

Cordelia Warr. *Dressing for Heaven: Religious Clothing in Italy, 1215–1545*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. xx + 264 pp. index. illus. bibl. £65. ISBN: 978-0-7190-7983-2.

Cordelia Warr's book makes a significant contribution to the increasingly vibrant field of dress history. As the author herself notes, "dress is both a repository and indicator of society's most deeply held beliefs" (1). The scarcity of actual garments surviving from the premodern period means that paintings and other visual representations communicate a sense of their design, function, and fabric. Warr goes beyond the use of pictorial representation as a historical record to explore the relationship of clothing — in the form of tangible relics and vestments, and painted habits and holy garments — to religious experience. Her previous essays on this topic provide a point of departure for the volume under review. Although the title suggests a trans-peninsular survey of the subject, her examples are drawn primarily from central Italy.

Warr begins part 1 ("Clothing and religious experience") with a chapter about the ways in which figuratively embroidered ecclesiastical vestments and hangings would have been seen and "read" by a Renaissance audience. The next chapter focuses on the fragments of the girdle of the Virgin (of whom no bodily remains survived) housed at Prato, Siena, and Assisi; its perceived miracle-working properties were associated with successful childbirth. Here the author's theme of art, relics, and power is obscured by a forest-for-the-trees effect, with a plethora of information and analyses of artistic depictions of the relic so detailed as to compromise narrative clarity.

In part 2, "Men and religious clothing," Warr skillfully presents the clothing of the religious orders (Dominican, Carmelite, Franciscan, and Augustinian) in relation to their emerging need for differentiating modes of dress — the appearance of which was often divinely inspired — as the mendicants became increasingly visible in

society. She draws on the rules and constitutions of the orders and other contemporary texts in order to explicate the design and artistic representation of religious dress. One is fascinated to learn that the struggle between the Augustinian canons and hermits to claim Saint Augustine as their own was acted out through artistic representations of his habit; frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli of 1464–65 at foundations such as Sant'Agostino in San Gimignano show the founders in hermit's garb. Color symbolism is considered in relation to the religious garments. Particularly interesting is Warr's account of fabric selection and dye with regard to the clarity of color produced for the habits themselves. (Art historians have only just begun to absorb the relevant work of textile and economic historians concerning dress history.) Apropos her point that for the religious the wearing of garments was imposed rather than chosen, the reader is amused to learn of the desire for individuality through reported infractions of the Dominican dress code: bootlaces with silver threads, split tunics, or unauthorized hats!

Part 3, "Women and religious clothing," is equally illuminating in its exposition of the dress of the female religious, who were less publicly visible than their male counterparts. Warr's stated objective is to demonstrate the "connection between clothing and salvation as being central to the religious experience of holy women in Italy" (7). In the chapter on Catherine of Siena, the author addresses the capacity of dress to signify both charity and salvation; the saint gave away her own garments, which Christ replaced with a red dress wrought from his blood. These themes, together with that of flamboyant dress as a sign of sinfulness and the role of garments in the articulation of visions, are addressed in a chapter on Santa Francesca Romana (d. 1440). The role of religious women as weavers and spinners for the Humiliati is then discussed within the larger context of the wool industry. Here Carr could have revisited the role of Mary herself as the prototypical worker of cloth (mentioned in chapter 1) and also cited the role of women in textile production elsewhere in Italy. (See Luca Mola's studies on the Venetian silk industry.)

The fourth and final section of the book ("Dressing for Eternity") examines images of the Last Judgment from Giotto to Michelangelo in relation to the role of clothing and its absence. Texts dealing with what is worn in heaven are cited with regard to perceptions about the degree to which clothes and related accoutrements survive the body. Artists and patrons pondered the role of nudity in the hereafter, often opting to utilize clothes to communicate visually the identity of the saved for whom clothing was a heavenly reward.

This is a provocative volume that is rich with insights as inspired as the subjects of Warr's inquiry. One wishes, however, that greater editorial care had been taken to showcase those insights effectively, particularly in the first part with its dizzying onslaught of information. The chapters need to be more fully integrated. One misses, too, comparisons of religious clothing to that worn by the fashion-conscious laity. Additional references to other Italian cities would be welcome. Finally, although many in number and thankfully embedded in the text, the photographs are muddy and often render unclear the details in the paintings under discussion. Despite these comments, Cordelia Warr should be highly commended for her

endeavor. Scholars in all fields of Renaissance study will profit from *Dressing for Heaven*.

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