is no one inherent meaning of a colour which can be decreed from what it essentially is. Therefore, a nuanced reading of the textual representation of clothing requires us to unpick the notion of 'universal' symbolic associations of particular colours, and instead to trace how these meanings can fluctuate. I show how the cultural associations affixed to specific colours at the start of the twentieth century were still valid in the interwar years but they acquired new significance which modernist writers explored, not by eclipsing the culturally recognised meanings, but by building upon them. This development of meaning reflects the rapidly changing early twentieth-century society and also the modernist development of the novel and short story. These writers, then, as part of contemporary literary culture, were not simply recording cultural change but questioning and enabling it as well. Until now colour has not

[6] Jane Garrity, 'Sartorial Modernity. Fashion, Gender, and Sexuality in Modernism', in *A Companion to British Literature: Volume IV: Victorian and Twentieth-Century Literature 1837-2000,* ed. by Robert DeMaria, Jr., Heesok Chang, and Samanatha Zachet (London: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2014), p. 261.

been examined in this manner and has been largely neglected when examining clothing in literature, but this study begins to address this gap, and opens discussion for further research.

I have chosen to focus on modernist literature published from 1914 to 1939 because of the significant changes in society, culture and the arts, and corresponding changes in womenswear during this period. At the start of the twentieth century the fashionable woman's silhouette in London and Paris was an exaggerated 'S' shape, with an extremely large bottom and balancing chest. However, by the 1920s the fashionable silhouette had altered significantly and was now flat chested, tubular and slim. Tightly laced corsets were discarded in the 1910s, dresses became less structured and hemlines rose drastically in a relatively short period of time. As Pamela Horn explains, 'skirts grew progressively shorter, starting from a point just above the ankle in 1919 and moving to the knee in 1926'.[7] A greater number of women moving into the workplace required more practical clothing than previously and wartime rationing of clothing and materials encouraged the advent of shorter, straighter skirts. Fashion historian Lydia Edwards illustrates the changing styles by reference to the *Daily Mail* in 1917 which reported that 'as a result of the [French] Government restriction of the use of woollen material, skirts are to be both shorter and narrower' and detailed the new restriction to be '4 yards and 32 inches of material per outfit'.[8] In comparison Christian Dior's 'New Look' of 1947 with its tight bodice and extravagantly full skirt required up to fifteen yards of fabric for the skirt alone.[9]

Being slim became fashionable, and without structured corseting a strict regime of diet and exercise was needed to achieve a 'boyish' shape.[10] This shape in turn suited more

[7] Pamela Horn, *Flappers* (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2013), p. 45.
[8] Lydia Edwards, *How to Read a Dress* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2019), p. 138.
[9] Anonymous, 'Christian Dior's New Look at the FIDM Museum'. [Online] Available at: https://fidmmuseum.org/2010/08/christian-diors-new-look-at-the-fidm-museum.html . [Accessed: 3 October 2022].
[10] Louise Foxcroft, *Calories and Corsets. A History of dieting over 2,000 years* (London: Profile Books, 2013), pp. 113-142.

'masculine' sportswear. The designs of Coco Chanel embraced this simpler way of dressing and with her pioneering use of jersey for women's clothing, a fabric formerly only used for men's underwear, and promotion 'of easy-to-wear garments [with] an emphasis on sportswear' she met 'the demands of contemporary life' and kept fashions evolving quickly from the 1920s into the 1930s.[11] The fashionable elite 'shingled' their hair, strapped their breasts flat and wore dresses which hung from the shoulders without any waist or bust definition.[12] The more daring dressers and sportswomen adopted masculine styled pyjama lounge suits and sports trousers. Additionally, changing class boundaries, the increasing mass production of clothing, a new technological age and the influence of cinema all affected fashion. With all these changes fashionable dress between 1914 and 1939 was associated with a younger, emancipated, more independent woman, and freer sexuality.[13]

This dissertation focuses on modernist literature predominantly written by women. Historically, an interest in dress was viewed as a feminine pursuit and as such was regarded as frivolous and insignificant. Virginia Woolf acknowledges this in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) where she writes '[s]peaking crudely, football and sport are "important"; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes "trivial"'.[14] The importance given to each of these interests is directly related to whether it is perceived to be a male (important) or female (unimportant) activity. During the first few decades of the twentieth century close links between women, the making of clothes and needlework meant that these pursuits were regarded as insignificant. However, this was not the view taken by many influential figures of the time including Cecil Beaton, a British photographer, who, when writing of fashion, explains that although some may regard him as a 'propagandist of frivolity' he believed that '[w]hen we

[11] Edwards, p. 142; Valerie Steele, 'Chanel In Context', in *Chic Thrills: a fashion reader,* ed. by Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson (London: Pandora, 1992), p. 119.
[12] The shingle was a very short tapered haircut exposing the hairline at the back of the neck.
[13] Edwards, pp. 141-142.
[14] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 96. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

talk about fashion or the minor arts, we really mean the whole art of living'.[15] In literature it is this 'whole art of living' which an author attempts to capture with language and as such the depiction of dress or fashion in a novel becomes another means through which to express the 'art of living' and to represent the self. By focussing on women authors I am to some extent responding to Rita Felski's provocative questions:

> [h]ow would our understanding of modernity change if instead of taking male experience as paradigmatic, we were to look instead at texts written primarily by or about women? And what if feminine phenomena, often seen as having a secondary or marginal status were given a central importance in the analysis of the culture of modernity? […] they might well throw some significant new light on that seemingly exhausted issue, the aesthetics and the politics of modernity.[16]

With this investigation of the importance of dress in modernist literature written by women I aim to 'throw some significant new light' on women's experience of early twentieth-century contemporary culture and society.

The modernist writers Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and Jean Rhys all demonstrated a personal interest in dress and incorporated this into their work. Lisa Cohen writes of Woolf's diary entries which culminate with her resolving 'to write about my *clothes* next time I have an impulse to write. My love of clothes interests me profoundly'.[17] Irene Brin describes one example of Katherine Mansfield's love of eccentric dress with her dramatic arrival in Paris

[15] Cecil Beaton, *The Glass of Fashion* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), pp. 1-2.
[16] Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 10.
[17] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume III: 1925-1930*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1980), p.21.

> in the full dark cloak that made her look like a romantic traveller; her hair was cut with a long fringe and, as soon as she reached the Riviera, she donned her short white jacket with English embroidery.[18]

Jean Rhys, who worked as a mannequin in Paris at one time, understood the importance of dress and 'the illusory, emancipatory promise of fashion' which she frequently depicts in her writing.[19] Given these authors personal interest in fashion and their engagement with dress to represent character and define the self, I have chosen to focus a large part of my discussion on their novels and short stories which are largely set in and around London and Paris. However, as today, there was a third 'fashion capital' of the world at the start of the twentieth century in New York, and in order to reflect this I have expanded my geographical reach to North America by considering the work of Harlem Renaissance authors Nella Larsen and Zora Neale Hurston, with significant reference to their contemporaries, both male and female. It would be incorrect to assume that only women writers understood the power of dress; a detailed reading of D. H. Lawrence, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Langston Hughes, amongst others, reveals that clothing often carried specific and important meaning in their work, too.

Academic scholarship regarding Virginia Woolf's personal interest in clothing and its representation of character in modernist literature begins with Lisa Cohen's journal article '"Frock Consciousness": Virginia Woolf, the Open Secret, and the Language of Fashion' (1999).[20] Cohen introduces a theoretical approach to examining dress in modernist literature and following from her research there are several valuable articles and books which have inspired my work, including the research of Clair Hughes and her books *Henry James and*

[18] Irene Brin, 'Women's Wardrobes, Men's Wardrobes', *Art in Translation* 7:2 (2015), p. 256.
[19] Maroula Joannou, '"All right, I'll do anything for good clothes": Jean Rhys and Fashion', *A Cultural Review* 23:4 (2012), p. 464.
[20] Lisa Cohen, '"Frock Consciousness": Virginia Woolf, the Open Secret, and the Language of Fashion', *Fashion Theory* 3:2 (1999), pp. 149-174.

the Art of Dress (2001) and *Dressed in Fiction* (2006). Although important, Hughes' work does not cover modernist literature and it is R. S. Koppen's book *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (2009) which begins to address this gap with its 'reading of Woolf's work as cultural analyst and writer of fiction, set in the context of the modern interest in fashion as theory and practice, and in clothes as things, commodities and symbols'.[21] Mark Gaipa, also writing in 2009 considers Woolf's portrayal of clothing in *Mrs Dalloway* and its importance in 'Accessorizing Clarissa: How Virginia Woolf changes the clothes and the character of her lady of fashion'.[22] This is a fascinating study drawing parallels between Woolf's modernist style of writing and the contemporary changes in women's fashion. I consider Gaipa's discussion of gloves and same-sex desire in further detail in Chapter 6.

Until recently critical attention appears to have focussed primarily on the fiction of Virginia Woolf, with the exception of Maroula Joannou's article '"All right, I'll do anything for good clothes": Jean Rhys and Fashion' (2012) which discusses the cultural and historical links between fashion, the modernist self and Rhys's fiction.[23] However, it is in the books of Celia Marshik and Lauren Cardon that an examination of the relationships between a wider range of modernist literature, clothing and culture on both sides of the Atlantic are explored. Marshik's *At the Mercy of Their Clothes* (2016) focuses on four specific types of garment: the evening gown, the Mackintosh, fancy dress and second-hand clothing and discusses these items in conversation with early twentieth-century culture, print media, personal memoir and modernist literature such as that written by Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys and James Joyce.[24] Cardon interrogates a wider range of early twentieth-century American literature from authors such as Nella Larsen and F. Scott Fitzgerald, amongst others, and considers the

[21] R. S. Koppen, *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. ix.
[22] Mark Gaipa, 'Accessorizing Clarissa: How Virginia Woolf changes the clothes and the character of her lady of fashion', *Modernist Cultures* 4:1-2 (2019), pp. 24-47.
[23] Joannou, pp. 463-489.
[24] Celia Marshik, *At the Mercy of Their Clothes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

correlation between the American fashion industry at the time and literature, especially with regards to the identification of self.[25]

It is Ilya Parkins and Elizabeth Sheehan who discuss in depth the inherent importance of fashion to modernism. Parkins in her chapter 'Fashion*'* in *The Cambridge Guide to Modernist Culture* explains the connection between fashion and modernism. She states that, 'fashion dramatized the underside of modern life, the alternative narratives that structured everyday, lived experiences of modernity'.[26] With this she describes the importance that fashion in modernist literature plays in highlighting different perspectives; for example, a woman's perspective. Sheehan in *Modernism à la Mode* (2018) echoes both Woolf and Parkins and identifies fashion as a primarily feminine pursuit which is frequently regarded as unimportant, but which provides the means to consider and understand much wider political and historical concerns.[27] Both Parkins and Sheehan consider the role fashion as a concept plays in modernist literature, but do not focus on particular garments, nor the colour of dress.

Most recently, Vike Martina Plock's *Modernism, Fashion and Interwar Women Writers* (2019) argues that fashion during the interwar period provided women writers a way in which to experiment with and examine female identity at a time of significant cultural and social transformation. In particular she discusses the 'contradiction between individual expression and community building through the use of clothes' through an exploration of the fiction of Edith Wharton, Jean Rhys, Rosamund Lehmann, Elizabeth Bowen and Virginia Woolf.[28] These works are extensive and are supplemented by additional academic journal

[25] Lauren Cardon, *Fashion in Fiction: Self Transformation in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).
[26] Ilya Parkins, 'Fashion', *The Cambridge Guide to Modernist Culture,* ed. by Celia Marshik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 96.
[27] Elizabeth M. Sheehan, *Modernism à la Mode. Fashion and the ends of literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp. 1-25.
[28] Vike Martina Plock, *Modernism, Fashion and Interwar Women Writers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 1.

articles such as Beci Carver's investigation of 'The Modernist Kimono' (2015).[29] This dissertation builds on the work of these scholars and I begin to address the additional element of the importance of the colour of dress in modernist literature.

Colour is an integral part of clothing and I believe the colour of a garment is a highly symbolic choice whether this is to be fashionable, to portray a particular image, to respond to contemporary culture, to belong to a group or to comply with a uniform. This link between colour, dress and fashion was particularly notable in the film industry of the 1920s. Michelle Tolini Finamore explains that

> Technicolour, which was in use as early as 1917 […] was used in a great number of longer narrative films with fashion show sequences. […] Of the three hundred and eighty-five Technicolor films catalogued by the George Eastman House between 1917 and 1937, the costly Technicolor process was commonly used for fashion shows, spectacular costume scene inserts within the film, or for period costume dramas.[30]

Bearing in mind that Technicolor was not widely employed in film production until about 1949 due to the expensive nature of the process, the use of it with fashion and costume reels is illuminating as to the importance of colour in relation to clothing.

Literature, in comparison to film, requires colour to be captured by language. A. G. Werner's *Nomenclature of Colours* in 1774 attempted to categorise colours and their many shades through illustration and description, and was later updated by Patrick Syme in 1821 by

[29] Beci Carver, 'What Women Want: The Modernist Kimono' *Modernism/modernity* 22:2 (April, 2015), pp. 303-314.
[30] Michelle Tolini Finammore, 'Color Before Technicolor: Colorized Fashion Films of the Silent Era', in *Colors in Fashion,* ed. by Jonathan Faiers and Mary Westerman Bulgarella (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2017), p. 114.

adding familiar natural objects as terms of reference - for example ultra-marine blue is described as the colour of the upper side of the wings of the small blue heath butterfly. [31] It is clear that capturing a particular shade of a colour in words is complicated, and this is highlighted by the modern day Pantone colour system which uses terminology and numbers; for example their colour of the year 2022 is Pantone 17-3938, Very Peri and is described as a blue with a violet red undertone.[32] Although these systems list and label numerous colours and shades the reality is that each individual experiences colour differently; as John Gage explains 'verbal language is incapable of defining the experience of colour', or at least when we attempt to capture our experience of a certain shade in language, the words used will vary and another person's interpretation of this language will potentially also vary according to their lived experience, cultural knowledge and prejudices.[33] Umberto Eco explains this concept:

> When one utters a colour term one is not directly pointing to a state of the world (process of reference), but, on the contrary, one is connecting or correlating that term with a cultural unit or concept. The utterance of the term is determined, obviously, by a given sensation, but the transformation of the sensory stimuli into a percept is in some way determined by the semiotic relationship between the linguistic expression and the meaning or *content* culturally correlated to it.[34]

[31] John Gage, *Colour and Meaning. Art, Science and Symbolism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), pp. 26-27.
[32] Anonymous, 'Announcing the Pantone Color of the Year 2022'. [Online] Available at: https://www.pantone.com/uk/en/color-of-the-year-2022 . [Accessed: 21 September, 2022].
[33] John Gage, *Colour and Culture. Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995), p. 10.
[34] Umberto Eco, 'How Culture Conditions the Colours We See', *On Signs,* ed. by Marshall Blonsky (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 157.

In accordance with Eco, Kassia St Clair describes colours as 'subjective cultural creations', and as a consequence the use of colour in literature and its interpretation relies heavily on understanding and identifying the cultural symbolism of a colour.[35] Modernist literature, with its deliberate sparsity of language facilitates interpretations which require an examination of semiotics and cultural environment, thereby, enabling a writer to not only embrace but also challenge older and more conventional readings of colour. For example red does not only have to indicate danger and green is not only the colour of nature. Furthermore, in her essay written about the painter Walter Sickert, Virginia Woolf explains how language can provide layers of meaning to basic colour terminology. She explains by reference to Robert Herrick's poem 'To Electra':

> 'More white than are the whitest creams,
> Or moonlight tinselling the streams.'
>
> where the word 'tinselling' adds to the simplicity of 'white' the glittering, sequined, fluid look of moonlit water. It is a very complex business, the mixing and marrying of words that goes on, probably unconsciously, in the poet's mind to feed the reader's eye. All great writers are colourists, just as they are musicians into the bargain; they always contrive to make their scenes glow and darken and change to the eye.[36]

As words are read together to create a richer interpretation of colour, so too must the colour of clothing be interpreted in conjunction with other elements of dress to interpret fully a garment's meaning. In other words the material, style and decoration of dress are all relevant

[35] Kassia St Clair, *The Secret Lives of Colour* (London: John Murray (Publishers), 2018), p. 27.
[36] Virginia Woolf, *Walter Sickert: A Conversation*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1934). [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.ca/ebooks/woolfv-waltersickert/woolfv-waltersickert-00-e.html . [Accessed: 21 September, 2022].

in addition to its colour. For this reason this dissertation investigates not only the representation of colour in dress but the ways in which this interpretation is affected by the material, embellishment and style of the garment. My research draws on the cultural history of colour, on which there is extensive scholarship, including the comprehensive studies by John Gage, Michel Pastoureau, Kassia St Clair and most recently James Fox.

Gage was a leading art historian and his comprehensive studies of colour and its meaning through time in culture and art, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (1993) and *Colour and Meaning: Art, Science and Symbolism* (2000) are considered to be definitive guides. More recently, Pastoureau's series of books discussing colour and symbolism in art and culture through time are in-depth and illuminating. He has currently covered Black, Blue, Green, Red and Yellow. Similarly Fox, another art historian, forensically examines the cultural and historical meanings of individual colours around the world with his most recent book *The World According to Colour. A Cultural History* (2021). These scholars cover an extensive amount of ground with regards to the significance of colour; however, there is little focus on colour in literature in their work and little to no attention to colour and dress in literature. In addition, Doran's study *The Culture of Yellow or The Visual Politics of Late Modernity* (2013) is the only volume which specifically examines the modernist period and its literature. Therefore, this dissertation builds upon these authors' findings and further interrogates the cultural and historical meanings of colour at a specific period in time in literature. Additionally, I acknowledge that literature is not simply a cultural barometer and consider modernist writers' active involvement in discussions on clothing's multiple roles, symbolic importance and representation of a more fluid, nuanced self.

This dissertation consists of seven chapters, each discussing varied garments of one particular colour. My focus is on the colours which were fashionable and culturally most symbolic during the period 1914 -1939 and which my chosen authors used consistently.

Consequently the colours chosen for detailed discussion are brown, yellow, red, blue, green, white and black. There are some colours missing from this list, notably orange and purple. Orange clothing is only referred to once by both Woolf and Rhys in their fiction. Woolf describes an orange plume which does not suit the complexion of its wearer in *The Voyage Out* (1915) and Rhys also only speaks once of an orange garment, a nightgown in her short story, 'Who Knows What's Up in the Attic?' - a nightgown, which Mr Singh (who is selling it) is surprised his buyer is interested in.[37] Mansfield similarly depicts only one orange garment in her short stories, in 'Bliss' (1920). It is 'the most amusing orange coat with a procession of black monkeys round the hem and up the front'.[38] This flamboyant coat and the rest of its wearer's costume for the evening are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 but not in the context of it being orange because the colour is not a key detail of my interpretation of the coat. Finally, Larsen describes a 'flaming orange dress, which a horrified matron had next day consigned to the dyer', again indicating that orange is not a desirable colour.[39] These examples constitute a rather insignificant number of items of orange clothing and indicate it was neither a fashionable colour for the period nor was culturally significant. I have consequently decided not to include orange specifically in this dissertation.

The second colour not included is purple – with the exception of violet which is discussed in my blue chapter. In ancient history Tyrian purple was an indicator of extreme wealth as it was an extremely expensive dye to produce given the method of extraction from two varieties of Mediterranean shellfish and the small amount of dye harvested from each creature.[40] St Clair tells how '[i]n the mid-fourth century BC it cost as much as silver; soon

[37] Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1929), p. 239. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text; Jean Rhys, *The Collected Short Stories* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 358. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[38] Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2006), p. 76. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[39] Nella Larsen, *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001), p. 51. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[40] St Clair, p. 163.

enough, Tyrian dipped cloth was literally worth its weight in gold' and '[i]n Republican Rome it was a tightly constrained badge of status'.[41] Only generals, senators and magistrates were allowed to wear clothing banded with this colour, albeit in different quantities according to their place in the hierarchy, until eventually it was only the emperor himself who could wear this exclusive colour of power.[42] With the fall of the Roman Empire the manufacturing secrets of the dye were lost, but purple was to regain popularity in the mid to late nineteenth century when a young chemist, William Perkin, discovered a synthetic purple dye made from coal tar which he named mauve. Mauve was to take the Victorian age by storm; Simon Garfield explains how Queen Victoria chose to wear it to the marriage of her daughter in January 1858 and by August 1859 the satirical magazine *Punch* 'declared that London was "in the grip of the Mauve Measles"'. [43] However, naturally enough, as with all fashions, mauve fell out of favour towards the end of the nineteenth century and it became associated with older, less fashionable women.[44] Charlotte Ribeyrol describes mauve as being a passé colour by the 1920s and defines it as a 'colour relegated to the decadent past'.[45] This sentiment is echoed in literature of the time including Aldous Huxley's matriarchal figure of Mrs Wimbush in *Crome Yellow* (1921) whose 'middle-aged face' and 'purple silk dress with a high collar and a row of pearls' marks her as 'dowagerish, so suggestive of the Royal Family' and therefore, out of date.[46] An unfashionable choice of dress requires an unfashionable hairdo and Mrs Wimbush is 'surmounted by a lofty and elaborate coiffure of a curiously improbable shade of orange' (p.5). In addition, Jean Rhys, an advocate of the chic little black dress, dresses Lois in *Quartet* (1928), a wife who has been usurped by a new

---

[41] Ibid.
[42] John Gage, *Colour and Culture,* p. 25.
[43] Simon Garfield, *Mauve. How One Man Invented a Colour that Changed the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2018), p. 65; St Clair, p. 170.
[44] St Clair, p. 170.
[45] Charlotte Ribeyrol, 'John Singer Sargent and the *fin de siècle* Culture of Mauve', *Visual Culture in Britain* 19:1 (2018), p. 19.
[46] Aldous Huxley, *Crome Yellow* (London: Vintage Books, 2004), p. 6. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

mistress and is out of favour, in 'a purple wig', 'purple dressing-gown' and then 'a gown of purple georgette'.[47] Even though purple can be considered as culturally significant, it is very much a colour of a previous period and as such I do not include an in-depth discussion of it in this dissertation.

Since the interpretation of colour is culturally and historically dependent this thesis not only draws on literary and fashion theory, but also refers to cultural theorists and fashion and art historians. In building knowledge of the culture and context of the period I have referred to print media of the time including newspapers, magazines, literature, historical records, photographic evidence and museum archival garment evidence. This method of layering literary theoretical analysis with an in-depth understanding of all relevant aspects of contemporary culture and visual aids aims to produce a more nuanced and detailed reading of the colour of dress in modernist literature. To interpret the colour of dress in literature is to simultaneously examine contemporary culture and how it is represented by that clothing.

This dissertation begins with brown as the cultural meaning of this colour is directly affected by World War I. To start, I consider the pre-existing associations with this colour stretching back to mediaeval times, and consider how at the beginning of the twentieth century working-class ties and associations of poverty were still prevalent and were embraced by modernist writers. However, they were able to develop the symbolism of brown both during and after World War I due to political and cultural changes which allowed additional layers of meaning to accrue. Therefore, I explain how brown clothing was no longer simply an indicator of the working class but extended to encompass military references and military uniforms while still symbolising class uniformity.

[47] Jean Rhys, *Quartet* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 52, 82 and 90.

In addition, I consider the material from which many of these garments are constructed, in particular velvet and fur. In this case I consider to what extent the nature and symbolism of the fabric affects the interpretation of brown clothing.

As with brown, the historical associations of yellow were still relevant during the first few decades of the twentieth century and Woolf and Mansfield both acknowledged and made use of its connection with the decadent movement. Firstly, this chapter examines their exploration of the character of the dandy, who they identify by his yellow gloves, and then discusses their subsequent development of this character for the modernist period. I argue the yellow gloves are a signifier of the dandy and are related to the negative associations of yellow with moral corruption and ill-health.

Secondly, I investigate how Woolf and Mansfield consistently rely on the pre-existing connotations of yellow such as paranoia and ill health with their depictions of yellow dresses. They then develop these interpretations to include further layers of meaning by referencing contemporary cultural movements such as anti-Semitism, contemporary bohemian lifestyles and the idolisation of African American culture and what was termed 'primitivism' in 1920s' Paris.

The next chapter examines how red is a colour directly associated with women, sex and power, and considers its particular relevance to black women. To do so, I investigate the depictions of red dresses in the literature of Harlem Renaissance authors such as Zora Neale Hurston and Nella Larsen, in addition to Jean Rhys's short story 'Trio' (1927). I consider their interrogation of the stereotypes of black womanhood in particular their acknowledgement and depiction of the matriarch, the jezebel and the tragic mulatto, all part of a lived experience of racism and sexism. Furthermore, through a discussion of the style, silk fabric and performance of these dresses I explain how modernist authors questioned the

accuracy of these stereotypes while still acknowledging their control over cultural perceptions of black womanhood.

Having examined the uniform nature of the colour brown, I turn to blue which from 1914 to 1939 was the predominant colour of public and military uniforms in Europe and became an extremely popular colour of clothing for both men and women. This commonality of appearance in men and women's dress created a visual impression of a blurring of traditional gender boundaries. In her short story 'Je Ne Parle Pas Français' (1918) Mansfield questions this gender blurring sartorial performance through her dressing of Raoul in various items of blue clothing. Therefore, with an in-depth close reading I present an alternative interpretation to current scholarship of Mansfield's short story and consider how she explores cross dressing to 'pass' as another gender, and bisexuality at this time.

In the following chapter, green's links to nature and the environment are discussed in combination with its contrasting associations of bad luck, poison and subversive sexuality. This chapter focuses on depictions of green dresses and costumes in Mansfield's 'Bliss' (1920), Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and Larsen's *Passing* (1929). The costumes in question encourage comparisons to the natural world, for example a pear tree, a mermaid in her watery environment and spring flowers. However, I show how these natural elements can also represent the character's subversive sexuality. In particular, I consider Deborah McDowell's reading of Larsen's *Passing* which focusses on sexuality rather than race. Furthermore, by considering the fabric of these costumes I support my reading of a modernist exploration of fluid sexuality.

I then turn to white, an extremely symbolic colour, with its most well-known and enduring meanings being that of purity, innocence and youth. However, there are contrasting interpretations of old age and death which also attach themselves to white. This chapter focusses primarily on Woolf's use of white clothing in her fiction and in particular her

dressing of Clarissa Dalloway. I examine how Woolf depicts Clarissa as both young and old at the same time and represents this through her clothing. Additionally, I consider Woolf's discussion of aging and the self in conversation with Simone de Beauvoir's arguments regarding old age and women. The ability for white to portray opposing meanings relies on a careful reading not only of the colour of the garment but also the style and material. In the light of this I consider white gloves and pearl accessories in relation to sexuality.

In my final chapter I consider black, which similarly to white, has long-standing cultural associations. In this case, black is the colour of death and mourning. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century black acquired both negative and positive associations, becoming the colour of modernity, and being considered 'chic'. This dissertation ends with black as it is the colour which most encapsulates the culture of the interwar years. I investigate how black clothing in the literature of Rhys, Woolf, Mansfield and Hurston represents an embrace of the modern and rejection of past values, a blurring of gender roles in society and the breakdown of class boundaries. Additionally, it represents a forward-looking promise of better things through the sartorial performance of self. I have chosen not to discuss in depth the racialisation of white and black in this dissertation because my focus is on the colour of clothing and not skin. However, I do consider race in my red and yellow chapters where the wearer's race is an important element in interpreting their dress.

These seven chapters and seven colours not only cover the key colours of modernity but identify and examine some of the key cultural concerns and changes in the first few decades of the twentieth century. These concerns run like threads through the modernist texts of the period and are brought to light by an alertness to the multiple meanings of colour, interlaced with the subtleties of style and fabric of the garments depicted. To 'read' clothing in these texts, then, is not merely to learn more about the culture and society in which they were produced, but to understand in a more nuanced way how personal identity and a sense

of self was produced and mediated through dress, and how literature is intimately connected with visual and material culture.

Chapter 1: Brown

Brown is not normally regarded as a bright and exciting colour and it does not appear in an artist's colour wheel, nor is it part of the visible spectrum of light.[1] However, psychologically it can be associated with warmth, solidity, security and comfort.[2] These positive associations stem from brown's predominance in nature where it is the colour of earth, wood, autumnal leaves, fur and feathers. On the other hand, brown is also the colour of mud and excrement resulting in it being associated with dirt, squalor and poverty.[3] Throughout the centuries brown clothing has been associated with the working classes. In ancient Rome the term 'Pullati' referred to people in working-class dress and literally translates as 'those dressed in dark garments', and the habits of Franciscan monks are brown to denote poverty and humility.[4] Historically, the lower classes have worn brown due to the unaffordable cost of brighter dyes and because of sumptuary laws restricting which occupations and social classes could wear certain colours. Unlike black, pastel shades, jewel colours or even white, brown has not benefitted from being a particularly fashionable colour at any point but it is consistently popular for uniforms including both school and military uniforms and it is particularly relevant as the colour of World War 1 British army uniforms and then for the Sturmabteilung (SA), the paramilitary army of the Nazi party, otherwise known as 'brownshirts'.[5]

This chapter examines how Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf dress their characters in brown clothing to identify them with a lower class or social status to others. I

[1] St Clair, p. 237.
[2] Karen Haller, *The Little Book of Colour* (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2019), p. 82.
[3] St Clair, p. 237.
[4] Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Creation and Expressions of Identity: Roman', in *Classical Archaeology,* ed. by Susan E. Alcock and Robin Osbourne (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), p. 371; Laura Perryman, *The Colour Bible* (London: ILEX, 2021), p. 288.
[5] Torsten Homberger and Linda Arthur Bradley, 'Nazi Dress: Hitler's storm troopers and appearance management, 1921-1933', *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion* 2:2&3 (2015), p. 184.

also examine how brown's associations with the earth, poverty and the working classes can be subverted by the choice of material the item of clothing is made from and explore the cultural environment at the time which enables this.

Brown holds both positive and negative associations. Primarily, as a muddy, dirty colour it connects a character's clothing to the earth, working with one's hands and manual labour. Its wearer is hardworking, down-to-earth and potentially performing a manual job. They may well be living in poverty due to the relatively lower economic remuneration of manual labour and as a result they will most likely belong to the working classes. This association of brown with the working classes dates back to the medieval period. At this time what an individual was legally allowed to wear in the UK and throughout Europe was carefully controlled by sumptuary legislation.[6] This legislation prescribed which colours and dyes could be worn by individuals according to their occupation. One example is russet which referred to a type of cloth which was a dull brown/grey shade, not the warm red-brown, house brick colour we identify it as today.[7] Russet, under law, was reserved for those in the poorest of occupations, for example carters and oxherds.[8] The purpose of this was to attempt to provide clear visual demarcations between the different occupations and classes, and as Julia Emberley explains this ensured that 'symbolic displays of wealth were reserved to the property-owning classes'.[9] Class distinction was between those who owned the land and those who worked the land. The more a cloth resembled its original state and colour, the cheaper and less desirable it was. A bright dye such as scarlet was expensive and more difficult to obtain, resulting in it only being worn by nobility and the wealthy. Although these sumptuary laws were no longer in force by the middle of the seventeenth century, the historical relationship of brown with poverty, manual labour and a lower social status

[6] Julia V. Emberley, *Venus and Furs. The Cultural Politics of Fur* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), p. 44.
[7] St Clair, p. 246.
[8] Ibid., p. 239.
[9] Emberley, p. 44.

remained. Virginia Woolf in *Night and Day* (1919) describes Mary Datchet as 'a sturdy russet figure, with a dash of scarlet about it'.[10] Mary is the daughter of a country vicar and holds a salaried position in London as a secretary for a suffrage society. By dressing Mary in russet, a shade of brown, Woolf associates her with the countryside and land where she grew up and is now visiting. Additionally, russet identifies Mary as a worker, albeit in the city, due to the sumptuary associations of it with the working classes.[11] Ralph reinforces that Mary is not a member of the upper classes when he says '[t]his is the sort of country I thought you'd live in, Mary, […] [r]eal country. No gentlemen's seats' (p. 192). Woolf's representation of Mary as a worker, as one of the masses, is emphasised by her use of the pronoun 'it' rather than 'her' to describe Mary. This indicates a certain lack of identity and an element of depersonalisation which can be likened to an employer regarding one of their employees as one of many, as part of a group rather than an individual. Furthermore, the use of the word 'sturdy' indicates the physical build of someone who is strong and used to manual labour.

The association of brown with the working classes is reinforced in Katherine Mansfield's short story 'The Garden-Party' (1922) where Mansfield describes the workers' cottages as 'little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown' and in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) where the interior of the Army and Navy Stores, a department store at the lower end of the market, is described as 'cool brown' (p. 204).[12] Reginald Abbot explains that

[10] Virginia Woolf, *Night and Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 190. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[11] However, 'the dash of scarlet' may indicate that she does have some financial stability through her job.
[12] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 128. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

> [b]y the 1920s, the Army and Navy Stores had opened its doors to everyone, reduced the price of its goods by manufacturing them in house […] and garnered a loyal but generally unfashionable clientele.[13]

Finkelstein argues that dress is one of the most visible indicators of wealth and social class and states that 'fashion and styles in appearance [… are] physical representations of our economic position and location in the occupational hierarchy'.[14] It can be assumed that an unfashionable clientele is one with less expendable income and is of a lower occupational status.

Mansfield had previously explored the connections between socio-economic class and dress in her story 'Prelude' (1920) where Fred and Pat, men who work for the Burnell family, are portrayed in brown garments. Fred wears 'brown velvet trousers […] [b]ut he never wore a collar, not even on Sunday. The back of his neck was burnt bright red' and Pat wears a 'neat brown coat and brown bowler' (pp. 9 and 24). Their brown clothing identifies the workmen with the working classes and becomes a form of uniform; it gives the workmen a group identity. Plock reinforces this idea stating that 'group identity is often maintained by a certain degree of uniformity in dress' meaning that membership of a group and identification with that group is affirmed through the wearing of similar clothing or a uniform.[15] In 'Prelude', it is by colouring the workmen's clothing brown that a uniform is created. Woolf also depicts a brown uniform in *The Waves* (1931), in this case a school uniform, to examine the loss of personal identity and adoption of a group identity. Sigmund Freud in his essay 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' (1922) considers the adoption of a group identity and states that 'the particular acquirements of individuals become obliterated in a

[13] Reginald Abbott, 'What Miss Kilman's Petticoat Means: Virginia Woolf, Shopping and Spectacle', *Modern Fiction Studies* 38:1 (Spring 1992), p. 205.
[14] Finkelstein, p. 155.
[15] Plock, p. 2.

group […] in this way their distinctiveness vanishes'.[16] Freud believes that membership of a group results in a loss of individuality, a concept which is illustrated by Woolf when Rhoda thinks '[b]ut here I am nobody. I have no face. This great company, all dressed in brown serge, has robbed me of my identity'.[17] Rhoda has 'no face', she has no separate identity and her brown uniform ensures she blends in with the crowd; she is one of many similar looking girls. It is also interesting to note the use Woolf makes of military language. She describes the mass of school girls as a 'company', this is suggestive of a military unit, a company of men at war and they are dressed in serge which was a fabric commonly used for military uniforms.[18]

Woolf's connections between the colour brown, a mass of ordinary people and the military can be seen in her diary entry of Monday 22 April, 1935. Woolf describes the crowds listening to Hitler as 'brown jelly' and Hitler as 'the great mould coming down on the brown jelly'.[19] It is unlikely that the crowd would all be dressed in brown and it must be noted that Woolf did not see this crowd herself, she is relating the story of a friend. Therefore, she uses the colour symbolically to describe the crowd as working-class, as a mass, and to identify it as a group which supports the Nazi Party. The full name of the Nazi Party was the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP), abbreviated to Nazi, and the SA was its paramilitary army formed in 1921. Homberger and Bradley clarify that '[t]he brown shirt was the key element of the uniform of the second SA from 1926 to 1933' and '[t]he period between 1924 and 1926 must be considered a transitional period during which the troopers

[16] S. Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (London: The International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922). [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35877/35877-h/35877-h.htm . [Accessed: 3 February 2020].
[17] Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000), p. 18. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[18] Encyclopaedia Britannica online. [Online] Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/serge . [Accessed: 11 February 2020].
[19] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume IV: 1931-1935*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1982), p. 304.

wore a mixture of grey sports clothing and brown shirts'.[20] (Figure 1.) Therefore, when Woolf was writing in 1935 the Nazi party and army were associated with the colour brown and her description of the crowd as 'brown jelly' references their Nazi allegiance.

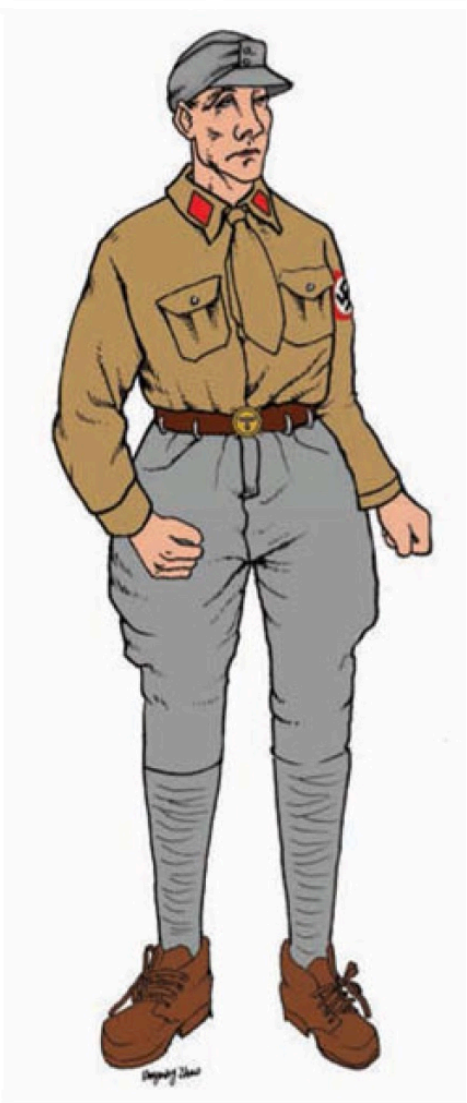


Figure 1. 'The transitional look as worn by the SA between 1924 and 1926. Drawing by Dongming Zhao'.[21]

[20] Hombeger and Bradley, p. 184.
[21] Ibid., p. 189.

Woolf's crowd is a group entity which can be lead and shaped by its perceived superiors and it can be described as a mass. Carl Sandberg in his poem 'I am the People, the Mob' (1916) describes this group entity as 'the mob – the crowd – the mass' and portrays the mass as 'the seed ground […] the prairie that will stand for much plowing'.[22] With this he identifies the mass as working-class and highlights their attachment to the earth as those who work it and produce from it. Furthermore, he describes their similarity to the earth as a group which is worked, used and harvested for labour. The associations which Sandberg links to the masses, the working classes, manual labour, poverty and an individual's ties to the earth are the same as those connected to the colour brown. Additionally, Sandberg specifically defines the mass as being not only workers but soldiers as well. They are the ones who 'spatter a few red drops for history to remember'.[23] The red drops are their blood. Therefore, where brown is depicted as a form of uniform it not only refers to an informal uniform indicating the working classes and the masses but it may also reference military uniforms and their associations of conformity, hierarchy and control.[24]

During World War I and the interwar years uniforms of various kinds became part of the cultural and political landscape which Plock describes as 'the contemporary drift towards a uniform dress culture'.[25] With the mass production of clothing and the resulting ready-to-wear fashion industry growth from 1890 to 1910 women from all walks of life could be fashionably dressed regardless of their wealth.[26] This 'uniform dress culture' not only refers to the mass production of fashion and its adoption across social classes but also to military uniforms which were now a common sight and in the UK were khaki in colour. Khaki is described as a 'dust-coloured; dull brownish yellow' by the Oxford English Dictionary,

[22] Carl Sandberg, *Chicago Poems* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1994), p. 75.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Jennifer Craik, 'The Cultural Politics of the Uniform', *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 7:2 (2003), p. 128.
[25] Plock, p. 183.
[26] Wilson, p. 40.

deriving from the Urdu word meaning 'dusty', and H.D. in her short story 'Asphodel' described World War I military uniforms as 'fawn-mud uniform[s]'. [27] The first khaki uniforms are purported to have been created by Sir Harry Lumsden in Peshawar (now in Pakistan) and were made by 'dyeing' the fabric in the mud and dirt of the river to ensure his soldiers would be 'invisible in a land of dust'.[28] The primary purpose of this new colour of uniform was camouflage and as such reinforces the soldier's lack of individuality. Not only was he one of the masses, the masses now merged with the earth.

Understandably, literature during the interwar years was influenced by the effects of World War I, declining relations between England and Germany and the potential future threat of another war. These sentiments were represented by brown clothing and military references in the writing of Woolf and Radclyffe Hall. In *Mrs Dalloway* the governess Miss Kilman, whose 'family was of German origin', goes shopping to buy a petticoat which potentially will be brown as this is the only colour Woolf mentions in regards to the petticoats which are for sale in the Army and Navy Stores (pp. 122 and 128). Woolf demonstrates the ambiguous nature of feelings towards German governesses at the time through the associations of a brown petticoat. Nora Gilbert describes the figure of the governess and her position in the family as 'blurring […] the lines between work and domesticity, between isolation and privacy, between subjugation and liberation'.[29] She was an employee who worked in the home but at the same time was carrying out duties which could be regarded as those of the mother. A German governess was considered a status symbol; Queen Victoria had had a German governess and

[27] Oxford English Dictionary [Online] Available at: https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/103170?redirectedFrom=khaki& . [Accessed: 11 February 2020]; St Clair, p. 240; H. D., 'Asphodel', in *Women's Writing on the First World War*, ed. by Agnes Cardinal, Dorothy Goldman and Judith Hattaway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 277.
[28] St Clair, p. 240.
[29] Nora Gilbert, 'A Servitude of One's Own: Isolation, Authorship and the Nineteenth-Century British Governess', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 69:4 (March 2015), p. 480.

> [b]y the beginning of the 20th [sic] century it was common - and fashionable - for upper-class families to employ a 'Fraulein' to help educate their daughters, even against the background of rising anti-German sentiment.[30]

However, with the start of World War I and declining relations with Germany she was now perceived as a potential threat. German governesses were victimised as spies in newspapers, literature and even a play by J. E. Harold Terry and Lechmere Worrall, *The Man who Stayed at Home* (1914).[31] Woolf's choice of a petticoat, an item of clothing which will be hidden under a skirt, hints at the subterfuge and secrecy of a spy. It is Miss Kilman who stands outside the door of the room where Elizabeth and Clarissa are talking 'in her mackintosh, listening to whatever they said' (p.121). Susan Bayley supports this connection when she says, 'German governess characters were also used with serious intent to contribute to the literary dialogue on the significance of growing tensions between Britain and Germany'.[32] Radclyffe Hall added to this 'literary dialogue' with her short story 'Fraulein Schwartz' (1934).[33] Fraulein Schwartz is a German teacher whose 'very presence in the house was looked upon as a potential danger' and whose landlady is 'convinced that she was a spy'.[34] The threat of the governess was now tinged with a military connection where she had previously only been considered a domestic threat. Since the nineteenth century the governess had been regarded as a competitor with the mother for the child's affection and Elizabeth Primamore identifying this in Miss Kilman and Mrs Dalloway's relationship notes

---

[30] Susan Reed, 'Is your governess really a spy?', *British Library*. *European Studies Blog* (7 November 2014). [Online] Available at: https://blogs.bl.uk/european/2014/11/is-your-governess-really-a-spy.html . [Accessed: 8 February 2020].
[31] Susan Bayley, 'Fictional German governesses in Edwardian popular culture: English responses to German militarism and modernity', *Literature and History* 28:2 (2019), pp. 200-202.
[32] Ibid., p. 198.
[33] 'Fraulein Schwartz' was published as part of Radclyffe Hall's *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* short story collection in 1934.
[34] Radclyffe Hall, 'Fraulein Schwartz', in *Women's Writing on the First World War,* pp. 22 and 23.

that Woolf uses military language to define this relationship.[35] Woolf describes Miss Kilman as 'armoured for primeval warfare' (p. 124). It is not a coincidence that in naming Miss Kilman, Woolf directly references the German threat and World War I; we cannot help but read her name as 'Kill man'. Furthermore, it can be argued that the potentially brown petticoat gives Miss Kilman a military connection. It is possible that Woolf would have been aware of the transitional dress code of the SA between 1924 and 1926, that is of brown shirts worn with existing grey uniforms, and also of the association between brown uniforms and the Nazi party which was coming into being. Additionally, Miss Kilman's metaphoric military connections are further enforced since her petticoat is bought from a department store which was primarily established as a military cooperative. By describing Miss Kilman in this way Woolf portrays her as a true adversary to Mrs Dalloway and potentially at war with her.

Uniforms are not simply military uniforms. Jennifer Craik's comprehensive discussion of 'formal prescribed uniforms', 'quasi-uniforms', and 'informal uniforms' in *Uniforms Exposed* (2005) identifies Mansfield's workmen's brown clothes as a quasi-uniform.[36] These are 'modes of dress that are consensually imposed as appropriate', for example 'business suits for men and women […] or black outfits for funerals'.[37] Craik explains the associations attached to uniforms as being conformity, hierarchy and control.[38] These associations are evidenced in Mansfield's 'Prelude' where Pat the handyman wears a 'neat brown coat' and Fred the storeman wears 'brown velvet trousers' (pp. 24 and 9). With the addition of the word 'neat', Mansfield indicates that Pat is in his correct place, he is

[35] Elizabeth Primamore, 'A Don, Virginia Woolf, the masses, and the case of Miss Kilman', *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 9:2 (1998), p. 128.
[36] Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed. From Conformity to Transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 17.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Craik, 'The Cultural Politics of the Uniform', p. 128.

conforming with the contemporary social hierarchy and is wearing the correct clothes for his position.

Mansfield was not the only author to describe clothing as neat when it is the correct garment or style. In her short story 'Illusion' (1927) Jean Rhys's protagonist Miss Bruce wears 'a neat serge dress in the summer and a neat tweed costume in the winter' (p. 5). The use of 'neat' confirms that her clothing is appropriate and correctly represents her as a respectable English woman living in Paris. Additionally, Rhys writes of 'neat women in neat hats' in a café which is 'respectably full' in her short story 'In a Café'(1927) (p. 13). Once again, the clothes the protagonists wear are suitable and correct for their position in society. Mansfield also demonstrates this correctness of place with Stanley's thoughts about the handyman, 'I believe this man is a first-rate chap' and '[h]e liked the way Pat had tucked him in […] he looked as if he was pleased with his job – happy and contented already' (p. 24). Stanley is pleased with the job Pat has performed and is reassured that he is happy in his position of employee. The relationship of employer and employee and the resulting class distinction is maintained as is the clear boundary in their social positions. The relative positions of Stanley and Pat as employer and employee are also reinforced by Mansfield in the way she describes them. Stanley is referred to as Stanley, whereas Pat is twice referred to as 'Pat the handyman' (pp. 14 and 23). This indicates his identity is defined by his occupation thereby highlighting his comparatively lower social status to his employer.

Mansfield portrays brown as a colour of clothing and resultant quasi-uniform to signify the working classes and illustrate a clear social hierarchy. Susan Kaiser explains that 'class is always in relation to the class subject positions of others' and this relative status is evident in Mansfield's use of colour when comparing the workmen to the family members in 'Prelude'.[39] Mansfield uses contrasting colours to emphasise the class difference. Mansfield's

[39] Susan B. Kaiser, *Fashion and Cultural Studies* (London: Berg, 2012), p. 98.

working-class men are dressed in brown to illustrate where they sit in the class hierarchy and Stanley who is described as 'Mr Business Man' and Beryl, his provided for sister-in-law, are depicted as wearing white (p.14). Stanley wears a 'crisp white shirt' and Beryl is a 'slim girl in white – a white serge skirt, a white silk blouse' (p. 16 and 41). White's associations with wealth and the upper classes is reinforced by Mansfield's description of white roses as 'gentleman's buttonhole roses, little white ones' (p. 22). Brown and white are at different ends of the dark/light colour spectrum and their opposite associations of clean/pure and dirty/soiled accentuate the difference in class between the manual workers and the family that they serve. Historically, to produce white fibres required significant processing and then to keep them white, without a domestic washing machine, required many hours of manual labour. As such, white clothing was associated with wealth and power as servants were responsible for this work and only the wealthy could afford them.[40] It is significant that Beryl wears a full outfit of white and repeatedly wears white in the text.[41] Thorstein Veblen argues that a woman's dress indicates the ability of her husband or guardian to pay for the finest clothes and newest fashions and as such is a display of his conspicuous consumption, a display which affirms his higher social standing to others.[42] Veblen further states that where clothes demonstrate to others that 'the wearer is not engaged in any kind of productive labour', it is another indication of one's superior pecuniary standing.[43] Beryl's clothes are indicative of her status as a kept woman and the impracticality of white clothing makes manual labour unlikely, highlighting her conspicuous leisure and affirming Stanley's assumed wealth and status.

Woolf similarly contrasts brown and white to highlight class differences. In *Jacob's Room* (1922) Mrs Pearce is portrayed as a needlewoman and her sewing materials contain

[40] St Clair, p. 40. Refer also to Chapter Six: White.
[41] Beryl is also described as dressed in a 'white muslin dress' and a 'white satin dress' (pp. 27 and 41).
[42] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 119.
[43] Ibid., p. 113.

both white cotton and brown wool.[44] The colour and material of her threads symbolise her current and previous economic standing. The white cotton hints at Mrs Pearce's former comfortable lifestyle when her husband was still alive but the brown, utilitarian wool refers to her current state of poverty since his death (p.10). Furthermore, the purpose these threads would be used for is significant. Firstly, white cotton may be used for hand sewing including blouses, summer dresses, white linen and potentially for undergarments. Alison Adburgham explains that at the start of the twentieth century a respectable woman's underwear would still be sewn by hand because '*ladies* never wore machine-stitched underclothes'.[45] Machine stitched mass-produced, ready-to-wear underwear was sold in department stores which were frequented by the middle and working classes. Woolf illustrates Adburgham's statement when she describes Maggie's flat in *The Years* (1937), '[t]he room was rather poverty-stricken; the carpet did not cover the floor. There was a sewing-machine in the corner'.[46] With this there is an understanding that home dressmaking and the sewing machine are a sign of economic inferiority and belong to a lower-class lifestyle.[47]

Secondly, brown wool could potentially have been used for darning socks and if so then these would not be on public view. Socks are hidden from view in the same way Mrs Pearce's poverty is hidden by her respectability. In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf also hides Miss Kilman's poverty from sight. The potential brown of her petticoat and the fact she is buying it at the Army and Navy Stores hint at her relative economic position. It is Miss Kilman's education and middle-class background which are outwardly displayed while her hidden, potentially brown petticoat indicates she is 'degradingly poor' (p. 122). This contrasts with Mrs Dalloway who 'came from the most worthless of all classes – the rich, with a smattering

[44] Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 7. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[45] Alison Adburgham, *Shopping in Style* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1979), p. 176.
[46] Virginia Woolf, *The Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 157. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[47] Plock, p. 194.

of culture' and who shops on Bond Street, where she sees 'girls buying white underlinen threaded with pure white ribbon' (pp. 122 and 18). We can assume that as Mrs Dalloway is rich she will buy her underwear, handmade from Bond Street, as Adburgham states 'the only clothes sold readymade in Bond Street were expensive blouses and handmade underwear'.[48] Furthermore, there is evidence that Clarissa's underwear is white because in *The Voyage Out* her cabin contains 'white under-clothes fallen and scattered on the floor' (p. 79). This colour difference highlights Miss Kilman's and Mrs Dalloway's places at opposing ends of the economic hierarchy and their relationship as employee and employer.

Needlework and knitting are common activities in Woolf's texts. Esther Rutter explains that Woolf herself was an avid knitter and describes how

> Dame Edith Sitwell's voice crackles with something like envy when she remarks in a letter following Virginia Woolf's death, 'I enjoyed talking to [Virginia], but thought nothing of her writing. I considered her 'a beautiful little knitter'.[49]

Woolf's protagonists repair their dresses, are seamstresses and several knit. In *To the Lighthouse* (1927) Mrs Ramsey knits a reddish-brown stocking for the lighthouse keeper's son who is unwell. Kathy Rees describes this act as harking 'back to Victorian philanthropy, and the patronage of the working classes by the rich' and Sayaka Okumra regards it as evidence of Mrs Ramsey's 'self-sacrificing devotion to others'.[50] In addition, Jo Turney writing of the culture of knitting explains that

---

[48] Adburgham, p. 176.
[49] Esther Rutter, *This Golden Fleece: A Journey Through Britain's Knitted History* (London: Granta, 2019), p. 71.
[50] Kathy Rees, 'Worsted, Weave and Web: The Cultural Struggles of the Fictional Knitting-Woman', *E-rea* 16:1 (2018), para. 28; Sayaka Okumura, 'Women Knitting: Domestic Activity, Writing and Distance in Virginia Woolf's Fiction', *English Studies* 89:2 (2008), p. 170.

> [k]nitting has historically been associated with both familial and romantic love: of time spent thinking of someone whilst making, with the made object an expression of the sacrifice of time, of thoughtfulness, and the embodiment of feminine 'virtues' of caring and nurturing.[51]

I agree that these are all valid interpretations of Mrs Ramsey's act of knitting, however, neither Rees nor Okumra refer to the colour of the wool with which Mrs Ramsey is knitting. The brown colour of the wool and its associations with the working classes reinforce their argument that she is knitting for someone who is of a lower social class than herself. Mrs Ramsey is placed as a benevolent superior bestowing a gift on someone of the working classes.

David Cannadine discusses class in Britain before and during World War 1 as a three-layered society comprising the working class, middle class and upper class, in a clear hierarchy.[52] He continues that after the war this hierarchy was breaking down and there was a blurring between the classes. Cannadine quotes Robert Roberts, whose autobiography of the first quarter of the twentieth century in the slums of Salford, Greater Manchester is called *The Classic Slum* (1971) and asserts that there was a 'blurring of the social layers' during this period.[53] The war had weakened social boundaries between men from all walks of life as they had been fighting and living together whilst visually appearing the same in uniform. Cannadine states that the effect of World War I was to discredit 'the pre-war social hierarchy' and it was reported at the time that 'working men were "beginning to use a manner of jaunty

[51] Jo Turney, 'Making Love with Needles: Knitted Objects as Signs of Love?', *Textile. The Journal of Cloth and Culture* 10:3 (2012), p. 302.
[52] David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 126-128.
[53] Ibid., pp. 127-128.

equality" in their dealings with their social superiors which had not been present before the war'.[54] Woolf writing in 1924 acknowledges that

> [a]ll human relations have shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.[55]

This movement in the class system and the perception of a blurring of class boundaries is something which Woolf subsequently examines in *Mrs Dalloway*. She describes Septimus as 'a border case, neither one thing nor the other', '[t]o look at, he might have been a clerk, but of the better sort; for he wore brown boots' (p.83). Woolf's use of 'might' indicates that Septimus's appearance is better than that of a standard clerk and his clothing emulates a higher social status. Georg Simmel at the start of the twentieth century is attributed with first explaining a 'trickle down' fashion system. Although he never used the term, such a system is one where the lower classes emulate the upper classes' choice of dress in a desire to improve their social standing, and in response the upper classes change their look to differentiate themselves from the lower classes creating a perpetual updating of current fashions.[56]

In the 1920s, the Prince of Wales was generally regarded as a fashion icon and it is said that he popularised the wearing of plus fours, the panama hat, the Windsor tie knot, the coloured pocket handkerchief and a white waistcoat with a tuxedo.[57] He was also responsible

---

[54] Ibid.
[55] Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown', (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924), p. 3. [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/63022/63022-h/63022-h.htm . [Accessed: 25 September 2022].
[56] Georg Simmel, 'Fashion', *International Quarterly* 10 (1904), pp. 130-155. [Online] Available at: http://modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Fashion_1904.pdf . [Accessed: 17 March 2020].
[57] Edward VIII (1894-1972); Prince of Wales (1911-1936); King (1936) when he abdicated to marry Wallis Simpson.

for the fashion of wearing 'working-class brown suede shoes'.[58] Therefore, it can be assumed that the colour of Septimus's brown boots indicate his working-class status but at the same time they are highly fashionable. It is Septimus's boots, an item of clothing worn to aid movement, which symbolise his pre-war desire to move between classes. Woolf continues, describing Septimus as 'neither one thing nor the other; might end with a house at Purley and a motor car, or continue renting apartments in back streets all his life' (p. 83). A house and a car, especially in the upwardly mobile, green spaces of 1920s Purley are significant indicators of being socially mobile in comparison to continuing to rent a smaller apartment in the centre of London. Woolf depicts two very different social statuses for Septimus suggesting he could end up with either. However, currently he is in a liminal state. Claire Drewery describes liminality as 'an uncomfortable yet subversive condition situated between […] "successive conservatively secure states of being"; a condition encountered whenever boundaries are crossed, whether fictional, cultural or psychological'.[59] Septimus is on a boundary between a higher and lower social standing. It is Natania Rosenfield who discusses Septimus's state as a middle-ground status and asks 'for how can one inhabit a border without, in fact, having one foot on either side? Such an image would imply possibility, even fertility, rather than limitation'.[60] I agree Septimus's potential to achieve and cross a class boundary is alluded to by Woolf and represented by his brown boots, a detail which Rosenfield does not consider, but as Woolf writes, Septimus is 'neither one thing nor the other'. I argue Septimus has the potential to blur the class boundaries as he is held in a liminal state, which is also a state of transition. It is his health after the war which has resulted in this liminal state not necessarily a lack of ambition. Jennifer Wicke agrees and describes him as 'Septimus Smith with his

[58] Michael and Ariane Batterberry, *Fashion: The Mirror of History* (London: Columbus, 1982), p. 306.
[59] Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), p. 1.
[60] Natania Rosenfeld, 'Links into fences: The subtext of class division in *Mrs Dalloway', Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 9:2 (1998), p. 142.

clerkly aims at cultivated status'.[61] His ambition and potential is demonstrated by him being promoted during the war and the managing clerk at his work believed 'he would, in ten or fifteen years, succeed to the leather arm-chair in the inner room under the skylight with the deed-boxes around him' (p. 84). Furthermore Woolf illustrates this ambition and desire to improve his social standing by describing how he ran away from home to realise his ambitions in London and portrays him as 'one of those half-educated, self-educated men whose education is all learnt from books borrowed from public libraries read in the evening after the day's work' (p. 83). In this way Septimus is similar to E. M. Forster's Leonard Bast in *Howards End* (1910). Leonard is attempting to traverse the social boundary from the lower to higher classes by the same means. Foster describes his protagonist as being 'stood at the extreme verge of gentility. He was not in the abyss, but he could see it, and at times people whom he knew had dropped in, and counted no more'.[62] Leonard educates himself by reading at night after work. Both protagonists try to attain the 'cultural capital' necessary to associate themselves with a higher class.

The term 'cultural capital' was conceived by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and discussed by him in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984).[63] Fred Davis explains Bourdieu's argument that

> 'matters of taste', including certainly a well-honed fashion sensibility for distinguishing the chic from the tacky, comprise in large part the inherited 'cultural capital' of dominant social classes in modern society'.[64]

---

[61] Jennifer Wicke, 'Mrs Dalloway Goes to Market: Woolf, Keynes, and Modern Markets', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 28:1 (Autumn 1994), p.13.
[62] E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 58. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[63] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984).
[64] Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 59.

Bourdieu is of the opinion that the working classes do not have the 'cultural capital' to become a member of the upper classes by economic gain alone. This is because the working classes have not learned the tastes, manners and attributes of the upper classes. They could adopt the clothing but would not have the inherent style, manner and knowledge of 'high' culture as these are attributes which are only learnt from being born into and brought up in that class. For Bourdieu class is something which is part of a person's 'habitus'.[65] Habitus is explained by Entwistle as the 'seemingly natural bodily demeanour we learn as members of a particular family/class' and Kaiser reminds us that the mind and body are one, meaning 'habitus' includes our mindfulness of appearances.[66] Kaiser acknowledges that economic standing obviously determines what clothes an individual can afford to buy but further explains that 'social class is more than what people buy; it includes *how* they wear what they wear, how they carry themselves, and how they present themselves to others'.[67] Woolf's essay on Beau Brummell agrees with this assertion. Brummell is credited with being the first true dandy and Charles Baudelaire described dandyism as a 'cult of the ego'.[68] Baudelaire explained that distinction above all else is most important to the dandy and described how the perfection of his 'clothes and material elegance' are 'no more than the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind'.[69] Woolf's essay published in *The Common Reader* (1925) discusses how his perfection in dress was alone not enough to raise him to a higher social position. According to Woolf he 'owed his ascendency to some curious combination of wit, of taste, of insolence, of independence'.[70] Through the acquisition of 'cultural capital'

[65] Bourdieu, pp. 169-172.
[66] Entwistle, pp. 134-135; Kaiser, p. 31.
[67] Ibid., p. 102.
[68] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Dandy', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (Phaidon Press, 1863), p. 27. [Online] Available at: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/architecture/ockman/pdfs/dossier_4/Baudelaire.pdf . [Accessed: 11 February 2020].
[69] Ibid.
[70] Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1948), p. 149.

Woolf believes that Brummell blurred the boundaries of class and moved out of the social sphere of his birth.

Woolf explores through clothing the idea that economic status alone does not determine class but a protagonist's 'cultural capital' is important as well. She demonstrates how Mrs Pearce's respectability and Miss Kilman's education and family background allow them to maintain middle-class status even though they are poor. Furthermore, she suggests this by dressing them in brown garments which indicate their poverty but ensure at the same time it is hidden from sight. However, Mansfield's workmen cannot and do not choose to conceal their working-class status and this is represented by them being outwardly dressed in brown.

The interpretation of dress does not lie simply in its colour. The combination of colour and fabric can be extremely significant. I turn now to consider how through the material of their protagonist's brown garments, Woolf, Mansfield and Jean Rhys further illustrate the blurring of class boundaries and how the fabric of a garment can significantly affect the interpretation of its colour. In particular, I look at velvet and fur fabrics. Similarly to brown, velvet and fur were historically subject to sumptuary laws and were reserved for clothing the nobility. In particular, the 1363 Statute called 'A Statute Concerning Diet and Apparel' mentions the wearing of fur only in relation to Knights and the Clergy.[71] These laws ensured velvet and fur were indicators of wealth, power and status, and these associations continued into the twentieth century due to the expert craftmanship and specialist looms required to weave velvet, and the expanse of the fur industry.[72] Woolf confirms these connections of wealth and high social status with both velvet and fur. In *Night and Day* Mrs Hilbery tells the story of a friend:

[71] Emberley, p. 46.
[72] Fabrizio de' Marinis, *Velvet* (Milan: Idea Books, 1994), pp. 12 and 21.

> ‘That’s Janie Mannering’, she said, pointing to a superb, white-haired dame, whose satin robes seemed strung with pearls. ‘I must have told you how she found her cook drunk under the kitchen table when the Empress was coming to dinner, and tucked up her velvet sleeves (she always dressed like an empress herself), cooked the whole meal, and appeared in the drawing room as if she’d been sleeping on a bank of roses all day’ (p. 118).

Woolf defines velvet as a fabric worn by the upper classes as Janie is described as a ‘dame’, who wears ‘satin robes’, ‘pearls’ and dresses like an ‘empress’ as well as having an empress to dinner. Additionally, she is likened to Titania, Queen of the fairies, from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* when she is depicted as having ‘been sleeping on a bank of roses all day’. In Shakespeare’s play Oberon, the King of the Fairies, speaks of Titania:

> I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
> Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;
> Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
> With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
> There sleeps Titania sometime of the night.[73]

The bank where Titania sleeps contains musk-roses and eglantine which are otherwise known as briar roses and is reminiscent of Janie’s bank of roses. Additionally, with her appearance of sleeping all day Woolf indicates that the protagonist’s appearance in velvet conveys an

[73] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream,* Act 2, Scene 1. [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1778/pg1778.html . [Accessed: 21 July 2022].

image of conspicuous leisure. Veblen identifies this as an indicator of a higher social class and with this Janie Mannering's upper-class status is affirmed.[74]

Fur's strong association with wealth is such that if a protagonist is depicted in a brown fur garment the working-class ties of the colour brown are eclipsed by the symbolic meaning of the material. It is the quantity and quality of fur that suggests the class and economic standing of the wearer, not the colour. Velvet, which is described as a 'domesticated fur' by Freyja Hartzell can be seen to have the same effect on brown clothing.[75] Mansfield demonstrates this in her short story 'The Little Girl' (1924). Kezia wears a velvet dress to be presented to her father. In 'The Little Girl' the fabric of her dress references the middle-class status of her family and her father's social status and wealth. Kezia and her velvet dress are ostensibly possessions of her father and he treats her in the same way that he would a servant; the brown colour of her dress indicates her inferior standing within the family. Her father tells her to 'get a move on and pull off these boots and take them outside' and to 'carry my teacup back to the table – carefully' (p. 478). The consumption of a luxury good such as velvet is evidence of her father's wealth, power and status in accordance with Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption.[76] Furthermore, Veblen surmises that inexpensive clothing is regarded as undesirable, he says '[a] cheap coat makes a cheap man'.[77] Therefore, a dress made of brown velvet, a luxury and expensive good is appropriate for a middle-class young girl to wear and by colouring it brown her inferior position within the family is reinforced.

[74] Veblen, pp. 28-48.
[75] Freyja Hartzell, 'The Velvet Touch: Fashion, Furniture, and the Fabric of the Interior', *Fashion Theory* 13:1 (2009), p. 54.
[76] Veblen, p. 74.
[77] Ibid., p. 167.

In Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, Mr and Mrs Dalloway are able to arrange carriage on board the *Euphrosyne* due to their social standing and connections. Woolf describes their arrival and appearance:

> Their arrival, of course, created some stir, and it was seen by several pairs of eyes that Mrs. Dalloway was a tall slight woman, her body wrapped in furs, her head in veils, while Mr. Dalloway appeared to be a middle-sized man of sturdy build, dressed like a sportsman on an autumnal moor. Many solid leather bags of a rich brown hue soon surrounded them, in addition to which Mr. Dalloway carried a despatch box, and his wife a dressing-case suggestive of a diamond necklace and bottles with silver tops (p.40).

It is later at dinner that Woolf confirms Mrs Dalloway wears 'soft brown fur' (p. 46). Although Mrs Dalloway's furs are brown, which as a colour would normally indicate a working-class status, Woolf's description of the Dalloways' appearance and luggage clearly indicates wealth and a high social standing. It is clear that the colour of the fur is insignificant as an indicator of social class rather it is the wearing of an expensive second skin or the ownership of it which is key; illustrated by the significant amount of brown leather luggage accompanying them. However, the violence required to make these garments and the leather luggage, the killing of animals, can be compared to the violence of war. Therefore, it is the cultural signifier of the colour brown and its links to war, military uniforms and violence which I argue mirror the violence and superiority of man over animal to produce these items and which in turn reinforce an interpretation of a higher social status. Additionally, their belongings and luggage represent a significant amount of conspicuous consumption. This consumption is further demonstrated by Mrs. Dalloway carrying a piece of luggage which

contains ‘a long glittering necklace’ and silver topped perfume or make-up bottles (p. 47). Furthermore, Mr Dalloway’s dress of a sporting man of leisure symbolises his wealth in accordance with Veblen’s theory of conspicuous leisure. Veblen describes leisure as a ‘non-productive consumption of time’, examples of which he gives as games and sports.[78] However, the most important indicator of the couple’s standing is Mrs Dalloway’s complete visual display of wealth with her full fur cloak.

The first impression of Mrs Dalloway is that of wealth. By covering her body with fur and her face by a veil the person underneath cannot be identified, resulting in her identity being primarily represented by her wealth. Her social status is made visible through her possessions, her social and economic status *are* her identity and her mode of dress creates a physical barrier and metaphorical class boundary between her and the others. She is safely cocooned in her cloak, which not only distances her from the others but provides a warm and comfortable environment for her body in the same way her wealth does. This barrier is not just a thin, single covering; due to the fur’s pile there is an outer surface to the fur and then a deeper surface of the animal’s skin which is reached through the pile. Warwick and Cavallaro state:

> Dress, then, could be described as a *deep surface*, a system of signs that fundamentally relies on superficial modes of signification for the purpose of expressing the underlying beliefs of a given culture and the character of the subjects fostered therein.[79]

[78] Ibid., pp. 33-34.
[79] Alexandra Warwick and Dani Cavallaro, *Fashioning the Frame. Boundaries, Dress and the Body* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p. 135.

In Mrs Dalloway's case the fur cloak provides a 'deep surface', it represents her identity by her wealth and by complying with the contemporary culture and fashion for fur garments she is deemed to be wealthy and highly fashionable. I interpret Warwick and Cavallaro's description of dress as 'superficial modes of signification' as meaning something existing on the surface rather than something which appears to be true until it is examined more closely. I do this in conjunction with Warwick and Cavallaro's assertion that 'clothes generally, have the power of revealing rather than occulting the wearer's actual or imaginary identities' and Woolf's clear demonstration of Mrs Dalloway's wealth through her fur cloak and other possessions. [80]

The cloak as a metaphorical class barrier is substantial, thick and to an extent impenetrable. Her furs represent the traditional class hierarchy and the security she feels in it. This traditional class hierarchy was still in existence in 1915 when *The Voyage Out* was published but things were changing and would change with the 'blurring of the social layers' after World War I. There is a relaxation of the class boundary when the boat's passengers are at dinner together and Mrs Dalloway has removed her cloak and veils. However, during the dinner conversation when Helen does not feel the same way as Mrs Dalloway who describes the conflict between the poverty she witnesses and her privileged lifestyle, Mrs Dalloway asks that 'her fur cloak [be] brought to her' and once safely shielded in her wealth and status, with the class boundaries metaphorically refortified, she changes the subject of the conversation to something she is more comfortable with and relevant to her status, that is the Greek play *Antigone* she saw in Cambridge (pp. 45-6). Warwick and Cavallaro describe this figurative masking as 'a kind of shelter' and a 'token of the desire for self-protection'.[81] Jean Rhys in *After Leaving Mrs Mackenzie* (1930) portrays Julia wishing she hadn't sold her fur

[80] Ibid., p. 137.
[81] Ibid., p. 138.

coat because '[p]eople thought twice before they were rude to anybody wearing a good fur coat; it was protective colouring, as it were'.[82] It is a similar sentiment that leads Miss Schlegel to declare in *Howards End*:

> 'But after all,' she continued with a smile, 'there's never any great risk as long as you have money.' […]
>
> 'Money pads the edges of things,' said Miss Schlegel.
>
> 'God help those who have none.' (p. 72).

In the same way, Mrs Dalloway's wealth represented by her cloak gives her security and safety.

In the first few decades of the twentieth century the global fur industry was vast. The paper 'Fur and the Fur Trade', which F. C. Ingrams presented to the London Fur Trade Association in 1924, details the total number of animal skins sold in London during the 1923-4 fur season as over seventeen million.[83] A vast number considering the season ran from only Autumn 1923 to Spring 1924. Additionally, the new publication *The British Fur Trade* in 1923 reported that 'from recent observations two thirds of women from all classes were wearing fur or fur-trimmed garments'.[84] The most expensive and most luxurious fur garment a woman could own was a full fur coat but for those who could not afford that, cheaper animal skins such as rabbit, squirrel and moleskin were used or a smaller quantity of fur was used to trim a coat or outfit.[85] Therefore, the greater the quantity of fur a woman wore and the better quality it was, the wealthier she was deemed to be. In accordance with Finklestein this

[82] Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 57. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[83] F. C. Ingrams, 'Furs and the Fur Trade', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 72:3739 (July 18,1924), p. 602.
[84] Carol Dyhouse, *Glamour: Women, History, Feminism* (London: Zed Books, 2013), p. 58.
[85] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

outward display of wealth directly correlates to the wearer's economic status and their place in the occupational hierarchy. In Mrs Dalloway's case her full fur cloak places her in a much higher economic and social bracket than for example the wives of shop owners in *Jacob's Room* (1922) who wear 'furs wrapped round their necks' and Miss Brill in Mansfield's 1922 short story of the same name who wears a necklet of fur (p. 83 and p. 272). A small amount of fur as either a trimming or accessory indicates their lower social status and economic standing. Furthermore, the quality of Miss Brill's fur is not good, it is old and damaged and is ridiculed in the park by a girl who says, '[i]t's her fu-ur which is so funny […] it's exactly like a fried whiting' (p. 271). This cannot be regarded as a compliment and we know Miss Brill and her necklet of fur are both past their best. However, by wearing fur, a commodity which was historically reserved for the upper and upper middle classes Mansfield demonstrates the desire to emulate the upper classes and in effect a desire for social mobility.[86]

With the rise in the fur industry in the interwar years and the wearing of fur by not just the upper classes, albeit of varying quantity and quality, this attempt to improve one's status and blur class boundaries was examined by Rhys in her writing during the 1930s. In *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939) Rhys looks at the surface impressions projected by the clothes people wear. In this case Sasha, a forty-something, single woman who is down on her luck, wears a 'Cossack cap and imitation astrakhan coat'.[87] Astrakhan is the curly fur from lamb skins and in a similar way to Mrs Dalloway Sasha wears her fur coat and hat as a barrier from the outside world. Wearing the coat she is picked up by two men in the street and mistaken for a rich woman by one of them:

[86] Dyhouse, p.23.
[87] Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 11. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

> The other one is impressed by my fur coat, I can see. He is willing to believe that I am rich but he says again that he doesn't think I am happy (p. 40).

Later she is approached by a gigolo who mistakes her for a rich woman looking for a man:

> Of course. I've got it. Oh Lord, is that what I look like? Do I really look like a wealthy dame trotting round Montparnasse in the hope of - ? After all the trouble I have gone to, is that what I look like? I suppose I do (p. 61).

Although she has had her hair dyed and wears a new hat it is the coat she blames for his misinterpretation:

> I want to shout at him 'I haven't got any money, I tell you. I know what you're judging by. You're judging by my coat. You oughtn't to judge by my coat. You ought to judge by what I have on under my coat, by my handbag, by my expression, by anything you like. Not by this damned coat, which was a present (p. 61).

Whereas the surface impression of Mrs Dalloway accurately represents who she is and her social standing, Rhys portrays a surface impression of Sasha which can be easily misinterpreted with regards to her actual economic status. Warwick and Cavallaro discuss the surface/depth relationship of dress and explain it is wrong to assume that dress hides the truth or projects a false impression. They state that

> truth cannot be explicitly associated with a deep dimension, hidden beyond or beneath an illusory surface, and indeed that the surface cannot be unambiguously equated with deceptive appearances.[88]

In Mrs Dalloway's case her surface appearance represents the truth, that is her wealth, and although Sasha's status is misinterpreted because of her coat in the novel, Rhys clearly states the coat is 'imitation' ensuring an awareness of the reality of her social and economic status. By depicting Sasha in this coat Rhys accurately reflects her economic status and potential desire to improve her social status.

In all the depictions of fur and velvet clothing I have discussed I have spoken of the garment representing the protagonist's wealth. This is not completely accurate, the women in question either do not earn their own money or do not have sufficient means to buy their own fur, it is bought for them. Their fur or velvet clothing represents the wealth of their husband or family. Veblen explains this concept:

> The women being not their own masters, obvious expenditure and leisure on their part would redound to the credit of their master rather than to their own credit; and therefore the more expensive and the more obviously unproductive the women of the household are, the more creditable and more effective for the purpose of reputability of the household or its head will their life be.[89]

In other words, the better dressed a woman is the higher the social standing of her husband and family are deemed to be. Veblen's argument is demonstrated in the depiction of Mrs

[88] Warwick and Cavallaro, p. 133.
[89] Veblen, p. 119.

Dalloway whose husband and family's wealth are clearly represented by her fur cloak; in Kezia's velvet dress which is provided by her father; and in the lower economic status of Sasha's former lover who bought her the imitation coat. Additionally, the wearing of fur blurs the line between animal and human, as Emberley states '[t]he figure of fur displaces power from the realm of gendered […] relations onto the world of anthropomorphized relations'.[90] In doing so women's lower social position to men is highlighted as them being something which can be possessed and dependant.

The colour brown's historical associations with social class and status emerges from the middle ages with echoes prevailing well into the twentieth century. During the time period of this thesis there was significant political, cultural and social change worldwide which meant brown also became associated with the military and military uniforms in the minds of the public. Modernist writing acknowledges brown's pre-existing reference to class and social hierarchy and incorporates a contemporary interpretation of brown as a colour of uniformity. In doing so through dress modernism questions whether class and social hierarchies are ever truly fixed and examines the breakdown of contemporary class structures. It is specifically clothing and uniforms that facilitate this discussion because they are items which not only represent class and ranking but can also be removed and replaced. Additionally, a reading of brown clothing becomes more nuanced when the fabric of the garment is traditionally regarded as being representative of the upper classes. In this case a traditional reading of brown can be subverted. The next chapter similarly explores the ways in which modernist literature layers historical meanings of yellow with contemporary interpretations to develop traditional connotations of yellow clothing and to interrogate contemporary culture.

[90] Emberley, p. 91.

Chapter 2: Yellow

When discussing the visual, social and cultural history of the colour yellow during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, Michel Pastoureau heads his chapters 'An Unpopular Colour'.[1] Considering yellow is bright, sunny and eye-catching this apparent universal dislike of it can be difficult to comprehend. At the start of the twentieth century, even though Pastoureau notes yellow was a favourite colour of post-impressionist artists including Van Gogh, yellow still clung to its nineteenth-century decadent and scandalous connotations.[2] These connotations came from nineteenth-century French sensationalist novels being printed with yellow covers; by prostitutes being identified by the wearing of yellow clothing; by French ex-convicts being given yellow passports; and by lunatic asylums being painted yellow in some European countries.[3] As Kassia St Clair has observed yellow is the colour of ill-health, of bile and jaundice.[4] It is no coincidence that Woolf describes Florinda's sick room in *Jacob's Room* as 'fit for these catastrophes – cheap, mustard-coloured' (p. 65). Yellow in the 1920s and 1930s, just as in earlier and later eras, was not fashionable and Pastoureau discusses the findings of opinion polls recording a person's favourite colour. He notes that:

> [s]uch studies spread throughout Europe and then the United States after World War I […] [d]espite the appearance of new materials and new lighting, despite all the changes in society and sensibility that have taken place since the late nineteenth century, the results have hardly varied from one generation to another. Whether it is 1890, 1930, 1970 or 2010, blue always comes first by a wide margin, yellow always

[1] Michel Pastoureau, *Yellow. The History of a Colour* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).
[2] Ibid., p. 194.
[3] Ibid., pp. 189-191.
[4] St Clair, p. 64.

> decidedly last. Moreover, not only do results remain consistent from one decade to another, but also they hardly vary across the European continent.[5]

Given this apparent widespread unpopularity of yellow, if a writer depicts an item of yellow clothing in their text, I believe there is a very good reason for doing so. This chapter examines the depiction of yellow clothing primarily in the work of Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield and focusses on gloves and dresses taking into consideration the relationship between surface impressions and actuality and investigating the potential yellow clothing has to blur social and racial boundaries. Additionally, I discuss the significance of clothing being portrayed as a second skin and 'skin' as a fabric.

Yellow Gloves

Yellow gloves are worn by the male protagonists in Mansfield's short story 'The Little Governess' (1920), Woolf's novel *Night and Day* (1919) and Woolf's short story 'The Duchess and the Jeweller' (1938). They can be read as a direct reference to the character of a dandy, the 'yellow nineties' and Oscar Wilde. To understand the significance of yellow gloves an understanding of what the 'yellow nineties' encapsulated and the importance of gloves at the start of the twentieth century is required. The 'yellow nineties', that is from 1890 to the fin de siècle, were characterised by the publication of the avant-garde periodical *The Yellow Book*. It was first published in 1894 and capitalised on the popularity of cheap, sensationalist yellow-bound books of the time. According to Sabine Doran the periodical *The Yellow Book* 'was meant to provoke or challenge the repressive bourgeois morality of the Victorian age'.[6] Doran explains that this reputation was maintained with Aubrey Beardsley as

[5] Pastoureau, *Yellow,* pp. 218-219.
[6] Sabine Doran, *The Culture of Yellow or The Visual Politics of Late Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 48.

art director and illustrator. Beardsley's illustrations depicting nudity and with a highly sexualised nature, were considered extremely shocking at the time. This culture of immorality and decadence was captured by other contemporary artists such as Edouard Touraine whose illustration of prostitutes and their customers in a bar, published on the front cover of *Le Rire* in 1901, is coloured a strong yellow and orange.[7] (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Front Cover of *Le Rire*, 14th December 1907.

Melissa Hope Ditmore explains that a prostitute in the nineteenth century could be identified by her yellow clothing and states that '[b]lack and white and yellow are the colours of choice

[7] French satire magazine published from 1894-1971; Doran, p. 5.

for clothing requirements for prostitutes in Europe. A yellow scarf or headdress was required in Vienna, Seville and Venice'.[8] As these examples indicate the nineteenth-century associations of decadence and immorality with the colour yellow are well documented and these associations carried forward into the start of the twentieth century. In particular, the depiction of a yellow book in modernist writing often references sensationalist novels with yellow covers which were published first in France and then, as it was such an effective and cheap marketing tool, soon became available to buy in railway stations across the United Kingdom. The depiction of yellow books in literature moves from Lord Henry Wotton's yellow book in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), which corrupts Dorian's mind, to the frequent appearance of yellow books in modernist literature to indicate a decadent or morally dubious character. The appearance of a yellow book in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* signifies the start of Dorian's fall into a life of corruption and decay. As Dorian reads the book he saw

> the sins of the world […] passing in dumb show before him […] [o]ne hardly knew at times whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some mediaeval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner. It was a poisonous book (p. 120).

When Oscar Wilde was arrested for gross indecency in 1895 it was reported that he was carrying a yellow book. This connection to his novel and its message of decadence and corruption did not help Wilde's reputation or that of the colour yellow.

In *Jacob's Room* Woolf portrays Fanny Elmer, a dancer and artist's model who falls in love with Jacob, as 'sat in a flowered Spanish shawl, holding in her hand a yellow novel' while being painted (p. 99). The association of yellow books with moral corruption is

[8] Encyclopaedia of Prostitution and Sex Work: A-N, Volume 1, ed. Melissa Hope Ditmore (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), p. 168, as quoted in Doran, p. 5.

recognised by Woolf as artists' models historically were reputed to be of a lower moral standard and were akin to prostitutes. Pettigrew explains that

> [i]n the eyes of the general public in the 1880s and 1890s, any woman who worked as an artist's model was only one step removed from being a prostitute. That any woman should go even further and sit 'for the figure' – that is to say, nude – was surely something that only a fallen woman would consider doing.[9]

Oscar Wilde attempts to defend British life models in his essay 'London Models' (1889) by stating that '[t]he two best things about them are their extraordinary prettiness, and their extreme respectability'.[10] However, their negative moral reputation continued into the early decades of the twentieth century. Mary McAuliffe discusses this reputation in the 1920s with C. J. Bulliet's book *The Courtezan Olympia* (1930) which details the history of the relationships, particularly sexual, between artists and their models and with Alice Prin aka Kiki, the Queen of Montparnasse and model for Man Ray whose racy memoirs published in 1929 upheld the perceived immoral reputation of artists' models.[11]

Woolf makes it clear that Fanny, although not necessarily nude, is not wearing much when she models as she throws on a dressing gown when she is finished. The clothing Woolf does dress her in associates Fanny with a woman of lower morals and even prostitutes. Fanny wears 'a flowered Spanish shawl', an item of clothing which is suggestive of gypsy dress, and she is instructed '[a] little lower, a little looser' (p. 99). Kirstie Blair discusses how popular culture and literature in the 1920s identified gypsies with

---

[9] Neil Pettigrew, 'The Beautiful Miss Pettigrew', *The British Art Journal* 15:1 (Autumn 2014), p. 3.
[10] Oscar Wilde, 'London Models', *English Illustrated Magazine* (1889). [Online] Available at: http://bookanista.com/london-models . [Accessed: 17 June 2020].
[11] Mary McAuliffe, *When Paris Sizzled* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), p. 12; C. J. Bulliet, *The Courtezan Olympia: An Intimate Survey of Artists and their Mistress-Models* (1930); Alice (Kiki) Prin, *The Education of a French Model: Kiki's Memoirs* (1929).

> liberation, excitement, danger and the free expression of sexuality [… and how] costumes based on gypsy style were widely worn in the 1920s, and it was popular, for the upper classes at least, to be painted or photographed in Spanish gypsy dress.[12]

Fanny does not belong to the upper classes suggesting that Woolf dresses her in a gypsy costume and accessorises it with a yellow novel to reinforce the 'loose' morals and stereotype of the artist's model. Woolf further demonstrates Fanny's questionable morals and compares her to a prostitute when '[h]er screwed-up black glove dropped to the floor' at the Empire music hall in Leicester Square (p. 102). This is an action known as a prostitute's invitation where the man who picks up the glove accepts her.[13] Woolf ensures we are aware of what such an invitation means earlier in the novel when Jacob and Florinda after dining out are walking through Soho, a well-known haunt of prostitutes in interwar London, and see a woman drop her glove:[14]

> 'She's dropped her glove,' said Florinda.
>
> Jacob, pressing forward, gave it her.
>
> Effusively she thanked him; retraced her steps; dropped her glove again. But why? For whom? (p. 68).

Woolf further encourages the reader to query Fanny's morals by her choice of place where the glove is dropped, as the promenade at the Empire was another popular place for prostitutes to ply their trade at the time.[15]

---

[12] Kirstie Blair, 'Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf', *Twentieth-Century Literature* 50:2 (Summer 2004), pp. 141 and 144.
[13] See note 6 by Sue Roe in the Penguin 1992 edition of *Jacob's Room,* p.179.
[14] Stefan Slater, 'Prostitutes and popular history: notes on the 'underworld', *Crime, History and Societies* 13:1 (2009), pp. 25-48.
[15] See note 5 by Sue Roe in the Penguin 1992 edition of *Jacob's Room,* p.179.

The importance of gloves and their links to respectability and class is something which Woolf explored in her short story 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' (1923). Here Clarissa thinks that '[a] lady is known by her gloves and her shoes'.[16] In other words, it is possible to identify the class and cultural capital a person holds by reference to the gloves and shoes that they wear. The gloves Mrs Dalloway desires must be skin tight as Nicholson explains 'it is not glove-wearing itself that is significant, it is the immaculate fit that carries the true mark of distinction'.[17] A person wearing such gloves displays their conspicuous leisure as they would be incapable of manual labour and their gloves would be spoiled by such work. The desire for close-fitting gloves is detailed in *Gloves and the Glove Trade* (1921):

> The cut should be well-balanced and shapely, true to size and to the shape of the wearer's hand. Many manufacturers make several varying finger lengths to each size of gloves so that those with long, medium or short fingers can be equally suited.[18]

Since Clarissa's gloves are so tight they require powder to be put on, her social standing is confirmed, whereas Lady Bexborough's diminished financial standing is evidenced by her gloves being 'loose at the wrist' (p. 156). The implication is that she cannot afford to replace her gloves which have stretched with age. Furthermore, as Miss Anstruther demonstrates in the glove shop, ladies' gloves must be so tight that they may rip when tried on. Gloves as tight as this do not fall to the floor by accident, indicating Fanny is not a lady, both morally and financially.

---

[16] Virginia Woolf, *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1989), p. 157. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[17] Claire Nicholson, 'But Woolf was a Sophisticated Observer of Fashion …: Virginia Woolf, Clothing and Contradiction', in *Contradictory Woolf,* ed. by S. Bolaki and D. Ryan (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 131.
[18] B. Eldred Ellis, *Gloves and the Glove Trade* (London: Sir Isaac and Sons, 1921), p.116. [Online] Available at: https://archive.org/details/glovestheglovetr00ellirich/page/116/mode/2up . [Accessed: 3 June 2020].

The etiquette of gloves and the associated respectability conferred by the wearing of gloves is further emphasised in Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934). When Anna is asked to leave her lodgings by her landlady because she 'don't want no tarts in my house' Anna makes sure she has her gloves on before leaving the doorstep because '(A lady always puts on her gloves before going into the street)'. [19] Rhys's use of parenthesis for this statement keeps it separate from the rest of the text to illustrate Anna's desired image of herself rather than that of her landlady who certainly does not regard her as a lady and although this is how Anna would like to see herself it is not necessarily the truth. The potential for an item of clothing being worn to create a surface impression of respectability and higher social status than the wearer necessarily has is a concept which Rhys addresses in much of her writing.

The location of symbolic meaning in gloves is not limited to women's gloves. The symbolism of men's yellow gloves is considered by both Woolf and Mansfield in their writing and the associations they illustrate begin with Beau Brummell, a society man of Regency England who was credited with being the first true dandy, and Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* In addition to Wilde including a yellow novel in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* he dresses Lord Henry in a pair of yellow gloves. This item of clothing was first attributed to Beau Brummell whose 'pale primrose gloves were famous'.[20] The yellow glove is intrinsically linked to Brummell and was a fashion which kept reappearing. In 1896 *Vogue* reported that '[w]hite gloves have lost their prestige, and the yellow and roseate tans have come back to carry the day'.[21] A little later in 1913 the Men's fashion column in *The Observer* stated that 'although in vogue, yellow gloves were not really suitable, for they

[19] Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 26 and 30. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[20] Olga Vainshtein, 'Dandyism, Visual Games, and the Strategies of Representation', in *The Men's Fashion Reader,* ed. by Peter McNeil and Vicki Karaminas (Oxford: Berg, 2009), p. 105; primroses are pale yellow flowers.
[21] Anonymous, 'Fashion: What she wears: The white glove retired in favor of yellow and tans', *Vogue* 7:9 (May 7, 1896), p. 328.

soiled so quickly in the fog'.[22] These links between the dandy and fashion are examined by John Harvey who explains that the true sign of a dandy is an excellence in dress, a particular attention to style and fashion, and Baudelaire said it is the dandy who 'has no profession other than elegance'.[23] In addition, with the 'Yellow Nineties' and Wilde's depiction of the dandy figure in his yellow gloves, he gained a decadent and morally corrupt reputation.

Pastoureau confirms this image when he discusses yellow at the start of the twentieth century and states that '[a] man would never wear yellow unless he wanted to draw attention to himself or deliberately transgress social codes'.[24] Furthermore, after World War I and with the advent of the 'roaring twenties', a time of living life to the full, Joseph McBrinn believes that 'the dandies of the 1920s looked back to those of the 1890s' and that there was 'a new attention to Wildean dandyism'.[25] I argue this resurgence of the nineteenth-century dandy was evident in the literature of the interwar years and agree with Hext and Murray who argue that decadent literature, including the work of Wilde, is not completely separate and opposite from Modernist literature. They claim that 'the tropes of decadence influenced those writers who have long been the standard bearers of modernism' and as Baudelaire said it is the dandy who 'is looking for that indefinable something we may be allowed to call "modernity"'.[26] Therefore, it is not surprising that such a character would exist within a new generation of writing. Mansfield, in particular, was influenced by the works of Oscar Wilde, and Kimber documents 'the Wildean undercurrent present in so much of her writing' and she proposes links between *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Mansfield's short story 'Prelude' (1920).[27] I

[22] Anonymous, 'Fashions for Men: Concerning Hats and Gloves', *The Observer* (26 October 1913), p. 21.
[23] John Harvey, *Men in Black* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1995), p. 29; Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), p.9. [Online] Available at: https://www.writing.upenn.edu/library/Baudelaire_Painter-of-Modern-Life_1863.pdf . [Accessed: 5 June 2020].
[24] Pastoureau, *Yellow,* p. 186.
[25] Joseph McBrinn, 'Queer hobbies: Ernest Thesiger and Interwar Embroidery', *Textile* 15:3 (2017), p. 311.
[26] Ibid., p. 22; Baudelaire, p. 6.
[27] Gerri Kimber, *Katherine Mansfield and the Art of the Short Story* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 7 and 37.

will further Kimber's argument with a discussion of the links between *Dorian Gray* and 'The Little Governess' which was published at the same time as 'Prelude'.

In 'The Little Governess' a young woman travels to Germany by herself to take up the position of governess with a family. She is naïve and inexperienced and is befriended by an older man on the train journey who in the end attempts to corrupt her. First he encourages her to go out alone with him, to drink beer and finally after taking her to his 'bachelor's flat', he kisses her and presses himself against her without consent (p. 148). Similarly to Lord Henry, who negatively influences and corrupts Dorian, the old man wears yellow gloves. When he arrives to take out the little governess he is 'more beautifully brushed than ever, with a rolled umbrella in one hand and yellow gloves instead of brown ones' (p. 147). Lord Henry, when visiting Dorian to tell him Sybil Vane is dead, is shown 'sinking into a chair, and slowly pulling off his yellow gloves' (p. 94). Although Mansfield uses the colour yellow as a signifier that the young governess is to be subject to an attempt to corrupt her, prior to this in the text there are parallels between *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the old man which support the interpretation of the yellow gloves in conjunction with the trope of the decadent and morally corrupt dandy. When the old man and the governess first meet each other his appearance is that of a well-dressed, respectable and charming man and he wins her over:

> [h]ow spick and span he looked for an old man. He wore a pearl pin stuck in his black tie and a ring with a dark red stone in his little finger; the tip of a white silk handkerchief showed in the pocket of his double-breasted jacket. Somehow, altogether, he was really nice to look at (p.142).

The old man's sartorial presentation of himself, in that he appears attractive and respectable, allows him to get close to the young governess and gain her trust. The social boundary

between strangers is removed and he takes advantage of this. Furthermore, this first meeting is reminiscent of that of Lord Henry and Dorian Gray. Where Lord Henry orders 'let us have something iced to drink, something with strawberries in it', Mansfield has her governess think 'Oh, she was thirsty! She was very thirsty!' after which the old man presents her with a basket of strawberries (p. 23 and p. 145). Mansfield's intention in this first meeting is to connect her short story to Wilde's novel so that when she presents the yellow gloves the potential corrupting influence and threat of the old man to the governess is evident. The old man's attractive and perfectly presented surface appearance is interpreted by the governess as respectability and gentlemanliness and she assumes this is his true nature. It appears that the surface impression of propriety he projects is in contradiction to his character and intentions. However, in accordance with Warwick and Cavallaro I argue this is not the case. Warwick and Cavallaro describe dress as a 'deep surface', it 'is a system of signs that [… express] the character of the subjects fostered therein'.[28] This means that an accurate reading of his clothing can and will represent the character of the protagonist. The 'decadent dandy's' costume appears to be akin to a mask, a veiling device which attempts to deceive the viewer as to the literary character's true nature but because of the definite links of *yellow* gloves to a certain type of personality, the old man's character is indeed represented on the surface. This is affirmed by Len Gutkin, who describes the nature of a 'decadent dandy' and states that '[c]orruption is thus the 'truth' of surface beauty, or its complement, or its price'.[29] A pair of gloves by themselves may signify respectability and gentlemanliness but it is by an analysis of them as *yellow* gloves that we understand the character more completely. Therefore, the yellow gloves with a 'definite signified' (a corrupt and morally dubious character) become a

[28] Warwick and Cavallaro, p. 135.
[29] Len Gutkin, *Dandyism: Forming Fiction from Modernism to the Present* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020), pp. 3-4.

sign in accordance with Barthes' explanation of semiotics. They are a sign which Mansfield makes use of to indicate the morally questionable nature of the old man.[30]

Woolf also uses yellow gloves as a sign and she develops their interpretation over time. In *Night and Day* Woolf gives William Rodney a pair of light yellow gloves to wear. Although the gloves link him to the figure of a dandy, there is no further indication in his behaviour that he is a 'decadent dandy' of the nature of Wilde and Mansfield's dandies. Gutkin acknowledges there are two types of dandy, the 'decadent dandy' and the 'aestheticist dandy'.[31] He describes the aestheticist dandy as a 'style of personality' and explains that '"aestheticism" tends to describe surfaces and "decadence" depth', he continues that aestheticism is a 'cult of surfaces – [… an] attention to clothes and makeup, to dispositional composure, to fine objets d'art, to affective control, to the well-turned phrase' without the immorality and corruption of decadence.[32] In *Night and Day* Rodney can be regarded as an 'aestheticist dandy'; he is a would-be poet and literature lover, he quotes poetry, finds beauty in the moonlight and is always impeccably dressed. Whilst giving a paper on Shakespeare '(h)e was scrupulously well dressed, and a pearl in the centre of his tie seemed to give him a touch of the aristocratic opulence' (p. 49). The pearl in his tie is reminiscent of Mansfield's old man in 'The Little Governess' and his dandiacal traits are evident in 'the perfect fit of his evening dress', his vanity and his appearance 'as a man who moved easily in very good society' (pp. 210-211). Barbey d'Aurevilly said that 'independence makes the dandy' and this is another aspect of the dandy which Woolf references when Henry thinks of Rodney '[c]ould any one, except a rather singular character, afford to be so ridiculously vain?' (p.

[30] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage Books, 2009), p. 136.
[31] Gutkin, p. 3.
[32] Ibid.

211).[33] Additionally, Gutkin lists androgyny as one of six traits pertaining to the dandy and Woolf depicts Rodney through Denham's eyes as

> [t]hat little pink-cheeked dancing-master […] that gibbering ass with the face of a monkey on an organ? that posing, vain, fantastical fop? with his tragedies and his comedies, his innumerable spites and prides and pettiness? (p. 318).[34]

Although Denham is angry and Woolf's use of the lower case at the start of each question indicates his fury, spurting out question after question, his description of Rodney takes particular notice of Rodney's potentially effeminate or androgynous qualities.

Rodney, Woolf's first depiction of a dandy figure, is simpler than Mansfield's old man. His surface appearance is true to his character of an aestheticist dandy. Michael Whitworth believes that such variances in interpretation support his argument that although yellow gloves can refer to the dandy figure we should not assume these references were still relevant when Woolf was writing and they may simply fall under Barthes' idea of 'the reality effect'.[35] Whitworth argues that 'the yellow gloves might be nothing more than gloves that happen to be yellow' and Barthes states that

> the very absence of the signified, to the advantage of the referent alone, becomes the very signifier of realism: the *reality effect* is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity.[36]

---

[33] Barbey d'Aurevilly, *On Dandyism and of George Brummell* (London: J. M. Dent and Company, 1897), p. 65. [Online] Available at: https://archive.org/details/ofdandyismofgeor00barb/page/64/mode/2up?q=independence . [Accessed: 8 June, 2020].
[34] Gutkin, p. 2.
[35] Michael H. Whitworth, 'Woolf, Context, and Contradiction', in *Contradictory Woolf,* ed. by Stella Bolaki and Derek Ryan, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 11-22; Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 141-8.
[36] Whitworth, p. 16; Barthes p.148.

Barthes reaches this conclusion by stating that 'every narrative […] possess a certain number of "useless details"'.[37] I agree with Barthes' concept of useless details but I disagree that Woolf coloured Rodney's gloves yellow to create the effect of reality because the colour signifies specific historical characteristics of the dandy figure which Woolf references in Rodney's character. It is notable that Whitworth does not refer to Woolf's 1929 essay on Beau Brummell which demonstrates that not only did Woolf have an in-depth knowledge of the dandy character but that it was a personality type she was interested in pursuing in her writing. Indeed, in *Jacob's Room* Woolf describes '[t]he pale girls, the old widow lady, the three Jews lodging in the same boarding-house, the dandy, the major, the horse-dealer, and the gentleman of independent means' and includes the dandy as one of a number of character types on the pier in Scarborough (p. 135). Whitworth does not consider Woolf's interest in the character of a dandy and further focusses on the colour of the gloves, he states we must not assume that lemon gloves, although linked to dandyism in the 1830s, continue to be a valid reference in the 1910s and also we must not assume that light yellow means the same as lemon. Firstly, Whitworth is referring to Alexandra Orr's 1891 biography of Robert Browning in which she writes that the poet was 'just a trifle of a dandy, addicted to lemon-coloured kid-gloves and such things' and argues that this connection between gloves and the dandy is not enough to prove a later connection in Woolf's work.[38]

There is a link between lemon or light yellow gloves and dandyism in the 1910s through Brummell's primrose gloves and with Wilde's depiction in *Dorian Gray.* This connection can then be evidenced in modernist literature by writers such as Mansfield and F. Scott Fitzgerald. In Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Nig*ht (1934) Dick Diver's clothes are a performance and identify him as a dandy. On the beach he wears 'a jockey cap and red-

[37] Barthes, p. 142.
[38] Alexandra Orr, *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1891); Whitworth, p. 16.

striped tights' and 'transparent black lace drawers […] lined with flesh-coloured cloth' and his dandiacal dress and corrupting influence is evident when out with Rosemary, the young film actress with whom he commits adultery, '[h]is hat was a perfect hat and he carried a heavy stick and yellow gloves'.[39] Later Diver is described as

> [d]ignified in his fine clothes, with their fine accessories […] his shirt-sleeve fitting his wrist and his coat sleeve encasing his shirt-sleeve like a sleeve valve, his collar molded plastically to his neck, his red hair cut exactly, his hand holding his small briefcase like a dandy (pp. 97-98).

Everything about Diver's appearance indicates a perfection of dress. Fitzgerald uses technology and machine vocabulary such as 'valve' and describes his collar as moulded plastic to indicate the perfect modern fit of his clothes, suggesting a more up-to-date dandy, a dandy of the 1920s. Catherine Mintler discusses the dandy figure throughout Fitzgerald's novels and identifies Diver as such. Although she does discuss at length the carrying of a cane as being synonymous with a dandy she does not mention the description quoted above which encapsulates the stereotypical dress of the dandy.[40] Diver's hat is 'perfect', implying an excellence of dress and the gloves and cane are symbolic of a dandy. Secondly, in answering Whitworth, the distinction between primrose, light yellow, lemon and many other potential shades is highly subjective. Woolf's vocabulary of colour does not predominantly describe shades or nuances of colour; she tends to use the primary colour name. As a result of this and since everybody interprets colour differently, it is reasonable to assume light yellow can be interpreted as the same colour as lemon or primrose.

---

[39] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), pp. 8, 24 and 81. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[40] Catherine R. Mintler, 'From Aesthete to Gangster: The Dandy Figure in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 8 (2010), p. 106.

Woolf developed her exploration of the dandy figure from Rodney in *Night and Day*, through her discussion of Beau Brummell to the jeweller in her short story 'The Duchess and the Jeweller' (1938). In this story the jeweller wears a pair of yellow gloves and even without this sign that he is a dandy Woolf ensures we know he is of this character type by her description of his material possessions and appearance. The jeweller dresses himself to perfection and looks in the mirror at

> his legs, so shapely in their perfect trousers; at his boots; at his spats. They were all shapely, shining; cut from the best cloth by the best scissors in Saville Row […] he straightened the pearl in his tie, cased himself in his smart blue overcoat; took his yellow gloves and his cane (pp. 248-249).

The jeweller is a perfect dandy, extremely well turned out and very conscious of his appearance. The meticulous nature of his grooming is highlighted by Woolf's use of semi-colons to list these items of clothing; all these elements must be ticked off and perfect to create the surface impression he wishes to project to others.

Woolf further identifies the jeweller as a dandy by referencing Brummell in the jeweller's flat. Brummell was a member of a club in St James's Street in London called White's. This club was known for having a bay window in the middle of its façade where Brummell and his friends would sit to pass judgment on passers-by. To receive a favourable glance from Brummell was an honour and as such many dandies of the day would pass by on purpose to be judged. The jeweller's flat also has a bay window '[a]nd from the middle window he looked down upon the glossy roofs of fashionable cars packed in the narrow straits of Piccadilly' (p. 249). The 'narrow straits of Piccadilly' could easily be describing St James's Street in London which is a narrow passage situated between Piccadilly and Pall

Mall, two much larger roads. It appears that Woolf is referencing St James's Street, White's Club and Beau Brummell with this description.

Woolf expands her description of a classic dandy in her essay on Brummell by explaining that '[h]e had no advantage of birth, and but little of fortune […] Brummell owed his ascendency to some curious combination of wit, of taste, of insolence, of independence'.[41] Woolf parallels Brummel with her jeweller who 'began life in a filthy little alley' but now spends the weekend with aristocracy and she illustrates his improving social status through his appearance (p. 248). This she does by explaining that as he earned more 'he dressed better and better'(p. 249). In this way the jeweller is similar to Brummell who used clothing to blur social boundaries and allow him to be accepted in fine society.

There is little doubt that Woolf depicts the jeweller as a dandy and uses the same dress details for the jeweller and Rodney to link the two characters; they both wear yellow gloves, a crimson dressing gown and a pearl tie pin. Whitworth does acknowledge that both characters wear a crimson dressing gown but does not consider that this reference back to Rodney encourages a comparison and demonstrates Woolf's development of the dandy figure, in fact he dismisses it as irrelevant. Woolf develops this figure from that of the aestheticist dandy to a decadent dandy. This is achieved through reference to *Dorian Gray* and the degeneration of her protagonist's character. Where Mansfield directly alludes to *Dorian Gray* in her short story, Woolf identifies the jeweller with Dorian Gray. She references the yellow gloves, Dorian's 'study of jewels' and the painting (p. 130). The jeweller stands in front of a painting and says "'I have kept my word,' […] laying his hands together, palm to palm, as if he were paying homage to her. 'I have won my bet'" (p. 130). His action of speaking to the painting in conjunction with the mention of a bet draws parallels with Dorian Gray's painting and his plea which has been described by John Herdman as

[41] Virginia Woolf, 'Beau Brummell', in *The Common Reader* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1948), pp. 148-149.

'Dorian's prayer to the painting'.[42] It is the jeweller who places his hands together as if in prayer but it is Dorian who says

> 'How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. It [the painting] will never be older than this particular day of June … If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that – for that – I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!' (pp. 27 -28).

This desire or wish is often described as Dorian's deal with the devil and later the women in the opium dens that he frequents call him 'the devil's bargain' (p. 180). We do not know what the jeweller's bet is, only that his current wealth and status has been attained through dishonesty. By giving the jeweller a dishonest character and morally dubious past Woolf develops her figure of a dandy into a more decadent, Wildean dandy and she explores the oppositional surface versus depth relationship between his immaculate, well-presented appearance and his corrupt personality. In this way Woolf builds upon her previous depictions of a dandiacal personality.

There is one more occasion where Woolf shows her engagement with *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* that is in the cameo of Mr Carmichael in *To The Lighthouse* (1927). Mr Carmichael not only smokes opium as does Lord Henry but he also wears yellow accessories. Wilde writes, 'Lord Henry elevated his eyebrows, and looked at him in amazement through the thin blue wreaths of smoke that curled up in such a fanciful whorls from his heavy opium-tainted cigarette' and Woolf writes of Mr Carmichael, '[h]e said nothing. He took opium. The children said he had stained his beard yellow with it' (pp. 6 and 47). With a yellow beard we

[42] John Herdman, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1990), p. 140.

are reminded of the negative, unhealthy associations of yellow and this colour is repeated in his clothing. Mr Carmichael does not wear yellow gloves rather he shuffles like an old man in his yellow slippers (p. 49). He is a poet, at first unsuccessful, not dissimilar to Rodney Williams. However, by moving his yellow garment from his hands to his feet Woolf signifies his downtrodden nature. He is old, unsuccessful and bossed about by his wife:

> She remembered that iniquity of his wife's towards him […] when with her own eyes she had seen that odious woman turn him out of the house. He was unkempt; he dropped things on his coat; he had the tiresomeness of an old man with nothing in the world to do (pp. 47-48).

Chronologically Mr Carmichael's character does not add significantly to Woolf's development of the dandy figure but he is an interesting example of intertextuality in her writing and of her move towards the decadent dandy and incorporation of Wilde's novel in her work.

Yellow Dresses

When men wear yellow, it is worn in the form of accessories. When Mansfield and Woolf dress their female protagonists in yellow, it is in a yellow dress. In her depiction of women's yellow clothing, Woolf uses yellow's associations with ill-health and paranoia, and as we see in her short story 'The New Dress' (1927) a yellow dress is 'not *right*' (p. 170). From the end of the nineteenth century to the first few decades of the twentieth century the stigma of yellow was recorded in literature. For example, in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story 'The Yellow Wallpaper' (1892) the protagonist is locked in a room to help her recover from a nervous breakdown with a yellow design on the walls, but instead she descends

slowly into madness. Returning to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, yellow to Wilde also represents ageing, illness and decay, '[y]ellow crow's-feet would creep round the fading eyes and make them horrible', a dead man's face is 'a glistening yellow face' and a dead ancestor's painting has 'lean yellow hands' (pp. 118, 166 and 138). Furthermore, at the end of the nineteenth century yellow was most readily associated with paranoia and the phrase 'the yellow peril' as there were public concerns regarding the large number of immigrants from the East. Kaiser Wilhelm, the last Emperor of Germany and King of Prussia from 1888 to 1918, is credited with coining the phrase to describe the perceived threat.[43] This was a threat which did not materialise and was eclipsed by the modernist movement's embrace of Eastern design and culture and the trend for 'orientalist' fashions.[44] Later Aldous Huxley named his first cynical satirical novel *Crome Yellow* (1921) hinting at the pigment chrome yellow, so loved and used by Van Gogh, which dulls and fades to brown over time, symbolising the decay and underlying degeneration of the social class depicted in his novel. Jean Rhys describing Miss Bruce's wardrobe in her short story 'Illusion' (1927) writes '[t]he yellow dress appeared malevolent, slouching on its hanger' and then in Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs Dalloway,* Clarissa bumps into Hugh Whitbread, an old friend, walking in London but is unsettled, she is 'oddly conscious at the same time of her hat. Not the right hat for the early morning, was that it?' (p. 6). It is the colour of her hat which is indicative of her feelings towards her friend. Clarissa feels inferior to him and uncomfortable in his presence. When she returns home and lays 'her feathered yellow hat on the bed' her paranoia on meeting him is symbolised by the colour of her hat (p. 30).

In a similar manner Mabel, the protagonist of Woolf's 'The New Dress' has her paranoia represented by a yellow dress. Mabel wears a dress which is very much out of

[43] David Scott Kastan, *On Colour* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 65.
[44] Zhaoming Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

fashion, this is partly by choice as she chooses a design from 'that old fashion book of her mother's, a Paris fashion book of the time of the Empire' and also because she cannot afford the new fashions as 'fashion meant cut, meant style, meant thirty guineas at least' (p. 170). Woolf reinforces her difference in dress to the other guests by describing Rose as being 'dressed in the height of fashion', 'in lovely, clinging green' (pp. 171 and 175), thereby confirming that not only is Mabel's style of dress unfashionable, so is the colour. In effect Mabel is wearing the trickle-down fashion of a previous trend, reinforcing her personal perception of being inferior to the other guests and her lower social and economic class.

At the party Mabel's self-image becomes a negative one due to her imagined judgement from others. It is clear that this is her interpretation of others' thoughts by the use of free indirect speech.[45] For she thinks 'oh these men, oh these women, all were thinking – "What's Mabel wearing? What a fright she looks! What a hideous new dress!"' (p. 170). It is the design of her dress and the fact it is out of fashion that makes it a 'horror' but importantly the inappropriateness of the dress is reinforced by its colour (p. 171). Once again the surface interpretation of a yellow item of clothing accurately represents the character and status of the protagonist. Here Mabel is economically inferior to her fellow guests and her interior paranoia is portrayed through the colour of her dress and its cultural associations of the time.

Mansfield describes a rather unusual costume including a yellow dress in her short story 'Bliss' (1920). Mrs Norman Knight is portrayed as wearing an 'amusing orange coat with a procession of black monkeys round the hem and up the fronts', and on arriving for dinner at her friends describes her journey there and the effect her costume had on her fellow travellers:

[45] Yael Sharvit, 'The Puzzle of Free Indirect Discourse', *Linguistics and Philosophy* 31:3 (2008), pp. 353-395. This is a style of writing where the thoughts of a character are seen through a third person narrator.

> ‘ … Why! Why! Why is the middle-class so stodgy – so utterly without a sense of humour! My dear, it’s only by a fluke that I am here at all – Norman being the protective fluke. For my darling monkeys so upset the train that it rose to a man and simply ate me with its eyes. Didn’t laugh – wasn’t amused – that I should have loved. No, just stared – and bored me through and through.’ […] ‘The cream of it was when she, being full fed, turned to the woman beside her and said: “Haven’t you ever seen a monkey before?”’ […] And a funnier thing still was that now her coat was off she did look like a very intelligent monkey – who had even made that yellow silk dress out of scraped banana skins. And her amber earrings; they were like little dangling nuts (p. 73).

Mansfield’s sense of humour is clear in her writing of this scene and her success in this was recalled by Leonard Woolf in his autobiography, ‘I don’t think anyone has ever made me laugh more than she did in those days’.[46] He goes on to describe how

> [s]he would sit very upright on the edge of a chair or sofa and tell at immense length a kind of saga, of her experiences as an actress or of how and why Koteliansky howled like a dog in the room at the top of a building in Southampton Row. There was not the shadow of a gleam of a smile on her mask of a face, and the extraordinary funniness of the story was increased by flashes of her astringent wit.[47]

Mansfield’s humour is most evident in her use of free indirect discourse at the end of the quotation at the top of this page. Delia da Sousa Correa describes this common technique of

[46] Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (London: Viking, 1987), p. 180.
[47] Ibid.

Mansfield's as a 'highly comic sense of timing that structures her characteristic blend of dialogue and free indirect discourse'.[48] Mr and Mrs Knight together tell the train story in direct speech but when describing how ridiculous Mrs Knight looks, in the last three lines of the quotation, Mansfield conveys this through free indirect discourse. The result is that it is not clear whose thoughts are being relayed whether Bertha's (the hostess), the narrator's, or those of all the dinner party guests. However, Mansfield does make it clear that Mrs Knight looks ridiculous; like an intelligent monkey, sitting in banana skins and wearing nuts as earrings.

Humour is evident in this costume and in this way Mansfield investigates much more complex issues of performance in regards to the surface versus depth relationship, the traversing of social boundaries, and race relations in the 1920s. Mansfield describes Mrs Knight performing for her audiences, both at the party and on the train. This is a narrative device which she uses in several of her short stories. In particular, in 'Mr Reginald Peacock's Day' (1920), the protagonist is portrayed as if his whole life is a performance including when he opens a letter at breakfast 'as gracefully as if he had been on the stage'(p. 114). The opening of the letter is an act performed for the gaze of another and to attract attention. This is similar to how Mr Peacock's avian namesake opens its tail to attract the attention of a mate. Mr Peacock's 'performance' is an effective device to alert the reader to the fact that a surface appearance may not represent the truth of their character as they are metaphorically acting. Mrs Knight's short scene consists of two performances, her first is to her fellow train passengers and her second is the rendering of her journey to her fellow dinner party guests. Before we meet Mrs Knight Mansfield ensures we have already linked her to the stage and acting, as we are told her husband 'was about to start a theatre' and the first image of her is

[48] Delia da Sousa Correa, 'Musical Performativity in the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield', *Word and Music Studies* 12 (2011), p. 76.

dressed in what can only be described as a bold, bright, highly unusual and theatrical coat (p. 72). We know that this performance is welcomed by Bertha as the coat is described as 'most amusing' (p. 73). Due to the ellipses at the start of Mrs Knight's speech we, as reader, come to Mrs Knight's performance after it has started but it is most definitely a performance. Mrs Knight starts by exclaiming 'why' three times. The repetition and the use of an exclamation mark rather than a question mark enforces the fact that she is not looking for an answer, her question is a rhetorical statement, a soliloquy to her audience. On the train the monkeys are her visual performance, which is hinted at as there is a procession of them on her coat and the collective noun for a group of monkeys is a troop, a homophone for a troupe of actors. Correa explains that Mansfield 'wrote with musical performance very consciously in mind' and Mansfield wrote in her letters 'I chose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence'.[49] Therefore it is reasonable to assume that this implied homophone could have been intended by Mansfield. Mrs Knight, claims her train audience do not give her the response she wants, she claims they are not amused by her but I believe she is happy with this response, in her melodramatic way it amuses her and provides her with another performance at the dinner party. Her actual success on the train is highlighted by her saying '[f]or my darling monkeys so upset the train that it rose to a man and simply ate me with its eyes' (p. 73). In effect, the train travellers give her the equivalent of a standing ovation all eyes were on her and they consumed her performance. Mrs Knight's costume, behaviour and appearance can be described as bohemian; her bohemian lifestyle includes an interest in interior design, links to the theatre and she dines with would-be poets. According to Booker

[49] Correa, p. 73; Katherine Mansfield, *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield,* ed. by Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-2008), volume 4, p. 165.

> the bohemian conveys the combination of a conspicuously unconventional personal style, exhibited in clothing and conduct, along with an associated social scene and urban enclave which fosters a culture of artistic endeavour.[50]

As Mrs Knight's dress is made of silk, a fluid, slippery and expensive fabric, Mansfield suggests that this bohemian appearance is one which is easily put on and removed while at the same time representing her middle-class status. Although she wears a yellow dress to project a bohemian appearance and criticises the 'stodgy' middle classes, the nature of the fabric indicates it is worn only as a performance and her own middle-class status can still be ascertained because of the material it is made from. Furthermore, Mrs Knight's nickname 'face', suggests that her surface appearance may simply be a mask, a costume donned for a performance.[51] She criticises her fellow train travellers for being middle class, although she is most probably middle class herself but does not want to appear that way. In this way she regards herself as different from them, avant-garde and certainly more daring. She cements this when she asks the woman beside her on the train 'Haven't you seen a monkey before?'.[52] With her troop of monkeys, yellow dress of banana skins and her performance, Mrs Knight has brought the Paris nightclubs of the time to the middle classes.

At the end of World War I many American and in particular African American servicemen remained in France and on the continent. This coincided with an interest in black culture, a white appreciation of black African art and fashionable nightclubs and theatres were soon hosting black cabarets. There was a fantasy of primitivism and the exotic, with this

[50] Liz Brooker and Peter Brooker, 'Virginia Woolf and Bohemian Lifestyles', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts,* ed. by Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 212.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

trend becoming known as negrophilia.[53] According to Elizabeth Way, negrophilia gained popularity because

> the horrors of WWI left Eurocentric society, and particularly avant-garde art communities in New York and Paris, searching for alternative cultural models. Observing African culture, especially art and music, through the lens of colonialism and eugenics, these artists praised blacks (including black Americans who knew little of African culture) as primitive and regressive and therefore oppositional to the destructive and industrialised West. They embraced this difference as one that 'could replenish and revitalize European culture'.[54]

Mrs Norman Knight brings this exotic, primitive entertainment to her train journey. Her name itself further reinforces this as Norman knights were a group of medieval knights who travelled throughout Europe in search of wealth and power, in particular they fought at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, coming over from France.[55] In a similar way Mrs Knight has brought a part of French culture, the avant-garde nightclubs and nightlife, from Paris to England.

Mrs Knight is a negrophiliac not just because she is dressed in black monkeys, banana skins and nuts but because she describes her monkeys as 'darling', she loves them. Only five years later Josephine Baker would exploit this negrophilia and love of the exotic and dress herself in a banana skirt to perform. Mansfield is not depicting Mrs Knight as a literary Josephine Baker as Baker did not appear on stage in her banana skirt until 1926 but Sowinska

---

[53] Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).
[54] Elizabeth Way, 'Dressing to Pass during the Harlem Renaissance: Fashion in the Novels of Jessie Redmon Fauset and Nella Larsen, *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* (2020), p. 11.
[55] '1066 and the Norman Conquest', *English Heritage*. [Online] Available at: https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/1066-and-the-norman-conquest/the-people-of-1066 . [Accessed: 11 June 2020].

explains that before then 'bananas were a part of music-hall tradition that used them not only as a focal point of comedian's skits [but also as] an indispensable accessory of the minstrel shows'.[56] Therefore, Mrs Knight's banana dress functions as a comedy garment but also highlights the current trend for negrophilia.

Nella Larsen in *Quicksand* (1928) also depicts this 'white modernist fascination with primitivism' as defined by Lauren Cardon.[57] When Helga moves to Denmark to stay with relatives she is encouraged by them to wear bright colours and 'exotic' clothes:

> [b]ut you, you're young. And you're a foreigner, and different. You must have bright things to set off the color of your lovely brown skin. Striking things, exotic things. You must make an impression (p. 98).

Her aunt believes this is how Helga should look because it conforms with her pre-conceived racial stereotype. There is some indication that her aunt is aware it is a stereotype as she starts by justifying the wearing of such clothing to Helga by using her age as the reason, then the fact she is a foreigner, which she is, but a foreigner could be of any race. It is only with her identification of Helga as different, as other, that she admits the real reason she wishes to dress Helga this way. Previously at Naxos, the school where Helga used to teach, the Dean of women makes a speech claiming that '"Bright colours are vulgar" – "Black, gray, brown, and navy blue are the most becoming colors for colored people"' (p. 51). In contrast to the Dean's speech Helga believes that

[56] Alicja Sowinska, 'Dialectics of the Banana Skirt: The Ambiguities of Josephine Baker's Self-Representation', *MFS* 19 (Fall 2005–Spring 2006), p. 60.
[57] Cardon, p. 140.

> bright colors *were* fitting and that dark-complexioned people *should* wear yellow, green, and red. Black, brown and grey were ruinous to them, actually destroyed the luminous tones lurking in their dusky skins (p. 51).

Helga knows her skin suits brighter colours and she likes wearing them. In Naxos for example she is depicted '[i]n vivid green and gold negligee and glistening brocaded mules' (p. 36). However, when dressed up to go out for tea with her aunt in a vibrant dress and jewellery she 'felt like a veritable savage […] [t]his feeling was intensified by the many pedestrians who stopped to stare at the queer dark creature, strange to their city' (p. 99). In Denmark Helga is othered and her discomfort is evidence of her feeling that she is being put on display. Her 'savageness' in this environment highlights the difference between her performance to a 'white audience' in Denmark and her similar sartorial appearance in Naxos, which in that all-black environment feels natural to her. Cardon explains that

> [a]lthough some black women, especially performers, took part in the Africa-inspired, colourful trends, other black women avoided these styles. This decision of whether to embrace or reject primitive fashions exposes a complex history of black women and clothing with its roots in slavery (p. 142).

On one hand colourful clothing is part of Helga's cultural heritage, which the New Negro model and many Harlem Renaissance writers believed should be embraced and celebrated especially since slaves arriving in America had been compelled to give up their native fashions and adopt western styles. However, whilst in New York Helga believes the best way to assimilate is through the emulation of a white middle-class appearance. There she dresses

> herself carefully, in the plainest garments she possessed, a suit of fine blue twill faultlessly tailored, from whose left pocket peeped a gay kerchief, an unadorned, heavy silk blouse, a small, smart, fawn-colored hat, and slim brown oxfords, and […] a brown umbrella (p. 63).

Similarly, after dancing at a party in Harlem, Helga says she is not 'a jungle creature' (p. 90). Even though she is in Harlem, a black neighbourhood, she sees herself through the white gaze of New York and equates her behaviour with a primitivism, that is not her but how the cultural stereotypes of the time define her.[58]

Helga's and Mrs Knight's performances can be compared to Josephine Baker's performances. Sowinska describes Baker as being 'suspended between civilization and savagery, and between the human and the animal'.[59] Baker was a sophisticated, glamorously dressed, black American woman who performed on stage in Paris nearly naked as an African 'savage', fulfilling her white audience's stereotypes. Rather than actually being one or the other of her personas, Sowinska invites us to see Baker 'as positioned *within* the boundary line that separates these binaries'.[60] In a similar way Helga sits on a boundary between her black and white heritage, and her life in New York versus Denmark or the Alabama town of her husband's parish. She is portrayed as not truly belonging to either race or place because of her mixed heritage; she hovers somewhere in between them all. Even at the end when she is trapped in Alabama by another pregnancy, she still dreams of the city and its attractions. Mrs Knight, on the other hand, is a white woman performing a black woman's performance. This double performance is what makes her ridiculous and at no point is she on a boundary. The adoption of her costume does not enable her to cross a racial or social boundary because

[58] Kate McLoughlin, *The Modernist Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 165.
[59] Sowinska, p. 54.
[60] Ibid., p. 51.

there can be no perceived authenticity in her performance. In comparison, Baker's performances were attributed a perceived authenticity by her white audiences, even though they knew it to be a fantasy. Mrs Knight merely mimics a black performance in the same way white men wore blackface for minstrel shows in the nineteenth century. Helga's surface appearance depending on where she is can be perceived by others as her true character because she exists on a boundary line and is of mixed heritage. It is Mrs Knight's white skin which, although she is dressed in a costume which she regards as exotic and primitive, ensures she is classified very much as middle-class white British. Way explains that

> [w]hen comparing the dress styles of black and white women during the 1920s, the clothing itself, divorced from the body, cannot indicate the race of the wearer […] it is clothing *on the black body* that makes black fashion because the viewer will always take the race of the wearer into account.[61]

Therefore, a white woman wearing a banana dress, a black woman wearing a banana skirt or a mixed race woman wearing 'exotic' clothing are wearing similar dress for the same reason, a performance, but how each is perceived is very different. Mrs Knight is doing it for effect, to appear bohemian, maybe even to appear witty. Helga's appearance in Denmark is a social performance emphasising her otherness and to please her relatives. Baker's costume was part of her performance and it associated her with the primitive and exotic and as a result she was able to exploit the 'European eroticisation of the black body' and the contemporary cultural climate of Negrophilia.[62]

[61] Way, p. 5.
[62] Ibid., p. 52.

On a different level there is a further interpretation of Mrs Knight's dress. I argue that with the banana dress Mansfield may have been referencing Lady Ottoline Morrell who was frequently depicted in literature and in connection with the colour yellow. Morrell was a British literary hostess and patron of the arts, a friend of the Bloomsbury set who frequently had them as guests at her country house, Garsington. She was repeatedly caricatured in their work; Huxley thinly veiled Morrell as Priscilla Wimbush in his novel *Crome Yellow* and D. H. Lawrence cast her as Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love* (1920). His description of her closely matches a painting by Duncan Grant of Morrell in a long yellow dress and hat:

> [n]ow she came along, with her head held up, balancing an enormous flat hat of pale yellow velvet […] [s]he wore a dress of silky, frail velvet, of a pale yellow colour […] [h]er shoes and stockings were of brownish grey, like the feathers on her hat.[63]

[63] D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 13. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Figure 2: Portrait of Lady Ottoline Morrell by Duncan Grant, date unknown.

Duncan Grant painted Morrell several times but the particular painting mentioned above and in Figure 2, not only matches the description in Lawrence's novel but is also very reminiscent of banana skins. The painting may have been created from real life or imagination, taking into account Lawrence and Mansfield's writing, or Mansfield may have taken the imagery of the painting for her short story. It is unknown but all these people were in Morrell's inner circle at the same time and spent many hours together at Garsington. Additionally, Sydney Janet Kaplan links the narrative of 'Bliss' to the relationship between Morrell, John Middleton Murry and Mansfield, in particular their purported mutual pursuit of Morrell's

attention and affections.[64] Furthermore, there is a possibility that Woolf was thinking of Morrell when she created Mabel and her 'original' yellow dress (p. 170). Judith Watt reports that Morrell 'wore clothes that had little to do with fashion but everything to do with originality'.[65] Therefore, in both the fictional and real life characters of Mabel, Mrs Knight and Lady Ottoline Morrell, yellow is a colour of clothing which represents a certain rejection or negation of societal expectations and an adoption of otherness.

Second Skin

As another layer between the body and the outside world, which lies close to the body, clothes can be regarded as a second skin. Gloves literally become a second skin, another layer which covers our hands which are inextricably linked to our sense of touch, and they are frequently made from the skin of an animal. Susan Vincent explains that not only were gloves de rigueur for both men and women as an indicator of respectability but 'decorum […] dictated women keep gloves on while shaking hands – thus remaining inviolate and, literally, untouched'.[66] Mansfield in 'The Little Governess', by giving the old man yellow gloves, rather than another garment, highlights the threat to the governess of unsolicited touch from him; and the jeweller and the Duchess touch flesh when they shake hands, indicating they have no secrets from each other:

> she held out her hand which came through the slit of her white glove […] And as their hands touched the link was forged between them once more. They were friends, yet enemies; he was master, she was mistress; each cheated the other, each needed the

[64] Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 69-70.
[65] Judith Watt, 'The Lonely Princess of Bohemia', *The Guardian* (18 November 2000). [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2000/nov/18/weekend7.weekend2 . [Accessed: 15 June 2020].
[66] Susan J. Vincent, 'Gloves in the Early Twentieth Century: An Accessory After the Fact', *Journal of Design History* 25:2 (2012), p. 194.

other, each feared the other, each felt this and knew this every time they touched hands (p. 251).

There are no secrets between them, he is aware of her need for money and she knows that she can effectively bribe him to buy her fake pearls by offering him her daughter. Woolf does not specify what the jeweller's gloves are made of but it is highly likely it is leather. They are in effect made from the hide of an animal and serve to hide the jeweller's past poverty and criminality by the surface impression of a well-off dandy. They are a metaphorical mask to project his desired social status to others.

His gloves might attempt to hide his past circumstances but on the other hand the colour indicates more about his cultural background. Before 'The Duchess and the Jeweller' was published in the US it was heavily revised in respect to both British and American public anxieties about anti-Semitic sentiments.[67] The jeweller is a Jew and even if we did not know the original title of Woolf's story was 'The Duchess and the Jew', Doran explains that since the middle ages yellow has been the traditional colour of anti-Semitism and this is why it was a yellow star of David that the Nazis forced Jews to wear from 1941.[68] It is reasonable to assume this colour symbolism was known to Woolf, especially since her husband Leonard was Jewish. In the early summer of 1935 they travelled round Europe together, including a trip to Germany where they witnessed processions of Nazi supporters and signs in every village they passed through saying 'Die Juden sind hier unwunscht [Jews are not wanted here]'.[69] It is clear that the jeweller is Jewish and not just because of the story's original title

[67] Lara Trubowitz, 'Concealing Leonard's Nose: Virginia Woolf, Modernist Antisemitism, and 'The Duchess and the Jeweller'', *Twentieth-Century Literature* 54:3 (Fall 2008), p. 275.
[68] Laura Maria Lojo Rodriguez, 'Contradiction and Ambivalence: Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetic Experience in 'The Duchess and the Jeweller'', *The Journal of English Studies* 3 (2001-2), p. 115; Doran, p. 160.
[69] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume IV: 1931-1935*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1982), p. 312.

but also because of Woolf's allusion to the Jeweller's nose. She describes another jeweller who

> would lay a finger to the side of his nose and murmur, 'Hum-m-m,' as he passed. It was no more than a murmur; no more than a nudge on the shoulder, a finger on the nose, a buzz that ran through the cluster of jewellers in Hatton Garden on a hot afternoon […] But still he felt it purring down his spine, the nudge, the murmur that meant, 'Look at him – young Oliver, the young jeweller – there he goes' (p. 249).

Trubowitz interprets the gesture of a finger on the nose as

> the non-Jew's code or shorthand for Bacon's Jewishness, in essence a reference to what, in anti-Semitic discourse of the period, was frequently depicted as the Jews' most distinctive feature.[70]

The fact this gesture and the resulting murmur 'purr' down his spine indicates that it affects him and its effect has not left him; it may even be that this pleases him as an animal purrs when it is happy or content. Additionally, Woolf names the Jeweller, Oliver Bacon, after the food Jews are prohibited to eat by their religion, that is meat from a pig and further describes his nose as 'long and flexible, like an elephant's trunk' (p. 249). Therefore, by clearly identifying the jeweller as a Jew, Woolf invites her reader to not only link his yellow gloves to the dandy figure but also to anti-Semitism.

Woolf, Mansfield and Fitzgerald chose garments to create a surface image of the wearer. This desired image is usually one of respectability, wealth, or a particular social

[70] Trubowitz, p. 276.

status. On the surface this impression can be easily realised, for example, by wearing gloves or an avant-garde dress which can also facilitate the transgression of a social boundary. Modernist writers made use of yellow's long historical negative reputation and continued contemporary associations, including that of ill-health and paranoia, strong ties with the dandy and the related decadence movement, to depict a morally dubious character, contrary to their surface sartorial appearance. In this way modernism moves away from a fixed signification of character and it is colour and the fluidity of colour symbolism, that enables modernist writers to explore difference between the surface and depth of character, and enables further modernist development of traditional character types such as the dandy. This apparent difference in interpretation between the surface impression of dress and moral character, though the colour of dress, is one which is considered in more detail in the next chapter, Red.

Chapter 3: Red

Red demands attention. Pastoureau claims that red 'remains the strongest colour symbolically' and he links it to danger, sex and power.[1] Traffic signs which must attract our eyes and alert us to danger are coloured red; lips are painted red to seduce; and individuals in positions of power in the judiciary and clergy dress in red. The symbolism of red is not only cultural but also a biological phenomenon which dates back to early civilisations. Recent scientific and psychological studies have shown that red and sex are intrinsically linked. The societal associations of red are not random 'but actually derive from the biologically based predisposition to perceive red as a sexual signal'.[2] The signal in question being 'the red blush of flirtation' and 'the red flush of sexual excitation'.[3] Humans have attempted to mimic these natural signals with make-up, such as blusher and lipstick, since ancient Egypt.[4] Therefore, it is not surprising that red clothing attracts similar representations of sex and availability that red 'flushed' skin does. If dress is regarded as a second skin, a red dress imitates the flush of human skin and is perceived as sexual.

In the 1920s and 1930s red was largely perceived as an effeminate colour. According to Michael and Ariane Batterberry even the Prince of Wales, a fashion icon of the time, had his trademark red tie described as effeminate.[5] This chapter considers red as a colour in which modernist writers dressed their female characters. In particular I consider the depiction of black women dressed in red. A black woman at the time could be associated with the colour red not only because of her gender but also because of her race. The West African cultural heritage of brightly coloured and printed textiles spread to America through the slave

[1] Michel Pastoureau, *Red. The History of a Colour* (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 192.
[2] Andrew J. Elliot and Daniela Niesta, 'Romantic Red: Red Enhances Men's Attraction to Women', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95:5 (2008), p. 1151.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Batterberry, p. 306.

trade in the nineteenth century and was later embraced by 1920s mainstream fashion and as explained by Cardon was identified as 'primitive'.[6] Langston Hughes in his poem 'When Sue Wears Red' (1926) describes a black woman wearing red clothes as looking like an 'ancient cameo […] turned brown by the ages' and as 'a queen from some time-dead Egyptian night'.[7] With this description he evokes images of antiquity in North Africa and implies that in red Sue embodies her African ancestors and authentically represents her racial heritage. This link between the bold colour red and an African heritage is similar to that which Nella Larsen writes of in her novel *Quicksand* (1928). Helga, Larsen's mixed race female protagonist, teaches at an all-black college. She recalls a speech by the Dean of women insisting that

> 'Bright colours are vulgar' – 'Black, gray, brown, and navy blue are the most becoming colours for colored people' – 'Dark-complected people shouldn't wear yellow, or green or red' (p. 51).

Helga does not agree, she asks for '*A Plea for Color'* and thinking of the Dean, someone who she describes as a 'woman from one of the "first families"' and 'a great "race" woman', Helga concludes that

> [t]hese people yapped loudly of race, of race consciousness, of race pride, and yet suppressed its most delightful manifestations, love of color, joy of rhythmic motion, naïve, spontaneous laughter. Harmony, radiance, and simplicity, all the essentials of spiritual beauty in the race they had marked for destruction.[8]

[6] Cardon, p. 144.
[7] *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes,* ed. by Arnold Rampersad (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), p. 45.
[8] Ibid.

Helga's view is that of Alain Locke's and the New Negro movement. The movement encouraged 'the rediscovery of the folk origins of the Negro's African heritage', including textiles and art, and upheld the sentiments of Langston Hughes who said '[w]e younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame'.[9] Helga considers the stereotype of black women wearing brightly coloured clothing and believes, instead of changing what she wears to emulate white middle-class dress, it is something to be proud of as part of her cultural heritage. This stereotype was common during the interwar years and found its way into modernist literature. For example, Mansfield in her short story 'How Pearl Button was Kidnapped' (1924) describes Pearl's dark-skinned female kidnappers, '[o]ne was dressed in red and the other was dressed in yellow and green. They had pink handkerchiefs over their heads', creating an image of bright multi-coloured women (p. 438).

Stereotypes of black womanhood were interrogated by Elise McDougald in 1925 when she asked 'What then is to be said of the Negro woman today?'.[10] She was writing in *The Survey* magazine and in answering her question describes white perceptions of black womanhood at the time. She explains that black women are deemed only good to serve and that their sexual morals are interpreted as lower than those of other races. Mae King later interrogates these stereotypes of black womanhood in 'The Politics of Sexual Stereotypes' (1973) and describes four main categories.[11] These categories are summarised by Patricia Morton as 'the sex object, the "tragic mulatto" who failed in her misguided attempt to pass as white, the inept and comical domestic servant, and the masculinised, domineering

[9] Eugene C. Holmes, 'Alain Locke and the New Negro Movement', *Negro American Literature Forum: Protest and Propaganda Literature* 2:3 (Autumn 1968), pp. 60-68; Langston Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain', *Nation* (June 3, 1926), pp. 692-694, reprinted in *The Langston Hughes Review* 4:1 (Spring 1985), pp. 1-4.
[10] Elise Johnson McDougald, 'The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation', *The Survey* 53 (1925), p. 689.
[11] Mae King, 'The Politics of Sexual Stereotypes', *The Black Scholar* 4 (1973), pp. 12-23.

matriarch'.[12] In other words, as Mahassen Mgadmi clarifies, the Jezebel, the tragic mulatto, the Mammy and the Matriarch.[13] In modernist texts and contemporary culture all of these stereotypes are frequently depicted as wearing red. In particular, when Harlem Renaissance writers cast their protagonists as one of these stereotypes their performance of that stereotype is represented by their red dress. This chapter considers red dresses in light of three of Morton and Mgadmi's recognised stereotypes of black womanhood, that is the Matriarch, the Jezebel and the Tragic Mulatto. I investigate how a red dress reinforces the stereotype and its performance, to what extent it is a performance of power and strength, and whether the portrayal of black female morality is accurately represented by a red dress. It then turns to consider the significance of the fabric of these dresses and demonstrates the ways in which modernist women writers questioned and subverted the Matriarch, Jezebel and Tragic Mulatto stereotypes through the depiction of red silk dresses.

The Matriarch

With its ability to attract attention red has a certain amount of theatricality. It is no coincidence that theatres are frequently decorated in plush red velvet with heavy red curtains draping the stage and leading ladies are commonly dressed in red. Red is the colour Zora Neale Hurston chooses for her leading lady, Janie, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). When Janie's second husband (Joe) finishes building his store which is the first and only one in Eatonville, their new town, he tells her to dress up. The purpose of this is to visually

[12] Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1991), p. 233.
[13] Mahassen Mgadmi, 'Black Women's Identity: Stereotypes, Respectability and Passionless (1890-1930)', *Revue LISA* 7:1 (2009), p. 40.
For the purposes of this dissertation I will consider the Matriarch, Jezebel and tragic mulatto stereotypes. There is little depiction of the Mammy in the texts I am analysing. However, in popular culture figurines of Aunt Jemima, the 'face' of a popular brand of pancake mix which has been in production in the US since 1889, were dressed in red dresses. The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University has an extensive collection of these dolls which can be seen online at: https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/mammies/homepage.htm . [Accessed: 14 October 2020].

demonstrate his desired superiority of her over the other townswomen and to reaffirm his wealth and social standing:

> [s]he had her first taste of presiding over it the day it was complete and finished. Jody told her to dress up and stand in the store all that evening. Everybody was coming sort of fixed up, and he didn't mean for nobody else's wife to rank with her. […] So she put on one of her bought dresses and went up the new-cut road all dressed in wine-coloured red. Her silken ruffles rustled and muttered about her. The other women had on percale and calico with here and there a head rag among the older ones.[14]

Janie's costume is a performance for the other women and men in the town. Hurston does not describe Janie standing in the shop wearing this dress; rather, she shows her walking down the street so that the whole town will notice and comment. It is an obvious display of conspicuous consumption.[15] Hurston describes Janie's dress as 'bought' to highlight this conspicuous consumption and to illustrate that they have the wealth to buy clothing in comparison to when Janie was a child and she was dressed in the second-hand clothing given to her grandmother by her employer (p. 11). Hurston echoes the townsfolk talking about Janie in the noise Janie's dress makes; her ruffles rustle and mutter about her. The onomatopoeia of r and s in 'ruffles rustled' replicates the townsfolks' whisperings and grumbles and 'mutter' implies a more negative aspect to their talk about her. This scene evokes the opening of the novel when, in different circumstances, Janie is described as returning to Eatonville after her third husband (Tea Cake) has died. She is walking down, potentially the same street, albeit this time in blue overalls. Here Janie comments on the other

[14] Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (London: Virago Press, 2018), p. 47. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[15] Veblen, pp. 49-69.

townswomen, '[w]ell, Ah see Mouth-Almighty is still sittin' in de same place. And Ah reckon they got *me* up in they mouth now' (p. 6). From this comment it is suggested that the same people are still there gossiping about her as they did when she walked down the street in her red dress. Furthermore, Hurston's use of 'about' indicates the townsfolk are discussing Janie but 'rustle' and 'mutter' imply that they are speaking among themselves in whispers behind her back. When Hurston depicts Janie moving from one chapter of her life to another she portrays her walking on a road and represents this transition through her clothing. For example, when Janie leaves her first husband (Logan) Hurston describes her walking away from their house:

> [t]he morning air was like a new dress. That made her feel the apron tied around her waist. She untied it and flung it on a low bush beside the road and walked on (p. 37).

Janie has a new life ahead of her which like a new dress can be put on and this new life is represented by the morning air. Morning air would feel fresh and light as does her new life in contrast to the apron which she is aware of being tied around her. The apron metaphorically ties her to Logan and her current life, and it is a symbol of female domesticity and passivity to her husband which she removes and discards as she walks away.

The red of Janie's new dress can be associated with a new-found superiority and wealth; Kings, Peers and those holding the highest ranking positions in the legal and church systems wear red robes. This association of red is illustrated by Woolf in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) when Mrs Ramsay imagines her son as 'red and ermine on the bench' (p. 6). With this description she conjures a future version of him in a position of judicial power, wearing red robes with a fur trim. Janie's dress is explicitly 'wine'-red and with this Hurston references a relative wealth and superiority to the other townsfolk. The townsfolk do not drink wine; they

buy 'likker' or make their own 'coon-dick' which is another name for bootleg moonshine or illegal home-made alcohol (pp. 169 and 170). In comparison to coon-dick, wine is an expensive alternative and would not be financially available to many in the town. Therefore, Janie's dress represents wealth and superior status as well as indicating that she may be intoxicating to others. In particular, Janie is praised in the store by one of the townsmen saying '[s]he couldn't look no mo' better and no nobler if she wuz de queen uh England' (p. 49). This heady impression of her, of her ruling over them is represented by her dress but when she is asked to speak, her husband, Joe, replies

> 'Thank yuh fuh yo'compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home' (p. 49).

Even though Janie's dress imparts an impression of power and superiority and it is appropriate for Joe's appointment as Mayor, ultimately the power, position and wealth are his. Joe's reply illustrates his control over her by silencing her and then describing her in terms more appropriate to the nineteenth-century American ideology of the cult of True Womanhood as described by Barbara Welter.[16] Welter explains that

> [t]he attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. […] Without them, no matter

[16] Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860', *American Quarterly* 18:2 (Summer 1966), p. 151.

whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power'.[17]

Janie's red dress displays an image of a strong black matriarch stereotype. However, Hurston reminds us with Joe's words that in this patriarchal society the actual power and wealth is held by him and is only conferred to her through her performance of 'true womanhood' or in other words as the good wife.

The stage for Janie's sartorial performance of conspicuous consumption is the new-cut road which is a piece of infrastructure her husband has orchestrated the production of. It is Joe who has organised the building of the new road and who ensures the townsmen work for him to dig a ditch to drain the street in front of his store. When Joe places himself in a position of command and superiority over the other men they 'murmured hotly about slavery being over' (p. 53). Hurston then continues to describe Joe and Janie's house as having 'two stories with porches, with bannisters and such things', which is reminiscent of a plantation house, and Hurston writes '[t]he rest of the town looked like servant's quarters surrounding the "big house"' (p. 54). With this Hurston compares Joe and Janie to white plantation owners and the townsfolk to slaves. This imagery continues in the differences between Janie and the townswomen's dress. Janie walking down the street demands attention with the colour and expense of her dress. Where she wears expensive silk, the other women are dressed in percale and calico. Both these fabrics are cotton fabrics and are inexpensive in comparison to silk. They represent the labour of cotton picking and production that slaves would have been employed in and illustrate the difference in social standing between Janie and the other townswomen. Additionally, some of the older women wear headscarves which were a popular item of clothing for slaves and later for poor agricultural workers in the South,

[17] Welter, p. 152.

after emancipation. By the start of the twentieth century, as Cardon explains, headscarves became 'part of a white slave mythology, as evidenced by white representations of slave women in popular culture and food product brands'.[18] Hurston references the links between headscarves and slavery to illustrate the superior social position of Janie and Joe in the town.

Janie is now dressed in silk with fancy ruffles, having removed and left behind her apron. Removing the apron represents her new-found freedom not only by the action of doing so but also because it is a garment most likely to be made of cotton. It references the cotton labour of slavery and indicates Janie is free from the control and ownership of her first husband. The fact that both garments are depicted as being worn (or removed) on a road suggests Janie is moving to a new life and is indicative of transition in her life. Janie's metaphorical transition from black woman to the equivalent of a white plantation matriarch, in the black town of Eatonville, is determined by the style of her dress; its ruffles represent her femininity. Morton explains that '[t]he "ultrafeminine" image of white womanhood can […] be captured in the American South' where women were regarded as delicate, pure and submissive to patriarchal rule.[19] By depicting Janie in an overtly feminine style of dress, she is further identified with the image of a white female plantation owner and her superiority over others. Morton continues '[i]n contrast, patriarchy and the gentle working of feminine wiles are not central to the black woman's image, but matriarchy and domination of men are'.[20] Therefore, the colour of Janie's dress places her as a strong, wealthy matriarchal figure who is superior to the other townswomen and its feminine style adds to this perceived superiority over others by likening her to a white plantation owner's wife but in allowing herself to emulate such a person and submit to Joe's patriarchal control she may diverge from the black stereotype of womanhood that is the matriarch.

[18] Cardon, p. 144.
[19] Morton, Chapter 1.
[20] Ibid.

Hurston's implication that for a black woman to move away from the stereotypes of black womanhood she must emulate a white woman's dress is described by Cardon who explains how college educated black women in 1920s America achieved this through their clothing resulting in an emulation of 'middle-class white women's fashion'.[21] This idea of a black woman dressing as a white middle-class woman to improve her status is what Helga in *Quicksand* is firstly advised to do by her Dean and then actually does in Chicago when she is looking for a job:

> [s]he dressed herself carefully, in the plainest garments she possessed, a suit of fine blue twill faultlessly tailored, from whose left pocket peeped a gay kerchief, an unadorned, heavy silk blouse, a small, smart, fawn-coloured hat, and slim brown oxfords, and chose a brown umbrella (p. 63).

Helga's choice of colour for her sensible clothes, colours which echo the Dean's speech, eventually secure her a job and Janie, by emulating the dress of a white plantation owner's wife, is regarded as superior to the other townsfolk.

It is not simply the style of her dress which reveals Janie's wealth and social position but also the fabric it is made from. Silk is an expensive fabric and Woolf identifies it with positions of power and wealth in *Three Guineas* (1938) when she describes 'the class of educated men […] in courts and universities' wearing 'velvet and silk, fur and ermine'.[22] However, the production and origins of silk suggest an alternative interpretation of Janie's position in this patriarchal society and indicate that Janie does not independently hold the power and control her red, expensive dress implies. Silk is produced from the cocoon of the

[21] Cardon, p. 145.
[22] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 180.

silkworm and the cost of silk represents the difficulty and delicacy required to produce it. St Clair explains how silkworms need to be carefully stored and fed continuously on their diet of mulberry leaves, which must be 'clean, dry and not too hot', until they pupate.[23] Once they are ready to be harvested the cocoons are 'steamed, baked or soaked in saline solution', effectively boiling alive the worm inside.[24] If left alone the cocoons would hatch and the silkworms would transform into moths. Just as the worms are trapped by their expensive cocoons and thereby doomed, Janie's expensive dress represents her entrapment. Although silk as a fabric represents wealth and social superiority, by being dressed, displayed and silenced by her husband Janie is in a position where the power and independence that her appearance would suggest, and that she enjoys in the town, is only gained through her position of Joe's wife.

In 'The New Dress' Woolf writes of Mabel who is invited to Mrs Dalloway's party and requires a new dress for the occasion. The dress she chooses and hopes will enable her to fit in with the fashionable, wealthy crowd is made of silk but it is also 'idiotically old-fashioned' (p. 171). Mabel wishes so much for this dress to transform her and allow her social butterfly wings to unfurl but she is grounded by her place in the social hierarchy. Mabel's economic position, in a similar patriarchal society to Janie, relies completely on her husband and here

> she had failed utterly. She had married Hubert, with his safe, permanent underling's job in the Law Courts, and they managed tolerably in a smallish house, without proper maids, and hash when she was alone or just bread and butter (p. 175).

[23] St Clair, p. 61.
[24] Ibid., p. 62.

Mabel's husband is not at the party and even though she appears to be independent, it is his economic status which determines hers and controls the interpretation of her silk dress. With her choice of dress Mabel wishes to portray wealth which will allow her to fit into the party's social group. Her dress and the nature of the production of its fabric represent Mabel's desire to transform into a social butterfly and 'fly', but as a silkworm will never fly, this is not to be. She describes herself as a fly 'crawling slowly out of a saucer of milk with their wings stuck together' whereas the others at the party are 'dragon-flies, butterflies, beautiful insects, dancing, fluttering, skimming', whereas Mabel's wings are fettered the others are able to float and fly round the room (p. 171).

Sarsfield investigates lepidoptera imagery in Woolf's work and discusses this 'cocooned state of female dependence' in relation to Cassandra in *Night and Day*.[25] Cassandra's hobby of 'tending silkworms', according to Sarsfield, was a popular leisure pursuit in the Victorian era and with this hobby Woolf references Cassandra's position as a woman in a patriarchal society. Woolf utilises cocoon and silkworm imagery to describe Cassandra's lack of independence and potentially her lack of desire for independence. Sarsfield explains that Cassandra 'is destined never to "fly" that is never to become independent settling instead, like her mother before her, for marriage'.[26] Cassandra, just like the silkworm that never breaks out of its cocoon of silk threads, wound round and round its body, will never break the bonds of patriarchy and be free.

Sarsfield discusses several of Woolf's texts but does not include 'The New Dress' in her analysis. Mabel and Cassandra with their links to silk, apart from their inability to 'fly', have similar responses to the prospect of being independent women which Woolf depicts once again with cocoon imagery. When Cassandra imagines the idea of being an independent

[25] Rachel Sarsfield, 'Cassandra's Worms: Unravelling the Threads of Virginia Woolf's Lepidoptera Imagery', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies. Femininity and Subjectivity* 9:1 (Spring 2003), p. 107.
[26] Ibid.

woman she recoils at the idea and 'almost wished herself back with the silkworms at Stogdon House' (p. 484). She wishes to cocoon herself back in the 'model of female passivity that the silkworms symbolise' and this is similar to Mabel's response when she leaves Mrs Dalloway's party dejected and on her own.[27] Mabel 'wrapped herself, round and round and round, in the Chinese cloak she had worn these twenty years' (p. 177). Although Woolf does not specify that this cloak is silk it can be assumed to be from the description of it as Chinese and the direct connections between silk production and China. It is Mabel's cocoon which she wraps 'round and round and round' herself in exactly the same way silkworms spin their cocoons by producing a single thread of silk which they wrap round themselves many hundreds of times. The 'cocoon' as Sarsfield argues is one of female dependence and it appears that Mabel has had hers for twenty years, potentially indicating the amount of time she has been married.

In Larsen's *Quicksand* when Helga moves from New York to Denmark to stay with her Aunt and Uncle she also wears a Chinese article of clothing, in this case a 'Chinese-red dressing gown'; the colour of which her Aunt determines suits her better than her other clothes (p. 98). Chinese-red identifies Helga with her more 'exotic' heritage and the mention of 'Chinese' suggests a silk dressing gown. Helga's life in Denmark is controlled by her Aunt and Uncle and similarly to Cassandra, Mabel and Janie she does not have the economic independence her appearance would suggest. When Helga's Aunt and Uncle encourage her to marry Olsen, Helga says 'But you see, Herr Olsen, I'm not for sale. Not to you. Not to any white man. I don't care to be owned. Even by you.' (p. 117). Helga's words clearly reference slavery and with this the bonds which a silkworm wraps round itself invite a further interpretation that Helga's oppression is twofold as a woman and as a black woman. Furthermore, when Helga first meets Olsen she is displayed on a 'red satin sofa' (p. 100).

[27] Sarsfield, p. 111.

This scene appears theatrical and Helga is a performance for the others at the party but the imagery is also reminiscent of a slave for sale on display at an auction or a prostitute in a brothel. Janie is also commodified and her silk dress is an indication of her future treatment from Joe. He demands that she wear a headscarf to cover her hair as it is attractive to other men. Janie's headscarf symbolises his patriarchal control over her but more than that it references slavery and his desire to control and own her.

Janie walking alone, confidently down the road in her red silk dress; Helga dressed beautifully in jewels and expensive clothes with the freedom to explore Copenhagen by herself; Cassandra in London; and Mabel with her new dress, alone at Mrs Dalloway's party, all initially appear to be strong, independent women. However, their associations with silk, cocoons and Chinese fabrics reaffirm their adherence to traditional gender roles in a patriarchal society where their social standing is dictated by their husband or male relative's class and economic standing.

Jezebel

The second stereotype of black womanhood which is represented through red clothing in modernist literature is that of the Jezebel. Larsen captures this stereotype in her description of Helga in *Quicksand* arriving at the church where she will meet her future husband. She comes in from the rain and takes off her coat:

> [a]t the sight of the bare arms and neck growing out of the clinging red dress, a shudder shook the swaying man at her right. On the face of the dancing woman before her a disapproving frown gathered. She shrieked: "A scarlet 'oman. Come to Jesus, you pore los' Jezebel!" (p.141).

The immoral Jezebel has her origins in the slave trade. Deborah Gray White explains these associations began when Englishmen first travelled to Africa and were faced with scenes they did not properly comprehend. The natives wore fewer clothes in the hot climates and African tribal dances were viewed as akin to orgies.[28] The subsequent treatment of female slaves by their white masters only added to the myth of their sexual promiscuity. Female slaves were frequently semi-clad at slave auctions where their fertility was discussed and sometimes tested; they were then provided with insufficient clothing by their masters; women whipped as punishment were often stripped; and they were at the mercy of their white owner's sexual desires.[29] Even though slavery was officially abolished in 1865 this eroticisation of the black female body and the perception of her as being sexually available remained well into the twentieth century. Therefore, red and sex already associated with each other become inextricably linked to black womanhood and the Jezebel stereotype.

In her short story 'Trio' (1927), Jean Rhys sketches a black Jezebel dressed in red:

> The fuzzy negress' hair was exactly the right frame for her vulgar, impudent, startlingly alive little face: the lips were just thick enough to be voluptuous, the eyes with an expression half cunning, half intelligent. She wore a very short red frock and black, patent leather shoes. Her legs were bare.
>
> As she grew more excited she jumped up, swung her slim hips violently, rolled her eyes, stamped her feet, lifted her skirt. Obviously the red dress was her only garment, obviously too she was exquisite beneath it (pp. 32-3).

[28] Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* (Ontario: Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1985), p. 29.
[29] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

Rhys's 'negress' is performing for the restaurant in which she sits. She kisses her male companion then looks 'round the room as if to gather up a tribute of glances of admiration and envy' and her red dress highlights the attention seeking nature of her behaviour (p. 32). The vocabulary Rhys employs is suggestive of the girl's erotic nature and loose morals; her lips are 'voluptuous', she is 'cunning', her skirt is 'very short', she has 'bare' legs, it appears that she does not wear underwear, and she exhibits this fact to the whole restaurant. With the repetition of 'obviously' Rhys indicates the connection between the girl's race and her promiscuity thereby affirming the Jezebel stereotype. It is an undisputed fact that she would not be wearing underwear and that the viewer would be able to see how perfect her body is under the dress. With her description of the girl dancing Rhys allows parallels to be drawn with Josephine Baker and dancers like her and illustrates that the Jezebel stereotype was more complicated than white prejudices resulting from slavery. As Archer-Straw explains the stereotype was encouraged by 'the world of nightclubs, revues, parties and the film industry that brought the illusion to life' it was 'a place of violent bodily motions, erotic gestures and sexual freedoms'.[30] Rhys's 'negress' 'jumped up, swung her slim hips violently, rolled her eyes, stamped her feet, lifted her skirt' (p. 33). The short clauses in this sentence aid the image of movement and excitement and allow Rhys to build up to the climax of the girl lifting her skirt. The imagery is also reminiscent of descriptions of Baker's performances on stage. Anne Cheng describes Baker's first performance in Paris at the Theatre des Champs-Elysees on October 2, 1925:

[30] Archer-Straw, p. 105.

> [w]ith eyes crossed, buttocks quivering, legs going every which way, that slim pulsating body on stage appeared part child, part simian, part puppet on neurotic strings [… Baker was] pure kinetic eruption.[31]

Baker's eye rolling, 'primitive' and erotic dancing is reflected in the girl's dance she even wears 'black, patent leather shoes' like a dancer's. Baker's on-stage and personal personas were very different and this allusion starts to hint that the erotic performance the girl makes in the restaurant may simply be a performance and not represent her actual moral character, although the red colour of her dress would imply so.

Left photograph: Josephine Baker on stage – note her black, patent dance shoes.
Right photograph: Josephine Baker and her trademark eye roll.
Photographer – George Hoyningen-Huene/Conde Nast.

Although the girl is portrayed as sexual and similar to an adult Baker she is in fact a child. Rhys writes that she is 'a girl, apparently about fifteen, but probably much younger' (p. 32). Her youth is described by Rhys's description of her as like a 'kitten', she has a 'little

[31] Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 5.

face', she has the pet name 'Doudou' which means teddy and she is compared with a 'dancer from the Thousand and One Nights' (p. 33). This is the classic collection of stories from Arab folklore, framed by the tale of a king who takes a new virgin for his wife every night, until one survives by telling him stories which carry on until the following evening for 1001 nights.[32] This reference indicates that like a virgin, the girl is sexually innocent and the sexuality she portrays is simply another story to keep her alive or in this case, in true Rhys style, to ensure she is taken care of. Additionally, she is reprimanded by the older woman as a child would be and the song she sings, 'F'en ai marre' (I'm fed up) indicates the sullenness of a child. Wearing a red dress, the Jezebel stereotype and associated sexual promiscuity is reinforced but Rhys explores the difference between this surface impression of a black woman in a red dress and the actual character of the girl through her description of her as young. This false impression of character is what Elise McDougald refuted when she wrote:

> [t]he Negro woman does not maintain any moral standard which may be assigned chiefly to qualities of race, any more than a white woman does. Yet she has been singled out and advertised as having lower sex standards. […] This I deny.[33]

With the girl in a red dress, I argue that Rhys examines and subverts the myth of the black woman as sexually promiscuous and morally depraved. She initially portrays her as a stereotypical erotic black dancer but gradually and subtly questions the surface impression and implies that as a child she is innocent and not necessarily as she first appears.

[32] Anonymous, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night,* translated and annotated by Richard F. Burton. [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3435/3435-h/3435-h.htm . [Accessed: 27 September 2022].
[33] McDougald, p. 689.

The connection between a red dress and the black jezebel stereotype is one which Mansfield illustrates in her short story 'At the Bay' (1922). Here Beryl judges Alice, the maid, by her clothing:

> It was Alice, the servant-girl, dressed for her afternoon out. She wore a white cotton dress with such large red spots on it and so many that they made you shudder, white shoes and a leghorn turned up under the brim with poppies. Of course she wore gloves, white ones, stained at the fastenings with iron mould, and in one hand she carried a very dashed-looking sunshade which she referred to as her 'perishall'.
>
> Beryl, sitting in the window, fanning her freshly-washed hair, thought she had never seen such a guy. If Alice had only blacked her face with a piece of cork before she started out, the picture would have been complete. And where did a girl like that go to in a place like this? […] She supposed Alice had picked up some horrible common larrikin and they'd go off into the bush together (p. 183).

Alice's dress is not completely red; it is a white dress with red polka dots. White is associated with innocence and purity and since Alice's gloves and shoes are also white normally this would reinforce her innocent nature and hint at the perceived purity of the white woman with an additional degree of respectability given by the wearing of gloves. However, Alice's dress is plagued with red spots and her gloves have reddish-brown iron rust spots on them. Items of clothing which initially appear pure and innocent are marked to symbolise Beryl's perception of Alice's morality. Furthermore, the association of red spots with illness and disease encourages the assumption that the spots hold negative connotations. This is especially since the red spots are 'so many' and make Beryl 'shudder' with distaste

and disgust. The red spots lead Beryl to make assumptions about Alice's behaviour which are only a surface impression of promiscuity and not necessarily representative of her character. Once again Alice, in the same way as Rhys's girl, is portrayed as apparently having conflicting sides to her personality and the negative side is hinted at as being an illusion.

The tainting of Alice's nature, as demonstrated by her clothing, is further illustrated by the red poppies under the brim of her hat. Mansfield previously links poppies to sex in her short story 'Prelude' (1920) when she alludes to Linda masturbating in bed:

> She turned over to the wall and idly, with one finger, she traced a poppy on the wallpaper with a leaf and a stem and a fat bursting bud. In the quiet, and under her tracing finger, the poppy seemed to come alive. She could feel the sticky, silky petals, the stem, hairy like a gooseberry skin, the rough leaf and the tight glazed bud (p. 17).

With the sexual associations of red and Beryl's racist thoughts that if Alice were black then the moral impression her costume gives would be complete as such perceived immoral behaviour is expected of a black person, Mansfield considers the links between implied promiscuity, race and black womanhood. Furthermore, Mansfield's description of red dots on a white dress brings to mind imagery of a red blood drop on white and by dotting Alice's dress with red a connection can be made to the notion of white purity being adulterated with black blood. Alice's red spots therefore 'taint' her moral reputation and associate her behaviour, in Beryl's opinion, with the sexually promiscuous stereotype of black womanhood prevalent at the time.

Once again red is linked to a performance, not only with the mention of blackface which white performers of the time donned for minstrel shows but also to highlight the fact that she is dressed-up and is not in the uniform or work clothes that Beryl is used to seeing.

The impression of a performance continues when Alice is at Mrs Stubbs store and Mrs Stubbs enters the room '[t]he bell jangled, the red serge curtains parted, and Mrs Stubbs appeared' as if through red curtains onto a stage (p. 184). Additionally, Mansfield suggests Alice's behaviour at Mrs Stubbs is a performance as she finds it difficult to 'keep up' her manners (p. 184).

In Alice, Mansfield depicts the Jezebel stereotype and clearly links promiscuity to black womanhood but also highlights a similar inaccuracy of perception of character that Rhys does. Alice is not leaving the house to have sex in the bush with a man, she is going to tea with Mrs Stubbs, the respectable owner of the local store, and once again the opinions of Elise McDougald are relevant. Whereas Rhys depicts innocence by describing her protagonist in childlike terms, Mansfield underlies Alice's innocence through the white colour of her clothing and accessories. Mansfield explores race as a social construct and considers it as something which is not simply reliant on skin colour but can be represented through dress, in particular the colour of that clothing. Kaiser explains that since the eighteenth century race was believed to be a biological concept due to colonialism and the perception of black bodies.[34] However, she acknowledges a shift from 'race as a thing to *racial formation* as a social process that categorizes people and creates social differences'.[35] These categories are predominately determined around skin colour. However, Mansfield and Hurston propose with their depictions of Alice and Janie that dress is a significant part of the 'racial formation' process. Mansfield describes Alice's character firstly through her dress and without the negative impression the dress gives, Beryl would not associate Alice with the black stereotype of a Jezebel. Likewise, Hurston implies that Janie is more 'white' through the wearing of her silk dress with ruffles as a pseudo-plantation owner's wife. In both cases

[34] Kaiser, p. 79.
[35] Ibid.

the apparent strict boundary between white and black is blurred and a manner of dress can be interpreted as a cultural representation of race, notwithstanding skin colour.

Tragic Mulatto

The tragic mulatto is the third stereotype of black womanhood which was explored by female modernist writers. Sterling Brown, writing in 1933, described the mulatto as 'a victim of a divided inheritance' and continues that her fate

> is intensified – the whole desire of her life is to find a white lover, and then go down accompanied by slow music, to a tragic end. Her fate is so severe that in some works disclosure of 'the single drop of midnight' in her veins makes her commit suicide.[36]

While Brown was talking about white authors, black Harlem Renaissance writers also wrote about mixed-race protagonists. Brown discusses the mulatto's tragic fate as one which is linked to biology, that is to her blood and the fact she has 'black blood' in her lineage. As previously discussed, there was another school of thought emerging at the start of the twentieth century which viewed race as a social construct and related more to ethnicity and culture rather than biological features.[37] Racial biology was criticised not least of all by W. E. B. DuBois but also by the Chicago School of Sociology at the time; and Michael Omi and Howard Winant have more recently described race as a dynamic and fluid social construct which is 'conceptualized in terms of attitudes and beliefs, religion, language, "lifestyle", and group identification', rather than a static and unchanging biological identity such as skin

[36] Sterling Brown, 'Negro Character as seen by White Authors', *Journal of Negro Education* 2 (1933), pp. 179-203, reproduced in *Callaloo,* Number 14/15 (Feb-May 1982), pp. 55-89.
[37] Race can be described as a section of the population which have particular physical and biological attributes in common, and ethnicity relates to groups of people who are identified together due to common geographical, religious, linguistic or cultural origins or background.

colour or hair type.[38] Considering race in these terms supports an investigation of Larsen's use of dress to represent race and its potential fluidity particularly in relation to her protagonists who 'pass' and her use of dress to describe the performance of race and its success.

In *Passing* (1929), Larsen writes of the 'tragic mulatto' figure with Clare Kendry, a woman of mixed heritage, who passes as white and is married to an unknowing white man. Throughout the novel Clare is directly linked to the colour red. First, as a child, we see her sewing herself a new dress so that she may attend the Sunday school picnic. Clare's father is an alcoholic and she knows

> well enough that it was unsafe to take a portion of the dollar that was her weekly wage for the doing of many errands […] [s]he wanted to go to her Sunday School's picnic, and she had made up her mind to wear a new dress. So, in spite of certain unpleasantness and possible danger, she had taken the money to buy the material for that pathetic little red frock (p. 172).

While her red dress is a symbol of her defiance, bravery and strength to get what she wants and these attributes are reminiscent of the strong Matriarch stereotype, she is still young and under her father's patriarchal rule. Larsen's description of the dress as 'pathetic' highlights the potential futility of her endeavours and it is clear that the money she earns from her errands is not hers and is expected to be handed over to her father. Clare's inner strength and independence, a repeated symbolism of the colour red in dress, is a recurring theme throughout the novel as is her performance. In this instance Irene, Clare's childhood friend who she reunites with unexpectedly at the start of the novel, describes Clare's behaviour as

[38] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (NewYork: Routledge, 2015), p. 22.

'verging sometimes almost on theatrical heroics' (p. 172). Larsen enforces the link between red and performance and directly associates it with Clare.

Clare and Irene's performance of race is investigated by Larsen when Irene meets Clare's husband (Bellew) in the street who is ignorant of the fact that his wife is of mixed heritage. Irene is with a friend (Felise) who is 'golden, with curly black Negro hair' and Bellew quickly understands that Irene also must be black and was passing the last time he met her at his home for a tea party (p. 259). Both Irene and Felise's racial heritage is referenced by the colour red. There is 'a strong wind that had whipped a dusky red into Felise's smooth golden cheeks' and Bellew addresses Clare by her married name, which happens to be Mrs *Red*field (p. 259). Felise's black heritage is shown by the blood flushing in her cheeks, it is a warmth, a fieriness that symbolises black heritage and the colour 'dusky' red indicates a dark-complexioned colour. Additionally, Larsen links Felise's blood and heritage to imagery of whipping and consequently slavery with the description of the wind whipping her face. The same wind causes tears in Irene's 'soft brown eyes', a colour of eye typical of a black person and tears also caused by a metaphorical whip (p. 259).

The reference to slavery, oppression and their 'black blood' represents Irene's feelings of intimidation on meeting Bellew and her inability to acknowledge or introduce him to Felise. She considers the reason for this to be her 'instinctive loyalty to a race' which she identifies as her black heritage and Clare is included in that. Irene would have given away Clare's true racial identity to Bellew if she had acknowledged Felise had met Clare before, but she does not.[39] Irene identifies herself with Clare through race and this identification is evidenced by their mutual association with the colour red. Red symbolises 'black blood' and although this appears to be Larsen's vindication of a biological determination of race there is some evidence that she sees race as a social construct. She does this when Felise comments

[39] Larsen, p. 260.

on a shop window as they walk away from Bellew 'Oh do look at that coat! There. The red one. Isn't it a dream?' (p. 260). The red coat has been in the background of this scene and is now noticed by Felise in the same way that Clare and Irene's black heritage is not visually obvious until it is brought to the surface by their dress. Metaphorically, Clare is in the background of this scene as well. Although not physically present she is constantly in Irene's mind. As a coat is a garment which we wear to stay warm and be protected from the weather, this coat represents Clare and the racial stereotyping of the symbolic warmth and inner fire of 'black blood' and black womanhood. Larsen demonstrates that, just as the coat can be taken off or on, race can be fluid and performed when appropriate, in a similar way to Clare's acts of passing, but Felise questions whether this is a dream. In other words it is simply a desire, an ideal that is unattainable and not real. In accordance with the 'one drop rule', as women of mixed-race, they would be classified as black and Larsen implies that their 'real or true' race, is waiting in the background, maybe in the closet, and necessity will require it to be worn at some point. Morton explains the 'one drop rule' and describes its broad acceptance at the time. In a society where people were either classified as black or white, a person of mixed race was also classed as black no matter how white they appeared. The theory being that even one drop of 'black blood' would turn white black and this was described as the 'Negroization' of the population.[40] Furthermore, by making their 'true' race a coat Larsen implies it is the safer of the two options and the more protective.

Larsen then dresses Clare in red for the finale of the novel. She is described as 'radiant in a shining red gown' (p. 265). Clare's shining gown can be interpreted in two layers. Primarily, it is radiant and appears to exude light placing Clare as the leading lady and star of the night. She is somebody that people are drawn to and admire. However, during the

[40] Morton, chapter 2.

interwar years in the US 'shine' was also a form of racial slur for black people.[41] The term derived from black shoeshine boys on the streets of large cities. By dressing Clare in a 'shining red gown' Larsen displays her black heritage and by describing her as 'radiant' Clare can be perceived as proud of her race for the first time in the novel. There is no need for Clare to perform this evening as she is true to her racial heritage. A fact which is bolstered by the lack of mention of curtains at the 'long casement windows' that Irene opens and Clare later falls through (p. 270). This is not a stage with red curtains and what happens next is very real.

Once again red is connected to the racial stereotype of a primitive, fiery black heritage within and Clare is described at the party as 'a vital, glowing thing, like a flame of red and gold' (p. 271). This image represents Clare's pride in her racial heritage but it also portrays her as a flame which is dangerous to Irene and her marriage; she is a powerful and potentially destructive force. Clare has been having an affair with Irene's husband. At the party Clare embodies all three stereotypes of black womanhood. Visually she appears to be the strong black Matriarch, radiant in red but she is also an alleged adulterer and husband seducer who can be identified with the immoral Jezebel, and her fate is to be the 'tragic mulatto' who Sterling Brown describes as suffering a tragic end after finding herself a white lover. Fiery Clare contrasts with Irene who is now depicted as cold and numb. 'Her hands were numb, her feet like ice, her heart like a stone weight. Even her tongue was like a heavy dying thing' (p. 266). She is 'cold and tense' and after Clare falls from the window Irene notes '[i]t was cold. Icy chills ran up her spine and over her bare neck and shoulders' (pp. 266 and 272). From this description of Irene we assume that whereas Clare is being true to her racial heritage Irene is not. That is not to say she is passing as white but more that she is not being true to her race

[41] Susan L. Keller, 'The Riviera's Golden Boy: Fitzgerald, Cosmopolitan Tanning, and Racial Commodities in "Tender is the Night"', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 8 (2010), p. 151.

and to Clare as their shared black racial identity is described as a fire or warmth. When Irene bumps into Bellew on the street earlier she thinks:

> That instinctive loyalty to a race […] Why should it include Clare? […] she could not change herself in this respect, could not separate individuals from the race, herself from Clare Kendry (p. 260).

Irene previously has protected Clare and been loyal to her, potentially because of their shared racial identity. However, Larsen now indicates that this is no longer the case. In fact, Larsen strongly suggests that it is Irene who pushes Clare out the window. In a premonition of what is to come, after opening the curtainless windows 'Irene finished her cigarette and threw it out, watching the tiny spark drop slowly down to the white ground below' (p. 270). The 'tiny spark' compares to Clare's 'vital glowing thing' which Irene later in the novel also throws from the window.

Clare is not safe from Irene even though, in her red gown, she appears as the strong black matriarch. The cold and snow does not simply represent Irene's loss of loyalty for Clare and their shared racial identity but it also represents white patriarchy and its control over Clare. Larsen demonstrates that it may alternatively be this, represented by her husband, which kills Clare and not simply a jealous push from Irene. Clare is the red flame which is extinguished by the snow when she falls to her death. The snow when they arrive at the party is described as 'undisturbed' and 'lovely' and Brian warns Clare 'to keep to the walk with those foolish thin shoes' (p. 269). With this warning Larsen indicates that the 'white' snow will cause Clare harm and the thin covering she has on her feet will not protect her. Clare's ability to pass can be read as the covering that does not protect her from racism and white patriarchy. Larsen purposefully creates ambiguity as to who is responsible for Clare's death;

it may be her husband, Irene or simply an accident. Clare may have died at the hands of the white patriarchy represented by her husband or Irene may have pushed her. With this Larsen suggests that the 'tragic mulatto' holds the least control over her fate of all the stereotypes of black womanhood. If Irene is responsible for her death then it is interesting that after the event, in a familiar echo to the red coat mentioned before, she gathers up Brian's coat when she leaves the flat to join him in the cold and snow. By not putting it on herself and relying on Brian to wrap his coat around her and protect her, she accepts his patriarchal control. This is apparently a much safer patriarchal control than the white patriarchy represented by Clare's other potential murderer, her husband. A parallel can be drawn between Irene and Mabel who are both wrapped in the protective 'cocoon' of their marriages at the end of their respective, disastrous parties.

In 1922 Walter Lippmann in *Public Opinion* discussed the notion of stereotypes and described them essentially as 'pictures in our heads'.[42] Forrest LaViolette and K. H. Silvert explain that 'the emphasis of the Lippmann point of view is upon distortion and behaviour based upon something which is contrary to fact'.[43] With their depictions of red clothing Hurston and Larsen are interested in doing more than just reproducing stereotypes. Their depictions of red clothing need to be recognised as stereotypical to then allow them to be questioned and subverted. As Parkins explains 'clothing provided the material for a complex negotiation of self and other across the charged boundaries of 'race', ethnicity and nation'.[44] It is the colour red with its close links to race and women of colour which allows them to blur the boundaries between body and environment, resulting in Hurston and Larsen frequently complicating these stereotypes and disputing their accuracy, while acknowledging their power and the danger they pose to black identity.

[42] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion.* [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6456/pg6456.html . [Accessed: 27 September 2022].
[43] Forrest LaViolette and K. H. Silvert, 'A Theory of Stereotypes', *Social Forces* 29:3 (March 1951), p. 258.
[44] Parkins, 'Fashion', p. 101.

Chapter 4: Blue

In Europe, World War I had a significant impact on women's place in society and as a result at the start of the twentieth century there was no other event which impacted more significantly on the alteration of women's fashion. With women performing men's jobs while they went to war, more practical clothing became fashionable. Laura L. Doan reports that in the UK alone

> [b]y July of 1918, according to the *Report from the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry,* approximately 7,310,500 women were doing some form of paid labour in industry, commerce, agriculture, transport, and national and local government, an increase of 23 percent over the total estimated four years earlier.[1]

This does not include volunteer work in the Red Cross or Land Army in which many other women were also involved. As a result the gender divide narrowed, but although these women were applauded and accepted, public perception apportioned them an air of masculinity. Women in uniforms personified this 'mannish' appearance, which was not simply due to their clothes but also to a newfound air of confidence and the chance to perform a man's role. European uniforms both during and after World War I were predominantly navy blue. Pastoureau examines the popularity of blue as a colour of clothing and surmises that 'in the period between the wars […] blue regained its place as the most commonly worn colour in Europe and the United States.[2] He believes this popularity arose from an increasing change in colour of a wide range of uniforms. In 1914 French soldiers'

[1] Laura L. Doan, 'Topsy-Turvydom: Gender Inversion, Sapphism, and the Great War', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12:4 (2006), p. 517.
[2] Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Color* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 163.

uniforms were updated from a 'horizon blue' overcoat and red trousers to blue trousers and this was not the only change, in France and its neighbouring countries' uniforms in the first few decades of the twentieth century: 'sailors, guards, policemen, soldiers, firemen, custom agents [and] postmen' all had their uniform or part of it updated in blue.[3] Both men and women increasingly dressed in blue both for work and leisure and it became a colour of uniformity; an androgynous colour. This trend of uniformity in interwar cities is described by Plock as 'the contemporary drift towards a uniform dress culture' and contrary to what this trend might imply in a time where blue clothing represented uniformity and conformity, modernist writers chose to dress some of their most subversive characters in blue.[4] This chapter examines how Katherine Mansfield and Jean Rhys questioned traditional gender boundaries and investigated the performance of sexuality through blue clothing and related accessories.

Mansfield, in her short story 'Je Ne Parle Pas Français' (1918) (hereafter referred to as JNPPF), creates the protagonist Raoul Duquette. Raoul is a writer living in Paris who has a relationship with Dick Harmon. Dick leaves Raoul only to return to Paris with Mouse, his new love. Dick then leaves Mouse as well and returns home to England and his mother. Critical scholarship commonly identifies Raoul as a homosexual man and Mansfield's deliberate depiction of gender ambiguity is used as evidence for this conclusion.[5] However, I argue there is further complexity to be found in Mansfield's depiction of Raoul's gender and sexuality and with Raoul, Mansfield explores the instability of identity categories. In particular, I consider a further reading of Raoul as both a woman cross-dressing to 'pass' as a man and as a bisexual woman. I support these readings through an examination of both the colour and style of Raoul's clothing and accessories.

---

[3] Horizon blue is a blue-grey colour which is the colour of the sky where it meets the earth; Pastoureau, p. 161.
[4] Plock, p. 183.
[5] Sarah Henstra, 'Looking the Part: Performative Narration in Djuna Barne's *Nightwood* and Katherine Mansfield's "Je Ne Parle Pas Français"', *Twentieth-Century Literature* 46:2 (Summer 2000), pp. 125-149.

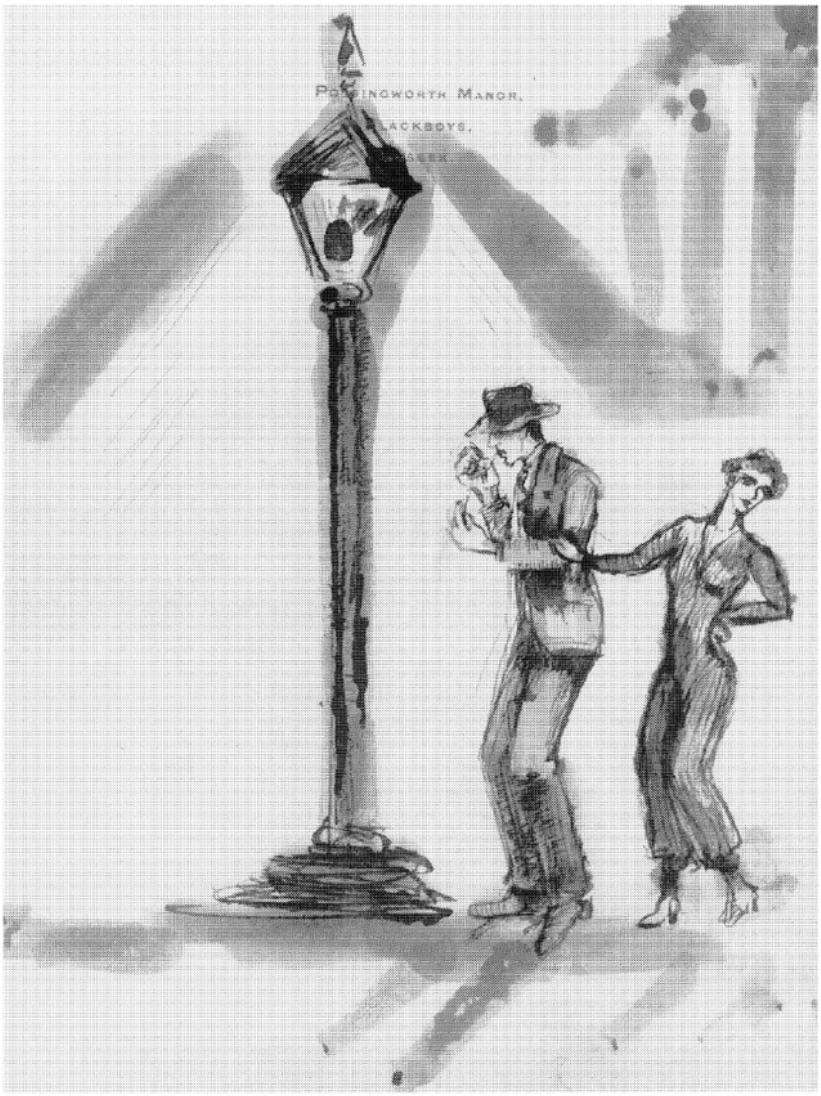
Wilson states that '[f]ashion is obsessed with gender, [it] defines and redefines the gender boundary', and Entwistle continues that 'fashions in androgyny are further evidence of the degree to which fashion likes to play around at the boundaries of sexual difference'.[6] Their sentiments are particularly relevant in relation to fashion in the interwar years when what was regarded then as an androgynous style of dress became highly fashionable. This departure from a traditionally feminine style of dress was called 'la garçonne' which translates literally as tomboy and is one of the named mannequin styles in Rhys's short story 'Mannequin'. Here the models in a fashion house are chosen to represent different fashion styles and the model described as 'la garçonne' is given a feminine derivation of a masculine name (p. 22). Georgette is described as 'sportive' and lights her cigarette 'with a devil-may-care air' (p. 23). These details are all characteristic of the 1920's stereotype 'la garçonne'. 'La garçonne' was a fashionable woman, dressed in the new 'flapper', androgynous style and was commonly perceived as having loose morals.

In JNPPF Mansfield takes advantage of a move towards less distinction between male and female dress in the 1920s, to create gender ambiguity in the character of Raoul. She introduces Raoul in the café wearing an 'English overcoat' and 'grey felt hat' (p. 46). With no further details of the style of coat or hat, these items of clothing can be interpreted as either masculine or feminine. Similarly, the colour grey is neutral. It is the colour which falls directly between black and white and is a combination of both. Grey is therefore the mid-point between opposites and a combination of opposites in much the same way Raoul is depicted as being neither clearly a man or woman but both. Raoul's full name is Raoul Duquette and it illustrates this combination of opposites. Although Raoul is a typically French, male name, Mansfield's choice of Duquette is illuminating. In French 'du' as well as being the form of de (meaning of) which is used with masculine nouns is also a close

[6] Wilson, p. 117; Entwistle, p. 140.

homophone to ‘deux’, translating as two, and the second syllable of his name ‘quette’ is a feminine suffix in the French language. Most words which end in a double consonant are feminine, for example, la fillette, la chaussette, la layette, la baguette, la toilette, amongst others. With Raoul’s name Mansfield has encased the concept of duality (Du or ‘deux) in the middle of two opposite and clearly binary gendered names. Additionally, by saying ‘[m]y name is Raoul Duquette’ instead of ‘I am’ indicates that there may be a difference between who Raoul presents himself as in public and who he is in private (p. 48).[7] Even the title of the story indicates a difference between what we are told ‘I cannot speak French’ when clearly this is not the case because the phrase is written and spoken by Mouse in French. Furthermore, it is conceivable that Raoul’s first name is adopted by him and is not his true name. Although Mansfield was not known for cross-dressing she was friends with or moved in the same circles as those who did. Within this circle was Vita Sackville-West whose relationship with Virginia Woolf began with a meeting in 1922 and who before that had had a relationship with Violet Trefusis. In this relationship Vita called herself Julian and dressed as a man, not unlike Radclyffe Hall who called herself ‘John’ in her relationships with women.[8] (Figure 1)

[7] I have chosen to use masculine pronouns when referring to the character of Raoul for consistency with current scholarship and to reflect the gender of his chosen name.
[8] Diana Souhami, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (London: Quercus, 2013), p. 55.



'THIS IS THE BEST ADVENTURE'

Sketch by Violet of her as Eve and Vita as Julian, 1918

Figure 1: Sketch of Vita Sackville-West and Violet Trefusis, where VS-W is dressed in masculine clothing and smoking.

Mansfield's choice of clothing for Raoul in the café, a public place, allows an open interpretation of his gender as the imagery is ambiguous. However, in private, Raoul wears a 'blue kimono embroidered with white birds' and later he dresses to meet Dick and Mouse in a 'new indigo-blue overcoat' with a 'velvet collar' (pp. 54-55). As Raoul's key items of

clothing are both blue this denotes a uniformity which reflects the current trend and suggests a balance in his masculine and feminine selves. It was Mansfield who wrote in her notebook in 1921 '[w]e are neither male not female. We are a compound of both. I chose the male who will develop and expand the male in me; he chooses me to expand the female in him'.[9] She is describing the relationship between 'lovers' and believes neither person is solely male or female but a mixture of the two. By describing this relationship as a compound indicates a more permanent mix of genders; something which cannot be separated easily. Virginia Woolf, in her extended essay *A Room of One's Own* (1928), asks 'whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness?', and surmises that '[t]he normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating' (pp. 127-128). This balance and combination of male and female is represented by the colour uniformity of Raoul's clothing and Mansfield demonstrates how Raoul can move between gender performances by altering the style of dress he wears. In public Raoul wears traditionally masculine clothing that is, overcoats, 'evening suits' and 'patent leather boots with light uppers', but in private his choice of kimono suggests femininity (p. 50).

From the mid-nineteenth century kimonos and Japanese culture became highly fashionable in the West and this continued into the early decades of the twentieth century in line with the vogue for oriental styles and 'orientalism'.[10] Beci Carver in 'The Modernist Kimono' describes how Mansfield herself 'wore a kimono, cut her hair short, bought a Japanese doll […], spoke of visiting Japan and "took on a Japanese air"'.[11] Western adoption

[9] Katherine Mansfield, *Notebooks* (29 August 1921). [Online] Available at: http://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/29-aug-1921 . [Accessed: 18 February 2021].
[10] Refer to Chapter 2: Yellow.
[11] Carver, p. 305; Included quote from: Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (London: Viking, 1987), p. 87.

of the kimono was as a dressing gown or bathrobe and therefore something to wear at home in private. This was in contrast to its traditional use in Japan where 'from the 16th century kimono became the principal item of dress for all classes and both sexes'.[12] As the kimono was a truly gender neutral garment Raoul's kimono supports Mansfield's ambiguous description of Raoul's sex and gender. However, I believe this interpretation alone is not accurate for 1920's Paris. Terry Satsuki Milhaupt asks 'what happens when one culture appropriates an object from another? In its new context, divorced from its social, economic and political meaning, the object takes on a new life'.[13] In the kimono's case when it was brought to the West it was regarded as a feminine garment and was predominantly worn by and marketed to women.[14] Additionally, with the western opinion of kimono wearing geishas as a type of prostitute the kimono became associated with a sexually alluring woman and was eroticised, a belief which was only added to by the 1920s media portrayal of the morally questionable 'flapper' or 'modern woman' wearing kimonos.[15]

Raoul's wearing of a feminine kimono in private and more masculine dress in public hints at a difference in performed gender according to where he is and the possibility that Raoul in public is a cross-dressing woman. In public, Mansfield clearly enforces the impression that Raoul is performing a part. In the café, he speaks of having 'come on to the stage at exactly the moment you were expected', of life being opposed to 'granting you these entrances' and 'keeping you in the wings until it is too late' (p. 45). Furthermore, he describes coming back to the café as 'revisiting the scene', the waiter has 'twenty photographers […] snap their fill of him' like a film star and Raoul considers his musings on life to be influenced by 'American cinema' (p. 45). Raoul's appearance in public, in

[12] Anonymous, 'Kimono', *V&A,* Produced as part of *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* (From 27 August 2020 to 25 October 2020). [Online] Available at: https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/kimono . [Accessed: 17 February, 2021).
[13] Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, *Kimono* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), p. 141.
[14] Akiko Savas, 'Dilute to Taste: Kimonos for the British market at the beginning of the twentieth century', *International Journal of Fashion Studies* 4:2 (2017), pp. 167-8.
[15] Milhaupt, pp. 143-4; Savas, p. 168.

masculine clothing, is described using stage and cinema vocabulary. In particular, the colour scheme of the café is suggestive of a black and white film. Raoul is dressed in grey, as is the waiter 'grey, flat-footed, and withered', the workmen who drink there are 'powdered over with white flour, lime or something and a few soldiers, bring with them thin, dark girls with silver rings in their ears' (p. 44). Madame, the owner of the café, completes the silver-screen colour palette as she is 'thin and dark, too, with white cheeks and white hands […] shining out of her black shawl' (p. 44). From stage to screen and back again Mansfield continues the idea of Raoul's performance when he compares himself, in his kimono, to Madame Butterfly from the opera *Madama Butterfly* composed by Giacomo Puccini.

Madame Butterfly is a Japanese woman abandoned by her English lover, who then discovers she is pregnant. This comparison continues Mansfield's allusion to femininity and a performance but there is also a further implication that Raoul may be or has been pregnant. Earlier in the café Raoul imagines the door opening 'and the Virgin Mary […] come in, riding upon an ass, her meek hands folded over her big belly …' (p. 46). This image of the Virgin Mary can be interpreted as an imaginary double for Raoul primarily by the colour of clothing associated with them both. Raoul is identified by his blue clothing in the text and the Virgin Mary has been depicted in blue since the late twelfth century.[16] Later in the text Mansfield doubles Raoul with Mouse, Dick's new girlfriend, who is described as 'a tiny creature, half butterfly, half woman, bowing to you with her hands in her sleeves' (p. 59). With this Mansfield draws an image of a second Madame Butterfly in a kimono and creates in Mouse a double for Raoul. The pregnancy and baby imagery is continued with Mouse as she has a 'Mouse II' (p. 59); Mouse II is her grey fur muff which she strokes constantly like a baby mouse. As well as Mansfield hinting at Raoul's pregnancy with these doubles she reinforces the verbal doubling throughout the text which in turn reflects the balance of

[16] Pastoureau, *Blue,* p. 52.

genders within Raoul and his performance of both his male and female selves through his choice of clothes. Given my assertion that Raoul is a cross-dressing woman, Mary is pregnant in Raoul's imagination, he describes himself as Madame Butterfly who was pregnant, and his doubling with Mouse who has Mouse II, I argue that Raoul has been pregnant. Additionally, Mansfield's use of ellipses at the end of the paragraph indicate that there is more to know about Raoul and his vision of a 'big belly'.

To be pregnant and unmarried was still a disgrace in the 1920s and the embroidery on Raoul's kimono hints at this. Traditionally, on Japanese kimono, the embroidered white birds would be cranes, a bird which in Japan symbolises good fortune and longevity.[17] However, in French the word for a crane is 'la grue' which is also slang for a tart or prostitute. Jean Rhys in her short story 'Vienne' (1924) uses this slang when a man is describing Tillie, a woman who 'flirt[s] outrageously' and counts that 'half the men there had been her lovers' (p. 97). Raoul's kimono not only identifies Raoul as a woman but the colour and embroidery reinforce my argument that he has had a sexual affair with Dick and become pregnant. It is unlikely the baby has survived as Raoul speaks of 'a little dead kitten' and no further allusion is made to pregnancy or babies (p. 46).

In contrast, Raoul's overcoat, is a practical, less frivolous garment which echoes a more masculine style of clothing especially as he wears it with a 'black silver-spotted tie' (p. 55). Once again Raoul's clothing hints at a combination or balance of sex and gender. The velvet collar on his overcoat is a fabric linked to femininity and the tie and overcoat are more masculine items of clothing.[18] Additionally, a coat is worn to cover clothes and the body, both of which display gender. Therefore, the coat can conceal gender or create an alternative. With these costumes Mansfield creates an image of gender ambiguity but also hints at a

[17] Anonymous, 'Kimono', *V&A*.
[18] For a further discussion of velvet refer to Chapter 1: Brown.

masculine public appearance and feminine private appearance and with this I argue that Raoul is a woman cross-dressing.

In *Vested Interests* Marjorie Garber states that '[c]ross-dressing is about gender confusion. […] Cross-dressing is about the power of women. Cross-dressing is about the emergence of gay identity'.[19] Mansfield's descriptions of Raoul do create gender confusion and by cross-dressing Raoul, the woman, gains power and independence he would not otherwise have as a woman in 1920's Paris. The overcoat hints at this as not only does it cover and conceal but it is an item of clothing which provides warmth and security. Secondly, Raoul is free to roam the city unaccompanied which would not be safe for a woman to do or would not be regarded as respectable.[20] He travels on the metro alone, he frequents cafes alone and rents a 'bachelor flat' (p. 49).

There are records of women 'passing' as men during the interwar years. Frequently, they chose to do so for economic reasons or to gain independence. Susan Gubar describes men's clothing as 'a costume of freedom' and regards female cross-dressing in Paris at the start of the twentieth century as 'not only a personal or sexual statement on the part of women; it is also a social and political statement that exploits the rhetoric of costuming to redefine the self'.[21] There was another side to cross-dressing too that of the experimentation of the elite whether out of curiosity or a public performance of sexuality. Raoul finds it 'extraordinary how one can live without money', the mirrors in his flat are 'unpaid for' and he is behind in paying his rent (pp. 50 and 54). Additionally, in Paris, cross-dressing by women was forbidden by law since 1800 and Garber explains that for women to obviously

[19] Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 390.
[20] Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[21] Susan Gubar, 'Blessings in Disguise: Cross-Dressing as Re-Dressing for Female Modernists', *The Massachusetts Review,* 22:3 (Autumn 1981), p. 478.

cross-dress in public was 'a privileged marker of class'.[22] Due to Raoul's lack of money he is unlikely to be experimenting with cross-dressing for curiosity but it may be a public performance of sexuality and therefore, I will address this consideration later in this chapter. To gain male freedoms and independence a cross-dressing woman would have to 'pass' as a man and there is some evidence to support the fact that Raoul does more than cross-dress but actually 'passes'. Alison Oram has researched this area and ascertains that in every year of the 1920s there was an average of five stories in the popular press of women 'passing' as men.[23] Although this number is small it should be remembered that these are only the women who were 'discovered' and not necessarily the actual numbers that felt the necessity to 'pass'. Mansfield indicates that Raoul is successful at 'passing' as he is referred to as 'Monsieur' by strangers in the café and on the metro, he rents a 'bachelor flat' and tells Dick about his 'submerged life' (p. 53). Raoul explains:

> I date myself from the moment that I became the tenant of a small bachelor flat on the fifth floor of a tall, not too shabby house, in a street that might or might not be discreet. Very useful that … . There I emerged, came out into the light, and put out my two horns with a study and a bedroom and a kitchen on my back (p. 49).

Raoul's performance as a man can be dated from this point as he says 'I date myself' from then and 'I emerged, came out into the light'. These words are evocative of a birth and a new start for Raoul. Raoul's comment that it is 'very useful' that where he lives might be discreet indicates he has something to hide, something which needs to be kept secret. Therefore, neighbours who turn a blind eye and do not ask questions are very useful. Once again

[22] Garber, p. 153.
[23] Alison Oram, *Her Husband was a Woman! Woman's gender-crossing in modern British popular culture* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), p. 3.

Mansfield's use of ellipses indicates that there is more to say on this subject but Raoul chooses not to explain his meaning. Finally, Mansfield's imagery of a snail with its 'two horns' and house on its back furthers her exploration of Raoul's male and female selves. Snails are hermaphrodites meaning they have both male and female sex organs. This imagery represents Raoul's sartorial performance of both male and female appearances.

Mansfield identifies the male and female selves of Raoul and with his clothing indicates that one is hidden from public view. Raoul describes this as 'my submerged life' (p. 53). When Dick and Raoul first have dinner, Raoul tells Dick everything about himself and says he threw

> every card that I possessed at him and sat back and watched him arrange them in his hand.
>
> 'Very curious and interesting …' […]
>
> But I was quite breathless at the thought of what I had done. I had shown somebody both sides of my life. Told him everything as sincerely and truthfully as I could. Taken immense pains to explain things about my submerged life (p. 53).

With these words Raoul indicates that he has been playing a game and is showing Dick his 'cards', that is, showing him what he has been hiding and keeping from him. Like a card game Raoul's game is potentially risky so much so that he is 'breathless'. This 'game' can be interpreted as Raoul's 'passing' and cross-dressing. Raoul shows Dick 'both sides of his life', his male and female sides, and Dick responds by finding it intriguing. Again, Mansfield

finishes Dick's words with ellipses to indicate something unsaid and imply there is more to be told than that which is revealed.

Mansfield suggests from the start of 'JNPPF' there is something hidden and more to Raoul than what she presents. Raoul describes people as 'like portmanteaux - packed with certain things […] half emptied suddenly, or squeezed fatter than ever' (p. 44). This simile suggests that Raoul views people and himself as a suitcase, as an empty vessel which can contain and conceal. Mansfield begins her discussion of half of a whole and dual selves with the idea of the suitcase being half empty or stuffed and when Raoul imagines the portmanteaux going through customs he asks '[h]ave you anything to declare? Any wines, spirits, cigars, perfumes, silks?' (p. 44). Again, his question implies something hidden and the items which may be hidden are clearly divided into those commonly regarded as masculine (wine, spirits, cigars) and feminine (perfumes, silks) indicating that a person may contain both a male and female self. Additionally, Mansfield highlights Raoul's hidden femininity with his description of the 'thin gold bracelet' which he wears above his left elbow (p. 50). Simon Bliss explains that

> [i]n the 1920s, women who eschewed jewelry were either expressing a particular sexual identity through transgressing 'normal' modes of dress (i.e. through cross-dressing) or involved in activities, such as sports, where jewelry wearing was impractical.[24]

[24] Simon Bliss, '"L'intelligence de la parure": Notes on Jewelry wearing in the 1920s', *Fashion Theory* 20:1 (2016), p. 11.

As this delicate, rather feminine bracelet is hidden from public view under Raoul's clothes it symbolises his hidden, private female side and as Bliss explains Raoul's lack of jewellery in public is consistent with Raoul being a cross-dressing woman.

There are several occasions when Raoul acknowledges his hidden or 'submerged' self and each of these occurs when he looks in a mirror. Each time the mirror reflects the male self which Raoul is dressed to portray in public but at the same time Mansfield's language and imagery indicate that this is only half of the whole and there is a hidden identity. In the café when 'Raoul' looks at himself in the mirror, there is an acknowledgment of a difference between the self which is performed and the self which is 'submerged'. Mansfield writes:

> Suddenly I realised that quite apart from myself, I was smiling. Slowly I raised my head and saw myself in the mirror opposite. Yes, there I sat, leaning on the table, smiling my deep, sly smile, the glass of coffee with its vague plume of steam before me and beside it the ring of white saucer with two pieces of sugar.
>
> I opened my eyes very wide. There I had been for eternity, as it were, and now at last I was coming to life … (p. 46).

The 'I' in this extract is the same 'I' who dates themselves as existing from when they rented the flat and once again they are 'coming to life' and the ellipses indicate an unspoken knowledge as to who the 'I' is that is coming into existence. With this Mansfield draws a distinction between Raoul's two selves. In the first sentence 'I' is described as 'apart' and therefore separate from 'myself'. The fact that 'I' smiles in spite of, or separate from, 'myself' indicates that there are two sides to Raoul; the one who is smiling and looking into the mirror (I) and the other who is there but not part of this performance. Mansfield continues

this use of the first person pronoun and the intensive pronoun to emphasise a difference in selves; 'I' raises their head to see 'myself' in the mirror. Given the assumption that 'Raoul' is dressed as a man in the café, a public place, the suggestion is that 'I', Raoul's performance as a man is seen by 'myself', his submerged female side. With the consideration that a mirror presents an inverted image, an inverted double of the viewer, I argue Mansfield encourages an interpretation of Raoul as a cross-dresser and as a combination of genders. The idea that there is a secret to the self which 'Raoul' sees in the mirror is shown by his 'sly smile' and Mansfield continues the idea of a doubling and the double imagery with two sugar lumps on the saucer. In the café there is a further indication that it is Raoul's sex which is submerged. Sitting at the table he thinks '[i]t was as if all of me, except my head and arms, all of me that was under the table, had simply dissolved, melted, turned into water' (p. 47). The part of Raoul which is 'submerged' and 'under water' is his lower half and genitals which define his sex. With this Raoul's sex is both hidden under water and undefined as if his lower half has 'dissolved' or 'melted'.

The use of a mirror to highlight the difference between how we are perceived by others and how we perceive ourselves, with a self-recognition of this, is a device which Woolf employs in her short story 'The New Dress'. In 'The New Dress' Mabel is attending Mrs Dalloway's party; however, when she arrives and looks in the mirror she soon realises that the dress she has had made for the party is not appropriate:

> she went straight to the far end of the room, to a shaded corner where a looking-glass hung and looked. No! It was not right […] for oh these men, oh these women, all were thinking –'What's Mabel wearing? What a fright she looks! What a hideous new dress! (p. 170).

When Mabel sees herself in public in the mirror she perceives herself through the eyes of others and sees herself as she believes they see her. In Mabel's case this is as unfashionable and ridiculous in her dress but when Raoul gazes at himself in the mirror he sees himself as a man as he believes others do. Later when Raoul is dressed in his blue overcoat with velvet collar to meet Dick and Mouse at the station he looks in the mirror and again Mansfield indicates that he is performing by a change in pronouns and free indirect speech which illustrates his performance and self-recognition:

> It was impossible not to believe this of the person who surveyed himself finally, from top to toe, drawing on his soft grey gloves. He was looking the part; he was the part. (p. 55).

Once again Mansfield moves from describing Raoul as 'himself' to 'he' and demonstrates Raoul's self-recognition of his male appearance and identity. Additionally, the use of free indirect speech with '[h]e was looking the part; he was the part' allows an ambiguity in interpretation that this is not only Raoul's perception of himself but potentially the public perception of him as we do not know exactly whose thought this is. Mansfield implies that Raoul's clothing allows him to not only appear as a man but to become the part. Her language is suggestive of an actor performing a part in a play. Raoul then continues:

> That gave me an idea. I took out my notebook, and still in full view, jotted down a note or two … How can one look the part and not be the part? Or be the part and not look it? Isn't looking-being? Or being-looking? At any rate who is to say that it is not? … (p. 55).

Raoul's questions suggest that although there may be a discrepancy between the surface impression portrayed, that is Raoul's performance of masculinity, and his 'submerged life', his femininity, these two sides of Raoul are linked and inseparable. Mansfield emphasises this idea by linking 'looking' and 'being' with a dash and then her reversal of the phrase. With this phrasing the combination of opposing selves in Raoul is again represented, and by connecting them, the whole phrase and the whole of Raoul is made of two opposites which cannot be separated. Mansfield uses repetition and the joining of words repeatedly throughout her story to represent Raoul's duality. Mansfield further demonstrates the duality of Raoul by linking several of his repeated phrases with a dash, for example when he describes himself as 'I'm rich–I'm rich' and 'insulted-insulted' (pp. 49 and 54). Raoul even describes himself as a 'fox-terrier' a small breed of dog whose name incorporates two opposing and very different animals in a similar way to Raoul's name which implies two different genders. Fox-terriers were popularised by King Edward VII at the start of the twentieth century. They are hunt dogs which were used to flush foxes from their lairs so that the hunt could continue.[25] The name 'fox-terrier' mirrors Mansfield's technique of connecting opposing words to illustrate Raoul's connected male and female selves. It is illuminating that Raoul describes himself as an animal where part of the name, 'fox' is hidden and the other 'terrier' seeks it out as he has separate public and private selves.

Mansfield's use of repetition, each time repeating the word twice when Raoul is speaking or thinking implies a double consciousness. Raoul describes the café as 'sad, sad' and Madame's hands are 'restless, restless' (p. 44). When thinking of Mouse, Raoul repeats twice the phrases 'Je ne parle pas français', 'Mouse!' and 'Where are you?' (p. 48). When Raoul is with Dick the repetition is more pronounced as Dick smiles his '*slow*, *dream*ing

[25] 'Breed Info', *The Fox-Terrier Club*. [Online] Available at: https://www.thefoxterrierclub.co.uk/breed-info. [Accessed: 21 February 2021].

smile, then gets drunk '*slow*ly and *dream*ily […] begins to sing *very low, very low'* whilst Raoul thinks '*I loved* that song, and *I loved* the way he sang it, *slowly, slowly'* (p. 53, emphasis added). Furthermore, when Dick first invites Raoul to his hotel Raoul thinks 'I was so *deeply, deeply* flattered that I had to leave him then and there to *preen and preen* myself before the cubist sofas' (p. 52, emphasis added). Once again Mansfield's repetition represents Raoul's duality but her description of the sofas as cubist is enlightening. Cubism was a modernist art movement and revolutionary style of representing reality created around 1907 by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque.[26] It attempted to capture all the planes or perspectives of a subject in one painting. In this way, the painting depicts the whole of a subject, including aspects which are not visible from a fixed-point perspective; giving the subject of the painting a distorted and fragmented, geometrical appearance.[27] Raoul preens himself in front of these sofas in the same way that he would preen himself in front of a mirror. With the multi-faceted perspective of cubism, Raoul's multi-faceted identity is reflected.

In Raoul, Mansfield creates a character where the male and female sides are inextricably linked and by an in-depth analysis of Raoul's clothing I believe Raoul should be read as a cross-dressing woman. Mansfield's deliberate ambiguity with regards to Raoul's gender, the suggestion of a submerged self and the suggestion of Raoul's public performance support my argument that Raoul is a woman cross-dressing. It appears that Raoul is successfully 'passing' as a man and the titles of his published books,' *False Coins, Wrong Doors, Left Umbrellas'* indicate that appearances can be deceptive, they may lead you to the wrong place and are lost. Gubar describes the female cross dresser as 'a being who manages to transcend the dualism of sex-role polarities, calling into question the categories of culture'.[28] Garber in her extensive study of cross-dressing and transvestism builds on Gubar's

[26] Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). Spanish artist and School of Paris artist; Georges Braque (1882-1963). French painter.
[27] 'Cubism', [Online] Available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/cubism . [Accessed: 6 May 2019].
[28] Gubar, p. 479.

work and states that 'the tendency on the part of many critics has been to look *through* rather than *at* the cross-dresser […] and to want instead to subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders. To elide and erase'.[29] Mansfield's writing in 'JNPPF' and deliberate ambiguity enables her to deconstruct traditional binary genders in creating Raoul. Raoul cannot be fully subsumed within either gender and this echoes the concept of a 'third sex' or an 'intermediate sex' that sexologists at the start of the twentieth century were debating. The term 'third sex' became popular at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century and was used to describe homosexual men and lesbians. The belief was that there was a biological reason for behaviour which did not comply with traditional male/female behaviour, in particular, same-sex desire. Newton explains that 'the true invert was a being between categories, neither man nor woman, a "third sex" or "trapped soul"'.[30] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, one of the key sexologists of the time, writing in his 1886 book, *Psycopathia Sexualis,* described women who desired other women as sexual inverts and categorises them into four levels. Within the first category were women who did not show any physical or mental male attributes but who were open to advances from other women, the second category included those with a 'strong preference for male garments', the third stage involved a woman fully assuming 'a definitely masculine role' meaning full 'inversion' was reached, and finally, the fourth being those who possess 'of the feminine qualities only the genital organs; thought, sentiment, action even external appearance are those of the man'.[31] Havelock Ellis in his 1895 book *Sexual Inversion in Women* simplifies Krafft-Ebing's categorisation but still maintains that the female invert feels more comfortable in men's clothing.[32] Even twenty-five years later, in 1920, Freud describes in his essay 'The

[29] Garber, p. 9.
[30] Esther Newton, 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman', *Signs* 9:4, The Lesbian Issue (Summer 1984), p. 568.
[31] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998), p. 264.
[32] Havelock Ellis, 'Sexual Inversion in Women', *Alienist and Neurologist* 16 (1895), pp. 141-58.

Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' how 'the homosexual clearly has to identify with the opposite sex in order to be one'.[33] With this Freud continued to affirm the belief that a lesbian recognises herself in the opposite sex and thereby chooses to dress as a man. The connections between female homosexuality, an identification with masculine attributes and a desire to wear men's clothing were something which endured nearly half a century and were explored by women writers in the 1920s. Therefore, I argue that as well as illustrating a mixed gender identity in Raoul, Mansfield also hints at a dual sexuality.

Although sexologists specifically mentioned clothing in relation to lesbianism, Laura Doan argues that lesbianism and cross-dressing were not linked in the general public's mind until towards the end of the 1920's with the banning of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and the ensuing court case and media coverage.[34] Hall's novel depicts the life of Stephen Gordon, a woman with masculine attributes and same-sex desires, who dresses in tailored suits and male fashions and wears her hair short. Doan explains '[i]n a culture where cross-dressing was not the exception but the norm, these women would have been positioned by observers at different points along a wide spectrum of female masculinity'.[35] Given the 'La Garçonne' fashion of the time it is not surprising that the general public did not immediately make a connection between women wearing masculine dress and sexual identity. Doan's study is restricted to British popular daily newspapers and she does not specifically discuss the small group of high class elite and bohemian women who did cross-dress not simply to experiment with dress but to make a statement regarding their sexuality. These women were more likely to have lived in a culturally more open-minded city such as Paris. Falling into this category were, amongst others, Radclyffe Hall and

[33] Tracy Hargreaves, *Androgyny in Modern Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2004), p. 85.
[34] Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism. The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 95.
[35] Laura Doan, 'Passing Fashions: Reading Masculinities in the 1920s' *Feminist Studies* 24:3 (Fall 1998), p. 667.

her partner Una Troubridge, known for their masculine styled clothing, and Vita Sackville-West and Romaine Brooks, an American painter living in Paris at the time.[36]

I argue Mansfield was aware of the connection between cross-dressing and the performance of sexuality, in particular same-sex desire, and I believe she explored this idea in several of her short stories which make up the collection *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920). This collection includes 'JNPPF' but similar themes can be detected in 'Bliss', 'Pictures', and 'Psychology'. I have discussed how Raoul's dual gendered selves are identified in the café mirror and now turn to Mansfield's use of mirrors to identify sexuality. Alexandra Deluise discusses Mansfield's use of mirrors in 'Bliss' and she believes that 'mirrors are used in these texts to help the characters confront their sexuality by showing them images that represent their unspoken feelings'.[37] Therefore, when Raoul sees himself in the café mirror and recognises his masculine self, his cross-dressed persona, then there is the implication that Raoul also acknowledges his sexuality.

DeLuise argues that in 'Bliss' Bertha is a woman who is 'suspiciously happy while preparing for a dinner party' (p. 30). Bertha has met Pearl at a club, spent time with her and now invited her to dinner that evening with friends. Mansfield writes that 'Bertha had fallen in love with her, as she always did fall in love with beautiful women who had something strange about them' (p. 72). This can be read as an admiration or friendship between Bertha and Pearl but Mansfield hints at a more complicated relationship at least from Bertha's point of view. While preparing the dinner table Bertha looks in the mirror and sees

[36] Katrina Rolley, 'The Dress of Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge', *Feminist Review* 35 (Summer 1990), pp. 54-66.
[37] Alexandra DeLuise, 'Panes of Glass: windows and mirrors in *Between the Acts* and 'Bliss', *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 89:89 (March 2016), p. 29.

> a woman, radiant, with smiling, trembling lips, with big, dark eyes and an air of listening, waiting for something … divine to happen … that she knew must happen … infallibly (pp. 69-70).

I argue Bertha appears to herself in the mirror as a woman in love; her 'trembling lips' represent her arousal and excitement and her 'dark eyes' may well be due to the dilation of her pupils, something which happens beyond our control on attraction to another. Furthermore, Mansfield's use of ellipses suggest something unsaid, an inner thought and desire of Bertha's which she identifies within herself on looking upon her reflection. Bertha is unable to control her emotions and excitement and surprises herself by 'suddenly hugging [the cushion] to her, passionately, passionately. But it did not put out the fire in her bosom' (p. 72). Mansfield's use of 'passionately' and description of the 'fire' inside Bertha implies a sexual excitement and this is in anticipation of the evening and Pearl's arrival. Mansfield also describes Bertha as 'radiant' an adjective which she uses twice to describe Raoul. On the first evening in his 'bachelor flat' Raoul is 'standing in front of the glass with my hands in my pockets and saying to that radiant vision' (p. 49). Firstly, a 'vision' implies that what Raoul sees is not necessarily real and secondly, 'radiant' implies a link with homosexuality. This link exists because Mansfield describes her female characters who have same-sex desires as 'radiant'. Raoul is radiant in his flat and on the metro and Bertha is radiant in front of her mirror.

When Pearl arrives at Bertha's dinner party she is dressed 'all in silver, with a silver fillet binding her pale blond hair' (p. 75). With this costume DeLuise compares Pearl to the moon and since Bertha sees the 'lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life' Deluise argues that the time they spend together looking at the garden 'is heavy

with imagery representing suppressed desire and lesbian attraction' (pp. 73 and 30). The passage in question is:

> [a]nd the two women stood side by side looking at the slender, flowering tree. Although it was so still it seemed, like the flame of a candle, to stretch up, to point, to quiver in the bright air, to grow taller and taller as they gazed – almost to touch the rim of the round, silver moon (p. 77).

Deluise believes that Bertha is symbolised by the phallic pear tree reaching for Pearl, the moon, which she cannot penetrate and she connects Pearl with the moon because of the silver colour of her clothing; however, she does not comment on the fillet which Pearl wears on her head. A fillet is a style of headband made of a narrow strip of cloth worn across the forehead and round the back of the head. It was worn in classical antiquity and it is a style which was fashionable in the 1920s.[38] Due to this vogue for fillet headbands it is not unusual for Pearl to be wearing one but due to its historical origins it does have a secondary interpretation. The fillet suggests a reference to Ancient Greece and Sappho, a Greek poet whose poetry has been interpreted as celebrating female same-sex relationships. I believe this interpretation of Pearl's fillet, which Mansfield could have described simply as a headband, strengthens the argument of Bertha's attraction to her, albeit unrequited.

The connection between mirrors and the self-recognition of sexuality in 'JNPPF' and 'Bliss' is explored further by Mansfield in her short story 'Pictures' and extended to include blue clothing. In 'Pictures' an out-of-work actress, after arguing with her landlady about overdue rent, is upset and looks in the mirror getting ready to go out:

[38] Jayne Shrimpton, *Fashion in the 1920s* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2013), p. 42.

> ‘Well, old girl,’ she murmured, ‘you’re up against it this time, and no mistake.’ But the person in the glass made an ugly face at her. […]
>
> Ten minutes later, a stout lady in blue serge, with a bunch of artificial ‘parmas’ at her bosom, a black hat covered with purple pansies, white gloves, boots with white uppers, and a vanity bag containing one and three, sang in a low contralto voice […] But the person in the glass made a face at her, and Miss Moss went out (p. 94).

Once again Mansfield separates the image in the mirror from the person who is looking into the mirror to the extent that Miss Moss’s reflection appears to dislike Miss Moss looking in the mirror. Mansfield creates the impression of an alternate self which is displaying and revealing her ‘submerged’ emotions. Furthermore, Mansfield’s description of Miss Moss is consistent with common stereotypes of lesbians as having masculine attributes and wearing masculine clothing.

Miss Moss is a contralto singer, they have the lowest range of female singing voice and are considered so low that they can be mistaken for men. In ‘Pictures’ Mansfield states that Miss Moss has a ‘low contralto voice’ giving her a very strong masculine attribute. This masculinity is reflected in her mirror self which sneers at her tears. Miss Moss’s ‘submerged’ masculinity is also implied by the blue serge clothing she wears. Serge is a hard wearing, cotton fabric which was used for making suits and military uniforms, indicating a certain masculinity to Miss Moss, but Mansfield still describes her as a ‘lady’, as having a bosom, a hat with flowers and a vanity bag. Miss Moss’s appearance is clearly that of a woman but her masculine tendencies hint at her potential homosexuality.

Jean Rhys in her short story ‘Illusion’ (1927) creates a very similarly dressed protagonist. Miss Bruce is an English woman of independent means living in Paris as an

artist and like Miss Moss she wears 'a neat serge dress in the summer and a neat tweed costume in the winter, brown shoes with low heels and cotton stockings' (p. 5). The serge of her dress again suggests a masculine style to her clothing and the description of Miss Bruce's clothing as 'neat' indicates a lack of frivolity and adornment in her dress uncharacteristic of a woman's dress. Furthermore, Miss Bruce eschews the classic feminine high heel and silk stockings. Overall, even though she is not cross-dressing her general appearance implies a more practical, masculine style of attire and hints at her homosexuality. Which is affirmed by Rhys's description of Miss Bruce as 'gentlemanly' (p. 6). Radclyffe Hall also dresses her protagonist, Stephen Gordon in a 'neat blue serge' outfit. In 1927 a Burton Menswear firm publication called 'Scientific Selling' recommended '[f]or the 'smart young man' a 'fancy worsted or blue serge suit', and Mansfield in her short story 'At the Bay' (1922) dresses her male character, Stanley, in 'a blue serge suit' to go to town for the day (p. 169).[39] Clearly, in each of these examples, Miss Moss, Miss Bruce, Stephen Gordon and Raoul have all chosen a masculine style and colour of dress which does not identify them with conventional tropes of femininity and alludes to their homosexuality.

If 'androgynous' blue is mixed with the feminine and sexually-charged red the resulting colour is violet. Mansfield uses the symbolism of violets to identify lesbian/ Sapphic love in her writing. Sappho was a Greek poet (c. 630- c. 570) who lived on the island of Lesbos. Her poetry depicts lesbian love and as such her name came to describe female same-sex love and her place of birth gave a name for these lovers. Sappho's poetry contains many references to flowers including several references to violets and purple flowers. In particular, she describes herself and a lover as wearing garlands of violets. It is believed these references are the origins behind the associations between the colours purple and lavender

[39] Katrina Honeyman, 'Style Monotony and the Business of Fashion: The Marketing of Menswear in Inter-war England', *Textile History* 34:2 (2003), p. 180.

and the gay community. The German cabaret song 'Das Lila Lied' (the purple/lavender song) (1920) by Kurt Schwabadh and Mischa Spoliansky is generally regarded as the first gay anthem in the 1920s and although it was initially aimed at gay men, the colour purple became a symbol for the whole of the gay community. Mansfield writes of violets to represent lesbian love and in 1926, in New York, the play *The Captive* received negative press and calls for it to be censored because of its references to 'Sapphism' when one female character sends bunches of violets to another female character.[40] In contrast, when the play showed in Paris, audiences were more liberal and some women wore violets on their clothes as a show of support.

Raoul encounters violets on the metro. He is on the train when he bumps into a woman wearing them:

> 'Ah! pardon, Monsieur!' said the tall charming creature in black with a big full bosom and a great bunch of violets dropping from it. As the train swayed it thrust the bouquet right into my eyes. 'Ah! pardon, Monsieur!'
>
> But I looked up at her, smiling mischievously.
>
> 'There is nothing I love more, Madame, than flowers on a balcony'(p. 57).

Raoul is addressed as Monsieur, he is dressed as a man and the 'tall charming creature' he bumps into is a woman, with a 'big full bosom'. This bosom is thrust into Raoul's face and he suggestively shows delight at this through his mischievous smile and innuendo. He says he

[40] Sherrie A. Innes, 'Who's Afraid of Stephen Gordon?: The Lesbian in the United States Popular Imagination of the 1920s', *NWSA Journal* 4:3 (Autumn 1992), p. 313.

enjoys having her bosom in his face which he describes as ‘flowers on a balcony’. Her protruding chest is the balcony and the flowers are the violets she has placed there. The violets symbolise lesbianism and if Raoul is read as a cross-dressing woman then Raoul’s bisexuality is suggested.

Mansfield symbolises same-sex desire with violets several times in her ‘Bliss’ short stories. As previously mentioned Miss Moss in ‘Pictures’ wears ‘parmas’, a type of Italian violet, in her cleavage and in ‘Psychology’ the female protagonist has a visitor, ‘an elderly virgin, a pathetic creature who simply idolised her’ who gives her violets on a regular basis (p. 90). The woman’s affection for the protagonist and desire is reflected when she is

> enfolded – more tenderly, more beautifully embraced, held by such a sweet pressure and for so long that the poor dear’s mind positively reeled and she just had the strength to quaver: ‘Then you really don’t mind me too much?’ (p. 90).

Although the old woman’s desire is likely to be unrequited as she is described as a ‘virgin’ and as ‘pathetic’ and a ‘poor dear’, the pleasure she gets from the hug is evident from Mansfield’s description of it as an embrace and ‘sweet’, and her quavering as if she is shaking or trembling with emotion. In addition, the violets encourage this as a reading of lesbian desire and not simply that of a female friendship.

Similarly to brown, blue became a colour of uniformity at the end of World War I in Europe. Mansfield and Rhys question the performance of gender through clothing due to this uniform culture at the time and experiment with the ability of blue clothing to blur gender boundaries. A deeper understanding of modernist writers’ exploration of androgyny through the colour blue is achieved by interrogating the garments which they coloured blue. Sheehan considers the fashion for oriental clothing at the time and surmises that

> [s]ince clothing has such a close relationship to the wearer's body – and is primary technology of identity projection – putting on an orientalist garment involved some degree not only of cultural appropriation but of *incorporation* of the other as part of the self.[41]

A blue kimono therefore, considers the blurring of gender boundaries and an amalgamation of male and female sides of the self through not only its colour but also the fashionable style of the garment. These layers of interpretation are an important part of modernism's development of new meaning in contemporary culture and deliberate blurring of traditional cultural boundaries. Additionally, Mansfield and Rhys's blurring of gender boundaries through blue clothing allows them to then question a related performance of sexuality and explore non-heteronormative sexuality in line with contemporary new-found sexual freedoms. The next chapter further investigates how green clothing came to represent a more fluid and subversive sexuality.

[41] Sheehan, pp. 100-101.

Chapter 5: Green

Virginia Woolf wrote in *Orlando* (1928) that '[g]reen in nature is one thing, green in literature another'.[1] In nature green is the predominant colour associated with the natural world; plants, trees, the countryside and the great outdoors. After World War I the importance of nature and green outdoor spaces was recognised for not simply aesthetic purposes but also for both physical and psychological health. Michel Pastoureau explains that

> [t]he English example was soon imitated throughout Europe: protecting existing green spaces; safeguarding and renovating historical gardens; creating many small public gardens and squares; the appearance of 'green belts' separating big cities from their suburbs and 'green links' connecting the town to the surrounding countryside; the birth of the 'garden city' that sought to integrate green landscapes into residential, commercial, and industrial zones.[2]

This desire to create and retain green spaces and cultivate nature in the city initially appears to contradict modernism's preoccupation with the metropolis and architecture. In reality, Jeffrey McCarthy explains that after World War I '[d]ynamic social movements sprang up across England' such as 'the Committee for the Preservation of Rural England' and this reflected the current 'powerful rural enthusiasm that modelled a green alternative to mechanized postwar England'.[3] In such a culture it is unsurprising that modernist writers in conjunction with their depiction of the modern city engaged with what nature might be in these modern technological times. They examined identity through nature or explored the

[1] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 5.
[2] Michel Pastoureau, *Green. The History of a Colour* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 209.
[3] Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy, *Green Modernism. Nature and the English Novel, 1900 to 1930* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), pp. 6-7.

physical reality of nature in their writing, and to do so they embraced the colour green in their work. Green as a natural and healthy colour was a far cry from its previous poisonous connotations and as an indicator of bad luck. Green had in fact been poisonous during the nineteenth century when new copper arsenite pigments were used to create vibrant green colouring in wallpaper and clothing.[4] Alison Matthews David describes numerous records of poisoning and ill-health due to exposure to arsenic pigments, and the ensuing association of bad luck which green held. Even the fashion designer Coco Chanel was reputed to shun green superstitiously in her couture collections.[5] Poisonous green was not only evident in dye-stuffs but was also the colour of the highly addictive and health destroying alcoholic drink absinthe. This was a drink which James Joyce, whose alcoholism is well-documented, was persuaded to stop drinking by his wife Nora in 1919, and which was banned in France in August 1914 at the outbreak of World War I.[6] Additionally, the colour's connections to decadence, Oscar Wilde, his green carnation and homosexuality all furthered its association with subversive sexuality. Beckson tells the story that at the premiere of *Lady Windermere's Fan* in 1892 at St James's theatre in London, Wilde not only wore a green carnation but asked his actors to wear one too.[7] Whether this ever happened is disputed by Beckson but the iconic image of the green carnation survives. Furthermore, in *Orlando,* Woolf dresses Sasha, a Russian princess, in green fur when she meets Orlando and skates with him on the frozen lake. At first Orlando is not sure whether Sasha is a man or woman and he is later to be heartbroken by her running away with another man. By dressing Sasha in this green fur Woolf encourages an interpretation of Sasha's dress which hints at her subversive and deceptive nature as there are

[4] Clair, p. 212.
[5] Alison Matthews David, *Fashion Victims* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2017), p. 76.
[6]Austin Briggs, 'Joyce's Drinking', *James Joyce Quarterly* 50:1/2 (Fall 2012-Winter 2013), p. 454; St Clair, p. 219.
[7] Karl Beckson, 'Oscar Wilde and the Green Carnation', *English Literature in Translation, 1880 -1920* 43:4 (2000), pp. 387–397.

no mammals in the natural world which have green fur.[8] A similarly destructive love exists between Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Gatsby's desire for Daisy is represented by 'the green light at the end of Daisy's dock' at which Gatsby stares and dreams of what might be.[9] Unfortunately, the result of loving Daisy is that Gatsby loses his life.

This chapter considers three green costumes in modernist literature which evoke nature and the natural and support the superficial impression of the wearer's idyllic, happy marriage and life in accordance with the wholesome and positive connotations of green and natural spaces after World War 1. However, green's contrasting lingering sexually subversive associations indicate that surface appearances are not necessarily accurate and in turn this suggests a further aspect to their relationships. The outfits I consider are Bertha's pear tree inspired outfit from Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss' (1920), Mrs Dalloway's silver-green dress in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), and Clare's spring green, floral chiffon dress from Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929).

Bertha

In Chapter Two I examined Mrs Norman Knight's outfit in 'Bliss', in the previous Chapter I considered Pearl's outfit and now I wish to turn to the ensemble of Bertha, the main protagonist. Mansfield describes Bertha as wearing '[a] white dress, a string of jade beads, green shoes and stockings' (p. 73). Bertha's outfit mirrors the natural items surrounding her, in particular, the pear tree which she gazes at in the garden through the window, which in blossom would be laden with white petals over its green leaves, trunk and branches. Additionally, the 'jade-green sky' she views the tree against is replicated in her jade beads (p.

[8] Anonymous, 'Why are there no green mammals?', *New Scientist,* Issue 3337 (5 June 2021). [Online] Available at: https://www.newscientist.com/lastword/mg25033370-800-why-are-there-no-green-mammals/. [Accessed: 16 September 2021].
[9] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (London: Reed Consumer Books Ltd., 1994), p. 156.

72). This mirroring is reinforced by Mansfield writing that Bertha 'seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life' (p. 73). By describing the tree as a 'symbol' of Bertha's life it is not simply that Bertha looks like the tree but also that the qualities of the tree are significant in the interpretation of her character. I will consider these qualities in detail later but first I wish to examine the colours of Bertha's costume.

Mansfield, with Bertha's green and white costume, brings nature into the domestic environment not only with Bertha's mirroring of the pear tree but also with her mirroring of the 'white grapes covered with a silver bloom' on the dining room table and the jonquils in the same room (pp. 70 and 73). White grapes are in fact green in colour as well as white in name and jonquils, part of the narcissus family of flowers, have white petals with green stalks and leaves. Bertha resembles these elements of nature to such an extent that she becomes part flower when welcoming her dinner guests; as '[h]er petals rustled softly into the hall' it is her clothing that facilitates this transformation and the rustling is indicative of her dress fabric moving (p. 73). White traditionally represents purity and innocence, in particular sexual innocence, as can be seen with its links to children and virginity.[10] Green, in contrast, as previously discussed, accrued in the latter half of the nineteenth century and at the start of the twentieth century associations of bad luck, poison and homosexuality. Bertha, therefore, wears two colours which carry opposing associations; one of sexual purity and the other of sexual decadence or subversion. I argue Mansfield uses this duality of nature to explore Bertha's bisexual desires. Although the term bisexual was not widely used until the 1960s, Helt, discussing Woolf's work, believes she 'most often frames same-sex desire and sexuality as common, ordinary, harmonious with women's desire for and sexual relations with men,

[10] St Clair, p. 41.

and even useful in achieving marital bliss'.[11] In other words, for Woolf, it is a natural state of being and I believe Mansfield also frames same-sex desire in this way in her writing; in particular in her short story 'Bliss' she uses the colour green to indicate bisexual desire.

Bertha's costume includes green shoes and stockings. Mansfield was not the only modernist writer to dress her protagonist in green stockings. D. H. Lawrence in *Women in Love* (1920) dresses his female protagonist, Gudrun Brangwen, in 'emerald-green stockings' a colour which at the time was controversial and as Garrity explains 'contrary to English conventions of good taste' (p. 8).[12] Garrity believes Lawrence's use of green shows that

> female nonconformity is noticeably staged through dress, and the most salient example of this is the outrageously 'fashionable and individual' style of Gundrun Brangwen. Her imaginative attire – particularly the startling color of her stockings – is indelibly linked to her resistance to prescribed gender roles and heterosexual norms.[13]

She supports this statement through the connotations of green at the time and emphasises this with an anecdote from Spalding's biography of the painter and designer Duncan Grant. Spalding writes that a worker from the Omega workshops in 1924 attempted to purchase emerald-green silk at Liberty's department store only to be told 'Emerald, Madam, is a colour we *never* stock'.[14] Although, the subdued pastels of Edwardian fashion were being replaced

---

[11] Brenda S. Helt, 'Passionate Debates on "Odious Subjects": Bisexuality and Woolf's Opposition to Theories of Androgyny and Sexual Identity', *Twentieth-Century Literature* 56:2 (Spring 2010), p.132.
[12] Garrity, p. 269.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Frances Spalding, *Duncan Grant: A Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 137.
Roger Fry started the Omega Workshops Ltd. in July 1913 at 33 Fitzroy Square in Bloomsbury. Here artists such as Vanessa Bell (Virginia Woolf's sister) and Duncan Grant designed and sold home furnishings and accessories. Anonymous, 'The Story of Omega Workshops', *The Tate.* [Online] Available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/o/omega-workshops/story-omega-workshops . [Accessed: 14 January 2022].

with bolder, brighter colours, such a bright green was still regarded as shocking and therefore, Bertha's outfit, albeit fashionable, is just as shocking and subversive as Mrs Norman Knight's yellow banana dress, and carries erotic associations.[15] Giorcelli discusses the erotic symbolism of stockings due to them being worn close to the body, being an item of underwear and drawing the eye upwards on the leg towards the genitals and explains that they have become 'objects of fetishism as Alfred Binet, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Sigmund Freud have demonstrated'.[16] Therefore, by colouring an already sexualised item of clothing green Mansfield further encourages the interpretation of Bertha's costume in light of her sexuality.

Mansfield's mirroring of Bertha with the natural elements both outside and inside the room suggest Bertha's bisexuality and this sexuality may not be immediately obvious in the idyllic family life that Mansfield creates on a surface level. Mansfield describes Bertha's bliss, her perfect life:

> Really - really - she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. They didn't have to worry about money. They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden. And friends […] just the kind of friends they wanted (p. 73).

There are several indications that this perfect marriage is not as it initially appears to be. Bertha's 'absolutely satisfactory house' is repeatedly described as 'chilly' and 'cold' (pp. 69-70); a hint about how she feels with regards to her marriage, representing her lack of sexual

[15] Batterberry, p. 272; Garrity, p. 269.
[16] Cristina Giorcelli, 'Sheer Luxury. Kate Chopin's "A Pair of Silk Stockings"', in *Exchanging Clothes. Habits of Being II,* ed. by Cristina Giorcelli and Paula Rabinowitz (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2012), p. 80.

interest in her husband. At dinner Harry, her husband, glories in his 'shameless passion for the white flesh of the lobster' and 'the green of pistachio ices – green and cold like the eyelids of Egyptian dancers' (p. 76). Once again Bertha's appearance is mirrored in the colours of the food and with the 'white flesh of the lobster' Mansfield suggests that Harry desires her body even though she is also cold to him. The green eyelids not only suggest an exotic nature to Bertha, potentially sexual, but also her coldness. With eyes considered as the mirrors of the soul, Bertha's inner feelings towards Harry are not the warm passionate feelings she experiences earlier when thinking of her upcoming dinner party and Pearl. Furthermore, when Bertha imagines herself and Harry in bed that evening 'something strange and almost terrifying darted into Bertha's mind […] Soon these people will go. […] And you and he will be alone together in the dark room – the warm bed …' (p. 78). Mansfield uses ellipses to imply sexual intercourse that may take place in their bed, something unsaid and undesirable to Bertha. Bertha also admits that '[i]t had worried her dreadfully at first to find that she was so cold' (p. 78). This is in relation to her sex life with Harry and is mirrored by the coldness of the marital home. However, Bertha's coldness and lack of desire for her husband, is contrasted by her desire for him at the end of the evening, by her description of the bed as 'warm', and it must not be forgotten that she has had a child with him.

> For the first time in her life Bertha Young desired her husband. Oh, she'd loved him – she's been in love with him, of course, in every other way, but just not that way. And, equally, of course, she'd understood that he was different. They'd discussed it so often […] They were so frank with each other - such good pals. That was the best of being modern (pp. 78-79).

With this Mansfield hints at Bertha's bisexuality as well as the possibility that Harry is bisexual too. Mansfield's repetition of 'of course' suggests a need to affirm the statement it follows; a need for Bertha to reassure herself. Mansfield describes Harry as 'different' given this is just after Bertha's thoughts of sexual desire for Harry it implies that his sexual desires are different to the acceptable societal norms or simply different to Bertha's. There existed several relationships within the Bloomsbury group and their close friends which can be regarded as bohemian and different from the norm at the time.[17] For example, Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's marriage is well-documented as one in which both partners enjoyed extra-marital same-sex relationships; Dora Carrington, an artist associated with the Bloomsbury group, lived for most of her life with her homosexual partner Lytton Strachey; and Virginia Woolf who is described as cold in her relationship with Leonard had a famous same-sex relationship with Vita Sackville-West.[18] Given the more liberal relationships of those in the social groups which Mansfield was part of, it is not unfeasible that her depiction of Bertha and Harry's marriage is a harmonious one.

It is not simply that Bertha mirrors the colours of nature but that the tree, fruit and flowers she mirrors also reflect her sexuality, in particular, her bisexuality. Firstly, she is mirrored with the pear tree and regards it as a 'symbol of her own life' and here Mansfield plays with the homophone pear/pair to encourage a reading of duality and also a coupling (p. 73). Helen Nebeker explains that pear trees are by nature bisexual, their '"perfect flowers" contain both male and female organs of propagation (that is the sense of "perfect" botanically)'.[19] It is these perfect and completely natural flowers that Bertha is compared with as 'she seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as

[17] Virginia Nicholson, *Among the Bohemians* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 31-66.
[18] Nigel Nicolson, *Portrait of a Marriage* (London: Orion Books Ltd., 2004); David Garnett, *Carrington. Letters and Extracts from her Diaries* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 11-12; Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), pp. 484-511.
[19] Helen E. Nebeker, 'The Pear Tree: Sexual Implications in Katherine Mansfield's "Bliss"', *Modern Fiction Studies* 18:4 (Winter 1972), p. 546.

a symbol of her own life' (p. 73). Furthermore, the shape of the botanical items which Bertha is mirrored with is important and these shapes also imply bisexuality. A pear has a feminine, rounded, womb-like shape in contrast to the elongated phallic length of the tree. When Bertha and Pearl stand looking out the window at the garden after dinner the tree is described as 'like the flame of a candle, to stretch up, to point, to quiver in the bright air, to grow taller and taller as they gazed – almost to touch the rim of the round, silver moon' (p. 77). The tree stands erect with its phallic imagery and combined with its fruit, the pear, hints at bisexuality. This fruit is on the table in the house and represents Bertha's traditional domestic relationship with Harry. Whereas, the tree is in the garden, natural and wild, reaching for the silver moon, which represents Pearl and Bertha's affections for her. Pearl is further evident in the grapes which are displayed on the table as they are covered with a silver bloom. Bertha's colours mirror those of the grapes and as grapevines are hermaphroditic, in that they possess both male and female reproductive parts, her bisexuality is hinted at again and the two women are brought together in the imagery of the grapes. Mansfield also reinforces Bertha's same-sex desires and her mirroring with the jonquils. Jonquils are a type of daffodil and part of the narcissus species of flower thereby associating Bertha with the Greek myth of Narcissus. Narcissus was a young man punished by the gods to fall in love with his reflection and subsequently die because he cannot relinquish his reflection in the water. In effect, Bertha desires a mirror image of herself as Pearl is a woman and Pearl's association with the moon, which reflects light as does a mirror, reinforces this mirroring effect. On a further level jonquils represent domestic bliss in the language of flowers illustrating the duality of Bertha's relationship and sexuality.[20]

[20] Katy Kelleher, 'Jonquil, the Light Yellow of Early Flowers, Mad Painters, and Dust Bowl-Era Pottery', *The Paris Review* (4 April 2018). [Online] Available at: https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/04/04/jonquil-the-light-yellow-of-early-flowers-mad-painters-and-dust-bowl-era-pottery. [Accessed: 7 February 2022].

Mansfield dresses Bertha in green, primarily the colour of the natural world, to illustrate the 'Bliss' in her life, including her marriage. However, due to the subversive nature of the colour green and Mansfield's careful choice of the elements of the natural world which Bertha mirrors, her bisexuality and dual life are suggested. When dressing her characters in green, Virginia Woolf considers not only the positive natural connotations of the colour and bisexuality but expands this to demonstrate a much more fluid representation of sexuality.

Mrs Dalloway

Virginia Woolf dresses three of her characters in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) in green. First is Miss Isabel Pole, Septimus's English teacher, his inspiration, who he falls in love with, and sees 'walking in a green dress in a square' (p. 84). Second is Doris Kilman, Elizabeth's governess, who is 'dressed in a green mackintosh coat. Year in year out' and finally, Mrs Dalloway herself wears a 'silver-green mermaid's dress' to her party (pp. 11 and 171). In green Miss Pole represents nature and all its positive connotations. She provides the seed for Septimus's imagination to flourish and the catalyst for his creativity in writing. Woolf describes this process with language which is reminiscent of the growth of a plant:

> 'It has flowered', the gardener might have said, had he opened the door; had he come in, that is to say, any night about this time, and found him writing; found him tearing up his writing; found him finishing a masterpiece (p. 84).

Given Septimus's admiration of Miss Pole it is not simply his creativity which has 'flowered' but also his love for her. Dressed in green and depicted walking outside in a London square, which often contain gardens, she represents what he loves and goes to war for:

> Septimus was one of the first to volunteer. He went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square (p. 85).

Miss Pole represents England and a certain national pride which was encouraged at the start of World War 1. Woolf was not alone in associating green nature with national identity during this period. In 1916 the preface of William Blake's poem 'Milton' (1808) was set to music by Charles Hubert Parry and became the hymn 'Jerusalem':

> And did those feet in ancient time
> Walk upon England's mountains green
> And was the holy Lamb of God
> On England's pleasant pastures seen![21]

'Jerusalem' was written by Parry for the 'Fight for Right' movement which was 'formed to sustain the resolve of Britain during World War 1'.[22] Although, Miss Pole's dress likens her to something natural, beautiful, alive and worth fighting for, England's green and pleasant land, the subversive nature of green is also represented in this love which is destructive. Septimus is to go to war and return with shell-shock which in turn results in his suicide, a scenario which is hinted at by Woolf when she describes Miss Pole as reflecting 'how she might give him a taste of *Anthony and Cleopatra'* (p. 84). Woolf draws parallels between

[21] Anonymous, 'William Blake's *Milton', British Library*. [Online] Available at: https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/william-blakes-milton . [Accessed: 21 January 2022].
[22] Jeremy Dibble, 'Jerusalem: a history of England's hymn', *The Conversation* (March 2016). [Online] Available at: https://theconversation.com/jerusalem-a-history-of-englands-hymn-55668 . [Accessed: 21 January 2022].

Septimus and Anthony, who goes to war for Cleopatra then on his return kills himself believing that she is already dead.

Woolf continues these links to war with Miss Kilman's green mackintosh. Celia Marshik explains that '[t]he association between mackintoshes and war was cemented when they were tailored and marketed for use at the front during WWI'.[23]Additionally, Marshik describes the mackintosh as an item of clothing which was associated with poverty, practicality and uniformity. However, there was a shift in the 1920s from these previous associations to 'the mackintosh of the 1920s [being] cast as a fashionable object'.[24] She quotes from the *Sunday Graphic's* 'Vogues and Vanities' column in 1929 which says:

> those of us who can remember the days when a waterproof was the last word in dowdiness were forced to 'sit up and take notice' last week. On Wednesday it rained relentlessly on the Goodwood racing crowd. But […] society merely slipped on its newest mackintosh of rubberized velvet or silk in a gay plaid design, or a satin coat made rainproof by some secret process.[25]

Miss Kilman, however, does not wear a fashionable mackintosh, she wears 'a green mackintosh' and as she shops at the Army and Navy Stores it is possible that she has bought it there, reaffirming her mackintosh's military links. Her mackintosh retains the more traditional associations of the garment at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the start of the twentieth century the mackintosh was mass-produced; it was a practical, un-shapely, apparently smelly garment. Due to its mass-production it was regarded as cheap and less desirable by fashionable women. The mackintosh's desirability was not improved by its

[23] Celia Marshik, 'The Modern(ist) Mackintosh, *Modernism/Modernity* 19:1 (January 2012), p. 51.
[24] Ibid, p. 62.
[25] Ibid.

primary wearers being soldiers in the British Army, sportsmen and the working class; in particular those in household service.[26] In addition to the mackintosh demonstrating her poverty, as a masculine, military garment it enables Woolf to indicate Miss Kilman's lack of femininity and hints further at Miss Kilman's sexuality, especially as Woolf colours it green. Miss Kilman's lack of femininity is evidenced by her 'not, after all, dress[ing] to please', she is 'clumsy', Clarissa describes her as '[h]eavy, ugly, commonplace, without kindness or grace' and as a 'prehistoric monster armoured for primeval warfare' (p. 121-124). This is in contrast to the feminine Clarissa and 'her small pink face, her delicate body, her air of freshness and fashion' (p. 123). This trope of a masculine woman being gay is affirmed by Gay Wachman who identifies Miss Kilman as a lesbian and refers to her desire for Elizabeth when Miss Kilman thinks '[i]f she could grasp her, if she could clasp her, if she could make her hers absolutely and for ever' (p. 130).[27] Again green clothing is worn by one whose love could be regarded as subversive at the time and whose sexuality is outside the heteronormative. A contemporary 1920s societal viewpoint of homosexuality is mentioned when Clarissa Dalloway thinks of her attraction to other women '[s]he resented it, had a scruple picked up Heaven knows where, or, as she felt, sent by Nature (who is invariably wise)' (p. 30). With this Woolf presents the generally accepted viewpoint and legal framework of the time that regarded homosexuality as unnatural and subversive.

Virginia Woolf brings the natural world into her novel *Mrs Dalloway* with her descriptions of London and the Dalloway's home and with her dressing of Clarissa who wears a 'silver-green mermaid's dress' to her party (p. 171). Where Mansfield brings the garden and nature into a domestic setting, Woolf brings the marine world into Clarissa's life, home and the city. Clarissa walks through London with the peals of Big Ben dissolving like

[26] Ibid.
[27] Gay Wachman, 'Pink Icing and a Narrow Bed: Mrs Dalloway and Lesbian History', *Virginia Woolf and the Arts: Selected Papers from the Sixth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf,* ed. by Diane F. Gillespie and Leslie K. Hankins (New York: Pace University Press, 1997), pp. 344-350.

'leaden circles' in the air, just like the ripples on water when a stone is thrown in (p. 4); the Prime Minister's car leaves 'a slight ripple which flowed through' the shops (p. 17); and when Clarissa and Peter are in the same room together there is the 'brisk sea-salted air of their intimacy' with a 'crystal dolphin' in the background (pp. 45 and 37). Furthermore, at her party, the pinnacle of the day, Clarissa is described as having the 'air of a creature floating in its element' (p. 171). It is her dress which affirms her as a hybrid between human and fish, land and sea and which puts her completely at ease in the watery consciousness that Woolf creates for her. However, there is a further interpretation of Clarissa's dress, it suggests a more subversive aspect of her sexuality which is in contrast to the perfect wife and hostess that she is perceived as on a surface level.

Clarissa's dress creates the surface impression of a wealthy, fashionable, society wife. It is tried and tested and has been worn at 'the Embassy party', and it is one which could be worn 'at Hatfield; at Buckingham Palace. She had worn [it] at Hatfield; at Buckingham Palace' (pp. 36 and 39). It is appropriate for the upper middle-class society woman that she is and it displays not only her and her husband's social standing and wealth, but also her fashionable status. Since the dress is made by a dressmaker Clarissa's wealth can be assumed and as Clarissa takes 'her silks, her scissors, […] her thimble' (p. 37) and repairs her dress with 'her needle, drawing the silk smoothly' (p. 39) it can be assumed that her dress is also made of silk, a fabric which denotes luxury and wealth.

Furthermore, in 1925 *Vogue* reported the fashionable colour this Autumn was 'grey-green' and that '[a]lmost any woman can wear green […] and nothing this year will be smarter'.[28] Although this quote is taken from the American edition of *Vogue* its fashion advice would have been highly indicative of UK trends. Alice Wood explains that

[28] Anonymous, *Vogue Fashion Bi Monthly* (November 1925), p. 13.

> the British edition of *Vogue* (Conde Nast, 1916-, 1s) provided high fashion and society news twice a month for wealthy leisured women and middle-class women aspiring to elite style in the interwar period. *Vogue*'s international outlook (with fashion pages transplanted from the US edition) […] made the magazine Britain's premier fashion periodical.[29]

At this time Edna Woolman Chase, whilst based in New York, was editor-in-chief of all three international editions of *Vogue*, the British, French and American editions, with the French and British editions edited in the Paris and London offices.[30] St Clair explains that a shade of green called glaucous 'was the darling of the Art Deco movement' and it can be described as a pale green/grey colour, reminiscent of the colour of Clarissa's dress.[31] The etymological origins of glaucous can be traced back to Greek myth with the Greek god, Glaucus, who had a merman tail and was the god of fishermen and sailors, and the ancient Greek *glaukos*, meaning 'gleaming' was used by Homer to describe water and eyes.[32] This translation of *glaukos* relates more to 'the reflective properties of the object and the texture and movement of its surface' rather than the actual colour.[33] Therefore, with this shade of green Clarissa is eminently fashionable, its proximity to the colour glaucous allows Woolf to refer once again to Clarissa's 'watery consciousness' (her *stream* of consciousness) and the fabric the dress is made from, and its description as, '*silver*-green' (emphases added) are all reminiscent of shiny and reflective surfaces. In the same way that Mansfield employs reflections, mirrors

[29] Alice Wood, *Modernism and Modernity in British Women's Magazines* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2020), p. 9.
[30] Ibid, p. 26.
[31] St Clair, p. 209.
[32] Katy Kelleher, 'Glaucous, the Greeny Blue of Epic Poetry and Succulents', *The AWL* (December 12, 2017). [Online] Available at: https://www.theawl.com/2017/12/glaucous-the-greeny-blue-of-epic-poetry-and-succulents . [Accessed: 14 November 2018].
[33] Ibid.

and mirroring to highlight Raoul and Bertha's sexuality and their identification of self, Woolf brings attention to Clarissa and her sexuality through reflective surfaces.

When writing of a mirror in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf uses the word 'glass'. When Clarissa looks into her mirror before choosing her dress for that evening she is described as 'collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass)' (p. 36). A mirror is made of glass backed by a reflective material, traditionally silver; it is the silver which produces the reflection. The glass is something which can be seen through and by naming her protagonist Clarissa, Woolf encourages us to consider her clarity of understanding of who she is; her ability to see her self. Although Woolf's language indicates a lack of the silver backing required to make the glass into a mirror and potentially a lack of a reflection and a lack of self-recognition, there are several references to silver in the text. Primarily, Clarissa's dress is 'silver-green' and there is 'the chink of silver on a tray; clean silver for the party', a 'silver casket' in the drawing-room where Clarissa sits to mend her dress, and Lucy thinks of her mistress as a 'mistress of silver' (p. 37). Furthermore, Woolf explains that '[b]y artificial light the green shone' indicating that the dress is shiny and reflective like a mirror (p. 37). These items, particularly the dress, provide the missing element to reflect Clarissa's nature and allow an interpretation of sexuality different to that of her surface character.

Clarissa is a wealthy upper middle-class society wife with a husband who is a politician; she lives in a house in central London, has servants and a daughter, and the Prime Minister attends her party. However, this veneer of the perfect life disguises her more solitary, abstemious marriage. When Clarissa returns from her shopping trip she feels 'like a nun who has left the world' and 'the room [in which she sleeps alone] is an attic; the bed narrow; and lying there […] she could not dispel a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet' (p. 28 and p. 31). Clarissa sleeps alone and in a single bed, something which Richard, her husband, has insisted on due to her illness but has not changed

even though she is now recovered (p. 36). Additionally, she describes herself as a virgin and this virginity is 'like a sheet', a thin covering which metaphorically represents a barrier between herself and her husband, preventing any further sexual intimacy. Clarissa's mermaid dress represents this lack of sexual intimacy with men, as mermaids, due to the tail, are unable to consummate a sexual relationship with a human man. Furthermore, depicting Clarissa as a mermaid, a cold-blooded half-fish, reinforces her coldness and apparent lack of feelings for Richard.

Woolf further illustrates this coldness, which she describes as 'this cold spirit' with the imagery of a diamond (p. 31). Clarissa looking into her mirror

> drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point (p. 36).

A diamond is both hard, cold to the touch and multi-faceted. The diamond represents Clarissa's lack of emotion to her husband but in a similar way to Raoul, Clarissa recognises the self which she portrays to others in the mirror and acknowledges that it is composed of many different parts. Like a diamond Clarissa's sexuality is also multi-faceted. She admits that 'she could not resist sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman […] she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt' and remembering her kiss from Sally Seton as a young woman, she describes it as being 'given a present […] a diamond' (pp. 31 and 35). When she later looks at herself in the mirror and considers her self like a diamond she alludes to her first same-sex attraction as something precious and desirable. Mansfield also implies that same-sex desire is something precious and desirable by naming the object of Bertha's affections Pearl.

Clarissa's sexuality is multi-faceted because although she is and has been attracted to women, as Olivia Wood explains, she did marry Richard and has a child with him and was attracted to Peter in the past.[34] After rejecting his proposal 'she had borne about with her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, the anguish' (p. 8). Again the colour silver is used by Woolf to illuminate Clarissa's desire, to show her realisation of her desire for Peter:

> [a]nd Clarissa had leant forward, taken his hand, drawn him to her, kissed him, - actually had felt his face on hers before she could down the brandishing of silver-flashing plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast […] all in a clap it came over her, if I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day! (p. 46).

This realisation, described as a thunder 'clap', occurs while Clarissa is holding her green dress which she has been mending. The silver element of Clarissa's dress, echoed in the 'silver-flashing plumes' provides her with a reflection of part of her sexuality, whereas the green element of Clarissa's dress represents another part of her sexuality, which could be considered subversive. Just as Clarissa composes these different selves into 'one centre, one diamond, one woman' her dress is one colour as demonstrated by Woolf's use of the hyphen ('silver-green') and it cannot be separated into two different colours (p. 36). To aid interpretation of Woolf's depiction of sexuality in her novels Brenda Helt addresses Woolf's own views on sexuality and concludes that

[34] Olivia Wood, 'A Diamond and a Tropic Gale: Reexamining Bisexuality in *Mrs Dalloway*', *Journal of Bisexuality*, 18:3 (2018), pp. 385-6.

> [i]n her work of the 1920s, Woolf challenged trends to construe same-sex desire as a distinguishing characteristic of a sexual identity type […] Against these trends and ideas she expressed a much older understanding of women's same-sex desires – a belief that they are common to most women – and promoted it as epistemologically, aesthetically, and politically more useful to women than the beliefs about bifurcated sexual identity.[35]

Although Helt reinforces that bisexuality was not a term which was used until the 1960s it is how she argues Clarissa Dalloway's sexuality should be described. Wood continues this argument and explains that scholarship to date has focussed on Clarissa as a lesbian or solely on her same-sex desires and this binary classification of her sexuality is too narrow a perspective and she should be considered as a bisexual woman.[36] I further both Helt and Wood's arguments by arguing that through a reading of Clarissa's dress her sexuality can be read as significantly more fluid and multi-faceted than simply heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual.

Woolf hints at this sexual fluidity not only with the colour of Clarissa's dress but also with the fabric it is made from; Clarissa's dress is made of silk and it is shiny; it is a fabric which will flow, drape and be fluid. Additionally, she wears a scarf at her party which 'as she passed; turned, caught […] on some other woman's dress, unhitched it, laughed. All with the most perfect ease and air of a creature floating in its element' (p. 171). Clarissa's scarf is floating round the room suggesting a lightness and fluidity to the fabric. It is telling that the scarf attaches itself to another woman rather than a man and Woolf indicates a natural, relaxed attitude to this with her choice of language. Clarissa's fluidity represented by the

[35] Helt, p. 131.
[36] Wood, pp. 382-3.

scarf links her to other women whilst she is accompanying a man (the Prime Minister) around the room. Clarissa's dress is described as a 'mermaid dress'. Again the nature of a mermaid's tail made of fish scales illustrates the slipperiness and fluidity of a fish tail moving through water. Furthermore, a mermaid is a hybrid creature, she is neither fish nor human but a combination of the natural non-human world and the human world. Hybridity was a concept which was discussed by Darwin in his *On the Origin of Species* (1859) where he explains and supports the conclusion that 'hybrids are very generally sterile'.[37] Woolf does not describe Clarissa as sterile but she does place her in an abstemious marriage which has not produced any more children and the nature of her attraction to women will not result in procreation.

Woolf acknowledges green as the colour of nature and uses it to bring the natural world into the city. Her embrace and intertwining of the city and the natural world allow an interpretation of green clothing which is positive and hopeful. However, she also upholds the pre-existing associations green has with subversive and destructive love and dresses her most sexually fluid characters in green. The associations between green and a non-heteronormative sexuality are also explored by Larsen in her novel *Passing.*

Passing

Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* (1929) does something very similar to *Mrs Dalloway* with regards to the depiction of the main protagonists' subversive sexuality being interpreted through nature and their dress. At the beginning of the novel Irene meets Clare for the first time since childhood in the rooftop restaurant of the Drayton Hotel. Clare is described as 'a sweetly scented woman in a fluttering dress of green chiffon whose mingled pattern of narcissuses, jonquils, and hyacinths was a reminder of pleasantly chill spring days' (p. 176).

[37] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859), p. 151.

Larsen evokes imagery of flowers and nature with fragrance and colour, she even describes Irene's dress as 'fluttering' suggesting the movement of petals and a lightness and delicacy to the dress not unlike Bertha's dress in 'Bliss'. With this dress she brings the positive associations of the natural world into the centre of the modernist city and presents Irene's meeting with Clare as a welcome occurrence.

Chiffon is a transparent and very fine fabric and similarly to Clarissa's scarf it is light, floaty and fluid. Stuart Hall describes race as a 'floating signifier' and explains that '*race works like a language'* meaning that 'racialized behaviour and difference needs to be understood as a discursive, not necessarily as a genetic or biological fact'.[38] Hall argues that race is given meaning through identified difference to others and not by inherent physical attributes and therefore, the meaning of race is fluid across cultures and time. Clare's ability to easily pass as white and move fluidly from one representation of race to another is because of her lack of difference and because race in the US at the start of the twentieth century, as W. E. B. Dubois stated in his essay 'The Conservation of Races' (1897), was founded on physical attributes such as 'the differences of color, hair and bone' and was 'clearly defined to the eye of the historian and the sociologist'.[39] Clare's ability to pass easily is because of the lightness of her skin and this is suggested by the fabric of her dress. A *Vogue* article in July 1928 warned readers that '[f]lowered chiffons and heavily embroidered dresses, so delightfully feminine, do not usually look well against brown skin – they may even look "niggery"'.[40] The article suggests with its racist language that there is a danger, even for darker-complexioned white women, that their race might be brought into question by the contrast of light chiffon against their skin. In this way Clare's choice of dress is a flamboyant

[38] Stuart Hall, 'Race, the Floating Signifier: What More is there to Say About "Race"?', in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference,* ed. by Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), pp. 361-2.
[39] Hall, p. 360.
[40] Anonymous, 'The Burning Question of the Summer: Nut-Brown Maid or Lady Fair, Following or Avoiding the Vogue of Sunburn, Has her Own Clothes Problem', *Vogue* (1 July 1928), pp. 37-39.

demonstration of her confidence in her ability to pass and demonstrates how pale her skin must be to allow her to wear such a dress, pass as white and frequent a white establishment such as the Drayton hotel; in fact Clare's skin is referred to as 'ivory' (p. 177). Later in the novel Irene mirrors this costume of Clare's reinforcing their connection to each other and their similarity in ability to pass easily. When Clare visits Irene at home she smooths 'out the tumbled green and ivory draperies of her dress with light stroking pats' (p. 224). Here she mirrors the green of Clare's dress and the ivory of her skin at the Drayton Hotel and again the fabric of the dress which is 'tumbled' and drapes suggests a certain fluidity of movement. Jennifer DeVere Brody explains that Irene's fluidity of 'passing' is so smooth it is rarely commented on by Larsen. For example, she highlights Irene's first act of passing in the novel when Irene's taxi driver suggests the Drayton Hotel as she feels she needs tea to help with the heat. DeVere Brody says that

> [i]n this moment, Irene passes; and yet, neither the omniscient narrator nor Irene comment upon this transgression […] It is so natural for Irene to pass that she is not even conscious that she is doing so.[41]

Irene's fluidity of passing is also represented by the description of her journey from the crowded street to the roof terrace of the Drayton which DeVere Brody describes as 'white only' and a 'temporary sanctuary'.[42] Irene feels 'like [she is] being wafted upwards on a magic carpet to another world, pleasant, quiet, and strangely remote from the sizzling one that she had left below' (p. 176). Again, Larsen's language indicates an ease of movement, a smooth flow upwards and something that happens as if by magic.

[41] Jennifer DeVere Brody, 'Clare Kendry's "True" Colors: Race and Class Conflict in Nella Larsen's Passing', *Callaloo* 15:4 (Autumn 1992), p. 1057.
[42] Ibid.

The green fabrics which Clare and Irene wear suggest fluidity and this can be read as a fluidity of race, as their ability to pass. However, the colour green indicates that this is not exclusively a story about race but also one of sexuality especially if we read it in conjunction with similar readings of 'Bliss' and *Mrs Dalloway*. Deborah McDowell, in her introduction to the Rutgers University Press 1986 edition of *Quicksand and Passing,* encourages a reading of the novel that does not focus solely on its discussion of race but rather sexuality. McDowell argues that by creating a surface impression of solid heterosexual relationships 'Larsen can flirt, if only by suggestion, with the idea of a lesbian relationship between them'.[43] She continues by saying:

> the novel's clever strategy derives from its surface theme and central metaphor – passing. It takes the form of the act it describes. Implying false, forged, and mistaken identities, the title functions on multiple levels: thematically, in terms of the racial and sexual plots; and strategically, in terms of the narrative's disguise.[44]

Rafael Walker continues this argument and prefers to write of the women's desire rather than sexuality as he explains that 'describing these characters as closeted lesbians would run contrary to the spirit of a novel so sceptical of binaries'.[45] I wish to develop this argument and suggest that not only does the novel discuss sexuality but it mirrors this in the clothes which Irene and Clare wear, and the colour and fabric of these clothes represent a fluidity to their sexuality which is similar to that which Woolf describes in *Mrs Dalloway.*

[43] Deborah E. McDowell, 'Introduction' to *Quicksand and Passing,* ed. by Deborah E. McDowell (USA: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. xxiii.
[44] Ibid, p. xxx.
[45] Rafael Walker, 'Nella Larsen Reconsidered: The Trouble with Desire in *Quicksand* and *Passing', MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the US* 41:1 (Spring 2016), p. 185.

Walker describes Larsen's protagonists as having a certain 'racial liminality' and in the same way they can be regarded as having a 'sexual liminality'.[46] The implication is that the women are constantly in flux moving from blackness to whiteness and back again occupying both racial identities as well as the liminal state between. This state of being extends not simply to their race but also to Larsen's depiction of their sexuality, indicating a fluidity not previously discussed by McDowell and Walker. Both women are married with children and demonstrate same-sex desire for each other. McDowell insists that although both Clare and Irene are in 'sexless marriages' this does not mean that they have not desired and do not desire men.[47] In fact, Irene believes that Clare desires her husband Brian. When Irene finds out that Brian has invited Clare to a party which they are attending she realises that they are interested in each other 'Clare Kendry! So that was it! Impossible. It couldn't be. In the mirror before her she saw that he was still regarding her with that air of slight amazement' (p. 249). A conservative reading of this extract assumes that Clare and Brian are having an affair and Irene sees the truth in the mirror. However, in consideration of how Mansfield and Woolf deploy mirrors to illuminate a character's self and sexuality, Larsen's ambiguity invites an alternative interpretation. Rather than it being Irene who sees the truth, could it not be Brian? Prior to them looking at each other in the mirror Irene is described as 'no more than a pane of glass through which he stared' (p. 248). With this, Larsen suggests that Brian doesn't see Irene's self, who she is, he merely sees through her. As with Bertha and Clarissa a full mirror is required to see the truth and this happens when Irene shows she is upset at Brian asking Clare to the party, 'Brian's head came round with a jerk. His brows lifted in an odd surprise. Her voice, she realized, *had* gone queer' (p. 249). Brian appears surprised rather than guilty at her extreme reaction and Irene describes herself not him as sounding 'queer'.

[46] Ibid, p. 166.
[47] McDowell, p. xxiii.

David Blackmore argues that Brian can be read as having same-sex desires. Irene's statement that 'Brian doesn't care for ladies […] I sometimes wish he did. It's South America that attracts him' highlights her concern at his lack of interest in sex (p. 203). Furthermore, Blackmore explains that Larsen uses the word queer several times in reference to Brian which 'according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* […] was used in the United States to refer to homosexuality as early as 1922' and explains that 'Brian's wish to escape to Brazil, a country according to Blackmore

> where homosexuality has been a visible cultural force throughout modern history […] 'passes' as a purely racial issue, allowing the subplot of his same-sex desire to remain under the surface of the narrative – in the same subtextual realm where Irene's homoerotic romance with Clare resides.[48]

Therefore, when Irene describes herself as 'queer' and Brian is surprised it seems that whilst looking in the mirror he recognises the truth in Irene and her same-sex desire for Clare.

This desire for each other is hinted at by Larsen with the green dresses both protagonists wear; the colour and fluidity of which mirror each other. When Clare meets Irene on the roof of the Dayton Hotel, where Clare is wearing her green chiffon dress, she is described by Irene as a 'lovely creature' with '[a] tempting mouth' and by the end of the novel Clare is 'exquisite, golden, fragrant, flaunting … her eyes sparkling like dark jewels' (pp. 180, 191 and 233). In the same way that Woolf associates Clarissa's same-sex desire with a diamond and Mansfield associates Bertha's with a pearl, Larsen associates this precious same-sex desire of Irene's with jewels. Additionally, the dress Clare wears is

[48] David Blackmore, '"That Unreasonable Feeling": The Homosexual Subtexts of Nella Larsen's Passing', *African American Review* 26:3 (Autumn 1992), pp. 477-8.

embroidered with narcissus and jonquils, both flowers which, as seen in relation to Bertha in 'Bliss', imply mirroring and same-sex desire. Irene's attraction to Clare is further demonstrated when Clare visits her and Irene is wearing her green and ivory dress. Firstly, she smooths 'out the tumbled green and ivory draperies of her dress with light stroking pats' (p. 224). Patting something is a tender and gentle thing to do and suggests a caring nature towards Clare as well as a desire to look her best for her arrival. Then when Clare arrives Irene has 'a sudden inexplicable onrush of affectionate feeling. Reaching out, she grasped Clare's two hands in her own and cried with something like awe in her voice: "Dear God! But aren't you lovely, Clare!"' (p. 225). She also talks of an 'illicit love-affair', suggesting undertones of same-sex desire while she is wearing green and mirroring Clare's outfit from the start of the novel. The mirroring of the women in clothes and affection is also shown in the reciprocation of affection by Clare. Clare writes:

> '…For I am lonely, so lonely … cannot help longing to be with you again, as I have never longed for anything before; and I have wanted many things in my life […] It's like an ache, a pain that never ceases …' […] 'and it's your fault, 'Rene dear […] For I would not now, perhaps, have this terrible, this wild desire if I hadn't seen you that time in Chicago …' (p. 174).

Larsen employs mirrors and green dresses to hint at the fluid sexuality of her female protagonists. However, she extends this connection between the women in a way which Mansfield and Woolf do not by mirroring their clothing thereby creating a definite connection between the women and a stronger hint of same-sex desire.

Larsen, Mansfield and Woolf explore female sexual fluidity and represent this in the green clothing of their characters. With the colour of the clothing, in addition to the fabric

and style, they develop a complex and multi-layered interpretation of sexual fluidity. It is the 'ephemerality and contingency' of fashion and dress as described by Sheehan, and the lack of essentialist meanings of colour which modernist writing embraces and employs to hint at and carefully explore sexuality which was considered subversive at the time.[49] Colour's ability to represent contemporary societal concerns and reference historical associations simultaneously is investigated in my next chapter, white.

[49] Sheehan, p. 4.

Chapter 6: White

White is a colour worn at key stages of our lives; Christening robes, wedding dresses and death shrouds in western society are all traditionally white garments and their whiteness denotes purity, innocence, virginity, youth and death. Normally the symbolism of a colour changes according to time and culture; however, the symbolic interpretations of white have changed little over the years. White has consistently signified innocence and purity resulting in it being a popular colour to dress children for important religious events, for example, christenings and confirmations. This reverence for white is documented in the Bible where saints and angels are dressed in 'pure and white linen', and in Ancient Egyptian tomb paintings pharaohs are depicted wearing white linen costumes.[1] In Ancient times those who were holy and close to God were depicted wearing white and consequently white represented a heavenly presence and unblemished, revered character. With a progression into adulthood white has become the traditional colour worn by brides in the western world and as such becomes a more gendered colour. It was Queen Victoria who popularised the wearing of white with brides, as she wore white to marry Prince Albert in 1840, a colour which given its pre-existing connotations appropriately represented her high moral reputation and purity as a bride. Therefore, a white dress came to represent a woman's sexual innocence and her desire to visually demonstrate her conformation to the patriarchal society's expectations of her.

Fox considers why we think of white as pure and concludes that it is due to its absence, he says, '[a]s purity is an absence of contamination, so white is an absence of colour' and he continues, '[l]ike purity, white is defined by what it excludes'.[2] In which case white represents the absence of sexual knowledge, the absence of age, the absence of worldly

[1] Anonymous, 'Revelation 15:7', *The King James Bible*. [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10/10-h/10-h.htm#The_Revelation_of_Saint_John_the_Divine . [Accessed: 12 September 2022].
[2] Fox, p. 144.

experience and it is regarded as clean, blank and even colourless. The association of white and purity continued into the interwar years with the architect Le Corbusier in his 1925 book *L'Art decorative d'aujourd'hui* declaring that 'all interior walls should be whitewashed [as this] would act as a moral and spiritual cleansing for society'.[3] At the same time Virginia Woolf acknowledges the association of white with innocence and brides in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) when she describes 'girls buying white underlinen threaded with pure white ribbon for their weddings' (p. 18). Later in the novel Woolf continues her portrayal of white as a colour of youth and innocence when she dresses Clarissa as a young woman 'coming down to dinner in a white frock to meet Sally Seton' at Bourton, her childhood home (p. 34). Woolf's choice of language with 'frock' rather than dress or gown indicates a less formal and younger style of garment, more suited to Clarissa's age, and she further highlights this innocence with Sally's memory of Clarissa at the time, 'all in white going about the house with her hands full of flowers' (p. 185). Sally's memory of Clarissa conjures the image of a bride with her bouquet and she reinforces this imagery with Clarissa

> feeling as she crossed the hall 'if it were now to die 'twere now to be most happy.' That was her feeling—Othello's feeling, and she felt it, she was convinced, as strongly as Shakespeare meant Othello to feel it, all because she was coming down to dinner in a white frock to meet Sally Seton! (p. 34).

Clarissa quotes Othello from Shakespeare's play of the same name. The scene in question is where Othello is happily reunited with his wife, Desdemona, when they are young and innocent of the tragedy that is still to come. By quoting this line Woolf implies Clarissa is

[3] St Clair, p. 41.

both young and innocent and very much in love with Sally and reinforces the imagery of Clarissa as a bride.

White is a colour with symbolic value for all ages it not only suggests youth but on an older character it can imply wisdom and even death. Woolf recognises this and does not only dress Clarissa in white when she is young but portrays her, a mature woman married with a family, in white garments in *The Voyage Out* and 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' (1923). In Woolf's first novel and her short story Clarissa is middle-aged and the traditional interpretation of white clothing denoting youth requires further scrutiny. I argue that white is a colour which is not tied to any one representation of age. As such, it can denote youth and purity, but also age and wisdom. Therefore, clothing an ageing body in white can be an attempt to cover and disguise the wearer's actual age or may be an external display of their youthful self. I consider how Woolf uses white's ability to transcend age to investigate the relationship between chronological and psychological time and how with the addition of certain decorations the perceived purity of white clothing can be challenged and suggest rather more subversive meanings.

In *The Voyage Out,* on the first evening onboard ship, Clarissa Dalloway wears

> a white dress and a long glittering necklace. What with her clothes, and her arch delicate face, which showed exquisitely pink beneath hair turning grey, she was astonishingly like an eighteenth-century masterpiece – a Reynolds or a Romney. […] Sitting slightly upright she seemed to be dealing with the world as she chose; the enormous solid globe spun round this way and that beneath her fingers (p. 47).

Clarissa is seen through the viewpoint of Rachel Vinrace, the daughter of the captain of the ship. Rachel is a young woman in her twenties and Clarissa is a middle-aged woman. With

this description of Clarissa the visual impression of her is both one of age and youthfulness at the same time. This duality is captured in the description of Clarissa as 'astonishingly like an eighteenth-century masterpiece – a Reynolds or a Romney' (p. 47). Sir Joshua Reynolds and George Romney were both famous portrait painters in the eighteenth century and were known for painting society women and men; examples of their work are illustrated below in Figures 1 and 2. Their portrait subjects would have been wealthy, upper middle-class women, not unlike Clarissa, and they were extremely fashionable. Many of their portraits depict woman in white dresses with grey hair and pink cheeks. Although the women have grey hair these are likely to be wigs as it was the fashion of the time and Lady Skipwith was only thirty-five when her portrait was painted.[4] Additionally, their pink cheeks are accentuated with cheek rouge, another fashion of the time, and as such their appearance projects signifiers of both youth and age simultaneously. Similarly, Clarissa has both grey hair and is middle-aged versus her pink cheeks and youthful white dress.

[4] Anonymous, 'Selina, Lady Skipwith', The Frick Collection. [Online] Available at: https://collections.frick.org/objects/127/selina-lady-skipwith#showAudios . [Accessed: 12 September 2022].

Figure 1: Sir Joshua Reynolds, Lady Skipwith (1787). The Frick Collection, New York.

Figure 2: George Romney, Mary Bootle, Mrs Wilbraham-Bootle (died 1813), 1781. Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh.

Candis Bond describes how Woolf 'viewed the past, present, and future as integrally connected spaces' and how she acknowledged that 'these layers of time and being can coexist in the present moment, leading to periods of intense vision, vitality, and becoming'.[5] This depiction of the coexistence of the past, present and future is appropriately achieved through clothing. Parkins explains that fashion 'brought together different orders of time – the past, the eternal, the present, and the future', and Sheehan argues that fashion 'holds and produces knowledge about the present and future, which may be inexpressible in another mode'.[6] The nature of fashion, and in turn dress, is such that to embrace the new and modern, it is constantly developing and changing, but it can also directly recreate or pay homage to the past. This concept and the blurring of age as depicted in the paintings of Reynold and Romney is clearly represented by Clarissa's appearance in *The Voyage Out.* Clarissa's hair which is 'turning grey' signifies an older age whilst her pink cheeks signify youth, and the contradiction between these results in an appearance which transcends age, a transcendence which is represented by her white dress. Clarissa's white dress and her 'arch' face and 'upright' stance suggest an aloofness and superiority, she sits 'dealing with the world as she chose; the enormous solid globe spun round this way and that beneath her fingers' (p. 47). This description of Clarissa evokes an image of a Grecian goddess in white looking down on the world, in this case a globe, and in control of the fates. Simone De Beauvoir discusses the perception younger generations have of older people:

> The purified image of themselves that society offers the aged is that of the white-haired and venerable Sage, rich in experience, planing high above the common state of mankind.[7]

[5] Candis E. Bond, 'Remapping Female Subjectivity in *Mrs Dalloway:* Scenic Memory and Woolf's "Bye-Street" Aesthetic', *Woolf Studies Annual* 23 (2017), pp. 64-5.
[6] Parkins, 'Fashion', p. 98; Sheehan, *Modernism à la Mode,* p. 12.
[7] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), pp. 3-4.

In this way, Clarissa is viewed as a 'venerable Sage', as somebody older and wiser by the younger Rachel. The Grecian imagery is further enforced by Clarissa's previous conversation with Mr Pepper who agrees to teach her Greek when she states that she would 'give ten years of my life to know Greek', with this comment Woolf again links Clarissa's appearance with time and age (p. 46). However, as well as her white dress representing Clarissa as an older, confident figure, white also signifies youth and vitality. These qualities are then reinforced by her pink face which indicates youthfulness and health. Clarissa's pink face is also referred to in *Mrs Dalloway,* when sitting at her dressing table, Clarissa sees in her mirror 'the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party' and when Peter, a former admirer, admits his current love affair to her his 'indomitable egotism charged her cheeks with colour; made her look very young; very pink; very bright-eyed' (pp. 36 and 44). Woolf draws a picture of Clarissa which layers both old and young appearances and allows them to coexist in the one character simultaneously.

Bond interrogates Woolf's view of 'the past and present as dynamic and fluid *spaces*, rather than as linearly progressing moments in time' and describes her method of characterisation which Woolf herself terms her 'tunnelling technique'.[8] Woolf explains this technique in her diary as

> how I dig beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment.[9]

[8] Bond, p. 65.
[9] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume II,* ed. by Anne Olivier Bell, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978), p. 263.

Woolf admitted it took her a year to discover her technique and she described it as the way 'by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it' (p. 272). Her 'caves' are past memories, events and places relating to her characters which interconnect to each other through time and are layered upon the present. Bond believes that this '"tunnelling" creates new geographies of the self, connecting a variety of selves in the present moment of the text'.[10] Woolf demonstrates this layering and connection between past and present in particular when people from Clarissa's past meet her again in the present. For example, when walking through London at the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway* Clarissa meets Hugh, an old friend, who assures Clarissa that 'she might be a girl of eighteen' and Clarissa 'always felt a little skimpy beside Hugh; schoolgirlish' (p. 6). Clarissa and Hugh have known each other since childhood ensuring their past and present selves overlap at this meeting and both the memory of the younger and the older Clarissa are recognised by Hugh in the present. He can see her as both young and as 'an old friend', someone who is at the same stage of life as his wife (p. 6).

In addition to Hugh's perception of Clarissa, both Rachel and Helen in *The Voyage Out* are aware of Clarissa's outward appearance of grey hair and of being middle-aged but they can also identify her youthful self which is represented by her white dress and petticoats. Helen visits Clarissa in her cabin and notices her underwear:

> [s]he [Clarissa] was trying to apologise for white underclothes fallen and scattered on the floor. For one second she opened a single eye, and saw that the room was tidy. "That's nice," she gasped. Helen left her; far, far away she knew that she felt a kind of liking for Mrs. Dalloway. She could not help respecting her spirit and her desire, even

[10] Bond, p. 66.

> in the throes of sickness, for a tidy bedroom. Her petticoats, however, rose above her knees. (p. 79)

Clarissa's white underclothes not only represent youth but they also reinforce her wealth as St Clair explains '[w]hite has long been intricately connected with money and power. Fabrics including wool and cotton, had to be heavily processed in order to appear white. Only the very wealthy […] could afford to keep them pristine'.[11] Woolf illustrates this point in *Night and Day* (1919) when Lady Otway is 'now sat, knitting white wool' which when she later turns 'to her balls of wool […] curiously, were not an ivory-white, but rather a tarnished yellow-white' (pp. 215 and 217). Lady Otway apparently is 'one of the people for whom the great make-believe game of English social life has been invented' (p. 215). Her title indicates that she is a member of the upper classes and therefore, is expected to be wealthy, elite and privileged. However, due to her husband Sir Francis retiring 'from service under the Government of India with a pension that was not adequate', their house is 'more than usually shabby' and Lady Otway has to pretend 'that she was a dignified, important, much-occupied person, of considerable social standing and sufficient wealth' (pp. 214-217). Her white/ yellow balls of wool represent not only her age, which is 'over sixty', but the fact they have tarnished to a sickly yellow indicate they are old and down at heel like her (p. 215).

Clarissa as a fifty-two year old woman, in 1923 when the novel is set, would in fact be viewed as relatively elderly. Kathleen Williams Renk explains that 'where life expectancy overall climbed from 41 years in 1880 to 51.5 years in 1920 […] we realize that, in her era, Clarissa is an 'elderly' woman'.[12] Although Renk does not consider the effect of infant mortality rates on these figures the fact remains that Clarissa is the same age as the average

[11] St Clair, p. 40.
[12] Kathleen Williams Renk, '"Blackberrying in the Sun"? Modernism and the Ageing Woman in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight,* Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent', Women: A Cultural Review* 27:3 (2016), p. 319.

life expectancy rate for a woman at the time even if there were others outliving this. Woolf reinforces that Clarissa should be regarded as elderly by introducing Clarissa's friend Peter Walsh, who is only six months older than her, as 'the elderly man in the hall' when he comes to visit (p. 39). However, similarly to Clarissa his outer appearance does not necessarily reflect his perception of himself or his inner youthfulness. He runs upstairs 'ever so quickly' and Clarissa observes that he 'looks awfully well, and just the same' although she has not seen him for years (pp. 39-40). This difference between biological/physical age and psychological age is considered by Simone De Beauvoir as she describes the ageing self as 'the other-in-me':

> [w]ithin me it is the Other – that is to say, the person I am for the outsider – who is old: and that Other is myself. In most cases, for the rest of the world our being is as many-sided as the rest of the world itself.[13]

Woolf captures this concept of 'the Other-in-me' through her use of stream of consciousness. This style of writing allows Clarissa's thoughts to jump seamlessly between both her young and old selves. She is both 'very young; at the same time unspeakably aged' and Woolf explores these different selves through the differences in perception of Clarissa's age through the viewpoint of several characters and Clarissa's own thoughts (p. 8). Clarissa indicates that she is aware of the difference between her psychological and biological age not only when she meets Hugh but also when talking of music to Helen and Rachel. Clarissa says 'I can't imagine anything nicer than to sit out in the moonlight and listen to music – only that sounds too like a schoolgirl!' (p. 49). With this she is aware that she is too old to be acting like a

[13] Simone de Beauvoir, *Old Age* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 316.

romantic schoolgirl and acknowledges her internal contradiction between feeling youthful, her youthful thoughts and her biological age. She then continues

> 'You know,' she said turning to Helen, 'I don't think music's altogether good for people – I'm afraid not.'
>
> 'Too great a strain?' asked Helen.
>
> 'Too emotional, somehow' said Clarissa (p. 49).

Woolf's use of 'strain' indicates that Helen sees Clarissa as frail or fragile in some way, potentially related to her age, whereas Clarissa explains it as an emotion. De Beauvoir expands on her discussion of how older people are perceived:

> [i]f old people show the same desires, the same feelings and the same requirements as the young, the world looks upon them with disgust: in them love and jealousy seem revolting or absurd, sexuality repulsive and violence ridiculous. They are required to be a standing example of all the virtues.[14]

Helen does not expect Clarissa to experience such emotion as an older person and as a result she thinks more of the physical strain of the music to Clarissa. Rachel and Helen are aware of Clarissa's older appearance but where Rachel can identify it as non-representative of Clarissa's inner youth, Helen is shocked at this inner youthfulness and does not expect it.

The difference between Clarissa's physical age and how she is perceived and how she acts continues when she is depicted walking through London at the start of *Mrs Dalloway*; Clarissa is described in youthful terms by a neighbour, as

[14] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age,* pp. 3-4.

> [a] charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought […] a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness. There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very upright (p. 4).

Clarissa is pictured as a lively bird ready to move, indicating her youthful vitality although she is white and over fifty. The description of her as 'upright' reinforces her youthfulness as her stance is the opposite of a hunched older person. It can be assumed that it is Clarissa's hair which has 'grown very white' but Woolf does not make this clear resulting in some ambiguity whether it is her hair, skin or a more metaphorical change in colour. As David Kastan explains white is

> the colour of ghosts. Of skulls and bleached bones. Of maggots. White literally 'appalls' (etymologically the word means to make pale). Instead of promising a future or forgiving a past, this white terrifies or disgusts.[15]

In this case, white can be interpreted as a draining of colour, of life from Clarissa, an illness which has affected her health. Woolf indicates that this draining of life and colour occurs not only with illness but also with age. When Clarissa returns from her walk and discovers that she has not been invited to lunch with Lady Bruton but her husband has, she considers the fact that her social value has diminished with age:

[15] Kastan, p. 180.

> But she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton's face […] the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence, so that she filled the room she entered (p. 30).

Woolf illustrates female ageing through the loss of colour, she writes of salts which are highly coloured chemical compounds and to lose these is to lose natural colour. Furthermore, with her use of 'tones of existence' she directly links colour terminology to a loss of life and vitality. Woolf expands this fading of colour with Clarissa earlier in the day walking through London 'thinking that [s]he had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown' (p. 10). Clarissa is aware of how her biological age is perceived by society and later echoes it in how she feels physically, which is, 'suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless […] out of her body and brain which now failed' (p. 30). Renk records how de Beauvoir explains that 'despite the way we feel inside, women are judged by their exteriors, their bodies, which in advancing years are in "decline"'.[16] This is a sentiment which Woolf, after visiting her optician who prescribed her glasses and commented on her age, echoed herself in her diaries saying:

> It means that one now seems to a stranger not a woman, but an elderly woman. Yet even though, though I felt wrinkled & aged for an hour, & put on a manner of great wisdom and toleration, buying a coat, even so, I forget it soon; & am 'a woman' again.[17]

[16] Renk, p. 318.
[17] Woolf, Diaries, Vol. III, p. 230.

Woolf describes Clarissa as an older woman who is thereby 'invisible' to society, 'shrivelled' and smaller than before, 'out of her body and brain' that is other to herself as explained by de Beauvoir, and 'breastless' meaning of no reproductive or child-rearing use anymore. Woolf then uses colour to further contrast her depiction of older men and the difference in how they are perceived. When Clarissa meets Hugh while walking he is carrying a parliamentary despatch box. Whereas Clarissa is 'invisible', 'white' and lacking in colour Hugh's box would be bright red and he is described as a larger and more lively character than Clarissa. Hugh is 'well-covered, manly, extremely handsome, perfectly upholstered body' and raises his hat 'rather extravagantly' (p. 6). Hugh as an older man, of a similar age to Clarissa, is bold and bright in comparison to her paler, quieter self.

Woolf's negative associations with an aging self are in line with the 1920's cult of youth and desire to be young. Cynthia Port explains that there was 'an explosion of media interest in "women's ages" and a corresponding idealization of youth in Britain in the 1920s and '30s'.[18] This 'idealization of youth' is surmised to have come about as a direct result of World War 1 where frontline soldiers were compiled of the younger generations and became the heroes of the conflict. Conversely, the older generations were less favoured, either giving orders or staying safe at home. Furthermore, they represented the Victorian values of family and responsibility which were rejected by the modernist movement.[19] This resulted in hostility towards the older generations which were viewed as having protected their own interests and prospering from the war.[20] This perceived conflict between the generations was exemplified by the actuality that there appeared to be a polarity in ages with only the very young and old surviving in the post-war years. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Clarissa wishes to cling to her youth as long as she can.

[18] Cynthia Port, '"Ages are the Stuff!": the traffic in ages in interwar Britain', *NWSA Journal* 18:1 (Spring 2006), p. 1.
[19] Ibid., p. 3.
[20] Ibid.

Clarissa as an aging woman and the picture of her diminishing with age continues when she considers that her bed will become 'narrower and narrower' (p. 30). The width of her bed references the fact that due to ill health she now sleeps in a narrow bed alone instead of with her husband and this will get narrower as she gets older until it is as narrow as a coffin. Woolf describes this situation as 'a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet' (p. 31). Clarissa's bed sheets are white, representing this sexual purity and by clinging to her they are impenetrable, but white as Kastan describes can also be associated with death, they can be imagined wrapped round her in her 'coffin' like a shroud. Clarissa climbing the stairs to her bedroom feels as if she has left a party, she feels like she is at the end of something, and that she has 'shut the door and gone out and stood alone, a single figure against the appalling night' (p. 30). Her thoughts emphasise her solitary status, locked out from society, metaphorically moving upwards towards her death and literally closer to heaven. Clarissa's impending death, is mirrored in the 'appalling night' in that, in accordance with Kastan's definition, it removes the colour and life from Clarissa and turns her to white, suggesting her skeletal remains.

Woolf describes Clarissa as turning white several times and the colour white can be identified as a key signifier of Clarissa's physical age and the passage of chronological time in both *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs Dalloway,* where she ponders that

> she had grown older […] It was true. Since her illness she had turned almost white […] Laying her brooch on the table, she had a sudden spasm, as if, while she mused, the icy claws had had the chance to fix in her. She was not old yet. She had just broken into her fifty-second year. Months and months of it were still untouched. June, July, August! Each still remained almost whole, and as if to catch the falling drop, Clarissa (crossing to the dressing-table) plunged into the very heart of the moment

> […] seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party (p. 36).

Woolf employs the same ambiguity in her language as before regarding what it is about Clarissa that is white. Clarissa acknowledges her age and clutches at the months that are left of this year, of which there are only three. She knows she is ageing and that her physical appearance reflects this. However, she denies that she is old and psychologically does not feel it. Throughout her writing Woolf portrays Clarissa with both young and old language and imagery thereby providing a more complex interpretation of the perception of age and the layering of past and present selves.

Woolf repeatedly dresses Clarissa in white and uses it to emphasise her age. In her short story 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' Clarissa seeks to buy new white gloves:

> 'White gloves,' she said. 'Above the elbow,' and she looked straight into the shop-woman's face – but this was not the girl she remembered? She looked quite old.
> 'These really don't fit,' said Clarissa. […] And the girl took the grey gloves with her to the end of the counter.
> Yes thought Clarissa, if it's the girl that I remember, she's twenty years older …(p. 156).

These new white gloves are to replace her old grey ones and as such the white gloves are a representation of youth masking age. The new gloves can be viewed as a second skin, one which covers and hides her old hands. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf's novel which should be read in parallel with 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' as the short story is a precursor to the novel and the novel is an adaptation of the short story, Clarissa thinks '[g]loves and shoes; she had

a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not a straw for either of them' (p. 11). Gloves are a second skin which Elizabeth does not require as she is young already and they represent an older version of respectable femininity which Elizabeth does not aspire to. Clarissa's gloves can be regarded as a second skin not only because they are literally made from skin, that is leather, but also because they are so tight that 'the glove was drawn off leaving her arm flecked with powder' (p. 158). Vincent explains as part of her research regarding the wearing of gloves in the early twentieth century that

> [g]love powder, made of French chalk, helped ease on a tight-fitting pair [and] [t]he desired effect was smooth, near and fitting – the garment should fit, indeed, 'like a glove'[…] this desirable tightness [was] so pronounced that in winter wearers sometimes complained the resulting loss of circulation made their gloved hands cold.[21]

Furthermore, Woolf suggests that Clarissa has aged by the colour of her old grey gloves, a colour as previously discussed in relation to her hair denotes old age but also because a well-used pair of white gloves would gradually turn grey over time. Time has passed for Clarissa and Woolf writes '[y]es, thought Clarissa, if it's the girl I remember, she's twenty years older …' (p. 156). Woolf's use of ellipses at the end of the quotation leaves unsaid the fact that if the shop girl is the same one that Clarissa remembers then not only is the shop girl twenty years older then so too is Clarissa.

Woolf further illustrates Clarissa's age with 'little brown spots on her arm' which are identifiable as age spots caused by exposure to the sun over her lifetime, and by her repetition of the phrase 'fear no more the heat o' the sun' (p. 158). The phrase is taken from the song in

[21] Vincent, pp. 195-6.

Shakespeare's *Cymbeline,* Act IV, Scene II and is interpreted as saying that death should not be feared as it can be a release and is inevitable. Woolf's repeated references to this song reinforce that the brown spots are age spots but it also implies that Clarissa acknowledges she is ageing and is closer to death but this not necessarily something to fear. Clarissa's ageing is further highlighted when she meets her old friend Hugh and discovers that Milly, his wife, 'is about my age – fifty – fifty-two' and is in London to consult her doctor about '*that'*, a complaint which is directly linked to her age and the fact that she is a woman (p. 153). Woolf's use of italics here emphasises the complaint as something important, something prominent at this stage of life for not only Milly but also Clarissa herself. It is a complaint which Judith Saunders identifies as 'menopausal symptoms'.[22] Therefore, as Clarissa is a middle-aged woman with visible and non-visible signs of aging, her choice of white gloves does not represent her youth and purity but act as an attempt to cover and disguise her aging with a second skin which is youthful and blemish free.

Clarissa's white gloves are a complex item of clothing. In the 1920s, as had been the case for many years before, Vincent explains

> gloves signalled propriety and self-worth, and to be without them was to be underdressed, underprepared in some way to meet the world's social demands. Gloves completed an outfit, they finished off the sartorial armour for social engagements.[23]

The colour of Clarissa's gloves present her as the wealthy woman she is but as a garment they show she is correctly and properly dressed for her social class and status. Vincent continues this argument and states that gloves

[22] Judith Saunders, 'Mortal Stain: Literary Allusion and Female Sexuality in "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street"', *Studies in Short Fiction* 15:2 (Spring 1978), p. 141.
[23] Vincent, p. 193.

> became an index of personality, a material manifestation of the kind of person you were. 'One can always tell a gentlewoman by her gloves', claimed the writer of an article in *Woman's Life* in 1896, adding that it was a maxim generally recognised.[24]

Woolf obviously agreed with this maxim as Clarissa in 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' thinks '[a] lady is known by her gloves and shoes, old Uncle William used to say' and in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf incudes this sentiment of Clarissa's that 'her old Uncle William used to say a lady is known by her shoes and her gloves' (pp. 157 and 11). In Clarissa's case her gloves are a second skin which both allow her to cover and disguise her physical age but also represent her inner youthfulness. In this way and in accordance with Uncle William's dictum she is judged by her outward appearance, indicating that the appearance of youth is extremely important in her society. Renk, speaking of de Beauvoir, explains her belief that 'despite the way we feel inside, women are judged by their exteriors, their bodies, which in advancing years are in "decline"'.[25] Saunders when discussing Clarissa's age spots believes that 'the whole glove-buying expedition reflects her special obligations as a woman to cover up the process of aging in her all too earthly self'.[26] That women are judged by their outward appearance is evident in how Clarissa is perceived by others. Their opinion of her is shaped by her outward appearance and dress rather than what she may say or do.

The symbolism of Clarissa's gloves is complex. The colour and nature of them represent a second skin of youth and as white gloves they could be considered to symbolise a certain purity or innocence. However, I argue that the details of Clarissa's gloves, in

[24] Ibid., p. 194.
[25] Renk, p. 318.
[26] Saunders, p. 143.

particular the buttons, suggest a further interpretation which subverts white's associations with sexual purity. Clarissa asks

> 'Do you remember before the war you had gloves with pearl buttons?'
>
> 'French gloves, Madame?'
>
> 'Yes, they were French,' said Clarissa. […]
>
> With pearl buttons, thought Clarissa, perfectly simple – how French! (p. 157).

Clarissa's exclamation 'how French!' implies that there is something special about the pearl buttons which is particularly French. I will consider the significance of the reference to French gloves but firstly, pearls were associated with same sex desire. Simpson explains that '[t]he writing of H.D., Woolf and other women modernist writers continued to appropriate the implicit eroticism of pearls and other precious gems, and to exploit the range of associations of such gems in order to encode sexual pleasures and desires between women'.[27] She continues that the use of pearls in their writing is a 'deliberate employment of clitoral imagery'.[28] I have written not only of Mansfield's depiction of same sex desire in 'Bliss' and the name of the object of this affection being Pearl, but also of Woolf's description of Clarissa's affection for Sally Seton as a diamond. In 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' Woolf uses the symbolism of pearls on Clarissa's gloves to suggest same sex desire. Radclyffe Hall also embraced pearl symbolism in her novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) when Stephen purchases a pearl ring for her female lover described by Hall in the window of the jewellers:

[27] Kathryn Simpson, 'Pearl-diving: Inscriptions of Desire and Creativity in H.D. and Woolf', *Journal of Modern Literature* 27:4 (Summer 2004), p. 37.
[28] Ibid.

> on a white velvet cushion lay a pearl that looked like a round gleaming marble, a marble attached to a slender circlet of platinum – some sort of celestial marble! It was just such a ring as Angela had seen in Paris.[29]

The jeweller explains that '[t]he setting's French' and it 'shone whiter than white against her skin' (p. 165). With the clitoris being related to desire and not reproduction its association with same sex desire can be justified and as Hall's ring is a spherical white pearl (clitoris) attached to a 'white' precious metal hole (vagina) on a soft white cushion (pubic area) the connection in imagery between the ring and female genitalia is clear. Therefore, Clarissa's white gloves with, most probably, white pearls represent not only a youthful second skin but with the lesbian connotations of pearls hint at a subversion of the sexual purity of white. A purity related to the abstention from sex and also to heteronormativity and patriarchal control of women.

In Mansfield's short story 'Poison' (1924) the female lover of the narrator, Beatrice, is 'dressed in white, with pearls round her throat and lilies-of-the-valley tucked into her belt. On the third finger of her left hand she wore one pearl ring – no wedding ring' (p. 572). Similarly to Woolf Mansfield depicts her character dressed as a bride although the story is apparently concerned with an unmarried couple. Furthermore, Mansfield uses first person narration to create ambiguity and an unreliable narrator in a similar fashion to her narrator in 'Je Ne Parle Pas Français'. The ambiguity of this narrator lies in whether they are male or female and the uncertainty is evidenced by her use of pearl and French symbolism. Beatrice wears a single pearl ring on her wedding finger indicating a committed relationship which can be interpreted as a same sex relationship. The poison the short story refers to is arsenic

[29] Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (London: Virago Press, 2007), p. 165. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

and Mansfield's description of a poisoning trial and how to poison someone '[j]ust a tiny pinch, now and again, cleverly disguised' are in accordance with arsenic poisoning trials which were well documented in the press at the time (p. 575).[30] The colour green appears with the narrator looking at their villa and

> the windows of our room hidden so mysteriously behind the green straw blinds. Was it possible that she ever came moving through the green light and smiling that secret smile, that languid, brilliant smile that was just for me? She put her arm around my neck; the other hand softly, terribly, brushed back my hair.
> 'Who are you?' Who was she? She was – Woman (p. 572).

The reference to their bedroom and Beatrice's private, sleepy and suggestive smile implies an intimate relationship which is coloured green and as discussed previously green was associated with subversive sexuality. With the last line Mansfield plays with the ambiguity of the gender of the narrator through use of free indirect discourse. It is not clear who is speaking and who is woman; Mansfield purposefully leaves this ambiguous allowing the interpretation of a same sex couple. Finally, Mansfield ends her story with the word '*queer'* (p. 576). This is the last word of the story and she emphasises it by italicising it. Again this highlights the potential that she is describing a same sex couple.

Pearls are most commonly white in colour and appear pure but they are created from an impurity when an irritant works its way into an oyster shell causing the oyster to coat it with many layers of fluid until a solid lustrous pearl is formed. It is something beautiful which is created from an impurity and this may well have been the sentiment of female

[30] For example Frederick Seddon was hanged in 1912 for the murder of his lodger Eliza Mary Barrow by arsenic poisoning and Herbert Armstrong, The Hay Murderer, was hanged for the murder of his wife in 1922 by arsenic poisoning and was arrested for the murder of a business rival who also suspiciously died of arsenic poisoning.

modernist writers, that same sex desire was something beautiful, but 1920s society did not generally hold the same opinion. Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* was censored for its depiction of lesbian love and her publishers were prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, which Sir Charles Biron, the judge, explained

> prohibited the sale of books, pictures and 'other articles' that 'depraved and corrupted' the morals of young people and shocked 'the common feelings of decency in any well regulated mind'.[31]

Then in his summing up to the court Sir Charles Biron stated that:

> [t]hese unnatural offences between women which are the subject of this book involve acts which between men would be a criminal offence, and involve acts of the most horrible, unnatural and disgusting obscenity. This is a fact which no one could deny.[32]

Although sex between women was not a criminal offence at the time the court proclaimed that such acts were those of depravity and impurity.

Woolf and Hall both identify their pearls as being French and this further connects the pearl's symbolism to lesbianism. At the start of and during the first few decades of twentieth-century France, in particular Paris, was reputed to offer homosexual women the freedom to live openly. Nicole Albert explains the interest in and exploration of Sapphism within art, literature, and general culture during this period in Paris and describes Paris as the 'mecca of lesbianism around 1900'.[33] Amongst other bohemian and modernist artists, Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes settled in Paris due to this freedom and significant public exposure and

[31] Souhami, p. 273.
[32] Ibid., p. 274.
[33] Nicole G. Albert, *Lesbian Decadence. Representation in Art and Literature of Fin-de-Siècle France* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2016), l. 261-270.

discussion was ignited through the writing and art of such women and many others. In literature, it is France that Stephen and Mary move to as it is the one place where they will be free to live together. Lesbianism in Paris at the time became such a topical subject that it was reported on and debated by journalists, and the medical community considered the nature of female homosexuality.[34] Therefore, Clarissa's gloves indicate same sex desire not only because the buttons are pearls but also because the gloves are identified as French; Stephen in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* buys a ring for her lover that has a French setting and is just like one seen in Paris; and Mansfield also includes a French connection in 'Poison'. Here the narrator explains that when their lover 'wished to speak of food, or the climate, or playfully, of her love for me, she always dropped into French' (p. 571). The connection is made between their love and French and adds to the suggestion of their relationship being a lesbian one.

In addition to the colour, style and provenance of the gloves; their cut is important too. The gloves are tight and as Vincent explains 'gloves were very deliberately deployed in late Victorian and Edwardian tight-lacing fetish accounts'.[35] Although Mrs Dalloway is set after the Edwardian period the concept of arousal through restriction, which Valerie Steele discusses in *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power* (1996), continued and continues to still be regarded as erotic.[36] Mark Gaipa also looks at the tightness of the gloves and the subtle lesbian undertones in 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street'. To do this he believes, as do I, that Woolf's short story and *Mrs Dalloway,* as a re-writing of 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', should be considered together. Gaipa considers the moment in Woolf's short story when Miss Anstruther splits one of the gloves she is trying on:

[34] Ibid.
[35] Vincent, p. 197.
[36] Valerie Steele, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 134.

> [a]nd then the other customer took a glove, tugged it, and it split.
>
> 'There!' she exclaimed.
>
> 'A fault of the skin,' said the grey-headed woman hurriedly.
>
> 'Sometimes a drop of acid in tanning. Try this pair, Madame.'
>
> 'But it's an awful swindle to ask two pound ten!'
>
> Clarissa looked at the lady; the lady looked at Clarissa (p. 158).

Gaipa considers this moment in conjunction with Clarissa's recollection of 'feeling moments where her coldness is ruptured, revelatory moments of warmness when, for example, she 'yield[s] to the charm of a woman' in *Mrs Dalloway*:[37]

> one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed (p. 31).

Reading these two extracts together Gaipa concludes that the latter moment which 'sounds blissfully orgasmic with its swelling and explosion' reflects Miss Anstruthers' splitting of the gloves as does Clarissa's 'explosive' ensuing recognition of her old friend which is illustrated not only with 'a violent explosion in the street outside' but also an exclamation mark: 'Miss Anstruthers! she exclaimed' (p. 159).[38] Additionally, the inversion of the clauses of the final sentence, 'Clarissa looked at the lady; the lady looked at Clarissa' suggests a mirror image

[37] Gaipa, p. 35.
[38] Ibid.

not only in the language of the sentence but also in the characters. This doubling is apparent in them both sitting at the shop counter trying on gloves and of being the same sex; they see themselves in one another especially with Woolf's choice of 'lady' which could easily refer to Clarissa as well as Miss Anstruthers. Gaipa's interpretation suggests that there is 'a clear moment of communion between the women' and he implies there is 'an undercurrent of transgressive sexual desire for another woman' which can be read from a rather ordinary event only if read with Woolf's later re-writing of the moment in *Mrs Dalloway.*[39] I agree with Gaipa's argument and add my own discussion of the pearl buttons and French lineage of the gloves to add evidence to the argument that there is a same sex desire connection between the two women and an indication of Clarissa's sexuality which Woolf further explores in *Mrs Dalloway.*

White is a colour that carries symbolism from birth through to death and due to its perceived blankness its initial associations can be easily subverted. I have demonstrated how modernist writers adopted the traditional interpretations of white as a colour of youth, innocence and purity and utilised bridal imagery to reinforce these associations. Although, these are traditional interpretations Woolf smoothly moves white from a youthful colour to one which also represents wise old age and death, represented by a character's clothing. However, to truly recognise the subversion of the symbolism of white an examination of the actual garment style, material and cut must be carried out. White pearls and their 'clitoral imagery' allow for a completely different interpretation of Clarissa's white gloves and I have considered and evidenced the ways in which this symbolism is adopted by several modernist writers.

Woolf's consideration of simultaneous youthfulness and age is achieved by her depiction of dress. Fashionable dress, like modernism, seeks the new and is constantly

[39] Ibid.

changing while still being related to what has come before. This continual evolution is in accordance with the non-static nature of colour symbolism and together a white garment can represent all orders of time. My attention now turns to black; a colour which can be regarded as symbolic of its time.

Chapter 7: Black

The symbolism of colours and their interpretation within literature is fluid, subjective to time and place, and frequently contradictory; yellow is both sunshine and illness, red implies both sex and danger, green is both poisonous and hopeful. However, when looking at white and black, colours which can be regarded as opposites and have been described as non-colours, the interpretation of meaning appears at first to be more definite.[1] White throughout time and across geographical location denotes youth, purity and innocence whereas black has historically been the colour of death, of emptiness and decay, witchcraft and the underworld. Black's negative associations extend to everyday language and Fox lists words and phrases where black is associated with evil and illegality, and more broadly with negative consequences or intent. This is embodied in language and cultural consciousness in phrases such as: to blacken one's name, black list, black magic, blackguard, black mail, black sheep of the family.[2] Fox continues that '[i]n the last hundred years it [black] has become the adjective *par excellence* for disaster: "Black Thursday" (24 October 1929) and "Black Tuesday" (29 October 1929) marked the beginnings of the Wall Street Crash and the subsequent Great Depression'.[3] I have explained why white is regarded as a 'non-colour' by some due to its perception of blankness but black has also been described in this way. Pastoureau quotes Leonardo da Vinci as having said that 'Black is not a colour' and St Clair quotes Renoir as declaring that 'White and Black are not colours'.[4] However, this was to change within the first few decades of the twentieth century.

---

[1] St Clair, p. 261.
[2] Fox, p. 33.
[3] Ibid., p. 34.
[4] Michel Pastoureau, *Black. The History of a Colour* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 177; St Clair, p. 261.

In the nineteenth century, black was primarily a masculine colour of dress and was worn across all classes. John Harvey explains that

> it was in this period, more than ever before, that men wore black […] [c]learly black served for gender-coding [but] what disturbed commentators of the time was not this, but rather the way in which, more and more, it appeared men were opting for the dress of death.[5]

Although this uniformity of colour was commonplace in men's day and evening wear there were several critics including Oscar Wilde who, in an 1891 letter to the *Daily Telegraph and Courier*, said that the 'uniform black that is worn now […] is dull and tedious and depressing in itself, and makes the aspect of club-life and men's dinners monotonous and uninteresting'.[6] While men wore black whether at leisure or work, Sonia Bedikian describes how women were only expected to wear black in accordance with rules and etiquette for mourning, resulting in them frequently wearing black too but with distinctly different connotations.[7] However, by the 1920s the wearing of black dress for both men and women had undergone several cultural changes. Pastoureau explains that black's reputation was to change after World War 1 when black was adopted as a symbol of modernity and became a favourite colour of modernist artists and designers especially within Art Deco circles and he demonstrates this with a description of the beginning of the mass production of goods at the start of the twentieth century:

---

[5] Harvey, p. 23.
[6] Oscar Wilde, 'Letter to the Editor – Fashions in Dress', *Daily Telegraph and Courier,* 3rd February 1918, p. 5.
[7] Sonia A. Bedikian, 'The Death of Mourning: From Victorian Crepe to the Little Black Dress', *Omega* 57:1 (2008), p. 35.

> the first objects of mass consumption were produced in such a colourless palette […] it is striking to note that between 1860 and 1920 the first household appliances, the first instruments for writing and communicating, the first telephones, cameras, pens, and cars (to say nothing of textiles and clothing) produced in mass quantities all fell within the range of white to black.[8]

As black became a fashionable colour for consumables it moved from simply being the colour worn by business men and women in mourning to a chic, modern, covetable colour. This change of opinion was embraced by designers such as Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel, whose pared-down style and designs, including her iconic 'little black dress' became highly desirable. Black moved from a colour which women were obliged to wear in mourning to one which they chose to wear on a daily basis. Fox notes that Renoir, in 1919, when told at the end of his life 'that black was a non-colour, […] responded with incredulity. "Black a non-colour? Where on earth did you get that? Why, black is the queen of colours!"'.[9] Black garments appear black to the human eye because black pigment absorbs the full spectrum of light and in a similar way black is a colour which represents and absorbs full spectrums of meaning. Black symbolises grief and death but also modernity and fashion. Where brown was the uniform colour of the working class, black was a colour worn by the service class as a uniform *and* the upper classes as fashion, thereby breaking down class boundaries in the process, and it was now worn equally by both sexes. I argue that modernist writers acknowledged the traditional cultural significance of black clothing but also identified it as a colour of modernity whether that was to reflect changing fashions or to illustrate how class and gender boundaries in society were blurring from 1914 to 1939.

[8] Pastoureau, *Black,* p. 174.
[9] Fox, p. 43.

Of course, the traditional associations of black with mourning did not disappear in the early twentieth century, and Virginia Woolf and her contemporaries closely adhered to this still relevant interpretation of it. Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* portrays Lady Bruton at Clarissa's party as a 'spectral grenadier, draped in black' (p. 177). This image of Lady Bruton as a ghost reinforces the associations of black clothing and death - although Lady Bruton is not dead and as Woolf points out, neither is Miss Parry, who Lady Bruton is guarding. Rhys in her short story 'Illusion' describing Miss Bruce's dresses hanging in her wardrobe considers that '[t]he yellow dress appeared malevolent, sloughing on its hanger; the black ones were mournful' (p. 6). Here Rhys similarly references the associations between a black dress, death and grieving. With no description of the style of the dresses, the emotions which Rhys attaches to the dresses are solely related to their colour and she indicates that an emotion, at least the outward appearance of grief or malevolence, can be put on and removed. This performance is, as the title of her short story suggests, potentially an illusion.

Zora Neale Hurston examines the idea that clothing can project to the outside world an image of ourselves which does not necessarily represent the actuality of what we feel or who we are. In accordance with this Hurston demonstrates that black clothing merely presents a surface impression of mourning for the perception of others. In her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Hurston describes Janie at the funeral of her second husband:

> Janie starched and ironed her face and came set in the funeral behind her veil. It was like a wall of stone and steel. The funeral was going on outside. […] Inside the expensive black folds were resurrection and life. […] She sent her face to Joe's funeral, and herself went rollicking with the springtime across the world (p. 100).

Janie's appearance is correct and proper in accordance with others' perception of how a widow should look. Hurston uses the imagery of cloth and clothing covering her 'self' to demonstrate how this is achieved. Not only does Janie wear a black veil to show her grief to the outside world but her facial skin is described in terms of a fabric which can be smoothed and perfected to give the correct appearance before she presents it to the world. However, she does not present this face directly to the world as it is hidden behind a fabric veil which is described as 'like a wall of stone and steel' indicating it is impenetrable, solid and yet also translucent as would be expected from a veil. With this Hurston suggests that Janie is hiding her emotions and her self from the other funeral goers not only through the correct presentation of her face but also behind a dark, opaque veil. Warwick and Cavallaro state that the 'ceremonial role of the veil lies in its ability to operate as a protective shield'.[10] This protective shield is evident in the strength of the materials ('stone and steel') to which Hurston likens Janie's veil. Joe, Janie's dead husband, was an important and well-known man and Janie's joy at her new-found freedom would not necessarily be understood or accepted by many. Therefore, her veil hides and protects her from others' misunderstanding and censure literally by creating a barrier between them and her but also by projecting a culturally accepted surface impression of grief.

Warwick and Cavallaro continue that a veil or head covering can be used by an individual 'to distance himself from the task'.[11] Janie uses her veil in this manner as Hurston places the funeral on the 'outside' of the veil and 'inside' the veil is 'resurrection and life'. Janie is clearly detached from the funeral service and also from the need to display grief as the veil does it for her. It is not Janie who is described as being inside the veil but 'resurrection and life', in other words, her hope, her feelings about the future and her

[10] Warwick and Cavallaro, p. 132.
[11] Ibid., p. 133.

potential. Janie's physical body goes to the funeral while her mind is happy and metaphorically 'rollicking' 'across the world'. Hurston describes her physical body as her 'face' in that she is no more than an appearance, a surface image and perfect performance of what is expected. Once more there is an element of detachment to Janie's attendance at the funeral as it is her face, not 'herself, which attends. Janie's veil and smoothed face give her a double layered mask portraying death and grief while hiding her actual feelings of 'resurrection and life'. Janie's self 'rollicking with the springtime' indicates that she feels reborn and revitalised with the death of her husband in the same way that spring brings the promise of new life. However, Warwick and Cavallaro develop their argument saying:

> truth cannot be explicitly associated with a deep dimension, hidden beyond or beneath an illusory surface, and indeed that the surface cannot be unambiguously equated with deceptive appearances. In fact […] the mask may reveal by concealing.[12]

With this knowledge, Janie's black veil can be interpreted as a disguise, a form of mask, and in turn betrays her true feelings. This is clearly referenced later by Hurston when Janie attends the funeral of her third husband, Tea Cake. At this funeral there are '[n]o expensive veils and robes for Janie this time. She went on in her overalls. She was too busy feeling grief to dress like grief' (p. 217). Hurston reinforces Warwick and Cavallaro's belief that the veil can be interpreted as a form of deception, a performance of grief for others but can at the same time reveal her true feelings because she needs to wear a mask to project this impression of grief; whether that mask is her veil and/or her carefully prepared face.

Mansfield also experimented with black clothing and the appearance of grief and mourning which it projects. In her short story 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1922),

[12] Ibid.

Josephine and Constantia, sisters whose father has recently died, discuss whether to dye their indoor clothes black:

> ‘Do you think we ought to have our dressing-gowns dyed as well?’
>
> ‘Black?’ almost shrieked Josephine.
>
> ‘Well, what else?’ asked Constantia. ‘I was thinking – it doesn’t seem quite sincere, in a way, to wear black out of doors and when we’re fully dressed, and then when we’re at home –‘
>
> ‘But nobody sees us,’ said Josephine (p. 212).

Again, the wearing of black clothing is what is deemed correct and appropriate to demonstrate grieving and mourning but Mansfield clearly illustrates that this is something which is worn to meet the gaze of others and to create the correct impression. Mansfield considers the difference between the sisters’ feelings and the impression of grief which must be portrayed to others. The sisters’ black clothing creates a surface impression of grief in the same way that Janie’s black veil acts as a barrier between her actual feelings and the gaze of others. This barrier between the internal and external is echoed by the impenetrable ‘doors’ and walls of their house behind which no one can see them. The sisters are described as being ‘fully dressed’ but when they remove their black clothes at home, their feelings are apparent in the bright colours, red and green, that they wear and their reluctance to wear black. The daughters do not necessarily feel the grief that their black dress would portray to an external observer. Josephine shrieks ‘Black?’ suggesting her sister’s idea is unexpected and that she is not in agreement with it. By dying their dressing-gowns they would be changing them from red and green to black and in effect removing the brightness and life from them. The homophone of ‘dye’ and ‘die’ is used by Mansfield to reinforce the sentiment that black is a

lifeless colour and as they do not wish to 'dye/die' their colourful indoor clothes, they do not wish to end their happiness and life because of their father's death. Similarly to Hurston, Mansfield indicates that the wearing of black and funeral attire is a surface impression and does not necessarily represent the wearer's true feelings.

After their father has been dead for a week their relief and happiness is demonstrated by Constantia who 'had such a strange smile' and 'Josephine, too, forgot to be practical and sensible; she smiled faintly, strangely' (pp. 226-227). The fact Josephine forgets to maintain her acceptable behaviour indicates that it is a performance which requires to be consciously maintained and the way she is acting is not necessarily how she is truly feeling. Similarly to Janie, it is their faces which can portray their true feelings. Whereas Janie must prepare hers for others to see, the sisters smile in private within the walls of their home. The sisters have been bullied by their father and their realisation of relief and happiness is demonstrated with their strange smiles. Mansfield illustrates this pleasure through the appearance of the sun in their shared environment:

> there fell a square of sunlight, pale red; it came and went and came – and stayed, deepened – until it shone almost golden.
>
> 'The sun's out,' said Josephine, as though it really mattered.
>
> A perfect fountain of bubbling notes shook from the barrel-organ, round, bright notes, carelessly scattered' (p. 227).

Mansfield creates a sense of building euphoria in the room through her description of the sunlight coming and going, getting stronger and becoming 'almost golden', a rich and positive colour. She highlights this increasing positivity through her use of dashes. Then this euphoria erupts in a 'fountain of bubbling notes' and these notes are 'bright' in contradiction

to the black clothing they have been wearing. The 'fountain' of notes 'from the barrel-organ' is reminiscent of champagne erupting from a bottle in a celebratory manner and is evocatively orgasmic. These are the same notes of music which are described as sounding like 'A week since father died, A week since father died' (p. 227). It is these words which trigger the good news and which they hear when the sun comes through the window.

By the 1920s black clothing was not only associated with grief, Kastan believes the 'little black dress' had become a 'dress of pure possibility' and further explains that '[i]t performs a sort of social alchemy' allowing 'everyone to imagine that social gaps can be narrowed and perhaps, if only for a moment, closed'.[13] Black at the start of the twentieth century was the colour of the uniforms of the service class, but when it became fashionable to be worn as a 'little black dress' and by women from all levels of the social hierarchy, it succeeded in blurring class boundaries. This percolation, a bottom-up flow of fashion in contrast to a 'trickle down' flow of fashion, was in line with the blurring of class boundaries in society during and post-World War 1. Chanel's iconic 'little black dress' was featured on the cover of *Vogue* in October 1926 and the magazine proclaimed that it would become a 'sort of uniform for all women of taste'.[14] (Figure 1)

[13] Kastan, p. 162.
[14] Ibid., p. 160.

Figure 1: The Chanel 'Ford' – The Frock That All the World Will Wear, *Vogue, October 1926.*[15]

Additionally, as Rachel Worth explains all women could wear Chanel's style as her clothing 'could be copied easily and disseminated widely and that could, therefore, be described as classless'.[16] The key suggestion here is that 'all' women could wear this style and be equal and as Michael and Ariane Batterberry explain 'Chanel was accused of invading haute couture with the style of the working girl, of creating the "deluxe poor look"'.[17] Susan Kaiser describes how

[15] Ibid.
[16] Rachel Worth, *Fashion and Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 135.
[17] Batterberry, p.294.

> [p]lain black dresses, at the time, had associations with working class maid uniforms and became the ubiquitous dress of retail and office workers. But for a middle class woman, the newly appropriated little black dress became a fashionable, flexible, elegant modern uniform that could be dressed up or down.[18]

Michael and Ariane Batterberry further illustrate this point:

> [a]t the popular *thé dansant* that characterized the decade [1920s], the debutante who had come to kick up her heels was distinguished from the hotel or restaurant's professional parties solely by the fact that she was wearing a hat.[19]

With this example they suggest that there was little to distinguish the black dress of a servant or working-class woman from that of the upper classes. However, when dress becomes simpler and uniform in colour it is the cut, fabric, fine details and potentially accessories which become the signifiers of wealth and status. An image of sophistication, wealth and propriety is represented by the 'little black dress' and it is the promise of these qualities which Rhys employs to illustrate her female protagonists' attempt to improve their social status and transform the situation in which they find themselves.

Rhys captures the promise of a 'little black dress' and frequently dresses her protagonists in black. Anna in *Voyage in the Dark* reassures herself about her shabby clothes, '[i]t was a pity about my clothes, but anyway they were black' (p. 19). Similarly Julia in *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* also believes in the magic of a black dress:

[18] Kaiser, p. 115.
[19] Batterberry, p. 294.

> [s]he began to imagine herself in a new black dress and a little black hat with a veil that just shadowed her eyes. After all, why give up hope when so many people had loved her? […] In her mind she was repeating over and over again, like a charm: 'I'll have a black dress and hat' (p. 131).

Julia believes such a dress will solve her problems and improve her situation. Her repetition of these words is a form of good luck incantation; she is willing it to be true. Furthermore, in *Good Morning, Midnight* Rhys describes the dress which Sasha, a shop girl, covets:

> there is a dress in one of the cupboards which has been worn a lot by the mannequins and is going to be sold off for four hundred francs. The saleswoman has promised to keep it for me. I have tried it on; I have seen myself in it. It is a black dress with wide sleeves embroidered in vivid colours – red, green, blue, purple. It is my dress. If I had been wearing it I should never have stammered or been stupid (p. 25).

Sasha continues:

> Then I start thinking about the black dress, longing for it, madly, furiously. If I could get it everything would be different (p. 28).

The dress is well-worn and aged just like Sasha, a middle-aged woman in her forties, who as Cynthia Port states has relied on 'the commodification of her body' in the past to survive.[20] Now Sasha earns four hundred francs a month, the same amount as the dress costs, further

[20] Cynthia Port, '"Money for the night is coming": Jean Rhys and Gendered Economies of Ageing', *Women: A Cultural Review* 12:2 (2001), p. 207.

enabling her identification with the dress. However, although Sasha believes that the dress will solve her problems and change her into a more confident, more successful person the reality is that it is worth as much as she can earn in a month and therefore will not improve her financial circumstances, find her a new job or somewhere better to live than where she currently watches 'cockroaches crawling from underneath the carpet and crawling back again' (p. 29). What Sasha yearns for is the surface impression that a black dress at the time projects to the observer, an image of herself which she has seen in the mirror.

Sasha believes that this particular black dress will solve all her problems but a black dress is what she is most likely to be currently wearing. Rhys describes the clothing of fashion house employees in her short story 'Mannequin' (1927). In this story all the workers are dressed in black. The protagonist Anna is 'dressed in the black cotton, chemise-like garment of the mannequin off duty', 'the [s]aleswomen in black rushed in and out' and at lunch 'the sewing girls [sit], pale-face, black-frocked – the workers heroically gay, but with the stamp of labour on them' (pp. 20, 21 and 23). All levels of hierarchy of women working at the fashion house wear black and it can be assumed that Sasha does too. Therefore, if the black dress she covets is to be transformative then it must be different in some way from her current uniform. Not only is it an expensive designer dress in comparison to Sasha's current uniform which she describes as shabby, but there is only one of it in comparison to the many similar black dresses which the employees of the fashion house wear (p. 25). In this dress Sasha would no longer be wearing a uniform and would be different from the other working girls. The individuality of the dress is exemplified in the colourful embroidery that not only demonstrates the more expensive nature of the dress but also its difference to her current uniform. Embroidery, whether haute couture hand-embroidery or machine-made, embellishes an item of clothing and the additional cost of labour to produce it means a colourfully embroidered item of clothing is more likely to belong to a wealthier, middle-class woman.

Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* highlights this fact in the cloakroom of Clarissa's party where Mrs Barnet, 'who had been with the family for forty years, and came every summer to help the ladies', can tell 'in spite of the furs and the embroideries, which were nice ladies, and which were not' (p. 164); it is their expensive furs and clothing decorated with embroidery which represent their wealth and social status but whether they are 'nice' is a different matter. I believe in this case by 'nice' Mrs Barnet is referring to their social background and breeding rather than personality. Sophie Oliver explains that Rhys's characters may 'fantasize about the distinction offered by fashion ('the search for *the* dress, the perfect Dress, beautiful, beautifying, possible to be worn') but this promise is always unfulfilled as they slouch into anonymity'.[21] The embroidery on Sasha's dress signifies wealth but as embroidery is only a surface decoration and is not woven into the fabric, it is only an impression of wealth and social standing. The embellishment of the dress with embroidered details makes it more interesting and desirable than her plain black work dress and represents Sasha's aspirations over and above where she is now although this promise of change is unfulfilled.

Woolf, in a similar manner to Rhys, dresses her service-class women in black in her early fiction. In *The Voyage Out* she describes Mrs Chailey, a servant of thirty years in 'her sober black dress [which] showed that she belonged to the lower orders' (p. 24). Woolf's description of the dress as 'sober' distinguishes it as a uniform rather than the dress which Sasha desires which is highly decorated and most probably significantly different from her black working uniform. However, the fact that Woolf feels the need to interpret the dress for us indicates that fashions were beginning to change. In *Jacob's Room* Woolf further acknowledges that black clothing was beginning to blur class boundaries, when she describes a street scene outside the Grosvenor Square window of the Countess of Rocksbier's house:

[21] Sophie Oliver, 'Fashion in Jean Rhys/Jean Rhys in Fashion', *Modernist Cultures* 11:3 (2016), p. 315.

> [b]ehind her […] stood Moll Pratt on the pavement, offering violets for sale; and Mrs Hilda Thomas lifting her skirts, preparing to cross the road. One was from Walworth; the other from Putney. Both wore black stockings, but Mrs Thomas was coiled in furs (p. 86).

Woolf describes two women from two very different sections of society - one is a flower seller and the other is a married woman from a more upmarket area of London. What is important is that they are both wearing black, albeit only their stockings, and therefore in some respects they are dressed the same. However, in a similar fashion to the ladies attending Clarissa's party it is Mrs Thomas's furs which distinguish her as middle class. Although Woolf cursorily acknowledges this blurring of dress across classes she does not embrace the transformative power of the 'little black dress' in the same way that Rhys does. Joannou notes that the word 'chic' is absent from Woolf's vocabulary but is used frequently in Rhys's *The Left Bank and Other Stories* 'where it is synonymous with the modern elegance associated with the most long-lived invention of the French fashion designer Chanel: the "little black dress"'.[22] Woolf's characters may wear black but it is not in the form of a 'little black dress' which may be perceived to improve their status. Although common perception was that the fashion for black clothing blurred class boundaries and dressed the classes similarly, modernist writers addressed the importance of decoration and style of dress to differentiate between the social classes.

Women from all social classes wear black in Woolf's writing including servants, Clarissa's middle-class cousin Ellie Henderson who 'ran out nervously and bought cheap pink flowers, half-a-dozen, and then threw a shawl over her old black dress' to wear to the party, and the upper-class Lady Bruton (p. 166). Although none of these garments are a

[22] Joannou, p. 465.

Chanel style 'little black dress' the cultural significance of women wearing black at the time is recognised by Woolf in her depiction of Lady Bruton. Valerie Steele writes of

> Chanel's philosophy of style, which had little to do with functional dressing for work and everything to do with the symbolic power associated with […] black clothing and upper-class male sportswear.[23]

The fashion for dressing in black because it was 'chic', stylish and no longer exclusively for mourning encapsulated the increasing emancipation of women in the 1920s. Black, as discussed by Harvey, had until then been predominantly a masculine colour of clothing and with women choosing to wear this colour in their everyday dress they were adopting, as Steele insists, a 'masculine model of power and freedom'.[24] Lady Bruton's black costume represents her attributes which can be regarded as traditionally masculine when she is depicted as 'a spectral grenadier, draped in black' (p. 177). Grenadier guards are a division of foot soldiers who traditionally wear bearskin hats like the Monarch's guards and they were historically an all-male regiment. Lady Bruton is portrayed as one of these soldiers and is further likened to a soldier with Woolf's description of her as

> a woman [who] could have worn the helmet and shot the arrow, could have led troops to attack, ruled with indomitable justice barbarian hordes and lain under a shield noseless in a church, or made a green grass mound on some primeval hillside, that woman was Millicent Bruton (pp. 177-8).

[23] Steele, 'Chanel in Context', p. 119.
[24] Ibid., p. 125.

Woolf's description of Lady Bruton ends with her full name highlighting that she is an independent person and decidedly masculine. Woolf, in her diaries, linked the masculine and a grenadier when she described Vita Sackville-West as 'a grenadier; hard; handsome, manly; inclined to double chin'.[25] Furthermore, the name Millicent derives from the Germanic words meaning work and strong which seem appropriate for a woman for whom Woolf makes no obvious mention of a husband and whose name evokes military connections with its first syllable.[26] Additionally, Woolf's description of Lady Bruton as active, military and heroic fits with a more traditional male image and she is not interested in more feminine pursuits such as the 'flora or fauna of India' as Miss Parry is (p. 177).

Black, then, is a colour which appears to allow for a variety of interpretations from death to a promise of better things while also appearing to break down the boundaries between class and gender. Hurston, Woolf and Rhys all recognise these symbolic associations and incorporate them into their writing but it was Mansfield who demonstrated that black could symbolise all these things at once within the same garment with her depiction of a black hat in her short story 'The Garden Party' (1922). In 'The Garden Party' Laura and her family are preparing for a lavish party they are to host that afternoon when Laura discovers that a carter named Scott has been killed close to the house in a tragic accident. On hearing this news Laura believes they should cancel the party but her mother and family disagree. When Laura attempts to discuss her feelings with her mother she places a hat of her own on Laura's head. It is a 'black hat trimmed with gold daisies and a long black velvet ribbon' (p. 205). As the hat is black and it appears when Laura is discussing Scott's death with her mother, it can be superficially interpreted as acknowledging his death. However, it does not simply represent Scott's death but more accurately, as Atkinson

[25] Virginia Woolf, *Diary: Volume II,* p. 217.
[26] *Collins Dictionary.* [Online] Available at: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/millicent [Accessed: 11 August 2022].

explains, 'the death of the old self', that is the death of Laura's old self.[27] Atkinson continues that

> [t]he hat is thus symbolic less of Laura's sense of the need to respect the dead man than of the death of the old Laura who felt that way, the Laura living in an innocent childhood that is unrealistically unaware of social realities.[28]

Laura's mother uses the hat to distract Laura from her concern for Scott's death, to distance Laura from his death and enforce the social boundaries she believes are appropriate for Laura. With its gold and velvet trims the hat represents wealth and their middle-class status, and by placing it on her head Laura symbolically becomes the matriarch or female head of the household, moves into adulthood and assumes the middle-class matriarch role that her mother has previously occupied. The passing of this role to her successor is shown in Mrs Sheridan's comment 'My Child! […] the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me' (p. 205). Mrs Sheridan's renunciation of her matriarchal role is only one of several 'deaths' in Mansfield's story which are represented by the black hat. Black is the colour of death but it is also traditionally a highly masculine colour. Mansfield's depiction of the house and party is a female centric one with the male members of the family very much in the background. When Laura wears the hat its colour represents not only the 'death' of her mother's reign as matriarch but also Laura's newly acquired adult responsibility. This is demonstrated when Laura's sentiments regarding the dead man are echoed by her father who says 'It was a horrible affair all the same' resulting in '[a]n awkward little silence' and Mrs Sheridan being uncomfortable (p. 207). Mrs Sheridan's behaviour indicates her opinion is

[27] William Atkinson, 'Mrs Sheridan's masterstroke: Liminality in Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden-Party"', *English Studies* 87:1 (2006), p. 56.
[28] Ibid.

overridden by that of Mr Sheridan and Laura. One is traditionally the head of the household and the other has been handed this authority with the symbol of the hat. Laura's superiority is evident when she arrives at the carter's house and the group of women outside the house part to allow her to enter. Again this household is female centric and the only man mentioned in this scene is dead. With this Mansfield suggests the 'death' of traditional patriarchal structures and shows the household is female through Laura asking if the house is Mrs Scott's house rather than Mr Scott's when she arrives.

Christine Darrohn reads 'The Garden Party' in relation to World War 1 and explains that this reading is one which previous critics have not explored.[29] I agree that Mansfield creates and mirrors society after the war in 'The Garden Party', where women outnumbered men and had to take over the reins in many areas of society, but although Darrohn mentions Laura's hat as a means for her mother to distract her from the death she does not consider the significance of the decoration of the hat.[30] I argue that Mansfield considers contemporary societal structures and class boundaries with these details. Mansfield portrays the change to a female-led culture in a positive light with daisies which are an early spring flower and represent new life and new beginnings. Furthermore, when Laura arrives at the house she 'tossed the velvet ribbon over her shoulder' (p. 208). This ribbon represents her social status and her ties to it; she is figuratively putting her class and wealth behind her. After World War 1 this may well have been an active choice but it was also a general shift in society of a blurring of class boundaries after the war due to different classes working and fighting together. Darrohn suggests that Laura's appreciation of the dead body and aestheticizing of it - she describes it as 'wonderful, beautiful' - '[signifies] the potential for society to become whole and beautiful, unmarred by exclusion, hierarchy, and dominance' and throughout 'The

[29] Christine Darrohn, '"Blown to Bits!": Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden-Party" and the Great War', *Modern Fiction Studies* 44:3 (Fall 1998), pp. 513.
[30] Ibid., p. 529.

Garden Party' Laura identifies with and breaks down both gender and class boundaries between herself and the working class characters (p. 209).[31]

Laura clearly empathises with the working class and is described by the women in the carter's house as 'my lass' and 'my dear' (pp. 208 and 209). The possessive 'my' suggests Laura is one of them and together they are a group dressed in black. Additionally, addressing her in this way suggests they see her as a child rather than an adult and authoritative presence. Darrohn explains how

> [Laura] is the only Sheridan who feels an affinity with the working class. Early in the story, in the presence of the men who are setting up the marquee, she thinks, 'How very nice workmen were!'. Disdaining 'these absurd class distinctions,' she bites into her bread-and-butter, looks at a workman's diagram of the marquee, and feels 'just like a work-girl'. [32]

Laura's rapport with the workmen and the fact that she allows them to determine where the marquee should be and not her is in contrast to her sister 'Jose [who] loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her' (p. 201). Furthermore, Laura's mother claims to be terrified of the cook that morning whereas Laura thinks she 'did not look at all terrifying', and it is Laura who drags Jose through the 'green baize door that led to the kitchen regions' albeit they are returning to their side of the door (pp. 202 and 200). Each time it is Laura who crosses the class boundary whether through a physical door or by not seeing the servants as 'other' and fearing them. However, although Laura is able to cross class boundaries she does

[31] Ibid., p. 516.
[32] Ibid., p. 523.

not remove them and it is this which makes it possible for her mother and family to intervene and reassert their traditional social hierarchies. Darrohn describes how

> Laura's identification with the working class represents a threat to her class […]; precisely at the moment she makes this imaginative leap, she is reclaimed by the middle-class world.[33]

This happens to Laura not only when her mother places the hat upon her head and successfully distracts her from thoughts of the dead carter but also when she is called away from the workmen to the telephone by a 'voice from the house' (p. 199). Additionally, when she intends to tell Laurie her concerns about continuing with the party he compliments her hat and in doing so stops her from articulating her thoughts. However, there is some indication that Laura does not fully wish to break down class barriers but merely 'loosen' them.[34]

When Laura first looks at herself in the mirror wearing the hat she sees herself as 'charming' suggesting she likes what she represents although she has previously not wanted to see this image of herself (p. 205). Mansfield again employs a mirror image to reveal a different self to her protagonist and reveals a previously unacknowledged aspect to their character. Furthermore, when she later leaves the boundaries of the house and her middle-class life to visit Scott's family she keeps her hat on and although she apologies to Scott for her hat which represents her class, its attitude and lack of care regarding his death, she does not remove it. Clair Hughes explains that 'the hat was once associated with a unique code of conduct: to wear one indicated superiority, removing it, a sign of deference'.[35] By wearing a

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Hughes, p. 119.

black hat Laura portrays the correct image of respect to the family but by keeping her hat on she accepts the social hierarchy and by doing this she is able to distance herself from Scott's death. In particular, when she looks at herself in the mirror she 'had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper' (p. 206). For Laura, Scott's death becomes a story, something which is one step removed and reported to her rather than her being part of it. She has a 'glimpse' of the bereaved family suggesting it is a quick, superficial impression and as this 'glimpse' is described as a newspaper picture it will be in black and white. These 'non-colours' suggest that the life has been removed from the family. However, Laura's affinity with the working class and the dead carter is reflected in not only them both being described as 'a picture' but also by Mansfield colouring them both black and white (pp. 205 and 209).

Just as dress captures the 'spirit of modernity' I have shown that *black* dress *is* the 'spirit of modernity'.[36] No other colour in dress at the time completely encapsulates modernism and the new. The reinvention of meaning attached to black, from mourning to chic, and its contemporary cultural associations meant it was now highly fashionable and represented the potential to blur cultural boundaries, including class and gender boundaries. Black's associations with death and grief are so entrenched in western cultural history that it is automatically interpreted this way and modernist writers continued to use black clothing as a symbol of death. However, they utilised this accepted and universally acknowledged surface impression of death to examine the distinction between surface and depth, demonstrating that a surface impression may simply be just that but at the same time a deeper consideration of this surface impression may in fact reveal rather than conceal the wearer's true feelings. Finally, black and its associations of masculine authority and power allowed

[36] Parkins, 'Fashion', p. 96.

modernist writers to subtly add another layer of interpretation to their strong, female protagonists by blurring gender boundaries and thereby representing the 1920's burgeoning emancipation of women.

Conclusion

In May 2020, *The Paris Review* published the next in its series of literary paper dolls. Julia Berick researched and Jenny Kroik illustrated their impressions of what Clarissa looks like and what she wears, apparently true to the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Julia Berick, 'Literary Paper Dolls: Clarissa', *The Paris Review* (May 13, 2020). Illustration by Jenny Kroik.[1]

The highly significant green dress is there, although whether it is the correct shade of green is debatable; Clarissa's white dress is also present; the appearance of a hot water bottle is odd, as is the fact that Clarissa's hair is not pictured as grey – but it was her hat which particularly caught my attention. On reading the article it is clear that Berick is familiar with the novel and even identifies that Clarissa's hat is 'wrong', but she doesn't ensure that the illustration

[1] Julia Berick and Jenny Kroik, 'Literary Paper Dolls: Clarissa', *The Paris Review* (May 13, 2020). [Online] Available at: https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2020/05/13/literary-paper-dolls-clarissa . [Accessed: 8 December 2022].

of the hat is yellow.[2] This error reinforced my belief that colour is a detail in literature which is rarely given the attention and importance it deserves.

Berick describes *Mrs Dalloway* as 'a novel about the rich interior life of humans in a metropolis, the minds of people inevitably tangled with each other […] [a] landmark of the Modernist form'.[3] Her summary reflects a traditional perception of modernist literature. Peter Child's definition of modernism echoes Berick and describes modernism as being primarily concerned with 'consciousness, perception, emotion, meaning and the individual's relation to society through interior monologue' as well as expressing 'the new sensibilities of their time: in a compressed, condensed, complex literature of the city, of industry and technology, war, machinery and speed, mass markets and communication'.[4] This dissertation considers modernism from a different perspective. I look beyond the conventional focus on psychological realism to an approach which focuses on the interconnection of the mind *and* body; which considers the impact of the modern technological age and the aftermath of World War I through the lens of material items which have previously been regarded as insignificant or unimportant; and which examines how the modernist world is captured and interrogated by women writers. Virginia Woolf writes in her essay 'Modern Fiction', '[l]et us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small'.[5] In accordance with Woolf I have shown that it is in fact this scrutiny of the seemingly immaterial that leads to material findings.

In his introduction to *Clothing as Material Culture* (2005), Daniel Miller discusses contemporary material culture studies, and states that current scholarship acknowledges 'the dissection of clothing into pattern, fibre, fabric, form and production is not opposed to, but

[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 3-4.
[5] Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *The Common Reader Vol. 1* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 150.

part of, its consideration as an aspect of human and cosmological engagement'.[6] With this he describes how contemporary material culture studies considers the materiality and the symbolic nature of a garment together, and sees 'integrity in the complex interweaving of what can rarely be separated out into distinct material and social domains'.[7] Colour is an element of dress which encapsulates both the material and cultural aspects of a garment; as a dye it becomes part of the fibres and production of the item, but it also holds a myriad of cultural connotations. Consequently, my consideration of the colour of clothing in modernist literature has resulted in not only an examination of the cultural and symbolic associations of a colour, but also demonstrates how this is interlaced with the materiality of a garment, including its fabric, design and embellishment.

My thesis and its primary focus on colour delivers an original perspective which highlights the affinity between fashion, dress and modernist writing. Colour, due to its fluidity of interpretation and constantly evolving cultural associations, mirrors the modernist development of form and meaning, as well as interrogating and challenging the contemporary and historical cultural connotations of the modernist colour palette. My research adds to current scholarship, particularly through its reading of the colour of dress, an area which until now has not been discussed in detail and I welcome and encourage further research in this area.

There are more colours and shades of colours available for study than there is scope for in this project. However, further research and study of other colours or shades, could provide similarly novel and illuminating readings of modernist literature; pink is one example. In Mansfield's short story 'Pictures', pink is the colour of Miss Moss's 'tempting bit o' ribbon' which is admired by the man she meets in the Café de Madrid and then with

[6] Daniel Miller, 'Introduction', in *Clothing as Material Culture,* ed. by Susanne Küchler and Daniel Miller (London: Berg, 2005), p. 1.
[7] Ibid.

whom she goes home (p. 99). Miss Moss has never done this before but as she is 'trembling because I've had nothing to eat today' she seeks salvation in a man in a similar manner to several of Rhys's protagonists (p. 98). Mansfield suggests a reading of pink as the product of red and white with her description of the Café de Madrid as '[m]en, palms, red plush seats, white marble tables, waiters in aprons' (pp. 98-99). It is an environment where red and white are brought together and surrounded by men. With their respective associations of sex and innocence Miss Moss's pink ribbon represents her innocence now mixed with connotations of sexual adventure. The language of the Café as soft ('plush'), hard ('marble'), and the mention of palms which can be read not only as referring to plants but potentially those on hands, invites sexual connotations. Furthermore, taking into account my previous reading of Miss Moss's potential homosexuality as indicated by her 'blue serge' suit and 'bunch of artificial "parmas"' her heterosexual innocence is implied (p. 94).[8] This reading of pink as a combination of white and red could then be extended to other costumes such as Elizabeth Dalloway's pink dress at Clarissa's party.

The analysis of additional colours is not the only means through which the range of this project could be extended. My focus has been on particular items of clothing as depicted by Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Jean Rhys, Zora Neale Hurston and Nella Larsen, but there is further scope to investigate and compare the use of colour in dress by other modernist writers, both men and women, because an interest in clothes is not solely the province of women and women writers. Arguably F. Scott Fitzgerald is just as fascinated with colourful garments as Rhys or Hurston. Indeed, utilising the methods of material culture studies of bringing together scholarship from within the disciplines of fashion, history, literature, philosophy and cultural studies, as I have done, is a method which could be applied to literature from other time periods and genres. Miller explains that bringing together these

[8] See Chapter 4: Blue.

different disciplines for the consideration of clothing as material culture and its interpretation, 'represents a certain maturity of perspective, one that recognizes the virtues of various disciplines and forms of expertise and seeks to bring these together within the larger project of academic understanding'.[9] I believe this method provides new and innovative readings of the interaction of literature and culture, depicted through clothing.

Through the lens of colour I have documented the ways in which modernist writing by women utilises dress to explore the sartorial performance of gender, sexuality, age, class and race, and I have examined the ways in which dress can be used to blur the boundaries of these categories, thereby allowing modernist writers to interrogate these boundaries and social conventions. However, clothing not only blurs metaphorical boundaries, it is also a physical boundary between the body and our environment. This physical boundary can project a desired image and in turn it may also create character. This creation and examination of character through dress is a key part of my chosen authors' work. I believe they used dress not only to explore the modernist psychological self but also the interaction of the modernist body with the modern world. Clothing to Woolf and other modernist women writers is not simply a material 'thing' nor just a representation of the self but an interwoven part of the mind and body. Woolf expresses this sentiment when Clarissa hears of the death of Septimus at her party, '[a]lways her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt' (p. 181). Here the body, mind and dress are all inextricably linked; Clarissa's emotional pain is felt as a physical pain in her body but it also metaphorically manifests with her dress being on fire. I believe the modernist expression of the human lived experience is not simply an inwardly focussed expression of consciousness but is intrinsically linked to the body and material culture, in particular clothing. Woolf reinforces this view in her essay 'On Being Ill' (1930) by saying

[9] Ibid., p. 2.

> [l]iterature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear […] On the contrary, the very opposite is true. All day, all night the body intervenes; blunts or sharpens, colours or discolours […] the creature within can only gaze through the pane – smudged or rosy; it cannot separate off from the body […] for a single instant.[10]

Hurston also talks of the soul being captured within and extends this in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to include material draped on the body. At the end of Hurston's novel Janie 'pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see' (p. 221). Hurston expresses the idea that our stories, our lives are analogous to the materials which we drape around our bodies and can be clearly seen there. Therefore, the notion of clothes as a second skin, could be accredited with creating a surface through which the 'soul' cannot be seen or is obscured. However, as Warwick and Cavallaro explain, it must not be assumed that a surface impression is an outward expression of 'a deep dimension', and likewise a surface impression should not be assumed to be deceptive.[11] Miller also argues against the 'denigration of surfaces' which results in the belief that 'the real person, myself, is somehow deep inside me, while my surface is literally superficial, a slight, transient aspect that is shallow, more contrived, somehow less real and certainly less important'.[12] He describes this as a modern, Western point of view and one which is not necessarily true historically or across cultures, meaning it is not inherently true. This complex surface/depth

[10] Virginia Woolf, 'On Being Ill', *The Moment and Other Essays* (1947). [Online] Available at: http://www.gutenberg.net.au/ebooks15/1500221h.html#ch3 . [Accessed: 10 December 2022].
[11] Warwick and Cavallaro, p. 133.
[12] Miller, p. 3.

relationship is one which I have closely examined and believe that clothing, the body and the mind cannot be interpreted separately from each other because they are, as Woolf and Hurston describe, threaded together into one whole.

Each garment must be read carefully as the layers of detail, starting with colour, affect the interpretation and the interplay between surface and depth. On a surface level sartorial performance embodies cultural signifiers, whether these be blue kimonos representing gender neutrality, white gloves representing respectability or the subversive connotations of green. However, gloves may be the height of respectability until they are coloured yellow and worn by a man, then historical and cultural references suggest immorality and decadence; or if white gloves are decorated with pearl buttons, a subversive sexuality rather than innocence and sexual purity is hinted at.

Finally, modernist literature strives to convey the complexity of the lived experience through language, with all its power and limitations. The interpretation of a colour is culturally dependent and changes with time and place, as well as it being a matter of personal perception and choice of language. Therefore, careful consideration has been given to the language and perceived difference between shades of colours: for example, light yellow and primrose. Through particular attention to the language chosen to describe dress and colour I have built upon a simplistic symbolic interpretation of colour to form more complex, culturally significant readings.

Colour is a fundamental element of clothing and material culture. By focussing on this part of material culture in literature, which until now has not been given the attention it deserves, I have demonstrated that the interpretation of the colour of dress in modernist writing provides a nuanced understanding of contemporary early twentieth-century culture and social convention; the embodiment of culture, and the body as a cultural being.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *Tender is the Night* (London: Penguin Books, 2010).
The Great Gatsby (London: Reed Consumer Books Ltd., 1994).

Forster, E. M., *Howards End* (London: Penguin, 2000).

Hall, Radclyffe, 'Fraulein Schwartz', in *Women's Writing on the First World War*, ed. by Agnes Cardinal, Dorothy Goldman and Judith Hattaway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
The Well of Loneliness (London: Virago Press, 2007).

H. D., 'Asphodel', in *Women's Writing on the First World War*, ed. by Agnes Cardinal, Dorothy Goldman and Judith Hattaway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Hughes, Langston, *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes,* ed. by Arnold Rampersad (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001).

Hurston, Zora Neale, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (London: Virago Press, 2018).

Huxley, Aldous, *Crome Yellow* (London: Vintage, 2004).

Larsen, Nella, *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001).

Lawrence, D. H., *Women in Love* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

Mansfield, Katherine, *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2006).
The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield, ed. by Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-2008).

Rhys, Jean, *After Leaving Mr MacKenzie* (London: Penguin, 2000).
Good Morning, Midnight (London: Penguin, 2000).
Quartet (London: Penguin, 2000).
The Collected Short Stories (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2017).
Voyage in the Dark (London: Penguin, 2000).

Sandberg, Carl, *Chicago Poems* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1994).

Shakespeare, William, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1778/pg1778.html .

Wilde, Oscar, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
Jacob's Room (London: Penguin, 1992).

Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924). [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/63022/63022-h/63022-h.htm .
Mrs Dalloway (London: Vintage, 2000).
Night and Day (London: Oxford University Press, 2009).
Orlando (London: Vintage, 2000).
The Common Reader (London: The Hogarth Press, 1948).
The Common Reader Vol. 1 (London: Vintage, 2003).
The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1989).
The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume II: 1920-1924, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978).
The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume III: 1925-1930, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1980).
The Diary of Virginia Woolf. Volume IV: 1931-1935, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1982).
The Moment and Other Essays (1947). [Online] Available at: http://www.gutenberg.net.au/ebooks15/1500221h.html#ch3 .
The Voyage Out (London: The Hogarth Press, 1929).
The Waves (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000).
The Years (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
To the Lighthouse (London: Penguin Books, 1964).
Walter Sickert: A Conversation (London: Hogarth Press, 1934). [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.ca/ebooks/woolfv-waltersickert/woolfv-waltersickert-00-e.html .

Secondary Sources

Abbott, Reginald, 'What Miss Kilman's Petticoat Means: Virginia Woolf, Shopping, and Spectacle', *Modern Fiction Studies* 38:1 (Spring 1992), pp. 193-216.

Albert, Nicole G., *Lesbian Decadence. Representation in Art and Literature of Fin-de-Siècle France* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2016).

Adburgham, Alison, *Shopping in Style* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1979).

Anonymous, 'Announcing the Pantone Color of the Year 2022'. [Online] Available at: https://www.pantone.com/uk/en/color-of-the-year-2022 .

Anonymous, Breed Info', *The Fox-Terrier Club*. [Online] Available at: https://www.thefoxterrierclub.co.uk/breed-info .

Anonymous, Cubism', [Online] Available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/cubism .

Anonymous, 'Fashion: What she wears: The white glove retired in favor of yellow and tans', *Vogue* 7:9 (May 7, 1896).

Anonymous, 'Fashions for Men: Concerning Hats and Gloves', *The Observer* (26 October 1913).

Anonymous, 'Kimono', *V&A.* Produced as part of *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* (From 27 August 2020 to 25 October 2020). [Online] Available at: https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/kimono .

Anonymous, 'Selina, Lady Skipwith', The Frick Collection. [Online] Available at: https://collections.frick.org/objects/127/selina-lady-skipwith#showAudios.

Anonymous, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night,* translated and annotated by Richard F. Burton. [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3435/3435-h/3435-h.htm .

Anonymous, 'The Burning Question of the Summer: Nut-Brown Maid or Lady Fair, Following or Avoiding the Vogue of Sunburn, Has her Own Clothes Problem', *Vogue* (1 July 1928), pp. 37-39.

Anonymous, *The King James Bible.* [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10/10-h/10-h.htm#The_Revelation_of_Saint_John_the_Divine .

Anonymous, 'The Story of Omega Workshops', *The Tate.* [Online] Available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/o/omega-workshops/story-omega-workshops .

Anonymous, *Vogue Fashion Bi Monthly* (November 1925).

Anonymous, 'William Blake's *Milton', British Library.* [Online] Accessed at: https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/william-blakes-milton .

Anonymous, 'Why are there no green mammals?', *New Scientist,* Issue 3337 (5 June 2021). [Online] Available at: https://www.newscientist.com/lastword/mg25033370-800-why-are-there-no-green-mammals/ .

Archer-Straw, Petrine, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

Ash, Juliet and Wilson, Elizabeth, *Chic Thrills* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992).

Atkinson, William, 'Mrs Sheridan's masterstroke: Liminality in Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden-Party"', *English Studies* 87:1 (2006), pp. 53-61.

Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage Books, 2009).
The Rustle of Language (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

Batterberry, Michael and Ariane, *Fashion. The Mirror of History* (London: Columbus, 1982).

Baudelaire, Charles, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (Phaidon Press, 1863). [Online] Available at: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/architecture/ockman/pdfs/dossier_4/Baudelaire.pdf.

Bayley, Susan, 'Fictional German governesses in Edwardian popular culture: English responses to German militarism and modernity', *Literature and History* 28:2 (2019), pp. 194-213.

Beaton, Cecil, *The Glass of Fashion* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954).

Beckson, Karl, 'Oscar Wilde and the Green Carnation', *English Literature in Translation, 1880 -1920* 43:4 (2000), pp. 387-397.

Bedikian, Sonia A., 'The Death of Mourning: From Victorian Crepe to the Little Black Dress', *Omega* 57:1 (2008), pp. 35-52.

Berick, Julia and Kroik, Jenny, 'Literary Paper Dolls: Clarissa', *The Paris Review* (May 13, 2020). [Online] Available at: https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2020/05/13/literary-paper-dolls-clarissa .

Blackmore, David, '"That Unreasonable Feeling": The Homosexual Subtexts of Nella Larsen's Passing', *African American Review* 26:3 (Autumn 1992), pp. 475-484.

Blair, Kirstie, 'Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf', *Twentieth-Century Literature* 50:2 (Summer 2004), pp. 141-166.

Bliss, Simon, '"L'intelligence de la parure": Notes on Jewelry wearing in the 1920s', *Fashion Theory* 20:1 (2016), pp. 5-26.

Bolton, Andrew, *Wild: Fashion Untamed* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004).

Bond, Candis E., 'Remapping Female Subjectivity in *Mrs Dalloway:* Scenic Memory and Woolf's "Bye-Street" Aesthetic', *Woolf Studies Annual* 23 (2017), pp. 63-82.

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984).

Beauvoir, Simone de, *Old Age* (London: Penguin Books, 1977).
The Coming of Age (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996).

Briggs, Austin, 'Joyce's Drinking', *James Joyce Quarterly* 50:1/2 (Fall 2012-Winter 2013), pp. 637-666.

Brin, Irene, 'Women's Wardrobes, Men's Wardrobes', *Art in Translation* 7:2 (2015), pp. 254-265.

Brody, Jennifer DeVere, 'Clare Kendry's "True" Colors: Race and Class Conflict in Nella Larsen's Passing', *Callaloo* 15:4 (Autumn 1992), pp. 1053-1065.

Brooker, Liz, and Peter Brooker, 'Virginia Woolf and Bohemian Lifestyles', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts,* ed. by Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

Brown, Sterling, 'Negro Character as seen by White Authors', *Journal of Negro Education* 2 (1933), pp. 179-203, reproduced in *Callaloo,* Number 14/15 (Feb-May 1982), pp. 55-89.

Cannadine, David, *Class in Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 1998).

Cardon, Lauren S., *Fashion in Fiction: Self Transformation in Twentieth-Century Literature* (University of Virginia Press, 2016).

Cohen, Lisa, '"Velvet is Very Important": Madge Garland and the Work of Fashion', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 11:3 (2005), pp. 371-390.

Carver, Beci, 'What Women Want: The Modernist Kimono' *Modernism/modernity* 22:2 (April 2015), pp. 303-314.

Cheng, Anne Anlin, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Childs, Peter, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Cohen, Lisa, '"Frock Consciousness": Virginia Woolf, the Open Secret, and the Language of Fashion', *Fashion Theory* 3:2 (1999), pp 149-174.

Collins Dictionary. [Online] Available at: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary .

Correa, Delia da Sousa, 'Musical Performativity in the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield', *Word and Music Studies* 12 (2011), pp. 71-86.

Craik, Jennifer, 'The Cultural Politics of the Uniform', *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 7:2 (2003), pp. 127-147.
Uniforms Exposed. From Conformity to Transgression (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

Crane, Diana, *Fashion and its Social Agendas: class, gender, and identity in clothing* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Darrohn, Christine, '"Blown to Bits!": Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden-Party" and the Great War', *Modern Fiction Studies* 44:3 (Fall 1998), pp. 513-539.

d'Aurevilly, Barbey, *On Dandyism and of George Brummell* (London: J. M. Dent and Company, 1897). [Online] Available at: https://archive.org/details/ofdandyismofgeor00barb/page/64/mode/2up?q=independence .

Darwin, Charles, *On the Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859).

David, Alison Matthews, *Fashion Victims* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2017).

Davis, Fred, *Fashion, Culture and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Day, Gary, *Class* (London: Routledge, 2001).

DeLuise, Alexandra, 'Panes of Glass: windows and mirrors in *Between the Acts* and 'Bliss', *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 89:89 (March 2016), pp. 29-31.

Dibble, Jeremy, 'Jerusalem: a history of England's hymn', *The Conversation* (March 2016). [Online] Accessed at: https://theconversation.com/jerusalem-a-history-of-englands-hymn-55668 .

Ditmore, Melissa Hope, *Encyclopaedia of Prostitution and Sex Work: A-N, Volume 1,* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006).

Doan, Laura L., *Fashioning Sapphism. The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
'Passing Fashions: Reading Masculinities in the 1920s' *Feminist Studies* 24:3 (Fall 1998), pp. 663-700.
'Topsy-Turvydom: Gender Inversion, Sapphism, and the Great War', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12:4 (2006), pp. 517-542.

Doran, Sabine, *The Culture of Yellow or The Visual Politics of Late Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

Drewery, Claire, *Modernist Short Fiction: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011).

Driscoll, Catherine, 'Chanel: The Order of Things', *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 14:2 (2010), pp. 135-158.

Dyhouse, Carol, *Glamour: Women, History, Feminism* (London: Zed Books, 2013).

Eco, Umberto, 'How Culture Conditions the Colours We See', in *On Signs,* ed. by Marshall Blonsky (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985).

Edwards, Lydia, *How to Read a Dress. A Guide to Changing Fashion from the 16th to the 20th Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

Elliot, Andrew J., and Daniela Niesta, 'Romantic Red: Red Enhances Men's Attraction to Women', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95:5 (2008), pp. 1150–1164.

Ellis, B. Eldred, *Gloves and the Glove Trade* (London: Sir Isaac and Sons, 1921). [Online] Available at: https://archive.org/details/glovestheglovetr00ellirich/page/116/mode/2up.

Ellis, Havelock, 'Sexual Inversion in Women', *Alienist and Neurologist* 16 (1895), pp. 141-58.

Emberley, Julia V., *Venus and Furs. The Cultural Politics of Fur* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).

Encyclopaedia Britannic. [Online] Available at: https://www.britannica.com .

Entwistle, Joanne, *The Fashioned Body. Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

Felski, Rita, *The Gender of Modernity* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995).

Finammore, Michelle Tolini, 'Color Before Technicolor: Colorized Fashion Films of the Silent Era', in *Colours in Fashion,* ed. by Jonathan Faiers and Mary Westerman Bulgarella (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2017).

Finkelstein, Joanne, *The Fashioned Self* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

Fox, James, *The World According to Colour. A Cultural History* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021).

Foxcroft, Louise, *Calories and Corsets. A History of Dieting over 2,000 years* (London: Profile Books, 2013).

Freud, Sigmund, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (London: The International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922). [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35877/35877-h/35877-h.htm .

Gaipa, Mark, 'Accessorizing Clarissa: How Virginia Woolf changes the clothes and the character of her lady of fashion', *Modernist Cultures* 4 (2009), pp. 24-47.

Gage, John, *Colour and Culture. Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995).
Colour and Meaning. Art, Science and Symbolism (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001).

Garber, Marjorie, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

Garfield, Simon, *Mauve. How One Man Invented a Colour that Changed the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2018).

Garnett, David, *Carrington. Letters and Extracts from her Diaries* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970).

Garrity, Jane, 'Sartorial Modernity. Fashion, Gender, and Sexuality in Modernism', in *A Companion to British Literature: Volume IV: Victorian and Twentieth-Century Literature 1837-2000,* ed by Robert DeMaria, Jr, Heesok Chang and Samantha Zacher (London: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2014).

Gilbert, Nora, 'A Servitude of One's Own: Isolation, Authorship and the Nineteenth-Century British Governess', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 69:4 (March 2015), pp. 455-480.

Giorcelli, Cristina, 'Sheer Luxury Kate Chopin's "A Pair of Silk Stockings"', in *Exchanging Clothes. Habits of Being II,* ed. by Cristina Giorcelli and Paula Rabinowitz (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2012).

Gubar, Susan, ‘Blessings in Disguise: Cross-Dressing as Re-Dressing for Female Modernists’, *The Massachusetts Review* 22:3 (Autumn 1981), pp. 477-508.

Gutkin, Len, *Dandyism: Forming Fiction from Modernism to the Present* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020).

Hall, Stuart, ‘Race, the Floating Signifier: What More is there to Say About “Race”?’, in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference,* ed. by Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

Haller, Karen, *The Little Book of Colour* (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2019).

Hargreaves, Tracy, *Androgyny in Modern Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2004).

Hartzell, Freyja, ‘The Velvet Touch: Fashion, Furniture, and the Fabric of the Interior’, *Fashion Theory* 13:1 (2009), pp. 51-81.

Harvey, John, *Men in Black* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1995).

Helt, Brenda S., ‘Passionate Debates on “Odious Subjects”: Bisexuality and Woolf’s Opposition to Theories of Androgyny and Sexual Identity’, *Twentieth-Century Literature* 56:2 (Spring 2010), pp. 131-167.

Henstra, Sarah, ‘Looking the Part: Performative Narration in Djuna Barne’s Nightwood and Katherine Mansfield’s “Je Ne Parle Pas Français”’, *Twentieth-Century Literature* 46:2 (Summer 2000), pp. 125-149.

Herdman, John, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1990).

Hext, Kate, and Alex Murray, *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2019).

Holmes, Eugene C., ‘Alain Locke and the New Negro Movement’, *Negro American Literature Forum: Protest and Propaganda Literature* 2:3 (Autumn 1968), pp. 60-68.

Homberger, Torsten and Arthur Bradley, Linda, ‘Nazi Dress: Hitler’s storm troopers and appearance management, 1921-1933’, *Critical Studies in Men’s Fashion* 2:2&3 (2015), pp. 183-197.

Honeyman, Katrina., ‘Style Monotony and the Business of Fashion: The Marketing of Menswear in Inter-war England’, *Textile History* 34:2 (2003), pp. 171-191.

Horn, Pamela, *Flappers* (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2013).

Hughes, Clair, ‘Hats On, Hats Off’, *Cultural Studies Review* 22:1 (March 2016), pp. 118-43.

Hughes, Langston, ‘The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain’, *Nation* (June 3, 1926), pp. 692-694, reprinted in *The Langston Hughes Review* 4:1 (Spring 1985), pp. 1-4.

Hungerford, Edward A., '"My Tunnelling Process": The Method of "Mrs Dalloway"', *Modern Fiction Studies* 3:2 (Summer 1957), pp. 164-167.

Ingrams, F. C., 'Furs and the Fur Trade', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 72:3739 (July 18, 1924).

Innes, Sherrie A., 'Who's Afraid of Stephen Gordon?: The Lesbian in the United States Popular Imagination of the 1920s', *NWSA Journal* 4:3 (Autumn 1992), pp. 303-320.

Joannou, Maroula, '"All right, I'll do anything for good clothes': Jean Rhys and Fashion', *Women: A Cultural Review* 23:4 (2012), pp. 463-489.

Kaiser, Susan B., *Fashion and Cultural Studies* (London: Berg, 2012).

Kaplan, Sydney Janet, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

Kastan, David Scott, *On Colour* (London: Yale University Press, 2018).

Kelleher, Katy, 'Glaucous, the Greeny Blue of Epic Poetry and Succulents', *The AWL* (December 12, 2017). [Online] Available at: https://www.theawl.com/2017/12/glaucous-the-greeny-blue-of-epic-poetry-and-succulents .
'Jonquil, the Light Yellow of Early Flowers, Mad Painters, and Dust Bowl-Era Pottery', *The Paris Review* (4 April 2018). [Online] Available at: https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/04/04/jonquil-the-light-yellow-of-early-flowers-mad-painters-and-dust-bowl-era-pottery .

Keller, Susan L., 'The Riviera's Golden Boy: Fitzgerald, Cosmopolitan Tanning, and Racial Commodities in "Tender is the Night"', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 8 (2010), pp. 130-159.

Kimber, Gerri, *Katherine Mansfield and the Art of the Short Story* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

King, Mae, 'The Politics of Sexual Stereotypes', *The Black Scholar* 4 (1973), pp. 12-23.

King, Stephen and Payne, Christiana, 'The Dress of the Poor', *Textile History* 33:1 (2002), pp. 1-8.

Koppen, R. S., *Virginia Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998).

LaViolette, Forrest, and Silvert, K. H., 'A Theory of Stereotypes', *Social Forces* 29:3 (March 1951), pp. 257-262.

Lee, Hermione, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996).

Lippmann, Walter, *Public Opinion.* [Online] Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6456/pg6456.html .

Mansfield, Katherine, *Notebooks* (29 August 1921). [Online] Available at: http://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/29-aug-1921 .

Marinis, Fabrizio de', *Velvet* (Milan: Idea Books, 1994).

Marshik,Celia, *At the Mercy of their Clothes. Modernism, the Middlebrow and British Garment Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).
'The Modern(ist) Mackintosh, *Modernism/Modernity* 19:1 (January 2012), pp. 43-71.

McAuliffe, Mary, *When Paris Sizzled* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

McBrinn, Joseph, 'Queer hobbies: Ernest Thesiger and Interwar Embroidery', *Textile* 15:3 (2017), pp. 292-323.

McCarthy, Jeffrey Mathes, *Green Modernism. Nature and the English Novel, 1900 to 1930* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

McDougald, Elise Johnson, 'The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation', *The Survey* 53 (1925), p. 689.

McDowell, Deborah E., 'Introduction' to *Quicksand and Passing,* ed. by Deborah E. McDowell (USA: Rutgers University Press*,* 1991), pp. ix-xxxv.

McLoughlin, Kate, *The Modernist Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

Miller, Daniel, 'Introduction', in *Clothing as Material Culture,* ed. by Susanne Küchler and Daniel Miller (London: Berg, 2005).

Mintler, Catherine R., 'From Aesthete to Gangster: The Dandy Figure in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald', *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 8 (2010), pp. 104-129.

Mgadmi, Mahassen 'Black Women's Identity: Stereotypes, Respectability and Passionless (1890-1930)', *Revue LISA* 7:1 (2009), pp. 40-55.

Milhaupt, Terry Satsuki, *Kimono* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016).

Morton, Patricia, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1991).

Nebeker, Helen, E., 'The Pear Tree: Sexual Implications in Katherine Mansfield's "Bliss"', *Modern Fiction Studies* 18:4 (Winter 1972).

Newton, Esther, 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman', *Signs* 9:4, The Lesbian Issue (Summer 1984), pp. 557-575.

Nicholson, Virginia, *Among the Bohemians* (London: Penguin, 2003).

Nicolson, Nigel, *Portrait of a Marriage* (London: Orion Books Ltd., 2004).

Nicklas, Charlotte, '"It is the Hat that Matters the Most": Hats, Propriety, and Fashion in British Fiction, 1890-1930', *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* 51:1 (2017), pp. 78-102.

Nicholson, Claire, 'But Woolf was a Sophisticated Observer of Fashion …: Virginia Woolf, Clothing and Contradiction', in *Contradictory Woolf,* ed. by S. Bolaki and D. Ryan (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

Okumura, Sayaka, 'Women Knitting: Domestic Activity, Writing and Distance in Virginia Woolf's Fiction', *English Studies* 89:2 (2008), pp. 166-181.

Oliver, Sophie, 'Fashion in Jean Rhys/Jean Rhys in Fashion', *Modernist Cultures* 11:3 (2016), pp. 312-330.

Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

Oram, Alison, *Her Husband was a Woman! Woman's gender-crossing in modern British popular culture* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007).

Orr, Alexandra, *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1891).

Oxford English Dictionary. [Online] Available at: https://www.oed.com .

Parkins, Ilya, 'Fashion', *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Culture,* ed. by Celia Marshik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 96-110.
'Introduction: Fashion and the Feminist Politics of the Present', *Australian Feminist Studies* 33:98 (December 2018) pp. 423-427.

Parsons, Deborah, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Pastoureau, Michel, *Black. The History of a Colour* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).
Blue. The History of a Colour (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).
Green. The History of a Colour (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014).
Red. The History of a Colour (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017).
Yellow. The History of a Colour (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

Perryman, Laura, *The Colour Bible* (London: ILEX, 2021).

Pettigrew, Neil, 'The Beautiful Miss Pettigrews', *The British Art Journal* 15:1 (Autumn 2014), pp. 3-15.

Plock, Vike Martina, *Modernism, Fashion and Interwar Women Writers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

Port, Cynthia, '"Ages are the Stuff!": the traffic in ages in interwar Britain', *NWSA Journal* 18:1 (Spring 2006), pp. 1-18.
'"Money for the night is coming": Jean Rhys and Gendered Economies of Ageing', *Women: A Cultural Review* 12:2 (2001), pp. 204-217.

Primamore, Elizabeth, 'A Don, Virginia Woolf, the masses, and the case of Miss Kilman', *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 9:2 (1998), pp. 121-137.

Qian, Zhaoming, *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

Reed, Susan, 'Is your governess really a spy?', *British Library*. *European Studies Blog* (7 November 2014). [Online] Available at: https://blogs.bl.uk/european/2014/11/is-your-governess-really-a-spy.html.

Rees, Kathy, 'Worsted, Weave and Web: The Cultural Struggles of the Fictional Knitting-Woman', *E-rea* 16:1 (2018).

Renk, Kathleen Williams, '"Blackberrying in the Sun"? Modernism and the Ageing Woman in Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight,* Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent', Women: A Cultural Review* 27:3 (2016), pp. 317-328.

Ribeyrol, Charlotte, 'John Singer Sargent and the *fin de siècle* Culture of Mauve', *Visual Culture in Britain* 19:1 (2018), pp. 6-26.

Rocamora, Agnes and Smelik, Anneke, *Thinking Through Fashion* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016).

Rodriguez, Laura Maria Lojo, 'Contradiction and Ambivalence: Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetic Experience in 'The Duchess and the Jeweller'', *The Journal of English Studies* 3 (2001-2), pp. 115-129.

Rolley, Katrina, 'The Dress of Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge', *Feminist Review* 35 (Summer 1990), pp. 54-66.

Rosenfeld, Natania, 'Links into fences: The subtext of class division in *Mrs Dalloway', Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 9:2 (1998), p. 139-160.

Rutter, Esther, *This Golden Fleece: A Journey Through Britain's Knitted History* (London: Granta, 2019).

Sarsfield, Rachel, 'Cassandra's Worms: Unravelling the Threads of Virginia Woolf's Lepidoptera Imagery', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies. Femininity and Subjectivity* 9:1 (Spring 2003), pp. 101-117.

Saunders, Judith, 'Moral Stain: Literary Allusion and Female Sexuality in "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street"', *Studies in Short Fiction* 15:2 (Spring 1978), pp. 139-144.

Savas, Akiko, 'Dilute to Taste: Kimonos for the British market at the beginning of the twentieth century', *International Journal of Fashion Studies* 4:2 (2017), pp. 157-181.

Sharvit, Yael, 'The Puzzle of Free Indirect Discourse', *Linguistics and Philosophy* 31:3 (2008), pp. 353-395.

Sheehan, Elizabeth M., *Modernism a la Mode. Fashion and the ends of literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

Shrimpton, Jayne, *Fashion in the 1920s* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2013).

Simmel, Georg, 'Fashion', *International Quarterly* 10 (1904), pp. 130-155. [Online] Available at: http://modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Fashion_1904.pdf .

Simpson, Kathryn, 'Pearl-diving: Inscriptions of Desire and Creativity in H.D. and Woolf', *Journal of Modern Literature* 27:4 (Summer 2004), pp. 37-58.

Slater, Stephan, 'Prostitutes and popular history: notes on the "underworld"', *Crime, History and Societies* 13:1 (2009), pp. 25-48.

Souhami, Diana, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (London: Quercus, 2013).

Sowinska, Alicia, 'Dialectics of the Banana Skirt: The Ambiguities of Josephine Baker's Self-Representation', *MFS* 19 (Fall 2005–Spring 2006), pp. 51-72.

Spalding, Frances, *Duncan Grant: A Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1998).

St Clair, Kassia, *The Golden Thread. How Fabric Changed History* (London: John Murray (Publishers), 2018).
The Secret Lives of Colour (London: John Murray (Publishers), 2018).

Steele, Valerie, 'Chanel In Context', in *Chic Thrills: a fashion reader,* ed. by Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson (London: Pandora, 1992), pp. 118-126.
Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Thacker, Andrew, *Moving Through Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

Tomalin, Claire, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (London: Viking, 1987).

Trubowitz, Lara, 'Concealing Leonard's Nose: Virginia Woolf, Modernist Antisemitism, and "The Duchess and the Jeweller"', *Twentieth-Century Literature* 54:3 (Fall 2008), pp. 273-306.

Turney, Jo, 'Making Love with Needles: Knitted Objects as Signs of Love?', *Textile. The Journal of Cloth and Culture* 10:3 (2012), pp. 302-311.

Vainshtein, Olga, 'Dandyism, Visual Games, and the Strategies of Representation', in *The Men's Fashion Reader,* ed. by Peter McNeil and Vicki Karaminas (Oxford: Berg, 2009).

Veblen, Thorstein, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Vincent, Susan J., 'Gloves in the Early Twentieth Century: An Accessory After the Fact', *Journal Of Design History* 25:2 (2012), pp. 190-205.

Wachman, Gay, 'Pink Icing and a Narrow Bed: Mrs Dalloway and Lesbian History', *Virginia Woolf and the Arts: Selected Papers from the Sixth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf,* ed. by Diane F. Gillespie and Leslie K. Hankins (New York: Pace University Press, 1997), pp. 344-350.

Walker, Rafael, 'Nella Larsen Reconsidered: The Trouble with Desire in *Quicksand* and *Passing', MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the US* 41:1 (Spring 2016), pp. 165-192.

Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew, 'The Creation and Expressions of Identity: Roman', in *Classical Archaeology,* ed. by Susan E. Alcock and Robin Osbourne (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012).

Warwick, Alexandra and Dani Cavallaro, *Fashioning the Frame. Boundaries, Dress and the Body* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

Watt, Judith 'The Lonely Princess of Bohemia', *The Guardian* (18 November 2000). [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2000/nov/18/weekend7.weekend2 .

Way, Elizabeth, 'Dressing to Pass during the Harlem Renaissance: Fashion in the Novels of Jessie Redmon Fauset and Nella Larsen', *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* (2020), pp. 1-32.

Welter, Barbara, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860', *American Quarterly* 18:2 (Summer 1966), pp. 151-174.

White, Deborah Gray, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* (Ontario: Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1985).

Whitworth, Michael H., 'Woolf, Context, and Contradiction', in *Contradictory Woolf,* ed. by Stella Bolaki and Derek Ryan (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

Wicke, Jennifer, 'Mrs Dalloway Goes to Market: Woolf, Keynes, and Modern Markets', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 28:1 (Autumn 1994), pp. 5-23.

Wilde, Oscar, 'Letter to the Editor – Fashions in Dress', *Daily Telegraph and Courier,* 3rd February 1918.
'London Models', *English Illustrated Magazine* (1889). [Online] Available at: http://bookanista.com/london-models .

Wilson, Elizabeth, *Adorned in Dreams* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

Wood, Alice, *Modernism and Modernity in British Women's Magazines* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2020).

Wood, Olivia, ‘A Diamond and a Tropic Gale: Reexamining Bisexuality in *Mrs Dalloway*’, *Journal of Bisexuality*, 18:3 (2018), pp. 382-394.

Worth, Rachel, *Fashion and Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).