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**“CLOTHES MAKE MEN”: CLOTHING AND THE EMBODIMENT OF
GENDER IN VIRGINIA, 1750-1775**

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2019

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

This study explores how late colonial Virginians used clothing to control, enforce, and negotiate gender. Gender, both as a system of power and as a category of social identity, became linked with the material forms of clothing that Virginians wore in their everyday lives. The identification of clothing with the body enabled Virginians to actively make choices about how to perform themselves to the wider culture of observation and perception present in the colony. Dress was ubiquitous, but its meanings were variable, changing, and unstable. In eighteenth-century Virginia, Anglo-descended colonists imported ideals from Britain, which then produced Chesapeake-specific gender relationships, facilitated by slavery and networks of perception. These relations became entangled in the sartorial embodiment of gender, as Anglo-Virginian women and men dictated acceptable forms of femininity and masculinity. Yet enslaved Afro-Virginians could and did negotiate gender on their own terms by fashioning new meanings about their clothing when they ran away. Bringing together documentary, visual, and material sources enables a material perspective on the importance of colonial appearances and the centrality of gender to colonial life. Embodiment theory, the method of reading “along the bias grain,” and discussions of agency further augment histories that deal primarily with embodied social status or race and refine gender scholarship concerned with colonies besides Virginia.

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INTRODUCTION

On Monday, August 22, 1768, in the sweltering heat of summer, teenager Frederick ran away from his enslaver in Surry County, Virginia.¹ Frederick was surmised to have fled south and eastward following the James River, trying to find a vessel that would take him aboard and away to freedom.² Perhaps he wanted to escape the tobacco harvest after the long season of planting, weeding, and tending the crop; or perhaps he wanted to get away from his enslaver's gaze.³ Regardless of his reasons, Frederick ran away, and he took with him "a light coloured duroy coat, green everlasting breeches, a double breasted green vest, coarse blue ribbed hose, a pair of turned pumps with buckles, a felt hat," and a bundle of other clothing not specified in the advertisement for his capture. His enslaver further described him as "an artful cunning fellow."⁴ A series of questions arises from this single runaway advertisement alone. Why did Frederick take with him the clothing that he did? What did it mean to him? What did it mean to his fellow enslaved he encountered on his flight? How was Frederick's gender communicated or complicated by his clothing? What did these garments mean to his enslaver, and how did linking Frederick's appearance in text to his deceitfulness help the enslaver recapture his quarry? In short, what did the clothing on colonial Virginian bodies mean, and how were those meanings created?

Inhabitants of the British Atlantic world were well aware of the constitutive and performative properties of dress. In the anonymous 1772 satire *The Miraculous Power of*

¹ *Virginia Gazette*, September 15, 1768, p. 3 col. 1.

² *Virginia Gazette*, September 15, 1768. Many enslaved runaways tried to escape their bound lives by getting aboard some vessel or another. Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 238.

³ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 166-70.

⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, September 15, 1768.

Clothes, from which this thesis takes its title, the author derides the notion that “Clothes Make Men.”⁵ Clothes could literally make a person by shifting how they embodied their identities, changing how others perceived them, and ultimately altering the meanings of their bodies. Teenage Frederick’s clothing of duroy and everlasting may have “made” him enslaved and genderless in the eyes of his enslavers, but the same fabrics may have “made” him something else entirely in his view or that of his fellow enslaved. Why clothing continued to be a primary concern of Virginians of all sorts during the late colonial period is owed not just to the fact that it was a necessary facet of life but also to the unstable, changing meanings assigned to the garments that provided warmth, protection, and shape.

This thesis argues that clothing became a highly visible, widely used form of gender power in late colonial Virginia. By locating gender in clothing, and then situating certain clothing on particular bodies, Virginians used dress as a shorthand for gender and identity. The relationship between gender, clothing, and the bodies categorized and covered by both was unstable and ever-changing during the quarter-century leading up to the War for Independence. Evolving gender ideals, the racialization of slavery, Enlightenment thought, and expanding points of exchange between people led to a shared visual language of dress that was used to gain, strengthen, and negotiate power. For Virginians of African descent in particular, dress and the body became sites of struggle over what it meant to be a woman, a man, a person. How clothing and gender became a form of power therefore rested on the specific and contingent

⁵ *The Miraculous Power of Clothes, and Dignity of the Taylors; Being an Essay on the Words, Clothes Make Men, Translated from the German* (Philadelphia: Printed for William Mentz, in Sterling-Alley, 1772), 4, from *Early American Imprints, 1639-1800*, record number 0F30150C19A46078, accessed June 21, 2021, https://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EAIX&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F30150C19A46078&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=F63152FD6C2543F59F9E49E287C6AC16.

circumstances of Virginia's standing as a slave society and the role that slavery played in shaping all aspects of Virginian life. This thesis further engages with issues of identity, performance, and perception to argue that Virginians of all sorts made specific and active sartorial choices to perform surface-level information transmission, which could, but did not have to, reveal personal senses of identity. Anglo-Virginians chose to continue to naturalize African-descended bodies as inferior by constructing them as genderless while solidifying their own genders as acceptable. Enslaved individuals chose to run away or to simply persist under such constructions as best as they could, and they used clothing to perform their own notions of being. Clothing, in short, embodied Virginians' efforts to perform a gendered self for others.

History and Historiography

This work primarily contributes to, and owes much to, the intersection of gender studies, the history of slavery, and material culture studies in the history of colonial America. Historians in these fields have engaged with the processes by which clothing reinforced other markers of social identity, such as status and race.⁶ Scholars have also examined relationships between clothing and gender, though these studies focus on North American colonies as a whole and generally glaze over Virginia.⁷ By focusing on Virginia in the late colonial period during the

⁶ For instance, see T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Katherine E. Gruber, "'By Measures Taken of Men': Clothing the Classes in William Carlin's Alexandria, 1763-1782," *Early American Studies* 13, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 931-53. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44630810>; and Cary Carson, *Face Value: The Consumer Revolution and the Colonizing of America* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2017).

⁷ Though these works are not comprehensive, they are most relevant for this thesis. Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002); Sophie White, "'Wearing three or four handkerchiefs around his collar, and elsewhere about him': Slaves' Constructions of Masculinity and Ethnicity in French Colonial New Orleans," *Gender & History* 15, no. 3 (Jan. 2004): 528-49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0953-5233.2003.00319.x>; Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).; Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2011).

years of growing imperial unrest, this thesis demonstrates the utility and necessity of considering gender through clothing, analyzing the materiality of gender, and paying due attention to Virginia as a case study of British Atlantic power. What follows is an overview of the history and historiography of Virginia, and colonial America more broadly.

Virginia serves as a key example of the process of how clothing embodied gender because of its demography. Founded in 1607 by a joint-stock company, the colony was intended to generate revenue for the empire, although it took several years before colonists discovered how well tobacco grew in the rich Chesapeake soils.⁸ Initially, English and Anglo-descended colonists in the region relied on White indentured servitude as their primary means of labor. By the last decades of the seventeenth century, however, Virginia began the transition from servitude to slavery, from a society with slaves to a slave society, where the entirety of the colony's economy, social structure, and politics was touched by slavery.⁹ The importation of enslaved people from Africa to Virginia continued through the early eighteenth century in part because of the shift westward in search of fresh tobacco lands.¹⁰ By mid-century, African importation slowed to a trickle, while the total enslaved population grew from natural increase instead. Though they interacted with those directly from Africa, these Virginia-born enslaved individuals increasingly came to define the terms of enslaved life in the Chesapeake. Their familiarity with enslaver customs and beliefs, their greater ability to shape how labor and life flowed, and their local knowledge each contributed to the creolization of their population.

⁸ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 30-34; K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 107-36.

⁹ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 109-41.

¹⁰ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 58-60.

Yet this creolization also developed in the other direction: Anglo-descended enslavers, by mid-century, had become as equally familiar with their slaves' practices, demands, and limits, as well as with their communities.¹¹ Such cultural blending, however intentional, meant that Virginians, more than the inhabitants of any other colony (Maryland excepted), more thoroughly shared and understood each other's culture, identities, and worldviews.¹² Creolization in Virginia enables the potential for analysis of both enslaver and enslaved sartorial practices. Although enslaved Virginians certainly did retain and remain in contact with African beliefs and customs, they also intimately understood—and so could meaningfully manipulate—the clothing practices of their enslavers. By the same token, enslavers knew (or believed they knew) what clothing meant on themselves and on others, including their enslaved. The tensions of knowledge produced by such cultural and social blending points to the utility of using Virginia to study how clothing embodied gender.

One important demographic group excluded from this study is poor Anglo- and European-descended individuals, including farmers and indentured servants. Colonial Virginian society cannot be neatly divided into White enslavers and Black enslaved with no in-between categories. Poor farmers constituted a large portion of Virginia's population, and they did not always align themselves with wealthier Whites.¹³ The proximity of poor Anglo-Virginians with

¹¹ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, especially Pt. 2: Encounters between Whites and Blacks.

¹² When we think of "creolization," it generally evokes those who are fundamentally non-White. Yet Anglo-descended Virginians experienced the process of creolization as well. This idea was first famously laid out by John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). Though Blassingame's methodology was criticized early on, his point about creolization being a two-way process continues to inform scholarship. See P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 257-317; K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 350-61; and Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 105-108.

¹³ Philip Morgan states that the "reluctance of plain white folk to share in the policing of the slave system does not prove that they were sympathetic towards blacks, but it does indicate that white solidarity could not be automatically assumed." *Slave Counterpoint*, 300-16, quote on 307. Wealthy Anglo-enslavers did try, and sometimes succeeded, in creating racial solidarity with lower status Whites. See Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Rhys

the enslaved, both physically and in terms of status, at times encouraged interracial bonds.¹⁴ Yet poor Whites often objected to wearing the same kinds of fabrics assigned to the enslaved, out of fear of “becoming” Black or enslaved.¹⁵ Therefore, this thesis prioritizes enslavers and enslaved because the construction, maintenance, and contestation of gender between Anglo-enslaver and Afro-enslaved Virginians appears in greater contrast than it would in including poor White farmers.

Additionally, the time period 1750 to 1775 finds itself in a unique temporal location. Situated between two revolutions, one consumer, one ideological, this twenty-five-year span provides a glimpse at the growth in economic globalization, the increasing distinction between central British and peripheral American identities, and the articulation of revolutionary political ideals. In particular, the ongoing consumer revolution, initiated in the late seventeenth century and dramatically expanded in the 1740s; the disruption of the French and Indian War (1754-1763); and the imperial crisis of the 1760s and early 1770s following the various tax acts each shaped this quarter century in ways that facilitated the use of clothing to perform gender. As more and more people had the means and the desire to purchase more and more things, Britons’ participation in the consumer revolution across the Atlantic drove the American impulse to declare independence.¹⁶ All Virginians, including the enslaved, participated in the consumer

Isaac, *Worlds of Experience: Communities in Colonial Virginia* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1987); and Sarah E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 300-16.

¹⁵ This was the case especially with livery. Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’: Slave Clothing in Early Virginia,” *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 14, no. 2 (Dec. 1988): 36-37, <http://www.archive.org/details/journalofearlyso1421988muse/page/26/mode/2up>.

¹⁶ Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*.

revolution when they could.¹⁷ The expansion of consumer goods therefore enabled more individuals to more effectively communicate identity. Yet conflicts like the French and Indian War and the political unrest of the 1760s and 70s provided Anglo-Americans numerous incentives to bemoan their position in the British empire and, eventually, to take matters into their own hands. In Virginia, elite planters took cues from those in society below them—smallholders, the enslaved, Indians—to move towards American independence even as they dealt with their own outrage at being denied westward expansion.¹⁸ The extensive list of contributions to imperial unrest during these decades cannot be covered comprehensively here.¹⁹ However, the well-known 1765 passage of the Stamp Act, the adoption of both nonimportation and nonexportation associations, and the restructuring of the empire that threatened all mainland colonies' governance each presented new circumstances under which Virginians created, performed, and perceived gender through their clothing.²⁰

Though people in the eighteenth century seem to have paid less attention to gender than to other important factors of social identity, like status and race, gender is the primary concern of this thesis because of the way that gender enabled other systems of power to operate in Virginia. On the one hand, gender in Virginian history has been a central concern since Kathleen Brown's

¹⁷ Jillian E. Galle, "Costly Signaling and Gendered Social Strategies among Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake: An Archaeological Perspective," *American Antiquity* 75, no. 1 (Jan. 2010): 19-43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20622480>.

¹⁸ Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 3-73, 133-88.

¹⁹ For an overview of some of the contributing factors of independence in Virginia, see Holton, *Forced Founders*; and Joseph M. Adelman, *Revolutionary Networks: The Business and Politics of Printing the News, 1763-1789* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 51-169.

²⁰ For the restructuring of the empire, see S. Max Edelson, *The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America before Independence* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2017), especially chapters 1 and 2. For more on Virginia's changing place in the empire, see Paul Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth: The Rise of Plantation Society in the Chesapeake* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), particularly chapters 6 and 7.

foundational text *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs* in the late 1990s, in which she offered one of the first challenges to previous scholarship by arguing for the imperative inclusion of gender in discussions of power and empire in the colony. Brown demonstrates that, by the mid-eighteenth century, gender and race together allowed elite White planter men to constrict avenues of power to themselves.²¹ This constriction, Brown argues, was based partly on discourses that naturalized women as subordinate to men and non-Whites as racially inferior.²² On the other hand, gender remains an important consideration of the colonial past because it helps us continue to complicate our own understanding of historical gender. Particularly following Thomas Lacquer's influential 1990 book *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, scholars have attempted to answer how gender was created, adapted, and applied in the long eighteenth century.²³ As this thesis demonstrates, gender in late colonial Virginia was often not an overt concern; British writers preached about how young White women and men should act, but gender was rarely explicitly cited in dealings with the enslaved, for example. However, the web of gender and genderlessness that surrounded Virginians shaped their lives, their bodies, and their perceptions in tangible, material ways, especially through their clothing.

The confluence between gender and other kinds of social identity have been studied at great length. This literature illustrates the ways in which individuals in the colonial past

²¹ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 269-71.

²² K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 1, 32-41.

²³ Lacquer argues for a relatively unchanging one-sex concept of gender from Galen in the ancient world to about the mid-eighteenth century, after which gender diverged to the two-sex model and beyond. Historians and other scholars have since attempted to prove Lacquer's interpretation to be too static, universalizing, and inaccurate, despite his work's measurable impact on the study of gender. Thomas Lacquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Karen Harvey, "The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century," *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (Dec. 2002): 898-916, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3133533>; Helen King, introduction to *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (London: Routledge, 2016), 1-30.

exercised agency, whether consciously or not, to manipulate and negotiate power in order to survive. For instance, propertied White women in Virginia participated in economic production to a great extent, as historian Linda Sturtz demonstrates in her book *Within Her Power*. Sturtz argues that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Virginian women with property operated family businesses and conducted their own where possible. Sturtz reveals that activities generally classified as “women’s work”—and therefore often overlooked—gave White Virginian women a degree of mobility in society and granted them power to spend and sell to their and their families’ benefit.²⁴ While these roles may have been accepted by White men and even expected in some cases, gender was a powerful factor in shaping how Virginians ran their economies and communities. The same system of gendered power that allowed White women to own property, however tenuously, classified other women, those of African-descent, as property themselves. In her book *Laboring Women*, Jennifer Morgan argues that Europeans’ perceptions of African and African-descended women were central to the creation of race-based slavery.²⁵ Further, these women faced particularly gendered challenges because of their woman-ness, which included the double burden of manual and reproductive labor.²⁶ By analyzing enslaved women through the lens of gender, Morgan demonstrates how childbearing, parenthood, and manual labor became sites of contention between enslavers and enslaved.²⁷

Indeed, relationships between enslaver and enslaved Virginians shaped the everyday rhythms of colonial life. Though the history of American slavery is a broad field, spanning

²⁴ Linda L. Sturtz, *Within Her Power: Propertied Women in Colonial Virginia* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 1.

²⁵ Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 12-49, 69-106.

²⁶ J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 7-10.

²⁷ J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 107-95.

centuries as well as continents, of particular concern for this thesis is the history of enslaved resistance in the British colonies. Philip Morgan's comparative study of slavery in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake and Lowcountry presents a thorough and complex understanding of Black enslaved lives. The parallel, though distinct, evolution of slavery in these two regions influenced agriculture, encounters between Anglo- and Afro-descended individuals, and the development of creole enslaved communities.²⁸ As Morgan stresses, the enslaved were both horrifically victimized by the institution of slavery and were active shapers of their lives.²⁹ Morgan characterizes resistance in this way to highlight that the enslaved resisted at all levels of their existence.³⁰ This view of resistance and agency has been problematized more recently by scholars working with the histories of other slave societies. For instance, historian Marisa Fuentes argues against reading enslaved lives under a framework that equates agency with resistance. She instead offers a methodology which seeks to interrogate archival omissions as much as archival records.³¹ (This methodology is explored more fully below.) By considering what defines agency, how agency is located in the past, and how we deal with interpreting it today, Fuentes utilizes stories of enslaved Barbadian women to remind how complicated and destructive enslaved life could be.

The relationship between clothing and gender is therefore the focus of this thesis because, to date, this phenomenon has been underrepresented in historical literature. A key exception to this trend in history is Kate Haulman's 2011 *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*. Haulman argues that contests over fashion and gender power shaped the politics of the

²⁸ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 29-58, 257-437, 463-77.

²⁹ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, xxiii-xxiv.

³⁰ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, xxii-xxiii.

³¹ Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 7.

American Revolution, as fashion, and with it gender, became linked visually to social status, political ideology, and revolutionary ideals.³² Fashion became political because it represented a struggle of power both between men and women, over consumer choices, finances, and polite visibility, and between competing discourses of masculinity and femininity as White Americans sought to distinguish themselves on the world stage.³³ However, while Haulman's analysis draws on sources from four major colonial ports—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston—the bulk of her argument rests on Philadelphia's culture and fashions to the detriment of southern perspectives.³⁴

Further, historians have paid more attention to gender as discourse than gender as material. Such a gap can be partially rectified by turning to archaeology, which, naturally, deals primarily with materiality. Since the 1980s, archaeologists of gender and sexuality have moved through several phases of reading bodies and interpreting embodiment. As archaeologist Rosemary Joyce describes, scholars in these fields began with inscriptionist narratives, analyzing archaeological bodies as surfaces upon which social norms were projected and performed.³⁵ However, since the 1990s and early 2000s, a new strain of embodiment theory emerged, with an increased focus on both human and non-human agency. The new generation of scholars increasingly focused on the body as a site of lived experience, and viewed objects as means through which identities were both constructed and constructive.³⁶

³² Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 3-7.

³³ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 47-151.

³⁴ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 3-4. Philadelphia comes to be the largest focus of the book in chapters 4 and 5.

³⁵ Rosemary A. Joyce, "Embodied Subjectivity: Gender, Femininity, Masculinity, Sexuality," in *A Companion to Social Archaeology*, eds. Lynn Meskell and Robert W. Preucel (Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2007 [2004]), 83-90; and Joyce, "Archaeology of the Body," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005): 141-45, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25064880>.

³⁶ Zoë Crossland, "Materiality and Embodiment," in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, eds. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 386-96, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199218714.013.0016>.

Historians, however, have been occupied with questions of materiality, object agency, and consumerism more broadly. Indeed, these have been driving questions since the material turn of the 1990s. Utilizing interdisciplinary approaches, histories of and with material culture reveal patterns of consumption, behavior and material meaning-making in ways that enable a more embodied view of the past. These studies tend to deal with objects of the home, or, in some cases, clothing itself. For instance, scholar Linzy Brekke's contribution to a volume on early American gender and material culture utilizes Revolutionary-era clothing and portraits to evaluate the ties between clothing and masculinity. She argues that fashion assisted men of the early republic to establish a national consciousness based on particular sets of fabrics associated with certain traits of masculinity.³⁷ Like Haulman's work, Brekke's demonstrates another way by which fashion and gender became politicized in the eighteenth century. Other works draw on the history of the consumer revolution to illustrate how consumer choice shaped an individual's place in society. Ann Smart Martin analyzes the social and cultural values of backcountry Virginia through a merchant's account ledgers to argue that colonists "bought into" a world of consumerism. In their acts of consuming, colonists "purchas[ed] commodities and validat[ed] a set of ideas about taste, fashion, and appropriate lifestyle" which in turn reinforced ideas about themselves, their social identities, and their communities.³⁸ Similarly, historian Cary Carson's work pushes for the study of the intersection between gentility and material culture. Carson's argument hinges on the idea that the consumer revolution came about from a rise in standards of living and a greater ability to purchase non-essential goods.³⁹ These objects, Carson argues,

³⁷ Linzy Brekke, " 'To Make a Figure': Clothing and the Politics of Male Identity in Eighteenth-Century America," in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1850*, eds. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven: The Yale University Center for British Art, 2006), 228-41.

³⁸ Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 1, 6-9.

³⁹ Carson, *Face Value*, 25-27.

allowed colonists to create a shared language of visual currency which enabled them to distinguish those who were elite from those who were pretending to gentility.⁴⁰ Though Carson focuses heavily on the implications of this visual currency as a symbol of social status, he leaves the door open for an expansion of his argument to include other analyses, like gender. Taken together, these arguments suggest the importance of material objects in creating an individual's visual identity, and the ability of clothing to aid that process.

Sources, Methods, and Terms

This thesis relies on textual, visual, and material sources to analyze the relationship between gender and clothing. Although some historians have utilized one or two of these kinds of sources in the study of colonial genders, bringing together all three enables a more multifaceted approach to gender ideals and their consequences.⁴¹ A large portion of the textual evidence used here is drawn from a survey of *Virginia Gazette* advertisements for enslaved runaways between 1750 and 1775. Using the *Geography of Slavery* database compiled by Tom Costa at the University of Virginia, advertisements were chosen if they contained each of these criteria: first, if they directly referenced or alluded to community networks, whether White or Black; and second, if they contained a description of the enslaved runaway's clothing. Ultimately, 114 such advertisements met these criteria.⁴²

⁴⁰ This idea is first hypothesized in his opening chapter and explored at great lengths throughout the rest of the book. Carson, *Face Value*, 34.

⁴¹ For instance, Haulman utilizes both textual and visual sources in her exploration of how fashion became politicized in the revolutionary period. Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, especially chapters 3-5.

⁴² These 114 advertisements range in the amount of detail that they give, yet they each document at least one network and one kind of clothing. The database was searched using its browse function sorted by location for Virginia, and only advertisements for runaway slaves were consulted. Tom Costa, *The Geography of Slavery in Virginia (GOS)*, online database, accessed August 28, 2021, <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/index.html>.

Fourteen of these advertisements detail runaway women—four who ran away in groups and ten who went alone. The remaining 100 identify men, confirming the tendency of enslaved men to run away more often.⁴³ Overwhelmingly, the advertisements describe runaways whose actions seem premeditated, rather than a spur-of-the-moment decision. However, this could be an effort of enslavers to cast the runaways as scheming and devious; it is unclear, from the runaways' perspectives, how planned their flights were. Most runaways were described carrying enough clothing for only one outfit, likely the clothes they wore daily, and only twenty or so seem to have taken multiple changes or stolen whole bundles of laundry.⁴⁴ Lastly, the tidewater region of Virginia is most heavily represented with fifty-nine instances, compared to fifty-five for the piedmont, fall line, and backcountry valley geographies combined. That the tidewater is more prevalent during 1750 to 1775 in these advertisements is striking, when one considers how much slavery had spread past the fall line into the backcountry to follow richer soils.⁴⁵ Given these characteristics, it was deemed unnecessary to cross-reference the database with the digital *Gazette* index provided by the Rockefeller Library Collections.⁴⁶ Further, only advertisements describing African-descended runaways were chosen because of the particular concern of this thesis for understanding how the enslaved dealt with and negotiated gender.

Other key textual sources utilized here include legal codes, conduct manuals, and store account ledgers. Hening's *Statutes at Large* provide digital access to Virginia's acts, laws, and other legal documents from 1619 to 1792, allowing a legal contextualization of slavery,

⁴³ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 204-56.

⁴⁴ At least ninety-seven advertisements describe an individual who took only one pair of clothes; roughly thirteen took two pairs; and four took three pairs. Others are unspecified or unclear exactly how many besides the pair the runaway already had on.

⁴⁵ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 29-34, 46-51.

⁴⁶ The Rockefeller Library index enables users to search by topic, and all digitized copies of the *Gazette* are placed in this index, but it would have taken more time than was convenient for this thesis. To see the index, <https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/va-gazettes/VGPPIIndex.cfm>.

punishment, and sartorial distinction.⁴⁷ Conduct manuals, published materials which preached to young women and men on proper behavior, dress, and lifestyle, provide useful in-roads to viewing gender as it was idealized in the colonial period. Manuals helped Britons on both sides of the Atlantic to order their lives by a widely accepted code.⁴⁸ The 1758-1768 Colchester store account ledgers of Scottish merchant John Glassford and his factor Alexander Henderson are utilized for a number of reasons. On one hand, these ledgers document purchasing trends of Fairfax County residents, including their consumption of dozens of types of fabrics. On the other hand, these ledgers also reveal important connections between the enslaved, their enslavers, and their social environments.⁴⁹ Lastly, though it may seem counterintuitive to not consult the only surviving tailor's ledger from eighteenth-century Virginia in a thesis about clothing, ultimately, this source was not used because the focus here became much more about clothing's meanings over its particular construction.⁵⁰ Altogether, the runaway advertisements, laws, prescriptive manuals, and account books provide a documentary bedrock upon which to first analyze gender ideals and then to examine more closely what gender signified through the visual and material sources.

Visual and material evidence is taken from a number of online repositories specializing in eighteenth century collections. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the John Carter Brown Library, and the Library of Congress were drawn upon in

⁴⁷ William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*, trans. Freddie L. Spradlin (Richmond: W.W. Gray, 1820), <https://vagenweb.org/hening/>.

⁴⁸ For more on the significance of prescriptive literature to the English writing tradition, see Linda C. Mitchell, "Entertainment and Instruction: Women's Roles in the English Epistolary Tradition," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (Autumn 2016): 439-454, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/huntlibrquar.79.3.439>.

⁴⁹ Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*.

⁵⁰ I would like to again thank Samantha Snyder at the Fred W. Smith Library for her help in obtaining a digital copy of William Carlin's tailoring account book during Summer 2020 when travel was impossible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I do hope to use this source in future research.

order to cultivate a set of sources that depict how Virginians sought to dress their bodies. Maps and prescriptive prints, jackets and petticoats: by placing these varying media in conversation with each other, and with the texts described above, this thesis brings together sources that otherwise have remained separate. Visual sources enable a reconstruction of the written word, allowing the historian to gauge one kind of source by another. However, the heart of this analysis draws on surviving aspects of material culture: clothing. Although clothing was by no means the only material good through which Virginians could communicate their worldview, identity, or community, it does provide one of the most functional sites to study this performance. Clothing was something all Virginians wore, all of the time. The repetitive motions of getting dressed every day, looking down at one's clothed body and looking out at others', and making or mending various garments each created a familiarity with the clothing itself and the social expectations attached to it. Getting and being dressed were embodied actions, experienced every day; the differences in Virginians' experiences aligned with the differences in expectations set for various groups.⁵¹ The materiality of clothing can be easily taken for granted, so by forefronting the physical aspect, this thesis allows for a historical reckoning with gender as both external power and internal identification. Here, only clothing that covered Virginian bodies from the neck to the wrists and ankles comes into focus, to the exclusion of shoes, hats, or other forms of adornment such as jewelry, pins, or buckles.⁵² Garments that laid directly on the body, such as shirts and shifts, as well as outer layers of dress, like coats, jackets, petticoats, and

⁵¹ Embodiment as a symptom of lived experience is a core part of the archaeology of gender and sexuality. See Joyce, "Archaeology of the Body," 151-52.

⁵² Objects of adornment have already been skillfully analyzed by others, particularly historical archaeologists. Galle, "Costly Signaling," 19-43; and Johanna Hope Smith, "Adorned Identities: An Archaeological Perspective on Race and Self-Presentation in 18th-Century Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 2017), 203-302, https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/4653.

gowns, provided the largest surface area upon which Virginians perceived meaning. However, reading clothing as a site of embodied gender is easier for some colonial Virginians than for others. Enslaved clothing in particular, by its nature, was rarely if ever kept and passed down through generations to end up in museum collections. In order to rectify this issue, proxy objects have been utilized in this thesis to approximate what enslaved clothing might have looked like, what it may have meant to wearer and observer, and how these differences were construed.⁵³

A few key methodologies shape this work. Central to a thesis aimed at attempting to reclaim personal identities is Marisa Fuentes's method of "reading against the bias grain." Fuentes describes this method as "stretch[ing] archival fragments" which "creates space for imagining the experiences and perspectives of enslaved women in all their, and our, uncertainties."⁵⁴ Where Fuentes focuses on reclaiming the silenced voices of enslaved women in particular, here, enslaved people of multiple genders are brought to the historical limelight and their lives considered from as close to their perspective as morally possible. Reading runaway advertisements as both products of enslaver efforts to regain their capital investment *and* as evidence of enslaved forms of self-expression allows for gender as a system of power to be explored alongside gender as personal identity. In addition to Fuentes's bias grain method, this thesis also relies heavily on embodiment theory, taken from archaeology and anthropology. Embodiment theory argues against a mind/body divide, and presents the body as a site of lived experience; the senses, repetitive actions, emotions, and, broadly speaking, existence are felt

⁵³ On reading missing or excluded historical objects, see Glenn Adamson, "The Case of the Missing Footstool: Reading the Absent Object," in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, 2nd ed., ed. Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2018), 240-55.

⁵⁴ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 7, 123.

through the body, are shaped by that body, and in turn shape it.⁵⁵ While this phenomenon is by no means unique to colonial Virginia, utilizing an embodiment framework on that time and place helps to draw out the contingencies of eighteenth-century Virginian genders, which were so reliant on Virginia's system of slavery and its social stratification. Clothing shaped the colonial body both because of its coverage of the body and also because it changed how others perceived that body.⁵⁶ Virginians actively chose, to the degree that they could, the clothing they wore not only out of necessity but out of ability to perform for others. Perception and its multiple perspectives are therefore central to this thesis.

Lastly, methods for how to write responsible colonial history have been taken into consideration. First, all quotes drawn from the textual sources are reproduced here as they appear in their original form. This includes italics, all caps, and other eighteenth-century writing or printing standards. Bracketed corrections are added in cases where the abbreviations, spelling, or grammar may be unclear to those unfamiliar with such sources. Second, historian Sharon Block recently argued in multiple works that our contemporary categories of "woman," "man," "White," and "Black" may be too limiting because of our associations with such words.⁵⁷ Rather, Block insists on taking sources on their own terms and understanding how categories of difference were constructed in the past. She further argues that categories like gender and race were neither static nor self-evident, but rather were accumulations of traits that for certain individuals happened to add up to "woman" or "Black."⁵⁸ Following the example Block sets in

⁵⁵ Anna Harris, "Embodiment," Oxford Bibliographies, last modified August 30, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199766567-0151>.

⁵⁶ Diana DiPaolo Loren, *The Archaeology of Clothing and Bodily Adornment in Colonial America* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010), 1-13.

⁵⁷ Sharon Block, "Making Meaningful Bodies: Physical Appearance in Colonial Writings," *Early American Studies* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 524-29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24474869>; and Block, *Colonial Complexions: Race and Bodies in Eighteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 1-9.

⁵⁸ Block, "Making Meaningful Bodies," 525-28.

her book *Colonial Complexions* about problematizing and forcing a confrontation with historical understandings of such terms, this thesis employs terms that aim to break down current understandings of race and gender.⁵⁹ For instance, the terms “enslaver” and “enslaved” are used more often than “White” or “Black,” as not all White Virginians owned slaves, though they may have benefited from slavery, and not all Black Virginians remained enslaved. In other places, descriptions like “African-descended,” “Afro-Virginian,” “those of British descent,” and “Anglo-Virginian” are used in place of “White” or “Black” to more accurately reckon with the still-burgeoning system of racial slavery in Virginia. Although “White” and “Black” are used, and although they are capitalized to recognize the growing cultures around these groups, these are used least often and only when the preceding phrases become too wordy. Similarly, where a sexed binary is too restrictive, the terms “masculine” and “feminine” are employed as these capture similar notions of gender, but are not limited in their application to a sexed binary. Further, the words “woman” and “man” are rarely used by themselves, and instead have modifiers attached to draw attention to the ways in which individuals of different statuses and races experienced gender. Hopefully, using these terms will meet the historical figures in this thesis in their own context, and push contemporary readers to think more about how our world is categorized.

Chapter Organization

This work is organized into three core chapters that each demonstrate how clothing, gender, and the body became historically and situationally entangled in late colonial Virginia. Chapter 1 explores the strategies by which Anglo-Virginians adopted, adapted, and created

⁵⁹ Block, *Colonial Complexions*, 8-9.

gender ideals as a way of reinforcing their power over each other and their enslaved. Virginia's place in the British Atlantic world and its continued utilization of slavery as a means of production and hierarchy allowed Anglo-Virginians to mold gender ideals to their needs. These ideals, imported from Britain, consequently structured interactions between women and men of various statuses in Virginia, dictated how they should comport themselves, and produced a hierarchy of gender and power that kept the enslaved at the bottom. Anglo- and Afro-Virginians alike understood what these ideals meant, and used them to communicate to and perform for their networks of perception. These networks facilitated movement, observation, and power throughout the colony.

Building on the understanding of Virginian gender ideals and their use of networks, Chapter 2 discusses the ways in which gender distinctions became embodied through clothing. These distinctions arose both out of categories of sexed bodies and out of perceptions about status and race. Clothing could and did change over an individual's lifetime as they traversed boundaries, which simultaneously changed how their gender was performed and perceived. By aligning the gender ideals imported from abroad to the clothing forms placed on various bodies, Anglo-Virginians constructed acceptable and unacceptable genders for themselves, and inferior genders for the enslaved—what historians have referred to as being made genderless. Genderlessness was a liminal space in which enslaved Afro-Virginians obviously still had gender, but in the eyes of their enslavers, that gender was lesser than or unimportant to the distinction of being enslaved.⁶⁰ Throughout each of these processes, clothing became the primary tool by which both Anglo- and Afro-Virginians understood themselves and each other.

⁶⁰ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 187-244; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 75; J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 12-49, 69-106.

Lastly, Chapter 3 draws attention to the ways in which enslavers and enslaved enforced and negotiated gender. Representations of clothing in visual form provided Anglo-Virginian enslavers with another avenue by which to enforce gender ideals and gender constructions, particularly on the bodies of the enslaved. By depicting the enslaved either as property or as objects of the transatlantic trade, enslavers assured themselves that the enslaved were in fact genderless and so posed little threat to White masculinity and femininity. However, enslaved Afro-Virginians possessed vital knowledge of White gender ideals, the visual language of dress, and the power of performance. This knowledge manifested in their daily lives in the ability to make choices about clothing, self-expression, and performing genders that stood in contrast to their forced genderlessness. Runaways showcase this ability of the enslaved to use clothing both to avoid detection and to express embodied gender in ways that clashed with Anglo-Virginians' predeterminations.

Therefore, this thesis argues that Virginians used clothing to control, enforce, and negotiate gender. By examining Virginians' gender ideals, how clothing embodied gender, and how the meanings of gender became complicated, this study provides a material perspective on the importance of colonial appearances and colonial genders. Gender may not have always or even often been the most pressing concern for eighteenth-century Virginians, but its applications nonetheless shaped how they lived, interacted, and moved through their world. Dress, as a physical object, became inseparable from the distinct uses and experiences of gender between Virginian social groups. The active processes by which Virginians of all sorts selected their clothing, performed their identities, and perceived others thus enabled them to navigate other, more visible relationships of power.

CHAPTER 1: GENDER IDEALS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES IN LATE COLONIAL VIRGINIA

The world, I know not how, overlooks in our sex a thousand irregularities, which it never forgives in yours; so that the honour and peace of a family are, in this view, much more dependant on the conduct of daughters than of sons...

James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (1767)

As the oldest colony in British North America, Virginia inhabited a distinctive commercial space within the empire, even as it remained geographically, culturally, and politically provincial. Like the other American colonies, Virginia exported its staple resources and imported manufactures such as clothing and other objects of social value. Yet eighteenth-century Virginia remained distinct from its neighbors, with exception of Maryland.⁶¹ Virginia's Anglo- and Afro-descended populations pushed the development of uniquely Chesapeake ways of life—including how Virginians performed and perceived gender. In contrast to South Carolina, it did not have a Black majority.⁶² But the colony did have a full-fledged slave society, unlike its neighbors to the north. By the middle of the century, Anglo-Virginians' "acts of extravagance, ostentation, and...disregard of economy" and their "indolent, easy, and good-natured" dispositions clashed, in the eyes of outsiders, with their exceedingly harsh treatment of their enslaved.⁶³ Enslaved Afro-Virginians labored for themselves and their families when they could, partaking in a comparable kind of consumerism for their means.⁶⁴ The century-long

⁶¹ Maryland was not a one-to-one mirror of Virginia, though, and their differences in religion, establishment and governance, and relationship to empire factor into this work's focus on Virginia by itself. For scholarship on the relationship of these two colonies, their tobacco production, and their populations, see works by preeminent Chesapeake scholar Lorena S. Walsh, particularly her most recent volume, *Motivations of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). See also Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*; and Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth*.

⁶² Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974).

⁶³ Andrew Burnaby, *Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North America: In the Years 1759-1760; with Observations upon the State of the Colonies* (Dublin: Printed for R. Marchbank, Castle Street, 1775), 39, 41.

⁶⁴ Galle, "Costly Signaling," 19-43.

development of creolization in Virginia, a cultural blending that progressed among White and Black communities alike, worked to create an environment of observation and judgment that hinged on the importation of British ideals and their ramifications for Virginian life.⁶⁵

Inhabitants in all the colonies, but in Virginia especially, valued certain kinds of outward appearances. This included the sum of one's posture, demeanor, and clothing. Travelers to the colony were warned as early as 1737 of Virginians' tendency to judge individuals on matters of presentation—particularly dress and fashion.⁶⁶ Clothing made the individual visually legible, a difficult business in a world of shifting ideals, realities, and crises.⁶⁷ Clothing's prominent place in colonial American life helped Virginians identify not only themselves but also others, sorting individuals into appropriate categories of social position, race, and gender. As the excerpt from Presbyterian minister James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* at the head of this chapter suggests, the onus of gender performance and maintenance rested on women, even as men tried (to varying degrees of success) to limit women's roles in public life.⁶⁸ The men of the British empire did carry gendered responsibilities to self, family, and community, but, according to Fordyce, they were less subject to scrutiny, even as Virginians became known for scrutinizing others.⁶⁹ However, both men and women experienced and grappled with the disconnect between

⁶⁵ On creolization and its processes, see P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, especially Pt. 2: Encounters between Whites and Blacks; and Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 1-14. On observation, Jonathan Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 1 (June 1991): 124-59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2078091>.

⁶⁶ John Clayton, John Bartram, Peter Collinson, William Byrd, and Isham Randolph, "Letters of John Clayton, John Bartram, Peter Collinson, William Byrd, and Isham Randolph," Peter Collinson to John Bartram, February 17, 1737, *William and Mary Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Oct. 1926): 304, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1919262>.

⁶⁷ Cary Carson has made a similar argument for objects meant to adorn the home. Carson, *Face Value*, 93-128.

⁶⁸ Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 1-17; Lawrence E. Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century," *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (Dec. 2002): 881-82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3133532>; Harvey, "The Century of Sex?," 902-4.

⁶⁹ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women, in Two Volumes*, Vol. 1 (London: Printed for A. Millar and T. Cadell in the Strand, J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall, and J. Payne in Pater-Noster Row, 1767), 17, from *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0121784194/ECCO?u=orla57816&sid=ECCO&xid=d4cd9803&pg=1>.

what gender ideals said they should do, and how those ideals played out in real life. Thus, they could only decipher the legibility of clothing and its associated meanings through the matrix of gender ideals and social realities in flux in the late colonial period.⁷⁰

This matrix of ideal and consequence determined the development and shape of gender in Virginia from 1750 to 1775. Virginians imported gender ideals directly from Britain in the form of print culture, pamphlets, and engravings, then molded these ideals through the colony's particular ways of life. Virginia's status as a province of the empire, its reliance on slavery, and its inclination toward a culture of observation bound in networks of perception each produced consequences for what gender meant to colonists. Networks of perception facilitated ideas both about slavery and imperialism, and about identities of gender, race, and social position. Therefore, in order to understand how clothing embodied and constructed gender, there must first be an understanding of what those genders ideally entailed and how they became significant through observation and practice. The chapter begins with an overview of Virginia's place in the British Atlantic, then discusses which ideals reached the colony and how. It then turns to Virginia's specific and contingent practices, particularly slavery, to demonstrate how networks of perception functioned to uphold colonial life.

Virginia in the British Atlantic World

Virginia's place in the British Atlantic world influenced both the adoption of gender ideals and the development of the colony's social structures. In particular, the changing nature of Chesapeake agriculture and economy and the colony's location on the edge of the British empire shaped the world that eighteenth-century Virginians inhabited. On one hand, before 1750,

⁷⁰ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 11-79.

Virginia's tobacco production began to shift westward into the piedmont following richer soils, while the older tidewater communities experimented with wheat, other grains, and further economic diversification.⁷¹ From the piedmont, smallholders continued to import newly enslaved Africans, and their tobacco dominated Chesapeake exports even during the years of the crop's declining value in the 1760s.⁷² Virginia, along with South Carolina and the West Indies, bore the brunt of the Navigation Acts, which dictated the direct shipment of colonial produce like tobacco, rice, and sugar to Britain.⁷³ As historian Woody Holton has demonstrated, the inability to sell tobacco directly to continental Europe—which consumed the vast majority of the Chesapeake export through British merchants—increasingly led planters to chafe under the imperial system.⁷⁴ British merchants benefited from this monopoly on tobacco. However, in the half-century before the American Revolution, Virginia continued to occupy a prominent economic place within the British Atlantic world through its agricultural exports.

On the other hand, the colony's imperial position in many ways remained provincial. By nature of its status as a colony, Virginia was required not only to export its economic produce but to import manufactures as well, a process that drew it further into the empire and relegated it to the edge of that empire through London's control of consumption and especially credit.⁷⁵ Further, Virginia's population remained higher than any other mainland colony, yet its largest

⁷¹ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 29-34, 46-51; Holton, *Forced Founders*, 6-13.

⁷² Holton, *Forced Founders*, 60-72; Emily Salmon, "Tobacco in Colonial Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, last updated February 5, 2021, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/tobacco-in-colonial-virginia/>.

⁷³ Tensions with Scottish merchants, who, by the 1760s, had established numerous stores to trade directly with colonists for tobacco and had thereby upset elite Anglo-Virginians' consignment system, exacerbated this situation. Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth*, 229-30, 237. On the Navigation Acts, see Holton, *Forced Founders*, 39-73.

⁷⁴ Holton, *Forced Founders*, 39-73.

⁷⁵ While colonists certainly understood the imperial value of consumption and the network of goods employed by the empire, it was not until the 1770s that key kinds of consumption became regulated by the colonists themselves in an attempt to curb imperial power. Klein, "Politeness," 882-85; Holton, *Forced Founders*, 77-129.

city by 1775, Norfolk, boasted only 6,000 permanent residents; its capital, Williamsburg, had only a small year-round population. For all the world, Virginia was a rural colony.⁷⁶ Though it never attained a Black majority, the presence of the enslaved and the deliberate development of the plantation system scattered Virginians, free and unfree, westward and across the countryside.⁷⁷ Thus, the colony was something of a cultural backwater; trends were not set in Virginia for the rest of the empire.

That Virginia was part of the empire was never in question (see the discussion of Figs. 12 and 13 in Chapter 3); but its standing within that empire was increasingly debated and underwent changes as new imperial policies arose, wars were fought, and taxes collected.⁷⁸ Anglo-Virginians held stake in most Atlantic regions, and the relationships between these regions reveals the fraught nature of Virginia's changing imperial standing. The continued importation of captive Africans to the piedmont connected the eastern reaches of the Atlantic basin to its western frontier. Westward expansion benefited planters who went into debt by sending tobacco back east and north with merchants. The returns on this tobacco drove the need for more enslaved workers, and the cycle began anew.⁷⁹ Virginia, along with the other colonies, kept the British Atlantic churning. But by the third quarter of the eighteenth century, Virginia's standing in the British Atlantic increasingly came under duress, from the Anglo-colonists' perspective, as officials in London continued to make choices that benefited the crown and the metropole over

⁷⁶ Paul Musselwhite has effectively argued that Virginia became so identified with ruralism by the eighteenth century because of the active, century-long efforts of elite Anglo-descended planters to keep it rural, where their power was most concentrated. Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth*, especially chapters 6 and 7.

⁷⁷ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 79, 84-101; Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth*, 219-52.

⁷⁸ Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth*, 56-115; Edelson, *The New Map of Empire*, 1-19.

⁷⁹ For the African side of the British Atlantic, see Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 153-81; and G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On tobacco shipped to England, the related concerns of debt and expansion, see Holton, *Forced Founders*, 77-129; and Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth*, 246-47.

the provinces.⁸⁰ A number of economic and political issues following the French and Indian War—recession, the Proclamation of 1763, the tax acts, and the decrease in tobacco prices—each helped relegate the colonies to an increasingly provincial role.⁸¹ To be sure, Virginia was not alone or wholly unique in this process. Maryland, its sister colony, faced many of the same troubles, and the rest of the mainland colonies collectively struggled to make sense of imperial policy that sought to limit their economies and governments.⁸² Yet Virginia remained part of the empire until the last possible minute, indicating that the colonists perceived their imperial position as central to the British Atlantic—and that they debated internally what it meant to remain part of that Atlantic or to split from it.⁸³ All the while, they continued to export tobacco, import enslaved people, and consume material goods from elsewhere in the empire.

British Gender Ideals in Virginia

Anglo-Virginians therefore imported British gender ideals into the colony alongside the material goods and human cargo that defined life in the Chesapeake, which inextricably influenced how those ideals were received. These standards came both in the form of orally communicated beliefs, transmitted by travelers and new residents, and in the form of printed materials like pamphlets and books.⁸⁴ Imported British ideals helped Anglo-descended colonists remain connected to the empire, yet Virginians modified them based on their experiences as

⁸⁰ Almost certainly, London officials did not see it this way, as the common good trumped the needs of individual colonies, as described in Edelson, *The New Map of Empire*, 1-17.

⁸¹ Holton, *Forced Founders*.

⁸² Edelson, *The New Map of Empire*, 141-95, 289-333.

⁸³ Holton, *Forced Founders*, 106-29, 164-88.

⁸⁴ For more on how information was propagated in the colonial period, see Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), especially chapter 1; and Alejandra Dubcovsky, *Informed Power: Communication in the Early American South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

colonists. Such ideals related not just to gender, but to other markers of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century identity like status, ethnicity, and race. For instance, Virginia lawmakers passed sumptuary laws only once in the colony's history. In 1621, the Assembly sent instructions to the governor entreating him "not to allow any but the council and heads of hundreds to wear gold in their cloaths, or to wear silk."⁸⁵ While seventeenth-century councilmen struggled to differentiate themselves from those below them in the "New" World, revealing anxieties about social mobility and excessive spending, by the eighteenth century these anxieties found expression in the colony's unwritten social codes rather than its legal framework.⁸⁶

Although eighteenth-century Virginians' clothing was less officially limited in who could consume, dress, and trade in it, colonial leaders nevertheless wanted people to dress to their "proper" positions. Perceptions about gendered sartorial presentation flourished at this time, with the body at center stage.⁸⁷ Gender was written onto sexed bodies that could increasingly only be presented and performed in specific ways.⁸⁸ As other scholars have shown, Enlightenment thought called for growing ways to categorize the world, including humans. Physical differences between what were categorized as "man" and "woman" granted space for scientific discourses about sex to develop.⁸⁹ Colonists utilized clothing and other material adornments to eke out

⁸⁵ Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. 1, Instructions to Governor Wyatt, 114.

⁸⁶ There were some laws passed on the subject of clothing during the eighteenth century, particularly regarding the proper attire of the enslaved, but the enforcement of these laws could be variable. See Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People,'" 40-45.

⁸⁷ On the body in the eighteenth century, K. Brown, "'Changed...into the Fashion of a Man': The Politics of Sexual Difference in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Settlement," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6, no. 2 (Oct. 1995): 171-93, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3704121>; K. Brown, *Foul Bodies*; and Greta LaFleur, "Sex and 'Unsex': Histories of Gender Trouble in Eighteenth-Century North America," *Early American Studies* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 469-99, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2014.0024>.

⁸⁸ This is not to say that eighteenth-century inhabitants understood or constructed gender in ways that we today would recognize. Yet gender as a system of beliefs about "natural" difference existed and structured power relations in the colonial world. On the difference between colonial and contemporary understandings of gender, see K. Brown, "'Changed...,'" 171-93; and LaFleur, "Sex and 'Unsex,'" 469-99.

⁸⁹ King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial*, 1-30; and Harvey, "The Century of Sex?," 899-916.

increasingly discrete gendered spaces based on “natural” differences not only between sexes but races, as well.⁹⁰ Transgressing these differences and their associated roles violated the “natural order.”⁹¹ By attempting to socially enforce gender differences through the material forms of clothing, colonial leaders ensured that hierarchies of power based on status and race also continued. This active process linked the “proper” or “natural” forms of masculinity and femininity to status and race.⁹²

Further, gender in the colonial period was never stable, yet imported gender ideals persisted even as they underwent changes. Around mid-century, the dominant ideal, politeness, faced competition from a new set of cultural values, sensibility. Where the former emphasized form, sociability, and rituals, even if it invited artifice, the latter reconfigured individuals and behaviors into something more authentic, collected, and open.⁹³ Scholars have demonstrated that politeness was the preeminent method by which individuals, both gentry and common folk, lived, as it determined conversation as well as rules of consumption and performance.⁹⁴ One practiced politeness to improve the self—including the body.⁹⁵ Often, such improvements came through presenting an inauthentic self; dressing the part could be achieved by anyone. In contrast, sensibility allowed for more “authentic” fashions and for less regimented rituals of performance.⁹⁶ Sensibility also emphasized the emotions and the senses.⁹⁷ The competition of these two modes of performance meant that, at any given time, more than one set of beliefs about

⁹⁰ Harvey, “The Century of Sex?,” 903-7; J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 12-49.

⁹¹ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 17-19.

⁹² Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 47-79.

⁹³ Klein, “Politeness,” 873-77; Smith, “Adorned Identities,” 92-96, 100-3.

⁹⁴ Klein, “Politeness,” 873; Smith, “Adorned Identities,” 92-96.

⁹⁵ Klein, “Politeness,” 875.

⁹⁶ Smith, “Adorned Identities,” 100-3.

⁹⁷ Smith, “Adorned Identities,” 100-3; Daniel Wickberg, “What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 661-63, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.112.3.661>.

either social position or gender could be called upon, argued against, or utilized in social situations.⁹⁸ Politeness's ritualized performances and sensibility's simple rusticity thus pulled gender in two different directions.

During the shift and overlap between these two modes, there was also a growing belief in the connection between fashion and gender for women, who supposedly had a more "natural" affinity for dress than did men.⁹⁹ Dress, or more broadly appearance, is difficult to separate out from colonial discussions of idealized gender because it was a prominent way to present gender. The relationship between the two rested on clothing's ability to communicate ideas about the wearer. Thus, the circular logic which dictated that fashion was feminine because women naturally pursued it benefitted both those who argued such logic and those who practiced it.¹⁰⁰ The consumer revolution further aligned femininity with fashion, as women became seen as primary consumers.¹⁰¹ Altogether, these changes in British Atlantic thought characterized the context of gender ideals imported to Virginia.

Several writers sought to instruct readers on proper ways of living, whether through behavior, craft, or otherwise performing their genders. These injunctions were not limited only to topics like sexuality and vanity, but also extended to include education and friendliness. Conduct manuals, a form of prescriptive printed material, represent a traditional source for understanding gender ideals. The manuals *The Whole Duty of Woman* (1753) by English playwright William Kenrick and *Sermons to Young Women* (1767) by Scottish minister James Fordyce provide

⁹⁸ Klein, "Politeness," 897.

⁹⁹ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 49-52.

¹⁰⁰ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 64-79.

¹⁰¹ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 49-52; Klein, "Politeness," 881-89.

insight into how Virginians imported gender ideals from Britain, and how these ideals were mapped onto and adapted to colonial life.¹⁰²

Though neither of these writings originated in Virginia, their presence can be traced to the colony. Manuals, novels, and other lengthy published works were often imported into the colonies rather than reprinted, in part because of the relatively small number of printing offices in North America and in part because of the prohibitive time and resources it took to produce even a four-page weekly newspaper.¹⁰³ Although Kenrick's *The Whole Duty*, published pseudonymously, does not appear on the for-sale lists at the *Virginia Gazette* printing office in Williamsburg, another of his works does, suggesting that the manual may also have been imported.¹⁰⁴ Fordyce's *Sermons* appears at least once on the book list, starting in 1768.¹⁰⁵

Though it is unclear how many copies were offered for sale, much less how many were bought by Williamsburg residents, the presence of such materials in the Virginian capital suggests that at least some Virginians, perhaps elites, purchased, read, and engaged with the arguments presented by these two authors.¹⁰⁶

What was the ideal? On one hand, the ideal was often prescribed by men.¹⁰⁷ Even *The Whole Duty*, initially published under the moniker "a Lady," conceptualized women's place in

¹⁰² Paul Fussell, Jr., "William Kenrick, Eighteenth Century Scourge and Critic," *The Journal of the Rutgers University Library* 20, no. 2 (1957): 46, <https://doi.org/10.14713/jrul.v20i2.1360>; William Kenrick, *The Whole Duty of Woman. By a Lady. Written at the Desire of a Noble Lord* (Dublin: Printed by Richard James, at Newton's-Head, in Dame-Street, 1753), from *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, accessed October 3, 2021, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CB0127909760/ECCO?u=orla57816&sid=primo&xid=a9bfd160&pg=1>; Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*.

¹⁰³ Adelman, *Revolutionary Networks*, 19-50; Jordan E. Taylor, "Enquire of the Printer: Newspaper Advertising and the Moral Economy of the North American Slave Trade, 1704-1807," *Early American Studies* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2020): 293-97, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2020.0008>.

¹⁰⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, February 21, 1771, p. 4 col. 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, February 25, 1768, p. 4 col. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Klein, "Politeness," 897.

¹⁰⁷ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 1-9; Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 1-17.

society through a man's perspective.¹⁰⁸ Men utilized such writings to continue to cement their own power over women and to justify their patriarchal societies.¹⁰⁹ Even as the Enlightenment pushed gendered thought toward a greater recognition of women's place and participation in colonial life, their lives often remained under the control of men.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, the ideal was designed by those of British descent, for those of British descent. Enslaved women and men of African descent were never intended to fit the ideal, though they nevertheless had other expectations forced upon them regarding birth, child rearing, labor, and behavior.¹¹¹ Not only were the enslaved unfree, but they also were not of the proper status; at least the two conduct manuals surveyed here targeted wealthier women and men.¹¹² At its core then, idealized gender in the British Atlantic reinforced power at multiple levels: across genders as well as within them, and through status and race.¹¹³

Under the guise of a fallen woman, Kenrick instructed his readers on matters of knowledge, character, and marriage to argue, in sum, that women should be content with their lives under men and strive to be a comfort to those around them.¹¹⁴ For instance, a woman should not seek knowledge that was not "fit" for her but rather realize that "[t]hy kingdom is thine own house, and thy government the care of thy family."¹¹⁵ Further, women should speak only on matters they truly understood, and if they had to praise or scold, to do so sparingly to

¹⁰⁸ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, v-ix.

¹⁰⁹ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, Part 3: Class and Power in the Eighteenth Century; Mitchell, "Entertainment and Instruction," 439-54.

¹¹⁰ Harvey, "The Century of Sex?," 905; Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 1-17.

¹¹¹ J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*; K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 187-211.

¹¹² As historian Ira Berlin states, "...if slavery made race, its larger purpose was to make class..." Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 5; Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 1-3; Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, vi-vii.

¹¹³ Kirsten E. Wood, "Gender and Slavery," in *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, eds. Mark M. Smith and Robert L. Paquette (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 515.

¹¹⁴ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 3-5, 10-12, 39-58.

¹¹⁵ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 12.

preserve their credibility.¹¹⁶ Kenrick also utilizes imagery of dress and adornment to demonstrate the merits of being frugal and modest, and the vices of affectation, thus linking gendered traits to clothing. For example, a woman who “distorteth her features to appear lovely” wears dress that is “antic and singular...gaudy or rich to excess.” On the other hand, a modest woman’s “attire is simple; her feet tread with caution...”¹¹⁷ Though by the 1750s women were beginning to be linked to fashion, fashion could still be unacceptable; excessive ornamentation revealed vanity where there should have been frugality.¹¹⁸ Kenrick’s ideal for women, then, seems to have been of obedience, silence, and living within one’s means.

Kenrick’s ideals also reveal anxieties about gender relations. He argues that a marriage should be defined by consent, love, and respect. Without these, he insists, “the husband is a tyrant, and the woman is a slave.”¹¹⁹ His rhetoric of slavery demonstrates the idea that enslavement was the loss of liberty and affected those of British descent, in a conscious rejection of the liberty of enslaved men and women.¹²⁰ Yet Kenrick also warns his readers—young women—time and again not to trust the perceived intentions of seemingly good men. “For as the specious shew of virtue may be hypocrisy,” he states, “so the appearance of ill may be sometimes deceit.”¹²¹ Appearances were not everything, it seems, for Kenrick or his worldview. Kenrick’s repeated reference to the disconnect between appearance—or, put another way, performance—and actual character demonstrates the beginning of the shift out of politeness into sensibility. *The Whole Duty* scorns affectation, excess, and artifice. However, it simultaneously

¹¹⁶ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 5-7, 15-18.

¹¹⁷ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 20-22.

¹¹⁸ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 34-36.

¹¹⁹ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 46.

¹²⁰ Edward B. Rugemer, *Slave Law and the Politics of Resistance in the Early Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 174-78.

¹²¹ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 17.

relies on the way politeness separated life into private and public, feminine and masculine.¹²²

Overall, Kenrick's manual pushes an ideal that characterized women as publicly inferior individuals who, though in charge of the home, still had to submit to their husbands and other men.

Some similarities exist between Kenrick's 1753 manual and Fordyce's published thirteen years later. In his *Sermons*, Fordyce links gender and clothing. His ideal for women, like Kenrick's, demanded obedience and self-reverence, to think chiefly of that which was "domestic and rational," and to exercise forgiveness.¹²³ Aiming his sermons at young girls and single women, Fordyce despairs "[w]hen a daughter...turns out unruly, foolish, wanton; when she disobeys her parents, disgraces her education, dishonours her sex, disappoints the hopes she had raised; when she throws herself away on a man unworthy of her..." and in the next breath, cuts at men who would "make [a young woman] their prey..."¹²⁴ These gendered expectations—to be an obedient, humble daughter and to become the same kind of wife—were explicitly connected to how a woman should dress. Fordyce characterizes appropriate attire with the term "simplicity." He argues that anything but simplicity in a woman's dress indicated that she was "poor and insipid," "worthless and...vain," and accordingly undeserving of men's attention.¹²⁵ Thus, Fordyce again represents the tensions between politeness and sensibility, between rigid social order and rustic simplicity of life.

For both Kenrick and Fordyce, gender ideals absolved men of emotional labor, removed many consequences for their actions, and allowed them to fill in the gaps of everything that

¹²² Klein, "Politeness," 881-85.

¹²³ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 9, 24, 33.

¹²⁴ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 16, 20.

¹²⁵ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 55, 59.

femininity was not. Where women remained at home, unable to pursue their curiosity, men could become educated and govern the empire. Where women were weak and bent to temptation, men were strong. Though the differences may not have been as binary as the lack of men's gender ideals in these conduct manuals suggests, the increasing Enlightenment categorization of bodies into gendered roles hardened the idealized divide between men and women, public and private.¹²⁶ Further, as the excerpt of Fordyce's manual at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, women ideally bore the brunt of a family's emotional and spiritual well-being.¹²⁷ Indeed, women bore the blame for and the responsibility of managing both the expectations put upon them, and the actions and reactions of men. Women's actions, especially their fashions, had the potential to affect men for better or for worse.¹²⁸ For Fordyce, the cause-and-effect between women's actions and men's effeminacy was clear-cut; he argues, "To form the manners of men various causes contribute; but nothing...so much as the turn of the women with whom they converse."¹²⁹ Kenrick extends this relationship to the domestic sphere to urge wives to "[r]eturn [a husband's] injustice with mildness of reproof, that his guilt may not have to reproach thee with bitterness."¹³⁰ Women therefore bore that which the ideal removed from men.

However, men were not completely free of responsibility. Men who followed excessive women and themselves dressed too richly were likewise "insipid," "worthless," and "vain"—effeminate.¹³¹ These men who dressed above their position or who exceeded their financial means "seldom fail to make themselves little, in the eyes of every man who is not himself

¹²⁶ This divide was never as complete or as rigid as the ideal hoped it would be. See Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 1-17; Klein, "Politeness," 881-85; and Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 47-79.

¹²⁷ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 17.

¹²⁸ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 60-73.

¹²⁹ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 21-25, quote on 22.

¹³⁰ Kenrick, *The Whole Duty*, 48.

¹³¹ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 55, 59; Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 73-79.

effeminate, and of every woman too who is not a slave to fashion.”¹³² Spending too much on clothes took necessary resources away from the family. Therefore, part of the ideal for men was to behave and dress in ways that were not already associated with the feminine: strong in character, knowledgeable, experienced, and logical.¹³³ They had to be “regular and considerate, careful to govern their passions, improve their faculties, and prepare for performing with diligence and distinction their duty to society.”¹³⁴ Men’s self-reverence and honor were just as expected as women’s, although men could afford to be lax in their upholding of society’s expectations in ways that women could not. Fordyce states that “...if the manly and magnanimous part should still be preferred to the mean and effeminate,” then a man could and did expect respect from others.¹³⁵ Yet as one impassioned Virginian wrote in 1772, “the Excess of Effeminacy” seemed “now to have risen to the utmost Height of Extravagance.”¹³⁶ The link between gender security and clothing only strengthened over the late colonial period as political tensions drew to the breaking point and as Virginia faced upheaval.¹³⁷ Though this colonist in particular longed for the days when fashion did not determine either a man’s worthiness or the security of his gender, their angst nevertheless demonstrates that which Fordyce and Kenrick communicated to their women readers. Clothing, as a performance and as an instrument of gender’s power, generated substantive and lasting impressions.

Whether anyone in Virginia consumed these conduct manuals is, unfortunately, unclear, and less so for those to whom the manuals were not addressed. However, the ideal shaped

¹³² Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 60.

¹³³ Fordyce, *Addresses to Young Men*, in *Two Volumes* (Boston: Printed by Robert Hodge, for William Green: 1782 [originally published 1770]), from *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CB0128146701/ECCO?u=orla57816&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=c2cbd82c&pg=1>.

¹³⁴ Fordyce, *Addresses to Young Men*, 15.

¹³⁵ Fordyce, *Addresses to Young Men*, 23.

¹³⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, January 21, 1773, p. 1 col. 1.

¹³⁷ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 81-151.

standards for all Anglo-Virginian women and men. Historian Linda Sturtz has demonstrated the concept of Virginia's "layered hierarchy," in which Anglo-descended women faced oppression from Anglo-descended men even as they wielded immense power over all enslaved individuals.¹³⁸ Virginia's social hierarchy was first and foremost based on social position, yet gender played a key role in structuring interactions and facilitating networks in the colony. The social domination of a free White woman over an enslaved Black man drew its potency directly from the fact that the ideal placed those women under White men.¹³⁹ Therefore, the circumstances of Virginia's slave society, in conjunction with the importation of British gender ideals, shaped Virginian life.

Virginian Circumstances

If travelers to Virginia were correct in their assumptions about its inhabitants, then appearances mattered in the late colonial period. But *how* appearances mattered relied on Virginia's specific social and cultural mores. Although part of the British Atlantic, almost everything about the colony differed from its motherland. The climate and environment, terms of labor and production, perceived place in the empire, people, and wealth each contributed to Virginia's social and cultural landscape.¹⁴⁰ Virginia may have imported and consumed gender ideals from Britain, but its unique qualities shaped the adoption and transformation of those ideals to fit how Virginians, free and unfree, interacted with each other and the empire.

¹³⁸ Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 89-110.

¹³⁹ Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 99-102.

¹⁴⁰ On environment, see Timothy Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Mart A. Stewart, "If John Muir Had Been an Agrarian: American Environmental History West and South," *Environment and History* 11, no. 2 (May 2005): 141, 143-48, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20723528>. On relationships between labor, wealth, and people, see Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*; Carson, *Face Value*; and Sturtz, *Within Her Power*.

The colony's foremost quality which distinguished it from its northern and southern neighbors, and from the rest of the empire, was the nature of its slavery. Aside from Maryland, no other colony experienced such high degrees of creolization by the mid-eighteenth century as Virginia.¹⁴¹ Virginian-born Afro-descended individuals dominated the unfree population.¹⁴² Enslaved and enslaver alike utilized the same kinds of knowledge, expression, and performance, although to different ends. Thus, the presence of the enslaved was constant, and Chesapeake laws accommodated early on for this fact.¹⁴³ Further, slavery structured not only the lives of the enslaved, but also those of British descent. Fear and dominance alternately shaped the day-to-day rhythms of enslavers, both women and men.¹⁴⁴

Anglo-Virginian colonists thus adopted and adapted what was useful for themselves, and used the resulting ideals to project inferior gender roles onto bodies which were already "othered" by race.¹⁴⁵ Those of African descent in Virginia became subsumed under White expectations of gender, which is to say that their genders were denied and were instead placed into a category of genderlessness. Historians Kathleen Brown and Marisa Fuentes have, in their own works, demonstrated how enslaved individuals, especially women, forcibly became genderless in Atlantic slave societies.¹⁴⁶ As Fuentes argues, "...gender was a privilege of the dominant (white) class and produced dynamic structures" which worked to subjugate those of African descent specifically because of that descent; gender became a secondary concern, if a

¹⁴¹ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 84-101; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 126-41.

¹⁴² P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 93, 95-101; Holton, *Forced Founders*, 60-72.

¹⁴³ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 108-9; Musselwhite, *Urban Dreams, Rural Commonwealth*, 181.

¹⁴⁴ Rugemer, *Slave Law*, 171-212; Holton, *Forced Founders*, 133-63.

¹⁴⁵ K. Wood, "Gender and Slavery," 513-14; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 70-99; J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, especially Chapter 1.

¹⁴⁶ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 187-244; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 70-99.

concern at all.¹⁴⁷ In these ways, slavery shaped the daily situations in which Virginians of all sorts found themselves. The relationship of race and status—in other words, slavery—with gender fundamentally shaped how power and performance operated in Virginia. Both Anglo- and Afro-Virginians’ participation in the consumer revolution meant that for all inhabitants in the colony, gender and clothing became linked. Putting on clothing performed gender, race, and social position simultaneously. These performances did not occur in a vacuum, but rather, Virginians performed for themselves and each other, in hopes of communicating specific ideas about gender as power and gender as identity.¹⁴⁸

Networks of Perception

Virginians performed gender and social position with the explicit intent of being seen. As historian Jonathan Prude has demonstrated, the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world thrived on a culture of observation, of perceiving and being perceived.¹⁴⁹ Observation—more specifically, polite observation—was a key spoke in the wheel that made the British Atlantic turn. There were codes about who could and could not “see” whom and under what circumstances. As scholars Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton have illustrated, visibility and observation functioned as mechanisms of power: those with the privilege to make others visible held the most power.¹⁵⁰ Ideally, therefore, performance and visibility were the domain of the gentry.¹⁵¹ Yet the middling and lower sorts of Anglo-descended communities, as well as Afro-

¹⁴⁷ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 75.

¹⁴⁸ Archaeologist Jillian Galle describes this process as signaling theory. Galle, “Costly Signaling,” 21-22.

¹⁴⁹ Prude, “To Look upon the ‘Lower Sort’,” 127-34.

¹⁵⁰ Morgan and Rushton argue that print culture, and advertisements in particular, contributed to this culture of observational power. Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, “Visible Bodies: Power, Subordination and Identity in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World,” *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 1 (2005): 39-42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2005.0115>.

¹⁵¹ Prude, “To Look upon the ‘Lower Sort’,” 130-34.

descended enslaved communities, also participated in this culture of observation and engaged in what are termed here networks of perception. These networks often overlapped with existing community ties, drawn on lines of kinship, business, and group identity, and reaffirmed belonging in that community.¹⁵² Further, and perhaps most important for understanding the ways clothing embodied gender, perception could not occur without the existence of communities. Such connections were the background against which any Virginian performed to be perceived in specific ways.¹⁵³ Put another way, Virginians of all sorts cultivated, maintained, and navigated community networks in an effort to be favorably perceived.

Regardless of status, Virginians found themselves belonging to more than one community and therefore to more than one network of perception. However, for most, it seems that only one network took precedence depending on the situation. Although the ideal called for a culture of observation barred to the lower sorts, especially the enslaved, in reality all Virginians possessed the ability to perceive one another and make decisions based on those perceptions.¹⁵⁴ Each network intersected at the individual level—an unavoidable circumstance, as Virginians performed for their own networks, but they could not stop others from likewise perceiving them.¹⁵⁵ This is not to say that networks did not mesh together; as other scholars have shown, Virginian enslavers and enslaved lived side-by-side, knew things about each other, and communicated often.¹⁵⁶ Yet Anglo-Virginians, especially planters and other enslavers, tended to align with one another, while the enslaved relied on their own communities.

¹⁵² Prude, “To Look upon the ‘Lower Sort’,” 130-34; David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (Apr. 1999): 253-59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2674119>.

¹⁵³ On manipulating one’s performance to communicate a specific identity, see Galle, “Costly Signaling,” 21-22.

¹⁵⁴ Galle, “Costly Signaling,” 21-22; Prude, “To Look upon the ‘Lower Sort’,” 143-49.

¹⁵⁵ Galle, “Costly Signaling,” 19-43.

¹⁵⁶ Indeed, elite planters feared the collaboration of poor Whites and enslaved Blacks. Holton, *Forced Founders*, 133-63; P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint* 318-76.

In the *Virginia Gazette*, 114 runaway advertisements contained information both about enslaved runaways' clothing and about enslaver or enslaved networks. Here, the latter component is crucial for understanding how clothing embodied gender and how networks of perception facilitated that embodiment. While these advertisements should be approached with caution because of the racist, classist assumptions imbued in them by enslavers, employing Fuentes's methodology of "reading along the bias grain" enables a more nuanced view of the enslaved networks, clothes, and genders presented in them.¹⁵⁷ Overall, enslaver networks tended to call upon common markers of identity such as race and social position, while enslaved networks were portrayed as operating on the basis of kin- or friendship. Individuals within networks therefore performed community expectations (e.g., spousal obligations or law enforcement) as well as identity.

Enslaver networks were legally supported by laws that benefited those who fully participated in these social webs and harmed those who did not. As early as 1748, the Virginia legislature mandated that enslavers post notices at each church in their parish when searching for a runaway, and that the names of the runaways be announced after every service.¹⁵⁸ Such actions reinforced enslaver networks by not only textually reminding them of their hegemonic position through printed or written notices, but also by strengthening connections in face-to-face interactions. Further, the law codified punishments for enslavers who failed to uphold their community networks. The 1748 legislative session thus decided that "if any master...shall knowingly permit...any slave, not belonging to him, or her, to be and remain" on their land for extended times, they "shall forfeit and pay one hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco, for every

¹⁵⁷ For more on the tension between runaway advertisements as unreliable but still useful sources, see Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort,'" 126; and Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," 246-47.

¹⁵⁸ Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. VI, Acts of the Assembly, Oct. 1748, Ch. XXXVIII, 110-11.

such offence.”¹⁵⁹ For larger plantations, 150 pounds of tobacco may not have been a terrible setback, but in general, the law was meant to discourage the unnecessary presence of truant enslaved persons on other plantations. It also encouraged cohesion among enslavers and other Anglo-Virginians. The punishment for allowing runaways to hide out on one’s land was less about the tobacco per se, and more about the social ramifications, as the offender could have been perceived as dangerous to the status quo.¹⁶⁰

Runaway laws also facilitated the maintenance of White networks in other ways. A 1753 law set the minimum reward for captured and returned runaways at 200 pounds of tobacco if captured over 10 miles from the original plantation, and 100 pounds if the distance was between 5 and 10 miles.¹⁶¹ A later 1769 law clarified these amounts to ten shillings as the base rate, and an additional six pence per mile.¹⁶² Yet many discontented enslavers evidently felt that a runaway’s labor and material value were worth extra reward. Of the 114 advertisements surveyed, just over a fourth offered additional money “besides what the law allows.” These amounts ranged from ten shillings to five pounds.¹⁶³ Clearly, these enslavers found it made better business sense to spend a relatively small amount on placing advertisements and offering rewards than to have the runaway outlawed, or to spend a much larger sum on acquiring a new enslaved person.¹⁶⁴ This practice also represented yet one more way in which enslavers solidified

¹⁵⁹ Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. VI, Acts of the Assembly, Oct. 1748, Ch. XXXVIII, 108.

¹⁶⁰ The “status quo” being social stability and racial control. Rugemer, *Slave Law*, 1-10, 171-212; Holton, *Forced Founders*, 133-63.

¹⁶¹ Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. VI, Acts of Assembly, Nov. 1753, Ch. VII, 363.

¹⁶² Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. VIII, Acts of Assembly, Nov. 1769, Ch. XIX, 359.

¹⁶³ Thirty-two enslavers offered additional incentive for their runaways to be returned. The most common additional rewards were twenty and forty shillings (one and two pounds, respectively), though one individual offered up to ten pounds.

¹⁶⁴ At minimum, to place advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette* for three weeks and to offer at least ten shillings extra reward would have cost enslavers two pounds. *Virginia Gazette*, January 2, 1752, p. 4. On outlawry, see Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. VI, Acts of the Assembly, Oct. 1748, Ch. XXXVIII, 110-11.

their power over runaways and broader society, as Simon Middleton has shown.¹⁶⁵ Promising higher rewards than what was required helped enslavers perform a show of good will, a practice that strengthened enslavers' commitments to their society, laws, and networks.

Enslaver networks were called upon in specific ways in the runaway advertisements and in broader Virginian society. Most advertisements which identified enslaver networks did so in two ways: forty-eight advertisements directly named another individual to whom the runaway could be taken if captured, and sixty-seven referred to whose plantation the runaway may have headed.¹⁶⁶ Both kinds of networks functioned to engage enslavers as perceivers by publicly drawing attention to specific individuals or locations. Enslavers identified in the advertisements knew to keep their eyes open and be ready to perceive an Afro-descended person as a runaway, but the advertisement also mobilized other enslavers or enslaver allies to do the same. By putting social pressure on the identified enslaver, they would be more likely to uphold the community's expectations and retain their status in that network of perception.

Advertisers who named another individual to whom a runaway could be brought sought to deepen trust between enslavers and to more tightly bind their networks. For example, between November 1769 and August 1770, three separate advertisers identified Neil Campbell of Richmond as the person to whom runaways should be taken if captured. Campbell was likely a nearby contact of at least two of the advertisers; both William Walton and John Harwood lived in Richmond or in Henrico County.¹⁶⁷ However, the remaining advertisement, placed by David

¹⁶⁵ Middleton argues that the re-commodification of the enslaved into values of rewards helped enslavers continue to deny the humanity of the enslaved and to reify their (perceived) condition as property. Simon Middleton, "Runaways, Rewards, and the Social History of Money," *Early American Studies* 15, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 617-47, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2017.0022>.

¹⁶⁶ The total of these two categories does not add up to 114; however, at least 13 fell into more than one group.

¹⁶⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, November 9, 1769, p. 3 col. 1; *Virginia Gazette*, August 2, 1770, p. 3 col. 2.

Pattison, identifies three locations: Buckingham, from where Solomon ran away; Norfolk, where Solomon previously lived; and Richmond, where Campbell resided.¹⁶⁸ Pattison likely believed Solomon would travel through or near Richmond on his way to Norfolk, if he indeed intended to go that way. Pattison trusted that Campbell could reliably hold onto Solomon, if captured, until Pattison retrieved him. On one hand, then, the amount of trust and financial responsibility placed in men like Campbell functioned to intensify relationships between Anglo-Virginians, especially enslavers. The realities of slavery and the constant need to reassert power over the enslaved meant that advertisements like the one for Solomon helped enslavers remain socially linked. Further, the masculine ideals which urged men to be knowledgeable and to demonstrate strength of character manifested in the actions of enslavers who both placed advertisements and responded to them.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, runaways likely intimately understood the White networks that surrounded them and the dangers of those networks perceiving them in unfavorable ways.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, by naming other Anglo-descended enslavers, advertisers provided another reminder of their believed superiority over “misbehaving” enslaved individuals.

Advertisements which identified places served similar functions. John Corrie’s 1769 advertisement for runaway Harry exemplifies how directing attention to a place helped enslavers draw upon and utilize their networks. At the time of running away, Harry resided in Essex County along the south bank of the Rappahannock, but was formerly enslaved by Betty Tod, a widow in King and Queen County to the south. Corrie expected Harry to run in the direction of

¹⁶⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, February 15, 1770, p. 3 col. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Knowledge of one’s dependents, their bodies, and their whereabouts constituted a form of (masculine) power. G. Morgan and Rushton, “Visible Bodies,” 39-42.

¹⁷⁰ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 377-437.

his previous residence.¹⁷¹ By identifying both a place and another Anglo-descended individual in his advertisement, Corrie probably wanted to direct extra attention to both. Although the law aimed to punish those who harbored runaways, more than one advertisement blamed “some evil disposed person” for helping runaways.¹⁷² Printed advertisements and other reminders of the law may have served as constant signals to uphold Anglo-descended community expectations by returning runaways. For Corrie, naming both widow Tod and her residence became an action of community and of perception because it enabled those in that area to partake in surveillance in accordance with maintaining the status quo. In both Harry’s and Solomon’s cases, the advertisements placed by their enslavers mobilized Anglo-Virginians’ networks of perceptions to turn inward, ensuring all members upheld their roles, and to face outward, attempting to perceive the guilty runaway amongst the other enslaved individuals.

However, runaway advertisements also revealed information about Afro-descended networks of perception, evidence of community building despite laws that sought to limit such actions. Enslaved individuals, whether newly arrived from elsewhere in the Atlantic or born in Virginia, formed networks among themselves even as enslavers broke up families and disrupted friendships.¹⁷³ Undoubtedly, Anglo-Virginian enslavers were well aware of at least some of the community and perception networks among the enslaved on their plantations or in the immediate vicinity. Further, many Anglo-descended Virginians recognized (and disliked) that the enslaved traveled locally under the cover of darkness, visiting relations and maintaining network ties, to socialize beyond their enslavers’ gazes.¹⁷⁴ Truancy threatened the whole system of slavery.

¹⁷¹ *Virginia Gazette*, May 11, 1769, p. 4 col. 3.

¹⁷² See, for instance, William Jones’s 1771 ad in Henrico County. *Virginia Gazette*, June 20, 1771, p. 4 col. 1.

¹⁷³ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 498-558; Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 182-207.

¹⁷⁴ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 524-26.

Accordingly, Virginia's legal measures that inspired racial solidarity among Anglo-enslaver communities also sought to punish the runaways themselves. The law stated that for any enslaved person caught without permission or business on another plantation, "it shall be lawful for the owner...to give, or order, such slave ten lashes on his, or her bare back, for every such offence."¹⁷⁵ Additionally, runaways who stayed away from the plantation too long, or who ran away more frequently, risked becoming outlawed.

Outlawry, wherein a slave was no longer protected by the colony's legal framework because of running away, causing "mischief," or otherwise harming the local White population, remained a potent method by which Anglo-descended Virginians tried to reassert control over the enslaved. Outlaws faced potentially violent deaths, which were fully legal and which absolved any Virginian of British descent of murder or destruction of property.¹⁷⁶ For example, runaway Tom was outlawed in Caroline County, but his enslaver supposed he might have hidden in at least four neighboring counties "as he has many relations at each place, where he may meet with some assistance."¹⁷⁷ As Tom was outlawed, however, his enslaver provided extra incentive: "And, as encouragement to all persons who would be so kind as to assist in taking him, I do hereby promise a reward of FORTY SHILLINGS, if taken alive, and if dead, TEN POUNDS."¹⁷⁸ Though the archival record is uncomfortably silent on whether Tom survived, was recaptured, or was murdered, his outlawry encapsulates the dangers that Afro-Virginian

¹⁷⁵ Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. VI, Acts of the Assembly, Oct. 1748, Ch. XXXVIII, 109.

¹⁷⁶ Before 1772, any slave could be outlawed. A 1772 law clarified the usage of outlawry to only cases where "it shall appear to the satisfaction of such justice...that such slave is outlying and doing mischief..." Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. VI, Acts of the Assembly, Oct. 1748, Ch. XXXVIII, 111; Vol. VIII, Acts of the Assembly, Feb. 1772, Ch. IX, 523.

¹⁷⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, February 6, 1772, p. 3 col. 3.

¹⁷⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, February 6, 1772, p. 3 col. 3; Middleton, "Runaways, Rewards," 617-47.

networks of perception faced. They could have been drawn closer together in solidarity or rent apart by fear and mistrust.

Yet runaway advertisements reveal the regularity with which Afro-Virginians continued to rely on and runaway to their own networks. Immediate family bonds between parents, children, and siblings paralleled the importance of “familiar” relationships of extended kin- and friendships, as termed by historian Sarah Pearsall.¹⁷⁹ In just under half of the 114 runaway advertisements surveyed, enslavers speculated on runaways’ potential networks.¹⁸⁰ The most common network identified was that of enslaved persons traveling to visit family or familiar connections, while a dozen advertisements document runaway groups of two or more.¹⁸¹ These network types demonstrate that enslaved communities could be built either on close relationships or on more transient, fluid ones.

The first type of enslaved network hinged on family. Networks identified through blood relations described connections between children and parents, brothers and their siblings, and individuals and other kin.¹⁸² By the late colonial period, Virginia enslavers came to realize the utility of keeping enslaved families together, but stability was never a guarantee.¹⁸³ Instability also characterized family links defined by choice. Philip Morgan demonstrates that eighteenth-century enslaved individuals tended to have spouses on other plantations because of separation through sale.¹⁸⁴ Morgan warns against using terms like “married couples” and instead favors

¹⁷⁹ Sarah M. Pearsall, “Women, Race, and Families in Early Modern North America,” in *The Oxford Handbook of American Women’s and Gender History*, eds. Ellen Hartigan-O’Connor and Lisa G. Matteson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 133-51.

¹⁸⁰ To be exact, fifty-one advertisements exhibit this trait.

¹⁸¹ Family and “familiar” networks account for thirty-nine advertisements; groups make fifty-one.

¹⁸² Sisters are never mentioned as the destination, and women who ran away to their families either went to partners, children, or parents.

¹⁸³ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 519.

¹⁸⁴ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 501-3.

phrases like “coresidential consensual unions,” as understandings of marriage and partnership differed between enslavers and enslaved.¹⁸⁵ Twenty-three advertisements identified runaways fleeing to a (presumably) consensual union. For instance, in 1772, William Pegram placed an advertisement for runaway Anthony, who “formerly belonged to Captain *Laforey* [but] I expect he will go to Mr. *Driver’s*, in *Nansemond*, where he has a Wife.”¹⁸⁶ As Anthony lived in Dinwiddie County, some ninety miles from Nansemond, this advertisement, like many others, raises more questions than it answers. Assuming Pegram’s appraisal of Anthony’s motivations were accurate, had Anthony visited the woman in Nansemond before with permission? Did he and the unnamed woman previously live closer together? Would he have taken or avoided roads? How did he use his knowledge of the environment to travel safely? Was he aided by other enslaved individuals on his journey? How did they perceive him: as a runaway, as a friend coming back home, as something in between? These questions cannot be answered by the few dozen words Pegram paid for in the *Gazette*, but asking them allows for an examination of the potential paths within Anthony’s enslaved networks of perception.

Runaway groups comprise the next most common kind of connection between runaways and other Afro-Virginians. Of the twelve advertisements that identify multiple runaways, eleven describe duos or trios—mostly two men traveling together. However, the earliest group advertisement identified in the survey traces the bodies, clothing, and projected paths of up to five individuals. In May 1767, Jack and Sukey fled their Chesterfield County plantation; Jack “carried off a wench, who is his wife, and a child of about 6 years old, belonging to” another enslaver. The group also picked up George, a “Mulatto...[who] is a Spaniard, but talks good

¹⁸⁵ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 499.

¹⁸⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, July 9, 1772, p. 3 col. 2.

English...”¹⁸⁷ This mishmash crew provides a window onto how enslaved individuals called upon and moved through networks of community and perception. How did a thirty-year old man, his wife and son, a sixteen-year-old girl, and a twenty-five-year-old “Spaniard” manage to coordinate their actions to escape? It is unclear whether Jack’s family lived on the plantation or nearby one, and where George resided in relation to the rest of the group. If these individuals were geographically separated, the fact that they were able to work together belies the very real importance of having community networks between plantations, towns, or other residences. If they were together, then they each must have understood the risks of running away in numbers, and, whether out of emotion or convenience, preferred to stick together.¹⁸⁸ On their flight, they may have stuck together as they traversed roads or swamps, encountered other travelers, and attempted to pass themselves as free. Perceivers within enslaver networks might have viewed the group with suspicion, while other enslaved networks may have sought to help or to at least not hinder their progress. Either way, networks of perception and of community surrounded this group and likely shaped how, when, and where they traveled.

Slavery and the ways it structured Virginia’s social and cultural life represent the key situation into which gender ideals were introduced from abroad and adapted to colonial life. Performance and perception enabled all Virginians to call on community ties to achieve certain ends. Enslavers utilized their networks to reinforce their power, drawn directly from slavery, and to reassert racial solidarity. The enslaved sought to avoid unfavorable detection or perception,

¹⁸⁷ George’s identification as both a “Mulatto” and a “Spaniard” raises important questions about how race, bondage, and appearance converged in Virginia. *Virginia Gazette*, May 28, 1767, p. 3 col. 4. See also Block, *Colonial Complexions*.

¹⁸⁸ Running away in groups, especially with children, could potentially have slowed progress and made the action more difficult. That these three adults, teenager, and child seem to have run together makes a strong case for the bonds of community. See P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 541-43; and J. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 178-83, 190.

relying on ties of blood, friendship, or circumstance to make their escape. In the late colonial period, therefore, networks of perception operated on the basis of communities predominantly aligned along racial divisions, allowing individuals to move within and between webs of power.

Conclusions

By the late colonial period, Virginia was both central to the British Atlantic and a province of it. Anglo-descended colonists imported gender ideals from their mother country and adapted them to the nature of living in the Chesapeake. The ideal, strategically limited by those of Anglo-descent for their own use and benefit, called for women's obedience and emotional labor, while men became protectors and shepherds of public society. Yet Virginia was shaped on all fundamental levels by slavery. The ideal was barred to the enslaved, even as those communities had access to what the ideal meant for performing and perceiving gender. Further, slavery partitioned the colony by social status and race, which in turn grouped Virginians, free and unfree, into particular networks of perception. Therefore, if the colony's place in the British Atlantic formed the background against which Virginians incorporated gender ideals, then networks of perception constituted the backdrop against which Virginians performed, and struggled against, those ideals. Networks of perception allowed Virginians to utilize ideals and other imported goods, like textiles and clothing, to communicate ideas about themselves, including gender. Gender became entangled with and embodied in clothing through the performances for these networks.

CHAPTER 2: MATERIAL EMBODIMENT OF GENDER

Dunces are they who persuade themselves and others, that nothing but true merit, the love of our country, honesty, and, in short, nothing but virtue, can make us happy and truly famous. How unpardonably cruel have our moralists hitherto dealt with us! What need have we of all the anxious endeavours they would enforce upon us? CLOTHES, happy invention! Clothes alone effect that which virtue, honesty, merit, and love of our country, in vain try to perform.

The Miraculous Power of Clothes (1772)

For Anglo-Virginians, clothing held a long tradition of substituting for identity. As far back as Shakespeare and the English theater, clothing and the self were understood as nearly synonymous. Boys who played women characters on stage drew anxieties about the reversal of their otherwise masculine bodies through cross-dressing, and in the colonies, fears about drastic changes to one's identity through bodily effects continued to pervade popular consciousness.¹⁸⁹ Authors of captivity narratives, as scholar Wendy Lucas Castro has demonstrated, were preoccupied with anxiety about what it meant to be naked, taken out of "civilized" clothing, and placed in Indian dress.¹⁹⁰ To wear a certain kind of clothing communicated the very essence of who one was; identity could change with the garments one wore. Virginians knew this concept well. In 1629, the case of Thomas/ine Hall confounded provincial officials and inhabitants as they struggled to make sense of an individual who seemed to switch feminine and masculine genders by changing clothes.¹⁹¹ Hall became a woman in feminine clothing and a man in masculine attire; their identity was only as rigid as the fabrics on their body. The direct relationship between clothing, gender, and the body was revealed in the Virginia court's

¹⁸⁹ Wendy Lucas Castro, "Stripped: Clothing and Identity in Colonial Captivity Narratives," *Early American Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 111-12, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2008.0003>.

¹⁹⁰ Lucas Castro, "Stripped," 107, 113-20.

¹⁹¹ K. Brown, "'Changed...into the Fashion of a Man'," 171-77.

punishment of Hall. Forcing Hall to wear garments evocative of both femininity and masculinity demonstrated seventeenth-century ideas about the material embodiment of gender.¹⁹²

By the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the relationship between clothing, gender, and the body had become elaborated and entrenched. The anonymous author of the 1772 satire *The Miraculous Power of Clothes*, quoted in this chapter's epigraph, understood the eighteenth-century power of dress even as they railed against it. Late colonial British Atlantic inhabitants had become too reliant on the communicative and constitutive power of dress, rather than proving their honor and merit through actions. The satirist likely intended for the quip "Clothes Make Men" to sting, yet for Virginians, this sentiment continued to prove useful through much of the eighteenth century.¹⁹³ Clothing allowed colonists to perform and perceive identity without ever having to directly interact with one another. First impressions based on attire provided the ability to earn either the praise or scorn of one's networks of perceptions, regardless of whether one was an "honest man in mean attire" or a "gilded fop."¹⁹⁴ Clothes therefore "made" a person by summing up and embodying their performed identities, displayed on the body for others to perceive.¹⁹⁵ Fashions came and went, but the perennial presence of clothing allowed it to embody identity long-term. Thus, clothing had the power both to reshape the body it covered, and to reconfigure the meanings generated by and about that body.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² K. Brown, "'Changed...into the Fashion of a Man'," 188.

¹⁹³ *The Miraculous Power of Clothes*, 4. Kate Haulman has read this satire in its Philadelphian context as a critique of tailors, extravagantly dressed men, and the influx of German-speaking immigrants to the region. Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 133-37.

¹⁹⁴ *The Miraculous Power of Clothes*, 4-5.

¹⁹⁵ Archaeologists of gender have moved beyond reading clothing as a mere signal of identity, useful only for its display and communication. However, the embodiment of gender in clothing, and the use of that embodiment to elicit specific community responses, is here used to demonstrate not only how clothing became identified with the wearer but also how it was used within certain audiences. On the historiography of embodiment in archaeologies of gender, see Joyce, "Embodied Subjectivity," 82-95. On the body as a category of analysis in history, see Block, "Making Meaningful Bodies," 527-28.

¹⁹⁶ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 17-31, 41-46, 73-79.

Clothing embodied gender through its materiality, the boundaries put in place between acceptable masculine and feminine dress, and the contexts within which one's dress was placed. As embodiment theory suggests, the physical forms of clothing, when put on every day and worn in close proximity to the body, influenced how Virginians saw themselves and each other, and how they attempted to perform their identities. The genders that clothing embodied could and did change as individuals crossed boundaries, whether naturally, such as through aging, or intentionally. Further, the contexts within which clothing was found influenced embodiment and perception; the same forms of clothing held different meanings on different bodies. Because gender expectations were often imposed from the top down in Virginia, Anglo-enslaver gender performances, perceptions, and identifications are read alongside their forced perceptions and identifications of the enslaved. This chapter discusses the changing forms of fashion from 1750 to 1775 before examining the ways in which clothing embodied gender as individuals crossed boundaries from childhood to adulthood, feminine to masculine and back. It then analyzes how clothing meant different things on different bodies, even when the basic form of dress did not change, to show how clothing, gender, and the body operated as sites of power and identification. The chapter closes with a consideration of the ways in which clothing became a tool of power.

Materiality: Clothing from 1750 to 1775

An understanding of how clothing embodied gender must be based on an examination of the materiality of clothing itself. On a fundamental level, clothing was a necessity of life in colonial Virginia. Though some forms of clothing remained stable from 1750 to 1775, others underwent changes whose altered shapes and silhouettes had ramifications for performed

identities. These changes did not occur all at once or for all the layers Virginians wore; the outermost forms of clothing tended to change quicker than undergarments.¹⁹⁷ Further, certain garments became associated not only with gender but with social status and race, as well. What was acceptable on genteel Anglo-descended bodies could be less so on those of the lower sorts, and unthinkable on those of African-descent and the enslaved.¹⁹⁸ This review of clothing is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive, but rather examines the most common forms of clothing as they pertain to this thesis. Garments have been divided along a feminine/masculine binary. However, this division should not be mistaken for a one-to-one translation of a sexed binary. As shown in the next section, certain garments took on new meanings as individuals progressed through life or put on different clothes.

Feminine clothing often came in more layers than masculine garments. In the eighteenth century, feminine clothes most often dressed women, but individuals perceived to otherwise be masculine could and did wear some of these feminine garments. The shift was worn closest to the body, protecting the skin from irritating fabrics and outerwear from dirty skin.¹⁹⁹ Shifts remained hidden from view, except where they appeared at key junctures like necklines and sleeves, and were starched to indicate both cleanliness and social status.²⁰⁰ Moving out from the shift, in approximate order, were the stays, which compressed the torso into a cone; pockets; any number of petticoats, or skirts; and a gown, robe, or jacket.²⁰¹ Stomachers, hoops, and other support garments came and went during the eighteenth century.²⁰² However, shifts and stays

¹⁹⁷ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 25-26.

¹⁹⁸ Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People'," 29-32; J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 12-49.

¹⁹⁹ This protection is more fully explored in the context of cleanliness. The association of linen, especially white linen, with skin, bodies, and identity was particularly powerful during the early modern period. K. Brown, *Foul Bodies*, 26-32, 89-93.

²⁰⁰ K. Brown, *Foul Bodies*, 26-32; Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 40.

²⁰¹ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 106-39; Smith, "Adorned Identities," 96-98.

²⁰² Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 226-30.

changed relatively little over this period. The stays, like shifts, remained hidden from view at all times, even as they molded the body and shaped perceptions. The more visible garments of petticoats and gowns, robes, and jackets underwent more significant change. For instance, costume historian Linda Baumgarten has detailed how feminine-coded skirts decreased in size during this period, as the support of incredibly wide hoops in the 1740s narrowed to a bell or dome shape by the 1760s. Stomachers were gradually replaced by front closures, and sleeves transitioned from cuffs, to large ruffles, to no ruffles.²⁰³ Daywear skirts and gowns remained shorter than formalwear, yet followed the same decrease in size.²⁰⁴ For enslaved women, enslavers generally provided them with two sets of shifts, petticoats, and jackets per year, one in summer and one in winter.²⁰⁵ Enslaved women's dress was, overall, consciously and conspicuously made to be less than their Anglo-descended counterparts' in both quantity and quality.²⁰⁶

Similar trends occurred for masculine clothing. Where women wore shifts to protect their skin and outerwear, men wore shirts and stockings.²⁰⁷ On top of their shirts, men wore waistcoats or jackets, coats, and breeches or trousers; at home, Anglo-descended men might have worn banyans or loose gowns.²⁰⁸ Further, working men wore clothing indicative of their trade, but overall, the tailored three-piece suit—waistcoat, coat, and breeches—was most common for White men.²⁰⁹ In contrast, enslaved men wore jackets, similar to waistcoats, and trousers, longer and fuller than breeches, with the occasional coat, an ensemble that resembled three-piece suits

²⁰³ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 226-30.

²⁰⁴ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 114-22.

²⁰⁵ Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People,'" 44-45.

²⁰⁶ Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People,'" 42-49; Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort,'" 143-46; Smith, "Adorned Identities," 163-77.

²⁰⁷ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 22, 27.

²⁰⁸ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 110-12.

²⁰⁹ Smith, "Adorned Identities," 98-99.

but was intended more for labor.²¹⁰ Further, while enslaved field- and tradesmen tended to wear coarse shirts, jackets, and trousers, domestic enslaved men wore livery, specifically designed to emulate an expensive three-piece suit.²¹¹ During this period, the masculine silhouette also decreased in size in an effort to make men's figures less feminine: coat skirts shrank, both in volume and length, and the overall cut of suits slimmed the body. Waistcoats and jackets also became shorter, while breeches extended upward to close the gap between the two garments. Coats moved from functional front-closure buttons to a cutaway style that revealed the waistcoat and breeches beneath. Further, men's sleeves receded from the large cuffs and ruffles seen pre-1750 to become more form-fitting, matching the slimmer figure.²¹² Thus, because of this shrinking, masculine clothing produced a distinctively masculine figure.

In colonial Virginia, these changes in clothing enabled enslavers and other Anglo-descended individuals to continually reinforce power over society by restricting modes of dress, types of fabric, and associated performances to Whites only. The materiality of clothing—both its constitutive fabrics and its physical closeness to the body—helped distinguish masculinity from femininity, free from unfree, and White from Black. Coarse fabrics tended to be used in ill-fitting garments; tailored clothing tended to be of finer quality. Further, the changes in clothing's shape during the third quarter of the century revealed changing modes of performance, as boycotts, resistance among the enslaved, and gender ideals took on new meanings. Thus, for these contests and contrasts of power, clothing further served to differentiate between those who “naturally” embodied “virtue, honesty, merit, and love of our country” and those who sought to

²¹⁰ This type of working wear was gradually adopted by wealthier Anglo-Virginian men during the boycotts of the 1760s and 70s. Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’,” 44-45; Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 96-116.

²¹¹ Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’,” 34-38.

²¹² Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 226-30.

dress “up” in society.²¹³ Yet these changes were also understood in terms of boundaries and limits. As Virginians aged and as they practiced dress for themselves, clothing took on multiple meanings at once.

Boundaries: Sex, Age, and Play

Virginians did not wear the same clothing during their entire lives, not only because clothing grew too small, wore out, or fell out of fashion, but also because they crossed particular boundaries that necessitated new kinds of clothing. The boundaries of sex, age, and play prompted some Virginians to transition from certain kinds of clothing to new styles.²¹⁴ Yet these new looks and the transition between them were not equal for individuals categorized as men and as women. Thus, the relationship between clothing, gender, and the body changed differently for different individuals. At various points in their lives, whether because of these boundaries or in spite of them, Virginians actively chose and used dress to signal their sex, age, and other markers of identity like social position. In part, these boundaries relied on determinations of (in)dependency, as to be dependent was to be feminine; independent, masculine.²¹⁵ Virginians and other colonists ridiculed effeminate men on the basis of perceived dependency: “slave[s] to fashion” depended upon vain women who tempted men into dressing to excess. Likewise, men who incurred high debts without the means to repay them could be “ruined” by indebtedness, a concept with highly gendered and sexualized connotations.²¹⁶ Under such formulations, the

²¹³ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 22-31; *The Miraculous Power of Clothes*, 4.

²¹⁴ The term “play” here is meant as a shortened form of “playing with clothing,” and is not intended to connote Virginians’ actions as childish. Rather, “play” is meant to demonstrate how Virginians actively manipulated clothing—playing with its materiality and its boundaries—to achieve certain ends.

²¹⁵ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 52-64, 73-79; Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 164-66.

²¹⁶ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 56; Holton, *Forced Founders*, 82-83; Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 18.

relationship between being feminine and being a woman, or masculine and a man, was not always equal. Boys and men could be effeminized, just as girls and women could become masculine.²¹⁷ Clothing represented only a part of this process, but the association of certain garments with femininity or masculinity—and therefore with dependency or independency—provided a highly visible avenue through which to perform, perceive, and control gender.

The boundaries of sex and age were some of the earliest thresholds Virginians crossed. Garments like stays and skirts were generally coded as feminine, while pants (breeches and trousers) aligned with masculinity. To wear either indicated that one was feminine or masculine, dependent or independent, whether that perception “fit” the body or not. Stays in particular were significant for Anglo-Virginians’ growth development because of how they molded the body to train proper posture. Stays acted to slim the back, slope the shoulders down, and compress the torso into a cone.²¹⁸ Yet stays were not simply functional. They also carried meanings about childhood dependency. All Anglo-Virginian children were dressed the same way until about age eight, regardless of whether the child was a girl or boy. Both young girls and boys wore stays, skirts, and gowns.²¹⁹ By dressing all children this way, Virginians aimed to visually denote that child’s dependency on adults, specifically on adult (Anglo-descended) men. It was not until boys were “breeched”—put into their first pair of pants—that they began to move out of the feminine to occupy a transitional stage between dependency and independency, as Linda Baumgarten has shown.²²⁰ Boys crossed the boundary of age and sex; girls did not. Women’s perpetual use of such garments signified their continued dependence on men. Thus, for boys and men, clothing

²¹⁷ Sharon Block argues that “man” and “woman” were accretions of characteristics, not stock biological categories. Block, “Making Meaningful Bodies,” 526-29.

²¹⁸ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 121-22.

²¹⁹ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 162-66.

²²⁰ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 164.

helped them cross the threshold into independence in a socially acceptable manner, while women's lives spent in stays remained on only one side of the boundary.

Other thresholds that necessitated changes in clothing, such as pregnancy or mourning, could occur, but individuals could also actively choose to cross boundaries. Although no change in clothing's embodiment of gender was quite as drastic as the transition out of stays for boys, the boundaries between masculine and feminine were never fully stable or clear, enabling some individuals to play with the limits of acceptable and unacceptable genders, clothing, and performances.²²¹ The reversal of feminine and masculine garments could be actively achieved by some individuals; at least a few enslaved runaways cross-dressed as they fled (explored in Chapter 3), but ideally, such boundaries remained uncrossed. Even satirists avoided such stark role reversal, and instead played with the fuzziness between genders in other ways. For instance, the duo in Figure 1 have not swapped their most salient and obvious markers of gender—skirt and breeches—but instead have donned accessories otherwise laden with gendered meaning. Though this print is from 1780, it is nonetheless useful for understanding colonial-era attitudes about gender. The woman in this print is obviously still meant to be perceived as a woman by viewers: her stays compress and lift her bust, while her robe remains unfastened and drapes over her purple petticoat. Though she wears the man's hat and his sword, and stands in a broad, open pose, she has not given up the most charged aspect of her feminine dependency: the petticoat.²²² Similarly, the man remains in his three-piece suit, his breeches unbuckled below the knees, while

²²¹ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 28-31, 49-64.

²²² Historical archaeologist Johanna Hope Smith has read this print differently. She argues that the accessories in this print—the hat, sword, and fan—carried the most gendered significance. While she may be correct, given that these are the items the couple has swapped, the most basic pieces of this couple's attire remains in their proper places, suggesting the unquestionable importance of skirts and breeches for embodying gender. Smith, "Adorned Identities," 132-34.

he holds the woman's fan and balances her headdress atop his head. This couple engages in a form of play, seeming to have fun trying out each other's accessories and manipulating the limits of their sartorial genders. Thus, if Ovid's *Metamorphoses* laying open at the woman's feet is any indication, during its own time, this depictive transferal of fashionable, gendered accessories may have elicited a few giggles, maybe some scorn. But the metamorphosis is not complete. The boundary between feminine and masculine has been bent, but not broken. Neither relinquish their actual genders, and neither venture so far as to assume the (in)dependency of the other.

Virginians crossed sartorial boundaries intentionally and actively, though these actions had varying consequences. Using the limits of sex and age to transition from one kind of clothing to another produced acceptable and favorable results; boys who became men needed masculine clothing to perform their genders for others in a way that would earn praise rather than scorn. Further, those who played with these boundaries did so at the risk of upsetting others' perceptions of their genders, and of the embodiment of that different gender becoming internal. However, variations in the meanings of clothing on certain bodies changed both across perceived boundaries—masculinity and femininity—and on either side of them. Where colonial society attempted to draw stark divides between genders with clothing, Virginians also sought to disambiguate the performances and representations of gender among men and among women, using social status and race as guiding lines.



Figure 1: The Transmutation of the Sexes, 1780

Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library. Carington Bowles, *A Morning Frolic, or the Transmutation of the Sexes*, mezzotint, hand-colored, c.1780, <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/digcoll/552229>.

Contexts: Body, Form, and Fabric

Clothing embodied gender in contextually specific ways. Although the basic forms of clothing remained the same for all Virginians, the relationship between clothing and the bodies it covered varied between individuals. An enslaved person and a poor Anglo-descended individual might both have worn attire made of cheap fabrics, but the sum of the White person's performance—including clothing, complexion, and perceived race—differed from that of the enslaved individual.²²³ Similarly, the enslaved individual and poor White might have acquired clothes of finer fabrics, and both would likely have been scorned for their attempts to dress “up” in society, but the meaning of that dressing “up” posed far greater threats to Anglo-Virginian society when it originated from an enslaved individual's body. These differences accounted for the process by which clothing became a tool of performance as well as power. This in turn impacted the gender an individual performed and others perceived. The relationships between the ideal, race, gender(lessness), social position, and clothing created myriad possibilities for how Virginians embodied, performed, and perceived identity. Ideally, the quality of one's garments matched the quality of one's character and gender; good fit and fine fabric together constituted the visual shorthand of gendered performance that was so integral to developing and maintaining networks of perception. Therefore, the contexts in which clothing embodied gender—differences between bodies, how the same sartorial forms produced different meanings on different bodies, and how fabric facilitated distinctions—enabled enslavers and other Anglo-Virginians to practice gender as power.

²²³ Sharon Block has argued that eighteenth-century inhabitants understood complexion as separate from race. Block, *Colonial Complexions*, 7-8, 12, 27-29. On differences between bodies, see Block, “Making Meaningful Bodies,” 525-29; and Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’,” 38-43.

The multivalence of clothing and gender hinged, ultimately, on the bodies of the enslaved. Differences within the categories of “woman” and “man” were deliberately constructed in an attempt to further nullify enslaved individuals’ humanity.²²⁴ As Anglo-descended women and men utilized clothing as a weapon to divest the enslaved of their individual identities, they simultaneously expanded their own genders and what was considered acceptable or unacceptable. By dressing themselves in finer fabrics than they provided to their enslaved, Anglo-Virginians actively sought to control the meanings of clothing and gender in ways that benefited their dominant position in society. In other words, Anglo-enslavers attempted to control the contexts within which gender was embodied and perceived. Femininity and masculinity both came under this attempted control.

Femininity

Virginian women’s femininity was most influenced by the presence or absence of stays and petticoats. The contexts under which Anglo-Virginians used or restricted these two garments produced variations in femininity, and this was in large part facilitated by pre-existing ideas about women of African descent. As historians of gender and slavery have demonstrated, the bodies of women, especially African-descended women, represented key sites of struggle over gender construction and power. The works of Kathleen Brown and Jennifer Morgan reveal how femininity became reserved for Anglo-descended women, relegating Afro-women to spaces of un-femininity or genderlessness.²²⁵ The relationship between clothing and women’s bodies, whether enslaved or not, hinged on overlapping beliefs about the ideal, enslaved women’s

²²⁴ Block, “Making Meaningful Bodies,” 525-29.

²²⁵ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 187-244; J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 12-49, 69-106.

genderlessness, and slavery itself. Further, the layered hierarchy of power in Virginia placed White women above Afro-descended women and men, a hierarchy which functioned on the differences between clothing on British and non-British, feminine and un-feminine bodies.²²⁶ Anglo-descended women therefore sought to perform genders that reflected the ideal. They further rejected what enslaved women were perceived to be—licentious or sexually available, capable of hard labor, “natural” and painless childbearing—in an attempt to bolster their own femininities as White women.²²⁷

Sartorial distinction between women’s bodies, free and unfree, began with stays. White Virginians reserved stays, and the “proper” posture they helped instill, to their own use, bolstering their own femininities at the expense of enslaved Black women.²²⁸ On one hand, fears about transgressions of status, racial, and cultural boundaries ensured that stays remained a Whites-only garment, as those of British descent fought to separate themselves from the perceived-to-be degenerative effects of living among non-Europeans.²²⁹ On the other, this restriction of the garment arose from the belief in African-descended individuals’, particularly women’s, “natural” ability to be “undressed.”²³⁰ Stays produced a certain kind of posture, and therefore a certain kind of person. The sloping shoulders, narrow backs, and prominent chests molded by stays marked Anglo-Virginians as distinct from their poorer and especially their enslaved counterparts.²³¹ The pair of silk stays in Figure 2 illustrates the kind of bodily shaping and context that the garment produced. The stiffness of these back-closure stays is apparent in

²²⁶ Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 89-110; K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 319-66.

²²⁷ K. Wood, “Gender and Slavery,” 523-25; J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*.

²²⁸ Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’,” 29-32.

²²⁹ Lucas Castro, “Stripped,” 119-20, 123-24; Block, *Colonial Complexions*, 10-34.

²³⁰ J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 34-35; Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’,” 30.

²³¹ White working men and women wore stays at some point in their lives, as gender ideals applied to them as well. Their stays may have been less expensive and made of leather, rather than linen and whalebone. Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’,” 30; Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 122.

the middle section, raised off the ground beneath it, its triangular shape drawing sharply down to a point. When worn on a body, this pointed end would appear to lengthen the wearer's stomach, and the hip flaps would have helped give the illusion of a small waist and flared hips. Further, the multiple sewn lines curving out from this middle section ensured the garment held its shape and probably enclosed some kind of reinforcement like whalebone. As a back-closure garment, these stays were likely laced with the help of another person, whether a sister or mother, servant or slave, indicating social position. The conical shape enforced by these stays helped White Virginian women distinguish themselves from the women below them.



Figure 2: Women's Stays, late eighteenth century

From the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gifts of Mrs. F.D. Millet, 1913. Open Access. Stays, British, late 18th century, silk, accession #13.49.2, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/84360>.

Although Anglo-descended women refused to appear in public without stays for fear of indecency or impoliteness, most women of African descent in Virginia went their entire lives without this garment.²³² This may have been a practicality. Laboring bent over in a field for much of one's time or working closely with a White family that needed to enforce such distinctions between households may have been precluded by the stiffness of stays. Yet enslavers purposely restricted the use of stays to Whites because of the gendered meanings stays embodied. Stays communicated that the wearer was feminine.²³³ In the 114 runaway advertisements surveyed for this study, no enslaved woman was described as wearing or carrying stays. Further, Thomas Jefferson's own plantation records reveal that he only allotted fabrics and thread to his enslaved women for their garments.²³⁴ Thus, the lack of stays on an enslaved Virginian woman's body marked her first as un-feminine, even as she was understood to be a woman, and second as "naturally" inferior for her ability to appear in public "undressed."²³⁵

Stays were not the only garment Virginian women relied upon to perform for their networks. Petticoats most completely embodied women's position in society and their genders. Along with stays, the petticoat presented Virginians with another key site upon which to construct and contest the dividing lines of femininity. Where stays became restricted to primarily White bodies, petticoats had meanings that changed drastically when draped over different bodies. Fabric, length, layers, and visibility each helped to define the variable meanings of embodied femininity. Anglo-Virginian women sometimes wore petticoats in multiple layers; the

²³² An example of a woman's embarrassment of being seen without stays can be found in Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People,'" 30.

²³³ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 162-64.

²³⁴ Farm Book, 1774-1824, page 41 and page 42, by Thomas Jefferson [electronic edition], Thomas Jefferson Papers: An Electronic Archive, Boston, Mass.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2003, accessed September 26, 2021, <http://www.thomasjeffersonpapers.org/>.

²³⁵ Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People,'" 29-32.

shorter under petticoat provided structure and support for the bell- or dome-shaped encasement of the lower body, while the longer over petticoats acted as canvases upon which gender could be performed.²³⁶ In contrast, enslaved women generally wore only one layer of petticoats, which was always visible, and often shorter than Anglo-enslaver women's skirts.²³⁷ The differences between White and Black women's genders therefore sprang from the combined effect of stays and petticoats, in whatever their configuration. On Anglo-descended bodies, stays and petticoats produced a distinctively feminine silhouette: the conical torso followed by the wide, flouncing skirts gave the illusion of small waists, and revealed feminine dependency. On African-descended bodies, the absence of stays and the use of shorter skirts forced these women to carry embodiments of White expectations of non-White genders. The petticoat continued to communicate dependency, but the meanings of such dependency were not the same on enslaved bodies as on free ones.

The delineations between different kinds of women, as Virginians constructed them, can be difficult to view directly, yet nowhere was the difference in clothing's meaning as stark or as enforced as on the bodies of the enslaved. Enslaved women are the least represented Chesapeake group in the historical record, a phenomenon which precludes a fully accurate comparison and analysis of gender construction and embodiment.²³⁸ Historian Jonathan Prude notes the same phenomenon, and sums the issue up with the question, "How better to confirm [enslaved women's] subordination than to denote them only glancingly?"²³⁹ This gap in both textual and visual records is evidence of a conscious effort to solidify enslaved women's inferior positions

²³⁶ On petticoats as a garment and their different lengths, see Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 29, 40.

²³⁷ Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 118, 120; Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People'," 30, 40-48, 55-59.

²³⁸ Block, *Colonial Complexions*, 7; Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort'," 150.

²³⁹ Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort'," 150.

by denying them representation. To avoid perpetuating this historical violence further, proxy objects must be allowed to stand in for these gaps to engage in as full a discussion of Virginian gender and power as possible.²⁴⁰ For this reason, the following analysis draws on proxy objects from other colonies in order to see what might have been in Virginia. Further, textual evidence will be utilized to enable accuracy where needed. These objects, by virtue of being proxy, are imperfect; but without them, such a discussion is ultimately more difficult if comparisons cannot be made. These objects are marked as proxy below.

The examples of the quilted petticoat, linen under petticoat (proxy), yellow dress, and West Indian Moravian congregation (proxy) seen in Figures 3-6 demonstrate how the variabilities of clothing and bodies coalesced into meaningful symbols of embodied gender. Although the quilted and linen petticoats were constructed in similar manners for similar functions, their meanings took different shapes on different bodies. The quilted petticoat (Fig. 3), made of silk satin and glazed wool backing, fell from the waist in pleats attached to the waistband. These pleats made the petticoat fall evenly across the legs, and gathered material at the waist, possibly providing more support there to enhance the illusion of a slim waist when worn with stays. Further, at thirty-five inches long, this petticoat may have come to an Anglo-descended woman's ankles, if not her feet, covering the entirety of her lower body.²⁴¹ The shiny silk satin, more expensive than coarser textiles, is quilted with a repeating design of sunflowers and leaves, demonstrating the wearer's interest in natural history.²⁴² In Virginia, this kind of

²⁴⁰ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 4-8, 142; Adamson, "The Case of the Missing Footstool," 240-55.

²⁴¹ This is assuming that the average woman's height in Virginia at this time was between five feet and five foot four. Block, *Colonial Complexions*, 41-42; Sharon Howard, "WHM18: Women's Heights in the Digital Panopticon," *Early Modern Notes*, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://earlymodernnotes.wordpress.com/2018/03/17/whm18-womens-heights-in-the-digital-panopticon/>.

²⁴² Zara Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 81-103.

petticoat would have been worn by a woman of British descent, perhaps displayed between the panels of a robe to conceal her body and perform her gender. Modesty conveyed by the skirt's length converged with the fashionability of the quilted design to perform a femininity both aware of and complicit in its dependence on men. Thus, this skirt would have communicated to the wearer's networks of perception that the woman wearing it was, in fact, feminine and secure in that femininity.



Figure 3: Quilted Petticoat, 1750-1775

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase. Quilted Petticoat, England, 1750-1775, silk satin, glazed worsted backing, pink woolen batting, quilted with silk, linen waistband, accession #1953-436, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/6423/>.



Figure 4: Under Petticoat, 1750-1770

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Gift of Titi Halle. Under Petticoat, probably New England, 1750-1770, linen and wool, accession #2014-176, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/98459/>.

In contrast, the linen under petticoat (Fig. 4) may have communicated something vastly different to certain networks of perception. As a proxy object, it is imperfect for a few reasons: the embroidery along its bottom edge and its designation as an “under” petticoat both betray its probable original use by a woman of British descent. However, by ignoring the embroidery, and by recasting its use from an under petticoat to the only skirt worn by an enslaved woman, this petticoat’s utility here comes to light. Made from linen and wool rather than silk, both comparatively inexpensive and commonplace fabrics, this petticoat could be similar to one worn by enslaved Virginian women. In the sample of 114 runaway advertisements identified in the introduction, roughly 10 enslaved women ran away by themselves, and took with them at least one pair of clothing. Moll took with her three Virginia-cloth petticoats; Winney carried skirts of osnaburg and of white dowlas; and Hannah “had on a Check Petticoat, [and] one Brown Linen Ditto...”²⁴³ Thus, Afro-Virginian enslaved women’s petticoats were generally constructed from coarser or at least less expensive materials. Additionally, though the skirt in Figure 4 gathers at the waist in small pleats, similar to the quilted petticoat, there is no bulk to this linen skirt, reducing the chance that it was intended to create an immediately identifiable feminine silhouette. Further, at thirty inches long, it may have only rested part-way down the wearer’s shins, exposing ankles and feet. On an enslaved woman, this petticoat’s main function would have been utility. Its shorter length, material and color, and primary use would have each conveyed that an enslaved wearer was first and foremost enslaved, and secondly genderless or un-feminine. Even as it reinforced her dependent status, which affirmed her gender as a woman, this petticoat, or those worn by Moll, Winney, and Hannah, would have embodied their

²⁴³ *Virginia Gazette*, October 27, 1752, p. 2 col. 2; *Virginia Gazette*, August 25, 1774, p. 3 col. 3; *Virginia Gazette*, March 25, 1775, p. 3 col. 2.

genderlessness and their enslavement. Gender and status worked together on these women's bodies to reproduce and reaffirm their inversion of the ideal.

The effect becomes clearer when viewed on representations of physical bodies. The mannequin in Figure 5 and the engravings of West Indian enslaved women in Figure 6 are, again, proxies in their own ways, but these visualizations provide a greater semblance of embodiment than petticoats alone. The yellow dress in Figure 5 was intended for formal events, and therefore presented the full feminine silhouette for any networks of perception at such events. Though the loud color of this dress purposely drew attention from across the room, undermining women's ideal to remain unobtrusive, the dress still communicates to viewers the wearer's secure femininity. Molded by stays, covered by the ruffled petticoat, and draped in an unadorned yet fashionable gown, the woman who wore this dress radiated feminine dependence and demureness. The petticoat, decorated with pleats and a scalloped trim, left only the wearer's feet visible, concealing the body beneath to suggest modesty and sincerity. At the same time, the mirrored serpentine ruffles of the bodice draw the viewer's eye down the torso where they meet at its point, further appearing to narrow the wearer's waist. The snaking design down the sides of the gown provides ornamentation without resorting to embroidery or brocade and accentuates the dome on which the skirts rest. The overall performance of this dress is therefore one of embodying proper gender. If we are to believe James Fordyce or the anonymous satirist of *The Miraculous Power of Clothes* that men who dressed above their means earned the scorn of sensible society, then it stands that the wearer of this yellow dress could afford to wear it, in every sense of the word.²⁴⁴ Ideally, those who dressed above their means would be easily

²⁴⁴ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 60; *The Miraculous Power of Clothes*, 3-5.

identifiable by the incongruence between their clothing and their bodies—and how the former shaped the latter—which further reaffirmed the relationship between the two.²⁴⁵ Thus, a woman of British descent in this yellow dress would have known fashion, confirming the link between femininity and fashionability; yet her gender remained secure because she dressed to her status. This dress on a lower status White, or, more jarringly, enslaved woman may have alerted perceivers to the discrepancy between gender and genderlessness.

²⁴⁵ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 27-31, 52-79.



Figure 5: Yellow Dress, c.1760

From the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Arlene Cooper and Polaire Weissman Funds, 1996. Open Access. Dress British, c.1760, silk, linen, cotton, accession #1996.374a-c, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/79220>.

By contrast, the bodies represented in Figure 6 demonstrate how similar forms of clothing constituted starkly different meanings. Though, as mentioned, this engraving is a proxy object as it originates from Moravian depiction of the West Indies, it may be similar enough to what might have been in late colonial Virginia. Some caveats must be made first, however. The enslaved women in the background of this engraving appear to be wearing, if not stays, then jackets that provided conical shaping and support.²⁴⁶ See, for instance, the woman bending down to help others to their feet. These women may have also been dressed specifically for the act of baptism. However, their petticoats do appear to be alike enough in form to Virginian dress for this analysis. Their skirts come to a rest at the Afro-women's mid-calves, perhaps even just below their knees, and are not supported by other skirts, hoops, or rolls. Even more striking, they are uniform across each body. While the woman of British descent who wore the dress in Figure 5 may have stood out because of the gown's color or fashion, every enslaved woman in this engraving is dressed to anonymity, a forced collective identity that made enslaved bodies legible and elided their individual humanness.²⁴⁷ These skirts were intended for utility—hard labor in the fields, bent over plants—and for forced identity construction. Their short petticoats and uniformity marked these women as “naturally” inferior, “loose” women, and “wenches.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Some enslaved Virginian women did run away with jackets or waistcoats, but it is unclear how form-shaping these garments were. For one example, see *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), Williamsburg, May 12, 1768, from *GOS*, accessed July 2, 2021, <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/search/related/Ad.php?adFile=rg68.xml&adId=v1768050254>.

²⁴⁷ Block, *Colonial Companions*, 118-25; P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 125-33.

²⁴⁸ The categorization of enslaved women as “wenches” is returned to in the next chapter. See K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 369-70.



Figure 6: Moravian Baptism, 1757

Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library. Open Access. Engraving by David Cranz, "Getaufte Neger, die nach der Prostration ... Nègres baptisés, qui après la Prostration sont relevés & baisés par les ouvriers de leur nation," 1757, acc. #30650, record #30650-4, originally published in Halle, <https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCB~1~1~2255~4160003>.

In Virginia, enslaved women's dress may have been as uniform as this engraving suggests. Plantation records reveal ill-fitting garments constructed en masse. For instance, in 1794, Thomas Jefferson recorded in his farm book that the enslaved on his various plantations were to receive a set amount of fabric in December depending on their age. Although well after the colonial period, these records may illustrate how colonial practices survived independence. For instance, all enslaved individuals were assigned a set of clothing that corresponded to a particular size, with seemingly little regard for how well that size fit the person. All children ages eight through ten received the fourth size of clothing, which was to be made from four yards of linen, four "3/4 yds. do.," and "1. lb of thread [that] contains from 100. to 130 skaines" of thread in order to sew each garment. Similarly, "common sized men or women" received the seventh size, to be made from a corresponding number of yards of linen and an appropriate amount of thread.²⁴⁹ Where a few of Jefferson's enslaved men like Jupiter, James, and Peter were specified to have a "coat, waistcoat[,] breeches of cloth" made for them, women like Critta, Sally, and Betsy were only given yards of Irish linen, calamanco, and flannel without specifics about shifts, skirts, or other garments, further denying them historical visibility.²⁵⁰ Enslaved individuals with ill-fitting clothing were not a new phenomenon in the colony. In 1772, George Washington received a letter from James Hill, a trusted steward and liaison for Washington and other planters, informing him that "there is a number of the negroes that has applyd for Shirts that had but one last year & am informd by the overseers that there Shirts was always so small in General that they were of Little or no service to them."²⁵¹ Prominent Virginian enslavers like Jefferson

²⁴⁹ Farm Book, 1774-1824, page 41.

²⁵⁰ Farm Book, 1774-1824, page 41.

²⁵¹ To George Washington from James Hill, 30 August 1772, from *Founders Online* database, accessed September 26, 2021, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0068>.

and Washington, and undoubtedly others as well, utilized clothing as a tool of power by forcing their enslaved to wear one-size-fits-most garments, or pieces of clothing that were simply too small. The denial of tailored garments to most enslaved laborers visually cemented their low, unfree status, and their genderlessness.

The connection between clothing and enslaved women's genderlessness was made in at least one specific case in Virginia, by runaway Moll. The advertisement for her recapture described her as having "brown Hair, grey Eyes, very large Breasts and Limbs..." and as taking with her several pairs of shirts, petticoats, aprons, and one "wastecoat."²⁵² The textual link between Moll's "very large Breasts" and the "stolen" clothing demonstrates Anglo-Virginian efforts to solidify the connection between enslaved bodies, genders, and attire.²⁵³ Where satirists scorned this connection for those of British descent, it was simultaneously reified in the bodies of the enslaved as Whites sought to identify them with and as their bodies and their clothing, rather than as human individuals. White Virginian enslavers therefore held sartorial power over the enslaved both in their ability to limit certain garments and fabrics, and in explicitly connecting the "natural" state of the enslaved as inferior to their lower-cost clothing.

Masculinity

Similar to Virginian women, the ideal called for men of British descent to be that which women were not and urged them to perform the opposite of their perceptions of the enslaved. White men strove to perform masculinities based on traits like strength, honor, education, and independence, and they used their clothing to achieve such performances. Thus, clothing

²⁵² *Virginia Gazette*, October 27, 1752.

²⁵³ On "stolen" clothes, see Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," 253-54.

embodied masculinity through the three-piece suit and variations of it. White men dressed to their social position, while enslaved men wore clothing that visually denoted them as enslaved, as prescribed by enslavers. By separating (or attempting to separate) cuts, fabrics, and garments between free and unfree, Anglo- and Afro-descended, Virginians made decisions about status, gender, and race that became implicated in and embodied by their clothing.

The garments in Figures 7-9 each illustrate the close relationship between gender and social status. The frock coat (Fig. 7) may have been intended for working or daywear; similarly, the Virginia homespun coat (Fig. 8) could have been working wear; and the ornamented blue suit (Fig. 9) was likely meant for formal occasions. Though all three consist of similar pieces—buttonholes, skirts, pockets—their overall appearances and constitutive materials differed in ways that alerted perceivers about the status and gender of the wearer. On the surface, unsurprisingly, all three suits communicate social status above all. These were White clothes, not meant to be dirtied with excessive manual labor or worn by those perceived as unworthy of the garments' status. Yet the differences between these outfits communicated variations of the ideal, depending on the Virginians who wore and perceived them.

The frock coat's (Fig. 7) casualwear connotation may have constituted a man of middling status, or perhaps evoked the industriousness of the masculine wearer. The fitted tautness of the coat's sleeves indicates a need for a cut that moved with the wearer and did not allow excess fabric to fold when he bunched his arms. Additionally, the cuffs of this coat are in line with the rest of the sleeve. They likely sat snug on the wearer's wrists. Following bodily lines molded by childhood stays, the coat curves inward to taper the waist and slim the back. The fashionable cutaway front, where most of the buttons would not meet over the upper body, left visible any waistcoat and breeches worn underneath. Overall, the slim, reserved silhouette this frock coat

created for its original wearer conformed to the fashion of the day, and in doing so, expressed multiple layers of the wearer's embodied and performed identity.²⁵⁴ By remaining fashionable without excessive finery, the wearer promoted a perception of himself to his network(s) that demonstrated his knowledge of fashion, and his ability to remain unswayed by it. The coat embodied his masculine independence, honesty, and authority while visually communicating his status, possibly reliant on business dealings or indoor work. His gender aligned with his social position, thus reinforcing each.

²⁵⁴ On the coat's fashionability, Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 230-31.



Figure 7: Frock Coat, 1770-1785

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase. Coat, England, 1770-1785, silk and worsted tabby, metallic buttons, cotton lining, accession #1960-695, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/16854/>.



Figure 8: Virginia Homespun Coat, c.1780

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase. Coat, Isle of Wight, Virginia, c.1780, cotton and wool, accession #1964-174,A, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/19181/>.

However, fabric as well as fashion said something about status and gender. The Virginia coat in Figure 8 produces a similar effect as the frock coat, but its differences lie in its material rather than its construction. These two coats look practically identical: long turn-down collars; cuffs in line with the sleeve; tapered, cutaway front; and straight, narrow back pleats. From a tailoring standpoint, these two coats may have communicated very similar ideas, indeed. Both coats embodied masculinity through their construction. However, the textiles of these coats convey two different ideals. Although neither coat is elaborately decorated and instead relies on the clean lines and unassuming airs presented by their cut and fit, the fabrics betray their differences.²⁵⁵ The frock coat's main fabric, a faded pink silk, would have stood in ideological contrast to the Virginia coat's homespun blend of cotton and wool. As historian Kate Haulman demonstrates, during the first swell of the imperial crisis in the mid-1760s, imported fabrics like silk continued to stock store shelves and consumer wardrobes because of their better quality and fashionability.²⁵⁶ Haulman argues that "high styles of foreign origin collided with homespun republican rhetoric."²⁵⁷ These collisions became mapped onto Virginian bodies through gender itself. In 1770, the *Virginia Gazette* announced that the current "mode of redress" to Parliament over the tax acts "is entirely disagreeable to the Americans," and in the next paragraph, the author described "a ball lately given by the Speaker of Gentlemen of the Houses of Burgesses...[where] upwards of a hundred Ladies appeared in homespun dresses."²⁵⁸ The textual proximity of imperial unrest and domestic sartorial performance was reproduced on the very bodies that displayed such domestic goods. The coats of Figures 7 and 8 may therefore look

²⁵⁵ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 27-31, 52-79.

²⁵⁶ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 107-8.

²⁵⁷ Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 156.

²⁵⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, April 19, 1770, p. 2 col. 2.

similar, but their meanings of empire, American-ness, and masculinity diverged. The Virginia coat embodied not only a masculine attendance to proper status, but did so within the larger discourse of nonimportation and domestic production, marking the wearer as a sober republican man, separate from the indulgent wearer in silk.

Those who were truly wealthy could afford to wear ornamented suits such as the one in Figure 9. The lace and gold gilding of this suit presented an opportunity for men of acceptable means (and therefore acceptable genders) to perform more successfully to their networks of perception, while ideally barring the same access to those below. Although it shares some common features with the two previous examples, such as the curved sleeves, cutaway front, and tapered back seams, this suit was likely intended for formal events where great swaths of the wearer's network(s) may have been present. As with the imagined woman in the yellow dress (Fig. 5), a lower-status White or enslaved Afro-descended man in this suit would have alerted perceivers to the artifice of the man's position and therefore to the falsity of his masculinity. Therefore, by embodying the desirable traits of both wealth and acceptable masculinity, the gilded suit aided its worthy wearer in performing integrity, strength, and independence to those who perceived the man. The suit, his body, and his masculinity legitimated his standing in certain networks and ensconced his place above others in Chesapeake society.



Figure 9: Gilded Suit, c.1760

From the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest and Polaire Weissman Fund, 1996. Open Access. Suit, British, c.1760, wool and gilt metal, accession #1996.117a-c, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/79048>.

Constructed distinctions between those of African and British descent enforced the variable embodiment of Virginians' masculine genders. Whether an enslaved man wore livery, field uniforms, or something in between, his gender was subject to scrutiny by the Anglo-Virginian networks of perception around him. White enslavers sought to create meanings about the enslaved and their clothing that likely countered what the enslaved thought of themselves.²⁵⁹ If the correlation between fit, fabric, and body helped determine how clothing embodied gender, then the coarse, rough clothing that most enslaved individuals wore represented both their lower status and their forced genderlessness, an inversion of the British ideal.²⁶⁰ To be designated both non-White and non-masculine put the enslaved in a space where the struggle over these disparate meanings manifested as the enslaved directly interacted with, came under the purview of, or flouted enslaver rule. This was the case for both runaways and those who remained behind.

Runaways took with them clothing to help them escape, a greater risk of punishment, and a higher chance of unfavorable gender perception. In 1767, somewhere between Norfolk and Richmond, Will ran away from his enslaver. The advertisement describes Will as "a sensible fellow, and [he] will probably trump up a plausible story to induce people to let him pass." It further explains that he carried with him "a jacket of dark coloured fearnought, a coat of light drab coloured *Bath* beaver, a duffil waistcoat,...one white and two osnaburg shirts,...[and] a pair of worsted stockings," as well as breeches, trousers, a hat, and shoes.²⁶¹ Will's clothing therefore primarily consisted of the coarse, durable fabrics set apart for unfree laborers. His jacket of fearnought, also known as bearskin, a thick wool; his duffel waistcoat; and his osnaburg shirts

²⁵⁹ Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," 251-53, 260-64; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 137-43; K. Wood, "Gender and Slavery," 522.

²⁶⁰ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 75-78; K. Wood, "Gender and Slavery," 523-35.

²⁶¹ *Virginia Gazette*, September 24, 1767, p. 2 col. 1.

(different from the bleached shirt) marked him visually as a low-status laborer, which was likely compounded by other perceived markers of identity like his complexion and ethnicity.²⁶²

Further, these fabrics were textually linked to gendered, specifically masculine (or, un-masculine) characteristics such as deceitfulness and unreliability. Will's forced dependence on his enslaver is left unspoken, yet all Anglo-Virginians who interacted with this advertisement and operated in the enslaver's networks understood Will's dependence. It is true that advertisements employed tropes that utilized general characteristics to aid recapture, and they further drew upon cultural conceptions of African-descended persons' external behaviors rather than internal worlds.²⁶³ Yet explicitly linking Will's gender to his actions—which included “stealing” clothes likely given to him—illuminates the exact nature of how Anglo-enslavers enforced particular gender embodiments.

Runaway Ned's advertisement further demonstrates clothing and gender as forms of power. Ned “has a great Share of Impudence, and...carried with him such Clothing as labouring Slaves generally wear...”²⁶⁴ That Ned's enslaver did not feel the need to describe Ned's clothing in detail highlights the understanding in Virginia that status and gender were mutually and visibly discernible on the body through dress. Virginian concepts of gender hinged on both what was acceptable for those of British descent and the presence of slavery. Therefore, the discursive

²⁶² Sharon Block masterfully describes the process by which clothing and other identifiers like complexion and behavior were utilized in advertisements to solidify the perceived differences between European and non-European runaways, in a colonial system of race, health, and capital that constructed African-descended bodies as inferior in every way. *Colonial Complexions*, especially Chapter 5. On the fabrics listed here, *Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online*, s.v. “Bearskin, n.,” accessed July 2, 2021, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/16582>; *OED Online*, sv. “Duffel, n. and adj.,” accessed July 11, 2021, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/58272>; *OED Online*, s.v. “Osnaburg, n.,” accessed July 2, 2021, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/133033>.

²⁶³ On ads as tropes, or perhaps more accurately caricatures, Prude, “To Look upon the ‘Lower Sort’,” 137. On the patterns of advertisements operating to displace internal characteristics of the enslaved, Block, *Colonial Complexions*, 111-18.

²⁶⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, October 31, 1771, p. 3 col. 2.

inversions of the ideal to be applied to the enslaved were purposeful attempts to secure White genders against those of non-Whites, and at disenfranchising African-descended gendered power.²⁶⁵ Whether unfree men like Will and Ned actually performed traits like dishonesty or disrespectfulness in their daily lives under the physical and emotional torment of slavery, Anglo-Virginians often perceived these traits as defining of enslaved men's genderlessness. By describing runaway enslaved men through tangible appearances and abstract gendered traits, Virginian enslavers reproduced ideas about race, social status, gender, and power for their networks of perception. By specifically naming Will's clothing of coarse fabrics, and merely hinting at Ned's laboring attire, enslavers cemented the connection between genderlessness and enslavement.

Understanding how runaways were perceived sheds light on how the rest of the enslaved population also were seen. Although runaways likely became more exposed to gendered reformulations, other enslaved men, who did not run away, also experienced similar gendered criticisms. For example, Colchester tailor John McIntosh received multiple credits at the town store run by Alexander Henderson of the Glassford Company for making and mending clothing for Henderson's enslaved men. In March 1760, McIntosh earned ten shillings for "makg [a] Coat[,] Jacket & 2 Prs [pairs of] Breeches for Glasgo[w]," and a further eighteen shillings in October 1761 for "makg a Great Coat[,] Jacket & Breeches for Milford."²⁶⁶ Though McIntosh received substantially more credit at the store for tailoring for men of British descent than he did

²⁶⁵ K. Wood, "Gender and Slavery," 523-25.

²⁶⁶ I have inserted commas here as it is probable that these garments were not "coat jackets," but rather a coat and a jacket. McIntosh probably made Glasgow and Milford three-piece suits. Alexander Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1759-1760, Colchester, Virginia* folio 105 Credit, and *Ledger 1760-1761, Colchester, Virginia* folio 34 Credit, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, D.C., Microfilm Reel 58 (owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association).

for these two Afro-Virginian men, the clothing he provided for Glasgow and Milford remained as potent for meaning making as did the clothing runaways “stole.”²⁶⁷

The meaning of Milford’s clothing issued from its variation on the stock three-piece suit worn by all Virginian men. Perhaps the only difference from Milford’s suit and one for a man of British descent, at least in terms of overall form, was that Milford had a jacket, rather than the more traditional sleeveless waistcoat.²⁶⁸ Further, the materials of Milford’s suit provided another method by which his gender was perceived within particular networks. The “Great Coat[,] Jacket & Breeches” consisted of various quantities of bearskin, white worsted shag, blue German serge, osnaburg, shalloon, and mohair; as well as odds and ends of tape, thread, and buttons.²⁶⁹ The durability of the fabrics, and therefore of the garments, attested to Milford’s enslavement. The image these garments created when worn likewise spoke to his genderlessness or his un-masculinity. Although the clothes were made by a tailor, his gender was no more secure for that fact than Ned’s or Will’s.²⁷⁰ The perceived relationship between Milford’s clothing and his body visually denoted him as African-descended and un-masculine. This would have been added to by the fact that Henderson tasked Milford with the highly visible labor of traveling between Glassford Company stores in the Chesapeake.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ In all, McIntosh received £6 16s. 8d. in credit from Henderson for making and mending garments for the enslaved men of the store. McIntosh also received £67 for tailoring for enslavers and other Anglo-Virginian men. Totals for the credits McIntosh earned for both kinds of commissions were calculated based on Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1758-1759* folio 11 Credit; *Ledger 1759-1760* folio 105 Credit; *Ledger 1760-1761* folio 34 Credit; *Ledger 1765-1766* folio 11 Credit; *Ledger 1766-1767* folios 115 and 193 Credit; *Ledger 1767-1768* folio 126 Credit; and *Ledger 1768-1769* folio 118 Credit.

²⁶⁸ Or it could have been the same garment. However, given that this suit was completed in October, as the weather continued to cool into winter, a sleeved garment would have been more practical. Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 126-27.

²⁶⁹ Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1760-1761*, folio 4 Debit.

²⁷⁰ Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’,” 34-37, 40-45.

²⁷¹ Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1760-1761* folio 7 Debit.

Carrying letters on store business between Colchester and the nearby Maryland towns of Rock Creek and Port Tobacco put Milford directly in the path of enslaver networks of perception as he moved through the Chesapeake countryside and its urban spaces. His tailor-made clothes, therefore, were a necessity less for his sake, and more because his new suit represented Henderson outside of Colchester. In this way, Milford represented not himself, but his enslaver, acting as a physical extension of Henderson's wealth and power in the world.²⁷² This representation rested fully on Milford's clothing. His dress embodied his gender as an enslaved man specifically through the lens of his enslavement. Though he wore the exact forms of apparel than Henderson commissioned for himself from the same tailor—a "velvit" jacket and silk breeches—the differences arose from both fabric and body.²⁷³ The instability of gender, even among those understood as "men," required the reinforcement of differences through clothing. Milford's attire therefore embodied both his objecthood and servitude, and the un-masculine traits ascribed to runaways by enslavers. Anglo-Virginian networks refused to perceive the enslaved as anything but enslaved, because to admit their genders and to understand the fundamental similarities between British and African bodies, lives, and humanities undermined their power.²⁷⁴

By actively choosing, limiting, and controlling clothing, Virginians determined how and in what contexts femininity and masculinity became embodied. For Virginian women, stays, petticoats, and their combinations communicated variations on the ideal. White women remained dependent, yet acceptably feminine, in both stays and skirts, while Afro-descended women

²⁷² Gruber, "'By Measures Taken of Men'," 943-45.

²⁷³ Henderson, et. al., *Ledger 1759-1760* folio 105 Credit; *Ledger 1760-1761* folio 34 Credit.

²⁷⁴ A similar effect has been analyzed by historians of slave laws and slave codes. See Rugemer, *Slave Law*, 171-212. For more on this effect seen in runaway advertisements, see Block, *Colonial Complexions*.

became genderless or un-feminine through their forced ability to go without stays and their shorter skirts. For Virginian men, the meanings of three-piece suits changed both on the body and in the materials of the outfit. Anglo-descended men's ideal to be independent, educated, and industrious benefited from enslaved men's perceived un-masculinity predicated on dishonesty and objecthood. The context of clothing—the body on which it laid—facilitated the production of divergent meanings, as the same forms of clothing enabled vastly different perceptions.

Clothing as Power

Clothing embodied gender, but clothing did not work as an independent entity. People made clothing, made choices about that clothing, and made decisions about gender. These active processes were then funneled onto the body as lived experiences: clothing embodied gender because of its proximity to and identification with the body.²⁷⁵ Those who dictated fashion and controlled the construction of clothing therefore directly impacted gender embodiment. In Virginia, multiple avenues to clothing existed, and each of these changed the power held by a piece of clothing to effectively communicate to particular networks of perception. Tailors and dressmakers, ready-made shops, unpaid women's work, and forced enslaved labor each allowed clothing to be constructed, acquired, and worn.²⁷⁶ Although the actions of clothing makers, whether professional or unpaid, did not dictate each detail of gender or power, their involvement

²⁷⁵ Joyce, "Archaeology of the Body," 142-3.

²⁷⁶ Ready-made clothing and hand-me-downs, though important features of sartorial life in Virginia, are not considered here because they are not apparent in my sources. For more on these clothing practices in Virginia, see Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People,'" 38-40, 43. On the other ways Virginians acquired fabrics and garments, see Gruber, "'By Measures Taken of Men,'" 951-53; Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 11-46; and Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 78-82.

nevertheless reveals components of the multivalent and multilayered process by which clothing embodied gender, became a form of power, and shaped Virginian bodies.

Under the auspices of wealthy Virginians, professional clothing makers as well as unpaid laborers each played a role in the creation and dissemination of clothing. Ultimately, socially powerful Anglo-Virginians—those with wealth, standing, and influence—controlled how clothing was acquired by those below them, even if they did not physically measure, cut, or sew every garment. Clothing makers abounded in colonial Virginia. In the *Virginia Gazette*, over five times as many Anglo-descended men placed advertisements seeking employment in the tailoring business than did White women in the trades of dressmaking, millinery, mantua-making, and seamstressing combined (Table 1).²⁷⁷ Men certainly did not outnumber women in the late colonial period by such a staggering margin, so the reason for the fewer number of Anglo-women's advertisements likely arose from practical concerns. Tailoring, as a men's profession, was a guild trade, and contemporaries expressed anxieties about women's potential professionalization as dressmakers.²⁷⁸ Further, the poor pay and general invisibility of White women's work in the home meant that the advertisement of domestic sartorial knowledge was a quiet affair, expected of women and carried out with little recompense.²⁷⁹ Free men and women

²⁷⁷ Totals taken from the *Gazette* topic index from the years 1737 to 1780; advertisements for clothing professionals in London or other colonies were not counted. <https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/va-gazettes/VGPPIndex.cfm>.

²⁷⁸ On tailoring as a guild, "The History of Tailoring," Alabama Chanin Journal, May 5, 2016, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://journal.alabamachanin.com/2016/05/the-history-of-tailoring>. On anxieties about professional women, Robert Campbell, *The London Tradesman: Being an Historical Account of the Trades, Professions, Arts, Both Liberal and Mechanic, Now Practiced in the Cities of London and Westminster* (London: Printed by T. Gardner, 1747), 227-28, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/TheLondonTradesman/n211/mode/2up>.

²⁷⁹ Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 141-75; Marla R. Miller, *The Needle's Eye: Women and Work in the Age of Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

could and did reproduce their own gender ideals as they sewed garments for themselves and one another, aiding their contemporaries in performing acceptable genders.

Table 1: Clothing Professionals of British Descent

Tailors	Dressmakers	Milliners	Mantua-makers	Seamstresses
107	2	13	3	2
Total: 107	Total: 20			

Table 2: Clothing Professionals of African Descent

Tailors	Dressmakers	Milliners	Mantua-makers	Seamstresses
7	1	0	1	32
Total: 7	Total: 34			

However, by drawing back and expanding the search criteria, it becomes clearer that enslaved women performed the bulk of sartorial construction for Virginian society. As they did in every other realm of labor and life, Anglo-Virginian enslavers exploited enslaved women for the mending and sewing of clothing for themselves and for other enslaved individuals (Table 2). While still nowhere near the number of White men advertising their tailoring skills, the difference in advertising numbers between free and unfree women's labor reveals how clothing,

gender, and power became mutually enforceable.²⁸⁰ Black women's sartorial knowledge was not only taken for granted, but demanded and expected:

To be sold, a young mulatto woman who is an excellent spinner on the flax wheel, a good knitter, can cut out and make up linen as well as any servant in Virginia, and is capable of doing any house business. For terms, inquire of the Printer.²⁸¹

Although it is unclear where this unnamed woman, or any of her contemporaries, learned the skills of clothing construction, the reality of these skills was widely understood. The expectation that this woman possessed the knowledge “as well as any servant” illuminates the implications of such knowledge. Not only were enslaved women demanded to construct clothing for others, a time-consuming and laborious task, but they were instructed to create clothing—and, by extension, genders—for their fellow enslaved. Though the linen this woman spun, cut, and sewed may have been intended for the creation of undergarments for her enslavers, it is as likely, if not more so, that this fabric was meant to clothe the enslaved. The details that the unnamed woman was “an excellent spinner” and could not only cut linen but “make [it] up” suggests that she was employed in creating homespun fabric. The gendered associations of homespun, particularly its consumptive independence, would have been reproduced by this enslaved woman as she spun, wove, and cut linen as White Virginians fought for their own freedom.²⁸² The bodies clothed by such linen would not only have been marked as enslaved, but genderless, as the uniformity of their apparel embodied the expectations forced upon them to be both of those things.

²⁸⁰ Only seven enslaved men were advertised as having tailoring skills. See “Slaves, as tailors” in the *Gazette* topic index.

²⁸¹ *Virginia Gazette*, October 25, 1776, p. 2 col. 3.

²⁸² Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 105-30; Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 96.

Anglo-Virginians and enslavers dictated the gender ideals reproduced in the colonies; limited the kinds of garments and fabrics the enslaved could wear; and, as seen here, controlled how the enslaved participated in the construction of clothing. This active process of limitation, control, and power is inseparable from understanding how clothing embodied gender for all Virginians. Commissioning a White tailor or dressmaker was not the same as purchasing fabrics to take home for one's enslaved woman to cut and make into clothing; the inherent power imbalances, discourses about Afro-women's gender(lessness), and general exploitation allowed clothing, at every level, to become a tool of slavery's power. If, as has been suggested, African-descended women represented sites of struggle over gender, then demanding those very women to create clothing for enslaver and enslaved alike centered gender issues in those women. Embodiment therefore began well before clothes ever came into contact with bodies, as ideals, discourses, and contests over meaning produced meanings that then became written onto the body. Clothing, how it was constructed, and how it constructed gender, became products of power from the top down.

Conclusions

In late colonial Virginia, clothing embodied gender according to British expectations. The materiality of clothing and the shifting boundaries during one's lifetime paralleled larger changes taking place during this period of politeness to sensibility. Further, while all Virginians dressed in the same forms of clothing, bodies, cuts, and fabrics collided to create new meanings between wearers. A three-piece suit on a man of British descent communicated strength and independence, while the same sartorial forms on an enslaved man conveyed, in the view of White networks of perception, dishonesty and un-masculinity. A pair of stays and a petticoat on

a White woman performed feminine modesty, while the absence of stays and use of shorter skirts marked enslaved Black women as licentious and un-feminine. Virginians' active selection of clothing led to the active processes by which clothing embodied genders, and allowed clothing to become another tool by which Anglo-Virginian enslavers solidified their power over the enslaved. Yet clothing, and its meanings, were never subject to White perceptions alone. Individuals of African descent could and did make new meanings for themselves when they chose what to wear when they ran away.

CHAPTER 3: ENFORCEMENT AND NEGOTIATION OF GENDER

RUN AWAY FROM the SUBSCRIBER, a Negro Man named WILL, about 5 feet 9 inches high, about 28 years of age, a little knock kneed, is a sensible fellow, and will probably trump up a plausible story to induce people to let him pass; had on and carried with him when he went away a jacket of dark coloured fearnought, a coat of light drab coloured *Bath* beaver, a duffil waistcoat, a pair of black stocking breeches, a pair of sailors trousers, one white and two osnabrug shirts, a new felt hat, a pair of blue worsted stockings, and a pair of shoes pretty much wore. Whoever takes up the said Negro, and delivers him to either Mr. *Alexander McCaul* in *Richmond Town*, or to Mr. *Henry Tucker* in *Norfolk*, shall have Twenty Shillings Reward, beside what the law allows. GEORGE MUTER.

Virginia Gazette, September 24, 1767

When Will ran away in late 1767, he took with him enough garments to make multiple outfits. In the previous chapter, Will's clothing and gender were analyzed through the lens of how they may have appeared to White enslaver networks of perception in their attempts to recapture him. However, this brief glimpse of Will also illuminates his own processes of sartorial meaning making. His choice to bring multiple pairs of pants, shirts, and jackets suggests both a plan to change clothing and an awareness of the centrality of clothing to performed identities. Although running away posed serious risks to enslaved individuals who attempted to gain freedom, whether temporary or permanent, Will and other Virginians like him continued to run away in numbers during the decades of imperial conflict and crisis.²⁸³ For years, historians have relied on runaway advertisements to understand how power operated in the colonies and to speculate on rates of enslaved literacy, demographic composition, and the importance of physical appearance.²⁸⁴ These studies allow for a fuller view of individuals who are otherwise obscured in

²⁸³ For some of the punishments of runaways, see Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, Vol. VI, Acts of the Assembly, Oct. 1748, Ch. XXXVIII, 109-111. On the proportion of runaways in the enslaved population, see P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 213; and Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort'," 138-40.

²⁸⁴ Antonio T. Bly, "'Pretends he can read': Runaways and Literacy in Colonial America, 1730-1770," *Early American Studies* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 261-94, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.0.0004>; Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," 243-72; and Block, "Making Meaningful Bodies," 524-47.

or absent from the historical record, and who, at every moment, faced multiple forces of objectification.²⁸⁵ Accordingly, these advertisements reveal as much about the enslaved as about the enslavers who wrote them. In particular, runaways' decisions to flee and their several smaller, though no less significant, choices about clothing reveal the power and ubiquity of embodied gender in Virginia.

Just as clothing embodied various meanings about gender on different bodies, it also held different meanings when used and perceived by various individuals. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Anglo-Virginians utilized clothing to construct divides between those of different statuses, races, and genders. Control over clothing and gender granted Anglo-Virginians the ability to dress themselves and the enslaved in ways that enabled gender embodiment to their benefit. Yet the enslaved also participated in this process of embodiment. Black Virginians learned, adopted, and adapted White notions of gender for their own purposes, particularly when running away. Historians have demonstrated an enslaved "double-consciousness," where they saw themselves both as commodities and as human beings.²⁸⁶ This double vision allowed them to work within Virginia's culture of observation and perception, which dictated that they wear markers of enslavement—livery, osnaburg or linen field clothes, old or ill-fitting garments—and which further enabled them to use those markers to their advantage.²⁸⁷ Clothing therefore communicated enslaved identities, or, rather, how they wanted their identity to be perceived. This process could only be achieved because of the high degree of creolization in the colony that

²⁸⁵ Scholars like Marisa Fuentes and Jennifer Morgan have demonstrated how enslaved women in particular in the English/British Caribbean were objectified both for their labor and their reproductive capacities. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*; J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*.

²⁸⁶ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 6-8. Double-consciousness, of course, originated with W.E.B. DuBois in his *Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1904).

²⁸⁷ These expectations are most clearly captured by runaway advertisements which only describe the runaways' clothing as "such that laboring Negroes wear" or some variation therein. See, for instance, *Virginia Gazette*, September 15, 1774, p. 3 col. 2.

enabled all Virginians, free and unfree, access to and fluency in the visual language of dress.²⁸⁸

The act of running away therefore represented a highly contested part of the relationship between clothing, gender, and the body.

Clothing's embodiment of gender therefore became a tool of both gender enforcement and negotiation. Virginians' interactions with and uses of clothing were contingent upon multiple beliefs, perceptions, and projections, which flowed both from the top of Virginian society down and from the bottom up. The tension between enslaver and enslaved constructions of gender became most complicated on the bodies of runaways. Because a forced embodiment of genderlessness began before running away, and because runaways continued to navigate and redefine that genderlessness well after the fact, gender was unevenly enforced and negotiated through clothing. In other words, while Anglo-Virginians attempted to enforce embodiments of Black genderlessness through depictions as well as practices, the enslaved simultaneously made conscious decisions about clothing that worked to their benefit and revealed their own identities. The dual processes of gender enforcement and negotiation, embodied in and elaborated by clothing, produced the conditions in which the enslaved created meaning for themselves.

Issues of agency underpin this chapter. Marisa Fuentes argues against a blanket framework of agency and instead reads sources "along the bias grain" to stretch the evidence in ways that help reclaim enslaved voices.²⁸⁹ Further, Philip Morgan maintains that enslaved individuals both became horrifically victimized by slavery *and* remained full human beings who aimed to live as much as possible under their own control; however, he argues, not every action

²⁸⁸ Other scholars have shown how Afro-Virginians used other kinds of goods, including clothing accessories and home furnishings, in ways that suggest a type of visual and communicative literacy based on, but distinct from, enslaver purposes. Smith, "Adorned Identities," 203-89; Galle, "Costly Signaling," 19-43.

²⁸⁹ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 11, 123, 142.

should be taken as resistance.²⁹⁰ In order to examine both the victimization of individuals under slavery and their lives as people, this chapter utilizes both visual culture and the 114 runaway advertisements to illustrate how the enslaved navigated enforcement and negotiation of multiple perceptions of gender. The chapter begins with a consideration of how Anglo-Virginians sought to enforce gender through representations of clothing, elaborating idealized enslaved genderlessness. It then turns to the advertisements for what they elucidate about enslaved attempts to negotiate that idealized genderlessness and to obtain freedom through attire.

Gender Enforcement

Although constructions of gender in late colonial Virginia rested, as already shown, on the importation and adaptation of the ideal from Britain and on the continuing practice of slavery, enslavers further sought to reinforce their control over society with print and visual culture. Virginians of British descent who produced and consumed engravings, maps, and newspapers ultimately aimed to utilize such avenues of cultural production to enforce their power over the enslaved. Such sources crystallized enslaver notions of idealized enslaved genderlessness. These representations constituted an ideal by placing the enslaved in demeaning positions, clothing, or scenes, and by playing with notions of perception and performance that further subjugated the enslaved. Viewers of these depictions acted as more than mere consumers of images, and took on the role of the perceiver, a node in a larger network. Enslavers as viewer-perceivers might have seen their worldview confirmed and genders enforced through these works. The enslaved as viewer-perceivers may have felt the strain of genderlessness once again.

²⁹⁰ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, xxii-xxiv. Jennifer Morgan also discusses the issue of a binary framework of agency, cautioning against seeing agency as a spectrum from subordination to resistance, and instead seeing agency as layered, multifaceted, and more complicated. *Laboring Women*, 167.

Thus, the creation and dispersal of printed and visual materials in Virginia gave enslavers another route through which to enforce their control of the relationship between clothing and gender.

Depictions of the enslaved differed in their creation, form, and function, yet each worked implicitly to cement enslaver power. For instance, portraits of Whites with their liveried slaves did less to capture the likeness of the enslaved individual than to juxtapose their subservience with the wealth and social control of the portrait's White subject.²⁹¹ In fact, Black enslaved individuals were notably left out of portraits and other works of art, even as their labor likely supported the time and resources needed for such artistic endeavors.²⁹² When those of African descent were included artistic depictions of colonial life, or an idealized version of that life, they were placed in the scene to make a statement about White power, which rested on and perpetuated divisions of status, race, and gender. Anglo-Virginians' performed genders in these materials directly contrasted with the constructed genderlessness of the enslaved.

Therefore, representations of the enslaved functioned to enforce power through gender by creating idealized versions of the enslaved. Overwhelmingly, Virginian and other British Atlantic depictions of the enslaved featured men rather than women, implicitly conveying ideas about masculinity over femininity. Figures 10 and 11 portray enslaved men in livery, a symbol of their enslavers' status and power. In both *Lady Nightcap at Breakfast* (Fig. 10) and *Frederick squandering away his Fortune at a Bagnio* (Fig. 11), the Afro-descended enslaved men wear variations on the livery uniform expected of household enslaved men.²⁹³ In Figure 10, titular Lady Nightcap wears a ruffled nightcap and a dark dress with voluminous, billowy sleeves; sits

²⁹¹ For an example, see Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People'," 36-37.

²⁹² Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort'," 131, 150.

²⁹³ Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People'," 34-37.

at a small table adorned with a tea set of pewter or silver, and a book; and is flanked by both a small dog on a cushion and a liveried enslaved boy, who carries a teapot. The opulence and social position conveyed by Lady Nightcap's clothing, tea set, and dog are amplified by the presence of the enslaved boy. His close-fitting livery suit is trimmed with what are probably gilded buttons and ropes. A crisp white collar turns down over his coat. He lifts the metal teapot, fulfilling his role in the scene. Yet his expression—turned in full profile to regard Lady Nightcap, and away from the viewer-perceiver—is almost one of perplexity or disgust. He is able to be observed by the viewer-perceiver even as he observes, silently and unobtrusively, Lady Nightcap.²⁹⁴ The boy's presence is primarily meant to impress upon the viewer-perceiver Lady Nightcap's status; he is another possession along with the dog and tea set. His clothes reinforce this fact. However, his livery also communicates an ideal about the genderlessness of the enslaved. Because this Afro-descended boy functions in this scene as a prop, he can have no gender; yet, by clothing him in a three-piece suit, he is dressed as masculine. His gender is unsettled, even as a child. He poses no gendered threat to Lady Nightcap by virtue of this unsettlement: recognized as masculine, but placed in a position of un-masculinity. For the real-life enslaved men who wore livery, these perceptions and idealizations of household men as ungendered helped relegate them as subservient.²⁹⁵ Thus, this engraving enforces enslaver perceptions of gender by modeling the idealized subservience of un-masculine enslaved men.

²⁹⁴ Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort'," 127-34.

²⁹⁵ Scholars have suggested that some Afro-Virginian enslaved men chafed under the control of White women. The inversion of the man/woman power dynamic apparent in White relationships, to a woman/man dynamic in enslaver/enslaved relationships, made certain Anglo-women targets of property damage. Sturtz, *Within Her Power*, 99-102.



Figure 10: Lady Nightcap at Breakfast, c.1770

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase. Carington Bowles, *Lady Nightcap at Breakfast*, London, England, c.1770, black and white mezzotint engraving, accession #2009-24, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/91276/>.

The presence of the enslaved man in Figure 11 provides a similar effect. This print is one of twelve in an engraved series which serves most acutely as a visual form of prescriptive material. Yet this print is the only plate in the series to depict an enslaved or African-descended individual.²⁹⁶ The series follows two brothers given equal favor by fortune. Frederick, as vice, spends his money irresponsibly, drinks, gambles, and hires prostitutes. Ultimately, in tremendous debt, he commits suicide. His brother Charles, as virtue, is frugal, cares for his family, behaves respectably, and dies surrounded by his children.²⁹⁷ In Figure 11, Frederick, most likely the seated man, flirts with prostitutes in a parlor.²⁹⁸ A woman sits in his lap, and though he is turned in profile, the similarities between Frederick and the enslaved man behind him are striking, as the visual echoes reveal multiple layers of prescription, power, and gender enforcement. In particular, by creating such a visual parallel between the effeminate figure of Frederick and the genderless figure of the enslaved man, this print serves to simultaneously enforce White masculinity and Black un-masculinity. Though Frederick wears the traditional three-piece suit, ties his hair back with a ribbon, and carries a thin sword as a sign of wealth (and perhaps of virility), his gender is nevertheless undermined by his place in a brothel. The women's dresses, the presence of another Anglo-descended man, and, of course, the enslaved man each contribute to an image of Frederick that probably rang hollow for late-eighteenth century Virginians. Rather than appearing as the epitome of secure masculinity, Frederick is, in fact, effeminized because of

²⁹⁶ There is only one other plate in the series to depict individuals as non-White, but these figures appear to be in blackface. Carington Bowles, *Frederick impiously assuming the Character of the Devil, at a Masquerade*, August 31, 1787, black and white line engraving, from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1959-83,8, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/15536/>.

²⁹⁷ The full series is available through the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. The first engraving is Carington Bowles, *Fortune bestowing equal Favours on Two Brothers (named Charles and Frederick) the first of whom uses them with prudence, while the latter destroys them in extravagance and dissipation*, August 31, 1787, black and white line engraving, 1959-83,1, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/15528/>.

²⁹⁸ Frederick appears to be the seated man as the impolite and unusual gaze of the enslaved man is directed at him, as are the gazes of the three women.

his absorption with the prostitutes.²⁹⁹ By spending his money away, Frederick serves as a warning about what kind of masculinity not to perform. That the enslaved man in this scene is dressed so similarly to Frederick—coat, waistcoat, knee breeches, ruffled linen undershirt—communicates several things simultaneously. First, even as Frederick is effeminized for his pursuit of prostitutes, the enslaved man cannot touch them and is therefore unmanned in the process. Second, Frederick's position is undermined by the enslaved man's posture, with his hand in his waistcoat in the fashion of the day. That the Afro-descended man can take such a stance unsettles Frederick's gender—and that of men who behaved like him. The power of the enslaved man's genderlessness at once reifies his position as enslaved and cautions those of British descent against effeminacy, enforcing gender through its warning.

²⁹⁹ As discussed in Chapter 2, men believed women had the ability to lead them astray and effeminize them by distracting them from masculine pursuits. Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 76.



Figure 11: Frederick Squandering Away His Fortune, 1787

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase. Carington Bowles, *Frederick Squandering away his Fortune at a Bagnio, with Common Prostitutes*, London, England, August 31, 1787, black and white line engraving, accession #1958-83,4, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/15531/>.

However, the scenes depicted in the above two sources were not the only environments in which the enslaved were found or represented. Map cartouches, a feature of maps from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, included details about the mapmaker, the map's purpose, and its title. They also often included various types of imagery and symbolism.³⁰⁰ As scholars like S. Max Edelson have demonstrated, colonial maps were produced for very specific purposes such as seeking to control space and resources, coalescing geographic knowledge, charting imperial boundaries, and negotiating disputes.³⁰¹ Yet such maps also played other ancillary roles in the construction of empire. The imagery of the cartouche, when included, communicated specific ideals about the place being mapped and the beliefs of the people contained in that geographic area—including those on gender.

Figures 12 and 13 are map cartouches; the first from a 1751 map of Virginia by Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson, the second from a 1770 map by John Henry. Both reveal a further dimension of the enforced genders of the enslaved, but the symbolism of these cartouches must be considered as integrated wholes. The Fry and Jefferson map (Fig. 12) was the definitive map of the Chesapeake for much of the second half of the century. It functioned to locate even the western frontiers of Virginia, and displayed the colony among its neighbors. Yet the map's title, *A Map of the Most Inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole Province of Maryland with Parts of Pensilvania, New Jersey and North Carolina*, raises questions about how "inhabited" was defined—settler colonials or Indigenous tribes—but the cartouche does not contain any

³⁰⁰ David Rumsey, "Cartouches, or Decorative Map Titles," David Rumsey Map Collection online database, accessed March 18, 2021, <https://www.davidrumsey.com/blog/2010/2/25/cartouches-decorative-map-titles>.

³⁰¹ Edelson, *A New Map of Empire*, in particular Chapters 1 and 2. See also Matthew H. Edney, "John Mitchell's Map of North America (1755): A Study of the Use and Publication of Official Maps in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Imago Mundi* 60, no. 1 (2008): 63-85, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40234117>.

Indigenous figures.³⁰² Rather, the Fry map cartouche depicts a dock, perhaps on Chesapeake Bay, where four Anglo-Virginian men linger and where at least four Afro-Virginian men labor. The enslaved man farthest from the viewer-perceiver appears to be loading a small boat to row to the ship at harbor, while the two enslaved men in the middle ground seal and transport hogsheads of tobacco. The last enslaved man, closest to the viewer-perceiver, carries a jug and goblet on a platter to the seated Anglo-enslavers, serving them as they discuss business. An open hogshead spills its precious cargo onto the dock. These enslaved men are dressed vastly differently from the men considered in the previous two examples. The men here wear only loincloths or perhaps underwear. This comparative state of undress is also found in the cartouche in Figure 13. In this cartouche, an enslaved man sits wearing only a striped cloth and holds a hoe, while a small Black child wears only a headwrap and carries a plate of produce.³⁰³ A (perhaps Indigenous) woman sits atop a plinth holding a cornucopia in one arm and a portrait of King George III in the other. Behind the plinth, the mast and rigging of a ship are visible, and hogsheads of tobacco rest at the plinth base.

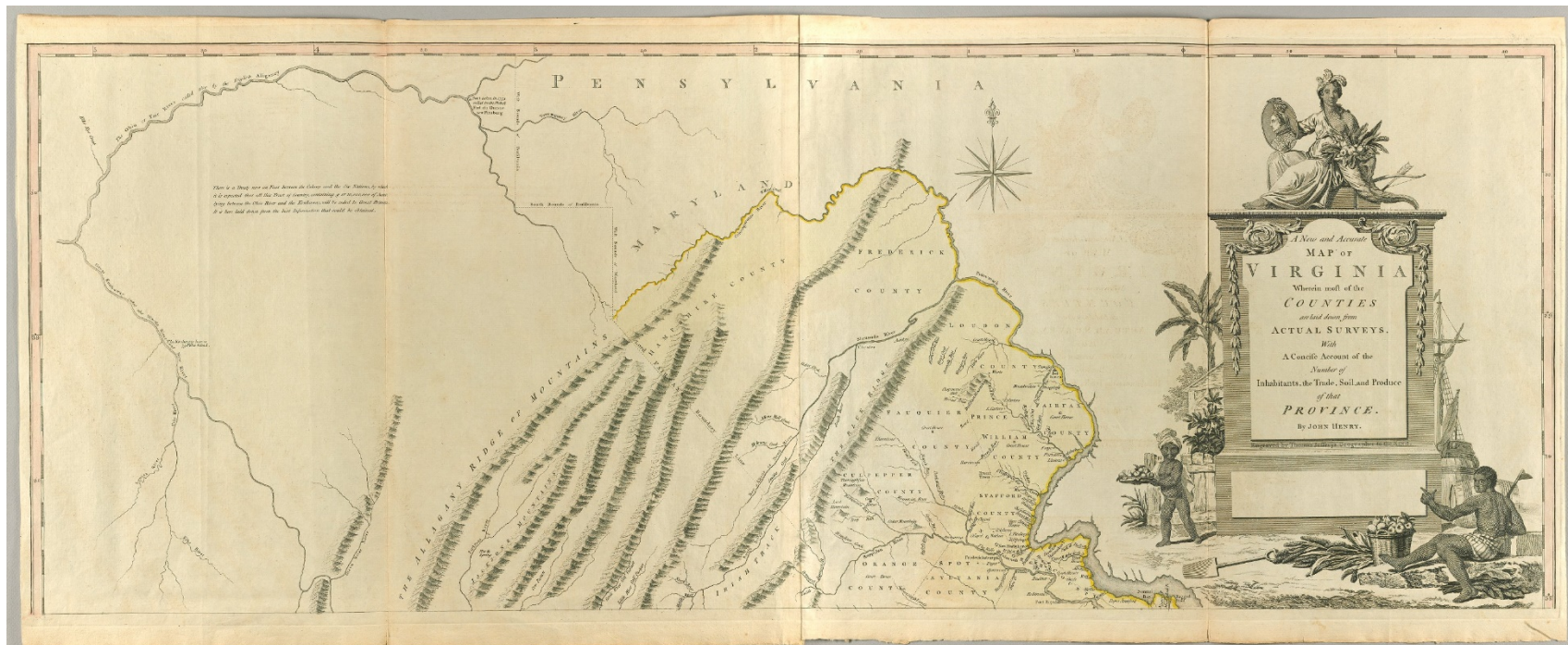
³⁰² Compare this to a contemporary map of South Carolina that includes Euro-Americans, a Black individual, and an Indigenous person. Thomas Bowen and James Cook, *A Map of the Province of South Carolina*, c.1773, colored engraved map, from the John Carter Brown (JCB) Library Map Collection, acc. #C-7210, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCBMAPS~1~1~2888~101345>. The lack of Indigenous representation in the Fry map may elide the Indigenous knowledge that may have helped produce the map in the first place. Chad Anderson, "Rediscovering Native North America: Settlements, Maps, and Empires in the Eastern Woodlands," *Early American Studies* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2016): 478-505, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2016.0015>.

³⁰³ These are not the only colonial maps to feature enslaved individuals clothed in little or no dress; the trend appears in other Virginia maps as well as maps of other North American regions. For another Virginia map, see John Gibson, *A Map of the Western parts of the Colony of Virginia*, 1754, black and white line engraving, from the CWF, 2017-112, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/102573>. For a non-British North American map, see Matthaeus Seutter, *Recens Edita totius Novi Belgii, in America Septentrionali siti delineatio cura et sumtibus Mattaei Seutteri*, 1740, colored engraved map, from the JCB Map Collection, acc. #9264, <https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCBMAPS~1~1~2483~101106>.



Figure 12: Fry and Jefferson Map Cartouche, c.1751

Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. Public Domain. Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson, *A Map of the most Inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole Province of Maryland with Part of Pensilvania, New Jersey and North Carolina*, c.1751, hand colored map, LCCN 74693088, <https://lccn.loc.gov/74693088>.



Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Figure 13: Henry Map, c.1770

Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library. Open Access. John Henry, *A new and accurate map of Virginia wherein most of the counties are laid down from actual surveys*, c.1770, engraved map on two sheets, accession #28960, <https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCBMAPS~1~1~2884~101320>.

That both Virginia map cartouches include ill-dressed enslaved individuals, a ship, and tobacco hogsheads suggests layered meanings. These cartouches promote an image of Virginia that slots neatly into a British Atlantic context. The depiction of ships, tobacco, and enslaved men in proximity visually links the geographic area of the map itself to a global network of culture and commerce. The ships in these cartouches, likely filled with more tobacco, would return to port in Britain, where they probably received goods like fabrics, housewares, tea, guns, and a host of other items that found their way across the Atlantic, whether back to the colonies, or south to Africa, where goods again changed hands in exchange for African commodities, including people.³⁰⁴ Money and credit changed hands for tobacco, fabric, and commodified human alike. Even if these depictions did not represent real people, they did draw on the very real ideals, attitudes, and perceptions about the enslaved examined elsewhere in this thesis. By the eighteenth century, nature was something to be conquered and subdued. Linking the enslaved with nature allowed Anglo-Virginians to add another layer of subjugation to the enslaved by naturalizing their condition. The cartouches therefore enforced enslaver power by equating the latter with nature and the goods reaped from it (tobacco, other produce) and with the transatlantic trade, both identifications which re-violated the terms of an enslaved person's humanity.

However, although these enslaved individuals are depicted wearing garments around their lower bodies, rather than a three-piece suit, here, too, they are being made genderless. Where Afro-descended enslaved women were constructed as “naturally” inferior for their perceived ability to appear in public without stays, enslaved men may have experienced similar distinctions of sartorial gendering. As the prescriptive engravings demonstrate, enslaved men

³⁰⁴ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 33-64; *Virginia Merchants: Alexander Henderson, Factor for John Glassford at his Colchester Store, Letter Book of 1758-1765*, transcribed by Charles & Virginia Hamrick (Athens, Ga.: Iberian Publishing Company, 1999).

could wear three-piece suits, but, as these cartouches suggest, they did not have to and indeed could wear almost nothing. Their visual and symbolic proximity to other representations of Atlantic commerce and commodification de-gendered them by linking them to objects and other natural goods. These Afro-descended men therefore faced genderlessness because of their enforced relationship to nature, which in turn made them more fit to produce commodities as commodities themselves. Further, these cartouches enforced genderlessness for all enslaved men, not just those who were “undressed” or worked outside of a White family’s home. By creating and enforcing ideals about one set of enslaved laborers, the rest of them undoubtedly also felt the ramifications.

What did these caricatured and idealized representations of enslaved men mean to those who lived on the ground in Virginia? Though the audiences of both the prescriptive engravings and the map cartouches were likely not the enslaved, these depictions nevertheless enforced ideals and power over them and provided another communicable measure by which to cement White domination. By predominantly depicting laborers of African descent, Anglo-Virginians hoped to take these ideals and reproduce them on the real bodies of the enslaved living on their land and in their homes. The absence of enslaved women from these depictions suggests not only enslavers’ representational power, but perhaps also a preference for communicating ideas about masculinity rather than femininity; masculinity trumped un-masculinity, effeminization, and femininity together.³⁰⁵ Whether liveried or “undressed,” the idealized enslaved man remained in his inferior, servile role, accepted his lot, and was not impertinent enough to gaze back at the viewer-perceiver. In essence, he did not run away. Thus, the engravings and cartouches

³⁰⁵ Prude, “To Look upon the ‘Lower Sort’,” 150.

considered here functioned along newspaper advertisements for runaways and slave sales to project and perceive (idealized) enslaved genders. These visual materials shifted the responsibility of truancy from enslaver to enslaved. Anglo-Virginian power therefore came loose of any guilt through the reproduction of genderless enslaved individuals. Enforcing an ideal of genderlessness through these materials allowed enslavers to routinely and continually re-objectify their enslaved.

Yet the fact remains that although enslaved Virginians did not always, or even often, fit into such a constructed ideal, Anglo-Virginians sought to re-implement commodification in one last visual representation: the runaway advertisement caricature (Fig. 14 and detail). The advertisement caricature was not used for every runaway, or even in every issue of the *Virginia Gazette*, so it is as yet unclear why some publishers chose to utilize the image or not, or which advertisements received special attention over others. The depictive device functioned first and foremost to draw the reader-perceiver's eye down the page to catch their attention.³⁰⁶ It also likely became a visual shorthand, helping those in a rush to identify more quickly pertinent advertisements. Caricatures were not only used for runaway advertisements, either; advertisements for some stolen or strayed horses were also accompanied by a miniature image of a horse as seen in Figure 14. That both truant humans and horses received similar pictorial devices suggests the similarities that enslavers drew between these two kinds of property.³⁰⁷ As a caricature, the runaway depiction blends the imagery of both the prescriptive engravings and the map cartouches. The enslaved man in the detail of Figure 14 wears a coat and knee breeches,

³⁰⁶ For more on how runaway ads functioned in their role as ads, see Jack Lynch, "'Sold on Reasonable Terms': Early American Newspaper Advertisements," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Autumn 2010), accessed August 1, 2021, <https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/Foundation/journal/Autumn10/ads.cfm>.

³⁰⁷ This link was established not only in newspapers, but in other documents of the colonial period as well, such as wills and inventories. J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 69-143.

appears to be barefoot, and a handkerchief covers his head. He carries a hoe or other agricultural tool as he runs. He is neither a liveried household slave nor a “naked” field worker, yet he incorporates aspects of both, and so bears the genderlessness the others do. He also remains an enslaver tool of enforced gender, re-commodified even as the accompanying text describes the actions and sartorial choices of the real individual. As a means of gender enforcement, the runaway caricature functions to crystallize the runaway as both laborer and deeply genderless.

Gender enforcement thus took place along multiple avenues of visual social control. The attempts to enforce a vision of the enslaved as genderless, and therefore to physically make them so by providing them with coarse fabrics and limiting their use of certain garments, was supported by Anglo-Virginian creations of engravings, maps, and caricatures that provided templates for power. These representations allowed Virginians to concretize and navigate the increasingly unstable and shifting terrains of gender, clothing, and perception during the years of imperial crisis. However, these representations present only one facet of gender in Virginia during this period. In particular, runaway advertisements reveal enslaved attempts to negotiate those perceptions in ways that began with enslaver expectations but ultimately arose from the needs, worries, and perceptions of the enslaved themselves.

Gender Negotiation

In an attempt to negotiate their own terms of their lives, Afro-Virginians adopted and adapted Whites' visual language of dress and its embodiment of gender to successfully run away. The depictions considered above were one-dimensional characters intended to enforce enslaver perceptions of enslaved genders, yet the real-life individuals such materials sought to depict had ideals and goals of their own. These people lived, worked, and negotiated conflict with the very individuals who enslaved them or benefitted from their enslavement.³⁰⁸ Clothing, and the genders it embodied, also took on different meanings when manipulated and perceived by the enslaved themselves, in a direct counterbalance to how Anglo-Virginians sought to enforce genderlessness. Gender therefore functioned in important ways within enslaved networks of perception to communicate intent, safety, and identity.

Although runaway advertisements were still very much a product of Anglo-enslavers' efforts to perpetuate slavery, by reading "along the bias grain" as Fuentes suggests in her work, echoes of the sartorial decisions made by the enslaved can be heard. In the 114 advertisements surveyed, 17 included judgements of personality that carried gendered assumptions about the runaway. Words like "artful," "cunning," "sly," and "deceitful" appear alongside assertions that the runaway would attempt to pass for free or get out of Virginia.³⁰⁹ As already seen, Anglo-Virginians constructed an ideal for themselves that was the opposite of whatever they perceived the enslaved to be. The examples of Will and Ned in the previous chapter exemplify how

³⁰⁸ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 318-437.

³⁰⁹ Of the seventeen ads that include personality judgements, two use three words, eight use two, and seven use only one word to describe the runaway. Fifteen of these advertisements are for runaway men, and only two for women, reflecting men's tendency to run away more often and Whites' tendency to more heavily describe runaway men. On the gender imbalance among runaways and their descriptions, Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort'," 150-52; and Block, *Colonial Complexions*, 60-83.

enslavers utilized gendered traits like dishonesty or disrespectfulness to force an embodiment of un-masculinity. Yet because this process of the “naturalization” of genderlessness was likely well understood by the enslaved themselves, traits like artfulness or deceit also help reveal how the runaways turned these characteristics, forcibly written onto their bodies and clothing, to their advantage.

For example, in March 1774, Billy fled his enslaver’s iron works in Prince William County, situated between the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers. Apparently, Thomas Lawson, the enslaver/advertiser, felt it necessary to cast Billy in an unfavorable light:

...I think it not amiss to say that he is a very likely young Fellow, about twenty Years old, five Feet nine Inches high, stout and strong made, has a remarkable Swing in his Walk, but is much more so by a surprising Knack he has of gaining the good Graces of almost every Body who will listen to his bewitching and deceitful Tongue which seldom if ever speaks the Truth...He had on when he went away a blue Fearnought and an under Jacket of green Baize, Cotton Breeches, Osnabrug Shirt, a mixed blue Pair of Stockings, a Pair of Country made Shoes, and yellow Buckles.³¹⁰

Lawson likely intended to communicate to his enslaver networks of perception a picture of a genderless runaway. Billy may have been aware of his enslaver’s characterization of him as “bewitching,” just as he might have consciously decided to wear clothing that embodied his gender on his own terms. The fearnought, baize, cotton, and osnaburg garments communicated one thing to enslavers, but for Billy and the enslaved who observed him on his flight, these fabrics, their combinations, and their meanings might have been something quite different. While two of the garments Billy took with him, the “Osnabrug” shirt and cotton breeches (Figs. 15 and 16), likely made him identifiable as a laborer and a slave when seen by certain networks, for others these markers may have embodied other traits: industriousness, wits, or determination.

³¹⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, April 14, 1774, p. 3 col. 2.

Lawson's advertisement for Billy included not only details about his clothing but also about his laboring abilities: "From his Ingenuity, he is capable of doing almost any sort of Business, and for some Years past has been chiefly employed as a Founder, a Stone Mason, and a Miller, as Occasion required; one of which trades, I imagine, he will, in the Character of a Freeman, profess."³¹¹ Thus, Billy's clothing may have embodied, in his view, his ability to provide for himself and potentially others.

Figures 15 and 16 stand as proxy objects, but their forms nevertheless help reveal more intimately what Billy's clothing may have meant for his own perceptions of his gender. Further, these garments may have helped him negotiate a masculinity distinct from the un-masculinity forced upon him by his enslaver. The shirt in Figure 15 is made of linen rather than osnaburg, but its cut and shape may be similar to the one Billy wore. Such a shirt made of coarse, durable fabric like undyed osnaburg would not have embodied the White ideal of cleanliness, and therefore Whiteness, the same way that this proxy linen shirt may have. However, by wearing such a foundational masculine garment underneath two jackets, and by mixing colors, textiles, and styles, the shirt and jackets may very well have embodied Billy's enslavement, but also his mobility, his skills, and a perception of his labor as his own.³¹² Similarly, the cotton breeches in Figure 16 may have also helped negotiate gender. Where Lawson attempted to enforce Billy's un-masculinity through the textual link of "Impertinence" with a scarred body and rough clothing, Billy attempted to negotiate masculinity by running away and taking his skills—undoubtedly seen as a valuable asset to Lawson—with him.³¹³ Though the breeches were not of leather, and though Billy took with him no obvious markers of a skilled trade, the garment

³¹¹ *Virginia Gazette*, April 14, 1774, p. 3 col. 2.

³¹² P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 204-54; J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 144-64.

³¹³ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 212-44, 519-30.

nevertheless communicated something to Billy's own networks of perception.³¹⁴ The cotton may have been an economical choice on Lawson's part; for Billy, the flexible, breathable fabric may have literally embodied mobility. Billy's coarse, rough clothing may thus have constructed a masculinity that, while related to his status as enslaved, performed an identity he fashioned for himself and communicated that he was his own person. His gender, which, in the act of running away, was not intended for enslavers but for fellow enslaved, was bound up in his green and blue outfit as he sought to separate Lawson's forced genderlessness from his own gendered identification as a provider.

³¹⁴ On trade-specific clothing, P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 346-53.



Figure 15: Men's Shirt, 1775-1790

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Bequest of Grace Hartshorn Westerfield. Shirt, England or America, 1775-1790; altered probably 1810-1820, linen, accession #1974-268, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/42096/>.



Figure 16: Men's Breeches, 1770s

From the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Irene Lewisohn Bequest, 1976. Open Access. Breeches, American or European, 1770s, cotton, accession #1976.1481.1, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/90570>.

Enslaved women's attempts to negotiate femininity also intersected with and relied on clothing. By the mid-eighteenth century, Afro-Virginians faced a system of slavery which continually recast African-descended women as hypersexualized beings who were simultaneously "monstrous" and desirable, in an un-femininity or genderlessness that opposed White women's modesty and which justified White men's sexual impulses with perceived-to-be degenerate women.³¹⁵ Indeed, 9 of the 10 runaway women in our 114 advertisements were assigned the status of "wench," a term that, by mid-century, was applied solely to women of African descent.³¹⁶ These runaway women may have sought their chance to escape their enslavement as well as their forced genderlessness. Enslaved men and women both suffered under genderlessness, a suffering that differed in kind, not degree. Enslaved women ran away less often than did men, and the reasons for this lower number of runaway women rested firmly on gendered practices and experiences.³¹⁷ On one hand, Afro-Virginian women's movements may have been restricted by children and a lack of skilled labor abilities.³¹⁸ On the other, they faced the threat of sexual coercion, rape, and forced childbearing.³¹⁹ Although enslaved men may have also dealt with sexual coercion, their greater degrees of labor-based mobility afforded them more temporary avenues of respite than, it would seem, those available to women.³²⁰

³¹⁵ J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 7-10, 14-16.

³¹⁶ K. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, 369-70.

³¹⁷ Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort'," 140.

³¹⁸ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 526-28.

³¹⁹ Here, sexual coercion and rape refer to distinct experiences. Coercion could occur in sexual actions set up and demanded by enslavers between two enslaved individuals, or between an enslaver and an enslaved person, sometimes with the goal of reproduction. Enslaved women, however, faced the threat and reality of rape and all its forms from every man in their lives. K. Wood, "Gender and Slavery," 517-19. On forced motherhood and the difficulty of recovering women's thoughts and beliefs about it in the colonies, J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 113-19, 134.

³²⁰ K. Wood, "Gender and Slavery," 517-19.



Figure 17: Women's Shift, 1780-1790

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Gift of Mrs. Cara Ginsburg. Shift, British or European textile, worn in Albany, New York by Ann Van Rensselaer, 1780-1790, linen marked with silk cross-stitches, cotton ruffles, accession #1990-7, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/49496/>.

If enslaved women's options for escaping the threats on their lives and livelihoods were limited by gendered reasons, then those same reasons may have been the deciding factor for the few who were recorded running away. For instance, in August 1768, twenty-year-old Grace ran away from her enslaver James Johnson with "an old striped Virginia cloth coat, osnaburg shift, and a rolls apron."³²¹ Her clothing, made unsurprisingly from coarse fabrics, would have communicated and embodied the genderlessness that Johnson and his networks created for enslaved women. Yet, the advertisement further states that Grace "appears to be young with child."³²² It is unclear whether Grace was actually pregnant, though the relative speed with which Johnson placed an advertisement for her recapture makes it seem likely that she was, indeed, pregnant, and that Johnson wanted her and his growing investment back.³²³ In the enslaver view, Grace's pregnancy affirmed her gender as a perceived woman at the same time that it wrought her genderless because of her enslavement. But for Grace, her clothing, and the shift in particular, may have embodied something very different. Her pregnancy, depending on its circumstances, may have been the very reason she ran away. Particularly if the pregnancy resulted from a traumatic experience, she may have felt the need to take matters into her own hands; historians have shown how African-descended women's environmental knowledge likely facilitated contraception and abortion.³²⁴ Therefore, Grace's clothing and the gender it embodied

³²¹ *Virginia Gazette*, September 1, 1768, p. 3 col. 1.

³²² *Virginia Gazette*, September 1, 1768, p. 3 col. 1.

³²³ Grace had only run away a month before Johnson placed his ad. On the time frames during which ads were put out, Bly, "'Pretends he can read'," 290-91.

³²⁴ The relationship between agency and sex is a complicated one to untangle. To assume that Grace's pregnancy was the result of either a consensual union or a forced encounter is difficult because of her lack of agency in other areas of life. Block, "Sexual Coercion in America," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Women's and Gender History*, 265-90; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 46-96, 70-99. On enslaved women's environmental knowledge, see Stewart, "If John Muir Had Been an Agrarian," 144-47; K. Wood, "Gender and Slavery," 521. For more on how

under her perception may have reflected a sense of bodily control, the possibility or pain of motherhood, and mobility.

Though the shift in Figure 17 functions as another proxy object, it may be similar to the one Grace wore when she ran away. Shifts were utilitarian garments. The fabric was cut into triangles and rectangles, then sewn together to create a silhouette that tapered outward from the shoulders.³²⁵ Several facts about Grace's particular shift are unclear: whether it was bleached osnaburg or left undyed, the shape of the neckline, its length. Regardless, the shift Grace wore, covered by a striped coat and an apron, marked her as enslaved within White networks of perception. However, for herself and for her own networks, these garments, particularly the shift, may have communicated her ability to run away as a method of gendered control. Her enslaver surmised she would flee his residence in Amelia County for Hampton, a journey that would take her out of the piedmont and back into the tidewater, where it may have been easier for her to hide out and blend in.³²⁶ If Grace's pregnancy had resulted from a consensual union, her running to Hampton may have been prompted by a familial need. Thus, her shift, draping loose over her body and potentially hiding her early stages of pregnancy (we cannot be sure how Johnson ascertained her situation), embodied a femininity connected to her relationships.³²⁷ At the risk of reifying Grace's reproductive capacity with perceptions of her as a woman, she may

enslaved women sought to control their reproductive capabilities against enslavers' desires for more profit, J. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 166-95.

³²⁵ Baumgarten, "'Clothes for the People,'" 31; "Shift," c.1780, white linen tabby, from the CWF, 1990-7, accessed July 27, 2021, <https://emuseum.history.org/objects/49496/>.

³²⁶ By this point, internal migration to the piedmont from the tidewater had already brought many enslaved individuals west, a situation which caused much tension between elite Virginian planter-enslavers and middling farmers. See Holton, *Forced Founders*, 90, 104-5.

³²⁷ Johnson may have been able to tell Grace was pregnant because of changes in how her clothes fit, by examining her stripped, or by the fact that he may have been the reason she was pregnant. Without other details, his motivations for such a claim are unclear.

also have used her Virginia cloth coat to communicate her identity as Virginian to the enslaved networks of perception on her flight. Her clothing, in this light, may have embodied a gender that was as cunning and able as any other runaways', a femininity defined by strength and autonomy. Her pregnancy may have complicated that femininity, but whatever her motivation for running away—to have the child with family or to abort it—her clothing aided not only her passage through Virginia but communicated her capability to handle herself. Her gender became negotiable through her pregnancy and the possibilities it underscored.

Enslaved Afro-Virginians could also negotiate gender in other, less strictly binary ways. When they had the chance or means, runaways chose their clothing for a variety of reasons beyond the practicality of changing appearance. Enslaved African-descended individuals' notions of gender are inherently more difficult to determine than Anglo-American ones. Issues of creolization, the continued (though decreased) introduction of African-born individuals, and the shuffling of persons between British Atlantic regions commingled in Virginia to produce fluid systems of gendered distinctions and identities.³²⁸ How much of a runaway's gender performance drew on understandings of British gender systems for personal advantage; how much they relied on the memories, inheritances, or interactions of African genders; and how much was a blend of these modes is a difficult question to answer, and not one that will be

³²⁸ Scholars have demonstrated that many enslaved individuals in the Chesapeake came from the Bight of Biafra, where internal gender roles determined the comparatively higher deportation rate of Biafran women than other West-African women. However, enslaved individuals also arrived in Chesapeake ports from other regions such as Senegambia, with different gender systems. Further, scholars have examined the creolization of society in Virginia, which also likely played a role in reshaping the gender beliefs of African-descended groups and individuals. Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture*, 117-77; P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 443-77; and Walsh, "The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Colonial Chesapeake Slavery," *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 3 (April 2003): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1093/maghis/17.3.11>.

tackled here.³²⁹ However, glimpses of gender negotiation within and beyond the man/woman and masculine/feminine binaries can be found in the runaway advertisements.

The runaway advertisement placed in August 1771 for Jenny illustrates this best:

RUN away from the subscriber, the 1st of *April* last, a Negro woman named *Jenny*, she is about 23 years of age, 5 feet 4 or 5 inches high, has a small scar on one of her cheeks, which seems to have been occasioned by the stroke of a whip. I am informed that she has been seen lately in *Williamsburg* in the habit of a man. She lived with Mr. *James Anderson*, blacksmith, last year, and since, some time, with Mr. *Robert Hyland*. Whoever takes up the said servant, and secures her so that I get her again, or delivers her to me, at Green Spring, shall have TWENTY SHILLINGS reward; and, if out of the colony, FIVE POUNDS. ... EDMUND BACON.³³⁰

Though Bacon provides a past residence and details about Jenny's age, height, and other physical features in order to mobilize his networks of perception, he says frustratingly little about Jenny's apparel beyond the single sentence claiming that Jenny "has been seen lately...in the habit of a man." There are several possibilities highlighted by this scant illustration to reveal how gender have been negotiated by the enslaved on their own terms. A few admissions must be made first, however. The following analysis of Jenny is not undertaken to downplay or dismiss the very real fact that the primary object of running away was escape. Gender became part of runaways' repertoire of camouflage as they ran, as useful for hiding as a change of clothes. Second, the issue of agency arises here because of the nature of the runaway advertisement. As a historical record created to obscure the true motivations and the humanity of the enslaved, runaway advertisements complicate the historian's ability to accurately and confidently speak on the decisions made by those runaways. Yet to ignore such possibilities is to perpetuate the

³²⁹ Historians have explored these questions, however, in other colonial regions. For instance, Sophie White has examined this issue for enslaved individuals in colonial French Louisiana. White, "'Wearing three or four handkerchiefs around his collar, and elsewhere about him'," 535-41.

³³⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, August 8, 1771, p. 3 col. 1.

invisibility of these individuals and to invalidate the complexity of life under slavery. Evaluating the enslaved on their own terms, or at least on terms different from those prescribed by their enslavers, enables a stretching of the historical record to peer into its gaps and to recapture Jenny's decision to dress as a man.³³¹

On one hand, Jenny may have chosen to move through Williamsburg, then the colony's capital, "in the habit of a man" for two related, wholly practical reasons. First, it could be that masculine clothing was easier to steal in and around town, or perhaps masculine clothing was all that Jenny's community network was able to provide. Masculine clothing could very well have been a matter of circumstance. Second, dressing as a man may have rendered Jenny more favorably (in)visible to the White networks in town. As seen with Grace, being read as an enslaved woman came with women-specific threats to life and health. It may have therefore been easier for Jenny to pass as free, or at least to avoid suspicion, while wearing clothing associated, in the view of Anglo-Virginians, with masculinity. In the eighteenth century, passing as free was less often based on one single characteristic, but rather on an amalgamation of perceptions about race, gender, and status, each embodied by dress.³³² Expectations about the gendered sartorial performances of both runaway and non-runaway enslaved individuals could have therefore enabled Jenny to move through Williamsburg more easily: the cultural knowledge that men ran away more often, coupled with the practice of only allowing enslaved men to gain skilled trade experience, may have converged for Jenny into an ability to pass as a

³³¹ Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 78.

³³² For more on passing as free, Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," 261-64.

skilled laborer.³³³ Thus, Jenny's clothing could have been the result of the availability of clothing as well as the potential benefits of being perceived as masculine.

But there are also other possibilities, and they can co-exist with the more practical interpretations. Perhaps Jenny's gender identity aligned less with the enslaver-created category of "enslaved woman" and more with a gender that was tied to masculinity. By dressing as a man, Jenny may have sought to avoid being recognized as a runaway, while simultaneously expressing a more accurate gender alignment. Jenny negotiated gender by thoroughly flipping the script. Though this reading of Jenny's actions can seem a little twenty-first century, colonists did understand their performative genders to exist along a man/woman binary. However, as some scholars have recently argued, eighteenth-century genders were not static and people of the time understood this, as well. The dynamic categories of "woman" and "man" were accretions of characteristics that could change depending on circumstance and perception.³³⁴ Further, late colonial Virginians, like many other colonists and British Atlantic inhabitants, had multiple experiences of gender instability in their own time or earlier: Thomas/ine Hall, French aristocrat and transwoman Chevalier d'Éon, and the Public Universal Friend in Philadelphia.³³⁵ Virginians may not have always found these variations of gender acceptable, but they were not oblivious to their possibility.³³⁶ It is easy to read runaway advertisements, and Jenny's in

³³³ P. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 204-56.

³³⁴ Block, "Making Meaningful Bodies," 525-29.

³³⁵ K. Brown, "'Changed...into the Fashion of a Man'", Hugh Ryan, "themstory: How This 18th Century French Spy Came Out As Trans," them., April 9, 2018, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.them.us/story/chevalier-d-eon-trans-woman>; Isabel Steven and Ted Maust, hosts, "The Public Universal Friend in Philadelphia," The Alley Cast (podcast), July 8, 2020, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.elfrethsalley.org/podcast/2020/7/7/episode-3-the-public-universal-friend-in-philadelphia>.

³³⁶ LaFleur, "Sex and 'Unsex'," 471-73.

particular, with an eye solely on the practicality of dressing to become more favorably (in)visible without considering how such choices reflected on and were made by gendered concerns. This is not to say that all sartorial decisions were made with gender in mind; indeed, runaway's practical use of clothing should remain the preeminent understanding. But to ignore the possibility of motivations which belie expansive gender expressions—or even to ignore the idea that sartorial choices afforded both gender confirmation and a way to blend in—would be to mishandle interpretations of the diverse past.

In each of the examples set by Billy, Grace, and Jenny, the perceptions and negotiations of gender worked to create legible figures. Reading runaway advertisements as evidence of enslaved negotiations between genderlessness and gender enables a view of the colonial past that more fully encapsulates the possibilities of enslaved experiences. These gender negotiations drew on knowledge of enslaver practices while potentially remaining distinct from that knowledge. An enslaved double consciousness allowed for reconfigurations in the meanings of clothing, gender, and the body that shifted emphasis from the enslaved as laborers to the enslaved as people. Thus, the use of clothing to negotiate and navigate gender in late colonial Virginia enabled the enslaved to create meanings for themselves and their networks of perception in ways specific to their situations.

Conclusions

Multiple groups in late colonial Virginia had access to and could manipulate the meanings of clothing, gender, and the body to their advantage. Enslavers who sought to enforce visions of the enslaved as genderless and inferior faced enslaved individuals who attempted to

negotiate identities of their own constructions. Prescriptive engravings, map cartouches, and runaway caricatures represented how Virginian enslavers wanted to see their enslaved, and the power to create such representations shaped how gender was perceived in the colony. At the same time, however, runaways in particular come into the historical spotlight as they made decisions about what clothing to wear on their escapes, demonstrating the knowledge of enslaver ideals they undoubtedly possessed and tried to use to their own benefit. This knowledge included gender and perceptions of gender, both from enslavers and from their own enslaved networks. Their own experiences, practices, and beliefs can be read in the runaway advertisement. By negotiating genders based on but distinct from the ones enslavers sought to create for them, the enslaved utilized clothing in ways that demonstrate the cultural availability of the visual language of dress in the late colonial period.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown how late colonial Virginians used clothing as a form of gender power and gender expression. The identification of clothing with the body enabled Virginians to actively make choices about how to present themselves to the wider culture of observation and perception present in the colony, which shaped how individuals saw themselves and each other. Gender, both as a system of power and as a category of social identity, became linked with the material forms of clothing that Virginians wore in their everyday lives. Dress was ubiquitous, but its meanings were variable, changing, and unstable. In attempts to either limit or expand expressive power through clothing, both Anglo- and Afro-Virginians deployed clothing in conscious, active ways to say something about their social status, race, and, as this work has argued, gender, to successfully navigate the networks of perception around them.

These navigations relied on how closely one aligned with the ideal. After importing gender ideals from Britain, Anglo-Virginians relied on their colonial experiences, particularly slavery, to shape how gendered power operated in the colony. They created distinctions among various kinds of masculinity and femininity by following other forms of social identity including status and race. The embodied genders performed by elite Anglo-Virginian enslaver men would have been ridiculed on lower-status White men, and unthinkable on the bodies of enslaved men. By constructing these differences, Anglo-Virginian enslavers sought to keep social stratification in their favor. The layered hierarchy of gender in Virginia meant that universalizing words like “man” and “woman” only captured likenesses of acceptable men and women—those with means, free, and White. The presence of networks of perception facilitated this hierarchy, and

reactions against it. The colony's culture of observation, infamous throughout the British Atlantic, provided the opportunity for both surveillance and invisibility as Virginians navigated these networks.

British-descended enslavers also attempted to limit the kinds of clothing available to all Virginians and to control the meanings about that clothing. Although embodied and performed genders could and did mutate over an individual's lifetime, by and large clothing became identified as masculine or as feminine. The alignment with or utilization of particularly coded clothing was liable to change how one performed, was perceived, and, indeed, lived. Though individuals across statuses wore clothing similar in kind and basic function, distinctions between bodies impacted how people read the same forms of clothing differently. Variations in the materiality of clothing—fit, fabric, color, length—ultimately enabled Virginians to comprehend acceptable and unacceptable genders. Anglo-Virginians privileged themselves with the more acceptable genders, even as they demarcated themselves according to status, and deemed the enslaved as genderless even as they engaged in rhetoric and practices that ensured the sexual reproduction of slavery. Clothing became a tool of gendered violence and enslavement.

Yet Afro-Virginians, by virtue of their adaptation of White practices and proximity to their enslavers, attempted to negotiate their positions of genderlessness through the visual language of dress. They actively chose, when possible, how their dress performed their genders. While White inhabitants of the British Atlantic reproduced stereotyped, genderless figures in prints, maps, and newspapers, the enslaved themselves took the clothing given to them and re-inscribed it with their own meanings. In particular, runaway enslaved individuals, with their historical visibility in advertisements, illustrate how the process of cultural blending, at its peak

in late eighteenth-century Virginia, provided enslaver and enslaved alike the ability to dress in active, embodied ways. The same coarse attire that signified enslavement might also have embodied a gender based on productivity or wit. Tensions between enforced visions of idealized enslaved genderlessness and realized enslaved genders contributed to the enduring place of clothing as a tool of identification.

This thesis points to paths forward for further study of colonial American gender, power, and identity. In particular, the bringing together of documentary, visual, and material sources, and the deep engagement with what the physical forms of what clothing meant, have enabled this study to contextualize gender and identity in the colony of Virginia. Its preoccupation with the Old Dominion helps balance some of the historiographic focus on the mid-Atlantic and northeastern colonies, and further helps explore how identity and community were constructed during the period of increasing imperial tension. Future scholarship which offers comparisons between and within regions, as well as across the colonial/federal temporal divide, will help illuminate how Americans of all sorts, whether forced or free, engaged with, understood, and actively partook in the creation, enforcement, and negotiation of gender. Work which offers a more nuanced and complicated look at how social stratification within European- and African-descended groups will also add much to this discussion. Further, studies which more rigorously engage with the colonial cultivation of hetero- and cisnormativity will provide a fuller view of how the dominant, acceptable modes of being have shaped the rhythms of American life since

colonization.³³⁷ Gender may not have often been an overt or primary concern of the colonial past, but its shapes and structures left marks on the bodies of those who were caught in its orbit.

³³⁷ Jennifer Manion argues that interrogating the invisible structures of heteronormativity is as important as revealing queer histories. Jennifer Manion, "Historic Heteroessentialism and Other Orderings in Early America," *Signs* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2009): 998-1000, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/597171>.

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- This Agreement is governed by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, without giving effect to Virginia's conflict of laws provisions. Any litigation with respect to this Agreement shall be brought in a court whose jurisdiction includes the City of Williamsburg, Virginia.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED TO:

By Rhiannon O'Neil
For Rhiannon O'Neil

Dated July 30, 2021

THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION

By Marianne Martin
Marianne Martin
Visual Resources Librarian

Dated July 30, 2021

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IMAGE LIST

Image Number	Description	Credit Line
DS1996-901	<i>Quilted Petticoat</i> , England, 1750-1775, silk satin, glazed worsted backing, pink woolen batting, quilted with silk, linen waistband, accession # 1953-436	<i>The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum</i>
D2015-JBC-0923-0008	<i>Under Petticoat</i> , probably New England, 1750-1770, linen and wool, accession #2014-176	<i>The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Gift of Titi</i>
DS2002-164	<i>Coat</i> , England, 1770-1785, silk worsted tabby, metallic buttons, cotton lining, accession #1960-	<i>The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum</i>
DS2002-147	<i>Coat</i> , Isle of Wight, Virginia, 1780, cotton and wool, accession # 1964-174, A	<i>The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum</i>
D201 8-JBC-0601-0039	<i>Lady Nightcap at Breakfast</i> , Carington Bowles, London, England, ca.1770, black and white mezzotint engraving, accession #2009-24	<i>The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum</i>
D2021-JBC-0727-0004	<i>Frederick Squandering away his Fortune at a Bagnio, with Prostitutes</i> , Carington Bowles, London, England, August 31, black and white line engraving, accession #1959-83, 4	<i>The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum</i>
DS1984-149	<i>Shirt</i> , England or America, 1775-1790; altered probably 1810-linen, accession # 1974-268	<i>The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Bequest of Hartshorn Westerfield.</i>
0201 8-JBC-0720-0014	<i>Shift</i> , British or European textile, worn in Albany, New York, by Van Rensselaer, 1780-1790, linen marked with silk cross-stitches, cotton ruffles, accession #1990-7	<i>The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Gift of Mrs. Ginsburg.</i>
N/A	Page 2, <i>Virginia Gazette</i> , Purdie Dixon, September 24, 1767	https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary gazettes/

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Thank you so much for your help earlier on this matter, as well as your time again.

Best,

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To: The Lewis Walpole Library <walpole@yale.edu>
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Hello,

I hope this finds you well. My name is Rhiannon O'Neil, and I am a graduate student in the history department at the University of Central Florida. I am currently working on my master's thesis, which examines the relationship between gender and clothing in the late colonial period in America. I would like to obtain publication permission for "A morning frolic, or, The transmutation of the sexes," call number 780.03.25.01+ (<https://hdl.handle.net/10079/digcoll/552229>).

My university does publish all theses and dissertations in an online library database, found here: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/thesesdissertations/>, in case that is an issue. I am on track to graduate in December 2021 and my thesis would become available in this database shortly thereafter.

I would be grateful for any information or permissions you can provide regarding this image.

Thank you for your time,

Rhiannon O'Neil

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