

history of clothing isolate an aspect of clothing — its designer, its aesthetic value or style, its advertising — without the context of the cyclical nature of the production of a commodity, seen through to its consumption. Business history is rarely visited as an aspect of fashion history, as if the magic of “*la mode*” will dissipate if the practical realities of production and merchandising are exposed. Palmer’s study is an excellent example of bringing all aspects of couture together, and while the study is limited in its historical and geographical scope, it overwhelmingly succeeds as a focused case study of a post-war luxury market.

The post-Second World War period of Palmer’s study witnessed enormous transformation of the clothing industry, as more women chose *prêt-à-porter*, or high-end ready-to-wear clothing in favour of the time-consuming fittings and financial investment required by orthodox couture. In many ways, couture is about as anti-modernist a cultural form as possible, based on the customization

paradigm of production. So, couture spun in an age of rampant post-Second World War modernism expresses Palmer’s theoretical chutzpah. In *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), Andreas Huyssen argues that women have historically been associated with mass culture and men with authentic culture (p. 47). Indeed, this stance would explain why women have so pervasively been interpreted as mindless consumers, historically. What Palmer clearly states in her work is that couture was not simply “imposed from above” (Huyssen, p. 48) within the patriarchy of couturiers but rather carefully chosen to reflect personal and regional sensibilities. It is ironic that even within celebrity-obsessed popular culture, there exists a love-hate relationship with society women and by researching and writing this book, Palmer rescues these women from almost invisible status as couture consumers.

Linda B. Arthur, ed., *Undressing Religion: Commitment and Conversion from a Cross-Cultural Perspective*

PAMELA E. KLASSEN

Arthur, Linda B., ed. *Undressing Religion: Commitment and Conversion from a Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Dress, Body, Culture Series. Oxford, New York: Berg Publishing, 2000. xiv + 220 pp., illus., paper, £14.99, ISBN 1859734804; cloth, \$100, ISBN 1859734758.

Undressing Religion: Commitment and Conversion from a Cross-Cultural Perspective is a collection of essays about the significance and uses of dress in situations of religious contact, conflict, and change. From a range of methodological and disciplinary perspectives including anthropology, costume history, clothing and textiles design, art history, and museum studies, the articles treat a wide selection of topics including the clothing of the *Iwa* (spirits) in Haitian Vodou, the “dress magic” of the Catholic Marist Brothers, and the intersection of religion and class in Afghan women’s dress practices under Taliban rule. As part of Berg’s growing Dress, Body, Culture series, *Undressing Religion* offers further testimony to the valuable utility of dress as a site for the analysis of gender, class, and cultural identity (among other issues) in religious contests over meaning and power.

The volume begins with a short introduction by the editor, Linda Arthur, and moves quickly to a collection of twelve articles, which I will describe briefly. Elisha P. Renne’s “Cloth and Conversion: Yoruba Textiles and Ecclesiastical Dress” considers the blend of traditional Yoruba textiles with Roman Catholic dress codes, arguing that post-Vatican II nuns who use traditional textiles in European-style habits are seeking a balance between Yoruba and Catholic identities. In contrast to Renne’s field work based perspective, Shannen Hill utilizes museum collections, as well as ethnographic and contemporary autobiographical writings, to argue that dress and ritual displayed the continuity of BaKongo cosmology in the independent Christian movements associated with African prophets Simon Kimbangu and Simon Mpadi. In Hill’s argument, cloth, colour, and gesture carried meaning in unspoken ways, conveying religious continuity despite Kimbangu’s overt repudiation of BaKongo religion. In the last African-related essay, Susan Tselos discusses the significance of ritual garments as symbols of unity and markers of the *Iwa* in Haitian Vodou.

The next two essays also deal with Christian themes, and offer a helpful comparison to the

African examples. Lynn A. Meisch's article "Christianity, Cloth, and Dress in the Andes" explores the role of clothing in the collision between Inca and Spanish cultures. She argues that for Andeans, clothing was sacred as it "embodied the essence of a person or thing" (p. 68). Drawing on reports of burial practices, missionary accounts, and her own field work, Meisch, like Hill, contends that present-day indigenous clothing still carries a memory of the Inca approach to dress, in the sense that "the link between dress, humanness, and group identity was never severed" (p. 76). Whether or not the present-day indigenous peoples actually remember the exact ritual significance of dress for the Incas, they still engage in ritual practices in which "clothing literally embodies the ancestors" (p. 79). William J. F. Keenan's neo-Weberian discussion of the rationalization of the "sacred-dress sense" (p. 86) of a Roman Catholic order founded in nineteenth-century France is a very revealing juxtaposition to the Andean case. Keenan's exploration of the ways that the Marist brothers participated in "dress magic" (p. 88), when read in conjunction with Meisch's chapter, shows that nineteenth-century Catholic men were drawn to the supernatural power of dress in much the same way as the sixteenth-century Andeans (whom earlier Catholics had tried to convert and rid of "superstitions").

While these first five essays constitute a thread of a conversation when read together, the next essay stands alone in terms of subject matter and method. Inwoo Chang and Haekyung L. Yu's "Confucianism Manifested in Korean Dress from the Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries" draws conclusions about gender and the rise of Confucianism in Korean society from garments excavated from burial sites. Theirs is a straightforward and descriptive article without a predominant theoretical focus in much the same manner as Tselos' article on Vodou.

The last half of the collection — with the exception of articles on Hindu women in India and on the rejuvenation of traditional Balinese textiles — focuses on Muslim women's clothing in various regions. Faegheh Shirazi considers notions of what it is to "properly veil" in Iran, with interesting use of graffiti as a window on attitudes to *hijab*. In an article written before the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, M. Catherine Daly argues that Afghan women's *chaadaree* (the ubiquitous and misnamed *burqa* of Western news coverage) is a multi-vocal symbol within the context of Afghani society, that may or may not have primarily religious meanings. Anthropologist Joseph Stimpfl, in his essay based on interviews with twelve university-educated Malay women living in Singapore, argues that the

adoption of veiling by these women is not a sign of curtailment of social movement or of self-definition, but actually the embrace of a "new and vitally important Malay female identity: one that is completely within their control to define and develop" (p. 179). Though this curious enthusiasm for the overwhelming power of individual agency is at odds with the foundations of his discipline, Stimpfl's understanding of the multiple meanings embedded in Muslim-influenced styles of dress is in keeping with those of the other authors, and of Linda Arthur's chapter on the intersection between civil religion and Islam in the practices surrounding the wearing of school uniforms in Indonesia.

Emma Tarlo's chapter on the saga of a cardigan and twenty-one saris in the life of a Gujarati wife, excerpted from her book, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, is a fascinating ethnographic examination of the ways clothing creates conflict and inextricable commitments in the lives of two families. Focusing on the ways a new wife's trousseau is a symbol of the higher-status, city family she left behind when she moved to her husband's village home, Tarlo evokes the multi-faceted emotional power of clothing, as the cardigan at once comforts a young mother who misses her family home and enrages her father-in-law who reads its donning as a gesture of insolence and ingratitude. Even in this short excerpt it is clear that Tarlo is a master storyteller and a fine analyst of the deeper emotional and symbolic meanings of material culture.

Finally, L. Kaye Crippen and Patricia M. Mulready's chapter on the revitalization of the making of sacred textiles in a village in Eastern Bali is an interesting examination of how tourism, sustained ritual practice, and environmental appropriateness (i.e., comfort) have conjoined to bring back traditional *geringsing* textiles that were thought to be in decline. In a refreshing move, the authors consider the simultaneous expansion and retention of notions of what counts as traditional textiles and dress. They argue that the dress and textile culture of Bali is involved in a process driven both by processes of globalization — such as tourism and the introduction of new, non-local threads and fabrics — and by traditional religious practice, in which young, unmarried women, as ritual specialists, both preserve and innovate dress culture.

There are many fascinating articles in this collection. Overall, the articles are uneven in terms of theoretical sophistication and several could have benefited from more consistent editing. A more developed introduction that both tied the papers together, as well as highlighted the theoretical

contributions of the papers read as a group would have strengthened the book as a collection. For example, several of the papers are insightful examples of how analysis of dress allows for deeper understanding of the complex interaction among competing religious systems, market forces, group identity, and individual agency. The articles by Tarlo and Daly demonstrate that forms of dress that may be univocally read as religious symbols by some are actually implicated in a historically and interpersonally complex web of class, gender, and religion. The articles by Hill, Meisch, Keenan, and Crippen and Mulready show that dress, while changing in response to forces of market, religious conversion, and "fashion," can carry within it cultural memory, which is, ironically, both embraced and forgotten by those wearing the clothes.

These insights are at odds with some of the more simplistic approaches to religion found in the book, as when Arthur contends in the introduction that Durkheim's projections about the growth of secularization have "come true" (p. 2). In another example, Renne uses the practice of novitiate dressing in Yoruba wedding garb when taking their first vows to argue that the women have achieved harmony between Yoruba and Catholic cultures, while ignoring the fact that the wedding garb is symbolically repudiated as women don the European-based habit by the end of the rite. Despite these weaknesses, the strength of this collection is that many of the articles demonstrate the manner in which dress symbolizes and enacts the material and ambivalent power of religions, in individual lives and for group identities, both historically and today.

Linda Welters, ed., *Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility*

SANDRA NIESSEN

Welters, Linda, ed. *Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1999. 243 pp., 36 b&w illus., cloth, \$100, ISBN 1 85973 282 8; paper, £14.99, ISBN 1 85973 287 9.

After approximately twenty years of extensive research, Linda Welters has become strongly associated with the study of Greek folk dress. In this edited volume entitled *Folk Dress in Europe and Anatolia: Beliefs about Protection and Fertility*, she collaborates with eight other authors to explore some ways in which indigenous and especially ritual clothing from a broader geographic area defines femininity and protects the wearer from evil. The volume comprises twelve chapters of ethnographic description and analysis from Greece, Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Russia.

Welters has given the opening chapter to E. J. W. Barber, well known for her book on *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years* (1994). The opening chapter is a re-publication of an article that she first published in 1994, in *Dress* 21, examining the "Antiquity of East European Bridal Clothing." Barber examines data extracted from great geographical, cultural, and temporal scope extending from the Peloponnesian Peninsula to Poland and

Central Russia, and from 20 000 years ago until historical time. On the basis of this data, she posits "that some of the oldest features of human clothing have been preserved among the conservative marital traditions of southeast Europe, and also that the very first clothing that humans fashioned...was designed to mark the social status of women" (p. 28). She emphasizes this conclusion in her second contribution to the book (Chapter 7, "The Curious Tale of the Ultra-Long Sleeve (A Eurasian Epic)"): "Many people today perceive clothes as being first and foremost for warmth and protection from the elements, but once again...our evidence suggests that prehistoric European clothing developed originally as a means of promoting women's fertility through rituals and charms. Only later did other aspects of clothing, such as warmth or modesty, become important" (p. 128). Barber's work forms a kind of supporting foundation, geographic and thematic, for most of the rest of the volume.

The theme of "fringes," picked up first in Barber's article, is a case in point. In her review of women's clothing in the village of Kocakovacik, Turkey ("Traditional Turkish Women's Dress: A Source of Common Understandings for Expected Behaviors" (Chapter 3)), Marlene Breu argues that the fringe that hangs down from a narrow, long sash, is to emphasize a woman's buttocks.