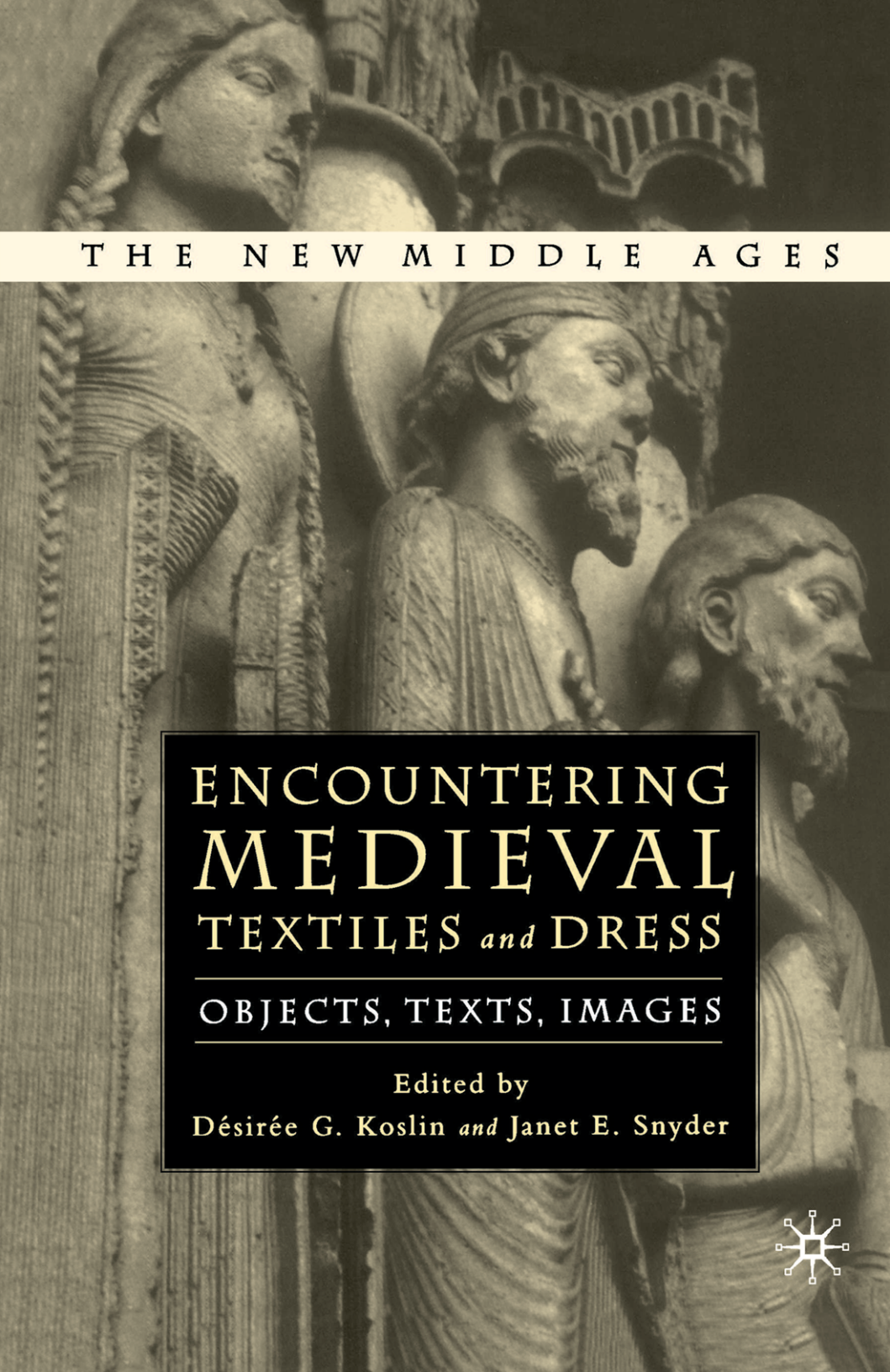
THE NEW MIDDLE AGES
ENCOUNTERING MEDIEVAL TEXTILES and DRESS
OBJECTS, TEXTS, IMAGES
Edited by
Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder

THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

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Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress
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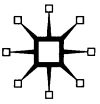
To Our Parents



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SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The New Middle Ages contributes to lively transdisciplinary conversations in medieval cultural studies through its scholarly monographs and essay collections. This series provides new work in a contemporary idiom about precise (if often diverse) practices, expressions, and ideologies in the Middle Ages. This volume, the thirty-first in the series, continues a concern expressed in an earlier series volume, *Robes and Honor,* edited by Stewart Gordon, with ways that material culture, in this case ceremonial dress, encodes but also ambiguates significant cultural symbolics. That volume invited us to think about robing as a "ceremonial metalanguage," but they also remind us that robes themselves as well as robing ceremonials have particular, local resonance. In *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images,* editors Désirée Koslin and Janet Snyder have assembled a rich range of surviving examples of dressing—across time, in different media, up and down the social ladder, across professions, and between genders—and the essays in this volume delineate the details while also interrogating the relation of the represented to the "real." We see keenly how in clothing alone the users/representers embody cultures, with a touch of the antique here, a foray into the foreign exotic there, and a constant consciousness of the body as the basic site for human display.

Bonnie Wheeler
Southern Methodist University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our interest in the material culture of the Middle Ages and its ramifications for human appearance evolved from our separate and parallel lifetime immersions in the study of dress and textiles and the meanings conveyed through their use. We are indebted to Jonathan J. G. Alexander, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and to Stephen Murray, Columbia University, who supported our respective dissertation research topics. We also warmly wish to thank the curators and museum professionals at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Pierpont Morgan Library who continue to encourage our investigations.

We are grateful to the many friends, colleagues, and acquaintances who listened and responded to questions and challenges with interest and patience. Our appreciation also goes to those who joined the discussions each year since 1995 in our sessions at The International Medieval Congress at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, where many of the papers that appear in this volume received their first presentations.

Special thanks are due to Bonnie Wheeler, series editor of the New Middle Ages series at Palgrave, to William T. Clark, Queens' College, City University of New York, and to Danielle Johnson, the Limestone Sculpture Provenance Project, Paris, whose mentorship led to this project. We thank Dr. Laura Hodges for her generous and attentive reading of the manuscript. We owe gratitude to Kristi Long and Meg Weaver of Palgrave whose cheerful and professional expertise sustained us from the earliest to the final phases of publication.

We bask in the warmth of special friendships, sorely tried while growing stronger, that have carried us through to the finish. Lastly, but decidedly foremost, we applaud our talented authors who worked with dispatch and diligence on their contributions, making this book everything we wished for at the outset.

ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Désirée Koslin and Janet Snyder

Audiences interested in the attire, dress, and textiles of the Middle Ages are aware of the importance of, as well as the challenges, in this field of study. It is widely recognized that medieval society depended on clothing codes and prestigious textile furnishings for signs of identity as well as the actual economic underpinnings of society. The evidence for these phenomena, however, is scant and embedded in the greater context of the surviving material from the period. Furthermore, between these sources and us lie several hundred years of interventions that have added facts and fiction, interpretation and alteration in an ongoing, multilayered process of change involving ideas about the culture of what we call the "Middle Ages."

Today the study of dress and textiles, undertaken through surviving objects and through representations in art, literature, and cultural commodities, is recognized as significant and is no longer "marginalized" in the academy. Indeed, scholars in a wide range of disciplines have taken it up as an area of specialization in their discrete fields, and at least two scholarly journals publish writings on the continued search for identity of the discipline.[1] Most of us also owe a debt for our methodological tools to the seminal contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, as well as to the proponents of material culture and design history.[2] The earlier, diligent antiquarians such as Joseph Strutt, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, and the later art historians, such as Otto von Falke, are also due credit for their empirically-based findings in the vast, opinionated, and by no means flawless compilations that helped establish the corpus of evidence.[3] It was clear to them that relevant research should be grounded in equal parts on close examination of surviving medieval artifacts *and* on their representation in the writings and images of the time.

From 1997 to the present, our Special Session on *Medieval Textiles and Dress: Object, Text, Image* at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo has served as a forum for

new work by scholars and practitioners in archaeology, art history, conservation, drama, economics, history, legal studies, literature, religion, and technology. The fourteen chapters that make up this book derive in part from the Kalamazoo sessions, while some other authors were invited to contribute. The volume also represents thematic diversity with a broad spatial and temporal span as it celebrates the encounter with attire, dress, and textiles in medieval society.

Today, "costume history" is disappearing as a designation, and is being replaced by "history of dress," and concepts such as "the study of culture of clothing and appearance" are current. This change, of course, is more than just a new rubric—the new emphasis, again borrowed from the literary theory of the 1970s—is implicit in Jauss's reception theory that calls for a removal of the "prejudices of historical objectivity."[4] This is an especially useful approach for the meager, usually decontextualized medieval material that we encounter in objects, texts, and images that once were executed for patrons and for purposes that were seldom recorded. Visual representations of dress and textile objects can never be taken at face value, of course, but the more challenging notion is to admit that we can probably never reconcile the medieval images of idealized dress, body, gesture, brilliance of color and pattern with any "accurate" idea of the medieval reality. After all, we probably also think that an attenuated, mannered female model drawn by Erté is more "authentically" representative of the 1920s than a photograph of chubby bathing beauties of the same time, or, indeed, their extant woolen swimsuits and caps.

One of the themes in this book concerns the phenomenon of medieval "fashion," both as it relates to clothing styles that appeared as novelties in works of art and in texts, and to the efforts of later writers who attempted to impose their ideas on the medieval evidence for purposes of identification and dating by fitting it into a linear history. No single definition of fashion is presented here, rather our authors recognize and work within established parameters and methodologies while proposing new interpretations (Blanc) and bringing attention to less accessible (L'Engle), lesser known (Heckett), and downright humble evidence to trace alternate paths of development (Effros, Williams), and advocating for their preservation (Crummy). Ideas derived from the meetings of cultures, and as results of political events in medieval society, are seen to influence "fashion" in significant ways (Heller, Jolly). It is especially the young noblemen who, unlike their female counterparts, could travel, go to war, and adopt foreign mores to create a "Youth Quake" on their return home (Blanc, Koslin). Some of the authors emphasize that fashion existed prior to the late medieval, explicitly rendered images of verisimilitude that many historians have equated with the "birth of fashion" (Effros, Snyder, Williams). Re-

search in iconography has also broadened to include dress as carrier of meaning beyond the three estates, capable of subtle nuance when "read" with textual concordance (Anderson, Cottrell, Gilmore, Heller, Yanson).

To a remarkable extent, the research published here has been informed by paying attention to the smallest details in dress accessories including headdresses, hairstyles, closures, jewelry, patterns, hems, and girdles, and so on. (Anderson, Blanc, Cottrell, Crummy, Effros, Heckett, Jolly, Koslin, L'Engle, Snyder, Williams). Their reconstruction and reasons for being have been considered, as in material culture theory, from "inside-out," deriving the context from the objects rather than merely contextualizing them. The medieval awareness of and proclivity for archaizing elements, thought of today as "postmodern," have also been noted in the medieval corpus (Anderson, Heckett, Koslin, Snyder, Yanson). These successfully developed ideas bode well for the continued discourse on appearance, its accoutrements, and literal as well as metaphorical construction that can be observed in medieval dress and textiles.

Notes

1. From 1979, *Block* (Middlesex Polytechnic) has featured articles on art, design, and culture, and since 1997, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture,* ed. Valerie Steele, is published.
2. For the structuralist approach, see Ferdinand de Saussure, *A Course in General Linguistics* (London: Peter Owen, 1960), and Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1973); and his *Système de la Mode* (1967) in trans. as *The Fashion System* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983). The study of material culture, using a progression of description, deduction, and speculation, is defined by Jules Prown in his "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *The Winterthur Portfolio* (17, 1982). Design history was recently introduced in academic curricula, see, for an introduction John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto Press, 1989); and Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society since 1750* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1986).
3. Joseph Strutt's 1796 *Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England* is accessible in the 1970 facsimile of the 1842 reprint edited by J. R. Planché (London: Tabard Press, 1970); Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français de l'époque carolingienne à la renaissance,* vols. III-IV (Paris: Morel et Cie , 1872); and for textiles especially, Otto von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1921 (1913).
4. See Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in *New Directions in Literary History,* ed. Ralph Cohen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 13.

PART ONE

THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

CHAPTER 1

APPEARANCE AND IDEOLOGY: CREATING DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN CLERICS AND LAYPERSONS IN EARLY MEDIEVAL GAUL

Bonnie Effros

The Symbolic Significance of Clerical Dress in Early Medieval Legislation

Clothing and other sorts of bodily adornment represent an important means by which individuals and groups express their identity. Garments, hairstyles, and the display of related possessions may reveal the nature of a person's relationship to his or her contemporaries, whether with respect to religious belief, gender, age, ethnic affiliation, status, or membership in a kin group. These practices are culturally specific, but may share certain features with more distant communities through trade, political or military contact, or the desire to emulate powerful or ancient models. Mores regarding personal appearance thus often serve to reinforce the social order, just as their violation may challenge the status quo. As a consequence, the existence of specific sorts of dress to distinguish particular social groups may indicate important hierarchical divisions existing within a society that are not tied solely to legal rank or social status. Keeping in mind that laws prescribing personal appearance preserve the ideals of a regulating body rather than reflect what actually occurred in that kingdom or religious community, evidence for clothing nonetheless allows scholars to understand how nuances in the expression of difference in historical and contemporary communities are valued by their leaders.

Particularly interesting examples of these processes were attempts by clerics in the Merovingian period to distinguish their numbers from the lay nobility. These early efforts were of great importance, since beyond

their consecration or taking of vows, the clergy were not separated from noble laypersons by more tangible factors such as status, ethnicity, or gender. After all, they originated from the same families as their lay competitors, had benefited from comparable political and economic connections, and were accustomed to a similar way of life during at least part of their childhood. Their authority thus depended in part upon their success at staking out an exclusive identity as church leaders, through not only their behavior but also their appearance. Emphasis on such differences likewise impeded clerics from returning to activities engaged in by the lay nobility but deemed inappropriate once they joined clerical ranks or monastic communities. Although not as comprehensive as those of the Carolingian era, Merovingian-period strategies for creating distinctions between clerics and laypersons through personal adornment provided important precedents for these later developments.

In early medieval Gaul, modest clothing and tonsure represented the primary means by which to distinguish clerics visibly from their lay contemporaries. Our most direct sources for these regulations survive in the canons of church councils and monastic *Rules.* Concern about the appearance of religious leaders constituted a repeated theme in ecclesiastical synods south of the Loire from the late fifth to seventh centuries. As early as circa 475, the *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* stipulated in two measures that clerics not grow their hair, shave their beards, nor wear inappropriate clothing or shoes.[1] In 506, the twentieth canon of the Council of Agde further insisted upon clerical tonsure and suitable liturgical dress.[2] In order to make the visual and physical separation between priests and laymen legally binding, the fifth canon of the First Council of Mâcon (581–583) forbade clerics from wearing secular clothing and shoes; those found dressed improperly or carrying weaponry were to be sentenced to 30 days in isolation on bread and water.[3] Nearly a century later, the Council of Bordeaux (662–675) threatened punishment for clerics who bore lances or other weaponry or wore secular clothing.[4]

Although relatively infrequent, warnings of penalties for noncompliance indicated the continuing temptation for religious authorities to dress as laypersons as well as to possess armament. Canonical texts nonetheless did not yet closely define the exact nature of their ceremonial garments. Liturgical dress, including the requirement of a belt (*cingulum*) to tie the tunic of priests based on the precedent of Peter (John 21, 18), did not receive attention in Gaul before the eighth century. Surviving examples of leather belts with elaborate buckles from early medieval Gaul, such as the one alleged to have belonged to Caesarius of Arles found at Saint-Trophîme in Arles, however, may have been used in a religious context.[5] While it is possible that belts were so common that contemporaries did

not consider it necessary to mention them, no extant evidence suggests that the *cingulum* was mandatory for clerics.

From early in the history of Christianity in Gaul, some clerics, and most famously Bishop Martin of Tours, were identified with military activities before their consecration.[6] Reform-minded bishops nevertheless periodically sought to bring about greater separation between professed religious leaders and their lay contemporaries. With the advent of clerical tonsure in Rome in the sixth century and its widespread establishment in Gaul in the seventh century, recognition of the benefits of establishing visual differences became even more firmly entrenched.[7] In an injunction dated to 589, participants at the Council of Narbonne decreed purple clothing an inappropriately worldly fashion for clerics. Noting that the color was unworthy of a priest's merit (*dignitas*), the canon stated that: "just as devotion is in [the cleric's] mind, likewise it should also be displayed on his body."[8] As purple was associated with imperial dignity, this measure was not simply an aesthetic issue. Rather, this regulation established a clear demarcation between the humility expected of clerics stemming from their devotion to God and the markers of high status normally conferred by men upon each other.[9] Further distinctions between the appearance of clerics and the lay aristocracy were left largely untouched in legislation prior to Carolingian reforming efforts.

Influenced by the *Rule of St. Benedict,* sixth-century clerical authorities also took steps to prevent monks from dressing as their secular counterparts and participating in activities deemed inappropriate to their vocation. Just as new converts (*conversi*) and penitents were required to rid themselves of personal possessions before being accepted into Christian congregations,[10] men who took monastic vows were obliged to give up worldly clothing. In exchange, they received a cowl, tunic, belt, handkerchief, sandals, and shoes from the abbot.[11] In the second book of his influential *Dialogues* dedicated to the life of Benedict of Nursia, Gregory I noted that monks could not carry handkerchiefs, even when they were received as gifts from nuns.[12] A variety of monastic *Rules* circulating in Gaul such as Aurelian's *Rule for Monks* (548) specified that the garments of monks were to remain undyed or be restricted to unimposing colors such as milk white and natural black.[13] Measures in Ferreolus's mid-sixth-century *Rule for Monks* likewise stipulated that the brethren were to be limited to a single change of modest clothing.[14] Having accepted a gift of clothing from a dying man, the Irish monk Fursey's soul was therefore punished with fire in a vision after his arrival in Gaul.[15] These texts did not so much describe monastic garments in a definitive manner as they set out to demarcate the appearance of monks and nuns from laypersons.