

Victoria

How Clothes Made the Queen

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The Newberry

60 West Walton Street, Chicago

Think of Queen Victoria. Her name immediately summons a vision of a short, stout, dour old woman, engulfed in widow's weeds. But in 1837, the year she became Queen, she was petite, fresh-faced, and charming, just nineteen years old and full of spirit and style. The news of the accession of a "girl queen" ignited the imagination of the populace, and in the decade that followed her public image evolved to embrace each role of her early reign: from winsome princess to young yet confident queen, from the most eligible bachelorette in Europe to the most devoted wife and serene mother in Great Britain. This lecture will trace that journey through the clothes she wore in the paintings and prints created during the first phase of her long sovereignty—the same years portrayed in the popular ITV Studios series *Victoria*—before she lost her husband, put on black, took off her corset, and settled into her role as the grandmotherly, old, middle-class Queen.

Chicago-based author and Newberry Scholar-in-Residence **Debra Mancoff** writes on Victorian art, fashion, and culture.



Portrait of Queen Victoria by Franz Xaver Winterhalter, 1845. Image: Wikimedia Commons.