



Women in Clothes

Sheila Heti , Heidi Julavits , Leanne Shapton

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

Women in Clothes

Sheila Heti , Heidi Julavits , Leanne Shapton

Women in Clothes Sheila Heti , Heidi Julavits , Leanne Shapton

Women in Clothes is a book unlike any other. It is essentially a conversation among hundreds of women of all nationalities—famous, anonymous, religious, secular, married, single, young, old—on the subject of clothing, and how the garments we put on every day define and shape our lives.

It began with a survey. The editors composed a list of more than fifty questions designed to prompt women to think more deeply about their personal style. Writers, activists, and artists including Cindy Sherman, Kim Gordon, Kalpona Akter, Sarah Nicole Prickett, Tavi Gevinson, Miranda July, Roxane Gay, Lena Dunham, and Molly Ringwald answered these questions with photographs, interviews, personal testimonies, and illustrations.

Even our most basic clothing choices can give us confidence, show the connection between our appearance and our habits of mind, express our values and our politics, bond us with our friends, or function as armor or disguise. They are the tools we use to reinvent ourselves and to transform how others see us. *Women in Clothes* embraces the complexity of women's style decisions, revealing the sometimes funny, sometimes strange, always thoughtful impulses that influence our daily ritual of getting dressed.

Women in Clothes Details

Date : Published September 4th 2014 by Blue Rider Press

ISBN :

Author : Sheila Heti , Heidi Julavits , Leanne Shapton

Format : Kindle Edition 518 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Couture, Fashion, Feminism, Writing, Essays, Womens, Art

 [Download Women in Clothes ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Women in Clothes ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Women in Clothes Sheila Heti , Heidi Julavits , Leanne Shapton

From Reader Review Women in Clothes for online ebook

Cassie says

Don't read this book because you're looking for a conclusion about how we (or you) dress like you do. Or maybe you'll find a conclusion, but I can guarantee the authors aren't going to hand you one. This book is interesting because there's not one message or one thing the authors/editors are trying to convey. They asked a wide variety of women (age, location, race, religious affiliation, etc.) various open-ended questions about clothes and dressing and appearance and they let those women take it from there. So there's not one unified point, but that's what made this so interesting to me. I had never asked myself most of these questions nor considered the wide-ranging answers to them. So many of the women answered relatively simple questions about clothes with deep, vulnerable answers involving past relationships, rape, their hopes for their careers and their families.

Daniel says

More than anything in my life I have been interested in human expression. This may all sound silly but it isn't. Clothing is one of the most efficient forms of communication and expression. It reflects personal style, but personal style is more than just clothing, it is a way of living, it's consciousness, philosophy, and, according to Alexander Nagel in this book, the way we move through the world and the way the world moves through us. I'm not sure I want to spend more time convincing anyone why clothing is important, so if you don't get it, get lost. People with great style, Nagel says, are constantly relearning. I am in the process of this relearning. I wish I had better methods of implementing this.

Maybe tomorrow during my lunch break I will go try on some leather jackets and find some more "apocalypse" boots, as my friend calls them. My current pair of boots are black suede and leather and they immediately got a hole in the suede, but I still wear them anyways because it is the most powerful item of clothing I own, it changes me completely in terms of gait and confidence; I've never felt sexier. After boring teenage years and colorful college years I am finding myself in a punk phase, a phase that is completely inappropriate to my job and life but maybe I am still young enough to pull it off? I don't have the confidence to do that, though, and punk clothing reminds me of those awful kids in high school I hated, so it's mostly manifested in leather boots and dark henleys, my favorite of which I found on the discount rack at the Gap and is dyed with the indigo used to color jeans. And let's be real, the only reason why I started wearing henleys is because a boy I had a major crush on in high school wore them. He was the only boy I had met (god, still probably true) who had read Moby-Dick "because he got bored." I don't know what any of this means or what it says about me. I know I probably won't buy any leather jackets because I haven't made up my mind what it means to wear leather, though I also haven't made up my mind what it means to wear Gap clothing when it's probably made in some terrible factory, though really, if I stop buying from there would the factory lay off its desperate workers, and would they be forced into a more dangerous trade, like prostitution? (That's a dilemma I can't win.) I don't know what that means about me either, but I know these clothes reflect something about me that I haven't managed to express in the simplest and most efficient way, a way that my words would probably never properly describe, and in a way that may give you some slight understanding about me.

This book has conversations about all of these topics with approximately 640 women (and a handful of men).

It's a fascinating book that has a playful, fragmented organization. It's not prescriptive in any way, it's not going to tell you what to buy to accentuate your ass, but it will ask you to explore why you want something to do that for you. (Carmen Joy King: "Do I need people to look at me? Yes. I mean, what's the point of being in the world if we're not looking at one another?") It has some nice illustrations from Leanne Shapton and is pretty experimental at times when it comes to its features. It's more inclusive than exclusive and explores how women of all genders, orientations, age, occupation, and nationality interact and form meanings with their clothes. It's worth taking a look, in my opinion.

Excerpts from Women in Clothes:

"Clothes that list more than one fiber are undesirable. Too many fiber types seems like a sad statement of late-stage capitalism, like, 'We had some surplus angora, nylon, and elastane lying around so we threw in five percent of each with your wool sweater. Hope you like it!'" - Jennifer Armbrust?

"When you witness beauty, it's visceral—there is no second guessing it. Plato says that feeling of absolute knowing can inspire the beholder to quest after a similar revelation in other disciplines of life—poetry or music or science, for example. The ultimate experience of eros, then, is one that inspires you to live in a questioning, questing way, seeking truth in all areas of life. Ergo, true beauty turns you into a philosopher!" - Liane Balaban

"I'm trying to get used to the idea that you wear things and they wear themselves out and you find new things. It's okay." - Mimi Cabell?

"My dog ate my shoes. I liked them. I want them back. I want my dog back." - Alexa S.?

"I want these worn things back. I miss having clothing that I feel connected to." - Allison D

"I see the world as an execrable place, lurking with humiliations, and dressing to go out is the last link to a fantasy I once had of what going out would be like—indeed, the only shred remaining of an early promise that the world would not be bereft of the feelings I had learned to desire from it in movies and books." - Ida Hattemer-Higgins?

"Clothes seem like literature to me. The text of a dream." - Eileen Myles?

Lori says

I was a good reads first reads winner of this book. I would give this a 2.5 myself. I will admit this is not what I thought it was when I tried out for the giveaway. I thought it was essays and short stories by women and in a sense this is a bit like that. I did not realize this is about clothes and the women who wear them. I am a blue jean and tennis shoe kind of person and not much for fashion. It is hard to know what category to put this book in. I would call it "hodgepodge" myself. It is a very unusual book. There are over 600 women interviewed who gave essays, or little snippets on their thoughts on clothes and anything else you could wear. It consists of interviews, conversations, surveys, poems, projects, and one part known as "collections" which range from interesting, to funny to downright weird. For me this book just was not my cup of tea.

other people who love to talk about fashion,clothing etc may love reading this book. I would say this is one of the most unusual quirky books i have read. but you know what they say "to each their own"

Victoria Weinstein says

I don't know that I will ever officially finish this book. I am checking in now to say that while I am enjoying picking through it for meaningful and coherent bits, it is a conceptual and aesthetic/design mess. How could a book on style have so little of it? The experience of reading this book is like finding a researcher's file cabinet full of random folders of interviews, sitting down with a cup of coffee and a pile of those folders at your side and sifting through them. It is in desperate need of editorial direction and curating.

RH Walters says

This thick book was due back at the library before I could finish it, but it contained some unforgettable, thought-provoking stuff. I particularly enjoyed Lena Dunham's idea of the perfect outfit (velvet or stiff taffeta party dress, nubby tights, flats and big wool coat with a hood in case she needs to go out on a secret mission); the struggles of a transgender woman trying to look feminine in the summertime; women admiring pictures of their mothers before they had children; a Muslim woman's question why western men are buttoned up to the neck for serious occasions while women are exposed; the experiences of refugees having only two outfits while growing up; garment workers who buy the cheapest possible garish clothing while sewing luxury goods for export; the scent expert guessing things about stranger's coats based on their fragrance; a little girl explaining her fashion sense and the fun of switching underwear with a little boy; women who say they feel the most beautiful when they're absorbed in making art or spend the whole day working outside. It's true that this book could use some more editing, and some of the photo essays/quotes are less interesting than others, but the book feels personal like a journal and I think its energy comes from the unfiltered, conversational nature of the interviews and writing. It would be a fun book to keep around and flip through.

Melanie Page says

Women in Clothes (2014, Blue Rider Press) is an anthology unlike any kind before it. At 515 pages, you may wonder what so many women have to say about their clothes, their relationship to clothes, and what they think of other women's clothes. In 2013 I was still an active on Facebook (you won't find me there now). Sheila Heti was a FB friend of mine, though we didn't really know each other. She had done a reading at my college, and I liked that her work was odd, and that she, too looked unique in a way I couldn't place, so I friended her, which many of us do. Through FB, Heti put out a call for participants in a survey for women about clothes. That was about all I knew, but I felt the tug of my past quizzical self asking me to do it, thinking of those years as a teenager when I filled out hours of questionnaires (what's your favorite color? what's the first thing you do when you wake up? etc.) my friends sent to each other, typically through AOL e-mail. I responded to Heti's request and filled out a long survey about clothes, style, make up, and jewelry.

In 2014, I learned that *Women in Clothes* was not only a reality, but it was a huge project. Sheila Heti, Heidi Julavits, and Leanne Shapton collected surveys from around the world, conducted interviews, gathered photo evidence, stories, and diagrams about fashion from over 639 (myself included) participants. The anthology is

described as “essentially a conversation among hundreds of women of all nationalities—famous, anonymous, religious, secular, married, single, young, old—on the subject of clothing, and how the garments we put on every day define and shape our lives.” I received my contributor’s copy and must admit, I was a bit shocked when I held it. This book is enormous, and because it’s not a narrative, I wasn’t sure how to approach it. In all honesty, I put the book in my bathroom and decided it’s short sections would make such a room the perfect place for it. Occasionally, I would take the book into another room and read it there, but there is so much information that it seemed better to read only one small section at a time.

I read *Women in Clothes* cover to cover, skipping very little. One page shows a diagram of stains on clothes, which I didn’t care to read thoroughly. The fiction stories, though there aren’t many, were too avant garde for me. But overall, I read the whole thing, front to back.

The anthology begins with a conversation between Heti, Julavits, and Shapton. It’s a bit gossipy and teenager in tone, which I found grating, but I can see how the authors were trying to keep the dialogue as real as possible, or perhaps they even recorded what they said and typed the conversation verbatim. I’ve read a number of reviews on Goodreads that point out a dislike of this introduction to how the idea for the book began, and I must admit that I also wish it started more professionally.

What I didn’t notice about *Women in Clothes* at first is its power to change the reader. First, I was copying quotes I enjoyed onto my Goodreads account to share with others. But half way through, suddenly it dawned on me that I was staring at strangers’ outfits, comparing the clothes people in groups wore, and grabbing and feeling all the fabrics in clothing stores as I walked by the racks. I began trying on clothes, noticing cut and color with a more fastidious eye than I had previously, back when I figured if it covered my body it must “fit.”

People tended to respond to my quotes on Goodreads. I often found women funny, strong, curious, and confused about clothes in a way that I am, but didn’t realize. Here are some excerpts where women discover things about themselves:

from You Don’t Know What I Deal With: the women from the podcast BLACK GIRLS TALKING:

“That’s an advantage of living in an area that’s populated by actual black people. You get to see other black people living relatively normal lives, with bangin’ hair. I only found natural communities because I have scalp issues...probably related to getting relaxers, and I was just Googling, and I was like What else can I do? Then I found natural hair, and I kind of just waded my way through the murk.”—Alesia: (25-27)

from a survey titled “Men Looking at Women”:

“In my family, I was known for my ‘sausage fingers.’ There was a family friend I really respected, a father of one of my friends. One day in the summer when I was reading on the couch, just being an awkward teen and feeling really ugly, he walked through the room and said, ‘You have the hands of the Madonna.’ I realized that we tell ourselves stories about how we think we are. It’s better if it’s a nice story.”—Karima Cammell (329)

And then there are informative moments, where readers can learn something:

from Flower X: smell scientist Leslie Vosshall speaks to Heidi Julavits:

LESLIE: "The current fashion in perfumes I find very depressing. A lot of people smell like vanilla blackberry ice cream: very vanilla, very musky, but with fruit layered on top."

HEIDI: "I hate to tell you this, but I'm wearing a vanilla scent. It makes me feel like a cookie. A happy cookie." (253-256)

And, of course, there is lots of humor when women talk about clothes:

from a survey titled "Strangers":

"I once met an elderly woman on an airplane and we started talking. I told her how much I liked her outfit, which I can't remember in detail now but which I definitely remember as being quite fabulous. She thanked me, then said, Every morning that I wake up and realize I'm not dead is a chance for me to say 'Fuck it.' So I dress like this."—Fatima G. (351)

Women in Clothes isn't just pages of writing; there are a number of images, such as photocopies of women's hands, pictures of mothers, and a series of women who swap outfits (so we can see how clothes change with bodies). There are tons of images, both in color and black and white. I found the most touching to be pictures of mothers that daughters submitted, who then describe what they think of their moms.

I recommend this book as a cultural artifact. I recommend it for its uniqueness. I recommend it to get you thinking about your own exterior and how it affects your interior—and vice versa.

This review was written after I read my contributor's copy. I make no money and gain no success from having two of my survey answers appear in this book, but it could cause some bias because I want the book to do well, yet feel that it stands on its own merit. This review was originally published at Grab the Lapels

Beth says

This is not a book to borrow from the library as I did after hearing the authors interviewed on NPR. It is interesting research about how women develop their dressing style and their reasons behind what motivates them to buy what they buy and dress as they do. It is a book for those who want to understand women's psychic or those who like women's magazines and will wish to read an article now and then. They could get a "fix" many times during a year because there is so much food for thought in the survey answers and interviews.

What the book doesn't have for me is a summary chapter or New York Times style book review in it to clear my understanding of the topic. I can't focus a message from it in my mind. It distracts. That is the beauty of it and the confusion too.

The authors have made a worthy research effort that will provoke thought in those interested in this kind of

research..

Yaaresse says

File under "What was I thinking?"

I guess I was thinking how I've been known to give a good rant about the lack of quality in clothing, the preposterous "shoulds" women cling to about what to wear, the ridiculous lengths some people go to to fit in with the fad of the moment, and why the hell anyone would pay more than the average American's monthly mortgage for a handbag. Since the synopsis said the material was funny and thoughtful, I guess I was thinking it would be funny and thoughtful. Say what you do; do what you say.

The first part of this book--and I'm using the term "book" loosely-- starts with Skype call transcripts of some women going on about how they are thinking of writing this book. It's pretty bizarre, a little like walking into the middle of a bunch of *Sex and The City* types trying to sound Very Serious and just sounding scattered and shallow. (Admittedly, I was put off by the third time *Vogue* was mentioned.)

If you make it past that nonsense, it goes into responses of an extremely long (and almost-but-not-quite hilarious) survey about how Oh So Important (or not) clothes are to women. There are lots of answers, but they aren't organized very well. And there's very little data about who these respondents are -- their ages, ethnicities, income levels, occupations, etc.

Maybe it got better, but page after page of what amounted to "I watch other women and copy what I like" and "I think a little gritty is hot," I got bored out of my mind. When I got to the part where someone makes the analogy that a woman's purse is an external womb, I was already saying "WTF?" every other page. I made it through 49 pages, which is my rule for giving something a valiant effort.

If you enjoy eavesdropping on a clique of self-absorbed people who act like they are Speaking Great Truth when talking about leggings and "cute booties," have at it. I have 350 other things on my to-read list; this silliness just isn't worth my time.

(And I literally am going to shelve under sociology because I can't think of anywhere else to put it. I don't want to make a "WTF" shelf just for this.)

Andrea McDowell says

I finally finished this book.

It took me several months to make my way through it; this was not, for me, a pick-it-up-and-finish-it-in-one-go kind of book. That's not necessarily a bad thing; I have a lot of books in the slow-read category that I work my way through in bits and pieces over the long haul, sometimes years.

But in the case of *Women in Clothes*, it wasn't necessarily a good thing, either.

It aims to legitimize the concerns about dress--what to wear, when, why, and what that clothing

communicates--that specifically women have as something that it is possible for serious, intellectual and successful women to think about. It certainly makes the case that women largely do think about this whether they should be or not, and that women put a fair bit of thought into what their clothing says about them, their lifestyles, their aspirations, and so on.

But the sheer variety of voices somewhat undercuts the success of this central message: one of the things that is most inescapable to conclude after reading *Women in Clothes* is that different women attach different meanings to the same clothing, so we're not all speaking the same language. It raises the question, what's the point?

Unfortunately this question--and others raised by the book--is never answered.

The book is a (very large) collection of completed surveys (you can find it [here](#)) by about 640 women, as well as essays, photo essays, stories, conversations and interviews with women about clothes. There's sure to be something in there that interests and resonates with you. Unfortunately, there isn't a conclusion, or any kind of unifying discussion. I'm sure that was their point, but it was also a drawback.

The book would have been vastly improved if it were cut in half and organized in some fashion--by theme, perhaps, or socio-economic group. It's an interesting book (in parts, anyway) but it could have been a lot better.

Sarah says

It's too bad, I loved this initially but after plodding through about 70 pages I need to abandon. The survey questions are great and there are thoughtful pieces in here and great photos of everyone's moms. But the gimmicks are numerous and it gets tiresome. Transcripts of chatter among ladies at a clothing swap, poems comprised solely of the names of textiles, watercolors in the shape of clothing stains - this all ranges in effectiveness but overall it seems like no one knew when to stop. There are elements where the meaningful and the mundane intersect beautifully. Photo montages of one woman's collection of white nightgowns, or another woman's vintage hand-me-downs from her mother, or concert t-shirts - I couldn't stop staring. Photo montages of various women's used earplugs, packs of gum, and safety pins? Ehhh. In any case, it started to feel like the authors got carried away by their own brand of quirky charm, and while I independently heart a lot of the collaborators, this book is not for me.

What it really made me want to do is listen to my friends or anyone else I know answer the questions. What is beautiful for you? How do you choose or shop for your clothes? How have your parents influenced your style? How do you feel about your breasts and your hair? If you're so inclined, please tell me!

Emily says

I love the premise, but I wish this was better edited.

Some of the interviews and essays stand out as exceptionally strong. I loved Julia Wallace's interviews with Cambodian garment workers about how they choose the clothing that they wear, and their thoughts on the clothing they produce. Emily Gould's piece on a status purse--its significance, her relationship with money,

and how they changed over the years--was excellent. I also enjoyed the piece where a smell scientist analyzed the smells of coats, and made guesses about the wearers. I loved the collection of photos and vignettes that various writers sent in of their mothers as young women.

I felt like the book was at its best when it was exploring unusual components of the fashion/beauty industry, or including unique perspectives that we don't often hear in the fashion world.

The part I began to dread mid-way through, though, were the interviews. There was far too much repetition, especially in the definitions of "taste and style," women discussing mimicking other women's fashion. I feel like a large number of the interviews or responses could have been cut.

Only a few of the questions elicited unique, intriguing responses across the women interviewed. Particularly, the explorations of the topic of modesty, and the idea of clothing as protection were effective. Still, this format, in particular, lent to far too much repetition.

Overall, it's a fun book to pick up and read portions at a time. Still, I wish that the editors had executed this concept better and chosen from a wider variety of perspectives, and more interesting stories.

Anna says

'Women in Clothes' collects a sprawling project interviewing (mostly American) women about what they wear and what clothes mean to them. Reading it is inevitably a rather fragmentary experience, as each snippet is only a few pages of the five hundred total. There are also plenty of illustrations, giving the air of a lengthy, intellectual magazine. At first I preferred to read only a small amount of it at time, before getting immersed. I think what makes the project compelling is starting to reflect on how your own perceptions and experiences are similar and different to the project's contributions. A few seemed insufferable, while others were wise or tragic, but the vast majority were thought-provoking. Visually, I particularly liked the photocopies of women's hands and accompanying discussion of the rings they wore. Also the photos of mothers before they had children, which addressed the generational elements of style and dressing. By contrast, I found the diagrams of clothes scattered on the floor horrifying, as I am very tidy and would NEVER leave clothes on the floor. (Whenever past housemates left their clothes on the floor, I picked them up.) The strongest element and the backbone of the whole project, however, are the survey responses and interviews. The wide range of voices give a fascinating overall impression.

As previously mentioned in my review of *The Curated Closet: A Simple System for Discovering Your Personal Style and Building Your Dream Wardrobe*, I think about clothes quite a lot already. Nonetheless, 'Women in Clothes' inspired me to further reflection and even action. One interview mentioned the futility of keeping garments that will only ever have sad associations, reminding me that I have a purple dress that I wore to my beloved Nana's funeral last year. I haven't worn it since and think of the funeral whenever I look at it. Yet I kept it, because I like the shape, colour, and fit. Now I realise that I never want to wear it again, so must give it to charity. I have other things to remind me of happy times with my Nana, rather than the distress of her funeral. The book also spurred me to look through past years of outfit photos that I used to take regularly. Recalling 2013, 2014, and 2015 through outfit selfies was a striking experience. What I wear, what we all wear to some extent, is mediated by how we feel. I started wearing a lot of big, soft woollen jumpers in 2014, during my PhD, because I felt unhappy and they were reassuring. The interviewee who talked about how garments feel on the skin really struck a chord with me - I care a great deal about clothes

feel on my body, perhaps more than I care about how they look. Indeed, I think the two are linked.

As well as the individual importance of garments, the book engages somewhat with the fashion industry and the damage it causes. There is a moving and horrifying interview with a survivor of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, a catastrophe in which more than a thousand people died. Several other interviewees focus on the ethical quandaries of dressing. One of them reassured me by stating firmly that second hand clothing is the way forward - we need to stop buying so much new stuff. This is my policy and I rarely buy new clothes, just underwear or the occasional item that I've failed for months to find second hand a couple of times a year. Buying ethical new clothes is fraught with difficulties: limited sizing, lack of availability, and the ever-present suspicion of greenwash. I have bought organic cotton items from H&M, although I know that their fast fashion low price ethos is fundamentally incompatible with ethical, environmentally responsible production. I always feel guilty about new purchases. Buying clothes from charity shops, by contrast, is about fun, discovery, and experimentation. Worst case, you've given a few pounds to a good cause and can donate the garment back if you don't wear it.

‘Women in Clothes’ is a broad project and I’m not sure how many readers would think it worth going through the entire write-up. It would be ideal to dip into, though, and I think anyone with even a modicum of interest in clothes, make-up, perfume, embodiment, or femininity would find a lot to think about. The survey responses have a sincere, honest air. Although some across as pretentious or over-privileged, they all have something compelling to say. (I can probably come across as pretentious myself when talking about clothes.) I was tempted to try and answer all the survey questions myself, as well as reflecting on garments that I’ve known, loved, and loved still. To me, and certain interviewees, clothing still retains the quality of dressing up in a costume that it possessed during childhood. A tiny pleasure that enhances the mundane working day is to choose an outfit to be someone slightly different, a character in some story more dramatic than your office job. It needn’t be perceptible to anyone but you. I took to heart a comment I once read online: Dress for the dystopia you want, not the one that you have.

JDAZDesigns says

It's difficult for me to not watch an entire movie. Except, of course, *Gladiator*. I had no trouble walking out on that one. Books are the same. Even if I don't like it, I have to finish it.

This is like reading the research for someone's thesis. The only problem with reading the notes for a thesis is that it's difficult to get the point.

That's this book.

515 pages of no point.

Phyllis says

This book is unlike any other book on style and fashion I've ever read. Primarily a collection of survey questions compiled by the authors, it also features essays, photographs, interviews, and transcripts of

conversations. At its best, it really illuminates the weird intimate relationship women have with their clothes in a way I've rarely seen in print. But for every really incisive, amazing section there was another one that was just kind of fatuously navel gazing. At over 500 pages, this was a dense roller coaster ride that at one moment would speak to my soul and my closet at the same time and the next minute annoy the hell out of me.

There's a recurring feature in the book of women's collections of tote bags or shoes or navy blazers, and I was FEELING this, because I tend to build my wardrobe around similar but different items like black pencil skirts or leopard print tops, and to the unobservant it would seem like I'm just hoarding multiple copies of the same outfit, but they're actually all totally different, man. For some reason some of these features focus on grooming/hygiene materials like false eyelashes and gum wrappers and floss picks, and because I am a pedantic crank it irritated me that these stupid little gum wrappers were taking up space that could have been given to a whole page of vaguely different black cashmere sweaters. What the heck was that?

Anyway, in conclusion, this book was an oddball combination of being truly groundbreaking and fascinating and being kind of banal and irritating. This is one of those times I really wish goodreads had half-star ratings, because I feel like three stars is totally stingy, but I'm not ready to commit to a four star rating for this book. Just picture that fourth star half shaded in, OK?

Abby says

“Vain trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world’s view of us.” -- *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf

This book! Has utterly jumpstarted my year, because it seems to be all I can think and talk about. THIS is the book about women and clothes that I have always been looking for, and I think the editors knew that. Sheila Heti, Heidi Julavits, and Leanne Shapton say, somewhere in the beginning, that they have been thinking about clothes but not in the way that typical women's magazines or fashion books assume that they are thinking about clothes. This is a very broad, vast, thoughtful, intentional, weird, and creative book. The editors survey 629 women (from a wide range of ages, races, backgrounds, gender identities) about clothes and why and how they wear them, and present their findings in an innovative and totally riveting way. One very interesting, intentional choice: Women surveyed are never shown or photographed. It's a fashion book with very, very few photos of clothes. I love it, and I'm totally obsessed (and slightly peeved that the Goodreads rating isn't higher, because it really ought to be).

I am still thinking about it, with fervent admiration and attention, even now, and I imagine it will stay with me for a long time. Clothes are important to everyone, even if we act as if our style and our sartorial choices were insignificant. The choices we make never are. To pretend otherwise is foolish.
