Dressing Judeans and Christians in Antiquity

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This is a very welcome addition to the study of dress in antiquity. While studies of clothing, bodily adornment and the body language of antiquity are becoming more frequent, a volume that considers the role of religious dress and the religious meanings of dress among Jews and Christians takes this research in new directions. The collective nature of this project has produced a series of very stimulating and inter-connected papers which offer much to a number of different audiences: dress historians, ancient historians; historians of religion as well as those interested in cultural studies more generally; philologists and linguists. The introduction, written by all three editors, provides an excellent outline to the topic. As an author who has written at least three introductions dealing with similar material, I appreciate the elegant manner in which the authors here have dealt with both the historiography and theory of dress history with reference to the work included in the volume. For those new to the subject, and for students, this will prove a very useful chapter. It has extensive notes and bibliography and deals with important and influential names (e.g. Simmel, Veblen, Barthes, Bourdieu) with eloquent ease.

The volume is divided into six sections: 'Dress and the Social Body; Dress and Relationality; Dress and Character Types; Dress and Status Change; Dress, Image and Discourse; and Dress and Material Realities. It has a full collected bibliography at the end of the book. It has only 12 plates, which is a shame and requires the reader to have some idea of the basic wardrobe of antiquity in order to understand the texts, although descriptions are given when relevant.

Naftali Cohn addresses the attitudes to women's dress in the third-century legal text, the Mishnah. The rabbis compiling this text had to face the dilemma shared by other (male) writers in antiquity: how to deal with the notion that adornment was considered 'natural' for women, and the belief that women could manipulate this adornment for the purposes of self-expression, inappropriate sexual attraction and deception. Self-expression is by no means always considered a negative, dress and adornment could also be used to present a particular Judean identity, and to attract a husband. By following the rules set out in the Mishnah, a woman could both express herself and express her belonging to the Judean people; adornment could thus represent both self and group identity. Additionally, as the rabbinic group were one among many that made

up the population of Roman Palestine, women who followed the Mishnah teaching were also aligning themselves to the rabbinic idea of a particular identity. The Mishnah is surprisingly positive on the subject of female adornment and sexual attraction between potential and married husbands and wives, and in terms of the expression of social status, granting agency to women, particularly young, unmarried women, in terms of adornment. The chapter makes the point that identity cannot be defined by a single element or context, a theme picked up in several chapters. For Roman historians, the third century is often thought of as a period where contemporary textual information is sparse, so this chapter will enlighten those of us who lack the confidence or background to deal with Rabbinic texts.

Maria Doerfler addresses Ambrose's *Ep.* 15 (p. 69) on the matter of male cross-dressing. Not surprisingly, given his own background, Ambrose's letter adopts many of the tropes found in classical moralists and earlier Christian writers who concerned themselves with the matter of personal appearance. These include the enervating effects of luxury and the dangers of creeping effeminacy. In Roman moralising writing, *luxuria* is linked to ideas of empire and Ambrose likewise expounds on the dangers of foreign and non-Roman elements. As Doerfler notes, Ambrose is attempting to align Christian appearance with the *virtus* of traditional Roman appearance, in contrast to any type of barbarian. Ambrose may be playing to a contemporary agenda, given the situation in Northern Italy, and Milan in particular, at the time. As a city Milan was home to both orthodox and Arian Christians, while Ambrose himself was involved in conflicts between the traditional pagan aristocracy and the nominally Christian imperial court. Thus, adding cross-dressing to the list of pagan practices furthers his agenda on more than one front.

Rebecca Krawiec draws together writing, dress and social memory to create meaning in monastic dress, and through a study of four authors (Evagrius of Pontus, John Cassian, Shenoute and Besa), examines competing ideas for the identity of monks in the fourth and fifth centuries. Evagrius is key in this debate as his *Praktikos* explains the symbolism of each item of the monk's clothing, so that as he dresses, the monk will remember the rules of monastic life, and thus be best placed to fight demons. In Gaul, John Cassian, redefined monastic dress in his own context, but bringing his knowledge of Egyptian practices to support his authorial authority. The final two authors considered address the production of clothing. It is interesting to note that in a part of the world where men have been trained to be weavers since Pharaonic times, it is the women in the women's community who make the clothing for the monks. Shenoute's canons address the correct making of the clothing by the women, who appear to resist his attempts to control this, and the making of his own clothing. While the text includes anecdotes which are of much interest to the dress historian (e.g. the destruction of Shenoute's favourite garment by moths), it is essentially about authority and the relationship between authority, the role of Shenoute's leadership, and finally about potential salvation. Krawiec argues that Shenoute is creating social memory through these intertwined discussions of clothing. His successor, Besa, is more worried about the nature of clothing and its relationship with monastic tradition. There follows a debate which discusses embroidered garments. Embroidery would be a rare technique in Coptic dress of this period, but the more common tapestry weave decoration is often mistakenly translated as 'embroidery'. It would be interesting to know if these literary mentions are actually examples of early embroidery, or simply a continuation of this habit of mis-translation. This point does not undermine Krawiec's main argument at all which is that Besa is warning against 'embroidering' inappropriate or alternative memories.

Adam Serfass examines the power play engaged in by Pope Gregory the Great in the late sixth century over the wearing of the ecclesiastical *pallium*. This scarf like garment is nothing like the *pallium* (mantle) worn by earlier Greeks and Romans and while Serfass describes its earlier history as part of the episcopal wardrobe, he does not discuss the relationship with the *pallium*-mantle. For Gregory the *pallium* was a symbol of a personal relationship, following the protocols of gift giving in antiquity; it was also a symbol of association, through the Pope, with St Peter. Receipt of a *pallium* boosted the ecclesiastical status of the bishop, and could also enhance his temporal authority and influence. The gifting of the *pallium* implied an obedience to the authority of Rome, and a sign of a bishop's subordinate position with regard to Gregory and to Rome. The late sixth-century political tensions between Rome and the imperial city of Ravenna which threatened Rome's ecclesiastical prominence were the background to Gregory's complaint against John of Ravenna. Gregory could claim that the use and mis-use of the *pallium* were signs of John's pride and lack of

subservience to both Gregory and the Church, thus articulating his own position of authority.

Callie Callon's consideration of the visual appearance of Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* covers the role physiognomy has had both in the past and in more recent interpretations of Paul's facial features. She also examines how text and image are inter-related and self-referring. There is much discussion of the notion of mono-brow, furrowed brow, baldness and bandy legs and how these are used to create a range of personae. Callon argues that the figure of the philosopher is predominant and it is this that is manipulated as a basis for the image of Paul in the text. Literary representations are also the basis of Erin K. Vearncombe's chapter on the use of dress in the *Book of Judith*. Here a close examination of the text illustrates the tropes which control the appearance of women and the willingness of male authors to suspend or reverse moralising attitudes to female adornment when required. As with Cohn above, the chapter provides good background to the rhetoric surrounding both male and female dress and the art of *cultus*.

Meredith Warren's chapter is also based on literary representations, this time on the Hellenistic novel *Joseph and Aseneth* and the role of dress in the process of transformation, with a particular focus on the notion of shining garments. From Homer to Hellenistic novels (and beyond) light acts almost as a colour, and here biblical stories share a descriptive repertoire with pagan texts in order to express transformation and transcendence, and in this text, the conversion of Aseneth to Joseph's religion. Hair, hairiness and holiness are the subjects of Kristi Upson-Saia's chapter, specifically the appearance of the Desert Fathers and the sometimes apparently contradictory association made between hairiness, beastliness, literal and spiritual otherworldliness and the resurrected body. She argues that the hairiness of desert ascetics indicated and enhanced their liminal status, both in term of physical geography and spiritual evolution. She also highlights the link between the appearance of some Desert Fathers with notions of radiance, which, as in the previous chapter, has associations with transformations and the divine.

Arthur P. Urbano begins his chapter on the *trib?n* by defining the toga as oblong and the *pallium* as a rectangular. To a UK English speaker these are the same shape, is this a cross-Atlantic shift in terminology? The toga, although its shape is still disputed, was a garment with a curved edge, either an enlarged semi-circle or an ellipsis, while the *pallium* is a rectangle with straight edges. This point, however, does not detract from the sense of the chapter which concerns the verbal and visual representations of the *trib?n* in Christian contexts. The *trib?n*, he argues is a garment upon which a series of contested values are laid. It served in the 'tailoring rhetoric' as a symbol of *paideia*, of philosophy, of intellectual identity among pre- and non-Christians. In the Christian world it was appropriated rhetorically to reflect similar moral and cultural identifications but also to reject them, a rejection that became stronger as Christian religion grew in power. Visually, however, Christians maintained and adapted representations of the *trib?n* to stress *paideia*, particularly on funerary monument. This tension between the visual and the verbal rendering of dress is a point well made. The inherent methodological difficulties of 'reading' visual imagery and text is central to Joan E. Taylor's work on Judean priestly dress. She compares the single representation of first-century historian, Josephus, in the ninth-century Berne MS., with imagery on Roman coinage post 70 CE (i.e. after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem), in an attempt to identify Judean dress. There follows an interesting discussion on the Hebrew, Greek and Latin sources for priestly dress (including Josephus himself), which addresses problems of terminology and translation. Taylor makes the important methodological point, which is often faced by dress historians, that translations become interpretations (see comments on embroidery and oblong above). A comparison with numismatic iconography is not overly helpful as it conforms to its own agendas, here of submission and conquering, with only schematic rendering of identifying details.

Carly Daniel-Hughes unpicks the multiple aspects of garment imagery in the *Gospel of Philip* and links them to sacramental rites, somatic metaphors, and to an overarching soteriology. This is an incredibly rich article which examines the strategies of the text in detail, arguing that it influences and conditions the reader's understanding of certain rites (particularly baptism and the eucharist) through the interaction of reading and physical participation. Alicia J. Batten highlights another textual oddity: different attitudes to the pearl in eastern and western Christian texts. After a brief excursus on the history of the pearl, Batten turns to its

symbolic and metaphorical use in theological terms. The material worth of the pearl allows authors to manipulate the notion of values, emphasising salvation over the riches of the world. Although this symbolism is found in the Bible, it has mythological antecedents of fertility and also of purity, making it acceptable to associate it with the Incarnation. Batten links the positive view of the pearl in eastern texts with the realities of pearl fishing; those who know the value of the pearl are more receptive to its use as a metaphor for theological concepts. In the West, rhetoric surrounding the pearl tended to follow traditional tropes we have seen elucidated in previous chapters, presenting it negatively as part of the discourse of *luxuria*.

The chapters in this volume range chronologically from the second century BCE to the sixth century CE, debating a number of diverse topics. There is a good deal of cohesion within this diversity, however, and some themes pop up constantly: the strength of the Greco-Roman/Judean moral discourse, the different attitudes to the dressing of men and women, the ability of ancient authors to manipulate vestimentary codes and metaphors for different ends. Individual chapters may well appeal to particular interest groups but the strength of the volume is in its collectivity which is a credit to the editors. It is an immensely rich volume with excellent notes and bibliographies, dealing as much with the classical world, or thinking inherited from the Greco-Roman mind set, as the Christian and Jewish cultural views. It demonstrates the incredible polyvalency of dress as a medium for talking about so much more than dress.

The editors are grateful to Dr. Harlow for her careful review of our volume and for her generous assessment of its strengths.

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