

## Queen Elizabeth I's Influence in Shaping Art and Fashion in England

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### Abstract:

Fashion and art have always played an important role in society and culture. The colourful and imaginative array of clothing and art designs that humans have developed over time can reveal a lot about their lifestyle and civilization at different times. The purpose of this article is to highlight the evolution of fashion in England during the Renaissance Era, with particular emphasis on its contribution to the development of English artistic movements. It heavily relies on books and authentic documents to provide a detailed description of art and fashion in sixteenth-century England with particular reference to the Tudors as the major cast.

**Keywords:** Art, Culture, English society, Fashion, Renaissance, Tudors.

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## 1. Introduction

Culture has a significant impact on the fashion and art of a particular nation. Fashion trends and works of art in society are simply reflections of its culture. They are assumed to have an impact on a region's culture to some extent. The majority of the time, however, it is the other way around. This concept can be applied to events in England during the sixteenth century. The Renaissance had a wide-ranging impact on English culture, including the introduction of Humanism and Individualism, which meant that more people had access to education and new ideas. As a result, they were able to express their creativity through art and break free from the Church's narrative. Art became more secular and diverse over time. Artists pushed visual form to more expressive heights than had previously been seen, benefiting the country's heritage.

The sixteenth century in England was certainly an exciting time. It was the "Renaissance" era, a cultural movement that lasted from the late fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century. It rediscovered ancient Greek ideologies and ushered in a new modern era. In Europe, the Renaissance inspired a great flowering of art, architecture, literature, science, music, philosophy, and politics.

However, it only flourished in England when the Tudor Dynasty ascended to the throne, a century after the Renaissance had thrived in the rest of Europe. This demonstrates the vital role that the Tudors played in popularizing Renaissance thought, either through the medium of art, such as exquisite paintings and architecture, or via extravagant costumes and elaborate appearances. The issue of fashion and art contribution to the development of the country as a whole arose as a result of this viewpoint. To this day, some argue that appearances and aesthetic creation have nothing to do with the nation's prosperity; nevertheless, others disagree, and this is the focal point this article attempts to find out, focusing on fashion and art during the English Renaissance and its impact on English culture.

The debate about the Norman Conquest has always been about whether it was a positive or negative event. Even at the time, English writers saw it as a disaster and a punishment. The Norman chroniclers, by contrast, portrayed it as a glorious victory by the great and godly Normans. In the 1800s, for instance, the great English historian E.A. Freeman saw Harold II as an English nationalist, fighting for the freedom of the English, while his rival J.H. Round portrayed the English as corrupt and out-of-date, and William the Conqueror as the king who brought modern, European ways to England. As a result, interpreting this historical event and whether it brought civility to English culture is difficult and dependent on the reader's own analysis. However, one must not overlook the Normans' notable legacies, such as French contributions to the English language, Norman architecture, and the feudal system, all of which influenced the development of English society.

## **2. The Advent of New Artistic Visions in Europe**

The debate about the Norman Conquest has always been about whether it was a positive or negative event. Even at the time, English writers saw it as a disaster and a punishment. The Norman chroniclers, by contrast, portrayed it as a glorious victory by the great and godly Normans. In the 1800s, for instance, the great English historian E.A. Freeman saw Harold II as an English nationalist, fighting for the freedom of the English, while his rival J.H. Round portrayed the English as corrupt and out-of-date, and William the Conqueror as the king who brought modern, European ways to England. As a result, interpreting this historical event and whether it brought civility to English culture is difficult and dependent on the reader's own analysis. However, one must not overlook the Normans' notable legacies, such as French contributions to the English language, Norman architecture, and the feudal system, all of which influenced the development of English society.

### **2.1. Styles of Clothing and Social Reaction**

One of William's first attempts to reassert control over the country was to replace the English in power with Normans because, in his opinion, the English were not worthy of his trust or good enough to be among the upper class. According to some historians, the Normans saw the English as second-class citizens and were determined to save England from its "backwardness" and "outmoded" culture. This sense of superiority can be seen in their use of French as a royal and courtly language rather than English, but more importantly in their clothing.

The use of costumes to distinguish social classes had existed in the English community since the beginning of time; however, with the arrival of the Normans, the distinction became more obvious. This was especially true given that classes were divided into upper Norman and lower English. Before the popularity of body armour, poorer men wore tunics, short trousers to avoid getting in the way of farming, and sometimes leggings to keep the lower body warm in the winter. English women, on the other hand, wore tunics and shorter gowns and covered their heads with a scarf made of large pieces of cloth. The English used primary colours for their clothing, leather was widely used, particularly in helmets and tunic bordering, silk was the dress of the wealthy, and as the commercial activity flourished, fine linen and other types of cloth found their way to England. The Norman influence was now gradually creeping in, making the Norman costume fashionable dress.

The Norman nobleman wore his tunic longer than the English and dressed his legs in hose and his feet in short boots; the Normans were more accustomed to cover their heads with hats than the English, so they cut their hair short, sometimes shaved the back of the head, and kept their faces clean-shaven, like priests. The English liked colour and ornaments, but the Normans had a much showier taste. They were proud of their appearance and thought pointed shoes were a sign of wealth and nobility.

The Normans were outstanding furriers, and the royal class used fur, along with other jewels, to decorate hats, that were the centre of attraction in the whole attire. Gloves were well-decorated adornments, not coverings, and were passed down through families in the same way that other property was. Over time, the Normans imitated the English by letting their hair grow and then experimenting with different hairstyles such as curls and, later, wigs. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it was very easy to distinguish between bad breeds and good births thanks to these exquisite costumes. It was not until the Tudor period that all classes were influenced by European extravagance and luxuries. (Hill, 1893, pp. 13-23).

At the time, the love of "la joie de vivre" and spoiling oneself with adornments was at its peak. Lavishness was seen in both the military and civil habits; men desired not only to be equipped, but also to be magnificently equipped for battle. The upper-class costume was distinguished by brilliant colours, unusual shapes, and expensive and fantastic fashions. Dress at the time was indifferent with the needs of the body or the wearer's convenience and comfort. When fur made its way through the lower classes and the "long peaked shoes," even peasants were subjected to this absurdity. Coloured shoes with long peaks, which had replaced the English plain black leather shoes, were getting longer each year. The blouse was introduced to the lower classes as well, though it was shorter and looser than those of the upper classes.

Similarly, as the middle classes grew in importance and wealth, it was only natural for them to indulge in more expensive clothing (embroidered gowns and tunics, ornaments and silken headbands). Nonetheless, the extravagant dress of nuns and clergymen had not previously been mentioned in historical records. They dedicated their lives to God and were not permitted to wear coloured gloves, rings, brooches, or ornamented belts (Hill, 1893, pp. 55-58). After a while, the distinctions between classes based on their attire were gradually obliterated because servants tried to imitate their masters and merchants wanted to dress like knights; basically, everyone strived for appearances. However, during the Tudor period,

laws were enacted to prohibit lower-ranking members of society from dressing like the Royalty, as the love of luxury had overwhelmed all of Europe, not just England.

## 2.2. The Development of Painting

Prior to the Norman Conquest, English painting, as a purely decorative arrangement of line and colour, was somewhat alien to the English conception. Beauty has primarily appealed to them through the ear in poetry and literature, rather than the eyes in sculptures and paintings. (Van Dyke, 1915, p. 296).

Painting, for example, was introduced by the Church as visual aids were needed to explain the Church's biblical doctrine and moral teachings to the uneducated along with the Normans. Thus, church wall painting flourished, though few have survived to this day due to dampness and other factors (Tomkeieff, 1967, p. 159). They were influenced by the Romanesque style, shown in illuminated manuscripts, wall paintings, and stained glass.

Illuminated manuscripts were those in which religious texts were embellished with decorated initials or miniature illustrations. The Bible and other religious manuscripts were the focus of Romanesque illuminations, which reached a peak of excellence in the thirteenth century. Stained glass was another important Norman art form that pervaded the windows of England's churches, cathedrals, and monasteries after the dukes launched a reform campaign against them because they thought the English churches were archaic and needed some symbolic illuminated windows. Their intention was for the ceiling to represent the sky and the body of the Church, depicting Christ's, the Virgin Mary's, and the saints' earthly lives, while figures of saints or personified virtues could be painted on the windows. (Tomkeieff, 1967, p. 160). The colours used were determined by the location and the wealth available. Most people had access to black (which was carbon from burned wood or bones), white (which was lime), and red and yellow earth pigmentation, but green, blue, and red were much scarcer. (Tomkeieff, 1967, p. 162).

### **2.3. Theatre and Music**

During the Middle Ages, theatre was in its most basic form, consisting of storytelling in which stories about heroes that provided moral instruction were usually sung or told around bonfire gatherings or feasting halls; however, with the Church's desperate need for visual aids to explain its services to the illiterate, theatre emerged. To explain their doctrines, they introduced a short one-act play in which the priests acted as performers. Despite this, no permanent playhouses of any kind were built during that period.

History and morality plays were also popular in the Middle Ages, where they attempted to imitate past events for didactic purposes; however, this didactic element had to be dropped in order for great drama to flourish. Such a step would be unlikely to come from the clergy, but rather from the general public. Music, on the other hand, is a natural outlet for a man's feelings and soul, so it must have played an important role in any period's life. The Normans, on the other hand, made little contribution to music. Songs were mostly traditional and are now extinct. There are drawings in early manuscripts of musical instruments in their primitive forms, such as horns and violins, which were most likely played in halls and palaces. Religious music, on the other hand, was the responsibility of the church, particularly monasteries, where the rule mandated many hours of liturgical singing each day. Despite the fact that the Church's drama and music were purely didactic and devotional, they also provided entertainment and pleasure to the people (Steenbrugge, 2017, p. 11). They were their only solace during those supposedly "dark times."

### **3. The Inspiration of Tudor Fashion**

As no other wardrobe drew as much attention as the British royal families', the massive number of portraits painted during the Tudor era made it very easy to get a peek at the Tudors' wardrobe and know how fashion was at the time. The allure of royal clothing extended beyond its cut and colour. These items were more than just clothes; they were also

symbols or statements. Throughout history, the royal wardrobe has played an important role in shaping the monarchy's image, for better or even worse.

Elizabeth had to carefully manage her image from the start of her reign. She was well aware that the odds were stacked against her becoming a successful monarch for several reasons: first, she was a woman doing a man's job; second, her mother was Ann Boleyn, and many people believed she was illegitimate; and third, she had very large shoes to fill because of her father, Henry VIII, who had every natural and artificial advantage. He was a handsome man; he was the ideal macho monarch. Elizabeth did not have all of these advantages, so she had to compensate by wearing clothes. And, in order to spread the word about how queenly this queen was, portraits of her dressed in powerful attire hung in every great house of the realm.

England enjoyed a long period of peace and expansion under Elizabeth I. It was an era of discovery and opportunity. In fact, the discovery of the New World was as exciting to them as the moon landing was to us. It was exciting to travel abroad and interact with people from other countries, bringing goods and new cultures with them. This was a watershed moment in the English economy because it opened new doors for trade and business with other countries, which had a substantial influence on English fashion.

At the time, costume was dictated by dominant European countries such as Spain and France, which dominated fashions for bright colours and extravagantly woven fabrics. (Elgin, 2005, p. 8) Upon this note, Tudor fashion was largely influenced by Spanish and French trends that reached in England via trade.

### **3.1. Trade and Fashion**

People in England had more money to spend on luxuries as the middle class grew. It was the birth of consumer culture, with many people making their fortunes trading the very textiles that were trending in the new fashion industry. Merchants gained confidence and



began to trade English wool for silks, jewels, and precious stones in Venice, Turkey, Russia, and China. Spices and silk were imported to England via overland and overseas trade routes, which meant that supply was dependent on foreign merchants who introduced new fashion trends to the English fashion market. The Tudors' costume was influenced by fashion from other countries, and as a result, it became more lavish and elaborate than at any time in history. Starting with Henry VIII, who encouraged the importation of fine European fabrics (cloth, satins, and brocades) and obviously took great pleasure in wearing them. Until Elizabeth I's reign, when she turned her attention to the fashion of King Philip II's court, despite the fact that political relations with Spain were tense for the majority of Elizabeth's reign. It did not stop the English from imitating their adversaries' fashion. The Spanish court expressed itself through stiff, buttoned-up styles and dark colours, primarily black, which became the cornerstones of Elizabethan fashion. (Elgin, 2005).

Fashion for both sexes went to extremes of design and opulence, changing almost weekly. Anyone appearing in court in an unflattering colour or wearing last month's fashion drew her eagle eye and became a target for mockery. Since being out of the queen's favour could be life-threatening, her young courtiers were kept in a constant state of rivalry for her approval (Elgin, 2005).

### **3.2.Spanish, Italian and French Fashion Trends**

There was a lot of criticism levelled at English fashion. Europeans frequently mocked the English for stealing the designs, referring to them as "apes of all nations." Critics claimed that because the English lacked their own style, they were forced to borrow the most interesting and unusual ideas from other countries and label them as Elizabethan fashion (Gail, 2003, p. 49).

The farthingale was an unusual Spanish addition to the Elizabethan gown. It was essentially an underskirt with wooden or wire hoops sewn inside that increased in size from waist to ground to give the dress that cone shape. This was an important addition to

women's clothing because it is still used today in wedding gowns - specially to give the bride a princess vibe. However, in 1570, it was primarily used to create the illusion of a smaller waist. This look could also be achieved by wearing a "bum roll," which was a roll of padding tied around the waist, making the waist look smaller.

Colourful embroidered fabrics were another Spanish trend in Elizabethan fashion. Colour was the etiquette's fingerprint. The queen's favourite colours were black and silver, which she only let privileged favourites wear. Essentially, because dyeing clothes with dark colours was once a very expensive process reserved only for the velvet class (Gail, 2003, p. 19).

Toward the end of the reign, the Italians introduced a new style of lower-body clothing articles known as Venetian Breeches or simply Venetians. They were essentially knee-length trousers for men, cut close to the body at first but becoming more puffed towards the end of the reign – as everything did – made of wool and cloth and worn with stockings. They quickly became a staple of western men's clothing. (Jeffrey L. Forgeng, 2005, p. 101).

Similarly, the slashing trend became an exaggerated motif in all fashionable clothing. It was the technique of cutting one fabric in such a way that the fabric of a contrasting colour could be seen underneath. In Italy, the style found its way into sleeves more than any other part of the garment; voluminous puffing of the under-sleeve would protrude from each cut portion of the sleeve. However, in England, slashed shoes revealed stockings, and on clothing, the under fabric was frequently pulled through the slashes for added effect. Slashing was popular in the early sixteenth century, but it remained popular throughout the Elizabethan period. (Brooke, 1963, p. 112).

Perhaps one of the most distinguished Elizabethan trends was the fancy ruff. It was an ornate collar that English men and women inspired from Holland (Brooke, 1963, p. 133). The stiffness of the garment forced upright posture, and their impracticality led them to become a

symbol of wealth and status. Men and married women wore full, round ruffs; while single women were permitted the variation of a fan-shaped ruff left open at the front which was the queen's favourite (Elgin, 2005, p. 22).

Elizabeth I, as one might expect, preferred the fashions of other European countries to those of England. Despite the long history of the war between the two countries, she was rather reserved in expressing her preference for French styles. In 1566, for example, the queen directed her adviser to write to the English ambassador in Paris in order to locate a French tailor. "The Queen's Majesty would rather have a tailor who had the skill to make her apparel both after the Italian and French manner; you might...obtain someone who served the French Queen, without mentioning any manner or request in our queen's majesty's name," he said in his letter. (Gail, 2003, p. 44).

The French Farthingale was one of the queen's favourite fashion trends. It was slightly different from the Spanish one since it had large hoops of wire of the same size sewn from the waist to the ground which gave a bell-shaped effect, it was nothing but normal. Women looked like they were wearing tables underneath their gowns. However, this garment was especially interesting because it made skirts slightly shorter, revealing shoes and feet for the first time in a hundred years. And since the Elizabethan motto was "The bigger the better", the French farthingale stayed in vogue until the seventeenth century when they finally realized the absurdity of their looks (Elgin, 2005, pp. 14-15).

Still, some other French fashion trends were not as half ridiculous as the farthingale such as the "French hood". It was basically a fabric bonnet shaped with interior wires that were especially fashionable in the early part of the reign. The French hood revealed only an inch or two of hair entirely which was suitable for English women at that time because fashion combined modesty and elegance unlike what is showcased in Hollywood movies of the period (Jeffrey L. Forgeng, 2005, p. 106).

#### **4. Style during the Elizabethan Times**

Elizabethan fashion enhanced not only the queen's international reputation, but also that of her entire court; she used clothes to construct her image and expected the rest of her court to follow her lead. The style was costly, but it was critical. For example, a gentleman's suit appropriate for court wear would cost the same as a year's rent on his London townhouse. Commoners were no exception; everyone tried to look like the queen and her courtiers and paid a lot of money to do so, even if it was uncomfortable. No one, however, dressed better than the Queen herself, not because she had the best taste or the best clothiers, but because no one else was allowed to. To keep standards high, Elizabeth enacted regulations governing what people should and, more importantly, should not wear. Elizabeth wanted her courtiers to look good, but she did not want them to overachieve. So, she enacted no fewer than ten laws governing who could wear what and at what social level; these were known as "Sumptuary Laws." (Lyon, 2017).

### **4.1. Elizabeth I's Sumptuary Laws**

As previously mentioned, the English took great pleasure in lavishness and wearing fancy clothes. At the time, appearances were everything; luxurious clothes for them were a way of announcing to the world that they had money. And since their Queen was equally vain herself, she issued laws against excess of apparel so that ranks would be easily distinguished. The main reason for the introduction of sumptuary laws was to control imports and protect local trades. However, these laws were also attempts by the monarch to maintain the social hierarchy. The population was divided into nine categories, each with a detailed description of the clothing and fabrics they were allowed to wear.

Infringers were fined. Between 1559 and 1597, ten proclamations were issued. These decreed that only the nobility could wear imported wool, and only those with more than £200 in income could wear velvet, embroidery, or gold, silver, or silk decoration. Apprentices were not permitted to wear gloves that cost more than a shilling, or gloves with fingers or

fancy trimmings. The 1571 Cappers Act required every male over the age of six to wear an English wool cap on Sundays and Holy Days. Not surprisingly, these laws were nearly impossible to enforce and were scorned by the majority of the population. (Elgin, 2005, p. 55).

#### **4.2. Elizabethan Men's Style of Clothing**

Menswear is never the first thing that comes to mind when the noun "fashion" is mentioned because men rarely think about clothes. They wear whatever they want and whatever feels comfortable to them, but if you look back in time, you will notice that this was not always the case. Clothing, for example, was a sign of status in Elizabethan times, it not only defined wealth but also social status in the Elizabethan Class system. As a result, men's clothing became as important as women's clothing and was more consciously elaborate.

Every man born in the Elizabethan period tried to emphasize his masculinity by creating an image in which formal elegance masked physical grace and athleticism. A small waist, broad chest, and more importantly long legs were in vogue. They achieved this look by wearing a doublet which was a short-fitted jacket that was mostly padded to add more volume to the wearer's upper body along with huge sleeves that tripled the size of their biceps and an extensive ruff to cover their neckline. As for their lower bodies, they opted for hose and stockings which might seem absurd to the modern eye because the hose is certainly not the equivalent of masculinity in the 21st Century. But back then, showing one's long legs ushered virility and athletic ability. The most common legwear, however; was that of the "trunk hose", these were basically onion-shaped short pants fitted close on the waist, puffed over the hips, and were gathered into a cuff around the upper thighs and as the name indicates they were worn with the hose or long stockings (Elgin, 2005, p. 13). It is worth noting that clothing in Elizabethan times distorted every resemblance to the human body with the excessive paddings that became a fashion staple at the time. This did not only apply

to men; women were also guilty of distorting the shape of the human body by wearing more clothing than necessary.

#### **4.3. Women and Children's Clothing in Elizabethan times**

The clothing worn by Elizabethan women looks heavy and exaggerated to the modern viewer. But the weather in England during the period was very cool and damp as northern Europe shivered in the grip of a mini-Ice Age. So, the heaviness of Elizabethan fashion was out of necessity, yet it is remembered as fascinating and beautiful, and strikingly easy to recognize. An Elizabethan woman wore a long-sleeved shirt that was considered as an undergarment, on top of her shirt, she wore one, two to three or four articles of clothing. The first was a long-fitted dress called a kirtle. The second was a bodice (corset) and a petticoat which was a thin underskirt. The bodice was something like a vest and was either sleeved or sleeveless. Wealthy ladies had it laced in the back because they had maids that help them dress; while poorer women had their bodices laced in front.

As mentioned earlier, Elizabethan women had an obsession with a tight waist so the bodices of upper-class women were stiffened with whalebone or wood that would give them a V-shaped upper body and would also help them keep a straight posture. Lower-class women's bodies were left unstiffened because they were expected to move around while performing daily tasks. Then a farthingale was worn, which was a series of hoops of wire or wood. The last garment, the gown, consisted of a bodice and skirt sewn together. Gowns worn by ladies of the court were richly decorated with jewels, gold and silver braids (Greenblatt, 2002, pp. 46-47).

Children, on the other hand, had a very peculiar fashion since it goes through different stages throughout the kids' childhood. Initially, new-borns were wrapped in swaddling bands for the first six to twelve months. This was done because it was considered unhealthy for an infant to have free use of their arms and legs. As the child grows older, boys and girls

alike would be put into dresses and skirts. Boys would wear dresses starting from the ages three through seven which made it difficult to distinguish between girls and boys in family portraits. However; when the boys reached the age of six or seven, they would begin to wear breeches which were –as previously explained- short onion-shaped pants. This ceremony was known as « Breeching » and would be celebrated with a big party. From this age onwards, children become exact miniatures of their parents. They dressed like adults and were expected to behave as such (Elgin, 2005, pp. 36-7).

### **5. The Role of Elizabeth's Attire and Cosmetics in Achieving Social Expectations**

Among all rulers that have had periods named after them. Queen Elizabeth I was by far the most influential, chiefly because of her strong personality that manifested from a very young age. When she was only fifteen of age a royal scandal involved her and Thomas Seymour (one of King Edward's uncles), they were accused of having an affair. The fifteen-year-old declared that she had nothing to hide and presented herself at court as "a virtuous maid" dressed in simple clothes of black and white. Her behaviour quickly won her the good opinion of the English people; as one historian comments "already she understood how vital were appearances.... For the rest of her life, she would woo the English knowing that their love and respect would be her shield against her danger" (Greenblatt, 2002, p. 10). Elizabeth realised the power of dress from that day forward, and she skilfully used it to create a monarch. She was ahead of her time in her understanding of public relations; everyone adored her and sought her approval. No one dared to outshine her as the Goddess from whom England evolved. All thanks to her dazzling wardrobe and powdery white face, which exuded a pure and innocent beauty that was lightly dusted with pink blush. Her image has remained an important part of her success as queen to the people of England to this day.

#### **5.1. The Image of Elizabeth I**

In movies, Elizabeth is portrayed as a strong, independent woman who does not require a man. And it is partially true due to her presumed romantic relationship with Lord Robert

Dudley 1st Earl of Leicester; however, her decision to marry to her country was one of the things that made her so special, because being a strong independent woman who does not require a man was challenging in a patriarchal society.

Perhaps no other period in history revolved around the personality of the monarch as did the Elizabethan age. Elizabeth inherited courage and amazing self-confidence from her father and intellect and self-indulgence from her mother. She was intelligent and well educated but also was fond of drinking beer, spitting, picking her teeth and swearing heartily (Lace, 2006, p. 19). Indeed, she was a complex figure of a woman at the time and was very conscious of the image she presented to the people. She alleviated her subjects' anxiety of having another female ruler by creating an image of her of both male and female. She artfully dramatized the masculine traits she shared with her father Henry VIII. This was largely palpable in her famous speech to the troops in the Spanish Armada 1588 when she appeared wearing armour and a helmet: "I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king" (Levin, 1994, p. 1). On the other hand, she emphasised her female attributes, such as her virginity, as a strong symbol of female power, enhancing the religious aura that surrounded her because she enjoyed being compared to the Virgin Mary. She also never grew tired of being complimented on her beauty, wisdom, courage, or any other virtue.

Elizabeth was popular among the English people even before she became queen. She was identified as the "Virgin Queen" or "Good Queen Bess". Edmund Spenser in his epic "The Faerie Queen" gave her a name that would be known to her subjects and history "Gloriana" praised Elizabeth I notions of virtue. Even artists abandoned all naturalistic aspirations in their portraits of her; she was transformed into an icon, an image of cosmic power and divinity and an object of worship.



## 5.2. Queen Elizabeth I's Costume

Elizabeth used to dress in clothing that covered her from head to toe when she was younger. Many admired the woman's modesty; however, fashion was beginning to take on a more seductive look during the latter part of her reign. This trend can be seen in her later portraits, where she begins to wear lower cut clothing that exposes more of her bosom, as was the fashion for unmarried women at the time.

Elizabeth's dress dazzled the eyes of her sixteenth-century courtiers and visitors. As a result, her wardrobe became legendary even during her lifetime, it was rumoured to contain more than three thousand gowns. It is quite remarkable that none survived today. Her favoured colours were black, white and silver (Weir, 1998, p. 234). Elizabeth dressed to impress; it took her about two hours to finish dressing up. Her ladies-in-waiting helped her into eight ornate layers of clothing. Beginning with a long shirt or chemise, they layered on top a bodice which was a corset that gave off the illusion of a long torso and tiny waist, petticoat which was an underskirt, a farthingale (hoops), skirt, robe, gown then finally laced or fastened on her sleeves. Elizabeth's ladies also curled and dressed her long red hair, filling it with jewels, or hairpieces. As she grew older her hair thinned so she wore extravagant red wigs in public. And for the final touch, she carried a container filled with herbs, to repel foul smells since bathing was a rare occurrence even for the queen (Sapet, 2005, p. 94).

While Elizabeth's incredible dresses may have been impractical, they certainly gave her presence; but it was not just the colour and shape that had significance, her dresses were also full of symbolism. For example, pearls signified the queen's purity, virginity and chastity. The eyes and ears of wheat implied that the queen was well aware of what was going on in her kingdom. Roses were the Tudors' hallmark ever since the War of the Roses. In addition to other symbols and emblems that an Elizabethan viewer could read like a book (suns, rainbows, monsters, spiders, pomegranates and pansies) (Weir, 1998, p. 234), Elizabeth's

dresses were an important part of the Tudor propaganda machine. The people saw them in portraits or her trips around the country and were absolutely bewitched.

### **5.3. The Importance of Cosmetics for Elizabethan Women**

Standards of beauty vary from one culture to another and can easily change over the centuries. To better understand the excessive use of cosmetics in Elizabethan times, it is important to understand the effect they were trying to achieve, that "ideal" of beauty they wanted to emulate. The Elizabethan view of pure beauty was a woman with light hair and a snow-white complexion along with red cheeks and red lips. A pale complexion could only be achieved by a woman of the upper class. Lower class women were expected to work outside and, therefore, acquired a suntan. The pale complexion was thus a sign of wealth and nobility; hence, the immediate identification for a person from the upper classes. This marble complexion was also required by Elizabethan men, which explains their use of white makeup as well (Sapet, 2005, p. 96). Queen Elizabeth and every Elizabethan woman achieved this idealised beauty through the use of ceruse, which was made of lead mixed with vinegar. Borax and sulphur were also used as whiteners but ceruse gave a more immediate effect. Once an ideal whiteness was achieved - sometimes complete with false veins drawn into the neck and bosom to give an illusion of skin so pale and transparent that veins were visible - Women applied fucus, which was a red crystalline mercuric substance in order to get red lips and cheeks (Burton, 1959, p. 237).

As for the eyes, Kohl was used since ancient times to outline the eyes and make them appear darker. To make their eyes sparkly and larger, a chemical named Belladonna was also used. A sign of aristocracy during that time was to have arched and thin eyebrows that created a high forehead; therefore, eyebrows were overly plucked to achieve that artificial look seen in most portraits (Burton, 1959, p. 238).

As sixteenth-century makeup contained lead and mercury, it is reasonable to assume that it was extremely poisonous. Even more shocking, women continued to use these dangerous substances despite experiencing severe side effects. For beauty, women risked dry skin, gastro-intestinal disturbances, a poisoned system, and even death. In the latter years of her reign, the queen was said to have had such damaged skin that she refused to look in the mirror. Nonetheless, she never stopped using cosmetics. In fact, as she aged, her make-up became more intense in order to conceal her flaws. (Burton, 1959, pp. 237-239). The Elizabethan era was strong evidence that beauty can triumph over sense.

## **6. Conclusion:**

No other Queen in English history had such a profound influence on fashion and beauty as Elizabeth. Despite some critics' claims that she was vain and egocentric, she certainly mastered the art of public relations and kept order throughout her kingdom. She portrayed the monarch in a majestic manner, and her presence was so wholesome that everyone begged her approval. People admired her and aspired to be like her. Even beauty standards were tailored to the queen's pale skin, red locks, and red cheeks. Queen Elizabeth undoubtedly left an indelible mark on English culture. To sum up, the role of fashion and art in English society during the Renaissance cannot be ignored or avoided. Their existence is inextricably linked to the country's growth and prosperity in the sixteenth century. Therefore, it seems only fitting to say that the Renaissance shaped the Tudors' minds and changed English society.

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