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DRESSING FOR TELEVISION

Costume, Fashion and Seriality

by

Josette Margarethe Wolthuis

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**Declaration**

This thesis is entirely the product of my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university. The case study of *Masters of Sex* (Showtime 2013-2016) was also the subject of my 2015 Research Master’s dissertation at Radboud University in the Netherlands and *Suits* (USA Network 2011-2019) was the subject of an essay, but my understanding of the material has changed during the PhD project and my writing about it in this thesis belongs firmly to the present research project.

Some of the interviews with costume designers conducted during this research project (with Ane Crabtree, Daniel Lawson, Arianne Phillips, Michele Clapton and the second interview with Ray Holman) were arranged because I have written biographies about them for the forthcoming *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Film and Television Costume Design* (edited by Deborah Nadoolman Landis). This work is currently in the editing stage. All interviewees agreed in advance of the interview with my using their words for both the encyclopaedic biographies and this PhD thesis (and related publications).

I wrote and published a review of *EUPOP 2016: The 5th International Conference of the European Popular Culture Association (EPCA)*, Paris, 20-22 July 2016, for Vol. 5, No. 2 of the Intellect journal *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, in which I dedicate one paragraph to my own conference paper based on research for Chapter 3 of this thesis. In the actual thesis chapter, however, I show that my thinking has developed since.

An article based on content from Chapter 3 focusing on *Call the Midwife* (BBC 2012–) is due to be published as a chapter in the forthcoming Manchester University Press book series *Moments in Television* in the volume *Substance/Style* (edited by Sarah Cardwell, Jonathan Bignell and Lucy Fife Donaldson).
Abstract

Asking how we can understand television through the way its people are dressed, this thesis aims to carve out a new field of study and enrich existing interdisciplinary scholarship by arguing for the key role of costume design and fashion in the meaning-making process of serial television drama and by suggesting new ways to understand their value in terms of style, aesthetics and cultural expression. This project adopts a mixed-methodology approach linking textual analysis of selected case studies with the study of extra-textual material and interviews with costume designers. The chapters of the thesis each offer a different perspective on the subject to understand the workings of costume, fashion and dress in British and American television in relation to television’s medium specificity (seriality, address, cultural understandings and technology), cultural notions of dress and fashion, and questions of aesthetics, gender, realism and authenticity.

The thesis discusses seemingly ‘transparent’ as well as more ‘spectacular’ uses of costume and fashion on television and argues that this needs to be understood differently than in film. This becomes especially clear in examining how costume and fashion underpin seriality. Chapter 1 establishes the groundwork by outlining key issues in the conceptualisation of clothing on television from the 1980s to the 2010s. It re-evaluates assumptions about television and its uses of costume and fashion that have discouraged critical attention. Chapter 2 addresses how crime and legal dramas tread the line between realism and dramatization in the gendered professional dressing of their characters. Chapter 3 argues that style and substance are inextricable in television’s creation of meaning, focusing on period costume in recent dramas set in the 1950s-60s. Costume, fashion and dress codes on television structure its meanings and need to be studied as a key form of cultural expression. This thesis begins that work.
Introduction

Do you know who designed the costumes of the television series you watch? Do you take note of what characters are wearing? Can you imagine the characters wearing completely different outfits – would you understand them the same? Honest answers to these questions, which I ask scholars, students and anyone else who enquires about this project, tend to be negative. However, we cannot fully understand television texts without understanding the clothes that people wear in them. This thesis argues that costume, fashion and cultural notions of dress form a key structuring component of dramatic television texts and are crucial to their meaning-making process. This is a component that has remained overlooked; whilst there is a considerable body of work available on the topic of costume and fashion in film, there is no such field in Television Studies. Due to the specific characteristics and cultural connotations of this medium, costume design on television tends to be understood superficially either as ‘just’ fashion or as ‘just clothes’. Telling people about my project always yields the question if I look at *Game of Thrones* (HBO 2011-2019), *Mad Men* (AMC 2007-2015) or *Downton Abbey* (ITV 2010-2015); the assumption is that either there is nothing to study or it must be ‘costume drama’ in period, heritage or fantasy texts (i.e. spectacle). The attributes of television make clothing work differently from film – it works with different narrative structures, expectations, cultural values, modes of address and relationships to the audience. This makes costume and fashion rich with meaning, even when it looks ‘ordinary’ or ‘everyday’. Joining the development of increasing attention to style and aesthetics in Television Studies, this project aims to carve out a new field within the discipline and offer new tools and criteria to understand how costuming structures meaning within and across serial television dramas.

To define the terms clothing, dress, costume and fashion: ‘Clothing’ broadly refers to the articles of dress that cover people’s bodies in everyday life, in any context and around the world. ‘Dress’ encompasses all bodily adornments that communicate an individual’s identity as embedded in a cultural context. ‘Costume’, derived from ‘custom’, refers to the ensemble of garments and accessories for actors, dancers or other people dressing up for an occasion or performance; trading the everyday for a performance identity. ‘Fashion’ is the most complex to define. In a sense, fashion, as Tim Edwards writes, ‘focuses upon socially approved or desired forms of dress’. In a broader sense, as Joanne Entwistle attempts to capture its spirit: ‘Fashionable dress

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1 Eicher 2010: 151-152; Entwistle 2000a.
is dress that embodies the latest aesthetic.\footnote{Entwistle 2000a: 1. See also: Munich 2011: 5. Entwistle stresses that fashion and dress are crucially linked (3; 40-52).} We speak of a ‘dress code’ when there is, Fred Davis explains, a ‘binding ligament in the shared understandings that comprise a sphere of discourse and, hence, its associated social arrangements’.\footnote{Davis 1994: 5.} Following Umberto Eco’s semiotics, Davis argues that ‘clothing styles and the fashions that influence them over time constitute something approximating a code’.\footnote{Ibid. 6; 8.} Looks or codes can mean the same across different television programmes, creating something of a code within costuming. Codes are context-dependent; as Davis writes, ‘[i]f… the very same apparel that “said” one thing last year will “say” something quite different today and yet another thing next year’, and ‘what some combination of clothes “means” will vary tremendously depending upon the identity of the wearer, the occasion, the place, the company, and (…) the wearers’ and viewers’ moods’.\footnote{Ibid. 6, 8.} He is one of several scholars that have approached fashion or dress as a language.\footnote{E.g. Barthes [1967] 2010; 2006; Lurie 1981; Barnard 2002.} Costume consists of clothing, dress, dress codes and/or fashion and functions in dialogue with the medium in which it exists and expresses itself. The medium of television has clothing, dress, dress codes, fashion, and, as the focus of this thesis: costume design. Clothes on television form a potent mix of costume, fashion and dress codes. Cultural understandings of all of these concepts, in dialogue with our understandings of television itself, underpin the way we make sense of people on the small screen.

This thesis subscribes to Television Studies as a field constituting, as Jonathan Nichols-Pethick references Jonathan Gray and Amanda Lotz, ‘work that understands television as a whole (…) as a complex set of cultural, social, political, industrial and aesthetic practices that “conceives television as a repository for meanings and a site where cultural values are articulated”’.\footnote{Nichols-Pethick recalls in his foreword to Ruth McElroy’s Cops on the Box; Gray & Lotz 2012: 22, quoted in Nichols-Pethick 2017: viii.} Television’s function as a site through which meanings and values are communicated into people’s everyday lives and living rooms, in line with its history as a medium transmitting far away events to nearby screens, means that its relationship to ‘the real’ is articulated more strongly than in cinema. This has a range of critical implications (which are further discussed in the Review of Literature), but whilst this thesis challenges the idea that television is a mere window on the world, the expectations television yields of realism, everydayness, regularity and a familiarity of understanding are crucial to how we interpret its texts. My project focuses on the way meanings and cultural values are articulated through costume and
fashion in and beyond serial dramas, evaluating what such a study contributes to the critical development of the field. Since regularity and the repeated negotiation of meanings in broadcasting form an important way through which cultural values become known and potentially challenged (which also distinguishes it from film), the analytic focus of this thesis in looking at the case studies lies on the serial (or series’) implications of dressing. In fictional television, ‘serial’ means that the narrative is divided across episodes and progresses over time, but I also take seriality in dressing for television more broadly to mean the articulation of meanings over multiple scenes, episodes, seasons and series (which is more coherent, designed and structured in long-term serial narratives than in episodic series). The success of serial television, as Glen Creeber indicates, relies on its balance between continuity and progression.9 Costume and fashion strategies are one of the main ways for television to signal temporality and balance continuity/repetition/familiarity against the anticipation of change: they situate the who, when and where, and convey narrative rhythm.

Traditionally, costume and fashion design are perceived as distinct practices.10 Jane Gaines in her foundational article ‘Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman’s Story’ (1990), focusing on the production and meaning-making process of costume in classical Hollywood cinema, argues that costume is designed to serve ‘the higher purpose of narrative’ and should not ‘distract’ from it.11 As Drake Stutesman later explains:

The key [difference] is that costume design is a working craft whose purpose is not to serve or even expand a style but to serve a film. It must express something far beyond the outfit: the costume designer must use clothes to create basic movie elements. They have to meet extreme demands such as coping with the cinematographer’s lighting, the dimensions of an actor’s body, the story’s character, and that unique cinematic feature – the close-up – all without being obtrusive. (…)

In a sense, clothes are what one sweats in (a life), fashion is the sweep of a Look (a lifestyle), and costume design is an industrial illusion of both (a desire for life).12

Although the last statement suggests that costume design merges clothing and fashion, this is an ‘illusion’ since it primarily has to serve character and narrative and remain otherwise unobtrusive. Hollywood costume designer Deborah Nadoolman

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Landis strongly feels that ‘[f]ashion and costumes are not synonymous; they are antithetical’.\textsuperscript{13} She echoes Gaines’ notion that costume has to remain subservient.

However, in \textit{Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies} (1997), Stella Bruzzi challenges Gaines’ theory by arguing that ‘costume exists as a discourse not wholly dependent on the structures of narrative and character for signification’.\textsuperscript{14} Bruzzi has shifted the attention to how obtrusive fashion can intervene into character and narrative and forge meaning beyond script; how costume can \textit{impose} rather than only absorb meaning. Screen fashion can operate as meaningful aesthetic discourse; clothes are imbued with meaning both within and outside of the onscreen text and narrative. Costume designers are now increasingly recognised for their ‘signature’ or ‘fashionable’ work and collaborate with fashion brands to turn onscreen designs into buyable fashion and vice versa. The relationship between costume and fashion is perhaps becoming more symbiotic – or just more visible. Costume, fashion and their relationship do however work differently in television, as this thesis teases out.

There is also disagreement amongst costume and fashion designers as to how separate these areas are. During this research project, I have interviewed ten costume designers who work in the United Kingdom and/or the United States: Ralph Wheeler-Holes, Nigel Egerton, Ray Holman, Rhona Russell, Alexandra Caulfield, Maggie Donnelly, Ane Crabtree, Arianne Phillips, Daniel Lawson and Michele Clapton.\textsuperscript{15} None of these designers have a degree in costume design for film or television – more than half of them studied fine arts and/or theatre (design); the rest started in fashion and stylist work, but half of those who studied fashion became disillusioned with the commercial/consumerist and nepotist character of the industry and veered towards textiles or theatre instead. Some of these designers are still active in the fashion world as well as in costume design, and whilst all of them see these as distinct practices, a few feel that fashion has a significant role in costume design, more than just because the character is interested in fashion; more directly, this is because they believe that costume and fashion can be symbiotic. As Holman discussed, it is a cyclic process: whilst costume designers have some garments made, they also go to stores to choose existing clothes that suit the characters, which become relatable through viewers’ engagement with the characters, and then the garments can become aspirational

\textsuperscript{13} Landis 2003: 8, as cited in Warner 2014: 2. Landis believes that, as opposed to in fashion design, the hand of the costume designer should always remain invisible; costumes must serve the director’s story.

\textsuperscript{14} Bruzzi 1997: xvi. Following her earlier essays on Jane Campion’s \textit{The Piano} in 1993; 1995.

\textsuperscript{15} See List of Interviews. Due to geographical restraints, I have interviewed half of them in person and spoke to the rest via Skype, with the addition of phone recordings and emails. Some interviews were arranged as part of my contribution to the upcoming \textit{Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Film and Television Costume Design}, during which I had the opportunity to ask the interviewees questions for this thesis.
fashions. Phillips felt that designing the costumes for fashion designer Tom Ford’s directorial debut *A Single Man* (2009) and his second film *Nocturnal Animals* (2016) had little to do with fashion, but that their working relationship benefited from the fact that clothing is part of Ford’s vernacular. In Phillips’ work as Madonna’s personal stylist (which she has done for the past 22 years), costume, fashion and stylist work are symbiotic; she has worked with Madonna in the star’s work as actress, director, on tours and for photoshoots. Lawson has launched his own fashion label under 35DL and works with fashion brands after the success of his fashion for professional women in *The Good Wife* (CBS 2009-2016), which, although they are different practices, are both part of his philosophy to break the mould for women’s professional dressing. Still, the most common response from costume designers about their visibility and the relationship of costume to fashion is that if they do their job right, viewers do not notice the design process—frustrating as the lack of recognition is—and that their design practice is not directed at influencing fashion. Yet, intended or not, several case studies in this thesis demonstrate that it often does.

Conversely, costume is shunned in the world of fashion. The worst critique a contestant on the fashion design reality competition show *Project Runway* (Bravo 2004–) can get is that their design is ‘costume-y’. This accusation is fired at multiple contestants in the 2012 season’s ‘avant-garde challenge’ (10:12). Discussing what avant-garde means, contestant Melissa knows: ‘Not a costume.’ The other contestants agree, but when presenter and advisor Tim Gunn first enters the workroom, he warns Fabio: ‘The coat’s looking borderline costume and I say that because it looks like it’s stepped out of the past.’ Fabio says in an interview shot: ‘[It’s] the one thing that none of us want to hear: it’s borderline a costume.’ During the models’ fitting, Christopher admits that his ‘Enchanted Queen’ gown design is costume-y but that it is gorgeous – to stress the conjunction. When after the runway presentation the judges assess all the looks, Christopher says he did not mean to ‘go costume’, but Michael Kors condescendingly judges that it is in the costume territory. Similarly, Kors notes that the shoulders of the jacket in Dimitri’s tailored ensemble make it costume-y, since they are too wide. There is a thin line between what is considered fashion-forward and what is rejected for being costume-y. Some designs reference past styles and are judged as a fashionable comeback; others are dismissed for looking like period costumes. Many designs are utterly unwearable but considered fashion; yet others are, too, but are considered costume or fancy dress, not fashion.

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16 Ray Holman, 11-04-2019. He also argues however that in the process, the costume designer becomes invisible.
17 Interview with Arianne Phillips, 21-04-2019.
18 Ibid.
19 Interview with Daniel Lawson, 03-05-2019.
If an outfit shows too much identity, it is too costume-y for fashion design; if it is too conspicuously a Look, it is too fashion-y for costume design. Such distinctions dominate the discussion, yet their boundaries are unclear. Clothes in fictional shows are often taken for granted if they seamlessly and inconspicuously merge with the character’s identity, despite the design work that has gone into the outfit; if it is a fashionable look, then it risks being judged as style over substance. This is a generalisation, of course, but there is a supposed distinction between costume and fashion which is further complicated for television due to the expectations and connotations attached to this medium regarding its relationship to the live, the real, repetition and the everyday. The ways that different levels of style and stylishness are understood have to do with cultural connotations of dress as well as with cultural connotations of television, which need to be interrogated in order to understand how they articulate meanings. This thesis contests binary perceptions of the concepts, as well as the binary of style versus substance, to more productively study how dressing for television—whether costume or fashion; whether transparent or spectacular—anchors the who, what and when of the texts and negotiates cultural expression.

This thesis adopts a mixed-methodology approach linking textual analysis of a selection of case studies with the study of extra-textual material and interviews with costume designers. This method serves the aim to offer a sustained start to the study of television costume as well as to enrich existing interdisciplinary scholarship with new means to understand this cultural expression. The case studies selected for this research project are mainly serial television dramas from the United Kingdom and the United States that have aired between the 1980s and the 2010s. This selection comprises a range of genres and styles, but deliberately remains limited to the Anglo-American context. Whilst I am aware of the problem of Western centrism in Television Studies and related academic fields, and—having grown up watching Dutch and German television—of the often exclusive and exclusionary focus on Anglo-American case studies in key literature, this thesis cannot solve that problem at the same time as solving the lack of study of television costume. Since there is little work available on the topic of television costume at all, in order to make a notable contribution to the existing body of knowledge, the thesis has to show first how the study of costume and fashion can engage with and enhance the predominant strands of research in the field – which are UK and US focused. In other words, to carve out a new field one must engage first with the surrounding areas that are already widely known. Once there exists a solid body of work on this topic, scholars can branch out to lesser known, less Western-centric texts and nuance the criteria for that context. The expected texts, Game of Thrones, Mad Men and Downton Abbey, are not my
focus of study. Some of the chosen case studies for this thesis are texts that have been widely written about but for which the function of clothing has remained underexplored (or unproductively understood); others are more neglected texts that have so far received little attention for their style and aesthetics. In this way, the thesis includes minority examples based on lack of acknowledgement within the dominant field rather than based on minority origin. Using both would undermine the intention of showing how attention to clothing contributes to television scholarship.

As explained in the Review of Literature and in Chapter 1, the periodisation of analysing television from the 1980s to the 2010s is the most productive for this thesis’ aims because important shifts in technology, aesthetics and cultural appeal from the 1980s onwards have to this day determined how the medium and clothing within it have become understood, and, as a result, scholarship has developed along with these shifts. Going back to before this generation will be less useful to future generations of scholarship. This is not to suggest that there was any radical change between 1979 and 1980, or that television from before this time does not require much attention to costume and fashion; in fact, Chapter 3 challenges a similar issue where it comes to contemporary representations that see the 1950s as radically different from the 60s. Any choice of periodisation seems arbitrary, but this choice is motivated by how to best produce knowledge of the function of clothing on television both in a particular time and over longer periods of time; across episodes and seasons, across several decades. The period chosen is wide enough to be able to show how meanings develop over time whilst remaining narrow enough to be able to analyse closely.

The Review of Literature will argue that Television Studies is now at a similar moment in its academic development as Film Studies was when studies of costume and fashion became part of that field. Since this is by definition a multidisciplinary study, the Review will explore the theoretical frameworks that need to intersect to underpin the understanding of clothing’s function in this medium: critical studies in television, mainly regarding the history and character of studies in design, style and aesthetics; studies of costume and fashion in cinema; recent research that touches upon television costume; and work on relevant periods and styles of fashion and the wider theorisation of dress. This serves to position my research project in relation to the available body of existing literature, to explain how and why costume has so far remained unacknowledged/underexplored in scholarship and to start to suggest a more productive approach to the topic.

Chapter 1 will challenge the stubborn assumptions about the look of television that assume it is either ‘ordinary’ and ‘transparent’, where clothing is perceived as invisible and self-evident, or ‘spectacular’ and thus style over substance, where
clothing is co-blamed for this judgement. Instead, this chapter and the overall thesis suggest that even when costume and fashion are at their most transparent or spectacular, they make significant contributions to the serial meaning-making process of and beyond the text. Whilst the focus of this thesis lies on fictional texts (in this chapter: *Miami Vice* (NBC 1984–1990) and *Brideshead Revisited* (Granada 1981)), Chapter 1 also explores what might be gained by applying the tools and criteria offered by the thesis to study the serial qualities of dress in non-fictional texts (the news and magazine programmes *Today* (NBC 1952–) and *This Morning* (ITV 1988–)) as well. The chapter questions how it is that we ‘get’ people on screen due to the way they are dressed, and the cultural assumptions that guide our understanding of them. The nature of television as defined by Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch as a cultural forum is key here: the idea that meanings transfer across different texts and the importance of the serial nature of the programmes.20

Chapter 2 focuses on how costuming structures the balance between realism and dramatization in crime and legal drama series, and how this relates to notions of gender, fashion and professional dress. The programmes discussed are *The Good Wife* (CBS 2009–2016), *Scandal* (ABC 2012–2018), *Suits* (USA Network 2011–2019), *Broadchurch* (ITV 2013–2017), *Scott & Bailey* (ITV 2011–2016) and *The Fall* (BBC 2013–2016), juxtaposing what are known as ‘stylish’ American dramas to ‘gritty’ British crime dramas to ultimately challenge the supposed distinction between them in terms of the function of style by showing how costume and fashion construct the serial meaning-making process of either type of programming. In so doing, the chapter discusses a range of possible strategies to structure seriality and strike the text’s particular balance between realism and the dramatic through costume design and the use of cultural connotations of fashion and dress.

Chapter 3 looks at the meaning-making process of period costumes in recent serial dramas that are set in the 1950s–60s, questioning the style versus substance binary, prettiness versus the problematic social issues the series deal with, and related issues of authenticity and nostalgia. The two case studies of this chapter are *Call the Midwife* (BBC 2012–) and *Masters of Sex* (Showtime 2013–2016), with reference to similar texts and existing work on *Mad Men*. The chapter finalises my critique on the transparent versus the style over substance conceptualisations of television costume and offers more productive ways to understand the texts’ style and aesthetics.

Across the thesis, I argue that the specific meanings made through dressing for television are at the heart of the medium’s form and address.

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Review of Literature

Television Studies is a relatively young, but rapidly expanding and maturing academic field. Several factors in the nature and development of the discipline have discouraged scholars from analysing or even discussing costume and fashion, along with other aspects of style and design. Presently, however, the field sees an increasing attention to style, design and aesthetics in relation to their narrative implications. In this sense, Television Studies is at a similar moment in the development of its discipline as Film Studies was when the study of costume and fashion earned its place in that area. Now is the time for the study of television costume and fashion to commence and earn a solid position in this area of scholarship.

Seeing through television costume

Since scholars in the 1950s started to recognise the cultural force of the medium, television has been approached from a variety of social sciences and humanities perspectives, eventually leading to the development of a distinct academic discipline. Although television has most often been studied only as part of studies concerned with other cultural output, and scholars have to this day not reached a consensus on the definition and boundaries of the object of study, by the end of the twentieth century Charlotte Brunsdon in the UK and Lynn Spigel in the US were able to confidently identify the discipline through the set of debates and theories that had since the 1970s started to form the contours of this new field.\(^{21}\) Television Studies has since seen fundamental changes and an increasing institutionalisation, but the field has remained overshadowed by several assumptions about the medium that have problematized the critical study of its style, design, aesthetics and, subsequently, costuming. One of these assumptions is that television, as a form of communication, provides a ‘transparent’ view onto the world; another is that its small images are not capable of sophisticated expression; and yet another suggests that as a product of popular culture and mass consumption, television is essentially a medium for leisure and pleasure, rather than also a powerful, even artistic form of visual culture.\(^{22}\) Scholars have dealt with such issues in the development of the discipline to this day.

In the year 1956, in a formative period for television in Britain, a designer for the BBC named F.H.K. Henrion stood up to the Royal Society of Arts to disclaim the

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\(^{22}\) See, for example, Jaramillo 2013: 69-70: referencing Herbert Zettl, she writes that television’s status has to do with its commercial imperative and reputation as a device that transmits ready-made messages, as well as, she adds, ‘the embrace of the medium by the field of mass communication’; the fact that liveness meant a constraint on visual and aural quality; and that television technology and screens used to be poor quality.
‘intellectually snobbish attitude’ towards the television medium. Henrion’s paper exemplifies an exceptional, far-sighted attempt to draw serious attention to television style and the contribution of the designer to the medium. A similar paper was given by BBC designer Clifford Hatts in 1975, in which he dissects the work of the designer in the television industry. Yet, despite these indications that the design and ‘look’ of television were early on recognised (if by few) as a sophisticated expression, in the present day the analysis of television design and style is still not self-evident. Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock write as editors of the volume *Television Aesthetics and Style* in 2013 that discussion of stylistic choices still often remains absent from critical work in the field. Work by scholars such as John T. Caldwell, Helen Wheatley and those contributing to Jacobs and Peacock’s volume does indicate that there has been a sustained interest in the subject. The journey to this awareness, which (along with work on film costume) paved the way for this study of television costume and fashion, has taken many obstacles along the way.

In his foundational 1974 work *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Raymond Williams describes how he felt estranged by what he termed the ‘flow’ of watching commercial television: the experience of consuming a continuous succession of images which did not seem to have a fixed focus, centre, beginning or end. Television to Williams seemed overwhelming, ephemeral and difficult to classify. In 1978, John Fiske and John Hartley’s *Reading Television*, following after Horace Newcomb’s *TV: The Most Popular Art*, was one of the first scholarly works to take television seriously as a subject for study and examine the medium’s signs, codes and functions as a language or text that can be decoded. This semiotic, structuralist analysis encouraged scholars and students to see not only what the television image shows us, but also how it is constructed. Fiske and Hartley posited that television’s sense of familiarity (‘everybody knows what it is like to watch television’), rather than pre-empting critical study, is precisely what makes it an important and complex object for academic research. The sense that television is perhaps too familiar, too popular for serious study has remained problematic for its status to this day, along with the long-held assumption that it is a medium for *transmission* rather than *expression*. Fiske states in his 1987 work *Television Culture* that it was seen as ‘an

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24 According to the chairman, Henrion demonstrated ‘the far-sightedness and the sense of his times to apply his mind to the problem of television’. Ibid. 439. In a discussion below this section, audience ask questions about TV’s relation to cinema.
26 Jacobs & Peacock 2013.
29 Fiske & Hartley 1978: 3.
essentially realistic medium because of its ability to carry a socially convincing sense of the real'.\(^{30}\) Television has long been (and sometimes still is) understood as a window on the world, rather than as a critique or revision of it.\(^{31}\) The belief that television provides a transparent view onto the world or a mirror reflecting its reality back to the viewer adheres to what media theorists have called the ‘transparency fallacy’.\(^{32}\) Fiske aimed, as per tradition in cultural studies in the 80s, to expose the ideological construct through which television produces a ‘reality’ rather than reflects it. Yet, notions of realism and flow have remained persistent and cause elements of style and design to be perceived of as artless or guileless components of the image. Clothes appear as a seemingly self-evident aspect of television’s reality, whilst their significance and underlying design remain invisible.

Scholars from the 80s onwards became increasingly concerned with television’s medium-specific characteristics. In Visible Fictions, John Ellis refines Williams’ concept of flow by introducing the notion of ‘segmentation’, suggesting that television flow can be broken down into smaller fragments.\(^{33}\) Ellis argues that broadcast television, as a medium for domestic use (placed in the corner of the family home), had developed a set of distinctive aesthetics to address its viewers.\(^{34}\) Television was composed of sequential units of image and sound and had to use strategies such as stripped-down but fast-cut images, loud sounds, close-ups and direct address to constantly draw the viewer’s attention to the screen. Ellis famously theorised that whereas cinema invites the viewer to attentively ‘gaze’ at the screen, television ‘engages the look and the glance rather than the gaze’.\(^{35}\) Television was in this era seen foremost as a medium of ‘immediacy’ or ‘liveness’, implying it is ‘transmitted and received in the same moment that it is produced’.\(^{36}\) Such theories suggest that television consisted of fleeting images produced for small, low-definition screens, which, as opposed to cinema, supposedly did not allow for much detail. The work of Williams, Fiske and Ellis has been much debated and the television form and content discussed are now from a bygone era, but these theories are still influential to the idea of television as a medium of low quality, ready-made images competing with the ostensibly superior aesthetics of cinema. Notions of transparency, immediacy and ephemerality are responsible for the lack of attention paid to costume and fashion on

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\(^{32}\) Fiske 2011: 21.
\(^{33}\) Ellis 1982; Creeber 2013: 32.
\(^{34}\) Ellis 1982: 111-144.
\(^{35}\) Ibid. 128.
\(^{36}\) Ibid. 132.
television, as they imply that clothes appear in an undistinguishable glimpse and make viewers and critics to look through style at television’s content.

In 1995, John T. Caldwell introduced the term ‘televisuality’ to describe the specific look and practice of television programming since its developments in the 80s.37 Caldwell delivered a critical view of television and the way it was studied thus far, presenting instead an analysis of style through a wide range of case studies with considerable attention to production and technology. Fiske and Caldwell addressed television style at a time when the medium was presumed not to have stylistic features worth studying,38 but the spectacular US television shows of the 80s, notably Miami Vice (NBC 1984-1990) and MTV, invalidated the attitude that television was incapable of stylistic expression. As James Lyons writes, viewers of Miami Vice did not fail to acknowledge that the show’s striking visual style was its defining feature.39 It unsettled viewers how stylistically elaborate the show was, but whilst some praised its unprecedented stylistic sophistication, others accused it of privileging style over substance or for mimicking cinema in an unsuitable medium. It may now be difficult to imagine how deeply viewers were intrigued by stylistic spectacle on television at the time. In a 1994 letter published in Sight & Sound, a critic named Adam Verney states that television could never become a spectacular medium like film, ‘probably not even when we have screens covering our living-room walls’.40 He deemed television drama from the 1990s ‘unwatchable’ because it seemed to him a poor attempt at trying to emulate cinema – a negative stance shared by many of his contemporaries. Caldwell aims to reverse this attitude in his 2005 essay ‘Welcome to the Viral Future of Cinema (Television)’, in which he argues that ‘the content on television is regularly edgier, more cinematic, and more compelling’.41 Reversing the mantra that television has become like cinema, Caldwell argues that cinema has become like television. Helen Wheatley, moreover, has more recently taken Caldwell’s work on tevisual aesthetics and his correctives of ‘glance theory’ as the point of departure for her discussion of how ‘television spectacle’ has amazed and intrigued viewers throughout the history of the medium, but has been generally ignored in television scholarship.42 It is within this context of scholarly reticence to appreciate television’s visual pleasure that, I further argue, costume and fashion have also been too easily dismissed.

37 Caldwell 1995.
40 Verney 1994: 64.
41 Caldwell 2005: 90.
42 Wheatley 2016.
The negative connotation of the phrase ‘style over substance’ illustrates a deep-rooted hierarchy between style and narrative, as critics have traditionally been more interested in questions of narrative, ideology and authorship than looks and styles. Whilst inconspicuous uses of style are often taken for granted, conspicuous aspects of style were (and still are) regarded as a ‘distraction’ which fails to fulfil mise-en-scène’s function of serving narrative realism; seen as excess rather than as a meaningful element of the image.  

The refusal by many critics to acknowledge that style has meaning (as Lyons argues for *Miami Vice*) has caused style and stylishness on television, and fashion especially, to be seen as adding only superficial value to the text. Paradoxically, then, costumes seem to be treated as either invisible, seen *through* in order to read a show’s meanings and ideological agenda, or, when they are conspicuous, as a distraction from those narratives.

Since Caldwell’s foray into the subject, Television Studies has seen extensive debates around televisual aesthetics. In her 2003 article ‘Aesthetics and Quality in Popular Television Drama’, Christine Geraghty suggests that ‘rather than looking for one set of television aesthetics, as Williams, Ellis and others have done, a more precise approach might attend to particular television categories’. She points out that earlier work on the subject by scholars such as Charlotte Brunsdon, Geoff Mulgan, Kim Schroder and Jostein Gripsrud in the 90s had not sufficiently been used for a sustained discussion of what ‘quality’ entails and how it should be evaluated, which is still a challenging question for both researchers and teachers in Television Studies. Brunsdon argues in her 1990 *Screen* article ‘Problems with Quality’ that ‘quality’ had become a ‘bad word’, and that its conservative criteria, centred around canonisation, traditional aesthetic discourse, political evaluation, often with disregard for subjectivity, were in need of interrogation. Of particular relevance to my project is Brunsdon’s discussion of *Brideshead Revisited* (Granada 1981) as a programme regularly involved in debates of quality, as this drama is a case study of Chapter 1. The text’s use of taste codes on which Brunsdon builds her argument are especially well expressed by the costumes, but a discussion of 20s fashion would in the 90s not have helped her case. Television’s status as a popular culture product has caused it to be either excluded from the arts, or, in attempts to justify its study, to be included in aesthetic discourses that neglect the specificities of the medium.

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43 See also: Wheatley 2016: 7-12, and in relation to costume, Helen Warner’s 2009; 2014 versus Jane Gaines’ 1990 work as detailed in the section ‘Spectacular costume on television’.

44 See also: Jaramillo’s 2013: 71 argument against using the term ‘cinematic’, a term which implies that television needs to be ‘saved’ from being a medium with ‘hyperstylisation or no style at all’; ‘excessive or sheer lack of style’.

45 Geraghty 2003: 25.


47 Brunsdon 1990: 67(-90).
The judgement of quality, style and aesthetics is still one of the most heavily debated subjects in the field. Yet, despite the ‘aesthetic turn’ at the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholars remain reticent to express verdicts of a programme, often obscuring value judgements altogether.48 Discussions of what criteria must determine the judgement of television change over time, but underpinning these debates is still the question to what extent television is capable of artistic expression. It seems that the split understanding that costumes either make meaning ‘at a glance’, and are thus seemingly artless or appear as a spectacle which distracts from ‘serious’ content is especially problematic for the debate on quality in television.

Similar to television, as Jeremy G. Butler reminds us, film was not recognised as an art form until it was proven able to transform reality through style, rather than merely record the world ‘as it is’.49 In Television Style, one of the few monographs on the subject, Butler sums up some of the main factors that have ‘militated against the study of style in television’.50 Indeed, as Brunsdon has explained, it was due to their mass audiences, novelty and industrial and technological infrastructures that both film and television were once excluded from the arts.51 Yet, they should not be judged according to the traditional aesthetic discourses of other arts (such as literature and the fine arts), as doing so means disregarding their medium specificity. In Brunsdon’s view, the very nature of the media allows for rather hybrid and unstable canons, if any, which perhaps did foreground issues of taste, value and judgement in screen studies, but at the same time problematized them. Television, as much as its criticism, is never neutral – and yet contemporary scholarship still struggles with the idea of television-as-transmission. Next to the aforementioned consequences this has for the characterisation of the image, the concept has also led scholars to prefer the study of the recipient’s use of the medium to the analysis of the text itself.52 Another factor in the absence of style, and, consequently, costume, in discussions of television is the academic paradigm of ‘auteurism’ that has been central to Screen Studies scholarship especially in its early formation. As Butler explains, critics considered film style ‘as a manifestation of the individual’s unique “vision”’, but since television is an industrial product involving the work of many contributors, it was difficult to define to whom the ‘genius of style’ could be attributed.53 Costume designers in particular tend to pass unnoticed within auteur theory, since the objective of their work is usually to make

49 Butler 2010.
50 Ibid. 1. Other relevant work by Butler: 2011; 2013.
51 Brunsdon 1990: 71.
52 Butler 2010: 2.
53 Ibid.
clothes *merge* with character, image and narrative. They are rarely mentioned in the credits, even though their work constructs core intrinsic meanings in television.

Glen Creeber’s work implies that it is impossible and undesirable to define an essential aesthetics of television, but that television’s aesthetic style is varied and historically situated.\(^{54}\) Online drama, he argues, forms a complex mix of new and old broadcasting forms and an enhancement of the aesthetics of early television through its re-construction of ‘the intimate screen’.\(^{55}\) This is based on Horace Newcomb’s 1974 theory of the soap opera genre’s two central components: ‘intimacy’ and ‘continuity’, indicating an intense audience involvement that was particular to television’s serial form.\(^{56}\) Although the online content Creeber discusses comprises YouTube videos, mini-series or spin-offs—not the high-end productions made for Netflix and Amazon Prime today—the notion that the distance between viewer, screen and content is dissolving has ramifications for costume design. Television of the last two decades has overcome limitations in terms of image and sound quality. Television landscapes change as technologies such as high definition, wide/plasma screens and digital online streaming for laptops, smartphones and tablets form a different relationship between viewer and image. Television’s small, high-contrast, monochrome image has been replaced by a clarity equal to that of cinema, but television still operates with its own aesthetics.\(^{57}\) As television becomes more complex in terms of serial storytelling and style, the ‘glance’ no longer suffices to consume its drama output. Contemporary television demands the viewer’s undivided attention and displays high-detail visual style. It is able to show costumes in more detail than ever before.

**Narrative form: seriality**

A key reason why costume in television drama needs to be studied as different from film is due to television’s different narrative qualities. In her 1986 article ‘Narrative Form in American Network Television’, Jane Feuer stresses the difference between the two media through a discussion of television’s narrative forms – specifically, the episodic series versus the continuing serial. Building on Ellis’ work on segmentation, in which, Feuer writes, ‘all television narrative is *serial* rather than linear’, she explains how the two distinct narrative forms (series vs. serial) do not correspond to earlier theories of cinematic narrative.\(^{58}\) Feuer also observes a general transition in

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\(^{54}\) Mainly in Creeber’s 2013 monograph.

\(^{55}\) Creeber 2011: 591-606. This is also central to his 2013 monograph, in which he traces the changes in screen aesthetics from early television to its ‘coming of age’, to increasing media convergence and web TV.

\(^{56}\) Ibid. 442.

\(^{57}\) See Jaramillo 2013 for a critique of scholars using the term ‘cinematic’ to judge television.

\(^{58}\) Feuer 1986: 102.
the 80s from the episodic sitcom series (which offers a contained story per episode) to the continuing melodramatic serial. As Robert C. Allen further explains in his work on soap opera,

True serialization – the organization of narrative and narration around the enforced and regular suspension of both textual display and reading activity – produces a very different mode of reader engagement and reader pleasure than we experience with non-serials.59

Drawing on literary theory, Allen describes how, as viewers, we move through the text – ‘from one shot, scene, sequence, or episode to the next’.60 Allen here identifies how we ‘[look] back upon the textual terrain already covered (what Iser calls retention) and [anticipate] on that basis what might lie around the next textual corner (protension)’.61 These processes occur in the institutionally imposed textual gaps between shots, scenes and sequences, which viewers fill in to understand the narrative.62 Allen distinguishes between ‘open’ and ‘closed’ serials: those that are ‘predicated upon the impossibility of ultimate closure’ and those that do work towards narrative (and ideological or moral) closure.63 Allen later extends his theory to account for all serials, including prime-time dramas, as they all ‘share the fact that their narratives are parcelled out in instalments, continuing story lines linking one instalment to the next in a narrative chain’.64

Scholars such as Glen Creeber, Michael Z. Newman and Jason Mittell have since explored the structure and workings of serial television storytelling, which relies on a balance between continuity and progression; stability and change.65 Creeber divides the narrative structures of television into the single play, made-for-TV movie, soap opera, series, miniseries, anthology series and serial.66 In the 90s there was a consistent lament for the single play, similar in form to the theatre play, and polemical contempt for the long-form drama (what Feuer calls ‘the continuing serial’ and Allen calls the ‘serial’), which, as Robin Nelson notes, became the main form of television drama by the mid-90s.67 Newman indicates how prime-time serial narratives are structured on the micro-level of beats, the middle level of episodes and the macro

60 Ibid. 16.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid. 17-23.
64 Allen 2010: 112.
level of arcs in order to keep the audience interested.\textsuperscript{68} Over time, narrative structures have become increasingly more complex and hybrid.\textsuperscript{69}

The existing scholarly work on seriality in television is based in literary theory, which means that attention to character and storytelling take precedence over audiovisual elements of style and design, but the specific form of a television narrative has significant implications for how costume functions in that text and forms its meaning-making process. This thesis covers a range of forms – British programmes of three to five seasons with six to eight episodes per season (45 to 60 minutes each) as well as American programmes of five to seven seasons with around 22 episodes per season (30 to 45 minutes each); some more episodic, some more serial in their storytelling. This has ramifications for how much time there is for characters and narratives to develop; the pace of production; whether there is one costume designer for the entire show or whether there are multiple; how extensive characters’ wardrobes are; how often they change clothes; how much budget there is, and so on. Most importantly, the way the viewer is to move through the text, to create links between what happened before and what happens next and understand the arcs and narrative chain, is guided, as I argue in this thesis, by costume and fashion strategies that signal temporality, express narrative rhythm and anchor the who, when and where.

Towards a view on television costume
In 1999, four years after Caldwell pioneered the academic study of television style, media scholar Piers D. G. Britton called attention to the underexplored status of design for television and costume design in particular.\textsuperscript{70} Britton argues about Doctor Who (BBC 1963-1989) that '[t]he costume of a principal character in a television series can come to “stand in” for the television series as a whole’ and ‘costume constitutes a visual “text” which is often at least as potent as the screenplay'.\textsuperscript{71} The textual analysis of television had by that time become a paradigm in the field, but discussion of style or design remained largely absent. Britton offers a first examination of costume design for television, focusing on June Hudson’s aesthetic considerations and stylistic choices for Doctor Who and according the designer the status of authorship. He sets his work apart from pre-existing literature on film costume, notably Stella Bruzzi’s Undressing Cinema, which, Britton states, ‘is more about the clothes themselves than the people who designed them’.\textsuperscript{72} Although this is

\textsuperscript{68} Newman 2006.
\textsuperscript{69} See Nelson 1997 on flexi-narrative; Mittell 2015.
\textsuperscript{70} Britton 1999: 345-356.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. 345.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. 346. See the section ‘Costume and fashion in cinema’ for Stella Bruzzi’s work.
correct, and I agree with both Britton and Bruzzi that costume cannot solely be explained by the ideology supposedly underlying the script, no scholarship had closely analysed the clothes on television either. In 2003, Britton and Simon J. Barker published the first extensive study of production design for television, in which the authors discuss the costuming arcs of The Avengers (ITV 1961-1969), The Prisoner (ITV 1967-1968) and Doctor Who. Britton and Barker are interested in the overall, cumulative meanings of design and the role of designers over the course of these series, not in close textual analysis of costumes from individual episodes or in understanding how costume functions. Furthermore, the texts discussed were chosen because their designs are considered unusual or subversive, as the authors are not concerned with ordinary or not directly problematic designs. This is part of a pattern within the few studies on the subject available: costumes are only discussed when they appear as fashionable, fetishist or fantasy, suggesting that onscreen clothes are only worthy of study when they appear as a spectacle. This worsens the blind spot in the interpretive framework of television, which is still in need of a basic understanding of costume design.

Despite the increasing scholarly attention paid to televisual style and design over the last 1½ decades, developing from noticing looks to closely analysing details, costume has received limited discussion. As actors’ appearance is generally one of the most noticeable elements through which viewers see the character and narrative portrayed, their overall look is often commented upon, but few studies elaborate on costuming details. When a character’s dressing is described, it tends to be in passing to serve the author’s broader argument about another aspect of the television series discussed. For instance, in their article on Absolutely Fabulous (BBC 1992-2012), Pat Kirkham and Beverley Skeggs only briefly consider the protagonists’ costuming styles as a spectacular comic device. In her work on the studio costume drama of the 1970s, Helen Wheatley notes upon the importance of period costume for the visual pleasures offered by Upstairs, Downstairs (ITV 1971-1975), but this remains limited to a brief mention. Amy Holdsworth observes in Television, Memory and Nostalgia that in Perfect Strangers (ABC 1986-1993) costume is used to demarcate a temporal shift, but her brief description (‘lighter clothes, a soft beige V-necked jumper’) is meant to illustrate how mise-en-scène in general forges symbolic meaning in terms of characterisation and memory. Costume is occasionally recognised in discussions of

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74 Ibid. 10.
76 Wheatley 2005.
77 Holdsworth 2011: 42.
its impact on everyday culture. James Lyons in his work on *Miami Vice* takes note of the men’s fashion and mentions a *New York* magazine fashion spread which includes the addresses of Manhattan boutiques where *Miami Vice* inspired pastel-coloured clothing could be purchased.\(^{78}\) Referring to an earlier era of television, Ann McGrath has studied how children wore the *Annie Oakley* (CBS 1954-1957) cowgirl outfit in the 1950s-60s to indicate how colonizing histories were popularized in the period’s everyday life and domestic spaces.\(^{79}\) McGrath’s focus is, however, strongly set on the costuming re-enactment by children rather than the costumes worn on screen. A study of both fans’ reception and costumes’ onscreen function is found in Angela K. Bayout’s discussion of the para-texts and popularity of Audrey Horne’s (Sherilyn Fenn) clothing style in *Twin Peaks* (ABC 1990-1991), focusing on five iconic outfits and their symbolic values.\(^{80}\) Yet, although Bayout provides a close reading of the clothes and rightfully points to their following on websites like Etsy, Polyvore, Kaboodle, Tumblr and Pinterest, the academic value of this work is debatable, as it is clearly written in a ‘popular’ tone (including an image of the author in an Audrey-inspired outfit) and positions the author as immersed in this fan culture rather than as a critical reviewer of it. In a piece on Yves Barre’s design process for *The League of Gentlemen* (BBC 1999-2017), Gamze Toylan teases out some differences between costume design for the stage and television, but not film and television.\(^{81}\) Toylan’s methodology is anthropological, combining interviews with secondary material such as DVD extras, and focuses foremost on adaptation processes and the designer’s views and practices, rather than the onscreen text of television. Similarly, in Patricia A. Cunningham, Heather Mangine and Andrew Reilly’s study of the influence of American cable and network television on fashion in the 1980s, in which they argue that ‘television moved from costuming characters, to fashioning contemporary style’, the actual costumes on *Miami Vice*, *MTV* and *Dynasty* (ABC 1981-1989) are not analysed for how they relate to their wearers nor how their visual expression works as a storytelling device.\(^{82}\) In a recently published collection called *Fashioning Horror*, editors Julia Petrov and Gudrun D. Whitehead explain in the introduction that whilst some authors might use the words ‘costume’ and ‘fashion’, all uses of the terms can be subsumed under ‘dress’; this is a book about the relationship between horror and dress in film, television and literature.\(^{83}\) As these examples show, existing scholarship

\(^{78}\) Ibid. 49.  
\(^{79}\) McGrath 2007.  
\(^{80}\) Bayout 2013.  
\(^{81}\) Toylan 2013: 15-26.  
\(^{82}\) Cunningham, Mangine & Reilly 2005: 209-228. See also Chapter 1.  
\(^{83}\) Petrov & Whitehead 2019.
lacks focus on the interconnection between clothes on the television screen, the work of costume designers behind the screen, the texts’ address and television’s medium-specific workings and meaning-making process.

Since costume design is an important and visually central component of mise-en-scène, we would expect to find it accounted for in general textbooks on television and its criticism. However, even in textbooks dealing with a range of topics, such as Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill’s *The Television Studies Reader*, Karen Lury’s *Interpreting Television*, Phil Whickham’s *Understanding Television Texts* or Jason Mittell’s *Television and American Culture*, costume remains absent from any index, heading or paragraph.84 One exception, Jeremy G. Butler’s *Television: Critical Methods and Approaches*, does dedicate a short section to costume design, but only aligns costume in narrative television with the function of set design to state that, just like props and backgrounds, costumes establish character.85 Butler names Sonny Crockett’s Armani suit in *Miami Vice* as an example – a costume which has a far more complex function than merely dressing the character (see Chapter 1). Butler’s work shows that when costume in television is accounted for, it tends to be addressed in a limited manner, simply filing costume under the label of production design.

The last decade has seen the establishment of a new field in media and cultural studies that looks ‘behind the scenes’ of media production. As Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John T. Caldwell explain, the production of media forms a particular culture onto itself.86 Costume designers have their own specific role in the industries and hierarchies of television production. In the sections of this book dedicated to the work of costume designers and fashion designers respectively, Banks provides a brief discussion of their work in terms of day-to-day practices, basic functions of screen costume and issues of gender in the field.87 This discussion, focusing on designers rather than designs, leaves its account of how designers’ work translates to the screen limited to several traditional assumptions not updated to the existing critical theory of film costume (see other section), nor is it concerned with an analysis of costumes as they are shown in the final text on screen. Although for my project a production studies approach would provide otherwise inaccessible insights into the practices behind the designs on screen, the intention of a designer is not necessarily translated as such to the screen and their design process does not dictate or explain the workings of costume in the text as perceived by viewers. The discussion of stylistic choices and how they were formed is relevant to the theorisation of television costume, provided

85 Butler 2012: 240.
87 Ibid. 90-95.
it is closely connected to the critical analysis of clothes as a text on screen which takes into account a variety of possible readings whilst aiming at a shared understanding.\textsuperscript{88} The interviews conducted for this study are used to understand materials, influences, concepts, choices and approaches, not to give an account of the production culture. It is the relationship between design choices and the product as it appears on the screen and is used by viewers that forges meaning.

In summary, on the one hand marginal attention has been paid to costume in existing studies of television in general, and on the other there is a limited number of texts that mention the costumes of television series, but do not aim to understand their workings in this medium specifically. Stella Bruzzi, for instance, has extended her analysis of film costume with an analysis of television costume in her \textit{Screen} article on the dressing strategies used in the 1945 Hollywood film and the 2011 HBO miniseries of \textit{Mildred Pierce} respectively.\textsuperscript{89} Looking at costume as an interpretational tool, Bruzzi argues that Michael Curtiz’s film uses spectacular, obtrusive design to dress the star, whereas costume in Todd Haynes’ series shows more concern with conveying character identity and historical austerity. However, Bruzzi does not elaborate on the distinction between the media of film and television. Rather, the distinction between either looking \textit{at} or \textit{through} costume repeats the idea of film as a medium for the spectacular and television being transparent.

Television costume is however gaining increasing attention in the media and fashion culture. AMC’s hit programme \textit{Mad Men} (2007-2015), during its growth from an appreciated but limited audience series to a worldwide cultural phenomenon, has received unprecedented appraisal for both its costume design and costume designer.\textsuperscript{90} Janie Bryant’s work on \textit{Mad Men} has brought about a turn of attention towards costume, making the visual expression of clothes on television more noticed than ever before. The interest that viewers have shown in the show’s costumes has stretched out to academe: though often mentioned only in enumeration with the rest of the series’ production and set design, Bryant’s designs have received more scholarly discussion than any other programme. Several contributors to Scott F. Stoddart’s edited volume on the series acknowledge the central role of costume.\textsuperscript{91} Meenasarani Linde Murugan emphasises the importance of period costume for the actor’s mindset by influencing both their look and the way in which one comports one’s body.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{88} See my ‘Approach to television costume’ section, inspired by Gibbs & Pye 2005: 3.
\textsuperscript{89} Bruzzi 2013: 397-402.
\textsuperscript{90} Although \textit{Miami Vice} and \textit{Brideshead Revisited} also received much attention for their fashion styles, there is considerably more critical work available on \textit{Mad Men}’s fashions and more attention to its costume designer. Digital tools have offered fans and critics more ways to engage with the series’ costuming.
\textsuperscript{91} Notably Murugan 2011: 166-185.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
She points out how Bryant’s designs for Peggy, Joan and Betty not only serve different characters but also a variety of fashion styles, thereby allowing the show to resist essentialism and complicate its relationship to issues of nostalgia and feminism, as showing women in various silhouettes provides a more authentic and critical perspective of the period. Murugan elaborates on the differences between the New Look dress for Betty and the fitted sheath dress for Joan, and also points out that the undergarments were the same regardless of skirt style to create that characteristic hourglass look. It is telling that Murugan’s interpretive framework relies on work in the fields of fashion history, feminism and popular culture, rather than television. A critical dialogue between television scholarship and the study of costume and fashion is long overdue.

**Costume and fashion in cinema**

The assertion underpinning this thesis that costume and fashion form one of the most important elements through which television viewers make sense of character, image and narrative is founded upon a pre-existing body of academic literature on costume and fashion in cinema. There is a considerable tradition of work in this area, especially from the US and UK, which (like television) took shape in relation to discourses on the medium of film and the study of dress. When in the 20s Hollywood cinema shifted from black-and-white to colour and from silent to sound films, studio productions required costumes especially designed for the medium to prevent distortion in colour and sound and to effectively relate a character’s appearance to the narrative. By the end of the decade, character attire was no longer constrained to the actors’ and actresses’ personal wardrobes, as costume became the product of the studio’s contracted designer. Despite the influence and acclaim of designers such as Edith Head and Adrian since the classical era of cinema, in 1976 Elizabeth Leese remarked that although ‘an enormous amount of books have appeared on virtually all aspects of world cinema (...) nobody previously produced a factual book on costume design in the movies’. Leese published an illustrated catalogue of the work of 157 Hollywood costume designers, but it was not until the 1990s that costume became a subject of critical enquiry. It was a growing attention to fashion and clothing in twentieth-century scholarship that led the way for the study of film costume, which has long been downplayed, as Sarah Street paraphrases Pamela Church Gibson, as ‘a frivolous, feminine field’; a product of capitalism; or an exemplar of how ‘women are

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93 Blausen 2010: 175-177.
trapped into gratifying the male gaze’. Jane Gaines first theorised how costume in realist cinema conveys the inner psychology of a character, especially for women’s roles, claiming that ‘[c]lothes, as lower elements in a hierarchy of screen discourses, primarily work to reinforce narrative ideas’. As mentioned in the Introduction, Gaines argues that costumes are designed to remain ‘subservient’ to characterisation, lest they ‘distract the viewers from the narrative’. This article appeared in a time when fashion scholars started to indicate the ways in which clothing and costume do not ‘disguise’ a person, but form a personal, visceral relationship to the body as well as a social dimension by which understandings and connotations of dress are constructed.

Meanwhile, British film scholars began to recognise the role of costume for the representation of history, politics and female (sexual) identity in national cinema. Sue Harper in *Picturing the Past* explores the social function of historical film through an analysis of the visual composition and mise-en-scène of British costume dramas from the 1930s and 1940s. Harper’s analysis of costume is part of a broader enquiry into questions of historical representation from a feminist perspective. In this as well as in her previous work on Gainsborough costume melodramas, Harper stresses how these costumes serve as a source of visual pleasure for female viewers in particular, as they privilege subversive aesthetic symbols of female sexuality over historical authenticity. The question of historicity in relation to the expression of identity is also central to Pam Cook’s *Fashioning the Nation*, in which she surveys the quest for an ‘authentic’ British national identity in costume romances from the 1940s. These works build on Gaines’ concept of costume as servant to character and narrative, suggesting that any other aesthetic display of fashionable dress is excessive and may disrupt narrative realism and characterisation.

Bruzzi then shifted the attention to the critical examination of how spectacular film costumes ‘can function independently of the body, character and narrative, [and] through them alternative discursive strategies can be evolved that, in turn, question existing assumptions about the relationship between spectator and image’. Several years after Bruzzi’s *Undressing Cinema*, Sarah Street ventured in her work on costume in contemporary cinema that the relationship between costume and film was

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95 Street 2002: 1, paraphrasing Church Gibson 1998: 36.
96 Gaines 1990: 181.
97 Ibid. 193, also cited in Warner 2014: 5.
98 Entwistle 2000a; 2011.
101 Cook 1996.
102 Bruzzi 1997: 3.
‘beginning to be recognised as a legitimate and fruitful area’.\textsuperscript{103} Scholars were innovating the field, Street writes,

by suggesting the ways in which film costume can be linked to wider debates about film form, the meaning and function of mise-en-scène, the role of the costume designer, the complex ways in which film costumes are “read” as intertexts and, finally, the impact of such representations on audiences in their everyday behaviours and appearances.\textsuperscript{104}

Scholarship has since has seen the publication of a range of studies on costume and fashion in film, such as in the edited volumes \textit{Fashioning Film Stars: Dress, Culture, Identity} by Rachel Moseley and \textit{Fashion in Film} by Adrienne Munich.\textsuperscript{105} The texts discussed range from Hollywood to Asian, Latin-American and European cinema, comprising a wide variety of subjects and representations. Central to Munich’s collection is the understanding that ‘[c]ostume designers work at the very center of creating the Look’: ‘an ensemble of visual signs in attire that orients the viewer by its simultaneous strangeness and familiarity and, \textit{at a glance}, conveys meanings’.\textsuperscript{106} Moreover, as Drake Stutesman asserts, ‘[c]ostume design is not only a phenomenal element of the filmic process, it is a phenomenon that has changed international economies. (…) Film spreads a Look or a message faster than any medium except the internet’.\textsuperscript{107}

Pamela Church Gibson has more recently pointed out that although since the 80s designer clothing in cinema has gained significant visibility, ‘it could be argued that it was perhaps the television of the period that had more impact on the popular imagination of the time—and certainly on the buying habits of the general public’.\textsuperscript{108} Despite the fact that costume in film is now recognised as an important device for visual storytelling, incorporated into teaching and known for its collaboration with couturiers and its impact on fashionable dress, the few calls for academic enquiry into television costume have received little response.\textsuperscript{109} Although, as explained above, in the history of the media television images and narratives were made and perceived as radically different from film, scholars interested in television costume or fashion have

\textsuperscript{103} Street 2002: 1.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Munich 2011: 2-3. Emphasis mine.
\textsuperscript{107} Stutesman 2011: 18.
\textsuperscript{109} Britton 1999; Street 2002.
only had theories of film costume to rely on. The present media landscape is in the process of an increasing convergence of film and television in terms of viewing practices, digital technologies, style and design, but I contend that a sustained study of costume and fashion on television needs to take into account its medium-specific history, theory, form, production, style, address and narrative structures. Similar to the emergence of film costume studies, scholars interested in fashion are now turning their attention to television. It is time for Television Studies to catch up.

**Spectacular fashion on television**

Screen Studies scholarship is starting to show interest in fashion styles on television. Television since the 90s has seen the rise of programmes with fashion at their centres, instigated by the success of HBO’s sitcom *Sex and the City* (1998-2004). Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson have identified the workings of spectacular costume in this show, arguing that rather than playing a role that is subservient to character and narrative, fashion can ‘interrupt and destabilise character and the unfolding action, offering an alternative and potentially contrapuntal discursive strategy’.110 Bruzzi and Church Gibson argue that the overt display of fashion in *Sex and the City* disrupts and redefines the normative relationship between script and costume. Following this argument, in an edited work on the *Doctor Who* spin-off *Torchwood* (BBC 2006-2011), Sarah Gilligan analyses how masculinity and desire are expressed through the way that costumes function as ‘spectacular interventions’ which make character Captain Jack the male focus of the gaze and Captain Jack’s coat ‘self consciously raised to the level of fetish’.111 The coat’s textile properties become the fetishized object of the gaze, rather than the body covered by the costume. Gilligan does not, however, further go into the fact that the coat is from a television series and what spectacle means in the context of this medium.

Bruzzi and Church Gibson’s argument has been set forth and challenged by Helen Warner in her work on ‘fashion programming’.112 Warner first published on the subject in an essay entitled ‘Style over Substance?’ in which she challenges the assumption in existing scholarship on film costume that ‘fashion acts primarily as “spectacle”, disrupting the economy of narrative flow’, arguing instead that purely textual approaches are limited by conceptual and methodological problems but that a mixed-method approach using both textual analysis and reception studies is more productive for a study of costume in US television.113 Warner looks specifically at the

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110 Bruzzi & Church Gibson 2004: 123.
111 Gilligan 2010.
113 Warner 2009.
meanings viewers attach to fashion in ‘fashion-forward’ shows, which are thought capable of influencing fashion trends and in which fashion is central to the narrative both within the programme and in extra-textual discussions. She claims that the existing textual work on film fashion overlooks viewers’ diverse interpretations of a text and needs to be substantiated by reception studies; yet the relationship between her textual reading and small-scale reception study of *Gilmore Girls* (CW 2007–) remains ambiguous. Although she points out that the few studies attending to fashion on television are founded on studies in film fashion, in which they neglect television’s economic and industrial specificities, it is questionable whether Warner’s transcends this methodological problem. Her study does not refer to other central specificities of television, such as narrative structure, distribution and viewing practices or television style and aesthetics. The relationship between fashion, spectacle and narrative is in need of further debate, but an analysis of fashion and costume’s function in this triangle should engage more closely with television’s medium-specific, yet hybrid factors. Some valuable insights to be gained from Warner’s article are, firstly, that onscreen fashion is capable of more than being either expressive or excessive; either a slave to the narrative or a distraction from it; secondly, that the theoretical framework privileging narrative above visual style, shaped by gendered discourses, is in need of critical interrogation; and thirdly, that extra-textual discourses are valuable to a study of television costume and fashion. Further, Warner also rightfully points out that the notion that television and spectacle are antithetical has become outdated. This notion is based on the view of television as a ‘realist’ medium and on academic work that has relied more on character and narrative than visual style, but more recent work in the field (see above section) has recognised the meaningful potential of television style and shown how the style and design of television programming can be spectacular.\(^{114}\)

Warner’s second article continues her study of cultural and economic factors in the relationship between fashion and television in a study of female celebrity and fashion promotion as represented in the trade press.\(^{115}\) She points to possible shifts in celebrity culture and how the trade press deals with this in the representation of female fashion icons and the promotion of fashion and material goods. In 2014, Warner published the first monograph on the subject, *Fashion on Television: Identity and Celebrity Culture*, in which she explores the meanings and meaning-making processes of fashion programming, and the role of costume designers, celebrities and

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\(^{114}\) See: Wheatley 2016.  
\(^{115}\) Warner 2010.
inter-texts in securing these meanings. She approaches costume and fashion in television from both a production studies and a textual perspective informed by discourses in the industry and celebrity culture. One of Warner’s main arguments is that the traditional distinction between costume and fashion does not fully apply to fashion programming. As discussed above, Gaines’ ‘Costume and Narrative’ has been of major influence to this separation, and it is a view still held by many designers and researchers who regard costume as ‘subservient’ to narrative. As Warner explains:

Underpinning this argument is Laura Mulvey’s well-known concept of ‘the gaze’. Just as Mulvey (1975/1989: 19) has argued that ‘[t]he presence of woman [onscreen]…tends to work against the development of a story-line [and] freeze the flow of action’, Gaines (1990: 193) asserts that costume which is not adequately motivated by character could also result in a disruption of narrative, ‘breaking the illusion and the spell of realism’. Within this formulation, fashion acts primarily as a ‘spectacle’ and a ‘distraction’, thus disrupting the economy of narrative flow.

As mentioned above, Bruzzi and Church Gibson have challenged Gaines’ theory by pointing to the ways in which onscreen costume and fashion can provide meaningful counter-discourses. Warner aims to further nuance the debate for the case of fashion programming by indicating how fashion on television, period costume in particular, is not necessarily either expressive or excessive, but can both fulfil its narrative function and display stylistic flourish.

Warner’s focus on fashion programming, the fashion industry and celebrity identity, as well as her methodological approaches, distinguish her project from mine. She is concerned only with the symbolic, conceptual meanings attached to fashion, not in the materiality of clothes or understanding how television costume functions. Despite her own claim that the limited available work on fashion in television tends to use theories of costume in film as a blueprint for the understanding of television fashion, Warner’s has the same issue. The fundamental problem with the existing body of work is a lack of insight into how costume works in this medium. Warner’s view of how fashion programming is different from ‘normative’ costuming relies on a theoretical framework of studies focusing on costume in Hollywood and British cinema. The only type of costuming investigated remains the unusual, spectacular, historical and/or fashionable.

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117 Warner 2014: 5. According to Warner 2009: 183, Gaines’ theory of costume is based on a gendered construct: the view that costume should foremost serve narrative realism suggests that elements of distraction are gendered; costume and fashion are coded feminine and the active, progressing narrative is coded masculine.
Approaching television costume

There are many different ways of looking at costume and many different questions to be asked of that costume. This is aptly pointed out by Aoife Monks in *The Actor in Costume*, in which she takes a photograph of two costumed theatre actors playing Pentheus (Tony Curran) and Dionysus (Alan Cumming) in The National Theatre of Scotland’s production of Euripides’ *The Bacchae* and subjects the image to over a dozen research questions.\(^{118}\) Rather than finding comprehensive answers to all of these questions, Monks’ intention is to suggest that ‘[a]nswering each of these questions would tell us something different about costuming’.\(^{119}\) The same applies to television costuming: we can question the historical accuracy of fashion styles, the views of the designers, the use of fabrics, how they feel to the actors, or affect the audience, their visual quality, or the expression of cultural concepts, etcetera. The considerations and implications of costume enquiries are presumably endless, and all require a careful approach on the part of the researcher.

Costume design for film and television involves the creation of a close interrelationship between narrative, actors, characters, fashions and the other elements of the visual medium.\(^{120}\) Costume is a pivotal ingredient of *mise-en-scène*, which refers to, as John Gibbs explains, ‘the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised’.\(^{121}\) *Mise-en-scène* encompasses all visual aspects of the frame (lighting, costume, décor, properties and actors); the organisation concerns their relationships, including camera movement and framing. My primary methodology of textual analysis approaches television costume as a ‘visual text’ of which the contents can be unravelled to gain deeper insight into how these elements inform our understanding; how they determine ‘what the audience can see, and the way in which we are invited to see it’.\(^{122}\) As V. F. Perkins points out about film, viewers make sense of images through their coherence: the synthesis of elements and relationships in which ‘there is no distinction between how and what, content and form’, and viewers relate these meanings to their own experience of the visible world.\(^{123}\) By singling out costume from *mise-en-scène* I do not mean to dismantle the synthesis of elements, but to explore the function of this aspect in relation to the other contents of the frame.

The research tradition of textual analysis, proposed by critics such as Perkins in the journal *Movie*, has been evaluated by John Gibbs and Douglas Pye, who argue

\(^{118}\) Monks 2010.
\(^{119}\) Ibid. 5.
\(^{120}\) Stutesman 2011.
\(^{121}\) Gibbs 2002: 5.
\(^{122}\) Ibid.
that although close reading has been dismissed for ‘lacking evidence’ due to its basis in interpretation, ‘to be concerned with film style and its significance is inevitably to be involved in interpretation’. My study builds on the Style and Meaning approach offered by Gibbs and Pye ‘which allows for the inevitable variability of reading while not succumbing to the equal but opposed follies of believing that a text can have only one meaning or that meanings are infinite and indeterminate’. Interpretative analysis can engage in reasoned argument and critical dialogue to determine what a text may tell us and whether we can arrive at a shared understanding. To reach an understanding of how television costume functions, my approach is not a ‘naming and shaming’—just labelling the symbolic meanings of costumes, as a semiotic (sign-analysis) approach would—but rather to unravel the processes through which the looks, materials, styles, textures, display and uses of onscreen costumes and fashions carry out the meanings that they do. My approach is similar to the focus of poetics, the guiding question for which is how texts work rather than what they say, but with perhaps a stronger engagement with the ways that the ‘how’ and ‘what’ work together. Perkins’ notion of ‘how is what’/‘content is form’ applies not only to cinema but, as I argue, also to television: style and substance are symbiotic.

The interviews conducted for this project, as well as the collection of extratextual material, are similarly considered as texts that warrant analysis. The study of television texts in this thesis is therefore enriched, but not pre-empted or dictated by my interviews with the costume designers. Their input forms an important part of the text which crucially works together with the other elements. I contend that we cannot fully appreciate style, aesthetics and narrative content without considering costume. Television scholars can no longer neglect the look of the image, nor of its people.

**Now is the time**

Although scholarship over the last two decades has started to touch upon this subject from various perspectives, nobody has yet written an extensive critical analysis of how television costume and fashion work. It is however at this moment in the development of Television Studies that such a study is most fruitful. This PhD project aims to offer a first set of tools and criteria to approach the study of how costume and fashion function in the medium of television and the culture it exists in.

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124 Gibbs & Pye 2005: 2. For additional discussion on textual analysis as research method, see: Browne [1984] 1987; Jacobs 2001; Creeber 2006; Butler 2010; Mittell 2015.
125 Gibbs & Pye 2005: 3.
126 Mittell 2010: 5.
In leaping from film to television, existing dominant notions of costume, fashion, dress, style and the ordinary vs. the spectacular require revision. As V.F. Perkins once wrote about cinema, ‘Films are constructed so as to address our minds in the knowledge that mind is much faster and much more comprehensively perceptive than intellect’.128 Perkins’ focus on the construction of meaning in film and the role of interpretation in criticism inspires my study of clothing on television; due to its workings and cultural status, television is a medium where the meaning-making process of clothing has been particularly taken for granted. Perkins, in his 1990 article ‘Must we say what they mean?’, starts his exploration of the Max Ophüls film *Caught* (1948) from the curiosity of why a certain moment made him smile, and offers an interpretation that makes overt the implications that the sequence presents.129 Similarly, one of the aims of this thesis is to show that whilst we often instantly ‘get’ the identity of a character and feel a certain way about them, which is to great extent due to their clothing, it is far less clear how it is that we come to know them this way. This is tied up with a set of cultural assumptions about the look of television and the codes of dress used within the medium, which need to be interrogated to understand how television costume addresses us.

Television texts do not stand alone; the way we make meaning of them, and of the clothes that people wear in them, is related to our associations with other cultural texts, ideas and values. In their 1983 article ‘Television as a Cultural Forum’, Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch bridge the gap between communication studies and television criticism by regarding the medium as a ‘forum’ where the negotiation of cultural meanings and values takes place, and its viewers and creators as *bricoleurs* of those meanings.130 Where communication studies eliminated textual detail and the possibility of multiple interpretations for the sake of ‘objectivity’ and explaining the power of dominant ideologies, and television critics acknowledged the medium’s qualitative value but ignored questions of production and reception and claim authority as its aesthetic judges, Newcomb and Hirsch suggest to see television as a

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129 Perkins argues against Bordwell’s idea that interpretation is a useless intellectual exercise to force exposure of meanings only placed onto the work by the critic; or stuffed in the artwork by the artist for some superior critic to pull out. Perkins nuances this and shows that interpretation can help us to understand how meaning in the film is constructed and to enrich our understanding of it.
medium for public thinking.\textsuperscript{131} Television’s cultural ritual of communication, which deals with the representation of shared values, is seen by the authors, following Victor Turner, as an ongoing process rather than a finished product.\textsuperscript{132} Newcomb and Hirsch use Turner’s concept of ‘the liminal stage of the ritual process’ to explain that viewers are confronted with unfamiliar issues and meanings by watching television and that this, as an ‘in-between’ stage, contributes to communal thought about cultural aspects.\textsuperscript{133} Newcomb and Hirsch’s theory implies that meaning made on television transfers across programmes and groups in society; viewers’ understanding of reality and its social and cultural values is negotiated across television texts and genres. I further suggest that the meanings made by the clothes worn on television also transfer between television texts and genres, and that this is why we understand, for example, the dress code of a costumed character in a professional role in a contemporary drama along the same lines as the outfit worn by a correspondent we just saw on the news. Meanings of clothing characteristics are being negotiated across different genres of television texts.

This chapter cuts across different types of television to consider the ways that costume, fashion and dress codes make meaning in this medium. One repercussion of carving out a new field of study is that this research project raises more questions than can be answered in any one thesis. My aim here is to start filling a part of the gap in existing academic frameworks that have not accounted for the complexities that television costume, fashion and the meanings of clothing bring into play. Throughout the thesis, I do this by focusing on the study of costume and fashion in fictional serial television drama from the UK and US. However, since I do not want to suggest that this is the one and only mode of television in which costume, fashion and dress are significant, this chapter starts the discussion with a broader perspective to show that the conceptual and analytical tools offered across this thesis may also be applicable to other types of television in future study. This discussion will contextualise and establish the issues at stake in studying television costume before moving to a closer analysis of serial drama costuming strategies in Chapters 2 and 3. This line of enquiry lays the groundwork for my thesis argument that costume, fashion and dress have a key role in the meaning-making process within dramatic television texts as well as between them and in relation to the cultural realm. Rather than simplifying this role, the discussion acknowledges the complex relationships at work between the concepts at stake and how meaning transfers between them.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid. 561-563.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid. 563.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid. 563-564.
In scholarship as well as in popular media, as discussed in the Review of Literature, persisting assumptions about the medium and the meaning(fulness) of its style and aesthetics have remained or worsened (television as a window on the world; as ‘low’ culture, mundane, or a capitalist instrument; the spectacular as privileging style over substance) that have affected how television costume has been continually neglected or discussed only within a limited framework. This chapter’s initial study juxtaposes programming that is not seen as having a concern for style, like the news (which is supposedly only about content) and daytime magazine programming (with its blatant commercial and entertainment value) such as This Morning (ITV 1988–) and Today (NBC 1952–), to fictional shows that are overtly stylised, Miami Vice (NBC 1984-1990) and Brideshead Revisited (Granada 1981), to demonstrate the usefulness of a study of costume, fashion and dress codes for ‘ordinary’/everyday as well as for ‘spectacular’/appointment television (i.e. programming that is ‘just always on’ versus that requires special effort and timing to watch).

This chapter’s periodisation of looking back at television since the 1980s to understand the role of costume and fashion in the medium until today has several reasons: firstly, because important shifts in technology, aesthetics and cultural appeal from this period changed how the medium and its costuming have become understood, and secondly, because scholarship has changed along with these shifts. As John T. Caldwell explains in Televisuality:

Starting in the 1980s, American mass-market television underwent an uneven shift in the conceptual and ideological paradigms that governed its look and presentational demeanor. In several important programming and institutional areas, television moved from a framework that approached broadcasting primarily as a form of word-based rhetoric and transmission, with all the issues that such terms suggest, to a visually based mythology, framework, and aesthetic based on an extreme self-consciousness of style.\(^{134}\)

Caldwell nuances this shift in his work through a critical analysis of the new way in which style became used and understood, and how stylistic markers became television’s primary assets. Although Caldwell’s study focuses on American television, this discourse is also found in British television.\(^{135}\) Scholarship from this period onwards paid more attention to the medium-specific visual, aural and narrative qualities of television and their implications for its stylistic and cultural value – see

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\(^{134}\) Caldwell 1995: 4.

\(^{135}\) Chapman 2006: 192 locates it in Doctor Who, for example.
for example Newcomb and Hirsch; Nelson’s work on flexi-narrative; Brunsdon’s and Geraghty’s work on ‘quality’; Jacobs’ work on aesthetics; or Butler’s work on style, to name a few.\textsuperscript{136} The 80s are a fruitful period to start with due to the institutional and hermeneutical shifts pertaining to the look of television and the increased importance of flexi-narrative and serial narrative structures. Seriality has not always been the norm; it was not until the early 80s that Stanley Cavell suggested that television’s narrative development over time, its serial nature, could be seen as the medium’s defining characteristic.\textsuperscript{137} As aforementioned, this is also when Jane Feuer noticed a transition from the episodic sitcom series to the continuing melodramatic serial.\textsuperscript{138} Whilst the tools and criteria to study costume in serial television drama as offered by this thesis may also be more widely applicable to television of earlier or later periods, I focus on the period from the 80s because of how those shifts have shaped a lasting understanding of the medium and its narrative forms.

**Points of intervention**

*Miami Vice* and *Brideshead Revisited* are primary indicators of the shift taking place in the 80s in the stylistic and conceptual paradigms of television, and that costume design is central to this. Yet, this has to be nuanced: firstly, the fact that these shows are conspicuously stylised does not mean that a show like *Quincy, M.E.* (1976-1983), which ended on NBC just before *Miami Vice* started, does not have style. Although the shows are from the same studio (Universal), the same network (NBC) and roughly the same genre (crime), they greatly differ in stylistic approach.\textsuperscript{139} A textbook example of Caldwell’s notion of ‘zero-degree style’, *Quincy, M.E.* has a restrained, realist look, draws attention more to word-based communication and actors’ performance merits than visual expression and has utilitarian cinematography and editing. Caldwell speaks of ‘anti-style’, but this is in itself a style. Secondly, what is deemed ‘stylish’, ‘fashionable’, ‘spectacular’ or not differs depending on cultural context. Whereas *Miami Vice* typifies a way of using spectacular costume, fashion and other elements of style in the context of American television and fashion, the British period drama *Brideshead Revisited* was similarly trend-setting and seen as ground-breaking even though it has a different tone and is stylish in a different way.\textsuperscript{140} The overarching issue remains that discussions of style and aesthetics tend to remain limited only to such

\textsuperscript{138} See my discussion of Feuer 1986 in the Review of Literature.
\textsuperscript{139} Coincidentally, both shows also have a protagonist living on a boat.
\textsuperscript{140} For the tradition of the spectacular in British television, see Wheatley 2016; for the discussion of *Brideshead* as ‘quality television’, see Brunsdon 1990, also discussed further below.
indicative types of television: to critically acclaimed dramas with conspicuous style. The way we understand fashion styles in these shows however works across texts.

Beyond fictional texts, there are other types of television for which the study of costume, fashion and dress could yield valuable insights into the text’s signification practices, uses of style and cultural expression. Everyday television such as magazine programming, for instance, expresses a keen interest in issues of style, costume and fashion and has thrived since the 80s, but is often overlooked in discussions of style. Following the model of the cultural forum, future study could identify in more detail how regular programming like magazine programming or the news contributes to the negotiation of concepts of dress, such as what we read as appropriate professional dress. To hint at the ways in which the tools and criteria offered in this thesis can be applied to other modes of television than fictional drama, this chapter offers an initial stand-alone discussion of how newscasters’ dress and magazine programming engage meaningfully with ideas around clothing. Those ideas may resonate with how we read costume and fashion in the fictional serial dramas discussed later in this thesis.

In the 80s, British public service broadcasters started extending their daytime scheduling from news and children’s/educational programming to entertainment, notably with ITV’s magazine programme This Morning in 1988.141 Daytime magazine programmes still make up an important part of television broadcasting in both the UK and the US. As Helen Wood notes in her 2009 book Talking with Television:

On British television for nearly two decades there has been a concentration of talk-based programming between 9:00 a.m. and noon, the mid-morning slot, consisting of magazine programs and audience participation talk shows. This particular period of the day is significant on terrestrial channel schedules as it is marked out for housewife-consumers, despite an increasingly changing demographic of students, retired people, and home-workers.142

Similar developments took place in the US, as network television saw the commercial value in daytime talk-based shows.143 Wood treats such texts as ‘communicative event[s]’ and ‘analyzes the way in which the domestic climate of morning television structures its “chat” through para-social arrangements for the daytime audience’.144 This type of television creates an ostensibly spontaneous ‘reproduction of a televised “everyday”’, which, Wood notes, ‘provides a mediated interface between public and

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142 Ibid. 7-8. Wood’s ‘nearly two decades’ is now three decades.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid. 56.
private domains that, following Meyrowitz (1985), must have repercussions for understanding of gender in the modern age.\textsuperscript{145} Whilst mundane in tone and content, these shows are carefully constructed media products with a gendered mode of address. In this chapter’s only detailed analysis of non-fictional programming offered in the thesis, I look at how what the presenters wear on such shows and how they discuss clothing styles helps to construct a mediated ‘everyday’ and engages with gendered ideas around codes of dress.

*This Morning* incorporates fashion, costume and style in its regular themed sections as well as in its general chat and through what the presenters wear. The show is broadcast live on weekdays (and since 20 January 2019 on Sundays) from 10.30am-12.30pm on ITV, which is the UK’s main terrestrial commercial channel funded by advertising revenue and generally understood to have a more ‘populist’ address than the BBC or Channel 4. In terms of topics dealt with,

Its staple daily content reflects typically socially constructed feminine pursuits such as cookery, soap opera stories and celebrities, hair and beauty sections, and consumer product advice, as well as phone-ins on health, relationships, and psychological issues.\textsuperscript{146}

This is not the only programme to deal with such topics; there has been ample competition over ratings between similar programmes. The British press called the alleged rivalry between ITV’s *This Morning* and BBC’s *Good Morning* (‘sofa wars’, in which the former beat the latter in the 80s-90s in great part due to the appeal of its presenters being a married couple.\textsuperscript{147} These first hosts of the show, Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan, were persistently referred to as ‘husband and wife team’ in media such as the magazine *TV Times*, which strengthened their public identity as such.\textsuperscript{148} As discussed below, what the couple wear on screen supports this identity. One of the current presenters, former model Holly Willoughby, has become a style icon for the viewers of the show, as also detailed below. The other magazine programme discussed in this chapter, the American programme *Today* (or *The Today Show*) on NBC was embroiled in a similar ratings competition when ABC launched *Good Morning America* in 1975.\textsuperscript{149} The appeal of the hosts’ identities is central to the comparative success of the shows,\textsuperscript{150} and is greatly indebted to how they look. Fashion has been

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid. 80.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid. 92.
\textsuperscript{148} For example: *TV Times*, 14-20 October 1989; 4-10 November 1989; 9-15 February 1991. (My research.)
\textsuperscript{149} Timberg 2002: 102; Londino 2017: 160. This was after ABC’s first attempt *A.M. America* had failed.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
part of Today's format since its early years, but the expansion of the show to a fourth hour in 2007 (after it was extended from two to three hours in 2000) developed into a distinct talk show section which has fashion as one of its main topics.

The form and content of This Morning, as Wood's study indicates, with its sociability and conversational style, gender its audience as feminine. I continue this line of enquiry by suggesting that the show's engagement with women's fashion and style, as well as that of Today, should be an important focus in the discussion around the genre's feminized mode of address, in which 'there are conflicting positions over whether a talk show can be evocative of a feminist therapy and connect to a public political agenda, or whether its staging of personal intimacy is ultimately voyeuristic and exploitative, particularly of women'. My work contributes to this discussion by looking at how the strategies used in This Morning and Today in dealing with issues of fashion, dress and costume negotiate gendered understandings of these concepts through the mediated interface that is offered between the world of high-end fashion and the viewer's wardrobe at home: between the out-of-reach spectacular and the close-to-home everyday. Television here evidently functions as a cultural forum: as a place where cultural ideas about clothing are being negotiated.

Although Miami Vice is an acknowledged example of fictional television's influence on fashion and has been written about extensively in terms of style, there has been no sustained analysis of how the fashions generate meaning as costume design. Bob Batchelor and Scott F. Stoddart's book on 1980s American popular culture has the Miami Vice protagonists on its cover, but the book's actual discussion of the show is marginal: one short section of the chapter 'Fashion' states that the characters 'donned colorful, fashionable clothes' and that this contributed to the show's look, but the authors do not offer any more specifics. The hyper visibility of clothing on this show and its stylistic appeal have more often than not caused scholars to discuss costume design and fashion in a way that only perpetuates a superficial understanding of their role. In most cases this is understandable because the scholar has a different focus. David Buxton's From The Avengers to Miami Vice: Form and Ideology in Television Series demonstrates the tendency to discuss the series' cultural or ideological narrative meanings as carried out by the character’s look, but not to actually analyse the costume design and point out how or why these

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151 Londino 2017: 19.
152 Initially called Kathie Lee & Hoda, it is since 2019 called Today with Hoda & Jenna and can be viewed as a stand-alone show, but for the sake of clarity I refer to all material as Today.
154 Most critics file it under postmodernism; Butler 1985 likens the show’s visual style to film noir.
155 Batchelor & Stoddart 2007: 73.
156 See also my discussion of Butler’s work in the next section.
clothes invite such readings. Jane Feuer in Seeing Through the Eighties: Television and Reaganism places Miami Vice into its political and cultural context, discussing the critique of its postmodern style and the question of whether its ‘reliance on visual excess and sexual display’ is in itself a critique.\textsuperscript{157} Feuer argues that the show exaggerates its use of the visual discourse of the male gaze to such an extent that it is self-aware and forms a postmodern joke on classic Hollywood scopophilia; the ‘Definitely Miami’ (2:12) sequence she discusses is, Feuer argues, ‘entirely complicit with sexism and yet entirely schooled in feminist film theory’.\textsuperscript{158} Although the crux of this analysis is how the female character’s body is portrayed, Feuer does not describe her costuming. Costume and fashion in Miami Vice are often seen as merely part of its overall eclectic postmodern look, in which meanings are stacked and combined until they become ostensibly meaningless, if often also ironic.

Television like Miami Vice, MTV and Dynasty (ABC 1981-1989) had an unprecedented impact on women’s, men’s and teenage fashion consumption; it was in the 80s that fashion became conspicuously displayed on the small screen.\textsuperscript{159} Scholarship has however only ever accounted for the texts’ effects on fashion style, not for how the characters’ dress makes meaning within and then outside of the text. Patricia A. Cunningham, Heather Mangine and Andrew Reilly write:

> Men’s fashion was strongly influenced by the two leads in Miami Vice. Crockett always dressed in casual trousers and T-shirts in pastel shades of turquoise, pink or lavender while Tubbs dressed in the more traditional dark suits and neckties that would be approved by John Molloy (...). While Crockett’s penchant for wearing no socks with his loafers became a fashion statement, his preference for casual clothes and soft colors soon caught on with men’s fashion, especially the Versace invention of wearing a T-shirt in place of a collared dress shirt and a tie with a jacket (Lehnert 2000: 90).\textsuperscript{160}

Although this is more detailed than many other writings on the fashions of the show, it is still a generalisation. To what end the characters are wearing these different styles is not explored (their characterisation is explained separately in the introduction to this section), nor how their styles develop (e.g. the colour palette suddenly changed in Season 3 and the personal styles of the characters evolved as the costume designer distinguished more between them), nor how costume works as a storytelling device. This is logical as the authors’ main concern is the influence of popular television on

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\textsuperscript{157} Feuer 1995: 102-104.  \\
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. 104.  \\
\textsuperscript{159} Cunningham, Mangine & Reilly 2005: 210-211.  \\
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid. 213.
\end{flushleft}
fashion culture, but an in-depth discussion of the workings of the fashions as costume design remains pending. James Lyons’ work (as discussed later in this chapter) argues for the meaningfulness of the show’s excess of style and acknowledges that its style has meaning, but also does not very closely analyse the *costuming* part of the series’ use of style. Existing studies either lack mention of costume design where it would have been useful or mention it only in passing.

The lack of serious attention to costume in *Miami Vice* is due to spectacular television costuming facing a double denial of significance. Scholars arguing for the programme’s value must overcome television’s significance-defying connotations of mundanity, everydayness and ‘low’/popular culture as well as fashion’s connotations of frivolity, ephemerality, femininity and conspicuous consumption. Those who do acknowledge the cultural and textual value of the show’s style have just overcome the first obstacle of accepting its look and fashions as meaningful but tend not to continue to the next stage of actually closely analysing them. My study therefore explores what might be gained from analysing the show’s fashions as costume design and how the text negotiates its own engagement with spectacular fashion. The way the show is self-reflexive about its concern for fashion is part of its postmodern pastiche and irony, but also reflects notions of costume, fashion and dress that are indicative of how they are understood in the medium more widely.

*Brideshead Revisited* exemplifies the early 80s trend described by Cavell of television becoming more serial. What characters wear in this British period drama is fashionable but also constructs the seriality of its narrative and characterisation. My analysis looks at how they intersect. Like *Miami Vice*, the programme’s costuming has been understood only within alternative frameworks such as the heritage genre, postmodernism or nostalgic representations of the 20s. Looking at how the costumes make meaning across the episodes can indicate how we come to understand the text and characters this way. Through a study of its costuming strategies, the chapter will begin to show the importance of costume design and uses of fashion in the serial meaning-making process of television.

**Everyday television and constructed transparency**

We generally look *through* what people wear in everyday television—as if television provides a window on the world—but clothing choices for broadcast are never neutral and always in dialogue with codes and interpretations of dress. It is not just viewers who pay little attention to what people wear on ordinary television (which is often the

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161 Lyons 2010.
purpose); critics and scholars have largely neglected the subject. On the one page that
Jeremy G. Butler dedicates to costume design in his Television Studies textbook, one
paragraph focuses on costume in narrative television and one on ‘coded conventions
of appropriate dress’ in other forms such as news or sports.\textsuperscript{163} Overly simplistically,
Butler aligns costume design in narrative television with set design to say only that
like props and backgrounds, they establish character. The first example mentioned is
‘Sonny Crockett’s Armani suit, pastel T-shirt, Aviator sunglasses’, but this costume
does much more than just function as a prop, as I show in this chapter.\textsuperscript{164} Important
here is that Butler notes that ‘[c]ostume design is not limited to narrative television’,
but his description of what sports teams, sportscasters and news reporters wear is
generic and perceives it as ‘just dress’:

The dress of sportscasters is practically as regimented as the players’, with men
wearing the inevitable blazer and women dressed in modified blazers or some
variation on the businesswoman’s suit.\textsuperscript{165}

If regimented, the colours of players’ uniforms have a significant effect on what fans
around the world choose to wear, and Butler’s observation is limited in that it suggests
no space for any variety in the casters’ dress—which is not a uniform but a collection
of choices based on ideas around professional dress—or for the impact that their looks
have on how we understand the image and its represented dress codes.

One might question whether what sportscasters or news presenters wear has
anything to do with costume. On the one hand, what presenters wear can be seen as
professional dress in the same way that people in other professions dress in work-
appropriate attire; on the other, if using a broad definition of costume as an ensemble
of garments and accessories for people dressing up for an occasion or performance to
express a performed identity (see Introduction),\textsuperscript{166} it can be argued that it qualifies as
costume. Butler notes about news reporters:

In news there is a sharp demarcation between the formal business dresses and suits
of the anchorwomen and men, and the less formal dress of the reporters in the Field
(...). The studied “informality” of the field reporters (appearing without ties, their
sleeves rolled up and reporter’s notebook in hand, or wearing fatigues while covering

\textsuperscript{163} Butler 2012. See also Review of Literature.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid. 240.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Eicher 2010: 151-152.
international incidents) signifies that they are the ones in the trenches, digging stories out by any means necessary.\textsuperscript{167}

The use of the word ‘studied’ is crucial, as this suggests a stylistic choice approaching that of costume. There is a process of meaning-making operative here, signifying the reporters’ different identities. It is crucial that although their respective looks come across as transparent and inconspicuous, there is a performed identity construction behind what they wear, which goes to show that even in the most factual, everyday, regular and ordinary of television programming, clothing evidences that television is indeed not a window on the world but a construction. Framing determines how much we see; newsreaders are expected to look impeccable, but we only see what is within the frame, not what they wear under the table or outside of the frame. In 2016, Dutch newsreader Xander van der Wulp tweeted a screenshot of his appearance on NOS Nieuws, in which he seems to be wearing a suit, next to a picture that reveals that he is actually wearing camouflage cargo shorts and slippers underneath the frame when he unexpectedly had to report on the publication of a concept election programme (Figure 1).\textsuperscript{168} Although the tweet suggests that this is not representative of the newsreader’s regular professional dressing, it does reveal the constructedness of newsreaders’ outfits having to function as a costume only within the frame. Similarly, a 2017 BBC News interview with Professor Robert Kelly went viral because his young children barged in and his wife stormed in to fetch them.\textsuperscript{169} Whilst Kelly is wearing a traditional navy suit, white shirt and red tie as one would expect from a newsreader, his family is wearing casual clothing. Their appearance discredits the formality of Kelly’s professional look and exposes the private side of his everyday life, which normally remains obscured by the suit that he wears as part of his public appearance. Since we are used to reporters’ constructed look, this disrupts our expectations of formality and regularity. This look, which we may have assumed to be transparent, is thus exposed to be a construction that normally excludes the messiness of life.

\par\textsuperscript{167} Butler 2012: 240.
\textsuperscript{168} The Dutch Sunday-night satirical news programme Zondag met Lubach drew attention to this tweet. It can be found at: https://twitter.com/XandervdWulp/status/768896008147329024 (accessed: 28 February 2020).
\textsuperscript{169} BBC News, 10 March 2017.
Figure 1. A Dutch newsreader reveals his complete outfit on Twitter.

The appearance of the presenter on screen is the product of choices that are inherently linked with the cultural assumptions tied to the articles of dress, which are then reinforced or negotiated through this image and transfer across programmes. Even when clothing on television is at its most transparent, it has a meaningful role in how we understand people on the news and in other texts, because meanings of, for example, what it means to look professional are being represented here. For men, the code of neutrality and ‘smartness’ required inevitably means: some or all elements of a suit. As Butler implies, no tie or rolled-up sleeves instantly communicates a lower level of formality than a full suit, shirt and tie combo.\textsuperscript{170} Anne Hollander writes that although men’s suited appearance has become so familiar to us that it does not seem meaningful or important, there is a long, rich cultural history of design behind this ostensibly uniform and timeless look.\textsuperscript{171} As a detailed analysis in Chapter 2 shows, this is ostensible as variations in tailoring determine how we understand the wearer’s identity. This is apparent in the ‘studied “informality”’ of field reporters as well as in suits in costume design. What counts as professional dress for men remains limited and news programmes are a platform for the expression of traditional ideas around professionalism that dominate existing understandings. To meet the expectation of regularity and sameness, there is coordination within the text: we might see navy, black and brown suits within the same frame; perhaps only the weatherman will wear plaid, red or green (and Channel 4’s Jon Snow is known for wearing Victoria Richards

\textsuperscript{170} Butler 2012: 240. See above.
\textsuperscript{171} Hollander 1994. See also Chapter 2.
rainbow-coloured ties that seem to taunt our expectations), but never do we see a multitude of original, eye-catching men’s styles within the same frame, lest it distracts us from what is being said. I discuss throughout the thesis how the idea that noticeable aspects of style are considered a potential distraction from serious substance, an idea that is embedded within the very construction of such texts, contributes to the continued neglect of television style and costume. This is especially problematic where it comes to women’s professional look. There are more shapes and styles to choose from for women—skirts, dresses, trousers, blouses, tops—and since fashion is seen as for women, not men, we tend to look at what women are wearing more than where it concerns men – but when watching the news, we should not be distracted by clothes. Rather, we should instantly accept what the newsreader says, since they look so unproblematically professional and reliable. The discourse of neutrality and smartness around women’s professional dress is more complicated than for men because the lack of a uniform and timeless template means a continuing negotiation of what is appropriate. This is linked with patriarchal ideas of gender: a man in a suit is quickly taken seriously, but women’s dress has to balance between stereotypes of looking neither too tough/strict/masculine nor too soft/sexy/feminine, or she risks not being taken seriously. Everyday programming like news broadcasts continually presents us with the negotiation of this balance, and, as my discussion of professional dress in crime and legal dramas in Chapter 2 shows, dress choices are crucial to how we understand dramatic television texts and their cultural expression.

A window between high fashion and ‘ordinary’ women
Magazine programmes such as This Morning and Today engage with discourses of fashion, dress and costume through the window on the world perspective (aided by notions of liveness and immediacy) which television is still thought to perform on certain levels (and which is perpetuated by these texts). These programmes use a set of strategies to create what Wood calls ‘a mediated interface between public and private domains’, in which, I contend, notions of fashion, dress and costume are negotiated between the far-away worlds of high-end fashion or costume design and the ‘ordinary’ viewer’s wardrobe at home. Both programmes incorporate fashion, beauty and style sections into their regular content, with stylists reporting on and showing the latest trends and giving makeovers. Television is a particularly suitable

173 Wood 2009: 56.
174 There are limitations to the amount of footage I could use for this study, since not much has been preserved or made publicly accessible. In 2008, Rachel Moseley and Helen Wheatley posed the question ‘Is archiving a feminist issue?’ in Cinema Journal, addressing the issue that especially ‘ordinary’ daytime television programming aimed at
medium for these shows to act as intermediaries and to foster or challenge (gendered) understandings of these subjects. This constructed image of the everyday might then impact on how, due to television’s function as cultural forum, viewers understand similar types of dress codes in other television programmes.

As the term implies, magazine programming once emerged when television producers applied the concept of magazines to television. As Lynn Spigel notes about its launch in the 50s, ‘Today was NBC’s self-proclaimed “television newspaper, covering not only the latest news, weather and time signals, but special features on everything from fashions to the hydrogen bomb”’. As Spigel notes, ‘Home’ borrowed its narrative techniques from women’s magazines, featuring segments on topics like gardening, child psychology, food, fashion, health, and interior decor. As Newsweek wrote, “The program is planned to do for women on the screen what the women’s magazines have long done in print.”

Spigel argues that the magazine format was perfect for the media producer’s goal to tell women what to buy, as ‘each discrete narrative segment could portray an integrated sales message’ and the programmes made housewives feel as if television viewing was part of their daily housework. Although the demographic of daytime viewers has expanded since then, these programmes still primarily address women consumers. The shows use strategies to appeal to this group; I am interested in how these strategies intersect with the understandings of fashion, dress and costume negotiated in and beyond the texts.

Presenter Phillip Schofield points out in This Morning, broadcast live, that the show uses ‘real ladies, not models’ for their fashion and makeover sections. There is a decent amount of diversity between the women represented – whilst it remains a predominantly ‘white’ show, many of these women are of non-western descent (since its beginning; not just, though more, since the recent diversification taking place in the mainstream media). There is an especially careful diversity in the ages of the

women has scarcely been preserved. This remains a problem for archivists and historians; even online, this type of content is largely unavailable. This is one reason why I chose relatively high-profile examples of daytime magazine programming, but even then, sources are limited.

176 Ibid.
177 Ibid. 82.
178 Ibid. 83.
179 Wood 2009.
180 This Morning, 16 January 2018.
women who receive makeovers or model new fashions – mothers with daughters,181 dedicated sections to dressing fashionably ‘regardless of age’,182 or using middle-aged and/or elderly women to model outfits.183 This coincides with the show’s strategy to make fashion trends accessible to women on a lower (or, regular) budget by showing where items similar to expensive fashion brand styles can be purchased cheaper from high street stores. The way the show tailors its fashion and makeover sections to the ‘ordinary’ woman is one of the strategies that helps, as Wood also writes about the show’s conversational style and liveness, ‘to close the distance between text and spectator’.184 Since the show is aimed at stay-at-home women, using similar ‘types’ of women to model fashion creates a potential for these women to imagine themselves wearing the outfits – a potential not offered to the same degree by mainstream fashion advertising or fashion in mainstream cinema. The repercussion of this is that the gendered understandings about fashion and dress codes that are used and reiterated by daytime programming may have particular resonance in the cultural realm.

Like This Morning, Today uses diverse non-model women to show fashions and reminds us of their authenticity by asking or commenting on how they are feeling. The programme accentuates the fact that women are not all of the same size and age. Sections such as ‘Luxe For Less: Trendy Tights That Look Good And Feel Great!’, on how ‘any woman’ can wear this trend, and ‘Think You’re A Size Medium? So Do These 31 Women, Because Clothing Sizes Don’t Make Sense’ aim to dispel restrictive notions of fashion and dress.185 Reminiscent of Spigel’s observation about the show in the 50s, Today now still suggests that watching television is part of women’s household task of shopping for their husband and children: it features sections translating the latest fashions to wearable outfits for ‘the whole family’,186 or telling women ‘what men really want’.187 Unlike the 50s, the show now communicates a more inclusive notion of women’s varied lives and looks.

A widely used strategy in television is that of direct address and the presenters using inclusionary wording such as ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘we’ to build a seemingly reciprocal relationship with the audience (known as parasocial interaction/communication),188 which is used in magazine programming to create a shared sense of fashion-related issues between the presenters and the viewers. This strategy is used, for example, in

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181 This Morning, s.d. 1997; 13 April 2017.
182 This Morning, 7 November 2017; 16 January 2018.
183 This Morning, 17 January 2003; 13 January 2004; and many more.
185 Today, 21 October 2016; 2 April 2018.
186 E.g. Today, 8 December 2016; 4 May 2017; 21 December 2017.
188 See Horton & Wohl 1956 on parasocial interaction.
a *Today* section in which presenters Hoda Kotb and Kathie Lee Gifford and fashion expert Jill Martin are wearing yellow construction helmets as they discuss ‘fixes for fashion emergencies’ (Figure 2).\(^{189}\) They use sentences such as ‘we’ve all had them’ and ‘hopefully everyone can relate to this’ to approximate to the viewers’ experience. As Spigel notes about the early presenters on *Home*, the figure of the hostess had to speak on the viewer’s level and not appear superior in looks or demeanour.\(^{190}\) This strategy is still useful; in the 2008 segment, the one hostess points out a stain on the other’s clothing to strengthen the association between themselves (women on television) and the audience (women watching television): we, presenters, have the same fashion problems as you, viewers.

![Figure 2. Hoda Kotb and Kathie Lee discuss ‘fashion emergencies’](image)

These shows take fashion off its pedestal to make it accessible. In a 2012 *This Morning* London Fashion Week section which translates styles from the event to affordable high street outfits, with a catwalk and flashing lights on set, Holly and Phillip giggle at a model wearing multiple items layered over one another. The duo provides ‘impartial’, humorous commentary on the styles chosen to ‘disarm’ fashion for the viewers. This strategy to translate expensive fashion to cheap high street styles has been present since the early years; *TV Times* advertised the programme in the 90s mentioning that its stylists were to ‘[re-create] designer chic on a tight budget’.\(^{191}\) A 2005 fashion section shows two outfits in cream, brown, khaki, white, silver and burgundy shades that were in fashion at the time, but the items are from ‘cheap’ stores

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\(^{189}\) *Today*, 10 October 2008.  
\(^{190}\) Spigel 1992: 84.  
\(^{191}\) *TV Times*, 8-14 March 1997.
One 2009 episode ties into the BAFTAs by showing ‘Red Carpet Star Style’ for the ordinary woman ‘on a budget’. Whilst most fashion magazines advertise items that the regular reader could never afford, shows like Today and This Morning make fashion accessible to an average consumer’s budget. This way, television can have more wide-spread consumer impact than other fashion-centred media and becomes central to how we understand clothing styles.

In its address to a feminine audience, This Morning neglects menswear. The makeovers are usually done on women and the fashion sections discuss almost exclusively women’s fashion. In one exception from 1997, a husband and wife with children receive a makeover together. Yet, whereas the woman undergoes a radical transformation, the man’s style does not change as much. It is of the woman’s new Next top that the stylist remarks: ‘we want you to look like we know what we’re doing with fashion in this country’. Men’s fashion has remained marginalised; This Morning perpetuates the idea that fashion is for women, not for men (unless women are shopping for men). This idea is also represented through the professional dress of the presenters, with the men wearing the same or similar outfits every episode, whereas the women wear different pieces and styles every episode. In the 80s-90s, Richard is consistently shown wearing a plain brown, beige, grey or black suit with white shirts and often a tie, whilst Judy wears a significantly greater variety of outfits – from skirted suits in various colours (brown, green, blue, red) in the late 80s (with the then-fashionable wide shoulder pads and midi or maxi skirts) towards brightly coloured and patterned blouses on shorter skirts or a statement colour blazer on a darker top and above-the-knee skirt in the 90s (Figure 3). When, due to audience demand, the couple returned 18 years after they last presented to host one episode in

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192 This Morning, 16 May 2005.
193 This Morning, 9 February 2009. Including hair styles by Charles Worthington, who styled some of the stars’ hair at the BAFTAs. Fashion stylist Helen Boyle notes that since red carpet dresses are increasingly couture or vintage, they are harder to recreate. Boyle also remarks that the stars’ styles were predominantly black that year, so the recreations are, too.
194 See also: Today, 21 October 2026; 14 October 2018; 24 August 2017. With titles such as ‘[X style] for Less’, updating a seasonal wardrobe ‘Without Breaking the Bank’, or ‘How To Rock Red Carpet Styles Without A Celebrity’s Budget’.
195 This Morning, s.d. 1997.
196 Whereas the woman undergoes a radical transformation from an oversized grey jumper on washed-out jeans to a then-fashionable denim maxi skirt and matching short-sleeved jacket over a striped top, the man’s look does not change much: in the ‘before’ shot he is wearing an oversized navy jumper on beige trousers with black shoes; after, he wears an oversized orange and beige plaid short-sleeved shirt but again with beige trousers and black shoes. The family’s new outfits are sourced primarily from George at Asda (a supermarket) and BHS (British Home Stores, a ‘value’ department store).
197 Even the girl has undergone a notably more extreme makeover than the boy; she went from an oversized yellow jumper on washed-out jeans to a hip coral denim dress on a matching plaid blouse; the boy went from blue jumper and jeans to a blue t-shirt with fish print, striped blue shorts and a blue jacket (which he threw on the floor upon arriving on set).
2019, Richard was wearing a plain dark navy suit and tie; Judy a contemporary black dress and white jacket of which ITV details the brands on their website. Between later presenters Fern Britton and John Leslie or Fern and Phillip Schofield, Fern stands out with the variety of colours in her dresses, tops, blouses and skirts against the male presenters’ plain suits, shirts and ties. Similarly, Ruth Langsford is shown wearing a range of fashions and tailored clothes across her presenting years, whilst co-presenter and husband Eamonn Holmes wears a navy or dark suit with a white or pink shirt and a matching pocket square (the men’s most stylised item) (Figure 4). A consequence of the fact that men’s clothes in everyday television do not generally stand out to us (due to their extreme regularity) is that it makes the idea persist that they are transparent, unimportant, not worthy of attention, which transfers into discouraging viewers to pay attention to what men wear in other programmes, such as dramas. This thesis endeavours to pay equal attention to men’s and women’s dress on television and demonstrate that men’s clothes in fictional shows are usually the product of equally careful costume design.

Figure 3. Judy Finnigan and Richard Madeley on This Morning, ca. 1990.

198 This Morning, 25 October 2019.
199 Except he does have a lilac suit, but the shape is the same. ITV has several pages on their website like ‘Get Ruth and Eamonn’s studio style’ (27 September 2013); ‘Get Ruth’s Friday look’ (14 June 2019); ‘Get Holly’s Thursday style’ (13 June 2019), tying in with viewers’ interest in what they are wearing.
Within *This Morning*, the gendered difference in dress variety also determines how we understand the presenters. Phillip Schofield, no longer wearing the suits he wore when presenting with Fern, now invariably wears a plain dress shirt (grey, blue, olive or occasionally pink) against black or other dark trousers—episode after episode, the same items repeatedly—whilst Holly Willoughby has become the show’s fashion icon. Both of their identities as presenters are stabilised through the daily repetition of their dress styles: Phillip as the reliable, constant factor; Holly as the refreshing face of the programme and representative of its concern for fashion (ITV’s website details what she wears and where to buy it). A *Radio Times* interview from just before she replaced Fern Britton illustrates multiple perspectives on Holly’s identity as a presenter: the title ‘Holly Willoughby: A younger, prettier daytime queen? No, I’m just a mum...’ reflects how Holly, as a former model and known entertainment presenter, attempts to show that she is not a model from the high fashion world, but a woman just like the viewers of *This Morning*:

[Benji Wilson] Critics say you won’t have empathy with the viewers; that you got the job because you’re younger (28) and prettier. You say...

[Holly Willoughby] I think that with *This Morning* the majority of people watching it are people like myself. Someone who’s had a baby or got a young family at home. I’m a massive *This Morning* fan and a viewer, so I don’t see why I wouldn’t have empathy. With the age thing I’m not sure why my age has got anything to do with it. I’d like to
think I got the job on merit rather than what’s on my birth certificate. But I guess I can only really answer that once I begin.\textsuperscript{200}

The anxiety that the former model would not be on the same level as the viewers stems from magazine programming’s early strategies: as Spigel writes about the choice of presenters, ‘the ideal hostess was decidedly not a glamour girl, but rather a pleasingly attractive, middle-aged woman’.\textsuperscript{201} Perhaps too much a ‘glamour girl’, Holly spins the narrative to highlight that she, as a young mother, is like the audience. Yet, the sentiment of Phillip as a reliable factor and Holly as ‘younger and prettier’ is reiterated in her first interview on the show, in which DJ Chris Moyles kisses her hand, praises her looks and asks if she enjoys being the new presenter (Figure 5).\textsuperscript{202} Moyle says to Holly: ‘new outfit, new hair…’ and to Phillip: ‘old suit…’. This joke is built on gender: whilst we are to accept it as normal that he extensively evaluates Holly’s appearance, it is comic when he refers to Phillip’s look. Phillip responds that he has new shoes, which is when, per comic exception, we see one of Phillip’s brogues in close-up. Like in fictional television, this sequence establishes the presenters’ different personas and styles, but also tells us that women’s appearance is a regular topic of conversation and men’s is not. Over the years, Holly has become the programme’s icon for women’s fashion: she is an ambassador for Marks & Spencer and Garnier and wears styles that correspond with magazine fashion and with what stylists on the show recommend.\textsuperscript{203}

The heteronormative nature and stability of Phillip’s look and identity have however recently become disrupted as he has come out as gay in the 7 February 2020 episode of This Morning. It remains to be seen if this will influence his dressing choices.

\textsuperscript{200} TV Times, 12-18 September 2009: 146.
\textsuperscript{201} Spigel 1992: 84.
\textsuperscript{202} This Morning, 14 September 2009. Holly is wearing a cream/pink tailored, form-fitting mini dress which she keeps pulling down throughout the episode; her future outfits do not require constant adjustment.
\textsuperscript{203} On April Fool’s Day 2019, Holly was pranked by Phillip in a way that played upon her interest in and knowledge of fashion. Holly herself is wearing head-to-toe beige, in line with the SS19 trend (see British Vogue, March 2019). This episode’s makeover however has an exceptionally bad, tacky, unfashionable result, and the woman receiving the makeover (an actress) bursts out in tears. Holly attempts to salvage the situation, with little success. After the April Fool’s reveal, when the fashion expert asks if Holly truly thought she would put those boots together with that dress, Holly claims that she did find it odd. Being on live television meant she had to be supportive. This prank would not have worked with another presenter; it works because we have seen Holly dress perfectly fashionable in every single episode.
A 2003 ‘Better Style’ section in *This Morning* exemplifies how discourse of dress and fashion transfers between the programme’s advice for the ‘ordinary’ woman and clothing worn elsewhere on television. As Fern Britton introduces the section: ‘we don’t often look to the Queen for fashion tips, but she did surprise us all when she left hospital earlier this week wearing a rather natty trouser suit! She’s in her seventies, 76, so if she can wear the trousers, can anyone?’ During this introduction, the show cuts between Fern, Phillip and stylist John Scott in the studio and footage of Queen Elizabeth in a straight-fit tailored grey trouser suit, with a scarf tied around her neck and holding a walking stick. Scott notes that trouser suits are ‘back’ or ‘in vogue’ since the Queen has been shown wearing them on television. Five women walk down the *This Morning* runway in high street versions of the outfit: a woman of the age and styled to be a lookalike of the Queen; a plus-sized model; a petite model; a standard model; and a mature model (Figure 6). This ties in with the show’s incentive to make high-profile style available to the regular consumer. The show repeats the footage of the Queen whilst Scott exclaims, ‘she came out in a beautiful designer suit, but she’s got an old National Health walking stick!’ He then showcases walking sticks to match the outfits in the studio (stating they will send the lookalike’s favourite stick to the actual Queen). This episode demonstrates that outfits shown on public figures in television broadcasts can become fashionable and picked up to shape the content of a magazine programme. Meaning explicitly transfers and the trouser suit becomes established as ‘in fashion’ and made available to a range of women.

204 *This Morning*, 17 January 2003.
Furthermore, the style of costumes in fictional television can also transfer to everyday fashion via the daytime television programme. In a 2011 *This Morning* episode, two junior contestants striving to become the new apprentice of celebrity hairdresser Jamie Stevens are to style looks in several themes, one of which is 1950s vintage. The style icons shown by the programme for this look are Joan Holloway (Christina Hendricks) and Betty Draper (January Jones) from *Mad Men* (AMC 2007-2015). The costuming in this popular period drama, which is discussed in Chapter 3, became instantly fashionable and inspired a new interest in and nostalgia for 50s fashion styles. *This Morning* tags onto this trend; it takes the narrative meanings of the costumes out of the context of the serial period drama to use the styles as inspiration for everyday fashionable dress.

Although we tend to look through ‘real’ dress on everyday television and might not read it as culturally forceful or even as a constructed look, magazine programmes are a prominent platform for the negotiation of cultural assumptions about what is deemed appropriate and accessible dress for women of different ages, sizes and backgrounds. This is part of a strategic approach to its gendered mode of address and contributes to the construction of a televised everyday that has serious potential to influence ideas about what women (should) wear on and off screen. This is arguably as self-conscious an attitude in terms of stylisation as spectacular fashion on screen.
**Miami Vice: hyper visible style and spectacular costume**

Whilst both ‘ordinary’ and ‘spectacular’ styles on television have been present from the start, the popular success of *Miami Vice* in the 80s ignited discussion in the media, in criticism and amongst viewers around the visibility of style, costume and fashion as thought suitable to the medium. Caldwell notes on the ‘televisuality’ of *Miami Vice*:

> By 1984 everyone seemed to recognize *Miami Vice* as a program distinguished by its obsession with high fashion and excessive stylishness. The producers not only instigated a basic house look coded to certain color schemes, costuming, and fashions, they also pushed beyond a defining series look and encouraged the very process of stylization as an almost autonomous ritual.205

As James Lyons further writes in his extensive work on the series:

> If there was one thing observers of *Miami Vice* could agree on, it was that it was a very stylish show. TV critics, cultural commentators, and even the odd literary scholar felt compelled to remark on the striking visual and aural characteristics of the show, and all seemed to concur that style was its defining feature. But (...) [w]hile some lauded the “new visual sophistication” the show seemingly brought to television, many pointed to executive director Michael Mann’s statement that the key characteristic of *Miami Vice* was “no earth tones” as evidence of the show’s fundamental vacuousness. (...) Reflecting upon the critical response to *Miami Vice* in the weeks after its debut, Robert Thompson concluded that “the show became instantly notorious as a vehicle for ‘style’ rather than ‘content’.”206

Thus, many felt that the show was too concerned with its visual style to offer narrative substance. Being, Caldwell notes, ‘overphotographed, overcostumed, overmixed, and overcut’, the show’s excessively visible style clearly represents how television broke with Hollywood conventions.207 Caldwell saw how ‘[t]he influence of extra-Hollywood tastes’ (such its fashions) ‘had entirely displaced the zero-degree lock that television had carried on its back for so many years.’208 Indeed, *Miami Vice* forms a strong contrast in terms of style to its zero-degree predecessor *Quincy, M.E.*. This, however, does not make the one better than the other. It is a matter of focus: whereas zero-degree shows such as *Quincy* draw more attention to their screenwriting/storytelling qualities and the actors’ performance, *Miami Vice* draws more attention to its visual

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207 Ibid.
208 Caldwell 1995: 66. He concludes: ‘The fact that these artistic influences came from outside of Los Angeles is significant. The structure of television form had changed.’
qualities and actors’ costumes, but this does not mean that the former category is not stylised or that the latter does not also convey narrative substance.

The supposed distinction between style and substance is a delicate issue in the genre of crime drama. Even in recent times, as detailed in Chapter 2, the programmes in this area of television that receive most acclaim tend to have a ‘gritty’ style. Comparing the *Miami Vice* series to its ‘grittier’ 2006 film adaptation, James Poniewozik writes in a *TIME* review that ‘[s]tyle-conscious director Michael Mann, who executive-produced *Vice* for TV, took the original show’s atmospherics from a provincial Miami that hid its grit under pink stucco’.209 Sentiments like these perpetuate the idea that its pleasingly colour-coordinated visual style could not but cover up the substance of its subject. Lyons rightfully challenges ‘the pervasive assumption that “style” in *Miami Vice* was, for good or bad, largely superfluous to the strategies of storytelling’, arguing instead that it has a substantial role.210 However, the implied myth that spectacular style and engaging content are mutually exclusive, despite its being debunked by generations of academics, continues to avert critical considerations of television style and aesthetics.

This supposed contradiction between style and content seems similar to that between fashion and costume, both in the industry and in scholarship: most of the costume designers I have interviewed, as well as Deborah Nadoolman Landis in her writings, express that they design strictly costumes for the narrative and identity of the characters and that this is different from fashion.211 Scholars and critics—consciously or not—often underwrite the idea that costume is about content, whereas fashion is ‘just style’; vacuous and ephemeral. Yet, other scholars, as detailed in the Review of Literature, such as Stella Bruzzi, Helen Warner and several more in this field research have argued for the narrative significance of spectacular fashion in film and television costuming.212 A distinction needs to be made, however, between spectacular costume/fashion in film and the spectacular in television, as the concept of the spectacular has a different meaning and historical background in Television Studies. Spectacular television, as Helen Wheatley writes in her monograph on the subject, ‘is programming which is designed to be stared at, to be ogled, contemplated and scrutinised, to be gaped and gawked at’.213 Whilst this is not dissimilar to Bruzzi’s notion of spectacular costume which draws the viewer’s attention away from the narrative and towards the impact of the visually appealing garment itself, the critical

209 Poniewozik 2006: 64.
212 Bruzzi 1997; Bruzzi & Church Gibson 2004; Warner 2014.
213 Wheatley 2016: 1.
task to understand how, also in television, the spectacular offers more than mere superficial appeal (Bruzzi shows, too, how it then imposes meaning) is different in the context of television scholarship since television has long been perceived as a medium viewers only ‘glance’ at, not ‘gaze’ at like the cinema screen has already been accepted to invite us to do.\textsuperscript{214} Thus, the way we read the ‘unstructured’ Giorgio Armani suit designs worn by Richard Gere in \textit{American Gigolo} (1980) (which made the brand synonymous with this type of tailoring\textsuperscript{215}) is different from how we read the same style of tailoring in \textit{Miami Vice}, as spectacular fashion in the medium of television faces a double denial of significance.

Wheatley’s work forms an important intervention in the field through exposing how televisual pleasures have been generally underplayed by scholarship. She argues that, as opposed to common understanding, ‘television has always had moments, programmes and genres which can be identified as spectacular, and has always incorporated visual pleasure into its schedules’.\textsuperscript{216} At the same time, Wheatley acknowledges that the increase of channels (and, later, alternative viewing platforms) and the development of high-definition image quality and digital technologies have drawn wider interest in the visual pleasure and spectacle offered by television.\textsuperscript{217} \textit{Miami Vice} put spectacular costume in spectacular television, which, due its stigma of ‘style over content’, has overshadowed the significance of its costume strategies which helps to explain its cultural appeal. Much of the series’ and fashions’ meaning-making, however, comes across not \textit{despite} of it being television, but \textit{because} it is television. Costume and fashion structure content by creating stylistic continuity as well as innovation across the series, and by making meaning episode after episode, season after season.

\textit{Miami Vice}’s fashion styles and brands were meticulously chosen and tailored to each character and the costume’s function in the narrative. As Lyons notes,

\begin{quote}
Costume designers took buying trips to European fashion shows to stay abreast of trends, and had an unusually large budget for wardrobe purchases (unusual for TV, unheard of for a so-called “cop show”), used to dress Crockett and Tubbs in the latest Versace, Cerruti, and Hugo Boss suits.\textsuperscript{218}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{214} Ellis 1982: 128.
\textsuperscript{215} Church Gibson in Warner 2014: ix.
\textsuperscript{216} Wheatley 2016: 2-5.
\textsuperscript{218} Lyons 2010: 33.
\end{flushright}
The show had five seasons, five subsequent costume designers and five represented seasons of fashion. Few viewers would probably be able to distinguish the brands when watching the show, but there was demand for this information: in March 1985, *New York* magazine published a twelve-page fashion spread, ‘The High Style of *Miami Vice*’, written by Wendy Goodman with photography by Douglas Keeve.\textsuperscript{219} It features photos of Ricardo Tubbs and Sonny Crockett on a speedboat in the style of the first season of the series and, in writing, praises the represented postmodern look of Miami. The actors pose as if within their role, but not as part of their acting in the series; these are staged fashion photographs. The pages detail of what brand and fabric the garments are, how much they cost and when and at which high street stores they could be purchased.\textsuperscript{220} Although the predominant style per character tends to remain the same for the duration of at least one season, within each episode the costumes aid storytelling and across the season help create the coherent visual style for which the show is remembered, and which Lyons has pointed out is key to its strategies of storytelling.

The pilot of *Miami Vice*, ‘Brother’s Keeper’, represents conventional strategies for pilots in terms of storytelling. As Lyons notes, ‘[l]ike so many network shows, the pilot episode of *Miami Vice* began with a teaser (or “cold open”) designed to ensure the audience could be drawn quickly into events, and thus primed for the post-credit first scene’.\textsuperscript{221} This teaser uses visual storytelling techniques to introduce some of the spaces, characters and events that will feature, as well as the tone and atmosphere, whilst leaving the viewer with unanswered questions. Some of these questions are answered in the pilot, but others, as Butler explains, are left to be solved during the ongoing series:

\textit{[T]he two-hour pilot for *Miami Vice* (1984) establishes the characters of Rico Tubbs (Philip Michael Thomas) and Sonny Crockett (Don Johnson), and, through the death of Tubbs’s brother, provides the motivation for Tubbs moving to Miami. But the pilot concludes without Tubbs apprehending his brother’s murderer—as would have been typical for a classical film. There is no closure to the pilot’s central enigma: Will Tubbs capture the killer? We had to wait until several weeks into the season before the murderer was punished during the run of the program. The pilot, which is frequently presented as if it were a stand-alone movie, uses a certain degree of narrative aperture...}
to engage us, drawing us into the narrative structure of the regular run of a program.\footnote{Butler 2012: 33.}

Costume design contributes to the balance between providing and holding back information about the characters and narrative in the service of its serial success. The pilot opens with a shot of Tubbs sitting in his car wearing a beige trench coat under which his white tie is visible, an outfit establishing him as an outsider to the low-life streets of the neighbourhood he is in. This is immediately confirmed by the next shot, in which three young men approach his car to intimidate him for money. When they draw a knife, he draws a shotgun, and they leave. Next, Tubbs walks away from his car, sticking his hands in the pockets of his long trench coat, and enters a glamorous club, where his outfit from under the coat is shown in close-ups: a tailored, double-breasted dark grey suit with wide peaked lapels over a black shirt with a white diagonal weave silk tie, which introduces Tubbs as sophisticated and fashion-forward for the early/mid-80s (Figure 7). His sophistication characterises his background: he is a cop from upscale New York. In contrast, after the credits a medium close-up shot (intercut with shots from the streets) moves upwards from Crockett’s shoes and legs to his chest and head, showcasing his equally unconventional but more casual outfit: a crisp white unstructured linen suit with a light blue crew-neck t-shirt underneath, a golden watch and a pair of large sunglasses (Figure 8). Crockett is from the South and served in the Vietnam war. Costume designer Jodie Tillen explains:

I used to keep his t-shirts in the costume department on a pile on the floor, so that they would have the exact wrinkles and looked kind of sloppy. He never wore a belt, he never wore socks, he did the least amount to look that way, because he was beach guy.\footnote{Footage from a TV broadcast uploaded to YouTube: \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7w-8vaaNuQ} (accessed: 28 January 2020).}

Whereas Tubbs, Tillen adds, ‘\textit{chose} his tie’; ‘\textit{chose} his shirt’, Crockett ‘threw on the cleanest thing in the morning’.\footnote{Ibid.} Yet, Crockett’s is the type of fashion that the show has become most renowned for. Whilst establishing character, the question remains what these differences in character mean for the continuing narrative.
Costume in *Miami Vice* expresses character in a dual way: there is the ‘true self’ of the character and the ‘undercover self’ of the character. Costume is a way to show identity *and* a way to disguise it. Every police officer except for Crockett wears an outfit undercover that is distinct from their personal taste and wardrobe. Gina and Trudy arrive at the crime scene dressed in form-fitting, shimmery outfits with large earrings and overstated makeup, but also wearing police badges on necklaces to enter
police lines. The difference between their informal dress style and the formality of the badge emphasises the dual nature of their undercover work. In Part II of the pilot, Gina and Trudy use the same undercover outfits they wore in Part I, but we first see them in their regular clothing: Gina in a white buttoned blouse with wide peaked lapels and a pastel orange gathered midi-skirt with a shawl tied around her waist and Trudy in a closer fitting white dress with a colourful flower pattern and elastic waist belt – both styles a contrast to their undercover looks. Tubbs is in Part II shown in an outfit that is also a strong contrast to his tailored ensemble from before: dancing in a strip club, he is wearing a gaudy, abstractly patterned, unbuttoned shirt, showing off the golden necklace on his bare chest, and jeans with a belt. He speaks in a fake Jamaican accent, the accent he uses when undercover. Through this emphasis on the disguise costumes of the characters when undercover (which is often emphasised in dressing sequences and dialogue), the programme is self-reflexive about its dual use of costuming. By contrast, Crockett’s costuming does not change when undercover; during his son’s birthday party in Part I, Crockett is still wearing his white suit (smudged since a car exploded near him), and when he afterwards drinks tea with his ex-wife Caroline, with his jacket draped over the sofa, we see that he is still wearing his leather gun holster vest – even when crawled into bed with his six-year-old son.

Everyone else in the Vice team, especially Tubbs, is wearing clothes that are of notably neater quality than when disguised undercover. This suggests that the lines between work and personal life are not as clear for Crockett as it is for the others – a thin line which remains problematic throughout the seasons. The question is: will he learn?

The episode ‘Give a Little, Take a Little’ (1:10) is exemplary of the show’s tension between being spectacularly stylised and conveying the serious drama of tragic situations associated with undercover police work in Miami. The reason that the tragic content moves us is precisely because of its contrast to the flashy, sometimes deceiving look of the image. One of the storylines in this episode follows Gina and Trudy as they go undercover as sex workers to investigate a pimp, Lupo Ramirez. Gina, like most characters in other episodes of the show, compromises her own safety when making a brazen move to get to the heart of the criminal organisation. Ramirez eventually suspects that she is not a sex worker and takes advantage of Gina having to prove that she is. Whilst the rape is not shown on-screen, the implication is clear, and the emotional depth of this storyline throughout the episode is conveyed most strongly through Gina’s costumes in relation to the rest of the mise-en-scène and her costuming in earlier episodes.

_Miami Vice_ is characterised by spectacular transition scenes which may seem to be mere superficial displays of neon colouring and extravagant lifestyles, but which
are important to the series’ world creation. The episode starts with spectacular shots from the ‘Gayety Burlesque’, where a host in a white suit with a chest-exposing pink ruffled shirt and waistband introduces the act against a décor of pink glitter curtains. Non-diegetic pop music accompanies shots of extravagantly dressed burlesque dancers moving across the glitter and neon embellished stage. The shots are intercut with shots from the Miami streets, presumably around the burlesque theatre, where pimps and sex workers are shown arguing, and where Gina and Trudy are entering a store to buy clothes for their undercover work. In the store, Gina and Trudy prance around in the tackiest and most satin, lace, leather or feather adorned clothes they can find (Figure 9). This is a contrast to the clothes they wear coming in and out of the store: Gina in a calf-length pastel salmon shirt dress with slim waist belt and white loafers; Trudy in a pastel lavender wide-fit jersey t-shirt and blue/green leaf pattern 7/8 trousers with white kitten heel pumps. They leave with bags of new clothes, excited about this dress-up opportunity. After the credits, Gina and Trudy enter the police station’s meeting room in full undercover garb: Trudy in a pale blue knee-length gown with a large bow tie at the back and with a black clutch and Gina, more daringly, in a form-fitting black catsuit with sparkly embellishments in the belt area, also wearing her hair pinned up instead of in her then-usual ponytail (Figure 10). They joke around with the policemen before the lieutenant discusses the case and warns them not to get compromised. Gina confidently assures him, ‘Don’t worry about us, Lieutenant. They haven’t invented a tricky situation we can’t handle.’ The women dress up to enter the extravagant world of the Burlesque, the look of which forms a meaningful contrast to the secret dark world of crime that they infiltrate. Style and substance work together; rather than covering up crime, it is the look of that transition scene’s setting and the women’s costumes that make us understand exactly what they are getting into.
The emotional resonance of this episode relies to great extent on the contrast between Gina’s everyday dress and the clothes she is wearing in her undercover role. In the next scenes, Gina successfully rises the ranks from street-based sex worker to high-end private escort, and, despite Trudy’s warnings, agrees to dine with Ramirez and his business partners; only to realise once there that she is alone with him. She is wearing a red V-back dress which suits her undercover persona but not her ‘true’
character. When Ramirez confronts her and asks if she is ‘a hooker, or something else’, she is forced to respond she is the former. Ramirez pulls her by her hair to kiss her and then takes her upstairs. Trudy later finds Gina alone, wearing a pastel salmon bathrobe; she has thrown her red dress on the floor and tells Trudy to burn it. In the last scene of the episode, after Trudy has shot another criminal chased by Crockett and Tubbs who provides the Vice with evidence, Gina and Trudy enter the Ramirez residence to arrest him. Gina, framed from the ankles up, is wearing her regular attire: a pastel yellow polo shirt, a light bluish-grey calf-length box pleat skirt, a white handbag, her hair pinned back flat and a gun in her hand (Figure 11). Ramirez realises that she is with the police and approaches her with a knife, condescendingly reminding her of what he did. Gina does not hesitate to shoot him. The episode ends with Gina and Crockett in a meaningful embrace. Over the course of the season, we have come to know Gina as the highly competent but modest woman who usually wears shirt dresses or polo shirts with midi skirts, all in soft pastel colours. We see both of these styles in the episode: the shirt dress at the start, the polo shirt and midi skirt at the end. In between, in her undercover role she wears black, shimmery and red fabrics in form-fitting styles. Gina’s being mistakenly over-confident is enhanced by how she carries herself in the undercover costumes: shoulders back, striding confidently or sitting straight up and tilting her head while she speaks. This is, however, not Gina as we have come to know her over the previous episodes. The emotional impact of Gina’s storyline is only truly set when she confronts Ramirez in her normal costume – with the strength that comes with her getting justice by shooting the perpetrator as herself. This is one example of how Miami Vice, firstly, strikes a balance between style and content in that its style is not just glitter and glamour but contributes to and to large extent communicates the narrative; and secondly, that the glitter and glamour do not cover up the criminal world. Rather, the show is self-conscious that appearances can be deceiving and that the glossy surface of a place like the burlesque theatre should not conceal the city’s problems with drug trafficking, rape and other crimes.
Another example of where style clearly informs content is the last episode of Season 4, ‘Mirror Image’, in which Crockett is undercover on a boat that gets blown up. He suffers a concussion and when waking up in the hospital he is told that his name is Sonny Burnett (his undercover name). The Vice department initially loses track of him, but when Tubbs finds him, Crockett is set up by the criminals he now works with and shoots Tubbs in the chest (who has a bulletproof vest). The criminals found out that Tubbs was a cop but are now confident that Crockett is on their side. Crockett’s confusion of identity is communicated to great extent via his costuming, as he now wears ensembles like a neatly tailored grey suit, shirt and tie, with black dress shoes – a different style from his costuming in the rest of the series (Figure 12). He wears similar suits later in the episode, and in a dream sequence he is dressed in a crisp white suit, shirt and tie combo. In the first episode of Season 5, which starts with a nightclub party scene, it is immediately clear that Crockett still thinks he is Burnett, not Crockett, as he appears with long hair worn in a ponytail and is still wearing a full suit. A frontal shot shows Crockett sitting outside in a neat dark suit and tie with a white spread collar shirt, his hair tied back and sunglasses on. He is wearing a tailored double-breasted suit – a style he would never wear as ‘himself’. Viewers can instantly see that he cannot remember his past identity. Whilst the series’ costuming reflects fashion trends in terms of colours, styles and silhouettes, each character also has their own style, carefully built over the preceding seasons. The fact that Crockett wears tailoring that is uncharacteristic to him communicates his identity crisis, not just a
fashion change, which we know because he had been wearing an entirely different style for the first four seasons. This only works due to the seriality of costuming. In the second episode of Season 5, Crockett is first wearing a neat charcoal suit with a dark shirt with subtle embroidery details along the button stand, but when he starts to regain his memory and is contemplating who he is at the seaside, he is no longer wearing the jacket and has left some shirt buttons undone. After another explosion, Crockett remembers who he is and returns to the Vice department wearing a grey suit which is too large for him; the shoulders are too wide, giving the ensemble a less well-tailored look that suggests that he no longer fits the Burnett role as leader of the Carrera criminals. When, after regaining the confidence of his colleagues, he sets off to roll up the gang, Crockett is undercover in a neater black suit, in the role he should have had: a cop, undercover.

Figure 12. Crockett is wearing different tailoring since an explosion.

A crucial aspect of the cultural appeal of the show is that whilst Crockett’s outfits are generally less well-tailored than Tubbs’, Don Johnson as Crockett was the bigger star; he was featured more prominently in popular media and as a style icon than Philip Michael Thomas was. The way Johnson’s and Thomas’ different star personas are described in a 1985*Rolling Stone* article illustrates this:

Johnson, 35, has that star quality people speak about. When he’s around, you have to take notice. It’s not just that he’s strikingly handsome and wears nice cologne and
tinted lenses, or that his freshly ironed clothes smell like Ivory Snow. He demands attention, even when he’s silent.

(...) I hear quick, light footsteps and turn to see Philip Michael Thomas, dressed in jeans, football jersey and baseball cap. When Don Johnson walks into a room, attention must be fixed on him. Philip is different. He can enter a busy crowd and join in the camaraderie; he can be just one of the guys.225

Other news and popular media sources similarly highlight Johnson as the star.226 In 2014, it was Johnson who was interviewed for Rolling Stone magazine’s ‘30 Years of Miami Vice’ retrospective.227 Although Miami Vice is one of the few shows to have an African-American or mixed-race protagonist, this portrayal is racially charged. As Kathleen Karlyn points out in a 1988 Jump Cut article:

Black Tubbs, as one would expect, plays second fiddle to white Crockett. Indeed, the racism implicit in Tubbs’ subordination to Crockett is one of the most serious charges leveled at the show, which peoples its representation of the world of nature with racial and ethnic minorities. Interestingly, however, it’s not ‘Tubbs’ race but his sophistication that the program uses to place him a little off its off-center center.228

Johnson’s and Thomas’ costuming across the seasons supports the construction of their stardom. Comparing the different levels of variation in and spectacle of their costuming, it is notable that Crockett wears a range of colours and shapes and his casual style changes significantly between seasons, whilst Tubbs’ costuming style does not undergo the same level of transformation; for most of the series, Tubbs is shown (when not undercover) wearing grey suits with the only variation being his blue or purple shirt and tie combos. Their distinct styles spilled over into the actors’ appearances as ‘themselves’ in the media: in a 1985 Today Show interview, Johnson

225 Benedek 1985. It further describes: ‘Johnson’s golden-brown hair is swept straight back and falls in careful layers to a perfect collar line. On the set, he frequently combs it into place, as it has the habit of falling rakishly over his eyes. His perfect features — straight nose, even teeth — give him an untouchable, macho cool, but his sensual mouth and soft, Cancerian eyes hint at another side of him, a side that at times shows through as fear in his gaze. This is the look that wins fans, that makes him seem heartbreakingly vulnerable. As Sonny Crockett, he is a roiling pot of emotions that are most often discharged in wiseass smart talk. But the love-hurt ex-husband and devoted dad peeks through those sad eyes and drives the girls wild.’ Thomas is described differently: ‘He seems comfortable with his good looks and radiates great energy and warmth.’ Additionally, this article also reflects the idea that television and its actors cannot possibly be this stylised, as the author writes: ‘Johnson and Thomas have a quirky individualism more often seen in movie stars than in television actors, and their show looks more like a motion picture than TV.’

226 E.g. Jameson 1985: 66-67; Bremner: 1988: 10. Loder’s 1986 article about Johnson’s foray into music states that ‘Philip Michael Thomas’s hipness index dipped precipitously’ after Thomas’ own debut album was unsuccessful.

227 Serwer 2014.

228 Karlyn 1988. It should be acknowledged that Karlyn is a white woman, and so am I.
is wearing a blue unstructured suit with a white t-shirt and white loafers; Thomas a grey suit with a blue dress shirt (Figure 13). When the interviewer asks if Johnson came dressed as ‘the Sonny Crockett we just saw on TV’, Johnson responds, ‘this is mine; this is me’. She then asks where his socks are, and Johnson claims he does not own any anymore. The lines between character and actor—between costume and fashion—are as blurred in this instance as between Crockett’s cop and undercover personas on the show. The fact that Crockett’s costuming is more serially dynamic than Tubbs’ and has had wider cultural appeal outside the text is further indicative of a complex intersection at work between ideas around characterisation, stardom, implicit racism and the show’s engagement with fashion, which together underpin its overall style and substance.

Figure 13. Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas are being interviewed on Today.

Another issue in the show’s cultural appeal is that when remembering Miami Vice, we think of its abundance of pastel colours and ground-breaking popularisation of unstructured suits, pleated trousers and espadrilles without socks. This is, however, only representative of the first two seasons of the show (with costume design by Jodie Tillen and Bambi Breakstone); the third season (with costumes by Richard

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230 Ibid.
Shissler) introduced a contrasting colour palette. Whereas in the first two seasons the characters are costumed in soft, desaturated, baby pastel shades of salmon, pink, yellow, orange, blue or green set off against white or cream, in the third season they wear much more saturated colours in a palette of predominantly blues and yellows against white, grey or black; occasionally pinks or greens. This is as coherent a look – characters wear extremely matching or blocking colours with enough variety between them in the overall selection of colours within the frame to show the colour scheme. They wear the same costumes repeatedly across the season; character’s individual styles show little change. Yet, costuming is still not superficial: as is usual for a second or third series of a television show (as also applies to the case studies of the other two chapters), the costume designer creates increasingly sharper distinctions between the characters: in almost all episodes, Tubbs is consistently wearing grey suits with blue or purple shades of shirts and ties; Crockett wears bright yellow or blue t-shirts under various jackets and pleated linen trousers. The distinction between ‘beach guy’ Crockett, who throws on whatever he finds on the floor in the morning, and the more sophisticated Tubbs with his tailored capsule wardrobe thus becomes stronger as we come to understand their different identities more over time. Even when in the 20th episode (‘By Hooker By Crook’) we see the protagonists at a cruise party with black tie dress code (where all women are dressed in glitter), whilst Tubbs is wearing a conventionally tailored navy tuxedo with a satiny white shirt and silk grey bow tie, Crockett wears a tux with rounded lapels and a white mandarin collar shirt without a tie. They both have different subtle patterns woven through the suit fabrics that not all audiences with 80s television sets may have been able to distinguish, but which still subtly inform actor and character. When having left the party and its dress code, it is significant that Crockett unbuttons his shirt as he relaxes from his role, but Tubbs is comfortable keeping his suit on. This aids characterisation, whether we consciously notice it or not. Furthermore, the episode has a guest appearance by George Takei, who, in line with the colour scheme, wears long black robes with layers underneath that show yellow and blue or purple, white and blue border stripe colours. The fourth and fifth seasons (with costume design by Eduardo Castro and Bobbie Read) continue with a similar colour scheme, if slightly toned down.

Due to it being television and its content communicated through spectacular style and fashion, *Miami Vice* faces a double denial of significance which led critics to too easily assume it was simply a case of style over substance. Whereas its zero-degree counterpart *Quincy M.E.* suffered the opposite in that its style and costuming were

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231 The costume design is credited to a larger crew, as always, here including Milena Canonero, who designed for many high-profile (film) productions since.
too transparent to be noticed, in both series costume is crucial to how we understand the layers of characters’ identities, which inform all its narrative content. Like the Vice cops, medical examiner Quincy (Jack Klugman) assumes multiple roles – his position in which is communicated through costuming. Whilst he is a forensic pathologist, Quincy gets involved in criminal cases as if he is a detective and defends or accuses suspects in court as if he is a solicitor. However, when Quincy transcends his role in court, there is a difference between the way actual lawyers are dressed (plain, neatly tailored suits) and Quincy’s costuming (the professor look; less well-matched and well-tailored ensembles, often crumpling when he gets angry). Additionally, Quincy, M.E. is not devoid of fashion, especially when looking back at the text today: even though men’s fashion and tailoring have not radically changed over time, the influence of 70s fashion is clearly noticeable in the extremely wide peaked lapels of suit jackets, the extra-long peaked collars of men’s shirts and the colour scheme of predominantly dark brown, green and orange. This comparison shows how in both texts costume and fashion operate together to make meaning, and there has been no convincing argument to suggest that it does so more meaningfully in the one category than the other. Looking more closely at their workings tells us how it is that we come to know the characters and narrative in the ways that we do.

More than raiding the past for its fashions

As a heritage ‘costume drama’ that was stylistically and aesthetically innovative for British television in the 80s, Brideshead Revisited faces its own challenges with the legitimisation of the significance of its costuming and other elements of style. As Ryan Trimm notes in a discussion of the heritage genre and postmodern spectacle, texts in this category are critiqued for only capturing the look of the past in empty pastiche; for raiding the past ‘only for its fashions’ and for the postmodern problem that ‘heritage images invoke a specifically nationalized past but one transformed into a simulacrum of itself, disconnected from any historical actuality’. Brideshead, alongside films such as Chariots of Fire (1981), A Room with a View (1985) and The Remains of the Day (1993), was ‘particularly criticized regarding a shallow stress on the image: such films obsessed over fashions and styles of a given era, an authenticity of image seemingly becoming the film’s entire relation to the past’. Indeed, Andrew

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232 Trimm 2018: 128 notes that it was ‘more aesthetically driven than other contemporary television productions’ (a notion linked to ‘the cinematic’, which I consider a problematic term, but it does point to its elevated style) and distinguished itself stylistically through the grandiose way it looks, was shot/produced and made use of its setting. Trimm 2018: 117; 121. Removed emphasis on ‘heritage’. Jameson 1991 stated, as Holdsworth 2011: 3; 6 argues against in her work, ‘that memory plays “no role in television”’. On the contrary, Holdsworth proves that it does. 234 Ibid. 121.
Higson argues that the attention to style in such adaptations obscures the critical voice of the novels: he writes that ‘that which in the source narratives is abhorrent or problematic becomes prettified, elegant, and seductive in the films’.\textsuperscript{235} However, as I discuss more elaborately in Chapter 3, this idea is based on the misguided assumption that that which is pretty cannot be significant, important, abhorrent or problematic as well.\textsuperscript{236} A serious look at costume, fashion and other elements of and style in texts like \textit{Brideshead} shows that prettified style can convey critical voices too.

Despite such critiques of shallowness, \textit{Brideshead} also exists as a contentious example of ‘quality television’. As mentioned in the Review of Literature, Charlotte Brunsdon argues that traditional criteria of ‘quality’ in television had to be interrogated.\textsuperscript{237} Brunsdon points to some of the aspects of \textit{Brideshead} that are partial to its classification as ‘quality television’: its ‘legitimising’ literary source, the Evelyn Waugh novel; renowned actors; high-end production; and ‘heritage export’ of English national identity.\textsuperscript{238} The ways \textit{Brideshead}, according to Brunsdon, ‘incorporate[s] already established taste codes’ is visible in its costuming: such taste codes are well expressed by the show’s use of 20s fashion, which remains an overlooked aspect. Yet, the costumes, designed by Jane Robinson, do much more than just raiding the past for its fashions to create an empty spectacle that claims its own quality. Without these specific fashions, we would not be able to visually locate the narrative as taking place in the 20s from a flashback from the 40s (although the voiceover says so), and, in line with how seriality became prevalent from the 80s,\textsuperscript{239} the programme represents serial costuming strategies that inform an increasingly deep sense of character and narrative as the drama’s critical voice unfolds gradually over its 11 episodes.

\textit{Brideshead} centres on the life and relationships of narrator Charles Ryder (Jeremy Irons) as he falls in love with Lord Sebastian Flyte (Anthony Andrews) and makes the acquaintance of his eccentric friends and family. In the first episode, which flashes back to the 20s after it starts in the 40s, Charles is told by his cousin upon arrival in Oxford in the early 20s that he should ‘dress as you do in a country house: never wear a tweed jacket and flannel trousers, always wear a suit. And go to a London tailor...’ One of the strategies used to create the show’s image of high production values, upper-middle class taste and imperial English identity is through the dressing of Charles and Sebastian in fashionable beige, off-white, brown or black suits with long coats and accessories such as matching hats and scarfs, and Sebastian’s sister

\textsuperscript{235} Higson 2003: 80.
\textsuperscript{236} See my discussion of Galt 2011 in Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{237} Brunsdon 1990: 67(90).
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid. 85-86.
Julia (Diana Quick) in lavish, flowy flapper dresses. High-end fashion from the 20s is on display at all social gatherings, showcasing character identities as well as English heritage style. *Brideshead* brought adapted 20s fashion styles back in vogue in Britain in the 80s as well as to the US: *The New York Times* claims in 1982 that *Brideshead*, along with *Chariots of Fire*, had ‘an undeniable impact on fashion’. As the writer continues:

The British fashion press reports that London’s new look is that of the “trad English gentleman - cool, dashing, aristocratic,” as exemplified by Nigel Havers, who plays Lord Andrew Lindsay in “Chariots of Fire,” and Anthony Andrews, who portrays Sebastian Flyte in “Brideshead Revisited.”

Several magazines report that luxury department store Bloomingdale’s in New York displayed *Brideshead* fashions in its windows and opened a store dedicated to selling fashion inspired by the show. This does not mean that it is ‘just’ fashion, as the relationships between characters and the way the narrative unfolds are expressed crucially through how the fashions function as costumes. Chapter 3 will engage with discussions of historical accuracy, authenticity and nostalgia in period costuming; my aim here is to commence the study of serial costuming.

Since the architecture and overall look of Oxford itself have barely changed in the last decades, it is through production design that the 40s and 20s are represented; the narrative is historically situated mainly through colours, clothes and cars. When the series starts, viewers—especially British viewers—instantly understand that it is set in the Second World War due to the recognisable colour and fabric of the men’s military uniforms; in the 80s, many British viewers would have seen or held such a uniform. This fulfils the degree of realism that viewers expect from a television heritage drama. When Charles recalls the 20s, the difference between the 40s and the 20s is shown through costuming – although this is an 80s representation of the 20s that reflects the era in which it was made, even today, the historical context is clear. Dress styles and codes are crucial to how we see and understand when and where the narrative takes place. Conversely, costume can also deliberately confuse us as to when and where it is situated: in the recent HBO adaptation (by the same name) of Philip Pullman’s fantasy novel series *His Dark Materials*, which is also set partly in Oxford, Lyra’s (Dafne Keen) rust corduroy pleated pinafore, buttoned shirt and socks in boots, although perhaps a 40s style, could have been worn at any point in the past decade;

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241 Ibid.
242 E.g. Stewart 1996; Vinciguerra 2011.
since the narrative is meant to be timeless and placeless, the rest of the production design does not corroborate any historical interpretation. Lyra’s costume aids the sense of unsettledness the fantasy show aims for by preventing us from being able to locate temporality. This is different from the costuming strategy used for Brideshead, which encourages us to see and revel in the historical grandeur of the city and countryside of Oxford in the 20s.

The serial narrative trajectory of the unfolding relationship between Charles and Sebastian is conveyed through what they wear, and this simultaneously informs us about their backgrounds and the environments in which the narrative takes place. Charles’ costuming style is either distinguished from or in harmony with Sebastian’s, depending on whether they feel apart from or close to each other at particular points in the narrative. When Charles and Sebastian are first shown together, one academic term after their meeting, Charles is wearing a light brown cable knit vest over a shirt and beige trousers, taking a light beige jacket with him; Sebastian first appears in a completely off-white outfit, with his signature fashion of a knitted jumper tied around his shoulders, and a teddy bear in his arms (Figure 14). A flashback shows Charles first arriving at his Oxford college. Charles does not follow his cousin’s advice; he is wearing beige tweed jackets with unmatching ties and trousers. Upon his first sight of Sebastian, passing in a doorway, Charles is wearing a beige trench overcoat (over, we later see, a beige suit, beige knitted vest, off-white shirt and diagonal stripe tie) and Sebastian a light brown coat draped over his shoulders, over a well-tailored light beige three-piece suit, holding his teddy bear. The colour palette of white, cream, beige and brown is as coherent as the pastels in Miami Vice. It represents a different approach to style, however: costume designer Jane Robinson says in an interview that she believes that ‘in television, too little color is often more effective than too much’. In this text, subdued uses of costume implicitly represent through colour how the characters are connected, but through differences in tailoring also that they are distinct in personality, wealth and status. Charles sees Sebastian again in a pub as Sebastian removes a fake beard and kisses a man in a white scarf, signalling Charles’ realisation of their gay sexuality. He meets Sebastian as the latter, in formal tailoring, drunkenly retches into the window of Charles’ room. As an apology, Sebastian has many bouquets of flowers delivered to fill Charles’ room and invites him to luncheon, for which Charles wears a three-piece suit; his is beige/brown with a coloured tie, Sebastian’s is full off-white/light beige. Through subtle details in colours and fabrics, we understand the differences in wealth and identity between the men: Sebastian’s

light-coloured outfits imply a history of English aristocracy; as Anne Hollander writes in her cultural history of suits:

The most vital forms of male elegance in the second half of the eighteenth century, in fact, were developed by the eccentric and unmodish male aristocracy of England, who increasingly scorned personal display and court ritual, while remaining somewhat aloof from the look of middle-class commercial success or clerical gravity. They adopted a sartorial blend of the chic plainness proposed by the Puritans of earlier days and by the country-dwelling yeomanry and gentry. To overtones of war and religion were thus added the potent flavors of leisured country life and country sport, which suggest the perennial conquest of brute nature.244

Sebastian’s and his family’s costumes similarly exude an air of an aristocratic country lifestyle, wearing outfits to perfectly fit each activity (hunting, supper, leisure, party). Sebastian’s ‘cricket whites’ imply a lower expectation of getting dirty, whilst middle-or working-class characters (such as Charles) would wear less precarious colours that could potentially be stained. We understand Sebastian’s background even before it is confirmed when he takes Charles to his family’s luxury country estate. The costumes thus speak for the characters’ class distinctions, which are ultimately central to its critical voice of how, as one reviewer puts it, ‘a deceptively charming, immensely wealthy family’ gradually inflicts psychological damage on the protagonist.245 During his writing of a BFI Classic volume about the show, Mark Broughton told the reviewer:

“Perhaps no other television program or film has captured the experience of a place over time with such lyricism and sophistication. (...) This lyricism is, however, tempered with a sense that the beauty fetishized by the protagonist, Charles Ryder, is a facade. The historical, cultural and personal forces that wear away at Ryder are unveiled at the same time as his self-deception becomes apparent.”246

The prettified, lyricised style of the series does not obscure the critique of the source novel but conveys it.

244 Hollander 1994: 60.
245 Vinciguerra 2011.
246 Ibid.
By the end of the second term at Oxford University, Charles wears a light beige herringbone three-piece suit with a paisley tie and a pocket-square, sticking a white flower into his lapel buttonhole as his older cousin criticises his look and behaviour (Figure 15). His tailoring has started to mirror Sebastian’s; its decorativeness and the way it makes him carry himself communicate gay identity and a higher class than the one to which he belongs. However, when they meet again, Charles is dressed in beige suiting, but Sebastian in black – signalling that the balance in their relationship is disturbed (by another character). Tellingly, when Charles dines with his emotionally distant father, he is again wearing a knitted vest over a shirt and coloured tie, with a beige jacket and unmatching trousers; away from Sebastian, Charles is dressed in his original style. Yet, when called to Sebastian’s, he is wearing full off-white/beige again, with the same jacket as at the start of this sequence. As they spend more time together over the next episodes, their costumes increasingly mirror each other; though Charles wears more beige and Sebastian more off-white, they look much alike, and Charles starts wearing more off-white and Sebastian more beige. Their harmony is most striking on a holiday to Venice in Episode 2, where they both wear beige suits, a beige vest, a Venetian straw hat and a beige coat over the arm (Figure 16). They move and walk in the same way; place their hands in their pockets simultaneously. Like how in Miami Vice the pastel costumes match Miami, Charles and Sebastian’s outfits match the muted beige colours of Venice itself as well as the clothes of other characters,
giving the image an impression of ‘stylishness’ and harmony of the characters with their environment.

Figure 15. Charles’ costuming has changed.

Figure 16. Charles and Sebastian are dressed harmoniously.

Whilst it is period fashion, costume also communicates the characters’ issues with the norms of society. Although Sebastian is the most popular, spoilt and fashion-forward character, he is also the most troubled, and his mental health issues, which
result in alcohol addiction, are reflected in his costuming. As Charles befriends Sebastian’s family, Sebastian grows more distant from him. Charles narrates at the end of Episode 3: ‘I was no longer part of his solitude. As my intimacy with the family grew, I became part of the world he sought to escape.’ In Episode 4, ‘Sebastian Against the World’, Sebastian, formerly impeccably dressed, is shown wearing an unmatching jacket and trousers, with the top buttons of his shirt unbuttoned and the shirt creased and tucked sloppily into his trousers. In the evening, although he has put on trousers, a dinner shirt and waistcoat and has a bow tie to be tied around his neck, Sebastian is too drunk to join for dinner. Afterwards, he stumbles into the lounge to apologise to Charles and his tie still untied, his collar and waistcoat unbuttoned and the fabric is crumpled (Figure 17). Although the clothes are perfectly tailored and of high quality, the way Sebastian wears them (versus the impeccable dinner dress of Charles and the others) makes him look more miserable than had he worn a more ordinary outfit. His casual- and formalwear in the next episode remains visibly less well put together than before; his bow tie is askew when dining with family. Sebastian wears clothes that are appropriate to his and his family’s place in society, but societal pressures are making him depressed, and he uses his depression as a form of rebellion.

Figure 17. Sebastian’s dinner outfit shows his distress.

Clothing and grooming are crucial for television series to signal temporality. Since Charles has moved away from Brideshead and travelled for his painting career, he has lost touch with Sebastian but married a woman and had children whom he
never sees (and neither do we). The passage of time and Charles’ maturing are shown through his now having a beard and wearing clothes of heavier, higher quality in more muted colours, occasionally with red accents. When he meets Julia on a cruise ship, her ageing is also represented through costuming and hair: whereas at Brideshead she wore a short bob haircut and dainty, embellished, flowy flapper dresses that reflected her flighty attitude, after time passed in which she married and left the wrong man, she now wears a plain beige dress with a white pearl necklace and her waved hair tied back, which makes her look older. Charles, who once felt a twinge upon their first meeting as she so strongly reminds him of Sebastian, now has an affair with Julia, and, significantly, after their night together, he shaves his beard but leaves a moustache – a return to his Brideshead years, but with a change. Julia wears plain, more tailored, black, cream, grey or beige, later also red costumes – a colour scheme that matches Charles’. When Charles reunites with a pompous and extravagantly gay acquaintance from his Oxford years, Charles wears a paisley scarf again. Such styling details are not accidental, but subtly convey characters’ narrative trajectory and the different layers of their identities. It is through costuming details that we understand that whilst Charles’ life has changed, his lyricised time at Oxford and Brideshead will always retain a grip on his present and future.

*Brideshead Revisited* is a highly stylised and stylish show, and whilst I agree with Brunson that it brands itself as ‘quality television’ through its use of taste codes and would add that fashion contributes to this, the narrative workings of costume are more subtle and nuanced – within the coherent, overwhelmingly beige colour palette, certain differences in shape, shade and texture in the costumes make us ‘get’ what the characters go through over the course of the serial narrative. This costuming strategy, in the sense of Perkins’ theory, addresses the mind more than the intellect; it is more instinctive than outspoken and it requires an analytical exercise to understand how it works – beyond just raiding the past.247 This becomes clear when taking into account the subtle differences in costuming across the programme’s serial development.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has offered some interventions and insights into what a productive study of costume, fashion and dress in television might look like, exploring some paths that are and some that are not pursued further in the upcoming chapters. Whilst the rest of the thesis is concerned with fictional television, this chapter has also suggested ways in which the study of dressing may help us to understand the meaning-making

process and negotiation of cultural ideas in non-fictional everyday programming. The suggestion that arises from this discussion is that cultural notions of the function and style of television programmes and the meanings attached to clothes work together in the meaning-making process of and across texts. The expectations that we may have of the medium—everydayness, repetition, regularity, immediacy, realism—shape but also obscure the intricate workings of how dress structures meaning across episodes. It is through serial dressing strategies that we ‘get’ who and what is being shown and how we are supposed to feel about that.

So, for future study, what might be gained by analysing the serial qualities of costume, fashion and/or dress codes in television not just in fictional serial drama, but also in non-fictional programming? To return to Robert C. Allen’s theory of serialisation, a serial requires the audience to move through shots, scenes, sequences or episodes, and meaning is understood as viewers connect what came before to what might come next.  

248 This is true, I would continue, not just for dramas, but also for other modes of television, as seriality is present in most forms of television.  

249 Viewers that regularly watch a news channel or a magazine programme will make more connections between its instalments than viewers who do not – just like in fictional texts. The emotional turmoil of Gina in the ‘Give a Little, Take a Little’ (1:10) episode of Miami Vice is expressed through the difference between her regular dressing style and her undercover outfits; we know that Crockett is not himself after the explosion in the last episode of Season 4, ‘Mirror Image’, because we know that his costuming up to that point was very different. The coming-of-age development and relationship of Charles and Sebastian in Brideshead Revisited are represented by their costuming across the series. We can clearly see the significance of seriality when looking at how the change that a crisis brings along in the narrative is expressed through costuming. This is also something we can see in non-fictional programming: on 9/11, for example, news reporters and magazine programme presenters went to work expecting a slow, regular day, so they wore what seems generally appropriate. In the days or even weeks after the tragedy, they would consider dressing more toned down; a more ‘serious’, sober look, compared to what they would normally wear. Channel 4 newsreader Jon Snow, famous for his cheerful, colourful ties, unexpectedly had to report the tragedy wearing one of his usual rainbow-coloured ties.  

250 Although Snow is known to always wear a colourful tie, when reporting on topics such as the Iran nuclear deal, he wears

249 See also my reference to Feuer 1986: 102 paraphrasing Ellis.  
a more ‘serious’ tie with more conventional colours.\textsuperscript{251} Whilst even during field work Snow normally wears a tie, during his visit to Ground Zero two months after the 9/11 attacks, he does not wear a tie at all.\textsuperscript{252} This conveys the seriousness of the situation, since regular viewers know that Snow always wears a tie. This is a minor disruption of the programme’s regular, everyday look that viewers only notice if they know how the presenter dresses on a regular basis.

We can also see how ideas of appropriate professional dress transfer between programmes when considering, for example, the moment when BBC newsreader Peter Sissons announced the death of the Queen Mother on 31 March 2002 and became heavily criticised for wearing a grey suit with a deep burgundy tie, instead of the black ties that the ITV presenters wore. Viewers and the BBC felt that the ITV presenters dressed appropriately, but that Sissons did not. Sissons’ tie choice was considered inappropriate not only because of its contrast to the black ties of the ITV presenters, but also because the BBC had for a long time required its presenters to wear a black tie for a situation like this. Viewers have learnt over time that this is appropriate. The following chapter will show that ideas of what is and is not professional in certain circumstances is also negotiated within and between fictional serial crime and legal dramas. What is gained by studying the serial qualities of dressing in non-fictional texts as well is a better understanding of how the programme makes meaning; how, per this example, ideas of what it means to dress professionally are being negotiated over time, and how we can understand a moment in which the presenter’s look is considered unprofessional. The serial qualities of dressing are relevant to understand specific moments as well as the cumulative meanings expressed by the text. In terms of cumulative meanings, we can only say something productive about the sustained gendered address of This Morning by analysing its dressing strategies in different moments over time, as I have done in this chapter. Just like in the case of Miami Vice or Brideshead Revisited, serial dressing strategies are significant here for how we understand aspects like the temporality, cultural ideas and expressions of identity in the text; how we understand one moment in relation to previous and future moments.

Since we need to make connections across the text in order to understand a specific moment and/or its cumulative meanings, methodologically, when studying serial drama, focusing on the pilot is a limited approach. A series’ pilot often becomes the most discussed, criticised and remembered episode amongst viewers and critics.

\textsuperscript{251} See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2X_qGWAU2A&feature=youtu.be (accessed: 5 August 2020). Although he presents this retrospective in a cheerfully coloured tie, the report in the video shows him wearing a tie in primary navy blue and brown shades.

Yet, to proceed with an analysis of costume on television, we need to look past the pilot and more into the regular run of the series to understand how costumes (and other elements) make meaning. The costume designer of a pilot has to contribute to its various tasks: to give an idea of what the series will be like on an ongoing basis, to introduce the characters, genre, storytelling strategies and premise of the series, and to argue for its viability.253 According to Jason Mittell in Complex TV, ‘the chief function of a television pilot is to teach us how to watch the series and, in doing so, to make us want to keep watching – thus successful pilots are simultaneously *educational* and *inspirational*.254 As Jeremy Butler explains about the storytelling, ‘[t]ypically, a pilot will resolve some narrative issues, but, more important to its producers, it must establish ongoing enigmas that will underpin the program during its regular run’.255 Costume design has to help convey these narrative strands in both the pilot and throughout the rest of the series. An issue here, described by costume designer Ray Holman, is that ‘sometimes the producers know ahead what the story arc will be [but] sometimes they don’t and you get it on an episode by episode basis’.256 Other challenges for costume designers include the usually limited budget reserved for pilots; changing trends between the airing of the pilot and the rest of the series; potential changes in crew, location/set and (costume) designers; underdeveloped characters; limited knowledge of viewer expectations; and different demands from the network or producers once the show is accepted. As a result, pilots provide only an initial idea of what a series will be like on an ongoing basis. There are often significant discrepancies between the pilot and the following episodes of a television series; these will not be discussed here, but as I argue throughout this thesis, looking at the seriality of costuming can make us gain a better understanding of the text. A solid methodological approach to studying television costume should consider this development throughout the programme’s episodes and seasons; taking into account, but not focusing solely on the pilot.

Furthermore, costumes do not always mean what they seem to on first glance; oftentimes, their meanings are more intricate and communicate something deeper or more self-reflexive which surfaces in the serial development of the text or can be understood when considered across texts. In their analysis of fictional programmes, Newcomb and Hirsch make a distinction between the ideology that shapes characters’ behaviour within the story world versus the perspective on that ideology as presented by the text. They write about *Father Knows Best* (CBS 1954-1960) that this ‘is

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253 Mittell 2015: 56.
254 Ibid. Emphasis in original.
255 Butler 2012: 33.
precisely the sort of television program that reproduces dominant ideology by lulling its audience into a dream world where the status quo is the only status’.\textsuperscript{257} Going further than traditional ideological criticism, however, Newcomb and Hirsch argue that the text does not side with the patriarchal, heteronormative, misogynistic implications of what happens in the episode but that, due to the emotional sympathy we are instructed to feel towards its character Betty, one could argue that ‘a strong feminist perspective is condensed into the brief, half-hour presentation’.\textsuperscript{258} This leads them to note that ‘in popular culture generally, in television specifically, the raising of questions is as important as the answering of them’.\textsuperscript{259} Multiple meanings and interpretations are negotiated by the television text. Newcomb and Hirsch’s notion that ‘television does not present firm ideological conclusions—despite its formal conclusions—so much as it comments on ideological problems’ also applies to how costume design can be used. \textit{Miami Vice} is self-reflexive about its preoccupation with characters’ looks against the background of crime that needs to be fought, as is the legal drama \textit{Suits} (USA Network 2011-2019, see Chapter 2); the costumes and actions of the protagonist of \textit{The Fall} (BBC 2013-2016) invite us to either condemn or admire her, but the text keeps the issue unresolved, which might prompt us to think about our assumptions, as discussed in Chapter 2; the New Look dresses worn by traditional but miserable 50s housewives in contemporary period dramas comment on their fate, as detailed in Chapter 3. Magazine programmes such as \textit{This Morning} and \textit{Today} raise questions about connotations of dress and fashion and negotiate these meanings for and with viewers. Clothes on television do not make meaning in isolation but within a network of connotations clinging to the medium as well as to types of dress and in relation to ideas around gender, ethnicity and class.

Although in this thesis I mainly focus on gender, taking clothing into account in the study of television will make apparent other patterns and understandings of age, race and class that underpin the medium. Further analysis of morning magazine programmes could, for example, usefully explore the communication of meanings of class and propriety around dress for the working-class or older women.

This chapter has used a wider focus and has made broader sweeps of analysis than the next two chapters, which will offer a closer analysis of costume details, textures and styles. This has theoretical as well as a practical reasons: as introduced, the aim of this chapter was to set up a broad conceptualisation of costume and fashion on television and to challenge existing assumptions that hinder their study, but when

\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid.
analysing texts from the 80s onwards, one is also confronted with the changes in technology that have made our current high-definition viewing experience possible. Before the advent and widespread use of HDTV, scholars could not analyse texts with the same level scrutiny as we can now. My retrospective viewing of pre-HDTV texts, using DVD/digital technology, has offered a greater level of detail than 80s-90s television sets could, but since this was not present in the original context of viewing and the programmes have not been filmed in high definition, overall, I have taken a more distanced look at these texts than at the high-definition filmed and viewed programmes that are central to the following chapters. My approach has been less extreme than Newcomb and Hirsch’s contention that ‘any emphasis on individual episodes, series, or even genres, misses the central point of the forum concept’,260 as I contend that the discussion of costume and fashion aspects does contribute to form an understanding of how ideas circulate within the cultural forum – or, in Perkins’ terms, to bring into the intellect how it is that textual aspects address the mind.261

Having drawn attention to how meanings develop over the course of longer-running programmes and the importance of seriality for how clothing on television structures its meanings, Chapter 2 will continue this enquiry through a study of a range of serial costuming practices in crime and legal dramas.

260 Ibid. 566.
261 Perkins 1990. See introduction to chapter.
Dressing Cops and Lawyers

Professional dress, gender and realism in crime and legal dramas

When in the pilot of the USA Network drama *Suits* (2011-2019) the young legal associate Mike Ross asks his mentor, top litigator Harvey Specter, why it matters how much he spends on suits, Harvey replies: ‘People respond to how we’re dressed so, like it or not, this is what you have to do.’ This line, next to advancing the plot, paraphrases the main notion in the discourse on professional dressing in Western culture which assumes that dress communicates primary information about the wearer’s identity and that one must ‘dress for success’ to climb the career ladder. Jane Gaines’ account of this assumption still holds: there is a sense that ‘dress is a key to the personality of the wearer’.262 This is integrated in the costume design of every television programme that features characters in the workplace and works in relation to their identity and situation as well as to the premise of the show. Defending the assertion of this thesis that costume and fashion are a key structuring component of television programmes, this chapter discusses several serial costuming strategies employed in contemporary crime and legal dramas to create each programme’s balance between realism and dramatization. The analysis focuses on how this serial balancing act works in relation to the costumes’ meaning-making process in terms of stylistic and cultural notions of gender in professional dressing.

Professional dress is a dress category that particularly tends to recede as ‘just clothing’, or, as in *Suits*, seen as only superficially representing fashion, rather than interpreted as the product of costume design. Beyond simply befitting the story world like a desk in an office space would, the design of professional dress costumes in crime and legal drama is key to the shows’ serial storytelling, style and characterisation, as well as to how television deals with cultural attitudes to dress in terms of gender and sexuality. Although there has been a growing interest from the media and amongst viewers in the costumes of television shows since the proliferation of HDTV and ‘quality TV’, there is only ever a spotlight on the iconic pieces from high-end period dramas, fantasy shows and fashion-centred programmes. The majority of television output, however, features people dressed in costumes that approximate everyday casual or professional dress as we know it. The closer look this chapter offers at the costuming strategies used for this area of serial drama reveals how crucial this aspect

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262 And further, ‘in this discourse, dress becomes somewhat more than a key or an indicator since “personality” and “dress” are so often confused that it would seem that they have become the same thing’. Gaines 1990: 184. See also Goffman’s [1959] 1990 theory as discussed in the section on The Fall.
of mise-en-scène is to how television—in each shot, scene, episode and season—continually articulates a balance between the realistic and the dramatic. I understand ‘realistic’ here as Ien Ang defines television’s ‘realistic illusion’: ‘the illusion that a text is a faithful reflection of an actually existing world emerges as a result of the fact that the constructedness of the text is suppressed’. It suggests a window on the world. This illusion, Ang writes, ‘is generated by the formal structure of the text itself’. My intervention into existing debates around television, realism and the melodramatic mode is to bring costume and fashion to the centre of attention to demonstrate their role in how the text generates a realistic illusion (or not) whilst conveying drama. In the process, style and aesthetics negotiate notions from the surrounding culture of dress and rework them serially into textual and extratextual cultural meanings. Crime and legal drama are a key platform for the negotiation of what reads as appropriate and effective in Western professional dressing, and of the discourses around gender, power and sexuality this is fraught with, since it is an area that strongly appeals to television’s expectation of realism.

In this chapter, I will discuss the design and textual as well as cultural meaning-making processes of professional dress used as costume in contemporary crime and legal drama across different serial narrative structures and stylistic premises. My aim here is to show that serial costuming is central to how television treads the line between realism and dramatization, and, interlinked with that, how it reworks generalising cultural notions into more textually nuanced images of what meanings are attached to how men and women look. To this end, I will discuss several costuming strategies used in this area of television drama: the serial changes in the professional dressing of powerful women in the legal/political drama series The Good Wife (CBS 2009-2016) and Scandal (ABC 2012-2017); the meticulous tailoring and display of new top designer fashion in each episode of the USA Network legal drama Suits (2011-2019); the ‘gritty’ look yet emotional resonance of the ITV mystery drama Broadchurch (2013-2017); the ordinary but varied wardrobes of women detectives in ITV’s Scott & Bailey (2013-2016); and the style worn by Gillian Anderson in The Fall (BBC 2013-2016) that is potentially problematic as well as fashionable. Juxtaposing programmes in which the costuming either reads as ‘fashion’ or as ‘just clothes’ raises the question of whether there is a difference between how we read ‘fashionable’ or ‘stylish’ costumes as compared to ‘ordinary’ costumes on television. By discussing this

\[263\] Ang [1982] 1985: 38. See also Perkins on how the fictional moving image ‘exploits the possibilities of synthesis between photographic realism and dramatic illusion’, where ‘the most “realistic” films are the ones which convey the most complete illusion’; 1993 [1972]: 61, 64. As I mention throughout this thesis, television is seen as especially capable of conveying a sense of the real.

\[264\] Ibid.
issue in relation to programmes from the US that display fashion and those from the UK that use more transparent strategies, the chapter addresses the assumption that American series are stylish whereas British series are not. This is a notion I dispel across the thesis by demonstrating how costume and fashion are equally meaningful for different stylistic and aesthetic achievements. These clothes and fashions are all costumes that determine the texts’ balance between realism and drama.

**Approaches to the case studies**

The contemporary crime and legal dramas selected as case studies each represent a common category of costuming in this area of television and the implications it has for how realistic and/or how dramatic the characters and narratives come across. My analysis of these case studies brings together the critical study of television style, aesthetics and seriality with the study of costume (including interviews with costume designers), fashion, gender and the meanings attached to professional dress. These strands are brought together to work towards the overall aim to better understand the role of clothing in how, in the words of Jonathan Gray and Amanda Lotz, “television [is] a repository for meanings and a site where cultural values are articulated”.  

The concept of serial television according to Glen Creeber as dependent on the balancing of continuity and progression, although theorised in terms of narrative, also applies, I argue, to style and mise-en-scène. Continuity in costuming is achieved by repeating character pieces and/or styles over multiple episodes and seasons; progression by adding, developing or changing the designs. As the costume designers I interviewed explained, other than in film, where costume designers work with full scripts, television producers usually do not have all episode scripts before the filming starts, so designers instead work with initial story arcs, character biographies and actors to prepare a wardrobe for each character that caters to situations they will logically find themselves in, and then select and add pieces as the scripts come in.

The dramas selected for this chapter all concern characters that needed wardrobes for their respective procedural work settings, but employ different costuming strategies, where one tends to be seen more as ‘fashion’ and the other as ‘just clothes’. These strategies have repercussions for the shows’ balancing act between adhering to the reality of culture and dress and the dramatization of character and narrative, and, through this, for the programmes’ negotiation of issues of gender in professional dressing. This becomes clear when analysing the clothes/fashions/dress as costumes.

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266 Creeber 2004: 9. See also the Introduction.
Suits draws as much attention to tailoring as it does to lawsuits. The show ran for nine seasons and comprises 134 episodes of 45 minutes, where in each episode the characters wear brand-new pieces. It showcases as many seasons of high-end fashion, with costume designer Jolie Andreatta having applied the latest styles from top designer brands such as Tom Ford, Burberry, Nina Ricci, Givenchy, Dolce & Gabbana, Dior, Prada, Giambattista Valli, Wes Gordon, Balenciaga, Victoria Beckham and many more. Suits belongs to a category of programming that is discussed for its conspicuous display of fashionable professional dress, alongside similar dramas such as White Collar (USA Network 2009-2014), The Good Wife (CBS 2009-2016), Scandal (ABC 2012-2017) and House of Cards (Netflix 2013–). These shows have piqued the interest of fashion bloggers and magazines, which feature interviews with the actors and costume designers about fashions worn on-screen or how-to guides for dressing like the characters. Scandal became widely discussed in the popular media for its costuming when, during her running for presidency in 2016, Hillary Clinton’s pantsuits were being compared (on social media and online press) to the protagonist’s costuming, and Michelle Obama appeared during the State of the Union in the same year wearing the same ochre Narciso Rodriguez dress that Scandal’s protagonist has worn (which sold out during Obama’s speech). The costuming of Claire Underwood (Robin Wright) as First Lady, then President in House of Cards has been the subject of debates around what constitutes appropriate dress for a woman in this position – whether she is only ‘the wife of’ (like Mellie Grant initially is in Scandal) or has equally strong political power. The Good Wife’s costume designer Daniel Lawson went on to design women’s fashion after the success of his women’s professional dress styles for the show, collaborates with fashion brands and started his own fashion label, 35DL.

The cultural appeal of the costuming on these shows is undeniable; it makes meaning within the fictional text as well as outside of it, which both require attention. Although Suits is about fashion, not realism, its costuming negotiates ideas of masculinity and femininity that explicate and nuance prevailing notions of gender, class and mobility of status in professional dressing.

The British police/mystery drama Broadchurch represents a different type of costuming, where professional dress is not treated as fashion (i.e. not in terms of embodying the latest aesthetic or promoting designer styles) and costume appears to be ‘just clothes’. The costume design of all three seasons, of eight 45-minute episodes each, is credited to Ray Holman, whose other recent work includes productions ranging from BBC’s Doctor Who in 2014-2015 and 2018, after its spin-off Torchwood

See: Scharf 2013; Thomas 2014; USA Network 2015.

Interview with Daniel Lawson, 03-05-2019.
(BBC 2006-2011), to procedurals like Silk (BBC 2011-2014) and Law & Order: UK (ITV 2009-2014), novel adaptations such as Apple Tree Yard (BBC 2017) and made-for-TV movies, with, lastly, A Midsummer Night’s Dream (BBC 2016). In my interview with Holman, the designer confirmed that ITV’s Broadchurch diverges from such fantasy spectacles and stylish procedurals by its focus on a realist narrative driven by emotion and environment. Indeed, although the drama reads as ‘gritty’ and realistic, costume often functions in a subtly melodramatic way, the meaning of which is constructed by means of serial repetition, as I explore below. Contrary to the men in Suits, David Tennant as Broadchurch’s physically and mentally strained small-town detective Alec Hardy wears the same suit over the whole first season. The effort required to achieve its ‘gritty’ look did however involve an elaborate process. Yet, with Radio Times only mentioning Ellie Miller’s (Olivia Colman) ‘no-nonsense anoraks’, there has been negligible media or scholarly attention to the costumes. This sense that these costumes read as ‘just clothes’ reinforces the assumption that television offers a window on the world rather than a critical reflection on it. Albeit less conspicuous than in Suits or Scandal, Broadchurch’s costuming is the product of meticulous design and has an equally significant textual function in the negotiation of the show’s balance between realism and drama, as well as of professional dress codes.

Like Broadchurch, ITV’s Scott & Bailey belongs in the category of ‘gritty’ social-realist British crime drama, but represents a third type of serial costuming. The show has had several costume designers: Alexandra Caulfield for the six episodes of Season 1, Rhona Russell for Season 2 and 3 of eight episodes each and Sally Campbell for Season 4 of eight episodes and 5 as three-part series. Scott & Bailey shows its leading women detectives wearing a variety of dress styles to work – from skirts to slacks; from blouses and blazers to casual tops. The pieces are worn by the characters repeatedly within seasons to tie in with the realist premise, but the three costume designers each constructed their own wardrobes for the season(s) they worked on. Again, there has been only cursory mention of costuming. In a 2012 BBC Radio 4 interview with Lesley Sharp, Mark Frost asks the actress about Scott & Bailey’s wardrobe, noting that magazines and newspapers lament the series for showing ‘real women’ wearing ‘real clothes’, and wondering if much thought has gone into it. The Guardian’s fashion section praises a trend in television of ‘female crime-fighters dressing badly’, where on Scott & Bailey ‘[e]veryone dresses badly apart from Rachel’,

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270 Interview with Ray Holman, 04-05-2017.
272 This BBC Radio 4 item from 2012 can be found at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01d0rj9 (accessed on 9 May 2017).
who has ‘a nice line in tailoring from the Zara Women rails’.\textsuperscript{273} Both examples compliment the show on letting realism triumph over style, but although the clothes were bought from contemporary stores, a thorough process of costume design \textit{was} involved. That this process is authored is most evident in that the changes in costume designers caused varying nuances in the notions of dress for women detectives that are being conveyed, and, like in \textit{Broadchurch}, the show’s costuming does evidence a subtle melodramatic strategy.

Significantly, even ‘everyday’, realistic, not necessarily ‘spectacular’ costumes can become desired as fashionable dress when they are repeatedly used in serial television. \textit{Radio Times} reported that Stella Gibson’s silk blouses in \textit{The Fall}—just like Sarah Lund’s knitted jumpers from \textit{Forbrydelsen (The Killing, DR1 2007-2012)}—had ‘taken on a life of their own’.\textsuperscript{274} Actress Gillian Anderson sighed that she was asked about them in ‘[l]iterally every interview’.\textsuperscript{275} There was a surge in silk shirt sales after the broadcast.\textsuperscript{276} In their popularity as style inspiration, with websites advising where to buy the shirt and a sewing company providing the ‘Anderson Blouse’ pattern,\textsuperscript{277} the costumes are treated as ‘dress’ that anyone can wear, in the sense of fashionable dress. Yet, the blouses were meticulously tailored to the production, with details such as, costume designer Maggie Donnelly told me, an enlarged buttonhole to let Stella’s button slip out in action,\textsuperscript{278} and the meaning of the shirts within the text is ambiguous. \textit{The Fall} has been the subject of a polarised debate on whether it reinforces misogyny and violence or condemns it, and my discussion shows how Anderson’s costuming is central to the show’s premise of leaving this issue unresolved. A closer analysis of how costume functions within and beyond the text can offer us answers to questions that cannot be answered otherwise.

\textbf{Gender, professional dress and seriality}

Costume design draws from dress culture to create characters and thus inescapably deals with its issues of gender – and notions of appropriate professional dress are still highly gendered. The man’s suit is perceived as having had continuity of design over its development into the staple ‘business uniform’ in the last 200 years.\textsuperscript{279} Yet, more precisely, Tim Edwards argues that although the common notion of men’s dress is that it is utilitarian rather than decorative, its meanings are more intricate and its

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{273} Fox 2012.
\item \textsuperscript{274} \textit{Radio Times}, 8-14 November 2014.
\item \textsuperscript{275} \textit{Ibid}.
\item \textsuperscript{276} McVeigh 2013, as noted in Jermyn 2017: 268.
\item \textsuperscript{277} The ‘Anderson Blouse’ pattern is a design by Sew Over It.
\item \textsuperscript{278} Interview with Maggie Donnelly, 21-06-2017.
\item \textsuperscript{279} Hollander 1994.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
specific look is key to the expression of men’s power and sexuality. My study of television costume builds on this more nuanced perspective. Conversely, choices for women have always been a more sensitive subject. As Joanne Entwistle found in her study of power dressing for career women, the ‘rules’ for women who want to be taken seriously in the workplace as laid out in the iconic, highly prescriptive 1980 manual *Women: Dress for Success* by John T. Molloy had ‘become “common sense” to many professional and business women’ in the mid-1990s. The still prevalent discourse of ‘power dressing’ owes much to this manual, in which Molloy provides restrictive guidelines for what women should wear as *their* business uniform. This chapter looks at how contemporary serial dramas in professional settings deal with gendered dress codes, drawing on Judith Butler’s feminist theory which assumes that gender is not a natural given or temporary role, but ‘a kind of becoming or activity’: the body is ‘made’ feminine or masculine through ‘a stylized repetition of acts’. Adopting the notion of ‘performativity’, Butler argues that the illusion of a coherent gender identity is fabricated and consolidated through repeated acts, words, gestures and behaviours. This is expressed, I argue, through dressing for television: in everyday programming such as the news as well as in serial television, we repeatedly see people making dress choices which consolidate or develop ideas about gender identity.

In this chapter, I discuss a range of case studies that to greater or lesser extent reinforce or challenge existing ideas about gender in professional dressing. Costume designer Daniel Lawson’s choices for the professional women in CBS’s *The Good Wife* and its spin-off *The Good Fight* (CBS 2017–) are an example of costume design that actively resists safe, expected and restrictive notions of dress and makes the women look more powerful and respected for it. As Lawson said in his interview with me, due to the fact that he did not put women in an adapted version of the business uniform, many professional women (‘real lawyers’) have praised the actresses for what they are wearing, thanking them for ‘opening up the closet doors’. Lawson had to discourage the actresses in the leading roles from the idea that in order for them to look strong and powerful, they had to look masculinised or disguise their femininity. This is a strongly embedded idea that had to be reversed; as Lawson reminisced about his first fitting with Archie Panjabi:

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283 Interview with Daniel Lawson, 03-05-2019.
I was putting her in skirts, and she kept saying: ‘I don’t think I should be in skirts. I think I should wear pants because I want to be strong. I want to be tough.’ I said, ‘Exactly. You want to be strong; you should be in skirts.’ And she was just like, ‘Oh my gosh, you know what? Can I be super feminine and strong?’ 284

There is however a delicate balance of realism and dramatization involved. Opposing his design to the ‘unrealistic’ styles of Ally McBeal (Fox 1997-2002), in which women wear sleeveless dresses and miniskirts, Lawson sought to achieve a balance between aspirational, spectacular, ‘maybe even a little fashion-forward’ and for the clothes to be rooted in reality; that women would actually wear to a courtroom. 285 Therefore, whilst he encouraged the actresses of The Good Wife to wear skirts and dresses to court, Lawson made sure the dresses had sleeves:

Imagine going into a court and guys in there are in dress shirts, in their suit jackets and ties, they’re covered, they aren’t – and there’s a woman with, like, her arms exposed, super short skirt, it’s like a lot of legs showing – god, you feel so vulnerable. [...] You don’t go into court to feel vulnerable; you go into court to feel strong and to try to win the case. So, that was a big thing for me: to make the women look like they were fine in court, and to make them feminine and strong at the same time. 286

In the serial progression of The Good Wife, Alicia Florrick’s (Julianna Margulies) look changes significantly (for just one season, her look was inspired by Rosie the Riveter and a 40s working girl aesthetic), but the idea of ‘breaking the mould’ by challenging the supposed opposition between femininity and strength/power was consistent.

Consider this scene in which Florrick decides to wear a pantsuit to court:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hon. Jared Quinn</th>
<th>‘Counsellor, what are you wearing?’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alicia Florrick</td>
<td>‘Your Honor?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Jared Quinn</td>
<td>‘What are you wearing? What are those clothes?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia Florrick</td>
<td>‘I think... they’re Ralph Lauren.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Jared Quinn</td>
<td>‘Yes, thank you. No, I mean: your pants. You’re wearing pants.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia Florrick</td>
<td>‘Yes... it’s a pantsuit.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Jared Quinn</td>
<td>‘I see that. In my courtroom, I require the male lawyers to wear ties and the female lawyers skirts. Am I making myself clear?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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284 Ibid. Lawson also gave Panjabi a pair of high leather boots to wear under her skirts, which she did not ever want to abandon – without the boots, she did not feel like the character.

285 Ibid.

286 Ibid.
The text is clearly self-reflexive about its own dressing strategy. According to Molloy’s rules, Alicia is doing it wrong when she is wearing a grey pin-striped pantsuit. Molloy writes that women should never wear a pinstriped pantsuit because this gives her the ‘imitation man look’, which only accentuates her ‘femaleness’ and diminishes her authority.\(^{287}\) The most pervasive argument in Molloy’s dress manual, as Bruzzi and Entwistle remark, is that female sexuality and professionalism are incompatible.\(^ {288}\) In Molloy’s regard, working women should be identifiable as female, but also asexual and not too feminine, as any hint of sexuality makes her ‘dress for failure’. She should therefore wear a skirted suit with the appropriate balance. The women’s costumes in *The Good Wife* do however accentuate their femininity and, whilst not exposing much skin, do not make her asexual; rather, they show that femininity/female sexuality and professionalism are or should be compatible – the scene above ridicules that this is not widely accepted.

Power dressing remains a site of contestation around women’s image, position and respect at work. Although, as Entwistle argues, ‘[p]ower dressing emerged (...) as a discourse on self-presentation ostensibly concerned with female empowerment in the workplace’, it is inherently conservative, as the premise that women can only assert competence and authority by wearing skirted suits that diminish their sexuality whilst maintaining their femininity—on the account of men—perpetuates gender prejudices.\(^ {289}\) Whilst women on television wear different types of professional dress without seeming less successful for it, according to Entwistle’s study of the 1990s, the discourse and retail strategy of power dressing for women has persisted as a code of walking the thin line between feminine and masculine dress connotations; which, by that time, had become culturally internalised. Such conservative connotations, as I argued in Chapter 1, are expressed in the dressing of people on everyday television, from where they consistently reverberate into culture. In dressing characters for serial dramas, costume designers and producers have to choose whether to subscribe to or challenge this. It is not the 90s anymore.

Seriality is key to the overall expression of ideas around professional dress in crime and legal dramas, as it can consolidate notions over time, change characters’ costuming styles or negotiate and potentially challenge dominant assumptions. One example that illustrates how seriality in costuming can solidify or change a character and cultural associations of dress is the political/crime/legal drama *Scandal*. Where

\(^{287}\) Molloy 1978: 27-32.  
\(^{288}\) Bruzzi 1997; Entwistle 2000b.  
\(^{289}\) Ibid. 225.
**Brideshead Revisited** offered slow, gradual serial costuming development, costume designer Lyn Paolo made a radical decision in the costuming arc of Olivia Pope (Kerry Washington) when, after having dressed her solely in plain, subdued, neutral tones (grey, white, black, beige) from Season 1 to 4, in Season 5 Olivia suddenly appears in bold colours. In an interview, Paolo explains, as the text itself supports, that the neutral shades she chose for Olivia showed how she ‘express[ed] her power in very subtle ways’, but when in the mid-season finale Olivia ostensibly ends her affair with the President (next to several other narrative twists), the episode after the mid-season break shows Olivia reinventing herself.\(^{290}\) Olivia appears in a colour-block Fendi cape with orange, red and violet panels, with matching dress and shoes. This colour scheme ruptures the continuity of her costuming arc and the way viewers have come to know her over the seasons. Except in flashbacks, Olivia had also only been shown wearing trousers so far. Like the women in *The Good Wife* and *The Good Fight*, Olivia becomes more powerful and more determined when she trades trousers (traditionally seen as more powerful, because masculine) for skirts and dresses. This change, which makes her more forceful, presents a contradiction which can make us question our long-held assumptions about what it means to look professional and powerful: it proves that this is possible in subdued, subtle outfits as well as in a bright orange dress.

In all dramas discussed, costume and fashion have a crucial role in creating the production’s balance between the illusion of realism and conveying the drama of narrative.\(^ {291}\) Costume design helps create this illusion in the most visceral way. It can do so using varying balances, where forms expose their constructedness more than others. The genre in which costume has received most attention is that which allows it to be dissected most clearly: film melodrama, in which, as Mary Beth Haralovich points out, mise-en-scène contributes to the expression of characters’ emotions and social conflicts (as discussed in the section on *Broadchurch*).\(^ {292}\) What has remained overlooked in scholarship is the way the melodramatic mode is used for costuming television, as much-discussed television series like *The Sopranos* (HBO 1999-2007), *Breaking Bad* (AMC 2008-2013) (Walter White’s costumes become darker over the seasons as he eases into the world of drug trafficking), *Hannibal* (NBC 2013-2015) (whose costumes are tailored to the situation or his relationship to other characters), soap operas and other shows use stylistic strategies that work in the melodramatic mode to convey meaning. Melodrama has been theorised by Peter Brooks as ‘rhetorical excess’; as Jane Gaines put it, ‘a hyperbole which exceeds verbal

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\(^{290}\) Derschowitz 2016.  
\(^{291}\) See the introduction to this chapter for Ang’s [1982] 1985: 38 and Perkins’ 1993 (1972): 61, 64 definition of the realistic illusion.  
\(^{292}\) Haralovich 1990.
language.293 This notion of ‘excess’ continues into the work of Thomas Elsaesser on
the subject, who asserts that, as Gaines explains,

the vehicles of melodramatic rhetoric are those aspects of mise-en-scène which verge
on the non-representational - gesture, lighting, camera movement, decor, and
costume (...) suggesting that what is inexpressible in the narrative overflows into the
more absorbant, purely aesthetic vehicles where it assumes an antithetical relation to
the action.294

Whilst I would argue that melodramatic use of colour or dress styles is common in
crime and legal dramas, the shows that aim for realism do tend to avoid the visual
excess that typifies melodrama. Especially in regard to professional dress codes, this
meaning-making process needs to be subtler, as the outfit needs to blend into our
understanding of ‘the real’ enough that we find its function in the pictured community
and work environment believable. Implied in the notion of professional dress or the
business uniform is that it is common, regular, not special; socially desired, not too
original; and that emotion should be contained, not displayed. Professional dress in
television costuming needs to simultaneously express the emotion/identity/narrative
of the character and remain within the realm of professionalism, meaning not the
excessive, which creates a tension between realism and the melodramatic mode. This
tension resides in the way the melodramatic is applied in the serial costuming of a
crime or legal drama that aims for realistic illusion.

At the same time, when analysing costume, it is tempting to assign deeper
ideological meaning to all colours and shapes, but sometimes colour simply appears
as colour, or a shape just contributes to the narrative world; appearing to the eye
without carrying much weight. As is the case in reality, it is not always meaningful
whether a man’s suit is black, grey or blue; or as Aoife Monks put it, ‘sometimes
costume remains stubbornly in view as costume, refusing to be meaningful’.295 This
is not to say they are self-evident or useless, but some aspects of television costume
just work to help construct a realist aesthetic of everyday life in the text’s narrative
space in which some elements simply appear suitable to the scene’s atmosphere.
Roland Barthes theorised this as the reality effect, in which certain details—
‘insignificant gestures, transitory attitudes, insignificant objects, redundant words’—
implemented into storytelling are resistant to meaning and defy functional

293 Gaines 1990: 204.
294 Ibid.
analysis. When there is no signified (indicated meaning) to be found, the signifier only has the function of saying *we are the real*. This is the case for the costumes of background characters in television productions, which are nevertheless important to narrative world-building. Costume design in crime and legal drama consists of a balance between deliberate dramatic strategies and clothes that contribute to the overall reality effect which helps to convey content; the overall construction of the narrative space of the serial drama.

This chapter is concerned with how the prevalent discourse on professional dress works as part of the stylistic and narrative elements of the television medium. Costume materialises ideas about gender and identity through dealing textually with attitudes towards professional dress. Unlike what popular discourse suggests, the details of men’s tailoring carry as many and as significant symbols of age, profession and status that impact on the way he is treated. At the same time, as Entwistle writes, ‘women’s appearance is a greater concern than men’s’, and as long as this is the case, the anxiety around women’s dressing endures. My study addresses the problem that there is still greater concern about women’s professional dress codes than men’s by showing how costumes for both men and women in television crime and legal drama make meaning in serial narratives and deal with prevailing gendered notions of how certain types of dress are read in contemporary culture. In the wider context of this thesis, these analyses illustrate how costume makes meaning within the text in relation to seriality and at the same time communicates wider cultural meanings.

**An inexhaustible wardrobe of fashionable costumes**

In the pilot of *Suits*, the first lesson for the intelligent college-dropout Mike Ross (Patrick J. Adams) when he is hired by litigator Harvey Specter (Gabriel Macht) for a prestigious law firm in New York City is that to become successful in this corporate world, men must attend to the minute details of their professional attire. Only the finest tailored suit of the latest fashion suffices, and relationships between the lawyers are expressed through comments on suits and ties. Mike meets Harvey when wearing his first suit and carrying a briefcase with trafficked drugs, as he runs into Harvey’s interviews for a personal associate whilst escaping undercover police. Mike convinces Harvey to appoint him, despite his not having a Harvard degree and not wearing a suit that fits the dress code. His suit is a ready-to-wear of low quality with cheap-looking shirt fabric and buttons, and his button-down shirt collar is inappropriate, as

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297 Ibid. 148. Emphasis in original.
298 Ibid. 237.
all other men in this corporate environment are wearing spread or point collars. Thus, Harvey assigns Mike to buy new suits. A dressing scene shows Mike choosing between shirts and ties for his first day, but at work Harvey confronts him with his marginal improvement. Legal secretary Donna Paulsen (Sarah Rafferty) later hands Mike a business card for Harvey’s tailor, which is when the dialogue takes place that opened this chapter. Over the series, Suits develops a self-conscious discourse on men’s professional dressing that explicates the ways in which fashion choices and tailoring details express power and masculinity. This focus on men’s dress choices relieves the pressure on women’s professional dressing, which is endowed with similar power but less anxiety. In showing this explicitly and unapologetically, the show confronts dominant cultural notions of gender in professional dressing (whilst staying within the boundaries of what constitutes masculinity/femininity). This is achieved over its long-term, fast-paced serial costuming development, in which characters wear several new costume pieces in every episode – which, with 134 episodes, means that they each have what seems an unlimited wardrobe that perpetually keeps up with fashion trends as well as character developments.

The men’s attention to tailoring in Suits challenges one of the most persistent notions of gender in Western culture since the Enlightenment period: that in order to focus on their work and other activities, men should dress simply and take an indifferent stance towards fashion. As described by Enlightenment writers, see: McNeil 2016: 68. This discourse has prevailed from the time of ‘The Great Male Renunciation’, during which, as J.C. Flügel wrote in 1930, men ‘abandoned their claim to be considered beautiful’ and ‘henceforth aimed at being only useful’. Anne Hollander traces in Sex and Suits how from the mid-eighteenth century onwards ‘[v]igorously noticeable fashion was feminine’ and masculine fashion became increasingly less spectacular. Men’s fashion found its ultimate expression in the shape of the modern business suit: the classic form of dress that discretely covers the body while allowing a man’s best qualities to come forward. As Hollander explains, the suit is an easy-fitting sheath that simultaneously hides the surface of the man’s body and indicates his sexual potency underneath. The jacket’s lines of design form a triangular shape that subtly points to the crotch whilst discreet padding emphasises the form of his shoulders and the underlying structure of bone and muscle. The suit is designed to be ‘uniform’ and ‘timeless’ to the extent that it should not require a male concern for fashion. Yet, Hollander argues that the suit’s success is not just down to practicality, nor is it resistant to fashion. Indeed, the way

299 As described by Enlightenment writers, see: McNeil 2016: 68.
302 Ibid. 89-91; 113.
suits are tailored, discussed, shown and developed as costumes over the serial narrative of *Suits* demonstrates that their details of design are not uniform or timeless. Tim Edwards in *Men in the Mirror* further asserts that what remains side-lined in discussions of the continuity and significance of the underlying design of the suit are

the wider dynamics, from technology and economics to attitudes and individual lifestyles, that have played their part in shaping the significance of the suit, giving it its strength, resonance and sexiness. Whilst the grave and elegance of the suit may come from the nature and continuity of its design, its eroticism comes more from its emphasis of the male form and, most importantly, from its associations with commerce, success and corporate power: in short form its wearer as well as how and where it is worn.303

This, I add, extends to the suit’s uses as a costume in legal drama, which, by its nature, takes aspects from the lived corporate world to realise a plausible representation, but dramatizes aspects of design for individual wearers to distinguish between characters and convey the serial narrative drama. *Suits* explicates the suit’s associations with commerce, success and power in New York City law practice, and its uses of fashion in costume design are key to the show’s balancing act between corporate realism and its dramatization as a television show, which operates in terms of style and aesthetics as well as character and narrative.

Unlike most other costume designers, who claim not to be interested in fashion but only in constructing characters, Jolie Andreatta told *Vogue*: ‘When I first started *Suits*, I realized, like fashion magazines, [the show] could be a platform for fashion.’304 Although all costumed according to the same corporate dress code, the main characters’ tailoring represent different fashion brands and wearers: Harvey’s promote the American twenty-first century fashion icon Tom Ford, with his single-breasted Tom Ford suits with peaked lapels, matching Tom Ford or Harry Rosen shirts and broad ties; Mike’s develop to become the crisp face of the classic British Burberry brand; and Louis Litt’s (Rick Hoffman) evolves from a relatively austere Savile Row look towards increasing flamboyance in the colours, patterns and fabrics of his suits, shirts and ties. USA Network responded to audience enquiries about brands by providing special infographics (Figure 18). As the costumes for the first episodes were designed by Christopher Peterson, when Andreatta took over, she had

304 Barsamian 2017.
to work with established looks, but she developed the costuming to distinguish more between the wearers.

Harvey's wardrobe contains several dozen suits in different patterns and fabrics, from sharkskin to pinstripe and from flannel to wool or mohair, several pairs of Italian handmade shoes and endlessly varying shirts and ties. His signature tailoring of extremely wide peaked lapels, a broad Windsor knot tie and broad shoulder pads express his corporate success and authority. As detailed below, in the show’s corporate world it seems that the broader the design of the jacket is, which visually makes the chest seem more expansive, the more authority is expressed by the wearer. Next to variations in pattern and colour schemes and the use of a waistcoat, from the second season onwards Andreatta added more accessories to Harvey’s wardrobe, such as tie clips, pocket squares and vintage cufflinks, which she said were added to achieve a ‘more romantic’ look that sets him apart from the other characters.\footnote{305} Harvey, like Warner’s identification of Jon Hamm as Don Draper in \textit{Mad Men} (AMC 2007–2015), is the ‘archetypal “suited hero”’.\footnote{306} The narrative premise that Louis cannot amount to Harvey’s authority is continually reflected in tailoring. Louis’ suits are not as well-fitting: the horizontal creases of Louis’ jackets in his stomach area and across his back and shoulders indicate that his suits are always slightly too small (Figure 19). In an interview, actor Patrick J. Adams explains, ‘The suits are like suits of armor. (…) The nicer and more tailored his suits get, the more Mike grows and his suit of armor grows’.\footnote{307} Actor Rick Hoffman feels that Louis’ ‘suit is more like a shield (…) to protect himself because he [is] insecure’.\footnote{308} Across the

\begin{figure}[h]
  \centering
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image18}
  \caption{USA Network infographic for Harvey and Louis.}
  \label{fig:usa}
\end{figure}

\footnote{305} Cutler 2011.  
\footnote{306} Warner 2014: 135, borrowing Church Gibson’s term for George Clooney.  
\footnote{307} Brunner 2012.  
\footnote{308} Ibid.
series, Harvey is always careful to unbutton his jacket when he sits and button it when he stands, each time making the suit central to his powerful disposition as ‘at ease’ and ‘in charge’. By comparison, Louis is never shown with his jacket opened; the shield remains closed to protect his sensitive character, which makes it crease and makes Louis look uncomfortable when sitting behind his desk. Such details gain significance by being sustained throughout the episodes and seasons.

Costuming also indicates temporality in characterisation: flashbacks in the episodes ‘Rewind’ (2:8), ‘The Other Time’ (3:6) and ‘The Statue’ (7:2) show that five years earlier the lapels of Harvey’s jackets were less wide, which suggests that he has ‘earned’ his power lapels over the years. When in ‘She Knows’ (2:1) Harvey finds that their boss, Jessica Pearson (Gina Torres), discovered that Mike never went to Harvard, Donna claims to have realised because the dimple in Harvey’s tie is too far to the left and the only other time she has seen him wear lavender his brother was in hospital. In the flashback of ‘The Other Time’ (3:6) Donna analyses that Harvey’s blue shirt and loud tie indicate he won in poker, his uneven shaving means he had little sleep and his left wrist is injured because his tie is slightly to the left. Such meta commentary explicates characteristics which otherwise seem arbitrary and encourage viewers to notice them in future episodes. The fashions, tailored to individual wearers, accumulate significance as costumes over the series, and show that television costume is a powerful medium for the expression of cultural connotations such as notions of masculinity through clothing.

Figure 19. Creases in Louis’ suit in *Suits.*
Regarding gender and fashion consumption, Warner notes that in *Sex and the City* (HBO 1998–2004) Steve’s shock reaction to expensive clothing implies ‘that the act of “irrational” consumption is intrinsically “feminine”’.\(^{309}\) In the pilot of *Suits*, despite Harvey’s order, Mike leaves Denault & Bray’s tailoring store upon seeing its high price tags.\(^{310}\) Instead, he trades six of his friend’s suits as a compromise. However, although this was the only scene in which a man is shown shopping and the show does not radically challenge male behaviour towards the consumption of clothing,\(^{311}\) the idea that it is ‘feminine’ is complicated by the fact that Harvey is empowered in his masculinity precisely by his expensive, accessorised and well-tailored suits. Indeed, as Warner writes, ‘[t]he suited hero, though often fully clothed (...), functions as an object of desire, with the suit serving as sartorial reminder of the naked body that lies underneath – and its sexual potency’.\(^{312}\) This sexuality is, in *Suits*, tied to heteronormative masculinity, which is reinforced by the tailoring choices that express hierarchies between the men. The difference between Harvey and Mike is continually emphasised. For example, in ‘Dirty Little Secrets’ (1:4) Mike has to borrow one of Harvey’s spare suits. A medium shot in the street shows Mike cycling towards Harvey in an absurdly oversized suit, also wearing a helmet and his staple shoulder bag. As Mike dismounts his bicycle, the camera glides down his body in close-up to frame in detail how the trousers drape his legs too loosely and one leg is tucked into his sock. In shot/reverse shots, Mike takes the helmet off, rubs his hair and locks his bike whilst he explains to Harvey why he had to borrow a suit. The jacket with its excessively broad shoulders holds a central position in the shots that frame the upper part of Mike’s body (Figure 19). A close-up of his legs shows him taking the trousers out of his sock. When Harvey notices that his waistcoat is missing, Mike replies, ‘Vests – *really*?’, implying he would never wear them (but see below). It is not until the end of Season 1 that Mike has learnt to appreciate suits, which is exemplified by a dressing sequence witnessed by his then-girlfriend in which Mike admires his mirror image and compares himself to James Bond.\(^{313}\) At the start of Season 2, Mike is worried about a dinner with his boss, and exclaims to Harvey the (stereotypically feminine) phrase, ‘What do I wear? What do I *wear*?’\(^{314}\)

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\(^{309}\) *Sex and the City*, ‘The Caste System’ (2:10), Warner 2014: 68.

\(^{310}\) The DVD box set of *Suits* features two pilots: the extended international pilot and the broadcast US pilot. The shots in which Mike looks at price tags are included in the extended pilot and the US pilot on Netflix, but, surprisingly, cut out of the US pilot on the DVD. These shots are vital to understanding why he leaves the store.

\(^{311}\) Notably, the male characters consult their female counterparts on clothing style. Harvey asks his secretary Donna whether he indeed looks ‘like a pimp’ in his three-piece and Mike asks Rachel if his tie is ‘too skinny’. They both confirm.

\(^{312}\) Warner 2014: 135.

\(^{313}\) ‘Rules of the Game’ (1:11).

\(^{314}\) ‘She Knows’ (2:1).
If masculine identity is performed through what Butler calls stylized repetitions of acts, this is done explicitly in *Suits* by serially repeated pointers—in tailoring choices, behaviour, gestures (like buttoning a jacket), dressing scenes and dialogue—of what constitutes powerful dressing for men. Next to recurring phrases (‘get out of my face’; ‘we’ve got bigger fish to fry’), the dialogue features repeated critiques on men’s dress choices (e.g. Harvey and Donna mocking Mike’s ‘skinny’ cuts). Rather than marking attention to fashion as unmanly or effeminate, the anxiety comes from the requirement for men to conform to the performative act of ‘dressing for success’ to achieve power, which is presented as a learning process essential to fit in. Mike’s initial tailoring, after having bribed some first suits off a friend, develops over the series to allow his growth into the corporate world. Throughout Season 2 he is dressed in Zegna, Margiela or Boss: brands with a fresh, youthful style to fit his slender body type and first-year status, with slim notch lapels, slim ties and point collars. As his career progresses, the ‘seasoned’ British brand Burberry becomes Mike’s main brand. In Season 4, however, his career change from associate lawyer to investment banker comes with a change in tailoring: whereas in Season 1 Mike refused to wear the waistcoat of the suit he borrowed from Harvey, he now appears in a three-piece. Although in theory the added waistcoat should command respect (like Harvey’s does), Harvey and Donna still use it to ridicule him. Mike later retorts

that Harvey’s suit is ‘a little dated for court’, affirming that suits are not timeless.\textsuperscript{316} When Mike returns to the law firm, his tailoring returns to his slimmer, single-breasted two-pieces. In this way, Mike remains visually subordinate to Harvey, whose broader suit designs make his chest look more expansive and draw more attention in the image. Quite literally, hegemonic masculinity is shown as a matter of broader versus slimmer appearance.

The series features instances where masculine power is threatened, but reinstated. Harvey normally wears the broadest tie of the firm, but in ‘Meet the New Boss’ (2:3), Harvey’s authority is jeopardised by co-founder Daniel Hardman (David Constable), who unexpectedly returns to the firm wearing an equally broad tie. Whilst arguing with Daniel, who is sitting at his desk in a closed single-breasted suit and expresses a calm dominance, Harvey has his two-piece wide open; having his chest exposed, he seems more vulnerable. The dimple of Harvey’s diagonal stripe Zegna tie is out of alignment and this tie is slimmer than his usual Tom Ford, Burberry, Armani, Hermes, Canali, Etro or Barneys ties. The poor fastening of Harvey’s tie is remarkable in court when Daniel overrules his authority on a case (Figure 21). Whereas the fabric of Daniel’s suit, shirt and tie is flat and tight, the visible creases in Harvey’s otherwise impeccable shirt and tie expose that he is on edge and risks loss of control over the situation. The next day, Harvey restores his appearance and triumphs over Daniel, who is in turn shown in his office without a jacket, with shirt sleeves rolled up and collar and tie loosened. When in ‘To Trouble’ (6:1) the firm is at risk, Harvey and Louis are smoking weed and wearing their shirts, shirt sleeves and ties loose; when the firm is saved, their tailoring is impeccable again. In ‘She’s Gone’ (6:11), after returning from prison, Mike momentarily works as the church’s teacher and is wearing a short-sleeved shirt, which would be unacceptable in the corporate world. Later in Season 6, after having spent time in prison, Mike works for a legal clinic, the lesser prestige of which is shown by the men not wearing their ties done up. These examples show how taking off a jacket, rolling up sleeves or loosening a tie detracts from the suit’s power and makes a man appear vulnerable; the armour securing his identity and success is then taken apart and dismantled.

\textsuperscript{316} ‘Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner’ (4:2).
By making a concern with men’s appearance the central theme of legal practices, *Suits* affirms what fashion scholars have argued for a long time: that men’s dress and fashion are as potent with meaning as women’s.317 The ways these suits as costumes are used performatively make the show nuance the generalised notions that men’s suits are uniform and timeless and that being masculine means not paying attention to fashion; rather, it is the opposite in *Suits*. These costumes read as fashion endowed with textual meaning in the mise-en-scène. The way the drama itself ignites the characterisation of its costumes as fashion is apparent both because the characters wear new designer clothes every episode and because of the way their costumes are framed and shown in the mise-en-scène, which is especially notable in the frequent shots of characters parading the firm’s long corridors between glass wall offices as if they are models on a catwalk. ‘Conflict of Interest’ (3:4), for example, features three scenes where a male-male, female-male and female-female pair confidently stride through the corridors, all starting from a medium tracking shot, cutting to a long shot and back to a medium shot – showcasing their fashionable adornments (Figure 22, 23, 24). A medium tracking shot first follows Mike and Harvey as they walk from the associate’s workplace towards the corridor. After they turn the corner, the scene cuts to a long shot of the corridor through which the men walk towards the camera in perfect unison. As a backdrop, three other men in well-tailored suits and five women in knee- to calf-length dresses or skirts and high pumps cross the corridor while Mike and Harvey march forwards. The scene cuts back to a medium shot of the men when

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four of the women have left the frame and the fifth halts. Mike is dressed in a deep blue suit, crisp white shirt and deep blue diagonal stripe tie; his jacket tailored with modest-sized peaked lapels, and Harvey in a paler greyish-blue suit with extra-wide peaked lapels, white shirt and an extra-broad greyish-blue tie with white dots, with a light grey breast-pocket handkerchief. These costumes are highlighted, as the series typically does, first in in medium shots of their torsos and heads, so that the tailoring of their jackets is well-visible; then (when the women enter the frame) the men’s bodies are shown in full. The complementary shades of their costumes and the way they stride in unison convey their like-minded, team-work spirit relationship, whilst the nuanced differences in tailoring (slim to modest width for Mike, extra wide for Harvey) continue to distinguish between their identities and positions in the corporate masculine hierarchy.

![Figure 22. Mike and Harvey parade the corridor.](image)

In its dealing with the meaningfulness of men’s tailoring in performativity, does *Suits* represent a subversion of heteronormative assumptions in the discourse of dress, or does it only expose and still repeat them? Questioning the usefulness of performativity as a tool for understanding masculinity, Edwards claims in *Cultures of Masculinity* that although critical studies suggest that masculinity is now more than ever a matter of performance, overt displays of fashionable, image-conscious performances of masculinity can equally be said to *not* undermine essentialist notions of masculinity but rather ‘reinforce the distinction between “real” and “unreal”
masculinity’. The male characters’ apparel and behaviour in *Suits* remain within the realm of heteronormative masculinity, but Edwards’ point is relevant to consider its accomplishments: is its male concern with clothing too far removed from the ideal of ‘real’ masculinity (i.e. not paying attention to fashion) and does it thus reinforce rather than subvert the distinction? Perhaps the threat is mitigated because *Suits* offers only an aspirational image – its characters cannot read as true to reality due to the series’ costuming strategy of showing them in new top designer fashion every episode; they all unrealistically own hundreds of neatly tailored high-end fashions, without being shown shopping or having the pieces tailored. As this representation of masculinity appears not in the actual social world but in a legal drama on television, which does not read as too close to reality, it arouses fewer anxieties about fashion-conscious masculinity than such performances of men in our lived world do. *Suits* as such can challenge the idea that “real” men just throw things on; Mike for example develops over the series from a someone who ‘just throw[s] things on’ to a man who learns that wearing well-tailored suits of the latest fashion is empowering. *Suits* does not subvert gender boundaries or masculine hierarchies in the corporate world, but through its serial uses of costuming it does offer a self-conscious discourse on the performative force of dressing which nuances essentialist notions of masculinity. Its corporate masculinity is one that is necessarily narcissistic.

Although *Suits* does not eschew hierarchical relationships between men, it does bestow remarkable power on the women working in the corporate environment. In the second ‘catwalk parade’ in ‘Conflict of Interest’ (3:4), Louis paces towards the corridor from the right side of the image, calling for his personal associate Katrina, who enters from the left, answering ‘At your service’ (Figure 23). Although Louis is Katrina’s superior, she has much influence on his decisions and they are portrayed here as partners. In a medium shot, they start parading the corridor side by side. Katrina is wearing a tight-fitting carmine dress, confidently swinging her hips and finishing Louis’ sentences. The carmine red of Louis’ dotted tie matches Katrina’s dress, which endorses the scene’s portrayal of their teamwork. The image cuts to a long shot of the corridor through which the characters stride, showing Katrina’s legs under a knee-length dress with nude patent leather pumps. A few background characters adorn the corridor but are not as noticeable as the women in Mike and Harvey’s scene. A close medium tracking shot captures Katrina and Louis as they finish their corridor stroll and turn the corner.

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The same episode also includes a parade of two women. After catching Donna flirting in the copy room, paralegal Rachel Zane (Meghan Markle) interrogates her while they head through the corridor in rapid pace. The scene cuts to a long shot of the corridor in which both women are fully shown: Rachel in a buttoned white cardigan and dark blue pencil skirt, Donna in a tight-fitting aqua-blue dress with a floral pattern, both wearing nude pumps (Figure 24). They stride through space in coordinated pace; in confident sway on high heels. Medium shots capture the end of their dialogue. The three scenes in ‘Conflict of Interest’ (3:4) in which pairs of characters parade the hallways are edited similarly: starting with a medium tracking shot, cutting to a wide shot of the long corridor and cutting back to a medium shot in which the characters come to a halt, look at each other and finish their dialogue. In all three instances, the pair marches forward in a confident and synchronised pace. They walk through corporate space as fashion models on a catwalk, displaying their costumes in full-frame and making the latest fashion for men and women central to the image.
Yet, significantly, whilst the men’s dress is the subject of constant scrutiny across the series, the women’s is not; nor are they ever impaired in their authority by ‘wrong’ dress choices. Jessica and Donna wear up to five different high-fashion outfits per episode, of which none reappear in later episodes. Only Rachel, characterised by a background of rich parents from which she wishes to separate herself, wears mix-and-match outfits (e.g. pencil skirts and blouses) of which top or bottom pieces are used repeatedly. The women are not represented as ‘frivolous’, ‘too feminine’ or ‘too sexual’ when they use fashion to dress for success. Contesting Molloy’s notion that professional women should not let fashion dictate their choice of clothing and must smother all signals of sexuality to be successful, the women in Suits wear fashionable, close-fittingly tailored dresses and skirts above high heels in an unashamedly ‘sexy’ way.\(^{319}\) Whilst it is unlikely that a secretary is able to afford new pieces for every working day, Donna uses this type of power dressing to advance her career – becoming Chief Operating Officer in Season 7 (despite not having a law degree). Her costumes have then become more tailored, with mostly neutral or jewel tones or subdued patterns and more forceful decorative power built within the structural elements of her dress. In ‘Home to Roost’ (7:6), she wears an emerald pantsuit without a blouse underneath, whereas she otherwise almost exclusively wears dresses. This power dressing is reminiscent of the form Bruzzi writes that the modern *femme fatale* in film uses: appropriating positively Joan Riviere’s 1929 theory of ‘womanliness as masquerade’, where a woman averts male anxiety by masking her

\(^{319}\) Molloy 1978; Entwistle 2000b; Entwistle 2007.
power behind acts of feminine sexuality – winning in the end. As Bruzzi argues, Riviere’s rejection of ‘genuine’ womanliness, of any split between woman and masquerade, allows a rejection of discourses such as from Molloy’s manual which frame femininity as a construct of male fantasy. In Suits, although Donna is regularly side-lined in decisions at top level in the firm despite the fact that she is COO, the fact that it is men’s appearance is a greater source of anxiety than women’s means that, although the rhythm of constant novelty in the women’s costuming on Suits also works as a stylized repetition that constructs feminine identity as concerned with fashion and appearance, this is not something women do for men or a concern that inhibits their power. It is, for a change, men’s dress that is coded as an external factor crucial to their success or demise.

A limited wardrobe of gritty costumes
At the opposite side of the spectrum from Suits, Scandal and The Good Wife, the costume design for Broadchurch consists of a limited range of repeatedly worn costumes, which adheres to its place in a long-standing tradition of British crime drama valued for its realist narrative, form and style. Broadchurch deals with personal and collective trauma in a Dorset seaside town community during the investigation of the murder of an eleven-year-old boy. The series was a phenomenal success for the commercially-funded public broadcasting channel ITV: its first season in 2013 was lauded by critics, nominated for seven BAFTAs of which it won three, and attracted the channel’s highest audience figure for a new weekday drama since 2004. Radio Times reported it to be the ‘most tweeted about UK drama ever’. This acclaim boosted the cultural status of both ITV and the genre of British crime drama, and, as Ross Garner argues, made Broadchurch emblematic of ITV’s channel branding. The programme has also won the 2018 National Television Award for Most Popular Crime Drama. Broadchurch is widely praised for its visual style and for being a refreshingly ‘humane’ drama, where high-definition filming enhances its textual focus on the seaside environment. As Ruth McElroy notes, Broadchurch fits a trend of UK shows offering lingering, stylistically pleasing, high-definition shots of British landscapes that Helen Wheatley has argued satisfies television’s desire to be spectacular, which has existed as long as the medium itself, but has proliferated in this form since technological developments have improved image quality. Yet,

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despite the attention the style and aesthetics of Broadchurch, its costumes remain overlooked. Precisely because its protagonists are a man and a woman costumed to have their professional dress blend into the environment, this case warrants a closer look at how costume reaches its expression of what culturally reads as appropriate – and as ‘just clothes’.

By creating a successful illusion of realism, programmes like Broadchurch perpetuate the notion of television as a window on the world, which, as I argued in the preceding chapters, is one of the aspects that underpins the neglect of costume design in this medium. As Sue Turnbull writes, British productions with ‘what is routinely described as a “gritty” social-realist approach to their subject matter are regularly perceived to be of better quality and greater value than other types of crime series’, whilst, importantly, ‘a social-realist approach and “gritty” look requires as much, if not more, artistic manipulation as any other “look” on television’. Indeed, what characters wear in Broadchurch is as much a construction as in Suits; albeit produced by a different strategy. The ‘gritty’ suit that David Tennant wears in Season 1 as Alec Hardy is the product of an elaborate design and breakdown process (Figure 25). As Holman explained in my interview with him:

I knew that he was gonna be a crumpled character, so I didn’t want him to wear a suit that was like a travel suit, for example; I wanted his fabric to be as crumpled as possible. So I went in search of linen suits. Linen suits weren’t quite the right thing, but I found the most brilliant Nigel Hall suit. And it was so good, I found it in the sale, that I couldn’t repeat it. So that was a bane of my life. But that’s good, because it means that he wore it and wore it and wore it.

David Tennant had to wear the suit repeatedly on set, achieving its ‘crumpled’ look through a combination of professional breakdown and extensive wear. This is especially effective on a show filmed in high definition, which, Holman confirmed, ‘has changed [the work of a costume designer] enormously, because it’s changed in the fact that if there’s a crease in your collar, you can see it, on HD, whereas you wouldn’t have seen it [before]’. Along with other costume designers I interviewed, Holman pointed out that, although the design process itself remains the same, television’s recent advancements in high-definition filming and viewing have made costume breakdown considerably more challenging. The designer explained that

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325 Turnbull 2014: 45.
327 Ibid.
costumers often used to make clothes look aged, worn-in, dirty or weathered by spraying them with a breaking down spray, but on HDTV, those spray droplets are visible on-screen. Dirt or makeup must be physically worked into the texture of each garment. Successful manipulation in turn obscures its own process and makes the costumes look like realistically worn-in clothes, but meanwhile their function is to create/heighten the drama of the production.

The emotional tone of the drama is conveyed most obviously through colour in the everyday dress of Beth (Jodie Whittaker) and Mark Latimer (Andrew Buchan), the parents of the murdered child, for whom Holman consistently used maroon to indicate strong emotions in the scene and in their household. Even though the style of the programme overall reads as ‘humane’ and social-realist, the use of maroon costumes strikingly corresponds to how the use of colour in Hollywood melodrama speaks for the emotion of the character and their social conflicts. Mary Beth Haralovich indicates how colour in Douglas Sirk’s melodrama All That Heaven Allows (1955) helps to create a recognisable social environment and partly abides to the conventions of cinematic realism, but also distracts from this realism and deviates from those conventions.\textsuperscript{328} For instance, the red dress that Cary Scott (Jane Wyman) is wearing, as Haralovich cites Laura Mulvey, ‘is misconstrued by her children as evidence that “the impotent and decrepit Harvey” is the object of Cary’s “newly

\textsuperscript{328} Haralovich 1990.
awakened interest in life and love”’, which helps to convey the narrative and mark a change in her sexual identity.\textsuperscript{329} Cary’s red dress sets the protagonist apart from other characters and the background and signifies her character development, abiding to Hollywood’s convention that colour and costumes should enhance characters’ narrative identities.\textsuperscript{330} Sirk’s melodrama pushes the boundaries of this trope to critique ideologies of female identity and sexuality.\textsuperscript{331} Yet this colour practice is also often disrupted, Haralovich argues, since ‘the film does not always use red to separate objects or characters from the setting in order to emphasize the narrative or to comment on ideologies’, as in some scenes ‘red’ appears as a ‘visual magnet’ that distracts from the realist look and the colour’s meaning for the character.\textsuperscript{332} Sirk’s colours comply with \textit{and} deviate from the conventions of Hollywood colour realism and the aesthetics of melodrama, both concerned with the primacy of the narrative, since colour sometimes appears as a spectacle unto itself. Scott Higgins further asserts that the colours in Sirk’s cinema ‘do ring of artifice, but at the same time they exact emotion’.\textsuperscript{333} ‘Artifice’ in melodrama does not necessarily distance the viewer. Higgins explains with regard to Todd Haynes’ \textit{Far From Heaven} (2002), known for its references to Sirk, that 1950s Technicolor melodrama is characterised by using the formal tool of \textit{colour scoring}, which ‘[b]eyond ensuring a pleasing surface (...) encouraged \textit{colour motifs} (particular hues or shades that gain associations across a film) and \textit{colour punctuation} (brief alignments or contrasts of hue within a sequence to underline a turning point)’.\textsuperscript{334} Colour punctuation is present in \textit{Broadchurch} from the first episode, in which Beth runs across the beach towards the body of her murdered son and is wearing a red dress that (next to Olivia’s orange eagoule) became iconic for the show (Figure 26; 29). This colour punctuates a dramatic turning point in Beth’s life; as Holman added, ‘the red dress was designed not only for its colour against the beach and the run to the beach, [but also] for in the house, where she’s wrecked with pain’.\textsuperscript{335} The colour then became used as a motif and returned in the form of either Beth or Mark wearing red/maroon as an indicator of emotion. Although this use of colour punctuates the show with the mode of the melodramatic, their dress reads as ordinary and realistic – not as excess.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item [329] Haralovich 1990: 67. See also Bruzzi 2011 for an elaboration on Cary’s New Look dress.
\item [330] Ibid. 63-64; 67.
\item [331] As Gaines argues, the wardrobes for melodramas (I cite Warner 2014: 101) ‘push the boundaries of “realism”’.
\item [332] Ibid. 68.
\item [333] Higgins 2013: 170.
\item [335] Interview with Ray Holman, 04-05-2017. He added, ‘it’s not only the colour, it’s the style and the fabric which clings to her; which is a character in itself’.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
As opposed to the convention that the colours of costumes should separate actors from the background, Broadchurch also demonstrates the use of the melodramatic strategy of making a character’s costume blend into the background. As further discussed in Chapter 3, Stella Bruzzi notes regarding the costuming colours used for Cary Scott in All That Heaven Allows and Kathy Whitaker (Julianne Moore) in Far From Heaven that instances of merging the costume with the background signify these women’s static and powerless position in the household. Holman used a similar strategy for Broadchurch for Trish Winterman (Julie Hesmondhalgh), a character introduced in Season 3 who contacts the police, Ellie and Alec, after she has been raped and traumatised. When I asked Holman if he ever wants an actor to blend into the setting instead of stand out from it, he replied:

Sometimes. Like on Broadchurch, Trish’s jumper, which she wore at I think the end of Episode 1 [of Season 3] and she wore it another time, a fisherman’s jumper, which was mustard, and she wore it when she was feeling vulnerable and at home and upset. She wore it for comfort. I did that colour deliberately, so that it would look beautiful because she had a big window— I knew she was gonna sit in the window, be framed by glass, but she still needed to look vulnerable, and like she’s comforting herself. So it’s all deliberate.
This strategy to make a character look a certain way—vulnerable, upset, in need of comfort—by choosing a costume colour and texture that merge with the character’s surroundings is done to achieve dramatization without seeming excessive; the fisherman’s jumper befits the realist image and communicate emotion from within the texture and design of the garment. Over the series, the repeated use of several costuming strategies balanced against each other—sparks of maroon standing out; inconspicuous costumes blending in; the consistency of the protagonists’ costume looks—is what constructs the serial image and storytelling of the programme.

As in Suits, the design, tailoring and texture of Alec Hardy’s suits and his manner of wearing convey crucial information about his character: the perpetually creased fabric and slim notch lapels of the jacket, the un-ironed or -pressed white shirts and his always wearing the jacket unbuttoned, the top shirt button open and tie not done up communicate his physical and mental strain (Figure 25). The notion that details of tailoring express a man’s success and welfare is consolidated by his dress showing his lack thereof. A shot from Season 1, Episode 4 in which Alec and Ellie interview a shopkeeper clearly shows how the disentangled look of his suiting impacts on his posture: whereas the tailoring of the men in Suits make them stand up straight, with their shoulders back and chest forward, Alec in this scene is slouching (Figure 28). Contrary to the serial costuming pace of Suits, David Tennant wears that one Nigel Hall suit for Alec Hardy in the whole first season of Broadchurch. For Season 2 he had three different suits, but this was due to there being flashbacks to when Hardy

Figure 27. Trish wears a mustard jumper when she feels vulnerable.
was still a more ‘together’ cop (as Holman put it) and wore perfectly tailored Paul Smith suits with properly fastened ties in an upbeat stage of his career. Over the three seasons, Hardy has minimal variety in his costuming. Yet, whereas Sarah Lund in The Killing was criticised by viewers and the media for continually wearing the same knitted jumper, no one complained about Hardy wearing the same suits. This can be explained, firstly, by the gender prejudice that it is acceptable for men to wear the same clothes multiple times whilst for women it is not (which is perpetuated by shows like This Morning through television’s function as a cultural forum; see Chapter 1), and secondly, by the relatively subtle nature of the communicative powers of the suit. Whilst on a superficial level Alex Hardy can be perceived as just a British man in a generic suit, the details of its gritty style and slim tailoring show that Hardy is a detective from another town than Broadchurch and is suffering from strain – and as his irritable demeanour, health issues and mental scars accumulate, so his suit becomes increasingly crumpled. As the series progresses, it offers some insight into his mysterious background: he is gravely ill and has left his previous workplace after being blamed for a scandal. Hardy’s newcomer status in this small-town community is reflected in how he wears his suit, and since he devotes minimal mental space to dressing, he is not always dressed appropriately. When in Season 1, Episode 4 Hardy reluctantly visits the Miller residence for dinner, Ellie exclaims upon his arrival:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ellie Miller</th>
<th>‘Oh, you’re in a suit!’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alec Hardy</td>
<td>‘Is that bad?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellie Miller</td>
<td>‘No, I didn’t expect it. We didn’t get poshed up.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alec Hardy</td>
<td>‘Neither did I.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The notion that Hardy sees little difference between dressing for work and dressing for a social call—except his not wearing a tie—is repeated when he introduces himself to Zoe (Elen Rhys) on a Tinder date in Season 3, Episode 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoe</th>
<th>‘Oh, you’re wearing a suit.’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alec Hardy</td>
<td>‘Er, I wasn’t sure. Is that wrong?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>‘No. No, no. Top marks for effort.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This dialogue explicates the significance of Hardy wearing his suit on every occasion, although these two are the extremely rare instances in which attention is drawn to the
costume design. The significance of Hardy’s costuming to character and narrative comes from its continuity across the series – it works as a stylized repetition of acts of masculinity and as a consistent factor in the series’ visual style.

Alongside Hardy, Olivia Colman as Ellie Miller consistently wears dark grey or greyish-blue pantsuits to work with a softer texture and more rounded-off lapels, all of which also have the same style, but her professional dressing does show some variety in colour with different blouses underneath. Holman explained that her costuming was to embody how Ellie is from the British countryside, not metropolitan police; that she is ‘full of heart’ of the place she lives and grew up in, and that therefore the costumes were to be made worn and weathered to great extent, with rounder lapels and a grainier texture, to make her come across as softer, more sympathetic.\(^{339}\)

Whilst these costumes are most significant to her character, it was Ellie’s bright orange cagoule for which the character has become known and which inadvertently became iconic for the visual representation of the programme (Figure 29). As Holman explained, whilst the characters on *Broadchurch* appear to have limited wardrobes, backstage they have an extensive set of clothes, but the costume designer only decides which pieces to use when the script comes in.\(^{340}\) This approach leaves space for serendipity, as Holman chose Ellie’s now iconic anorak, a weathered orange cagoule, along with one for her husband Joe Miller (Matthew Gravelle) before the costume

\(^{339}\) Interview with Ray Holman, 04-05-2017.
\(^{340}\) Ibid.
designer himself knew that Joe was the murderer and without the intention of using it on screen. Only when he unexpectedly needed a coat for Ellie to wear in a field outside the house in night-time, Holman decided to use it – and the orange cagoule subsequently became Ellie’s staple piece and an icon of the series’ style. Although the designer felt that it ‘took away from what [he] was really feeling about the character in the end’, Ellie continued to wear it across the three seasons.\textsuperscript{341} Whilst, narratively, Season 2 of Broadchurch is convoluted, with multiple storylines running alongside each other that replace the in-depth emotional exploration of Season 1 (which is partly restored in Season 3), this coat helps the series to retain a consistent visual palette. It is the extremely consistent costume strategy for Alec, Ellie, Beth and Mark that keeps the show together; the restricted palette is consistently used as a dramatic motif.

As scholars of the everyday such as Michel de Certeau have pointed out, the repetition of certain practices makes routines read as ordinary and everyday.\textsuperscript{342} In Broadchurch, it is the sustained serial repetition of costume styles and colours that makes the text read as realistic; as a window on the world. The consistency achieved through this costume strategy allows its melodramatic use of colour to not read as excessive, but as both realistic and emotionally entrancing.

Figure 29. Promotional image for Broadchurch.

\textsuperscript{341} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{342} De Certeau 1984.
A varied wardrobe of ordinary costumes
The costume design on ITV’s *Scott & Bailey* is emblematic of the balancing act that serial crime drama operates with to create a sense of realism whilst conveying narrative meaning and dealing with changes in the production team. The programme has received considerable critical attention primarily for its representation of ‘ordinary’ professional women working in the traditionally male-dominated line of police detective work, centring on the lives and work of DC-then-DS Janet Scott (Lesley Sharp), DC-then-A/DI Rachel Bailey (Suranne Jones) and their boss, DCI Gill Murray (Amelia Bullmore). From a critical feminist perspective, Ruth McElroy addresses questions of realism, melodrama and the representation of professional women in contemporary female-lead police procedural, focusing on how *Scott & Bailey*’s narrative focus on women’s emotions and empathy works in relation to its balance between realism and melodrama. Building on this work, I argue that the series’ costume design is key to this. *Scott & Bailey*, as Helen Piper puts it, is ‘a drama as much about women in the workplace as it is about crime’. McElroy’s only note on costuming is that ‘Murray [is] wearing a formal, skirted suit that could be worn by any professional woman’, but a more nuanced analysis of the costuming across the series helps to define its negotiation of realism and drama in relation to power and gender in the workplace.

Costume designers Alexandra Caulfield and Rhona Russell both stressed in my separate interviews with them that the (mostly female) production team aimed to depict police procedures as authentically as possible. Informed by ex-detective Diane Taylor, they paid attention to the factual responsibilities per rank and, as Piper notes, details such as the officers wearing ID cards or name badges, using clipboards, taking notes, doing paperwork and enduring long interviews with suspects or witnesses responding ‘no comment’ to each question. When visiting crime scenes, the detectives are covered from head to toe in light blue paper scrubs (Figure 30), which the costume designers said originated from this wish for realism (although, Caulfield remarked, it is doubtful whether detectives in their rank actually visit crime scenes), but these scenes had to be limited because the scrubs are hard to light well, complicate dialogue, performance and facial expression and obscure costume’s function of conveying distinct and realistic, complex character identities. As per the

343 DC = Detective Constable; DS = Detective Sergeant; DI = Detective Inspector (the A stands for Acting).
345 Piper 2015: 133.
346 Ibid. 91.
348 Piper 2015: 130. McElroy 2017 also notes Sally Wainwright’s claim to realism.
349 Interview with Alexandra Caulfield, 08-06-2017.
tradition of gritty British crime drama, the characters’ professional dress costuming is required to read as ‘real’; as true to the reality of detectives' lives, whilst at the same time distinguishing the characters from each other and conveying the emotional tone of the scene. The costumes read as ‘real’ mainly due to the costume designers’ strategy to provide each character with a realistic-sized ‘capsule wardrobe’ of clothes initially bought from contemporary Manchester high street stores that were turned into costumes and are worn repeatedly within seasons. The creation of realist mise-en-scène is aided by the serial continuity and repetition of the characters’ costuming. Yet, the fact that the series’ costuming is constructed and authored is evident in that this repetition only occurs within the season(s) that each subsequent costume designer was responsible for; Alexandra Caulfield for Season 1, Rhona Russell for Seasons 2 and 3 and Sally Campbell for Seasons 4 and 5. Differences are visible between the seasons that impact on the text’s balance between realism and the visibility of it being styled. Costuming here works to create both realism and drama; it both consists of ‘real’ clothes and is authored according to each costume designer’s strategy of meaning-making.

The first costume designer on a serial drama sets the bar for characters’ wardrobes. As Caulfield explained, ‘we decide early on: what does this character decide is professional for her; for some women it would be a smart blouse, for some it’d be a cardigan, with a scarf...’350 Opposed to Jolie Andreatta’s approach to Suits ‘as

350 Ibid.
a platform for fashion’, regarding Scott & Bailey Caulfield and Russell indicated that, whilst they bought what was in the shops at that moment, they deliberately pitched the costuming as not too ‘in fashion’.\textsuperscript{351} The production team had to establish, as Caulfield explained, if they wanted ‘real police officers or (...) stylised– you know... what I call Armani dress police officers’.\textsuperscript{352} She elaborated:

...they were supposed to be two real police officers, so let’s try and keep them real. I mean, obviously when you’ve got– you know, Suranne is very beautiful, very statuesque, and you have to decide whether you’re going to play that up or play that down. And that’s quite an important thing, really, because what you don’t want is somebody going onto set looking ludicrously glamorous for a police officer.\textsuperscript{353}

On this topic, Russell also stated that for Seasons 2 and 3 she meant to ‘keep it real’:

...you see a lot of TV detectives wear t-shirts and jeans and stuff like that, (...) but in the real world, that real world, of police work, that’s only undercover that get to do that. Your everyday detective has to maintain a level of smartness, because at any time they can be sent to someone’s house to tell them their relative’s been killed and work out they could be called out to deliver that news at any point. So the idea was they had to maintain a certain level of respectful looking, like smartness, to take them into all these situations, rather than the jeans and the t-shirts and leather jackets. I would say that’s more an artistic compromise of other dramas.\textsuperscript{354}

Not compromising invites the series to be read as a window on the world, suggesting that it emulates the reality of working in the Manchester Metropolitan police. In line with Jane Gaines’ and Deborah Nadoolman Landis’ arguments, Russell claimed: ‘It’s all about telling the story, so costume shouldn’t get in the way. People shouldn’t attempt to be highly noticing what they’re wearing.’\textsuperscript{355} She pitched the costumes to not be spectacular but to blend into image, character and narrative, emphasising that ‘if I’ve done my job properly, it does just blend in (...); it works with design, it works with makeup, it works with the actor – it’s all one thing.’\textsuperscript{356} Both designers further stressed that the costumes had to be practical for the detectives’ work on the day represented in the filming; stab vests when doing arrests, and trainers and trousers.

\textsuperscript{351} Interviews with Rhona Russell, 08-05-2017; Alexandra Caulfield, 08-06-2017.
\textsuperscript{352} Interview with Alexandra Caulfield, 08-06-2017.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{354} Interview with Rhona Russell, 08-05-2017.
\textsuperscript{356} Interview with Rhona Russell, 08-05-2017.
for chase scenes. Caulfield, like Russell, explained that they had to balance this with the scenes in which a detective interviews a witness or suspect, where she should have a jacket on because she ‘[has] to look professional and smart’.357

There are differences in how the two costume designers approached dressing the detectives as women in the workplace. Caulfield explained that for Season 1 she meant to convey that the police force is an environment in which women have difficulty in being taken seriously and want ‘to come across as, not butch, but (...) almost masculine’.358 She wanted the women to ‘look like they mean business, like they’re good at their jobs, rather than playing up the feminine side’.359 It is remarkable that costume designers still feel the need to defend the women characters’ capability even in a time where there is a plethora of cops shows featuring female protagonists. 

As discussed above, the traditional cultural assumption is that exuding toughness and competence cannot go hand in hand with looking very feminine – although Scandal, Suits and The Good Wife prove that they can. Scott & Bailey is about women’s concern with whether they have to make an effort to show through masculinised professional dressing that they are capable. In the first episode, when Gill Murray introduces the murder case under investigation, a medium shot smoothly tilts down as it shows Janet Scott, in a blue V-neck knitted jumper, taking notes at her desk. It cuts to DS Andy Roper (Nicholas Gleaves) looking at Janet with his head tilted, then cuts back to a shot of Janet’s legs, adorned in dark tights under a brown/grey plaid skirt, with brown leather pumps on her feet. Whilst toying with the trope of femininity in the workplace as framed only in terms of male fantasy, the text swiftly counters this expectation regarding the women’s role in the police force. Janet’s dress is ordinary, not demanding attention; men being distracted in this text only suggests their lesser professionalism in contrast to the women detectives. Barely taking Andy’s remark about the case on board, the women are the ones talking; men are tossing coins or shuffling paperwork in the background. They are told off by Gill when misbehaving. Andy is further left out of focus in the scene, whilst the women are in focus in the foreground.360 For Seasons 2 and 3, Russell continued the distinction between men’s and women’s dress, but differentiated more strongly between the protagonists than Caulfield and put Janet Scott, as the caring, thoughtful character and working mother-of-two, in what she called ‘more feminine blouses and cardigans and pencil skirts’, and the younger, self-focused and impulsive Rachel Bailey in ‘more masculine trousers and flat shoes’, with Janet mostly wearing green and blue shades, sometimes

357 Interview with Alexandra Caulfield, 08-06-2017.
358 Ibid.
359 Ibid.
360 Andy Roper figures as Janet Scott’s extramarital romantic interest but thereafter exits the show.
with prints, and Rachel wearing predominantly wine-red, grey, black and charcoal (Figure 32; 34). This contrast is continued for the rest of the seasons.

Figure 31. Janet in the opening episode of *Scott & Bailey*.

Figure 32. Janet and Rachel in Season 3 of *Scott & Bailey*.

Over the show’s serial costuming, the women wear a wider variety of clothing types and colours than in *Broadchurch* – tops, jumpers, cardigans, blouses, trousers, pantsuits, dresses and skirts. Despite their ordinary look and repeated uses, costume design work did go into choosing pieces that set the characters apart from each other.

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and make each wearer exude a level of professionalism befitting the situation. Caulfield explained that for it to look realistic in a contemporary setting, the costume breakdown involved washing and ironing to ‘take the finishing out of the fabrics’, which reflects what she calls our ‘wash-and-wear-and-throwaway culture’. Though subtle, the strategy to make the on-screen clothes look plausibly aged and worn-in contributes to the image of the costumes as ready-to-wear dress with a lifespan as limited as is realistic in contemporary consumption culture. Clothing from factory produce chain stores is no longer made or meant to be durable; most ready-to-wear, mass-produced garments lose colour and shape after a few washes. Like in Broadchurch, this contributes to the ongoing assumption that television can deliver a window on the world, even though this is a styling strategy. A closer look at the clothes as costumes further reveals that, rather than being real-life dress worn on screen, these garments have been transformed from clothes into costumes and as such play an important role in the serial meaning-making process.

As discussed in relation to Broadchurch, the more realistic the costumes look, the more unnoticeable they become to the viewer. Scott & Bailey’s costumes have only been discussed in the media for their ‘ugliness’ or ordinariness and their way of blending into their environment. Indeed, realist crime drama generally privileges the plot of crime solving over the look of the mise-en-scène; viewers are supposed to focus on the narrative suspense, not on the costumes. Yet, again, even in a ‘gritty’ crime drama, costuming is the product of meticulous choices and artistic manipulation to create plausible character identities and narratives and to set them apart from each other and their backgrounds. This is also a matter of style, and, as Ben Highmore notes, ‘aesthetics is overly enamoured of the beautiful and by art, yet in its approach to social life as a sensorial realm its essential proclivities are directed towards the ordinary’. A closer look at the strategies used to achieve this realistic yet compelling narrative contributes insight into how television style and aesthetics work.

The characters’ professional dress is occasionally a topic of dialogue. When in the first episode Nick Savage (Rupert Graves) ends his relationship with Rachel, a flashback shows her returning to his house, where they have a fight in which Nick accuses her of wearing the same clothes to work that she wore with him the night before. Rachel is upset that Nick implies that she is unhygienic, and the scene perpetuates the idea that dressing professionally means not wearing the same clothes twice in a row. Caulfield felt this was ‘played upon’ by the execs and producers, as

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362 Interview with Alexandra Caulfield, 08-06-2017.
Rachel was ‘painted as far more rough and ready’ in the dialogue than she looked on screen:

she was always well-presented; (...) she wasn’t a character who ever looked like she’d worn the clothes from the night before. (...) Things in scripts often change. (...) She had a lovely dress on, when he says that to her, and her hair was done. So, I think, what we decided with that reference was: she may go into work, she stays with him the night, then she goes into work the next day with the same clothes on, but she’d have a locker where she could change into something else. So that was a backstory that we invented so that she’d always look nicer at work.364

In the shot after the flashback, Rachel is at work, looking into a mirror and adjusting a bra strap when Janet comes in; she pulls a dark brown woollen blazer over her green blouse, having changed into her usual wide leg trousers and flat shoes.

Across the series, professional dress exemplifies narrative development. In Season 1, Episode 3, where Gill, Janet and Rachel are all wearing dark grey and black clothing to court, Rachel is wearing a close-fitting dark grey dress that shows her pregnancy bump, not expecting to be questioned by Nick (who is a barrister), whom she told that she would abort the pregnancy. She hides it when he questions her, but he notices when she is standing in the hallway talking to Janet and two other women involved in the case. When in the first episode of Season 5 (designed by Sandy Powell) Rachel gets promoted to A/ DI, she is told that she is not allowed to wear a leather jacket in that role, on which she comments in the women’s bathroom to Janet:

| Rachel Bailey | ‘Do you know what I hate about up here?’ |
| Janet Scott  | ‘Serial killers?’ |
| Rachel Bailey | ‘No. If you’re not wearing a 200-quid, shit blue suit, you’re not dressed right.’ |
| Janet Scott  | ‘Mm.’ |
| Rachel Bailey | ‘No, not yours. Yours is nice.’ |
| Janet Scott  | ‘Oh, and it only cost 180. I was looking at a lovely beige one for the wedding. I don’t fancy a wedding dress. Can’t dance at the disco. Me and Chris are thinking of getting matching bride and groom suits.’ |

Later in that episode, a new assistant asks Rachel what she is going to wear to an important event, making her realise that she has to change, so she borrows Janet’s

364 Interview with Alexandra Caulfield, 08-06-2017.
blue jacket. In the evening, Rachel is back in a large comfy jumper. Costume is here
drawn attention to due to the dialogue and it dominates the scenes – yet it still reads
as ordinary and realistic and aids the narrative.

Within each season, Scott and Bailey repeatedly wear the same overcoats and
scarves in multiple episodes and varying situations, which helps construct continuity
in the costuming and overall visual style of the series. At the same time, by often
making one of them wear their overcoat indoors whereas the other has taken it off,
within and across the shots there is variety in their shapes of dress. This is aided by
the protagonists usually wearing different colours, such as in Season 1, Episode 3
when Janet wears a black coat with blue gloves and Rachel a camel coat with a wine-
red scarf; or when in Season 2 Janet has a grey woollen coat with wide peaked lapels
and Rachel a camel coat with longer, slimmer lapels. They tend to wear different
textures and shapes of dress when shown together in the frame; Janet a fitted knitted
jumper and Rachel a loosely draped blouse, for instance, with Janet wearing a skirt
and heels and Rachel wide trousers and flat shoes. Even when they wear similar
shades of costumes, as is the case in Season 2, Episode 1 with Janet wearing a beige
peter pan collar blouse above a black skirt with black tights and Rachel a grey-brown
cardigan over a cream top on black trousers, the costumes remain different in shape
and texture, which again shows that there an authored difference that constructed the
characters (which would not be the case with ‘just clothes’). The series then switches
back to starker contrasts; in the same episode, during a meeting one day later, Janet
is wearing her pale blue cardigan again and Rachel a maroon jumper, and outside the
first is now wearing a dark overcoat when the second wears a camel coat. Over the
episodes, the costuming for Janet alternates between her grey and black coat and for
Rachel between the camel and a grey coat. They frequently alternate their scarfs, often
with only one of them wearing it within any frame. The repetition of costumes within
seasons contributes to the continuity in style across the series and to its level of
realism, whilst upon closer scrutiny we can see that the differences in costuming are
authored to distinguish characters’ identities from each other.

Like in Suits, instances of characters putting on or taking off pieces of costume
in Scott & Bailey sometimes carry direct significance for the characters and narrative.
Choices of when they wear which clothes seem to be purely out of practicality—jackets
or coats on or off; blouses with or without jumpers; skirts or trousers—but these were
careful choices made to differentiate between the characters, to place the protagonists
in the foreground, and to suit the dramatic tone of the scene. At the end of Season 1,
Janet is attacked in her home when she is not dressed professionally; she is wearing
a wide pink jumper and jeans, the soft texture of which makes her read as ‘kind’,
‘comfortable at home’ and ‘motherly’. Not wearing professional dress, she is made to look vulnerable; not having her guard up. The same happens in Season 3 when Gill is taken hostage in her car when grocery shopping in her casual, non-work clothes—wearing a red top, blue jeans and green parka—and in that way, like Janet in Season 1, Gill is vulnerable by not being dressed professionally. This in turn emphasises the power of the women’s everyday professional dress during policework in the rest of the series. The ordinariness of Scott and Bailey’s professional dress is especially apparent when in Season 1, Episode 4 it is contrasted to an arrested porn actress who, after having changed from her panther print dressing gown, is taken into custody wearing a tight-fitting red mini dress, fishnet stockings, feathery faux fur coat, panther print shoes, ample jewellery and a platinum blonde wig. Kevin and Andy strike a different, more flirty tone to her than to other women. Janet, annoyed by this, is wearing beige plaid trousers, a white blouse and a beige plaid woollen coat; her golden necklace and ID badge are the only, subtle accessories. Costume can also secure continuity during narrative jumps in time: in Season 1, Episode 5, Rachel tells Janet about meeting someone earlier, and in a flashback with fuzzy lighting and colouring she is shown in a coffee place wearing a dark blue top with white spots and a red cardigan that she has worn in an earlier episode, implying that it was recent. Here, like in Suits, Scandal and Broadchurch, costume indicates the temporality of the flashback, and by showing Rachel in a blouse that she has worn before, it also creates continuity and everydayness across the series.

In The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau discusses the role of the ‘general character’ or ‘ordinary man’ (in the sense of the ‘Everyman’ anti-hero in literature as well as der gemeine Mann in Freud’s work), who represents everybody and nobody at the same time. In cinema and television, narratives that centre on the everyman can however not make this character completely everybody/nobody, as primary characters of any compelling narrative must be made interesting. Russell stated in relation to designing costumes for Scott & Bailey that ‘there’s always one foot in the practical, believable camp, and the other is still aspirational, still had to look good, had to look interesting’. The tagline of the show on my (Dutch) DVD box set cover is ‘ordinary women; an extraordinary job’, which represents that although the women are meant to be ordinary, they are interesting television characters because of the way this extraordinary job makes their actions and lives worth narrating. They may look ordinary but are not ‘everywoman’, as what is extraordinary

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365 Although Gill in the next episode is wearing a grey panther print cardigan, she does not resemble the look of this woman.
is precisely the fact that they are women in a line of work that was traditionally men’s territory. The male cops as secondary characters, however, are more like the figure of ‘the ordinary man’, as they do represent both ‘every’ policeman and no policeman in particular, which is communicated by their costuming. Costume negotiating the issue of gender is important to how the show foregrounds ‘ordinary, yet extraordinary’ women and keeps ‘ordinary men’ in the background. Russell noted that viewers notice more what women police officers wear than men, who ‘can look quite safe, just with a suit’.368 The costume designers here repeat the notion of gender difference in professional dress that women’s dress is a greater concern than men’s.369

This gender difference in costuming is in the service of foregrounding the women, and as such in the service of feminism. In the last shot of the first season, Andy, Janet, Rachel and Gill are shown together in the frame as they reconcile at the local pub (Figure 33). This shot is taken from behind the bar and shows half of Andy’s body on the left side of the screen, with the three women taking up the rest of the space. Helen Piper uses this shot to illustrate that, whilst the men in the lives of the women protagonists are a source of constant concern, and men outnumber women on the Manchester Metropolitan Police Major Incident Team,

opportunities to sympathise with them are restricted by a textual structure of moral allegiance which offers no spatial access to the male officers without the mediating presence of the central characters, and they are frequently even marginalised even within the frame.370

Men are marginalised textually not only by their position, but also by their costuming in the frame: they are consistently dressed in drab, inconspicuous suits-and-tie ensembles, which Russell and Caulfield designed to let the men sit in the background, remain unnoticed and not distract from the women’s roles. Caulfield made clear that this was as much a choice in the service of achieving realism, as actual policemen simply wear a suit, shirt and tie in which they do not stand out. She did, however, differentiate between the characters’ ages and incomes: the costume designer ‘[looks] at things like: are they single, do they have a disposable income, how young are they, because younger people will spend more money on their clothes; older people with mortgages and children tend not to’.371 Thus, younger cops wear ‘trendy’ coloured and striped shirts and ties; older cops look plainer, as she put it, ‘almost to the point where

368 Ibid.
369 As opposed to Suits, which is an exception to the norm.
370 Piper 2015: 132.
371 Interview with Alexandra Caulfield, 08-06-2017.
throughout an episode you would hardly see any difference in what they were wearing, because it was just a suit.’ By putting the men in ‘just a suit’, they become like the ‘everyman’, representing a policeman. Russell also iterated that dress styles for male officers are limited essentially, and there were barely any wardrobe changes for any of the men since the first season:

Well, again, it was this whole: we had to be believable, as real. There is a limited look that real male detectives have. They’re all in a suit. So it’s a case of what level of suit you have: what’s the work ethic, who’s got a coat, who’s got a Barbour... It was really all about the women, to be honest. It was in the way it was written; you know, the guys bring support and everything, but visually you just had to hold the work together, they were part of the police team and stuff.

*They were more like background characters?*

Yeah, not to do them a disservice, but yeah, they were. You didn’t want to be noticing what goes on with one of them in the background when you focus on what’s happening with the women. You don’t want any distraction, visually, really. It should all just be part of this world that they’re in. That’s how it works still. They didn’t change much from the first series, to be honest. (...) They were all established.372

Indeed, details in men’s tailoring are not made significant through focus, framing and dialogue like in *Suits*, nor is the suits’ look and texture striking—they are worn-in and not brand-new—rather, *Scott & Bailey’s* men in suits form a marginalised collective of background cops whose role remains outside the centre of attention in the image, which is occupied by women. This costuming is carefully constructed, even though it looks ordinary.

372 Interview with Rhona Russell, 08-05-2017. The cursive are my words.
The way the male officers serve as a backdrop for the women is especially apparent in the frequent scenes of meetings in the police department. Season 2, Episode 1, for instance, features several meeting scenes in which this is apparent. In the first meeting of that episode, Gill is shown standing up at the head of the meeting table, with everyone around her sitting down, as she buttons the jacket of her black skirted suit and opens the meeting. Like Harvey in Suits, this action of standing up and buttoning the jacket establishes Gill as in charge – an action which is here doubly significant, as she is a woman leading an overwhelmingly ‘male’ work department. Another meeting scene in this episode opens with a medium close-up shot of Janet Scott, costumed in a buttoned pale blue cardigan with police badge, sitting and staring at the table (the suggestion being that she is thinking of having split up with her husband the night scene before). The left side of the frame is covered by a black blur of (presumably) a man’s suit, and behind Janet, out of focus in the background, a man taking notes is shown from chest to thighs in a brown shirt, diagonal stripe tie, black belt and black trousers. The scene cuts to a mid-shot overview of the meeting room table, with Gill Murray standing on the opposite side and facing the crowd around it. Gill is wearing a burgundy top under a black blazer and a grey skirt, which stands out from the other characters surrounding the table that form an ensemble of monochrome shades. A brief medium shot shows the young cop Kevin, in a grey shirt and plum tie, showing a coin trick to Pete, when it cuts to a medium close-up of Gill interrupting her discussion of the case to reprimand Kevin, who in a next shot swiftly turns around and straightens himself. The scene cuts a few more times between Kevin and Pete protesting about having to work under DCI Julie Dodson and Gill rebuking...
them. As Gill continues to discuss the case, the scene alternates between overview shots of the meeting table and medium close-up shots of Gill; Janet in her pale blue cardigan; Rachel in a maroon jumper; and of several male officers in black, blue and grey suit-and-tie ensembles – all shown between out-of-focus parts of surrounding characters. In terms of shot length, the shots of women are longer than the shots of men, and, in addition, the women are positioned more centrally in the frames than the men. Together with this framing, the women detectives stand out in the meeting scenes because of their costumes, which, by means of colour, shape and texture, form a contrast to that of the men in suits and the monotonous backdrop that their ensemble forms. When the team meets again in the afternoon, Janet and Rachel are positioned centrally in the frame, where their pale blue and maroon knitwear draw attention whilst Gill discusses the case. Over the series, even when the women’s costumes are not designed to be radically different in colour from the men, they make the women protagonists stand out against the background policemen because their types of dress—blazers, cardigans, blouses—have a different shape and texture from the men’s bland suits. The women wear varied outfits across meeting scenes, which make them look dynamic, whilst the men’s costuming is static. These strategies make apparent that although the costumes read as ‘real’, they are designed to manipulate the eye to be drawn towards the women, not the men. This represents how costuming constructs a show’s balance between evoking realism and dramatic meaning.

Across the series, Scott & Bailey frequently features scenes set in the police station’s women’s bathroom, where the protagonists meet and discuss matters outside the office area. This bathroom is a sphere of intimacy and an outspoken gendered space and the only area in the police station where the women can speak in private – and unprofessionally. The costumes stand out against the background of the bathroom, as it is a clinical, white space, and the mirrors reflect the characters within that space. Season 2, for instance, opens with a mirror image close-up of Gill sighing and applying lipstick. It then cuts to a medium shot from her other side, where she is shown wearing a near-black dark green skirted suit with a white shirt and police badge as she turns around and talks about a murder case to, as the next shot shows, Janet, who is sitting on the bathroom corner counter, is wearing a pale blue buttoned cardigan with a slim brown waist belt above a black pencil skirt. When Gill asks if she looks ‘alright’ and Janet replies she looks ‘fabulous’, Rachel comes out of a stall behind them, wearing a maroon short-sleeved top above black wide-leg trousers, which she is still fastening whilst walking out (Figure 34). As Gill discusses the case for a press conference and Rachel rinses and dries her hands and then sits down next to Janet, the scene shows the three women together in the frame in their most distinguishing
and staple professional dress costumes. The way the women are shown in this bathroom scene wearing different colours and shapes of dress against a white background, from which a pale blue haze of light emerges, and reflected in the mirror, conveys an emotional resonance that is again reminiscent of Sirkian melodrama. Gill’s skirted suit makes her exude professionalism and authority as ‘the boss’, but in the bathroom, she complains that she hates the cameras and press. The triangular, pointy shape of her jacket and the sharp contrast in her costume between the dark skirted suit and white blouse, combined with her harsh-talking demeanour, form a contrast to the soft shade, shape and texture of Janet’s cardigan, which is contrasted again to Rachel’s dark red top with zippers on the sleeves and long black trousers. Confronting an international group of MA students from over the world with this scene during a lecture and seminar, who had never seen Scott & Bailey before, it was immediately clear to them that this is who the characters are: Janet is a sweet-tempered working mother; Rachel is a younger and rougher-tempered single woman; Gill is their boss. The styling of this scene stays close to what the women would realistically look like, but the costume strategy of creating such contrasts in character and meaning, reflected in a mirror, verges on the melodramatic.

Figure 34. Gill, Rachel and Janet in the police station’s bathroom.

373 After seeing Gill at the press conference on television, Janet’s mother declares that Janet could be promoted if she would dress more like Gill. Janet, however, is content with her position; because of her family, she would not have time to work longer days. As becomes clear to Janet and Rachel in the bathroom scenes and to Janet’s mother at the pub in the next episode, Gill’s conduct is not always as immaculate as her public appearance suggests.
Complexity in women’s professional dress

BBC’s *The Fall* uses a costume strategy where most characters have realistically sized wardrobes consisting of ordinary, everyday, locally sourced clothes which instantly communicate their identities and blend into the expectation of realism in British crime drama, except for the protagonist: Gillian Anderson as DSI Stella Gibson wears soft, fluid, fragile silk blouses which have become noticeable and fashionable and go against all of Molloy’s rules for women’s professional dressing.\(^{374}\) Her silk blouses, sleek trousers or skirts and 4-inch heels elevate above the ordinariness of the other costumes and, in relation to her character and the serial narrative, disrupt the way we normally read professional women’s costuming. The killer she is after, Paul Spector (Jamie Dornan), wears costumes that are so ordinary that their blandness becomes unsettling. The text also foregrounds the traditional function of clothing and makeup details in crime dramas as clues that lead to the discovery of the murderer. Costume in this series balances realism and dramatization through the way it weighs costumes that fit into our understanding of television’s relation to ‘the real’ against those that make us uncomfortable due to the complex way in which they refuse to fit into existing cultural ideas about what successful professional women look like. Understanding the complexity of costuming in *The Fall* should be central to any critical account of how it deals with its subject matter—violence against women and the tense relationship between detective and killer—but the association of television as a window on the world complicates such a discussion. Whilst the current debate consists of, on the one hand, critics who condemn the series and its protagonist for perpetuating sexism and violence, and, on the other hand, those who hail Stella Gibson as a tough feminist icon and fashion inspiration, I argue that the crux is that there is an unresolvedness, a lack of resolution, about the identity of her character which challenges widely held ideas of what it means to be a professional woman.

Costume designer Maggie Donnelly explained to me that upon her reading of the script, she felt that Gibson ‘came across as a strong, self-confident woman more than capable of working in a man’s world of policing and rising to the rank of DSI’.\(^{375}\) Since Donnelly was responsible for all three series, *The Fall* has a more unified design scheme than *Scott & Bailey*. Rather than going down a more conventional route, which Donnelly associated with ‘disciplined dark trouser suits’, she went in a different direction, instead ‘showing a woman who is relaxed about her femininity and wears what she feels good in.’\(^{376}\) The producers were not immediately on board with the

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\(^{374}\) Molloy 1978.

\(^{375}\) Interview with Maggie Donnelly, 21-06-2017.

\(^{376}\) Ibid.
decision to put Anderson in silk blouses and high heels, but Anderson agreed, and this decision became key to the success of the series. Stella Gibson, who is from London, has London-sourced clothes which were all tailored to fit Anderson—from a cashmere navy Harrods coat to designer silk shirts from Max Mara, Vince, The Kooples and Joseph—as well as altered to accommodate for actions in the script. More important than the brands of the silk shirts was that they had the desired simplistic cut and colour; no fussy/frilly details, which dominated high street styles at the time and would distract from the fluid movement of the fabrics on Anderson’s body. Donnelly chose colours like ivory, pale pinks, gold and pale blue to let the shirts look ‘soft and fragile’, contrasted to dark trousers or slim skirts above 4-inch designer heels (Jimmy Choo nudes/Manoli Blanik suedes), which Anderson insisted on wearing even in the woods.\footnote{Ibid. Donnelly initially had 3-inch heels in mind, but it was Anderson’s decision to wear the 4-inch height.} Different from the women in Suits or Scott & Bailey, this look seems inherently impractical and not traditionally professional (though still tailored and within the realm of professional dress) or powerful; however, the clothes do not detract from her capability and Gibson is resistant to the potential vulnerability of working as a woman in the traditionally masculine environment of policework. There are frequent shots throughout the series of Gibson walking along corridors in which her silk blouse moves loosely and sensually over her body, creating a sexualised sense of movement that is simply unavoidable with such a dress choice. We are being invited through costuming to read the protagonist as a troubling figure making problematic choices, and to either condemn or admire her for it.

The popularity and understanding of the blouses are linked with Anderson’s star persona. Donnelly was surprised at the attention that the blouses received, which she feels is largely due to that and how Anderson wore them.\footnote{Ibid.} In Anderson’s break through role as Dana Scully in The X-Files, she also played an FBI agent who stayed cool-headed whilst dealing with the male-dominated character of this line of work. As Sherrie A. Inness writes, like Jodie Foster as Clarice Starling in The Silence of the Lambs (1991), in her role as Scully, Anderson displays attributes (attitudes, gestures) that are traditionally associated with masculinity and toughness.\footnote{Inness 1999: 85.} Addressing ‘the uneasiness with the tough woman in the 1990s’ from a feminist perspective, Inness explores how Foster and Anderson are depicted in such a way that they do not disturb gender norms to the extent that it averts mainstream audiences.\footnote{Ibid. 86.} Inness discusses how The X-Files ‘has been involved in a sustained attempt to blunt [Scully’s] tough
image, making her into a more traditional female sidekick for Mulder. The text itself contains contradictory messages about Scully’s femininity and toughness. One condescending review points to Scully’s “serious suits and frumpy pumps” in calling her ‘humourless’ and ‘self-righteous’ – judgements based on stereotypical, misogynistic notions of femininity promoting the idea that women should be merely pleasing. Scully’s suits, with the power silhouette of wide shoulders and a cinched waist, have however become an iconic image of professional women’s dress in the 90s and how to dress for success. Since this look is thoroughly embedded in that image, Anderson’s costuming as Stella Gibson had to diverge from this. A link with the tough women detectives of the 90s is however made by several male writers reviewing The Fall, with one Evening Standard writer pointing to the ‘blankness’ and ‘emotional permafrost’ of the ‘cold star’ (note that he says ‘star’, not ‘character’), claiming The Fall uses ‘the Silence of the Lambs device’ in picturing the relationship between detective and killer. Yet, whilst she is bold in her detective work, Gibson’s silk blouses are a soft, fragile, feminine style. Through costume, as discussed below, she is at times aligned with the victims and at times aligned with the killer; her character is uncomfortable because (like Anderson’s other roles) she is neither entirely feminised nor masculinised, neither entirely vulnerable nor tough; she occupies two positions at once.

The opening scene of The Fall sets up the complexity of the costume narrative for the rest of the series: rather than introducing her as a professional, the first time we see Gibson, she is wearing pyjamas (grey t-shirt, floral bottoms, no bra) and a head band to keep her hair out of the way whilst she cleans her bathtub and rinses off a face mask. She hangs her professional outfit on the door and packs a suitcase (Figure 35). Here, we are instantly offered a look into Gibson’s private life which shows that her professional look at work is a construction. As Erving Goffman argues in his classic sociological study The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, in social situations, like in theatrical performance, we show others the ‘front stage’ of ourselves, whilst our ‘back stage’ remains private; we perform our outward facing identity. By giving us a glimpse into Gibson’s backstage, this scene asks us to (re)consider what it means for a woman to have a professional identity, or how this is distinct from her private self. Throughout the narrative, she unashamedly brings

381 Ibid. 96.
382 Ibid.
383 Ibid.
384 McKay 2016.
385 Stella Gibson cleaning her bathtub gains significance later as the killer cleans a bathtub after having cleansed one of his victims in it, aligning detective and killer through this action.
traditionally private aspects of life (sexual encounters and talking about sex) into social interaction at work and vice versa (speaking to the killer on her mobile phone, mimicking his strangulation during sex). This and the series’ costuming strategy encourage us to reflect on our preconceptions about femininity and professionalism.

Figure 35. Stella Gibson in the opening scene of *The Fall*.

Costume and uses of costuming details in this series challenge conventional assumptions about what signals strength, fragility and professionalism. In Series 1, Episode 3, Gibson has to give a press conference, a scene starting with a short dressing sequence in which we see her buttoning a pale pink silk blouse on front of a mirror. As she sits down in front of the press, the third button of her shirt, which she just fastened, pops open. A medium shot shows an assistant in the back noticing this; then an extreme close-up shows the gaping area (Figure 36) and pans to show Gibson’s face; she has not realised. When a woman asks if the victim was *clothed* when found, as Gibson answers, a close-up shows her hands buttoning the shirt.\(^{387}\) Notably, this scene follows a meeting scene before the press conference in which she suggests not to call the victims ‘professional’, but ‘something that is less of a value judgement – highly qualified?’, and demands not to call them ‘innocent’ since ‘the media loves to divide women into virgins and vamps; angels or whores’. The scene in which her button becomes unfastened gives weight to this idea: ‘professionalism’ is a construct; an expectation which prescribes that she should look ‘together’; that she should have

\(^{387}\) There seems to be a continuity error when Spector is shown watching the interview on television, as in the press conference scene Gibson is wearing a pale pink (almost white) shirt with a mandarin collar, whereas on Spector’s television she is wearing a white shirt with a pointed shirt collar, which is actually a shot from Episode 5.
made sure that button remained closed and her modesty protected. Yet, this has no bearing on her being highly qualified and doing her job. Gibson’s costuming, which is at once soft/fragile and confident/sensual does not categorise her as either an ‘angel’ or a ‘whore’ but does taunt viewers to either admire or condemn her – or to reconsider these categories.

Figure 36. A button of Gibson’s blouse has come undone.

The title shot of each episode, which consists only of the letters THE FALL superimposed onto an extreme close-up of dark knit fabric with ripped ladders, signals the series’ focus on detail. The detection that leads to the killer is due to detail: when in Series 1, Episode 2 Gibson and a female pathologist (Archie Panjabi) inspect the victim’s body after she has just been found, they notice that her nails are not just painted, but freshly painted (after her death), the body and the bedsheets have been washed after the killing, and a small piece of her hair has been clipped. Such specific observations driving the detection is not as common in the traditional crime drama, in which the male genius solves the case thanks to logic. Yet, it is not a new or isolated device: as Charlotte Brunsdon writes about Prime Suspect (ITV 1991-2006), detective Jane Tennison (Helen Mirren) ‘not only shows that she can police, but also that her policing brings new competencies to the job’. Brunsdon discusses a Prime Suspect episode in which, similar to The Fall, two women, Tennison and her gofer, talk about an observation about the female victims’ manicure. As Brunsdon argues:

\[\text{Brunsdon 1998: 234.}\]
Maureen’s tentative idea about the nails – ‘It could be nothing’ – an idea only accessible within feminine cultural competence, is both listened to and recognized by the squad room at large. Knowing about manicure is, like Tennison’s earlier recognition of a victim’s clothing, shown to make a critical contribution to a traditionally masculine game of detection. Similarly, it is Tennison’s respect for the prostitute women (…) which elicits crucial information from them in a scene which shows both female solidarity and the way in which class differences fracture this.389

This type of detection, made possible through gendered competencies, is a feminized aesthetic and narrative strategy which suggests that such details and textures require a feminine eye and sensibility.390 Similarly, Gibson’s concern for the female victims’ representation—a scene in which she asks, ‘What if he kills a prostitute next? Or a woman walking home drunk? Late at night in a short skirt? Will they be in some way less innocent, therefore less deserving?’—shows a sense of solidarity and attention to stigmatisation and class differences that represents a complex mode of address which encourages a more nuanced perspective.

Gibson then takes an unorthodox approach by using clues offered by clothing and makeup details of the victims not just to find, but also to provoke the killer. In the next episode, before another press conference, Gibson paints her nails in the exact shade of red nail varnish that was found on the victim.391 In Episode 5, Spector watches the press conference on television, in which we see Gibson holding a piece of paper in front of her chest, making her red varnished nails the centre of attention (Figure 37). As she ostensibly reads out the victim’s father’s statement, Gibson looks into the camera, inviting the killer to ‘a one-to-one conversation with me’. Spector pauses the broadcast and a shot zooms in on Gibson with red nails. Where otherwise we may not have noticed this detail on Spector’s television set (a double mediation), the framing and setup of this scene secure that we do. The next shot shows her running her fingers through her hair, foregrounding the varnish; then back to Spector, suturing their relationship. As a similar strategy, in Series 2, Episode 5 Gibson lends lower-ranking cop Gail McNally (Bronágh Taggart), who normally wears conventional professional dress (more like Scott & Bailey), one of her silk blouses when questioning Spector, which makes McNally look like his victims (working women in their 20s-30s with brown/auburn hair) as well as his pursuer. Finally, although in all episodes Gibson wears neutral, desaturated shades, at the end

389 Ibid.
390 See also my reference to Parker’s 1984 theory of embroidery and the feminine in Chapter 3.
391 This scene is the first time Gibson wears the silk shirt that became particularly popular: a wrap front blouse (without buttons) with a loosely draped fit.
of this series she wears a bright red boiled wool wrap cardigan for one scene where she questions Spector. Donnelly stated that Gibson ‘[exploits] his fascination with the colour of blood red’ in this scene. Donnelly so far used red details sparsely and purposely only on the victims, so that it could motivate the narrative in this way. This only works because of the details in the style palette.

Conversely, Spector’s look had to be as ‘nondescript’ and ‘normal’ as possible. His tweed blazers, plain jumpers, plaid shirts and slacks from British brands such as M&S, Next, Gap and Primark, which were all bought in Belfast, are so everyday that they blend into the image of the ‘Everyman’, but we know from the start that this is a farce (Figure 38). Spector has a wife, two children and a job as a grief counsellor, and it is unsettling that we cannot see the evil in his exterior image (the ‘front stage’). When Spector goes out to kill, like Gibson dressing professionally for work, he strips off his bland clothing to put on his murder suit: brandless black trousers, trainers, a grey t-shirt, a charcoal hoodie and a black body warmer, which together create a look that is meant to be inconspicuous in his narrative world, but, to us, is clearly coded as him being in disguise (Figure 39). The relationship between Gibson and Spector is one of attraction and repulsion; the frequent parallel editing between the two characters aligns them whilst Gibson’s ephemeral designer blouses form a textural contrast to Spector’s black ensemble. Also as a contrast to Gibson, the Belfast police,

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392 Interview with Maggie Donnelly, 21-06-2017.
393 De Certeau 1984.
as Donnelly explained, wore clothes sourced from local charity shops and old suit stocks from past productions from the 90s and early 2000s, since the director of the first series (Jakob Verbruggen) wanted the local detectives to have ‘slightly tired and out of date clothing which reflected the police station’s cold environment’. This dramatized the contrast to the London detective and demonstrates that whilst the blouses represent high-end fashion and the rest of the costumes appear to be ‘just clothes’, their juxtaposition is where narrative meaning resides.

Figure 38. Spector’s ordinary look blends in.

Figure 39. Spector’s murder outfit.

394 Interview with Maggie Donnelly, 21-06-2017.
The Fall has been controversial from a feminist perspective; it is critiqued for glamorising violence against women through the relationship between Gibson and Spector and because the way the victims are staged by the killer after their death looks like, as one Radio Times writer puts it, ‘some kind of art-directed tableaux’. My stance is that the construction of beauty in these images conveys the horror, pain and grief of the women’s fate, and that the evil of the perpetrator is condemned. Gibson is not ‘cold’ – as Anderson notes in an interview, Gibson ‘doesn’t reveal much about herself, so the little bits she does feel quite large’. The emotionally aloof protagonist is not a new concept; there are countless male characters in acclaimed dramas whose identity is based on the same trope of emotional introversion – see Alec Hardy in Broadchurch, with his emotional female counterpart Ellie; The Inspector Lynley Mysteries (BBC 2001–2008); House (Fox 2004–2012); Luther (BBC 2010–); True Detective (HBO 2014–); Breaking Bad (AMC 2008–2013); Mr. Robot (USA Network 2015–2019); and many more. To judge a female actress/character for being ‘cold’ or ‘icy’ (terms rarely used for men; it is only women who are expected to be warm and welcoming, in terms of personality as well as body) and consider that as a detriment to the text’s quality, rather than a useful narrative device, is misogynist. Just like in the other programmes, the emotional introversion of Stella Gibson and the inherent contradiction in her appearance is what keeps us fascinated in her motivations, which in turn motivates the narrative.

The silk blouses have led multiple lives: first they were designer clothes; then they became costumes on television; thanks to their success, they gained wide-spread popularity as fashion; then they inspired a sewing pattern, the Anderson blouse by Sew Over It, so amateur seamstresses can make and wear them as clothes. By letting Anderson wear the same blouses across the episodes, intertextually, the programme achieves a strong sense of serial continuity, and extratextually, seeing the blouses on screen episode after episodes sustains their allure. Donnelly pointed out that in the script Gibson does not re-wear them—like the women in Scott & Bailey do—but it was considered that she would not have had time to change. This is apparent when in Series 1 Gibson arrives at her office in the same outfit she wore the previous day. Since Anderson wished to not constantly wear the same costumes, the production team let her wear a grey cardigan over yesterday’s shirt, sustaining realism. Although similar designer blouses might have been worn by the women in Suits, those women would never wear the same outfit two days in a row; the backstory would rather be that they

396 Ibid.
397 Interview with Maggie Donnelly, 21-06-2017.
kept a spare set of clothes at work. *The Fall*, however, makes the fashionable designer blouses adhere to the expectation of realism by doing the reverse. Such strategies are key to the production of serial television; within the usual timeframe represented in film, it tends to be less unrealistic if characters wear constantly different or constantly the same clothes over the span of the narrative. In television, whether viewers notice it or not, the rhythm of repetition of costumes has great effect on its achieved level of continuity and realism. Beyond that, *The Fall* has made this style of silk blouses, which were already available from high-end fashion brands, into a more widely accessible style inspiration for women thanks to the continual re-use and repetition of this style on a female character throughout the series’ three-year run in which she, even though she wears fragile clothing, proves entirely qualified.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated the key role of costume and fashion in crime and legal dramas by exploring how costuming constructs meaning over the serial development of a range of British and American programmes. These serial dramas each exemplify a different costuming strategy for the balancing of realism and dramatization and for dealing with notions of gender in the workplace. Whereas some texts are concerned with representing a strong sense of ‘the real’ as is expected from television and this genre in particular, other pitch at a more conspicuous, more aspirational level of style. These approaches are all valid, but due to the idea of television as a window on the world, dramas that use conspicuous fashion in their costuming tend to be judged as ‘unrealistic’ whereas dramas that use ordinary costuming that blends into our idea of ‘the real’ tend to not be discussed for their costuming at all. Whether realist or more aspirational, however, all clothes in crime and legal dramas are carefully designed and selected by costume designers, working together with production designers and hair and makeup artists, to reach the desired balance. This balance is linked with wider cultural connotations of dress and television’s meaning-making process.

Comparing lawyers to cops, the meaning of the level of togetherness/tailoring also depends on what side of the crime the character and their profession are on, and what cultural connotations are attached to how they dress. Whereas the lawyers in *Suits* are dressed appropriately in meticulously tailored ensembles, this does not work the same for the police. This has to do with whether or not we trust people who pay attention to their looks in relation to the work that they do: lawyers who are successful earn a lot of money and therefore wear expensive suits, so we trust a lawyer who looks good more than a lawyer who looks scruffy, as we assume that the former is better at their job. On the contrary, police officers who wear expensive, fashionable outfits are
seen as less reliable, as the assumption is that they should be getting their hands dirty; if they do their job well, then they cannot pay much attention to their looks – let alone to fashion. This is more complex for women than for men, since women also have to deal with the constant negotiation of what is or is not professional in relation to their femininity – and a policewoman who looks scruffy risks not being taken seriously at all.398 These cultural assumptions are crucial to costume design and the meanings put forward by the design of the professional dress worn by the characters.

This can be linked back to the debate of style and content in Chapter 1: *Miami Vice* was said to privilege style over substance because the cops look too stylish. When watching *Miami Vice* or *Suits*, viewers are indeed encouraged to look at the costumes, whereas in crime dramas like *Quincy, M.E.*, *Broadchurch* and *Scott & Bailey* the focus lies more on the serial plot, the suspense of crime solving and the drama of character’s actions and situations; not on style, mise-en-scène, fashion or costuming. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, the intellectual exercise of analysing costumes in either type of text—whether they look like ‘just fashion’ or ‘just clothes’—can produce otherwise inaccessible insights into the meaning-making process of these texts. The real barrier here is the stubborn notion that style and substance are somehow binary, which the following chapter will challenge.

398 *Columbo* (NBC/ABC 1968-2003) provides an example of a male detective who looks too scruffy to be taken seriously, but this is an extreme, as men can get away with much more scruffiness (see Alec Hardy) than women.
Close-ups on Texture, The Pretty and Nostalgia

Period costume in recent dramas set in the 1950s and 60s

Recent television from the UK and US has seen a spate of new high-end dramas set in the past, which display period fashion. Produced against the backdrop of a continued digitisation of everyday life, these programmes and their period designs take us back to a time yet unspoilt by the synthetics of ready-to-wear fashion and the cold surfaces of digital culture. Since high-definition technologies have improved the image quality of television, and the distance between viewer and screen diminishes as series are watched on PC, laptop and tablet screens, viewers can look closer at costuming details such as the choice of fabrics and accessories, compared to former eras of television. This trend is linked to a wider revival of styles from the past, notably the enthusiasm in the 2010s for vintage fashion from the 1950s and 60s, along with a resurgence of handicraft hobbies such as knitting, sewing and crafting jewellery. Yet, the 50s-60s are a period of both attractive fashions and socio-cultural restrictions, unrest and change. This chapter’s case studies, *Call the Midwife* (BBC 2012–) and *Masters of Sex* (Showtime 2013-2016), are about women’s role in social change, about feminism, and thus necessarily move beyond a conservative notion of nostalgia which assumes that such texts only celebrate the past. Costume and fashion determine the dynamic in which pretty images narrate the abhorrent social situation that these women fought to transform.

Through a study of the texts’ costuming strategies, this chapter argues, firstly, that the style versus substance binary which dominates existing discussions is unproductive and unhelpful to our understanding and judgement of television texts, and secondly, that the fact that high-definition image technologies bring the weave and weft of clothing into sharper focus has had an impact on television form. Style and substance are inextricable; significance is located in the working together of the pretty and the negotiation of social issues, which are materialised through the textures of costumes. Since we can now see the textures and details of clothes on the small screen, there are more close-ups of clothing details and more focused ways of showing clothes in recent shows than in previous eras of television. Although period fashion has been central to the visual pleasures offered by (British) television costume dramas already from the 1970s onwards, costume and fashion in today’s television culture and technology of high image clarity, portable screens and online discussion

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400 Wheatley 2005: 143-158.
ask for a reconsideration of the function of style and aesthetics and the way television negotiates issues of prettiness, authenticity and nostalgia.

The attention already paid to costume in period dramas from the last decade is significant and unparalleled in television history. Viewers and critics have shown a burgeoning interest in the fashions from *Mad Men* (AMC 2007-2015), *Downton Abbey* (ITV 2010-2015) and *Outlander* (STARZ 2014–), and shows such as *Call the Midwife* and *Masters of Sex*, but also *The Hour* (BBC 2011-2012), *The Bletchley Circle* (ITV 2012-2014) and *The Collection* (Amazon 2016) followed in the footsteps of *Mad Men*’s success. Costume designers usually remain out of the spotlight, but *Mad Men*’s Janie Bryant and *Outlander*’s Terry Dresbach have become known worldwide. *Mad Men*, which is about a Manhattan advertising agency in the upper-middle class American culture of the 1960s-70s, has been the subject of a large number of reviews, academic papers and edited volumes.\(^4\) The show is widely acclaimed for its style, dialogue, storylines, characterisation and historical accuracy, but debated for how it deals with discourses of racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and, most prominently, sexism. *Mad Men* simultaneously produces a glamorised, nostalgic version of the period and shows us its oppressive politics. As with *Miami Vice* (NBC 1984-1990), viewers of *Mad Men* have not failed to acknowledge that style is a primary characteristic of the show and both reviewers and academics have recognised the role of costume.\(^5\) Bryant’s designs have been a primary object of fandom, which led her to publish *The Fashion File* to meet the demand of fans to explain her work.\(^6\) Her designs inspired fashion brands Michael Kors, Prada, Vera Wang and Marc Jacobs for their vintage style collections and Bryant still collaborates with high-street brands.\(^7\) Costume and fashion have become symbiotic here.

The reputation of *Mad Men*’s costumes has been paralleled by *Outlander*, a drama based on a book series by Diana Gabaldon (1999-2014) of which a first season was broadcast in the US, Canada, Australia and Ireland in 2014 and released to Amazon Prime UK in 2015. The next seasons launched on international broadcast television and Amazon Prime. Season 1 is mainly set in Scotland and centres on the British former army nurse Claire Beauchamp Randall (Caitriona Balfe) as she accidentally travels back in time from 1945 to 1743. Claire’s quest to return home to her husband Frank Randall (Tobias Menzies) is complicated when she is married off to and falls in love with the Scottish Jamie Fraser (Sam Heughan) in the midst of a conflict between the Redcoats and Highlanders. The programme’s eighteenth-century

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\(^6\) Bryant 2010.
\(^7\) Including Mack Weldon, Maidenform, Banana Republic and NIKE.
style costumes and accessories have gained remarkable visibility on social media platforms such as Etsy, Twitter, Pinterest and Tumblr. There is a large community on online marketplace Etsy invested in the crafting and trading of jewellery, woollen capes, tartan shawls, knitted scarfs and elbow-length mitts inspired by the series.\textsuperscript{405} On Twitter, not only the series but also Dresbach and her ‘Outlander Costume’ account have an active following.\textsuperscript{406} The visual bookmarking site Pinterest holds a variety of content related to Outlander, including how-to manuals for making clothes and accessories.\textsuperscript{407} The number of Outlander related blogs on Tumblr subscribes to this trend.\textsuperscript{408} Since the release of Season 2, Dresbach has been subjected to a range of interviews where she answers questions about the design process, and this is in addition to the high volume of questions she answers on Twitter and on her blog. Prior to the broadcast of Season 2, STARZ had a selection of costumes showcased at Saks Fifth Avenue, linking the costumes to contemporary fashion. As viewers engage with period costumes in an active and tangible way, their function extends beyond the television text and into everyday culture.

The available discussions of costume on television have so far overlooked how the effect of the clothes is due to their relation to the other elements of mise-en-scène, image technologies and their function within the serial narrative. High-definition imagery allows television form to show clothing elements in close-up, and this has an impact on how character and narrative come across. The most praised costume of Outlander’s first season, Claire’s wedding dress, becomes a source of visual pleasure through the use of slow-motion and close-ups shots that bring the garment’s texture into focus. The dress is shown in a slow-motion flashback to Jamie’s experience of their union. As a lady removes Claire’s cloak, Jamie recalls, ‘it was as if I stepped outside on a cloudy day, and suddenly the sun came out’, upon which a beam of light illuminates Claire. A close-up shot lingers on Claire’s torso in the dress, showcasing the delicately woven texture of its exterior layer, the ruffled fabrics of the sleeves and white bodice and the metallic embroidery adorning the front (Figure 40). The next shot pedestals up along her back from the bottom back part of the pleated skirts, then cuts to a frontal shot of Claire in her bodice. After a brief shot showing Jamie’s admiration, the scene cuts back to Claire where a crane shot glides down and visually caresses the wide skirts, high-quality textiles and silvery adornments. The people surrounding Claire share looks of astonishment likely to be met by the audience. This

\textsuperscript{405}Etsy: etsy.com/uk/search?q=outlander.
\textsuperscript{406}Twitter: twitter.com/outlander_starz; twitter.com/outlandercostum.
\textsuperscript{407}Pinterest: uk.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=outlander.
\textsuperscript{408}Tumblr: tumblr.com/search/outlander.
sequence is potent with meaning, showing a level of embroidery detail that was not possible in previous eras of television.

Embroidery, as Rozsika Parker argues, has since the eighteenth century come to signify femininity and ideas about and ideals of the feminine, but has also offered a means of resistance for women, as they negotiated the constraints of their social role through detailed stitching. Outlander is about beauty and pleasure as much as it is about trauma and resistance: the visual appeal and viewers’ appreciation of Claire’s dress exist alongside the sexual assault narrative threading through the series. When in ‘Both Sides Now’ (1:8) Claire is assaulted by Jack Randall (Frank’s ancestor, also Tobias Menzies), extreme close-ups focus on Jack’s knife cutting the laces of Claire’s bodice, string by string, until he tears her stay and shift open; close-ups of the bodice thus show the lack of female agency inscribed in eighteenth-century dress. Outlander depicts a world that is visually pleasing, but also violent and repellent. As Parker’s study of embroidery shows, women’s resistance against their restrictive social role was stitched into the very fabric of their lives and on their bodies, but the patriarchal dismissal of prettiness and detail as feminine and frivolous has obscured this history. The texture and detail of costumes in contemporary series create meaning because pretty clothes are capable of communicating ‘serious’ meaning, such as to highlight the constraint of the wearer and reveal the oppressive politics of the past.

Series like Mad Men, Masters of Sex and Call the Midwife foreground fashion as a means of imaging a transition from the restrictive culture of the Fifties to the Sixties as the moment of revolution and change.⁴¹⁰ These programmes depict a period just before and during changes in Western culture in norms and values, technological innovation, interpersonal relationships, media and advertising culture and social rights movements.⁴¹¹ Previous studies of cinema costume have pointed to the connection of period costume to the present; as Pam Cook has pointed out, ‘[it] has to reflect contemporary fashion as well as the suggested period’.⁴¹² Television since Mad Men, in the words of Katharina Niemeyer and Daniela Wentz, has demonstrated a ‘trend towards the nostalgic’ which works as both a potion that excites our longing for the past and as a cure for nostalgic desires.⁴¹³ Alongside this trend, styles from the 50s and 60s have made a comeback in fashion, for which this ‘retro programming’ is considered responsible.⁴¹⁴ The popularity of fashion styles from costume dramas like Mad Men and Outlander is the clearest manifestation of the connection between television and fashion since Miami Vice popularised Giorgio Armani’s unstructured tailoring, and in both cases these fashions work significantly as costumes. Costume in period drama has been discussed where it is spectacular and/or for how historically accurate the garments are, but my study also looks at a lower register of spectacle and considers how materiality and the textures and designs are filmed and framed create viewing pleasures for the audience that can also be critical.

Whilst the revival of handicraft and vintage fashion is often understood as a countermovement to the increasing digitisation of everyday life, it is through digital media that viewers engage with these costumes and fashions. Moreover, the changing way of imaging materiality unlocked by the advent of HDTV requires a different kind of attention from the viewer and from scholars. When looking at, for example, how costume functions in a period drama like Brideshead Revisited (Granada 1981), as I noted in the conclusion of Chapter 1, I could only make broader strokes of analysis, since 80s image technology did not afford the same narrow attention to detail by either the text itself or the viewer. Nowadays, we can finally analyse (contemporary) television costume in detail and understand the use and appeal of its fashions.

⁴¹⁰ Like other scholars, such as Dwyer 2015: 5, I use the terms ‘Fifties’ and ‘Sixties’ when referring to the culturally constructed concept of this period and the 1950s/60s when I mean the years 1950-1959/1960-1969.
⁴¹¹ The 1950s and 60s have recurred as a popular object of nostalgia in the 1970s, 1990s and 2000s/10s. Although different, the recurrences share a binary division between the 50s and 60s (Marcus 2004). For the revival in the 70s, see: Marcus 2004; Dwyer 2015, for the 90s, see: Grainge 2002; for the 2000s/10, Sprengler 2009; Niemeyer & Wentz 2014.
⁴¹² Cook 1996: 75.
⁴¹³ Niemeyer & Wentz 2014: 130(-138).
However, even as recent high-definition, high-profile dramas have gained appeal for their style and design, traditional notions of television’s transparency and ephemerality have taught us to look through style at television’s substance. Seeing style and substance as binary reinforces the stubborn notion of television as a window on the world—rather than a construct and revision of it—since it implies that any elements of style and mise-en-scène that are not overtly in service of narrative substance, social-realism or historical accuracy are frivolous—and that prettiness and decoration are somehow a detriment to the text’s substance. The term substance has multiple meanings—it can refer to character and narrative, i.e. diegetic content, or to wider frameworks of knowledge, ideology or representation—but in a metaphorical as well as in a literal sense, substance always refers to something that matters; something that has weight. A thick, sturdy fabric like wool has substance; a sheer, lightweight, flowy fabric like chiffon does not. Both textures are useful: wool keeps you warm, chiffon keeps you cool. Yet, chiffon is transparent and pretty, and the pretty is traditionally seen as frivolous decoration. Pretty and conspicuous aspects of style on television are often regarded as a distraction which fails to fulfil mise-en-scène’s function of serving narrative realism; seen as excess rather than as a meaningful element of the image. Pretty clothes are then seen as adding only superficial value to the text. As I show throughout the thesis, costumes are treated as either invisible; we look through them to read a show’s meanings, or, when they are stylistically conspicuous, as a distraction from its substance. This chapter argues however that style and substance are inextricable in television’s creation of meaning.

**Discourses of fashion and nostalgia**

When asked about the concept, one of Fred Davis’ informants for his founding 1979 work *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, a young artist, responded:

> You ask what nostalgia feels like to me? It feels like an old tweed coat. That stuff stays alive. It stays around, and the tweed coat I saw in the store yesterday is just like the ones I remember from when I was a kid. But I’m not going to go out and buy a tweed coat or cut my hair short again or get some button-down shirts and argyle socks like they wore in the fifties. Maybe I’ll get the tweed coat, but I’ll incorporate it into my current reality.

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415 Galt 2011.
417 Davis 1979: 35.
The old tweed coat, a fashion and fabric that haul the past into the present, defines the substance of nostalgia. It functions as symbolism which, in Davis’ words, captures the ‘nostalgia-borne dialectic of the search for continuity amidst threats of discontinuity (and the synthesis that can be effected between them)’.\textsuperscript{418} Since thinking about nostalgia has developed from its early definitions of (home)sickness and subsequent status as an incurable condition of regressive sentiments,\textsuperscript{419} the concept is now increasingly used as a critical tool to complicate, rather than simplify the past and its recurrent recycling.\textsuperscript{420} Both contemporary expressions of nostalgia and the debates around their significance still represent a desire to understand the ‘search for continuity amidst threats of discontinuity’ and whether the two can be synthesised. Nostalgia for the 1950s and 60s in western culture is especially relevant to the field, as these decades have been a recurring popular object of nostalgia – in the 1970s, 1990s and 2000s/10s.\textsuperscript{421} Although every revival says something different about these decades, as well as about the time in which they resurfaced, they share, as Daniel Marcus explains, a powerful hold on the public imagination because they are often represented in binary ways: the 50s are portrayed as the era of post-war reconstruction, but also of constrictive social norms, racism and sexism, whereas the 60s symbolise a time of social unrest, idealism, liberation movements and a vibrant popular culture with appealing ‘Swinging Sixties’ and ‘retro’ styles.\textsuperscript{422} Tensions between continuity and discontinuity are central to expressions of nostalgia for these decades over the course of serial television narratives.

The nostalgia for the 50s in the 1970s, as Christine Sprengler explains, derived from a fascination with the objects and fashions of the ‘Fifties’ that \textit{were} actually there (like the old tweed coat), and which belonged to a lived social, political and material culture that already at the time mythologised its own luxury products.\textsuperscript{423} This glorification of commodities, however, also functioned, she argues, to conceal the oppressive politics of the period.\textsuperscript{424} In the year 1958, Henri Lefebvre saw through this in his \textit{Critique of Everyday Life}:

\textsuperscript{418} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{419} Boym 2001.
\textsuperscript{420} Atia & Davies 2010.
\textsuperscript{421} As noted above, although different, the recurrences share a binary division between the 50s and 60s (Marcus 2004). For the revival in the 70s, see: Marcus 2004; Dwyer 2015, for the 90s, see: Grainge 2002; for the 2000s, Sprengler 2009. For the revival in the 70s, see: Marcus 2004; Dwyer 2015, for the 90s, see: Grainge 2002; for the 2000s/10s, Sprengler 2009; Niemeyer & Wentz 2014.
\textsuperscript{422} Marcus 2004.
\textsuperscript{423} Sprengler 2009: 39-43.
\textsuperscript{424} Ibid. 41.
This display of luxury to be seen in so many films, most of them mediocre, takes on an almost fascinating character, and the spectator is uprooted from his everyday world by an everyday world other than his own. Escape into this illusory but present everyday world, the fascination of ordinary objects which scream wealth, the seductive powers of the apparently profound lives led by the men and women who move among these objects, all this explains the momentary success these films enjoy.425

To Lefebvre, modern everyday life in the late 1950s had the ‘familiar strangeness of a dream’.426 Several decades later, this seems apt to describe the feeling of nostalgia for this illusory world as expressed in contemporary popular media. Lefebvre’s critique is however built on the assumption that that which holds stylistic appeal and evokes visual pleasure cannot possibly also have critical value.

Television, as Amy Holdsworth outlines, is a medium of both remembering and forgetting, both reflective and fleeting, and engages in a complex relationship with nostalgia.427 Whilst it is often seen as ‘amnesiac’ or ‘a metaphor for forgetting’, television is also considered responsible for, as Holdsworth writes, ‘the construction of a popular iconography of nostalgia’.428 The ways this has been evaluated are varied. Lynn Spigel surveys in the Screen article ‘Postfeminist Nostalgia for a Prefeminist Future’ how US media ‘rewrite’ and ‘imagine women’s lives in the early 1960s, a decade that witnessed both the heyday of US television/advertising culture and the rise of second-wave feminism’.429 Spigel argues that by visually celebrating the post-war period, programmes such as Mad Men create the illusion of a lifeworld for twenty-first century women to desire whilst neglecting the feminist struggles that have made their situation possible. Nostalgia in film and television is indeed often understood in terms of a desire to return to an unrealistic version of the past which portrays its history only from an affirmative and positive angle.430 Spigel claims that this form of nostalgia expresses a failure to cope with the present. As Heike Jenss recalls in her work on the current popularity of 60s vintage fashion, ‘many scholars have critiqued the postmodern discourse on retro for its generalizing and also essentializing tendencies that overshadow the varied ways in which forms of the past are used in diverse contexts, and with quite different meanings or effects’.431 However, other scholars have pointed to the critical potential of retro programmes that use

426 Ibid.
427 Holdsworth 2011.
428 Ibid. 1; 97.
429 Spigel 2013: 270.
430 Cook 2005; Niemeyer & Wentz 2014; Pierson 2014.
431 Jenss 2015.
material culture to display and exaggerate nostalgia. According to David Pierson, *Mad Men*’s ‘nostalgic vision of when social and gender roles were well defined in American society’ should not be mistaken for the desire to live in ‘an established, traditional and hierarchised society’. Rather, Pierson argues that *Mad Men* expresses four different levels of nostalgia: (1) as a ‘nostalgic imaginary’ that is ‘both alluring and repellent’; (2) as evoking emotional loss and in turn ‘healing’ this loss; (3) to critically comment on the period as well as refer to our contemporary culture; and (4) as ‘an indelible resource for present-day cultural critique, and as a means of inspiration for social resistance and action against existing hegemonic domains of power in society’. Pierson, alongside others, asserts that the men and women in *Mad Men* do exemplify instances of social resistance, and that the series offers a form of nostalgia that holds potential for a critique on the present. This fits the framework of thinking about nostalgia which has developed to seeing its expression not as a necessarily regressive or even dangerous sentiment, but looking at how it can be used to reflect critically on how the past is represented in different media. Retro programming can do more than incite fascination and desire for an irretrievable past; it can also express a relief that its oppressive politics belong to the past, or question what our obsession with these nostalgic images and styles indicates about the present.

Alongside this discussion, period costume fuels discussions of authenticity, especially amongst dress historians and viewers who have lived through the time represented. Period costuming shows an adapted version of the historical reality of dress to suit character and narrative and is updated to appeal to the contemporary viewer, which has been discussed in scholarship on costume and fashion in film. In order to appeal to a present audience, as Stella Bruzzi points out, period costumes are often ‘contradictory, anachronistic, ‘not always transparent and capable of being deeply ambiguous’. Whilst existing studies, as Helen Warner writes, ‘have tended to focus on the way in which onscreen clothing serves either as historical signifier, expressing temporal specificity, or as a pleasurable, “excessive”, “aesthetic discourse”’, Warner suggests that fashion in retro programming does not function simply as either representing historical realism or spectacular stylistic excess, but engages in a complex aesthetic discourse of the past in the present which can provide

432 Ibid. 141.
433 Pierson 2014: 139-140.
434 Davidson 2011; Rogers 2011; Murugan 2011.
435 Davidson 2011; Rogers 2011; Murugan 2011; Spigel 2013; Pierson 2014.
a social commentary. Drawing on Bruzzi’s theorisation of spectacular costume, Warner illustrates this by referring to the New Look dress worn by Mad Men’s Betty Draper. The New Look was a popular dress style introduced by Christian Dior in 1947 that, although swiftly passé in couture fashion, became readily adopted by mid-1950s Hollywood costume designers – as well as those of period dramas in the 2000s. Epitomising the hourglass shape that was the dominant body image for women in the 50s, this tight-torsoed, full-skirted dress style can be identified, as Bruzzi writes, as ‘one of the most persistent means of representing classic and ostensibly traditional femininity’, and has been discussed as such by scholars such as Jane Gaines, Pam Cook and Pamela Church Gibson. However, Bruzzi complicates this idea by arguing that this style in film often promotes ambivalent meanings. The characters wearing the New Look, she argues, ‘are troubled by this conformity and in subtle ways rebel against it – a rebellion that is, in turn, reflected, not denied, in their costumes’. It represents a romanticised, idealised femininity, but can also signal the characters’ frustrations with their sexuality and gender identity. The woman dressed in the New Look can be rendered not only elegant and desirable but also matronly and maternal. It can be used to show women’s frustrations of trying to balance their social image with their own desires and can function to comment on the norms and values of the period. As Warner writes, the use of this fashion style from the 50s when Mad Men’s narrative is set in the 60s is not only more realistic than having everyone dressed in Mod, but also works to have Betty’s character resist changing ideas about modernity and challenge the image of the ‘Swinging Sixties’ that is so often associated with the start of the era, as many of those social and cultural changes did not occur until the later 1960s. Warner analyses the costume as follows:

Betty, as the epitome of Betty Friedan’s disconsolate housewife, struggles to reconcile social expectations with her own desires, and as Bruzzi notes, it is no coincidence that she appears in one of the most ‘eye catching’ New Look evening gowns—a garishly spotted evening gown that is both preppish, “safe” and eye-catching underneath which nestle several springy petticoats that give it a dollish bounciness—when she confronts Don about his adultery. In the episode ‘A Night to Remember’ (Season 2, 1963),

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440 Cook 2005: 207.
441 Bruzzi 2011: 160. The New Look ‘wore the woman rather than vice versa, thereby flouting Coco Chanel’s rule that if a woman comes into a room and everyone exclaims “what a beautiful woman” then her dress has been well designed but if instead everyone declares “what a beautiful dress,” the dress is deemed a failure’ (167).
442 Ibid.
443 Ibid.
444 Warner 2014: 2-3; 103-104.
Episode 8), Betty hosts a dinner party for Don’s co-workers. After the event Betty asks Don about his alleged affair, which he denies. The following day, still wearing the dress—and looking increasingly dishevelled—Betty searches through Don’s wardrobe attempting to find evidence of his indiscretion. Unsuccessful, Betty collapses on the bed in the dress and begins to weep. The image of Betty on the bed, engulfed by the dress which the previous night had aided her performance of an idealized category of femininity, now has the very opposite meaning. The scene borrows heavily from the ‘paranoid women’s films’ of the 1940s in its composition, and her ‘eye-catching’ gown now functions as a very different kind of spectacle. In other words, the costume becomes a contrapuntal discourse in this episode.445

This analysis shows how costume can provide a social commentary, which occurs very similarly in the pilot of Masters of Sex, where housewife Libby Masters (Caitlin FitzGerald) appears in hourglass-shaped dresses with a full skirt that swishes when she moves. When Bill Masters (Michael Sheen) arrives home after work, Libby enters the kitchen in a floral New Look dress with an apron to match (Figure 41). With a chocolate soufflé in the oven and a bottle of champagne, Libby tries to create a romantic setting for their conceiving a first child. Bill, however, being a doctor, only shows interest in measuring her physical statistics, and the following shots depict the least romantic and passionate sex scene of the complete series. In a next scene, Libby is wearing another floral New Look dress while watching television as Bill arrives home. Libby’s sore voice and flushed face suggest she has been crying, and after Bill tells her about his working day, she bursts into tears because she has not become pregnant (Figure 42). As Libby says she is ‘feeling like a failure’ and exclaims ‘why can’t I give my husband a child?’, the series makes reference to the period’s middle-class ideology wherein the worth of a woman lay in her ability to produce and raise children.446 In this scene, the layers of fabric of Libby’s dress are an outlet of emotions rather than a picture of ideal womanhood. As Libby runs out of the room, her wide skirts bounce and ruffle audibly, placing the voluminous dress in the centre of attention. The New Look accentuates the bust and hips, but also nips in the waist so tightly that, despite its ‘maternal’ connotation, the material constriction of the dress literally inhibits the formation of a maternal body for Libby. This shape of dress carries Libby’s wish to conform to an ideal of femininity, whilst the fabrics vent her frustrations about her inability to become pregnant and her passionless relationship with her husband. The costume symbolises Libby’s competing feelings about who she is, who she wants to be and what is expected of her.

445 Ibid. 103.
Viewers and scholars alike tend to omit the fact that costume has material properties. Studies of costume and fashion tend to focus exclusively on the cultural, representational or symbolic dimensions of the clothes.\textsuperscript{447} As Aoife Monks captures the issue, the ‘semiotic approach assumes that we look at costume to see beyond it, to its meanings and significance for the production’.\textsuperscript{448} In such an approach, as Daniëlle Bruggeman points out, the body becomes a mere cultural text and ‘the materiality of

\textsuperscript{447} Entwistle 2000a; Entwistle & Wilson 2001; Smelik 2014; Bruggeman 2014; Rocamora & Smelik 2016.

\textsuperscript{448} Monks 2010: 6.
clothes often disappears into the realms of the linguistic, textual and discursive’.\(^{449}\)

Whilst this is to an extent true for this thesis, my study attempts to break the habit to
look through clothes only to see what they carry out by looking closely at their texture,
materials, design and details first. Screen costume is usually designed to blend into
character and narrative; to construct an identity and to make meaning at a glance, so
that viewers do not notice their presence. Fashion scholars such as Joanne Entwistle
and Elizabeth Wilson stress the neglected yet inextricable link between fashion and
the body.\(^{450}\) They regard fashion not only as a visual phenomenon and a carrier of
symbolic meaning, but also as an embodied practice.\(^{451}\) Anneke Smelik and Daniëlle
Bruggeman have taken a step further beyond the textual realm by using the tools of
‘new materialism’ for the study of fashion, an innovative approach which redirects the
attention to how the matter of humans and objects, or bodies and textures, shapes
experience in relation to the world.\(^{452}\) This approach ‘points to the inextricable
interconnection between matter and meaning, matter and discourse, and the material
and immaterial’.\(^{453}\) It recognises the agency of clothes on bodies to produce social
meaning in a process constantly oscillating between the material and symbolic. In the

My discussion of texture does not simply describe clothing materials. Rather,
I understand ‘texture’ as Lucy Fife Donaldson does: ‘both in the sense of materiality,
a piece of cloth or surface evoking a particular feel, and in the sense of an overall
fabrication, a densely textured world indicating a complex and fully formed fiction,
occupied by three-dimensional characters’.\(^{454}\) Textures on screen can appeal to our
sense of touch and evoke a certain ‘feel’ when their tactile properties are made

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\(^{449}\) Bruggeman 2014: 17.
\(^{451}\) Entwistle 2001: 35.
\(^{452}\) Coole & Frost 2010; Rocamora & Smelik 2016. Materialism does have a history in Western thought, but ‘new’
materialism is innovative in that it places matter and materiality back on the agenda after decades of neglect.
\(^{453}\) Smelik 2014; Bruggeman 2014: 17. These and other fashion scholars mostly use the corporeal theory of Maurice
Merleau-Ponty or the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari to address the materiality and embodiment of
fashion.
\(^{454}\) Fife Donaldson 2014: 2.
visible.455 Some even evoke our sense of smell: as costume designer Michele Clapton told me, she wanted the clothes for *Game of Thrones* (HBO 2011-2019) to look as if they have a smell; for us to imagine that unpleasant characters smell unpleasant.456 Clapton had costumes painted with fish oil, which is practical as it keeps out the wind, but also made them smell abhorrent.457 Next to such material aspects, texture, as Fife Donaldson writes, also ‘encompasses broader expressions of quality and nature’.458 Understanding film through texture, her study ‘[brings] the response evoked by film’s material qualities into the relationship between style and meaning’ and helps create an understanding of how a mood, tone or overall sensibility is achieved on screen.459 A similar approach can be taken for the study of television, which can likewise appear rough or smooth, dry or slick, warm or cold, hard or soft, old or new, etcetera and be ‘densely textured’. In terms of nostalgia, to return to the old tweed coat, the garment’s symbolism of the feeling of nostalgia resides in the touch and smell of its woollen fibres as well as in its connotations of substance, quality, style of tailor-made clothing from the 50s and the nature of its association with a culture of the past. The nostalgic appeal of costume in television drama lives within a complex expression defined by texture; in its surface appeal as well as overall quality and sensibility. Pretty, textural or abhorrent elements of style that may only seem to be there for superficial reactions can also be central to the text’s meaning-making process.

**Colour, style and substance**

Colour is of fundamental importance to the aesthetics and tone of the period drama. The colours of costumes contribute to the series’ textural feel and quality, whilst orienting the viewer in the narrative world on screen. A core element of style and mise-en-scène, colour aids the achievement of nostalgic engagement invited by the television series. Rather than only assisting the drama to reproduce the ‘natural’ look of the world as we know it to make it look ‘authentic’,460 stylistically the characteristic colour palette of retro programming has formed a textural aura of the 1950s-60s that has become the representational construction through which we now recognise the period. In terms of characterisation, colour is an overt and powerful tool of costume

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455 See also: Marks 2000; 2002.
456 Interview with Michele Clapton, 19-08-2019.
457 Ibid.
459 Ibid. 13.
460 Haralovich 1990: 58-65. The stylistic conventions of colour realism can create a credible social environment on screen by reproducing the ‘natural’ look of our visual reality, and should aid the expression of the dramatic narrative. See also V.F. Perkins ([1972] 1993: 59-70). Yet the reconstruction of the 1950s-60s period in fiction on screen has perhaps created its own discourse of signification; its own ‘feel’ as we now recognise the period through film and television imagery, rather than in the way the world actually looked back then.
design to convey character identities, connote unity or difference between characters, and create continuity in style and narrative over the course of the series or signal ruptures within narrative arcs (see Chapters 1 and 2). For Masters of Sex and Call the Midwife, too, the colours of costumes help situate characters and narratives within the historical world of the 50s-60s as we recognise it, whilst, in addition, costume designers take into consideration how certain colours will look on the television screen and fit within the series’ overall aesthetics.

Masters of Sex is loosely based on a 2009 biography by Thomas Maier and centres on the sexuality researchers Dr William (‘Bill’) Masters and Virginia Johnson (Lizzy Caplan) as they pioneer the American sexual revolution of the 50s-60s. Like Mad Men, Masters of Sex literally points to (the need for) the feminist and sexual liberation movements, for example when the secretary Jane reads Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex to two male doctors in the hospital cafeteria; in the storyline of Dr Lillian DePaul as an underpaid and undervalued female doctor fighting for research into uterine cancer; or when the show focuses on Masters and Johnson’s findings that refuted Freud’s theory of sexuality by proving that women can achieve equal or superior stimulation compared to (and without) men. What has remained unaddressed in criticism of the series, however, is the role of costume and fashion for the way television cloaks the potential for social critique in nostalgic appeal, attractive colours and pretty clothes. As costume designer Ane Crabtree told me, instead of using existing Technicolor-like clothes from costume houses, she made new costumes and ‘[infused] the look of the show with darker tones, because that was the emotional, psychological tone’ that she needed to tell the story of ‘a feminist who didn’t even know she was a feminist.

The colour of a costume always has a contextual position in the frame; it is not limited to a fixed meaning, but rather it assumes meaning through the association of the colour with what the image and narrative convey (character, event, object or situation). For period drama to achieve the effect of realism—immersing the viewer in the illusion that the world on screen simulates what the 1950s-60s looked like, even if this world only exists within representation—costumes are traditionally expected to ‘blend’ into context, character and narrative. Existing writings on costume tend to single out pieces of clothing and define the meaning of any costume unto itself. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the act of analysis, we may want to see deeper ideological meaning in all choices of colour and shapes, but sometimes it simply helps construct

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461 ‘Race to Space’ (1:2); ‘Brave New World’ (1:7); ‘Phallic Victories’ (1:11); ‘Manhigh’ (1:12); ‘Dirty Jobs’ (2:4).
462 Interview with Ane Crabtree, 18-04-2019.
463 Belton 2013: 189.
464 Gaines 1990.
the narrative world. Some choices of colour in the costuming of the series discussed predominantly serve to sketch their 1950s-60s representational space and (together with more overtly meaningful colours) contribute to its overall style and aesthetics. This is still key to conveying substance; the different uses of colour are relevant to how period costuming establishes the nostalgic texture of the television series. As Murugan points out with regards to Mad Men, ‘[t]he craftsmanship that goes into the extras’ clothing is the same as that which goes into the lead characters’ outfits’. The same accounts for Masters of Sex and Call the Midwife, in which characters in both foreground and background are costumed in meticulous detail. Although for the sake of argumentation, selection and the discussion of serial development I focus on the main characters’ costumes, all of the costumes together (and with other elements of production design) form the complete serial costuming texture. As Egerton explained, he had to dress about a hundred characters and each of them had to have their own ‘little story’ and their own look, no matter how small their role within the narrative.

Costume and set designers often make concessions to historical accuracy in the interest of stylistic appeal or characterisation, as studies of period costume in cinema have pointed out, which, in turn, contribute to the (historically incorrect but) nostalgically powerful image we now have of the 1950s-60s. For instance, the art department of Call the Midwife, as costume designer Nigel Egerton noted, tends to avoid using white for the set, which may ‘flare’ on screen. The series features many long shots of the Poplar streets in which clothes and sheets in pastel, beige and brown shades wave in the wind on laundry lines, but, as Egerton remarked, a clothing line of the 1950s would in reality have been predominantly white. The colours of the props are not ‘accurate’ but suit the architectural style of the set and mask undesired colours or items in the background. The grey and brown shades contribute to the austere and sepia feel of the setting, whilst the pastel colours bring softness and warmth to its atmosphere; white sheets would have contributed to neither and appeared more ‘flat’ or ‘cold’. The set designer provides the costume designer with colour swatches for every setting so that they can make the character stand out from or blend into their environment, depending on their characterisation and narrative in the scene. As detailed below, prettifying the set with colours does not detract from the programme’s

466 Amongst other reasons; limited budget is also a notable one. Set designer Eve Stewart spoke in radio interviews about the many letters she received from viewers wanting to correct ‘mistakes’ of the show.
467 E.g. Cook 1996: 75. See also Review of Literature.
468 Interview with Nigel Egerton, 01-11-2016.
469 See below Bruzzi’s discussion of women’s costume blending into the background.
substance, although long-held assumptions about prettiness mean that critics might assume so.

For costume’s function of creating characters, maintaining their identities and showing their developments throughout the serial narrative, colours can be used in a variety of ways: throughout the series a character can be linked to one single colour or a limited colour palette, or can be costumed in the same form of dress in different colours, or in different forms of dress and a varied yet character-suited colour scheme. Colour, shape and texture all work together, but sometimes the colour of a costume diverges from the realist aesthetic to assume a specific meaning, either in a single scene or as a repeated practice, which can encourage the viewer to read the costume as a meaningful device. Changes in the colour palette of the costuming for a character are used to show development in their narrative arc. As one of the protagonists of Masters of Sex, Libby is subjected to major developments in her character identity and storyline throughout the series, which is reflected most overtly in the shapes of her costumes changing from the New Look, to maternity wear, to plain dresses and two-pieces, to trousers with blouses or jumpers. Yet, one stable factor in her costuming is the colour scheme that sets her character apart from other women.\(^{470}\) Although Libby at times wears saturated colours, her costumes of the first seasons most characteristically have pastel shades, either plain or with a floral pattern, which suit her soft-spirited, gentle character.\(^{471}\) The colour scheme of Libby’s costuming helps construct continuity, as, although she appears in a spectrum of hues and degrees of saturation, her costuming consistently brings liveliness and loveliness to the character in the image. In ‘Catherine’ (1:5), Libby is in her second trimester of pregnancy and costumed in colourful maternity wear: she is first wearing an ensemble of a soft yellow top and a soft yellow necklace with a dark grey skirt and poncho-shaped cardigan with yellow rims, in contrast to the sterile white background of the hospital; next, a coral peignoir and robe at the breakfast table; then a deep blue dress with multi-coloured flower appliques on its collar when shopping for a new maternity dress; and, finally, a striking, lustrous gold and white dress with ornate patterns and cream pink accessories at Bill’s boss’s wedding anniversary gala. Libby is portrayed in this episode, named after her unborn child, as a thriving, radiant woman in the best period of her life. This is ruptured, however, when during the gala Libby’s golden dress becomes stained by her having a miscarriage, and in the next

\(^{470}\) Colour palettes can form colour coordination or colour schemes, meaning that the various shades show a similar degree of brightness, saturation, purity, modulation, differentiation or hue. Kress & Van Leeuwen 2002.

\(^{471}\) Especially notable is the pastel orange returning in one of her maternity two-pieces (1:11), a blouse worn with grey trousers (2:2 and 2:10), her sleeveless dresses (2:7 and 2:9) or wide coat dress (2:9), as well as soft shades of pastel blue, yellow, coral and salmon.
scene she is dressed in a white patient gown on a bed with white sheets, subjected (instead of contrasted) to the sterile white environment of the hospital. After Bill has surgically removed their unborn child, the following morning Libby is sitting on the hospital bed fully covered in a lustreless grey coat, with a grey dress underneath, whilst Bill folds another grey robe to put in her suitcase. Libby’s brightly coloured maternity dress has turned to grey to emphasise her traumatic experience, and the alignments of whites and greys dramatize this turning point. A similar use of colour occurs in ‘All Together Now’ (1:7), in which Libby aims to stealthily receive fertility treatments at the hospital despite Bill’s refusal to try for another child. When Bill arrives home at night, Libby is awaiting him in a lustrous dark dress with a weave of thin silver and gold horizontal stripes and a golden bead necklace. Tipsy from drinking martinis, Libby tries to seduce her husband to not make her pregnancy seem impossible. However, Bill secretly spends his days having sex with Virginia (allegedly for his research) and dismisses his wife. The next day, Libby visits Virginia in Bill’s office to demand more time in her husband’s schedule. Unsuccessfully masking a hangover, Libby is wearing dark sunglasses and a dull, bluish-grey two-piece dress. This colour-draining use of grey for Libby is set forth throughout the series: during unrest in the household Libby is wearing a grey bathrobe instead of her white, coral or pastel orange peignoirs, and she is wearing a light grey cardigan after being traumatised by witnessing a hit and run. Grey signals her discontent, frustration and trauma.

This is a relatively unobtrusive use of colour in costume to convey particular meaning, but occasionally colour in Masters of Sex is taken to an obtrusive level that is reminiscent of the affective use of colour in 1950s Hollywood melodrama. The colours of costumes in Masters of Sex are to an extent representative of the affective use of colour in melodrama as described by Mary Haralovich and Scott Higgins (see Chapter 2) and represent colour scoring, colour motifs and punctuation, but also at times occur inconsistently, hesitate between realism and drama and stir narrative meanings. All uses of colour together form the texture of the series and allow space for a critical engagement with its nostalgic mood.

Similar to how grey becomes associated with discontent and trauma for Libby (and has a comparable function for Bill, as discussed below with regards to his suits), a change of colour disrupts the continuity of character Vivian Scully’s costuming. As daughter to the Provost, Vivian has been raised in a Catholic and chaste manner. She

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473 ‘Mirror, Mirror’ (2:8).
474 See Chapter 2 for an elaborate discussion of Haralovich and Higgins on Sirkian melodrama.
is an eighteen-year-old young woman who is determined to marry Dr Ethan Haas. Vivian is repeatedly costumed in pink. Pink, as fashion scholar Colin McDowell for one remarks, has been persistently connoted as the most feminine of colours since the evolution in the late 1930s of the gender bias of pink for girls and blue for boys. Related to its feminine aura, pink is often associated with the emotional concepts of romance and love, and as a continuum with the sexuality of the female body. In low saturation, as in Vivian’s costumes, pink traditionally signifies ‘softness and delicacy’ or ‘subtle and tender’. Vivian’s repeated pink costuming renders her feminine and constructs a colour motif with the notion of ‘delicate’ sexuality to associate the wearer with femininity, refinement and gentility. The repeated use of pink for Vivian can seem ‘artificial’ rather than authentic after several episodes, and is further amplified by the contrast of Vivian to other characters. At her parents’ wedding anniversary gala (Figure 43), Vivian’s mother Margaret Scully is dressed in a bright red chiffon dress which, similar to Cary’s red dress in All That Heaven Allows (1955, see Chapter 2), signifies her sexual maturity as well as her unfulfilled desire for her (closeted gay) husband Barton. The colours of costuming for mother and daughter, sitting closely together, are contrasted to signify their distinct stances towards sexuality.

Figure 43. Libby, Margaret and Vivian at the gala.

476 In ‘Thank You for Coming’ (1:4), Vivian first appears as a volunteering nurse at the hospital costumed in a red and white striped apron dress, a white rounded collar shirt and a matching nurse’s cap on her golden hair. Notably, the exact same uniform design is used for one nurse in the background of Mad Men episode ‘The Fog’ (3:5).
477 For instance, when she first visits Ethan’s home, she is dressed in a soft pink coat, skirt and cardigan with bright pink details and white gloves; a pink chiffon dress at the gala (1:4); a light pink dress with pink pumps and jewellery (1:7); a candy pink skirt and pastel pink gloves, handbag and earrings when choosing a wedding cake (1:9); etcetera.
479 Koller 2008.
480 Ibid. 396; 411; 413, referring to Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 233.
However, the implied meaning of Vivian’s pink appearance is not entirely stable and at times diverges from the chasteness presumed by the colour motif. Its connotation of virtuousness is unsettled already in the first episode in which Vivian appears by her readiness to undress from her pink cardigan and white brassiere at Ethan’s request on their first evening together. The sexualisation of her body in the scene’s obscurely lit setting disrupts the meaning of her pink costume, since it departs from the former connotation of its shade. The colour pink punctuates the scene with a focus on the tension between her presumed abstinence and the performed act of sexuality. Later, a rupture occurs when Vivian’s costume changes colour, which destabilises the single-coloured enactment of feminine identity and emphasises the artificiality of colour.\textsuperscript{481} In ‘Involuntary’ (1:9), Ethan’s withdrawing their engagement forms a dramatic turning point for which Vivian’s costume is transformed to blue. In this scene, Vivian is wearing a light blue half-sleeved bolero, a white shirt with light blue flower appliques, a light grey-blue mesh skirt, a white apron and light blue pumps, suited to the mild colours of the setting. The transition to blue disrupts the former pink colour stability and highlights the scene’s dramatic tension. Now marked by the colour blue, in ‘Parallax’ (2:1) Vivian is dressed in a light blue jumper and dark blue-grey skirt whilst trying a bright blue jumper on her body in front of the mirror (Figure 44). This scene draws attention to the specific meaning of the colour, as Vivian is placed in a décor consisting of a bedroom with a blue-on-white wallpaper, blue bed sheets and blue curtains. Vivian’s mother is also dressed in blue and remarks that the colour looks beautiful on her daughter. The set and costumes form an alignment of hues which, as colour punctuation, point to a dramatic turning point. The tranquillity of the scene is then interrupted by a noise from the basement where their husband and father Barton is attempting suicide. For Vivian and Margaret, the colour blue is a marker of trauma, announced in clothing prior to the event. Vivian’s transformation from pink to blue (‘feeling blue’) disrupts the colour continuity and gives the colour blue an intrusive, affective meaning. Change of costume colour is all the more powerful—just like in Scandal as discussed in Chapter 2—when a character had been dressed in the same colour (scheme) for multiple episodes or seasons.

\textsuperscript{481} This first happens in ‘Catherine’ (1:5), when Ethan, compelled by her father, takes Vivian out to an American diner. Vivian aims to contradict Ethan’s view of her as an innocent, sexually naïve girl and persuades him into a sexual relationship to make him marry her. Her costuming is once not pink, but replaced by a soft beige cardigan, skirt and pumps with orange details in her scarf, belt, buttons and rings (not radically different). Vivian’s costumes return to pink after this moment; she keeps up appearances in her social environment. To continue their relations, Ethan has to marry Vivian to retain her ‘decent’ femininity.
These examples show how the unruly nature of reality is punctuated in order to convey the drama of a scene. This colour practice suits the emphasis of Hollywood melodrama on the primary function of colour to serve the narrative – even if that means using colour artificially rather than naturally to aid the story of the character. Costume colours help give expression to Bill, Vivian and Libby’s conflicts with their emotions and sketch out the norms and values of their social environment in the series’ representation of the 50s. However, even though colour assumes motifs for certain characters, it is always potentially unstable, as the same colour can be used differently and distort its initial implications. Neither purely realist nor spectacular, colours in the period costuming of Masters of Sex and other retro programmes of that calibre are used in different ways, not always consistently, but contributing to the series’ texture and conveying its (critical) substance.

In Masters of Sex, white costumes seem to have a fixed function in which they provide a contrast to the colours of other costumes and blend into the hospital environment. When a doctor dons the white coat, it applies a professional identity as perceived by both the public and the wearer. The white coat in modern America traditionally functions as a symbol of life, purity and candour in the context of the medical profession.482 The doctor’s relationship to the patient is bodily intimate, and the white coat serves to protect both the patient from the doctor and the doctor from the patient. In ‘Kyrie Eleison’ (2:2), however, the white surgeon’s scrub, which normally stays within the narrative space of the operation room, is obscured and torn

482 Blumhagen 1979.
out of its context. On his first day at Gateway Memorial Hospital, Bill has a falling-out with his new boss and the mother of a patient who are forcing him to perform a hysterectomy on a healthy young woman who is perceived ‘sexually overactive’. As an obstetrician who has seen women desperate to get pregnant (including his wife), and on edge due to his inability to cope with his own first child, Bill loses his temper and refuses to sterilise the girl. Whereas Bill’s costume usually functions as a staple of professionalism, this time it exudes drama as he wears the white scrub outside of the operation room and inside the office; signalling how the clean, homogeneous, neutral white can also become central to a character’s emotions.

Red appears in Masters of Sex as a shared colour motif of women whose sexual identity is coded ‘experienced’ (married or unmarried) and who exude agency and self-confidence, yet are in a potentially unstable or vulnerable position.483 This applies mainly to Virginia, since she is characterised by her open attitude towards casual sex as well as her desire to be recognised as a medical researcher, but is reliant on Bill for her career and in the constant risk of being reduced to sexist ideas about women’s identity. Virginia is often dressed in red with black when her career with Bill is at a crucial moment; for instance, at her job interview in the pilot (1:1) or when she has to decide whether to participate with Bill in their study (1:2). Perhaps the most dramatic moment occurs in ‘Blackbird’ (2:6) when Virginia is dressed in a bright red, long-sleeved, buttoned shirt and black pencil skirt which render her fierce and confident, until Lillian declares she will stop her treatments and surrender herself to cervical cancer. A later, pivotal scene shows Bill and Virginia in a frontal shot of the hotel room in Alton, Illinois where their sessions take place in Season 2. Sitting on the bed, fully clothed, Virginia weeps and confides to Bill how much she will miss Lillian. Virginia is vulnerable in her red attire; Bill shows unprecedented tenderness in soothing her. The colour red is central to a turning point in the series: they kiss for the first time. When Bill’s mother Estabrooks (‘Essie’) first appears on his doorstep, she is also dressed in saturated red, with a coat, hat, gloves and lipstick in the same colour, announcing that four years of wearing black has been enough to mourn her husband.484 Throughout the season, she has red details in her clothes, accessories, lipstick and nail polish. Although Essie’s intrusion in the household is a blessing to expectant Libby, Essie is in constant risk of being dismissed by her son. Bill repeatedly confronts her with their traumatic family history and forces her to leave. In similar vein, red also has an ominous meaning for Margaret Scully. At the Scully’s gala, Margaret is the centre of attention in her bright red dress (Figure 43), contrasted to

483 As Batchelor 2000: 63 writes, ‘[c]olour is often close to the body and never far from sexuality’.
484 ‘Thank You for Coming’ (1:4).
the cream, beige and brown background; especially when Barton in his cream suit devotes a speech to her beauty and their love. Yet, although Margaret is the star of the evening, the episode ‘Standard Deviation’ (1:3) has revealed to the viewer that Barton is secretly gay. The Scully’s marriage of 30 years has been disclosed as a fraud, which is unbeknownst to Margaret, and re-emphasises that a woman in red may express strength, sexuality and allure, but this colour also signifies her position as at risk. The use of red in the series’ visual style is invaluable to convey these characters’ identities, situations and narratives in a way that could not be done through dialogue.

This colour motif is also used to provide a counter-narrative, contradicting established character identity. Libby, Vivian and Lillian are normally never costumed in red, as it does not align with their sexual identities. A spectacular disruption hereof occurs at the end of Season 2. ‘The Revolution Will Not Be Televised’ (2:12) begins in Bill and Virginia’s hotel room, in which John F. Kennedy’s 1960 ticker tape parade in New York is shown on television. The sequence cuts to Bill’s dream, characterised by a fuzzy light filter, in which we see Bill exiting his house through the front door and walking over the green lawn to fetch the day’s newspaper. Implying an early morning scene, Bill’s shirt collar is still unbuttoned and his suspenders and bow tie hang loose. When he returns to the house, Bill notices confetti falling from the sky and a large crowd of people applauding him. Festive music accompanies Bill while he joins Virginia on a parade car, with the newspaper still in his hand. Virginia is not costumed according to her character, but in the outfit that Jackie Kennedy wore during the presidential campaign: a loose-fitting, light grey, tweed coat dress with a matching hat and white gloves. The parade halts and the music fades when the couple notices Libby in the middle of the road, staring at Bill and Virginia with a fierce look, dressed in a striking bright red coat dress and matching red lipstick. Bill’s dream signifies his wish for praise as well as his fear for the exposure of his relationship with Virginia. Outside of this dream, Libby would not wear bright saturated red, as this does not suit her character identity. In Bill’s dream, the artificial feel of the colour of costume and lipstick applied to Libby provides a contrapuntal discourse to her character identity, whilst it affirms the function of the colour motif to dress women who assume agency but are at risk. Libby takes control by exposing Bill but is in a vulnerable position as her marital security and, by extension, her domestic feminine identity are revealed to be untenable. The colour motif pushes the melodramatic style to an extreme to signal the conflicts in Libby’s sexuality and desires that drive her narrative arcs.

Occasionally, the colour of a costume is discussed in character dialogue, making clear its specific meaning. For instance, when in ‘One for the Money, Two for the Show’ (2:11) Libby arrives at Bill’s clinic before they will appear in a television
interview, she remarks that Virginia and she are wearing the same colour. Whereas in the rest of the series the colour brown is not conspicuous for the costumes of either Libby or Virginia (more like Barthes’ reality effect\textsuperscript{485}), this colour becomes a site of contestation when the women protagonists wear the same colour in the same scene and setting. Libby wonders, ‘Do you think it’ll look like a uniform? What all of Bill Masters’ women wear...’ In this scene, costume colour signals the dramatic tension in the relationship between Bill’s wife and mistress, both longing for his exclusive attention, yet appearing in the same colour of dress. Both women are wearing a two-piece similar in their form of a half-sleeved top and a pencil skirt, made of brown tweed fabric; the one difference being that Libby’s top garment is buttoned and Virginia’s is not. Although Virginia assures Libby that the CBS is shooting in black and white (colour thus being irrelevant), this episode suggests that Libby has realised that the sexual unavailability of her husband is due to his relationship with Virginia, who, dressed in similar clothes, seems to have replaced her. Libby muses that she has become ‘the woman behind the man behind the woman behind the man’. Although her awareness of Bill’s affair is explicated in dialogue only in the last episode of the season, the form and texture of Libby and Virginia’s costumes create a meaningful sheath which yields this narrative development.

As opposed to the convention that the colours of costumes should separate actors from their backgrounds,\textsuperscript{486} several dramas set in the 1950s demonstrate a colour strategy in which the clothes of characters blend into the setting of a scene. Stella Bruzzi has noted with regards to the costuming colours used for Cary Scott (Jane Wyman) in \textit{All That Heaven Allows} (1955) and Kathy Whitaker (Julianne Moore) in \textit{Far From Heaven} (2002) that merging the costume with the background signifies these women’s static and powerless position in the household, showing the fragility of her modelling as the ‘perfect’ housewife and ‘her romanticized ideal of how a woman should be—or rather appear—even as her marriage is being exposed as a sham’.\textsuperscript{487} Similarly, in \textit{Masters of Sex} Libby’s place in the domestic sphere is affirmed by the colours of her costumes blending into the environment of the home’s décor; for instance, in ‘Blackbird’ (2:6), where in a room coloured in pastel yellow and white Libby is folding pastel yellow, white and pastel blue clothes on an ironing-board whilst dressed in a pastel blue cardigan with pastel yellow and light pink embroidery and a dark pastel blue skirt (Figure 45). By contrast, when Bill (the absent, adulterous husband) appears in the doorway with a glass of scotch, the actors are spatially

\textsuperscript{485} Barthes 1986 [1968].
\textsuperscript{486} Haralovich 1990: 64.
\textsuperscript{487} Haralovich 1990: 69-70; Bruzzi 2011: 177.
separated by the open white door in the centre of the image as well as by the ways the colours of their costumes relate to the setting. Bill’s dark brown trousers, light blue chequered shirt, dark brown suspenders and dark red bow tie form a contrast to the pastel colours of the room but align with the dark brown chest that is opposite from Libby. (Bill’s position in the doorway suggests he can leave anytime.) This image, typical of the show, recalls the spatial discourse of the 1950s in which social space was divided into ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ space, equating women with the private sphere of the household and men with the public sphere of the wide world and work space.488 Scenes like these clearly show that style yields meaning.

The same strategy is used for Betty Draper in the first two seasons of *Mad Men*, where it enforces her embodiment of domestic femininity in the post-war, pre-feminist era in which, as Diana Davidson put it, ‘woman’s worth was in her ability to produce children, raise children, keep house, and entertain’.489 Although Betty ‘has it all’ (husband, family, house, car, money), she is deeply anxious, suffers from sudden paralysis in her hands and frequents a psychiatrist. The household is her space, but she is trapped within the walls of her home. As Doreen Massey has pointed out, ‘[t]he attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere was both a specifically spatial control and, through that, a control on identity’.490 Betty’s New Look dresses—next to being impractical for work or outdoor activities—secure her place in the home.

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through the alignment of their colours, patterns and layered fabrics with the colours, ruffles and patterns of the home décor’s wallpapers, objects and curtains. In ‘Indian Summer’ (1:11), Betty’s pink New Look dress is in the kitchen accompanied by pink details on a baby food can, the pink stripes of her dish towel and the pink colour of a soap bottle (Figure 46). Her pastel green waist belt is aligned with the dish rack, kitchen plinth, colour in the curtains and another stripe in the towel (earlier also with tea cups and saucers). The soft yellow colour of her chiffon dress in ‘Marriage of Figaro’ (1:3) aligns with the colours of the kitchen’s oven and the home’s doors and frames. In ‘For Those Who Think Young’ (2:1) the chequered pattern of Betty’s dress is continued on the wallpaper (Figure 47). By associating her ultra-feminine dresses with the setting of the home, Betty’s character is equated with the domestic sphere, and the narrative space of this household is rendered ‘feminine’. When she visits her neighbour’s house in ‘New Amsterdam’ (1:4), her pastel yellow dress and floral cardigan also blend into the design of Helen’s walls, objects, doorframes and floral blankets; another domestic environment. Like in Masters of Sex, this is different for the man of the household, as Don’s suits, with their plain colours and rectangular lines, contrast the bright colours and patterns of the home’s wallpapers, curtains, rugs, furniture and decorations. Don’s unease in the domestic setting is shown, for example, in ‘Marriage of Figaro’ (1:3), when after building a playhouse for his children Don uses Betty’s lavishly decorated powder room and wants to dry his hands, but is hesitant to touch her perfectly folded, pink floral handtowels, wiping his hands on his t-shirt instead. The New Look and the suit as period costumes influence the way in which the men and women comport their bodies in the narrative world.491 Don’s appearance is dominated by the straight graphic lines of his suit, which are aligned with the rectangular set design of his workplace, Sterling Cooper’s agency (Figure 48). This set consists of rectangular offices, straight hallways, windows with horizontal blinds and plain curtains, walls made of rectangular panels and a square grid ceiling. The lighting grid of the ceiling has been identified as a visual strategy which imprisons its employees in the power structures of the workplace.492 Where Betty blends into the home, Don blends into the office set. The workplace as masculine space is in harmony with the suit as staple of professionalism but also of male power of sexuality, as opposed to the constriction of sexual desire in the New Look.493

491 See also Murugan 2011: 167.
492 Butler 2011: 60-63. See also Butler’s reading of Joan and Peggy in this setting.
493 Betty visits Don’s office once in the complete series, and in this scene, her New Look dress looks out of place.
Figure 46. Betty’s costume matches items in the home.

Figure 47. The pattern of Betty’s dress continues on the wallpaper.
Costume, texture and nostalgia

The nostalgic texture of the television image, which conveys its substance, quality and sensibility, hinges on whether the colours and fabrics of costumes appear soft or hard, smooth or rough, woven or flat, or warm or cold. Such choices determine how characters are portrayed in relation to their surroundings and can tell us more about them, whilst contributing to the ‘feel’ of the programme. A character dressed in a stark white doctor’s coat comes across radically different from a character in soft tweed or knitwear, and *Call the Midwife* and *Masters of Sex* contain both types ubiquitously – pristine doctor’s coats and surgeon’s scrubs (which get covered in blood), and both programmes are saturated with knitwear, crochets and tweed, which contributes to their retro feel. The fabrics further help communicate matters of identity and degrees of intimacy between characters and their position within the culture of the period. Male and female subjects participating in Masters and Johnson’s study are clothed in blue bathrobes before they undress to temporarily shed the norms and values of sexuality (‘in the name of science’). Whereas other robes in morning scenes function as precursors of daily clothes still to be dressed in, the blue bathrobes capture the spirit of that moment in American cultural history in which progressive doctors aimed to defy sexual ignorance but the nation was not yet ready for total liberation. The consistent use of the blue bathrobes with their loose form and plain fabric contributes to their function as a mediator between clothed and unclothed, male and female, outside world and examination room, the stages of intercourse, before and after the sexual revolution, before and after the feminist movement. Bathrobes are equalising, universal, impersonal and offers the wearer a momentary escape from sexual politics.
As Bill and Virginia trade their flat-textured, sterile, white doctor’s coats for rougher-textured bathrobes, they assume the status of anonymous participants in their study. This is different, however, when the couple becomes more intimate and in Season 2 they engage in secret meetings in the Chancery Park Plaza Hotel in Alton, Illinois, performing role-play as Dr and Mrs Holden. In ‘Fight’ (2:3), a 1958 boxing match on television provides the leitmotif for an episode full of metaphors about masculinity and masculine behaviour. Bill and Virginia spend the day in a hotel room and are half of the episode dressed in white terrycloth bathrobes. The thick and soft fabric of terrycloth covers their bodies in a texture that conveys a feeling of closeness and the blurring of boundaries between the protagonists. Their roles of doctors in white coats and subjects in blue bathrobes are overthrown by the white terrycloth robes which carry the increasing warmth of their secret affair. During this episode, Bill and Virginia confide in each other about their personal histories and childhood traumas, meanwhile humiliating the other to test their own strength. Where the blue bathrobes work as intermediaries between binaries, the terrycloth robes melt boundaries and increase the feel of intimacy. The softness of the terrycloth robes render the characters more tactile and vulnerable, and give this episode a more dramatically intimate feel than the ones set in the hospital environment.

Tweed is ubiquitous in the representation of vintage Fifties style in television drama. In her study of the history of the business suit, Anne Hollander asserts that natural fibres like wool render the wearer traditional, honest, morally sound and rational. The texture of tweed (now shown in high definition) appeals to the viewer with its warm, woolly quality, with classic tailoring and natural fibres expressing purity and sustainability. Tweed on television functions as a texture of nostalgia that enhances the appeal of the series’ images and styles from the past. However, in its function as a costume, the suit’s design and texture can also frame male anxiety with the period’s construct of masculinity. As Bill conducts research into human sexuality, the suit’s classic style secures his position and prevent him from being dismissed as a degenerate or a threat to society. The series often calls attention to the suit’s texture by highlighting its surface on screen. Bill’s suits mask his emotions with professional demeanour but are also tailored to let his inner struggles shine through. This becomes most clear in the use of colour, as Bill tends to wear a steel-blue rather than brown.

494 Hollander 1994: 89-92; 113. As discussed in Chapter 2, Hollander documents how throughout the past centuries the style of the business suit has evolved into the most ‘ideal’ and uniform shape of male dress. The form of the suit, Hollander writes, simultaneously envelops the surface of the male body and hints at its sexual potency. The jacket’s lines of design indicate the structure of his bone and muscle whilst padding gives form to his shoulders and chest, and the triangular shape of the seams abstractly points to the crotch. Bill Masters in his suit is rendered traditional and with sexual potency.
suit in the scenes in which his attitude is cold and distant. Normally, the appearance of male costumes aids stability and the reality effect, but sometimes the colour of a suit punctuates a scene. In ‘Catherine’ (1:5) and ‘Asterion’ (2:7), Bill is wearing a grey-blue suit which gains meaning in the content of certain scenes. When Libby loses their unborn child in ‘Catherine’ (1:5), Bill assumes a distanced medical attitude. This is reflected in the ‘cold’ colour of his suit, while he ignores his own feelings and his wife’s desire for comforting. When Bill is not wearing a jacket, he is either in an informal situation or he is vulnerable, such as when in the same episode he has arguments with his mother over his childhood traumas and oppressive father. Bill’s bow tie is loose and his collar unbuttoned, and the jacket’s absence signifies his lack of a shield of emotions. In the same episode he is wearing his tweed jacket when he bursts into tears in Virginia’s presence. At the end of the episode, Bill is wearing a black and grey hounds-tooth pattern suit in Virginia’s presence when he cries about feeling guilt and loss, revealing the emotions formerly kept inside the cold shield of the grey-blue suit. In ‘Asterion’ (2:7) Bill is tormented by jealousy after learning that Virginia has a new lover. During examinations, his emotional detachment is kept in place by a sterile white doctor’s coat, but when Virginia approaches Bill in his office without him wearing a jacket, he reaches for his grey-blue ‘shield’ on a hat stand and buttons it before giving her a reprimanding response. The colour and texture of the suit here exceed the unruly arbitrariness of reality as it assumes an affective function: matching the suit to Bill’s attempt to shield the emotions stirring inside. Tweed is omnipresent in the series; its absence is as significant as its presence, conveying the story of a man who aims to make history move forward, but is kept prisoner by the culture’s strong hold on ingrained norms and values. Two shots from ‘Catherine’ (1:5) and ‘Love and Marriage’ (1:8) let the light shining through the blinds of the window cast a horizontal barred shadow over Bill’s suit, which makes him look ‘imprisoned’ (Figure 49; 50).
Now that we can see costume textures on screen, they contribute more than ever to the substance of the text. In the Masters of Sex episodes after Libby suffers a miscarriage in ‘Catherine’ (1:5), the fabrics of her clothes have lost their luxurious quality and voluminous layers. Her costumes in ‘Brave New World’ (1:6) consist of simple cotton dresses and two-pieces which loosely cover her body. Yet, Libby’s desire for Bill’s admiration comes to the fore in this episode when she is wearing a short, silvery, satin negligée and robe on holiday to seduce him in their hotel room. Due to its smooth, glossy surface and soft, slippery nature, satin is perceived as a texture of
sensuality and sexual allure.⁴⁹⁵ In contrast to this association, however, the fabric loses its allure on Libby’s body when Bill responds indifferently to her advances. The fabric is imbued with her frustration and tension; wearing the garment, she is rendered alluring but neglected. This satin garment represents Libby’s agonizing struggle to become an active subject, rather than a neglected object of sexual desire. This and her other costumes indicate that the norms and values of what a housewife should look like and how she should behave keep a strong hold on Libby’s ability to express herself. Her anxiety is further reflected in the materiality of her costumes when, for instance, in ‘Kyrie Eleison’ (2:2) her orange blouse is visibly creased. This forms a contrast to the meticulous care with which she normally wears her clothes, reminding us of her troubled mental state and discontent with domestic femininity. In ‘Mirror, Mirror’ (2:8), Libby is rattled by witnessing the hit and run of an African American man and is dressed at home in a strikingly casual, soft-textured, turtle-neck jumper on Capri trousers. In ‘Story of My Life’ (2:9), Libby offers to volunteer for the African American Civil Rights Movement and appears in a strikingly wide, loose-fitting, orange coat dress. Although she remains a housewife wishing to have a family, the shapes and fabrics of the costumes (either sensual or markedly wide) show a wish to be freed from the strict socio-cultural norms. Beyond representing the housewife in full-skirted dresses and aprons, the costumes of Masters of Sex capture women’s struggles and repressed desires in their very textures, and in a way that was not possible in previous eras of television.

**Shaping the past**

Next to colour and texture, the shapes and foundations of costume designs inform us of characters’ identities and narrative developments, as well as about the series’ wider discourse of representing the past. In Masters of Sex, the bow tie is the most defining characteristic of Bill’s character – indispensable to his image and identity. According to costume designer Ane Crabtree, Bill’s bow tie functions as a “Caution: Do not cross” mark between his face, emotions, expression and his language or words with which to communicate’.⁴⁹⁶ As Maier documents in his biography, the ‘real’ Masters indeed ‘always wore a properly drawn bow tie and an astringent face’.⁴⁹⁷ In Season 2, when the screen characters of Bill and Virginia are ready to present their findings to the public, Bill is compelled by a CBS producer to trade his signature bow tie for a straight tie. Extreme close-ups show Bill fidgeting with a red tie, which he feels does

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⁴⁹⁶ Parks 2014.
not belong to him; it is impractical and makes him feel uncomfortable. Bill grumbles, ‘As Henry David Thoreau said, “beware all enterprises that require new clothes”.’

The extreme close-ups on the changing of neckties, transforming the representation of Bill’s identity, show the value of this piece of costuming for his character and constructing the very texture and meaning of the image.

The tight-fitting, below-the-knee cut of the pencil skirt restricts the movement of the working woman’s body. There are several scenes in Masters of Sex in which Virginia is running to catch up with Ethan (1:1) or Bill (1:9) in the hospital hallways where the confinement of the skirt complicates her mobility and, as a consequence, emphasises her position as woman in a man’s world. As Llewellyn Negrin argues, certain garments are capable of producing modes of bodily demeanour in space. Virginia’s limited mobility in the pencil skirt is a clear example, and this becomes most explicit in ‘Kyrie Eleison’ (2:2) when she rushes out of a male doctor’s office who expressed more interest in arousal than education from her research. In this scene, Virginia is costumed in a close-fitting, half-sleeved, dark jumper with an embroidered white bow collar, a matching dark grey pencil skirt and black pumps, holding a large black suitcase in her left hand and some paperwork in her right hand (Figure 51). A frontal tracking shot follows Virginia as she runs through the hallway to catch a lift. Virginia’s tight pencil skirt ends below the knees and forces her to take small steps, which causes her to miss the lift. Frustratedly she throws the paperwork against the lift doors, and we are reminded of Virginia’s limitations as a woman working in a man’s world. A staple of 50s fashion, the pencil skirt in this scene shows us that living as a progressive woman in this regulatory culture was complicated and is not something to return to. Its constriction of the wearer represents the socio-cultural restraints of the era. Virginia’s vexation is further dramatized by the stark contrast between her frantic attempt to run and the astonished faces of passing male doctors and female nurses in wide-fitting coats, strolling unproblematically through the same space.

498 ‘One for the Money, Two for the Show’ (2:11).
499 See also Entwistle’s 2000a; 2000b; 2001 work on discourses of women’s professional dress codes.
500 Negrin 2015. Negrin discusses the use of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception for the analysis of the embodied experience of fashion.
Shaping the foundation of the costumed body, the period dramas’ use and imaging of 1950s-60s underwear captures the issues of historical authenticity, critical nostalgia and serial characterisation. An obvious but significant difference between the image of undergarments during the period and as represented in television today is that they are now unproblematically part of visual culture and candidly shown on screen. The girdle is the most symbolic underwear fashion of the 50s and, as Valerie Steele remarks, serves as an object of desire due to its shaping and confining the flesh of the female body.501 It shapes the actresses’ bodies into the period’s desired hourglass-shaped body silhouette and helps project them into their characters’ world. Actress Betsy Brandt (Barbara Sanderson in Masters of Sex) has noted that the uncomfortable feel of the girdle underneath the outer layer of her costumes helps her forget the present and embody the historical period.502 Yet, more than a hidden means of constructing the hourglass silhouette, in Mad Men, Call the Midwife and Masters of Sex women’s underwear is explicitly shown during scenes in which the characters dress or undress. They show how women’s bodies are shaped into a form of femininity meant to comply with their position within the norms and values of the period, and the different designs of the undergarments convey characters’ distinct sexual identities and negotiate how they deal with their (limited) level of freedom.

Regarding Mad Men, Murugan notes that despite differences in connotation between dress styles, from Betty’s New Look on the one side to Joan’s sheath dresses

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on the other, ‘the undergarments were the same regardless of dress shape’ to construct the hourglass figure.\textsuperscript{503} Whilst all together the designs help create the overall aesthetic underneath women’s attire and add to the texture of the series when the undergarments are made visible, there are significant differences in designs to differentiate between characters or show changes in their costuming according to their development and changing identity politics throughout the serial narrative. \textit{Mad Men} shows this most clearly when in ‘Maidenform’ (2:6) Don claims for an underwear campaign that every single woman is either a ‘Jackie’ (Kennedy) or a ‘Marilyn’ (Monroe), but Peggy finds herself suiting neither the category of virgin/angel nor that of mistress/monster.\textsuperscript{504} Different types of underwear represent different types of femininity here, suggesting that there are more than just two categories possible.

As a series about sexuality, \textit{Masters of Sex} features numerous dressing and undressing scenes in which underwear is explicitly shown and tells us about the characters and narrative. It represents the distinct sexual identities of its female characters and shows how the women deal with their bodies being forced into a form of femininity compliant to the dominant norms of the 1950s. Vivian wears a cotton triangle brassiere; simple, practical and compliant with her being coded as ‘naive’ and ‘inexperienced’ in terms of sexuality. In a different way, the shots of Libby in underwear draw attention to the bodily confinement of her undergarments and the way this inhibits her expression of sexuality. In Season 2, Libby is twice shown in a white girdle that enwraps her body from a pointy brassiere to garter straps hanging from her thighs. In ‘Dirty Jobs’ (2:4), Libby paces back and forth between the mirror and the wardrobe in her bedroom whilst choosing a dress for a luncheon and talking to the babysitter about Bill’s anxiety about fatherhood. The scene is cut in shot/reverse shots between Libby and the babysitter with the baby. One shot lingers on Libby’s engirdled body, framing exclusively her torso on the left side of the frame, without her talking head. This focus on her confined body in the girdle is repeated in ‘Asterion’ (2:7) in a bedroom scene in which Bill and Libby fight over his mother’s role in their household. These images of Libby exposed in the structured full-body girdle shows that, despite her attempts to gain sexual agency, she remains trapped in a construct of the period in which she is framed as an object, not a subject of desire. The shots of Virginia in underwear convey a different sexual identity, as they often zoom in on her performance of putting on or taking off the pieces of dress and suggest that she is in control of her body image and actions. In ‘Race to Space’ (1:2), for instance, Virginia is shown at her vanity table in a white long-line brassiere whilst

\textsuperscript{503} Murugan 2011: 172.

\textsuperscript{504} Krouse 2011: 194.
attaching skin-coloured stockings to the garter straps of her girdle. Stockings, as Steele explains, ‘lead the viewer’s eyes up the legs, while garter belts frame the genitals’. With a focus on the attachment of the straps of the garter belt to her stockings, these shots emphasise the sensuality of her legs.

Underwear is in this series also used to show the development of characters as the serial narrative progresses. An important but at first sight unobtrusive change in Virginia’s costuming occurs just after in ‘Involuntary’ (1:9) Bill decides to pay for her physical participation with him in their study of human sexuality and she realises that their relationship is an extramarital affair rather than an unconventional work agreement. Albeit unasked for, receiving money for sexual intimacy gives Virginia’s femininity a different mark. When in the following episode her lover Dr Ethan Haas unzips Virginia’s dress in her bedroom, one detail marks a significant change: the slim strap of a black brassiere is exposed. As Virginia trades her white foundation underwear for a black brassiere, she is symbolically branded with a femme fatale femininity. Regarding the femme fatale in cinema, Bruzzi points out that she is characterised foremost by the display of her long, sensual legs, which represent both power and sexuality. From that moment, in following (un)dressing scenes Virginia is typically wearing a black underdress, brassiere, slip, garters and stockings (see ‘Fight’ (2:15)). The framing of Virginia in black undergarments, focusing on her legs and body, sets her apart as a woman embodying an unapologetic stance towards sexual agency in an era which forced femininity into structured girdles. Yet, she remains confined to the structure of the period. When Libby, at the end of Season 2, also rebels against the norms by sleeping with an African American man, the second time she visits his house she is wearing no more than a short, translucent, flimsy nightgown under her coat. As these women temporarily shed the restraint of white foundation garments, they engage in acts of social resistance; identified by Pierson as ‘moments of discontinuity or counter-memories with the hegemonic notion that the early 1960s was a period of limited social conflict’. These acts criticise the period: by showing the garments’ confinement of the women and their attempts at liberation, this costuming negotiates conflict and reminds us of the limitations of social life in the 1950s. In Call the Midwife this is poignantly the case when in Series 2 Jenny treats a woman who conceals her pregnancy of eight months with a tight-laced girdle so as not to lose her job and dignity over an out-of-wedlock affair. The girdle not only represents an image of Fifties fashion that contributes to its appealing nostalgic

505 Steele 1996: 132.
imagery, but also serves a critical form of nostalgic discourse which shows how girdling retained control over women’s social standing.

**Pretty style and substance**

‘We are midwives, not glamourpusses,’ refutes Nurse Crane when she is told by Sister Julienne that their new uniforms would not only be ‘professional, practical’ but also ‘really rather pretty’. Coinciding with its transition from the 1950s into the 60s, the opening episode of Series 5 of BBC1’s Sunday-evening drama *Call the Midwife* sees the arrival of a new set of uniforms which replace the ones the nurses had been costumed in for all thirty-three episodes of the preceding four series. This moment has caused great excitement both in the text and in the wider media – *Radio Times*, *TV Times* and *Total TV Guide* frame the series as having hit a new era.508 Young nurses Trixie Franklin (Helen George), Barbara Gilbert (Charlotte Ritchie) and Patsy Mount (Emerald Fennell) are overfilled with joy when they receive the parcels that contain the novelty. The more senior Phyllis Crane (Linda Bassett), however, needs time to adjust. Other scenes show how the change is processed by different characters, whilst life in working-class London goes on. Nurse Crane’s comment encapsulates the assumption that professional/practical and pretty/ glamorou s are mutually exclusive, or that a pretty uniform would mean privileging style over substance, prettiness over practicality.

Yet, costume can do much more than just make characters into midwives or glamourpusses. As I argue throughout this thesis, television costume is more complex than being either ‘transparent’ or ‘spectacular’; we need to look at how ‘ordinary’ or repeatedly used costumes as well as stylistically foregrounded costumes function in relation to serial characterisation and (visual) storytelling techniques in the medium. Whilst the new uniforms are framed as spectacular in and beyond the text (marking an ostensibly sudden transition from the ‘Frumpy Fifties’ to the ‘Swinging Sixties’) and the nuns’ and working-class characters’ costumes read as their inconspicuous counterpart, the change in costumes signifies more than a superficial Sixties update. The pretty, as Rosalind Galt argues in her work on the concept in film and aesthetics, has been consistently excluded as a critical category and denigrated as meaningless, apolitical, empty spectacle, superficial, passive or feminine.509 This is contrasted to beauty: ‘To defend the beautiful or the ugly might be a heroic or radical task, but the

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508 This was featured on the covers and in articles of *Radio Times*, 16-22 January 2016; *TV Times*, 16-22 January 2016; *Total TV Guide*, 16-22 January 2016.
509 Galt 2011.
pretty is precisely defined by its apparently obvious worthlessness. The beautiful ostensibly has elements that exceed what is merely pleasing:

The pretty vista is less valuable than the dirty street or the wretched urchins because once these visually unappealing scenes are attached to beauty, they are understood as having inherent goodness, nobility, and truth. To be beautiful is to be good, whereas to be pretty is simply to look good.

The beautiful is thought to have substance; the pretty is not. In the following analysis, taking *Call the Midwife* as an example (although it also accounts for *Masters of Sex*), I argue however that there is an intricate meaning-making process at work in the series’ costume design in which the stylistic juxtaposition of prettiness and gruesomeness lies at the very core of the text’s substance.

*Call the Midwife* focuses on the lives and work of a group of midwives set in the post-war working-class community of Poplar in the East End of London. Initially adapted from a 2002 memoir by Jennifer Worth, the first and second series tell the story of Jenny Lee (Jessica Raine), later Jenny Worth, a newly qualified midwife from a middle-class background who joins a commune of nurses and nuns working as midwives based at ‘Nonnatus House’. The first series in 2012 surprised critics and the network by becoming the BBC’s most successful new drama since the current ratings system was implemented in 2001. Although, as expected, some male writers dismissed it early on as purely sentimental and nostalgic women’s television, *Call the Midwife* has had an overwhelmingly positive response from critics in the UK and, since it was broadcast on PBS, in the US, and has been recommissioned for more series than was ever anticipated. The show has been nominated for and won numerous awards, including a BAFTA win in 2013. After the success of the first two series, creator and writer Heidi Thomas expanded the narrative beyond the memoir to explore the stories of other women, with Raine leaving after Series 3. The programme currently has nine series and has seen a range of different lead characters. It has become an example of the quintessential British Sunday-evening drama. *Call the Midwife* is seen as unique in its portrayal of women’s issues and camaraderie between women and is subversive in its engagement with the taboos and politics of reproduction and the lives of working-class women. It has been hailed as ‘feminist

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510 Ibid. 7.
511 Ibid. 52.
513 FitzGerald 2015: 250.
514 Ibid. 251.
television’. Louise FitzGerald argues that neither the memoirist nor the adaptor had initially framed it as political, but that Thomas has appropriated this critical response for the following series.515 Questioning this reception, FitzGerald contends that ‘its main concern is in the relationship between poverty and social welfare, not feminism’.516 If for varying reasons, critics agree that the text eloquently deals with difficult topics and transcends just sentiment. Yet, even in positive critiques of the show, the style versus substance binary is being reinforced. The New Yorker’s television critic Emily Nussbaum writes: ‘beneath its sepia tones and gentle ways, the series is a safe place for dark truths, among them the many ways in which birth can be a terror, something that no one is designed to go through alone’.517 Nussbaum assumes that it is in spite of the series’ stylistic tone that has good substance, but I argue that it is because of that. Call the Midwife is characterised by its nostalgic appeal, ‘make do and mend’ mentality, frequent shots of women knitting, sewing, crocheting, dressing and discussing clothing, and balancing the Parisian styles of middle-class nurses and housewives against the raggedy florals, plaids and hand-me-downs of working-class families. Costume and other elements of style construct the series’ tone, texture and substance, both polished and threadbare.

The uniforms of Call the Midwife are iconic for the series’ visual style. Both in the text and in its representation in the wider media, the series’ image is characterised by the nurses wearing light blue uniforms with crisp white collars, red cardigans, and, when outdoors, red hats and grey coats, or white caps and aprons in the antenatal clinic; and the nuns wearing traditional religious habits with crisp white wimples (Figure 52). In terms of serial television’s premise of repetition and anticipation,518 these costumes, worn by the midwives in every scene in which they are on duty, create a sense of continuity and stylistic stability throughout the episodes and series. This is aided by the re-use of items and the coherent colour palettes of the nurses’ off-duty wardrobes, but gradually, the style of their everyday dress develops as midwives come and go and tastes change alongside fashion trends, whilst the uniforms remain a beacon. Costume’s dynamic of continuity and anticipation of change is key to the meaning-making process of serial television drama. This is a show about women’s role in society and social change, and the nurses’ and nuns’ uniforms speak for their different social roles. The costumes cannot be defined as either just style or just substance, or by being historically accurate or not; style and substance are not binary, but inherently linked in the costuming strategy.

515 Ibid. 250.
516 Ibid. 257.
517 Nussbaum 2016.
518 Creeber 2013.
Costume designers put great effort into historical and archival research but may still choose to deviate from dress history. My interviews with Ralph Wheeler-Holes, the costume designer for Series 3 and 4 of Call the Midwife, and Nigel Egerton, who continued on Series 5, indicated that their research included visits to the Royal College of Midwives archives and hospitals in London as well as speaking to people who have lived through the period, who were midwives during the period, or are currently nurses at the same hospitals.\(^{519}\) Although frequently told off for not using historically accurate items, Wheeler-Holes pointed out, ‘we are aware of the truth of it all, but actually we’re not making a drama documentary; we’re making a drama’.\(^{520}\)

The sense of ‘authenticity’ aimed for is not purely historical; not a window on the world of the 50s/60s, but a revisional perspective which is reflected in costuming. Authenticity for Wheeler-Holes is what feels true to the characters and narrative. Whilst Wheeler-Holes and Egerton used many original clothes and expressed a stronger affinity with these items because of their ‘period’ feel (similar to the old tweed coat discussed earlier), they also defended the use of newly store-bought or designed pieces to enforce characterisation and dramatic substance. The costume designers do differ in opinion about the appropriate liberty with dress history; as discussed below, Egerton introduced changes to make the costumes look ‘more period’; more ‘accurate’. Wheeler-Holes felt however that when the show became

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\(^{519}\) Interviews with Ralph Wheeler-Holes, 16-08-2016; Nigel Egerton, 01-11-2016.

\(^{520}\) Ibid.
more popular in the US, it became ‘more glamorous’ and ‘less realistic’. Performers’ wishes also play a role: whilst some are content with looking working-class, others want to look polished – and the costume designer has to work with the set designer, hair and makeup artists and producers as well. As Wheeler-Holes put it, ‘the job is 40% clothes and 60% psychology’.

Even if television appears like a window on the world, costume designers exaggerate contrasts between colours and styles to differentiate between characters and make us instantly ‘get’ their different identities. There is a careful stylistic construction which makes the text’s substance come across. A study of television costume and aesthetics should not just highlight spectacular costume moments but take into account the serial patterns of colours and styles. Character identity dictates the extent to which characters’ everyday dress in Call the Midwife changes alongside fashion trends, corresponding with how quickly they adapt to changes in modern life. Jenny’s costuming, in its quality, pastel colours and style, carries traces of her middle-class background and time spent in Paris, and her style remains consistent. When Sister Bernadette, then Shelagh (Laura Main), leaves the order to marry GP Patrick Turner (Stephen McGann), she only has a suitcase with clothes from 1948 and has trouble choosing a wedding dress, as she is out of sync with fashion. Her style remains disjointed and she wears the same colours and outfits more often than others. Barbara Gilbert has a cheerful disposition but not much affinity with fashion and wears clashing colour and style combinations; Patsy and Delia, a secretly lesbian couple, wear styles on the cusp of traditionally feminine and slightly masculinised. Trixie, who stars in every series, is the fashion-forward character: her wardrobe develops along the lines of magazine fashion, she talks about fashion and is the first to adopt new styles – even though, Wheeler-Holes noted, ‘it’s a complete farce to think that a midwife like Trixie would have had the range of clothes that Trixie has in the television series’. This is not just for superficial visual pleasure; as a detailed analysis will show, her pretty clothes are central to the articulation of the deeper, darker truths in the narrative.

Characters’ identities are also differentiated in how they style their uniform’s cardigans: Cynthia Miller (Bryony Hannah), who becomes a nun in the 2014 Christmas special, is the only one who wears her red cardigan buttoned up, and the more senior Nurse Crane is the only one in later series; the more progressive Trixie and Jenny wear cropped cardigans whilst Chummy (Miranda Hart) wears a longer

521 Ibid.
522 Ibid.
523 Interview with Ralph Wheeler-Holes, 16-08-2016.
one; and Jane Sutton (Dorothy Atkinson), who struggles to fit in, wears a grey instead of a red cardigan. As others contend about Mad Men, differentiating between women’s styles helps to avoid essentialising the culture of the period represented.\footnote{Murugan 2011; Warner 2014.}

Although Mad Men initially presents its main characters as stereotypes—Betty as the frustrated, chain-smoking housewife in New Look dresses whose beauty seems wasted on her maternal role; Peggy as the mousy, proto-feminist, hard-working young woman in loosely draped, blandish, girlish outfits; Joan as the hyper-sexualised, savvy office diva in figure-hugging sheath dresses; Don as the smooth-talking yet mysterious man with a false name and double life as the epitome of office masculinity (smoking indoors, liquor at morning meetings, lunch break adultery)—the series resists essentialism by nuancing characters’ personal styles as well as their complex personalities and conflicting desires, thereby providing a critical view on those stereotypes.\footnote{Bruzzi 2011; Rogers 2011; Davidson 2011; Murugan 2011.}

Masters of Sex similarly distinguishes between its characters in terms of style: housewife Libby in lovely sweetheart dresses or skirts; career woman Virginia in close-fitting sheath dresses or two-pieces; cheerful secretary Jane in bright yellow and blue; lesbian former sex worker Betty (Annaleigh Ashford) in fashion-forward, colour-blocking and patterned outfits. Such a costuming strategy is crucial for shows about how different women deal with social change.

The uniforms, due to their role of signifying unity, in themselves are not spectacular, but there are moments in which the significance of the costume overtly drives character and narrative. In Series 4, Episode 5, Doctor Turner suffers a breakdown and nun-turned-wife/secretary Shelagh takes over his practice. Although Shelagh is a qualified nurse and had been a midwife for ten years as a nun, patients refuse to be treated by her as they do not believe in her capabilities because she is wearing an everyday dress style. Only when she dons the uniform, is trust regained – as is her confidence; she returns to midwifery. When the Series 5 nurses receive new uniforms, Nurse Crane is distinguished from the others as hers has a pointed collar whereas the others’ have a shawl collar. In historical reality, Egerton noted, Nurse Crane’s high collar was more conventional amongst midwives than the shawl shape. This stylistic choice aids the narrative premise that Nurse Crane differs in opinion, age and status. Her remark quoted at the start of this section suggests that uniforms should be only professional and practical. Nurse Crane voices the problematic assumption that it also being pretty would necessarily place it lower in the hierarchy of significance – an idea that is challenged by the visual style of the show itself.
The first episode of Series 5, broadcast on 17 January 2016, opens with Trixie working out amidst a synchronised group of women dressed in black leotards and tights. Narrator Vanessa Redgrave introduces the episode’s subject: ‘The female body is a complex thing: at once fragile and formidable; vulnerable and brave...’ Images of the fitness class are intercut with shots of bloody surgical materials and blood being mopped from the floor, after which we see Shelagh with a new mother, baby and father. The episode, in style and substance, is all about women’s relationships to their bodies and the cultural developments implied by the new silhouettes of the 60s. Yet, the novelty of fashion styles and silhouettes represented by those who can afford it is meaningfully juxtaposed to the still ‘frumpy’ (dowdy; outdated) looks of working-class characters and extras. The latter we tend to look through, since they seem to seamlessly blend into the world created on screen, but an analysis of style and aesthetics should take into account both transparent and more foregrounded costumes to understand and judge the text.

At the start of the new uniforms sequence, Barbara and Trixie cycle to Nonnatus House. Barbara is dressed in the uniform the nurses had been wearing throughout the preceding series: a crisp, pale blue shirt dress with a white Peter Pan collar, a red knit cardigan and a red hat. Just before, Trixie is shown cycling past the docks alone, styled in 60s Mod fashion: a cream white short-sleeved knit top with a high neckline, light blue ankle-length slacks, beige kitten heel pumps and plastic arm bracelet, cat-eye sunglasses and eyeliner, red lipstick and a white scarf with red and blue polka dots loosely tied around her shoulder-length blonde hair with a fringe (Figure 53). The crispness, close fit and carefully matched details of her 60s look form a contrast to the costumes of the dockworkers and children in the brown and grey streets she cycles through, who are dressed in weathered, worn, ill-fitting, mostly brown, beige, grey and navy clothes – a stylistic contrast that defines the series’ substance of poverty versus welfare. It testifies to a critical nostalgia that shows that not all was as polished as Trixie’s magazine fashion look, which stands out from the people around her. When Trixie arrives with Barbara, shots from the streets show Patsy (in uniform) leaning out a high window and shouting: ‘Do hurry up! You’re late for the delivery...’ The next close-up shows Trixie giggling and bouncing with excitement as she holds the brown paper parcel in her arms. Patsy and Barbara are also each holding a parcel; Patsy slaps Barbara’s hand as she tries to peek inside.
The dramatic construction of the text situates the arrival of the uniforms as a spectacular moment. Despite how it has been taken up by paratextual discourse, however, a closer look reveals that this is less about historical discourse (i.e. the Sixties have arrived) than it is about the serial exploration of characters, generational differences and the disruption of continuity. Whilst this spectacular costume moment seems to be all about changing style, it is also integral to the wider meaning-making process of the text.

The sequence cuts to Nurse Crane, wearing the original uniform with cardigan, looking at her parcel and expressing her worries to Sister Julienne (Jenny Agutter): ‘I hope it includes what it says it includes. I’m not sanctioning this fandangle until every button, bow and apron string’s correct’ (Figure 54). Sister Julienne responds, ‘Nurse Crane, the suppliers assured me that all is in order. The new uniforms are going to be everything we hoped for: professional, practical, and really rather pretty!’ Here, Nurse Crane sniffs that they are ‘midwives, not glamourpusses’. This scene is contrasted to the preceding one as it is darker lit and the characters are shot from a lower angle. The paper parcel makes a crumpling sound as Nurse Crane frustratedly picks it up and takes it away. She joins the other nurses in the hallway, all with their parcels, and when they look at Nurse Crane with a wary expression, she says, ‘Oh, go on then, I’ll race you!’ As the nurses sprint upstairs to get changed, they pass two nuns on the stairs. Lighting illuminates the crisp white of their wimples as Sister Winifred (Victoria Yeates) laughs and sighs to Sister Mary Cynthia: ‘Oh, no new look for us, Sister. Still, better 600 years out of date than six!’ This emphasises the continuity of their own costuming style, which resists social change. There is a
pensive, mildly doubtful look on Sister Mary Cynthia’s face as she affirms, which viewers of the earlier series can read as hinting at her recent past: she was one of them, a nurse in uniform before she became a nun in a habit.

Figure 54. Nurse Crane is hesitant about the new uniform.

Nurse Crane’s hesitation illustrates the generational gap between her and the younger nurses – a theme that is explored throughout her serial storylines. This ties in with the idea that the cultural changes of the 60s were more readily adopted by the younger generation, but also with the notion that a woman’s professional dress should be austere, not pretty, in order for her to be taken seriously. This is built on the assumption that ‘too much’ style inhibits something from seeming important, or in the context of television drama, from conveying substance.

Galt criticises ‘the anti-pretty rhetoric of cinema’ (and its criticism) and uses the decorative image to pose questions of aesthetic and political value.\textsuperscript{526} Similarly, in the style versus substance binary of television criticism, pretty or pleasing stylistic elements are seen as the lesser quality. Yet, they do however not detract from, but rather contribute to the text’s substance, or even explicitly dictate the narrative. When Wheeler-Holes came to work on Series 3 of Call the Midwife, he already wanted to change the uniform, but was only allowed ‘to add some frill to the hats’.\textsuperscript{527} In Series 1 and 2 the nurses’ hats when working in the clinic are plain, crisp white caps, but in Series 3 they have a rim of white lace frill at the top. In Episode 2 of this series, Jenny

\textsuperscript{526} Galt 2011: 5-6.
\textsuperscript{527} Interview with Ralph Wheeler-Holes, 16-08-2016.
is appointed as the clinic’s Acting Sister – to the chagrin of Trixie. As Jenny prepares for her new role, a series of close-up shots show her putting on a different new white cap in front of a mirror: one with a wider lace rim than the standard ones and two lace-rimmed cords. Trixie touches her standard cap with an expression of envy when she later sees a patient complimenting Jenny on her hat. In the evening, Trixie lends Jenny her scarf but takes it back as Jenny decides not to go out with the rest. When Jenny receives information she had missed about a patient, Trixie remarks this was because she was ‘too busy being bossy’ and refutes Jenny’s defence by sneering: ‘If the cap fits...’ Here, the prettified, frilly cap drives a wedge between the characters and negotiates their relationship. We understand Trixie’s jealousy because, over the series, we have come to know her as the fashion-forward character. The decorative lace becomes politically valuable, signifying a hierarchical distinction between the wearer and other nurses.

Trixie’s look is as fashion-forward and pretty as it is substantial to the series’ dramatic scenes, in which the pretty and the gruesome are placed side by side. Series 2, Episode 5 features a sequence in which shots of a woman receiving an illegal abortion are intercut with Trixie painting her fingernails before a date, juxtaposing the bloodshed of the abortion with Trixie’s red fingernails and foreshadowing Trixie’s own hurt as her date sexually harasses her. Although painting fingernails may seem a frivolous act, this prettification does not cover up or mitigate trauma; the dramatic substance of the scene is embedded within it. In the next episode, Trixie parades around on red lacquered heels, wearing a black pencil skirt and tight-fitting top, saying she wants to wiggle like Marilyn Monroe. Jenny remarks she would have to cut a quarter off the heel to get that walk. Women’s negotiation between looking pretty but suffering for, or underneath it, characterises Trixie’s storylines. These are emotionally charged as she suffers from poor mental health whilst trying to negotiate the social expectations of women in the 50s, and she descends into alcoholism. There is a dialectic relationship between pretty clothes and dramatic substance; costume is never just spectacle. In the 2018 Christmas special, Trixie’s expensive black Parisian dress becomes stained with blood as she unexpectedly delivers a baby in the street. This is not like the films that Galt takes issue with: destroying the merely pretty and decorative according to canonical ideas of aesthetics and significance.\textsuperscript{528} It is also not, as Andrew Higson argues about English heritage drama, a case of nostalgia covering up the social critique from the source novel.\textsuperscript{529} Rather, \textit{Call the Midwife} exemplifies that there can be a focus on the pretty without a loss of substance. The blood-stained

\textsuperscript{528} Galt 2011.
\textsuperscript{529} Higson 2003: 80-84.
dress represents the coming together of blood, poverty and the pretty that makes *Call the Midwife* into the show that makes audiences watch and cry every Sunday evening: pleasurable to watch *and* affectively charged, dealing with an uncomfortable social history, revisioning how we might imagine that sepia tinted past.

Creator Heidi Thomas (who originally decided on the uniform’s colours) and advisor Terri Coates had wished to enhance the uniform for some time. Egerton explained that his issue with the old uniforms was the texture of the fabric and the way it lit on screen; he felt that its texture was too ‘flat’ and that it ‘could be more sympathetic to the camera [and] the lighting’. After liaising with Coates, Egerton conducted detailed costume research at the archives, using descriptions from the Central Midwives’ Board 1960 handbook *Midwives Uniform*. Although deviating from the prescribed colours, Egerton made the new uniform design more historically accurate: he adjusted the skirt shape to be more flared, the collars to be a round, low-cut V with a shawl shape (and buttons to take them off), white cuffs on the sleeves, and the caps to be correct according to the handbook, with new midwifery badges and an added waist belt with a silver clasp. They now wear grey capes instead of macs.

Whereas the old uniforms are made of a stiffer polyester/polycotton fabric, Egerton chose chambray for the new version, which he feels has more depth and ‘a nicer hang’; looking ‘softer, more sympathetic’ and increasing the ‘period’ feel and texture for the sake of characterisation and the narrative world.

The dressing sequence in which the nurses don their new uniforms, as such scenes often do, marks the moment of change. The way the women receive the new style communicates the episode’s substance of women’s changing social roles and relationships to their bodies. A shot pans from a frame with all pieces of the new uniform laid out on a bed to Trixie picking up a petticoat with Barbara and Patsy behind her, all shown from the hips up in their underwear as they put on their uniforms. When Patsy remarks that they are ‘rather more nipped-in than the last ones’, Trixie responds that she has no complaints; she wants to show off the slim waist she worked so hard for during her recovery from alcoholism. Barbara says that midwives in Scandinavia are wearing slacks, and although Patsy would find it ‘bliss’, Barbara expresses discontent with the shape of her thighs. Whilst Patsy and Trixie argue over Trixie persuading them to come to her fitness class, Phyllis Crane enters to ask for help with the new fastenings. Upon Patsy’s remark that she will ‘have to turn a blind eye to all of us in our scanties’, Nurse Crane discards her robe and reveals an unstructured underwear suit, saying, ‘we’re all girls together, aren’t we?’

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530 Interview with Nigel Egerton, 01-11-2016.
531 Although the grey macs were more historically accurate.
others laugh uncomfortably as non-diegetic music enhances the comedic moment: she is set apart from the other nurses, as the others are wearing a brassiere or structured girdle according to late 50s fashion. This emphasises the generational difference between the characters in dealing with change through comedy built on a difference in style.

Tied in with how the new silhouette is used as a hook, the decorative aspect of the new uniform that causes friction is the waist belt. In a next scene, the nurses march into the dining room in their uniforms with their hands on their hips; the nuns clap and laugh (Figure 55). Sister Julienne is pleased, but Sister Evangelina (Pam Ferris) asks ‘if those waspy belts are practical? If there’s one thing midwifery has always involved is a good deal of bending at the midriff; one protracted birth on a low-slung mattress and you’ll end up cut in half.’ Her comment reflects Nurse Crane’s worries about the pretty style not being practical, but never again is it suggested that it is unpractical; after this episode, the uniform returns to its function of creating continuity in the serial narrative.

Figure 55. The midwives present their new uniforms.

**Conclusion**

As the weave and weft of clothing textures can be brought into sharp focus, television texts increasingly communicate substance through close-ups on clothing textures and details. This complicates the distinction between looking *through* or *at* costume, as

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532 Egerton used original underwear from the 50s for Barbara and Phyllis but used store-bought brassieres for Patsy and Trixie.
costume in Call the Midwife, for example, is not spectacular, but does invite us to pay attention to clothing textures and acts of knitting, sewing, crocheting and mending. Costume textures and these acts convey the text’s narrative substance; they are often central to communicating the women’s joint effort and support. Call the Midwife’s Series 2, Episode 8, for example, opens with medium and close-up shots of Jenny, Cynthia and Chummy washing and pressing baby clothes from Cynthia’s childhood to donate to Chummy, who is pregnant. An extreme close-up shot shows a small, cream-coloured, crocheted baby cardigan with brown buttons which Chummy runs through a clothing press. Medium shots alternate between Chummy sitting at the kitchen table and Cynthia and Jenny standing on the opposite side, and as Cynthia tells them that the buttons on the cardigans came from her mother’s wedding dress, with a cracking sound and a cringed expression Chummy breaks the buttons in the press. Between the shots of Chummy apologising, there is another extreme close-up on the crocheted fabric.533 Several scenes later, an extreme close-up shot focuses on two skilled hands sewing a new button on the crocheted baby cardigan, then focuses on the background and pans along two more pairs of hands folding several different fabrics.534 This expresses the ‘make do and mend’ mentality of the midwives and tells us about the series’ imagination of women’s work and their resources at the time.

The close-ups on threads and fabrics illustrate a feeling of closeness between characters through the construction of texture in the image. A later scene starts with close-ups of blanket squares being crocheted, laid on the recognisable blue uniforms with red cardigans, moving up to show that Jenny and Trixie are making a beginning for Sister Monica Joan. Cynthia is wearing a top of a fabric that Chummy has given to her as a gift during a previous episode, in which Chummy had taken fabrics back to Nonnatus House from her missionary work in Africa and had chosen one specifically for each of the nurses. (Presumably Cynthia has sewn this top herself.) When Fred, holding his grandson, is giving parenting advice to Chummy, who is now wearing the maternity version of her uniform, she is struck with pain as her labour begins. The episode reaches a dramatic high as it appears that Chummy is haemorrhaged during childbirth. She is admitted to the hospital; her life is in danger. The nuns and nurses stay up together all night and crochet a blanket together. Several extreme close-ups

533 Later, when the nurses and Sister Evangelina discuss how to keep Sister Monica Joan (with her deteriorating mental state) from answering the phone, Cynthia suggests they could keep her busy with making baby clothes, to which Sister Evangelina responds she should be making blanket squares instead: ‘She could knit them in her sleep, just like any fool. Then she can sew them altogether, and some deserving person will get a lovely bedspread.’

534 The shot ends on Trixie applying a mask, looking in a hand mirror. A long shot shows the nurses all sitting at the kitchen table; Cynthia in everyday dress with the baby cardigan, Jenny in uniform, Chummy in floral maternity wear and Trixie in a pink ruffled robe, whilst Jane in a blue jumper serves tea and they discuss baby clothing and Chummy still needing to adjust the maternity version of her uniform.
show their hands lacing the blanket squares; a long shot shows all of them focused on lacing and crocheting separate squares. More close-ups show the midwives working on the blanket squares, as the narrator says they have never felt closer. The camera glides along the crocheted blanket to show how the separate squares are gradually forming a blanket. A long shot of the same composition as the one before now shows all of them connected by the blanket in between them, on which they are working together. They later cover Chummy, who is lying in a hospital bed, with the crocheted blanket they have crafted together. This scene is one of the most powerful of the series – not through dialogue, but through the very act of crocheting. Here, again, meaning made through stitching and texture; substance and style become inextricable.

What seemed initially most significant about this area of programming is that British and American period dramas often imagine an ostensibly sudden transition from the Fifties to the Sixties, in which the Fifties are framed as restrictive and frumpy and the Sixties as the moment of revolution and rapid social change – a transition we should be critical of. In Masters of Sex, this happens within a single scene: in ‘Asterion’ (2:7), the series’ narrated time jumps from 1958 to 1960 as Betty guides Libby and her toddler son through the building of Bill’s clinic. Betty, the fashion-forward queer former sex worker, is first dressed in a Fifties tight-bodied, wide-skirted, yellow polka-dot dress, whilst Libby appears in a simple dark blue dress under a long beige coat. The time lapse is explicated by Libby and Betty carrying not just the one toddler, but two children upstairs in the next shot; Libby’s now-preschooler son dressed in blue and her baby daughter in pink. Libby’s costume change is marginal—a shorter coat in the same colour over a dark brown dress—because her character holds on to the social norms of the 50s and a traditional image of domestic femininity (which only changes later in the series). Betty’s look, however, transforms to a loosely draped, brown and white Mod dress of synthetic fabric with a bold, diamond-shaped pattern. Later, Betty is wearing a strikingly Mod combination of a shirt with a tropical fruit print, tight blue Capri trousers and a small yellow hat, signalling that the Sixties have begun. Yet, only in Season 3 did the programme’s Sixties aesthetic become extensively implemented. Similarly, as discussed above, Series 5 of Call the Midwife is framed as the start of a new era, where costuming is also used to signal change. Only in Series 9 does Call the Midwife fully commit to Sixties styles, showing the midwives proudly on a catwalk in colour-blocking miniskirt outfits without tights.\footnote{The current issue of Radio Times at this time of writing, 4–10 January 2020, has three of the midwives on the cover dressed in Mondrian-style mini dresses, referencing Yves Saint Laurent’s famous 1965 Mod collection. The subtitle reads: ‘Look who’s swinging into 1965!’} The idea of the Sixties is suggested by the texts but
emphasised by the media since the narratives hit 1960, which we should indeed be critical of, but my closer look at the costuming strategies of these dramas reveals that whether or not the characters are wearing Mod style fashions is less about historical discourse (i.e. the Sixties have arrived) than it is about the serial exploration of characters, generational differences and the disruption of continuity. Whilst a costume moment such as the nurses receiving new uniforms seems to be all about changing style, it is also integral to the wider meaning-making process of the text.

Contrary to the costume designer’s aim to make the new uniforms of Series 5 look ‘more period’, the media took the innovation as a marketing tool to celebrate the series’ turn to the Sixties, repeating the trope of the transition from the 1950s to the 60s as a radical transformation. When confronted with this media representation, Egerton chuckled and responded:

(...) what I liked about 1960 and 1961 is that it’s still quite frumpy. 60s, for me, is still 50s, really. And I’m not that interested in Swinging Sixties, which I think is what they were trying to sell, but for me, 1960 in Poplar was not Swinging Sixties; for me, it’s dirty, depressing, frumpy, working-class Sixties.

Indeed, most of 1960 Poplar in the series remains ‘frumpy’, only it is these costumes that are more transparent; that we tend to look through. Every episode, the nurses care for women from working-class families who cannot afford new fashions. Another storyline in the same episode concerns a mother who gives birth to a baby with severe deformities, and who is consistently dressed in layered florals. When Trixie (in black leotard with bright coral cardigan) persuades Patsy and Barbara to join her fitness class in black leotards (for which they get in trouble with the nuns), they stand out from all other women in the class who are predominantly dressed in ‘frumpy’ floral dresses and blouses, with calf-length skirts. One of these women suffers a prolapse of the womb but was not able to seek help since she never learnt the words to name her body parts. This woman, visually linked to the other women in florals and calf-length skirts, stands in for a generation of women lacking agency and as such conveys the narrative’s premise of women’s bodies as a feminist issue and the relation between poverty and social welfare.

If we look at the role of costume design in Masters of Sex and Call the Midwife, we find that even at the moment where style appears to be at its prettiest (here: Mod) or most transparent (here: frumpy), it makes a significant contribution to narrative substance. This chapter’s discussion suggests, firstly, that the style versus substance binary hinders a productive study of dramatic television texts and problematically
reinforces the idea of television as a window on the world; secondly, that we instead need to look carefully at how elements such as the colours, textures, shapes and of uses of costume function in relation to television narrative, characterisation and seriality; and thirdly, that we should not dismiss costumes as either a spectacle that distracts from the narrative or a seemingly self-evident component to look through, as their function in the series is often more complex.

There is no opposition between the pretty, nostalgic look of Masters of Sex and Call the Midwife and the dramatic subjects the texts deal with; rather, meaning resides in the stylistic juxtaposition of prettiness and gruesomeness of the situation the characters are in. Style is substance and vice versa. Taking this into account allows us to understand the levels of meaning at work in this television moment: that it does not turn midwives into glamourpusses or make the Sixties push aside the Fifties, but that the new uniforms and Trixie’s or Betty’s fashions as well as the ordinary styles of other characters and the way different characters deal with change say something about the dynamics of age, class, cultural developments and women’s relationship to their bodies. This moment makes meaning in the context of the programmes’ serial narrative, characterisation and costuming strategies. Decorative aspects need not inconvenience narrative substance but can structure it. The new uniforms, as Sister Julienne says, are professional, practical and pretty all at once.
**Conclusion**

This thesis has engaged with the question of how to understand television by looking at clothing through both a diachronic and a synchronic lens. In arguing that costume and fashion play a key role in meaning-making process and wider cultural expression of television drama, my diachronic approach demonstrates the function of costume for serial character and narrative development, as well as how dressing choices impact on a text’s style and aesthetics and on our cultural understandings of dress. At the same time, an ostensibly simple dressing choice, when unpacked synchronically, can prove to have crucial implications for how we understand a particular text, character, narrative strand and/or clothing style. The methodological contribution of this thesis—to include a focus on costume and fashion in the analysis of dramatic television texts—intervenes in the existing debates around style and aesthetics.

The aesthetic study of television undertaken in thesis was not set out to make decisive evaluative judgements about whether the programmes are good or bad, but rather focuses on, in the words of Horace Newcomb, ‘the description and definition of the devices that work to make television one of the most popular arts’.\(^{536}\) My focus on the device of dressing makes a methodological and theoretical contribution which in the process has produced innovative readings of both previously written about and otherwise overlooked television texts. The thesis has shown that, in both high-profile and low-profile texts, the device of dressing adds a level of complexity that has been neglected in previous scholarship. In *the* book on contemporary television’s potential for complexity, Jason Mittell builds his poetics entirely on storytelling and character, not just neglecting but rejecting the value of costuming; where he writes about change in serial characters, Mittell argues that ‘overt actions’ can ‘indicate a character’s true subjective state’, but that ‘dialogue, costume, and appearance all might be indications solely of superficial changes or characters’ attempts to change that viewers assume are ultimately futile’.\(^{537}\) Whilst indeed not all instances of characters claiming to have changed turn out to be true, Mittell fails to acknowledge that costume usually *does* contain this very complexity, for example by signalling through tailoring that the new look does not ‘fit’ or by capitalising on the discrepancy between who the character wants to be and who they actually are.\(^{538}\) Costumes do not just offer a superficial exterior but are designed to negotiate the layered interior of a character over time. All we need to do is take them seriously.

\(^{536}\) Newcomb 1974: 245.  
\(^{537}\) Mittell 2015: 134-135.  
\(^{538}\) See for example my discussion in Chapter 1 of Sonny Crockett’s costuming in 5:2 of *Miami Vice*. 

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Rather than making evaluative judgements about the texts, I have opened up a space for the re-evaluation and nuancing of existing methodologies and theories for understanding television style and aesthetics, offering a revised framework for textual analysis that includes the device of dressing. Since the emergence of Television Studies, scholars have sought ways of justifying the study of texts that are either considered spectacular/excessive/style over substance or that seem to have no style at all.\textsuperscript{539} Recent high-profile, high-end production shows have received more serious attention from viewers and critics, but the set of texts this accounts for remains limited.\textsuperscript{540} In a critical overview of television aesthetics since the early 2000s, Sarah Cardwell struggles with Matt Hills’ inclusion of “popular” texts in aesthetic evaluation and what to do with Noël Carroll’s notion of ‘junk fiction’.\textsuperscript{541} Cardwell accepts R.G. Collingwood’s criteria for art, according to which ‘amusement art’, which television would be, is not considered art at all.\textsuperscript{542} This and Carroll’s notion that television narratives are ‘junk fictions’ suggests, as Cardwell provokes, that it is problematic to take an aesthetic approach to most television.\textsuperscript{543} In her discussion of what constitutes an ‘aesthetic experience’, most theoretical accounts seem to assume that this requires an active attitude from the beholder who recognises the worthy qualities of the object; that is, an engagement with recognisable aspects of quality. However, this thesis has demonstrated that costume, one of the least recognised and noticed aspects of television style, is crucial to the aesthetics of television and how we experience and judge its meaning-making, even if we do not actively notice how and that the clothes contribute (because they are not a commonly acknowledged aspect). This leads me to suggest two things: (1) that we might ask if aspects of style that are not commonly actively recognised as value-contributing aspects may still be worthy of aesthetic study, and (2) that including costume strategies in our debate may help to close the conceptual gap between spectacular and transparent as well as between ‘quality’ and ‘junk’ television, since expression and meaning can be found in the way people are dressed in any text.

To return to my reference in the Review of Literature to V.F. Perkins’ work on film, we understand screen images through their coherence: the synthesis of elements and relationships in which ‘there is no distinction between how and what, content and

\textsuperscript{539} See Review of Literature.

\textsuperscript{540} A contentious point in which I avoid using the term ‘quality TV’, but Brunsdon’s 1990 discussion of Brideshead Revisited as a show that is deemed high quality thanks to its literary source, high-end production, renowned actors and heritage label is not far removed from contemporary high-profile shows that receive the attention that they get thanks to their commonly accepted markers of quality and their production and distribution strategies.

\textsuperscript{541} Cardwell 2014.

\textsuperscript{542} Ibid. 30.

\textsuperscript{543} Ibid. 31.
form’, and in relation to our knowledge and experience of the world. The form and cultural understandings of the medium of television are different from film. Due to its connotation as a window on the world and a medium that traditionally does not or should not flaunt its form, many stylistic attributes of television have been neglected or condemned. At the same time, recent high-definition, high-profile dramas have received considerable critical attention and there have always been spectacular aspects that have drawn our attention. In either case, to understand the synthesis of elements and relationships that make a television text, costume and fashion should receive at least as much attention in scholarly analysis as narrative content and structure, editing, framing, lighting, sound, performance and other elements that are commonly included in textual analysis. Out of all of these aspects, clothing has the strongest link with viewers’ notions of the lived world, since people (consciously or less consciously) ‘read’ clothes, see fashion and make decisions about what to wear on their own bodies every day. In a similar way to how television has long been seen as too familiar and everyday to be studied critically (because ‘everybody knows what it is like to watch television’), we read most clothing styles so easily and instantly that we look through the construction of their meanings. Whilst there are certainly television costumes and fashions that invite us to look at them in awe, they still tend to address the mind or senses rather than the intellect. Unpicking why they evoke awe requires analysis. The majority of clothes worn by people on the small screen fit within the medium’s expectations of regularity, realism, familiarity and genre-appropriate levels of dramatization. Analysing familiar objects requires extra effort on the part of the researcher. This thesis has taken such effort and demonstrates that rather than just discussing striking, spectacular, heritage or fantasy designs, it is also worth looking at the dimensions of costuming that we tend to look through, but which nonetheless support the text’s narrative, stylistic and aesthetic strategies and, through television’s function as a cultural forum, negotiate connotations of dress. The knowledge produced during this research project pertaining to how costume elements function generically now offers the opportunity to return to spectacular costumes and consider not only what their most striking attributes are, but also how choices of colour, fabric and tailoring make us ‘get’ their meanings in and beyond the text.

How might we understand costuming that is ‘inaccurate’ or melodramatic but the design of which does not disrupt television’s realistic illusion or our engagement with the character and narrative? Here, Ien Ang’s notion of ‘emotional realism’ can

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545 Fiske & Hartley 1978: 3.
546 See my discussion of Perkins 1990 in Chapter 1.
547 See the introduction of Chapter 2 for Ang’s definition of television’s ‘realistic illusion’; [1982] 1985: 38.
be applied: in her study of why many Dutch people watched *Dallas* (CBS 1978–1991) and had strong reactions to it, even though they are far removed from the rich Texas oil family it focuses on, Ang found that whilst the show is ‘unrealistic’ on a denotative level, viewers found it ‘realistic’ on a connotative level.\(^{548}\) Ang argues that fans ‘ascribe mainly emotional meanings to *Dallas*’; their perception of realism ‘is situated at the emotional level: what is recognized as real is not knowledge of the world, but a subjective experience of the world: [what Raymond Williams termed] a “structure of feeling”’.\(^{549}\) Television’s meaning-making process relies more on connotation than denotation; more on emotion than cognition; more on evoking a truth to feeling than a truth of fact. This is why costume designers so often choose to deviate from the (historical) reality of dress, whether or not the text strives for an illusion of realism; there is more value and complexity in emotional than factual realism where it comes to drama. If we are to evaluate how television does what it does, we need to, in Perkins’ terms, bring its meanings from mind to intellect.\(^{550}\) In the analytical process, one thing to look out for is that we not lose our emotional engagement; that we keep intact (as Perkins does) the emotional response that prompted our initial interest.

Television Studies scholarship has always been interdisciplinary, with wide-ranging foci and frameworks. Whilst the two main scholarly areas this thesis has intervened in are television style and aesthetics on the one hand and (film) costume and fashion on the other, my bringing them together to carve out a new field has been enriched by the inclusion of cultural theory, philosophical, historiographical and sociological perspectives and theories of gender, class, space, affect, colour and texture. My knowledge of how dressing choices generate meaning is partly due to the fact that, alongside this research project, I have taught myself to sew. The expertise of garment construction and fitting that I have gained by making clothes for myself and others has enabled me to intellectualise how costume operates and to demonstrate that design choices matter. When viewers who do not have this niche expertise watch *Suits* (USA Network 2011–2019), for example, they will likely instantly get that Harvey Specter (Gabriel Macht) is a confident, powerful character whereas Louis Litt (Rick Hoffman) is insecure and awkward in his masculinity, even though they both wear conventional business suits. I was once this viewer. In order to understand *how* it is that we ‘get’ these characters and their relationship, I had to interpret subtle, detailed tailoring choices such as the width of shoulder pads, ties and lapels and the fact that Harvey’s suits fit perfectly whereas Louis’ suits are too tight. Whilst being familiar

\(^{549}\)Ibid. 45.
\(^{550}\)Perkins 1990.
with the materiality and terminology of fabrics, styles and garments has certainly helped with the writing process, I am not saying that every television scholar requires extensive knowledge of sewing, fashion and tailoring, or all other above-mentioned fields, in order to incorporate costume into their analysis. I am saying that paying attention to costume design and fashion choices brings a substantial contribution to our understanding and appreciation of television texts.

Any study of television has to deal with the problem of text. Most programmes referenced in this thesis consist of multiple seasons and variable numbers of episodes, with many scenes and innumerable clothes to analyse. Some of these programmes are ongoing, presenting new information during my writing process: *Call the Midwife* epitomised its Sixties aesthetic with a runway show in Series 9, whilst I had already written most of my analysis about Series 5; ITV presenter Phillip Schofield suddenly came out as gay on live television in the 7 February 2020 episode of *This Morning*, making television history shortly before this thesis was due. The nature of television requires its researchers to set limits to the texts under scrutiny. In the selection of what costumes deserve attention, I chose examples that represent the overall aesthetic and achievements of the text and/or that tell us something about the text that could not be gained by looking exclusively at its other elements. At the same time, my analysis was concerned with the accumulative significance of dressing choices for television. Some new information presented in later episodes could potentially challenge a reading of the text from before that moment (e.g. Schofield’s disclosure of his sexuality prompts a reconsideration of his heteronormative dressing choices), but other developments support my existing discussions (e.g. Trixie wearing the shortest miniskirts and most extreme Mod fashions on the runway) and do not warrant reconsideration. It is a matter of strategic selection. This thesis shows the importance of looking beyond the pilot or any singular episode of a television programme to make claims about the text, because an ostensibly ‘innocent’ look in a different episode or a more gradual style development can significantly impact our understanding. Films have a shorter time in which to communicate meaning and, with a few exceptions, tell their stories in a contained instalment. Even if there are sequels, films tend to resolve their narrative issues more resolutely, within a shorter time; it is a blunter approach. Television, with its tendency towards seriality, offers poignant moments as well as long-term narrative developments, the logic of which is to great extent structured by costuming.

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551 We could even consider whether ad breaks during the broadcast or announcements of upcoming broadcasts are part of the text, but that falls outside the scope of this thesis.
As acknowledged in the main introduction, one of the limitations of this research project is the geographical and cultural scope of the body of studied texts. In order to get a foot in the door of Television Studies, I have chosen to focus on programming from the US and UK, since the dominant and relevant fields of existing scholarship that this thesis engages with look at programmes with this origin. A secondary reason for this decision was that my location provided access to British libraries and archives and offered me the opportunity to arrange interviews with British costume designers in person and American costume designers via Skype. This study serves to start a dialogue about television costume and fashion which can now be stretched out to a wider multiplicity of cultural output. Furthermore, whilst this thesis focuses most intensively on representations of gender, it offers space for more detailed critical discussions of issues of class, race, sexuality and nationality – issues that have been touched upon but left open for further study. Once we include a focus on costume and fashion into the textual analysis of television, there is an opportunity for enhanced critical consideration on any level.

In terms of genre, the selected programmes fall mainly in the categories of crime drama, legal drama and period drama. This covers a significant part of the television landscape. One genre that may seem glaringly absent here is soap opera, which offers an invaluable opportunity for the study of serial costuming strategies and theories of which have contributed to my understanding of costume and the melodramatic mode. However, a sustained study of costume in soap opera requires long-term historical research, which would become a project on its own. This is also a matter of access: having lived in the UK for a relatively short period, I would be much less qualified to study its soap operas than long-term viewers are. Whilst I have had access to broadcasts, online resources or DVD copies of my case studies and have a history of watching crime and legal drama, I do not have a history of watching soap opera – the sheer volume of which would be impossible to catch up within the timespan of this project. My personal history with television is one of growing up in a small rural place in the Netherlands (with only 16 houses) that did not have access to cable – we received three Dutch public broadcasting channels via an antenna and 200 German channels via a satellite disk that my father had assembled, from which I mostly watched the music channels and Cartoon Network. On a standard evening, as a child, I watched Sesame Street and a children’s news programme with my brother; as a teenager, my parents and I/we watched the eight o’clock news followed by a crime

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552 During the 2018 Critical Costume conference at the University of Surrey, I was asked to contribute to the forthcoming Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Film and Television Costume Design, a UCLA-led project, edited by Deborah Nadoolman Landis.
drama. To keep up with appointment television that was popular in the Netherlands but only available on commercial channels, such as *Lost* (ABC 2004-2010), I went to a friend’s house after school in a nearby village, but more everyday shows such as soap operas have not become part of my vernacular. Since the contribution of this thesis is largely methodological and theoretical, it aims to encourage other scholars to extend the study of costume and fashion to this and other genres.

To return to the question of what incited my initial interest in costume on the screen: in my first ever film analysis essay from ten years ago, which I wrote about Tarsem Singh’s *The Fall* (2006), I was already interested in exploring the meanings that are expressed through costume design. I assumed that it was a given that film and television scholars take costuming into account in their analytical process. It was my surprise that this is not usually the case, especially where it concerns television, that prompted this study. A question I receive in the feedback on every article I write is whether I could cite other sources that theorise television costume – I could not. This thesis has therefore started to fill a gap in literature and encourages others to include the close analysis of costume and fashion in their discussions of television’s meaning-making, so that one day it may become the given that I had assumed.
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1. Ralph Wheeler-Holes, Warwick, 16 August 2016

2. Nigel Egerton, University of Warwick, 1 November 2016

3. Ray Holman, London, 4 May 2017


5. Alexandra Caulfield, London, 8 June 2017

6. Maggie Donnelly, email, 21 June 2017

7. Ray Holman, phone, 11 April 2019

8. Ane Crabtree, Skype, 18 April 2019


10. Daniel Lawson, Skype, 3 May 2019

11. Michele Clapton, Skype, 19 August 2019
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