

BOOK REVIEW

What Shall I Say of Clothes? Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of Dress in Antiquity. Edited by MEGAN CIFARELLI and LAURA GAWLINSKI. Selected Papers on Ancient Art and Architecture, vol. 3. Boston, MA: Archaeological Institute of America, 2017. Pp. xvi + 223. Paperback, \$24.95. ISBN 978-1-931909-34-1.

The selections in this publication, resulting from two 2015 and 2016 conferences, utilize current approaches in material culture studies, from performance theory and New Materialism to chemical analysis and experimental archaeology, to examine artistic representations and surviving artifacts that range widely in both geography and chronology.

In the first chapter of Part I: “Getting Dressed,” Kiersten Neumann takes the practice-oriented and embodied approach of dress theory in “Gods among Men: Fashioning the Divine Image in Assyria.” She explores how Neo-Assyrians experienced statues of the gods – their bodily forms, clothing and accessories and the practice of dressing them – in a multisensory way which established their divinity. Neumann argues that the king’s proximity to the statues, his similarly decorated garments and identical accessories help to confirm his status as an intermediary between gods and humans.

Next, Josephine Verduci explores the practice of adorning the dead with jewelry, especially beads, in “Early Iron Age Adornment within Southern Levantine Mortuary Contexts: An Argument for Existential Significance in Understanding Material Culture.” Handling, seeing and then burying personal items of jewelry or other symbolically significant items along with the corpse may have aided mourners in grieving for and remembering that

person. Verduci proposes that this process enabled “forgetting” their existence in the living community so their identity and memory could transition to an altered status in death.

In Part 2: “Being Dressed,” Alyssa Whitmore’s “Fascinating *Fascina*: Apotropaic Magic and How to Wear a Penis” investigates Greco-Roman beliefs that unusual-looking amulets drew the evil eye toward themselves and away from the wearer. Her investigation of how phallic amulets called *fascina* may have performed this function reveals that mostly children wore them on necklaces, though styles, placement and suspension methods vary from site to site. A memorable experiment of wearing a replica shows that some such amulets may have attracted the gaze through an erect position and active movement on the wearer’s chest.

In “Color-Coded: The Relationship between Color, Iconography, and Theory in Hellenistic and Roman Gemstones,” Eric Beckman explores the possible meanings of a scorpion icon on a yellow gemstone. Intertwining layers of significance for color and image together include the Galenic humor of yellow bile, the element of fire, the planet Mars and the myths of Orion and Ophiuchus. Beckman draws the conclusion that such an amulet may have been more than a remedy for scorpion stings, showing off the wearer’s sophistication in the intellectual pursuits of medicine, astronomy and mythology.

Alexis Castor’s “Surface Tensions on Etruscan and Greek Gold Jewelry” draws on New Materialist theory, wherein “objects are considered for the effects they could have on those who produced, handled and experienced them” (84). She argues that the sensorial effects of the rich textures, miniaturized imagery and tiny moving parts on the elaborate jewelry would captivate the eye and “enchant” viewers, especially non-elites for whom such objects were unusual. They also require close observation to comprehend fully, an experience that would be restricted to a select few and thus reinforce social hierarchies.

In the last chapter of Part 2, “Costly Choices: Signaling Theory and Dress in Period IVb Hasanlu, Iran,” Megan Cifarelli utilizes the theory that a trait which seems a handicap to survival can in fact signal success honestly, being too costly to fake. She observes that the very long and sharp dress pins in women’s burials at Hasanlu would be nearly impossible to wear, having a haptic effect that would necessitate a rigidly upright posture and hinder physical activity. This embodied cost thereby signifies elite status and a potential for violence which may have prevented abuse.

Part 3: “Dress and Identity” opens with an investigation by Ayshe Bursali, Rana Özbal, Emma Baysal, Hadi Özbal, and Barish Yagci, “Neolithic Blue Beads in Northwest Turkey: The Social Significance of Skeuomorphism.” They find that the blue-dyed beads reveal a desire to imitate a wealthy sub-group with access to rare turquoise, a significantly early display of social inequality. Scientific analyses showed the beads are made of bone, tooth or ivory, while experiments in reproducing the color were successful but inconclusive as to the process originally used.

Neville McFerrin’s “Fabrics of Inclusion: Deep Wearing and the Potentials of Materiality on the Apadana Reliefs” reveals the individuality within the seemingly homogeneous groups depicted bringing gifts to the Persian king at Persepolis. She notes varied details of hairstyle, clothing and gestures that emphasize the materiality of garments, while decorative motifs throughout the monument are echoed in the king’s dress, signifying his power over the whole population. The experience of Persian subjects walking next to the reliefs would thereby reinforce this display of the ideology of inclusion and cohesion within the Achaemenid Empire.

Next, in “Theorizing Religious Dress,” Laura Gawlinski evaluates ancient Greek religious dress as both a signifier of special identity and an embodied experience. She discusses how sacred status is marked by more ornate clothing, old-fashioned clothing, special or unusually-worn garments, objects or accessories. The act of donning this special dress, Gawlinski

argues, is an embodied performance necessary to the religious experience, preparing the body to participate in a sacred rite.

“The Costumes of Late Antique Honorific Monuments: Conformity and Divergence within the Public and Political Sphere” follows, in which Elizabeth Wueste finds that the majority of honorific statues wear togas and/or hold scrolls to indicate a government office. Moreover, the drapery-style of statues in the Greek pallium shows that these most likely represent Eastern magistracies, not philosophy or Christianity. The military cloak called the chlamys is a late and similarly Eastern development, displaying the military emphasis and geographical shift of late-antique government. Wueste concludes that the primary purpose of the statues was to communicate high civic office, largely to the exclusion of other types of identity.

In the final chapter, “Western Men, Eastern Women? Dress and Cultural Identity in Roman Palmyra,” Maura Heyn evaluates the argument that women in funerary portraiture wear “local costume” as an expression of “traditional” values. She notes instead significant changes in iconography over time, not static adherence to a local tradition: the style of jewelry changes as its quantity increases, domestic items decrease, preferred gestures and hairstyles vary. She argues that this reflects a shift in commemorative emphasis from group identity for the elite, with women as active domestic producers, to family prestige, where women serve as displays of family wealth and connections.

This collection provides valuable models for bringing the study of clothing and bodily adornment in the ancient world current with recent trends in material culture studies. Many selections mark the changing emphasis in dress history from semiotics to embodied experience by focusing on the sensory effects of clothing and accessories on wearers and viewers in different social contexts. Overall, the authors provide excellent examples of how the study of bodily adornment and its interactions with wearers and

viewers, objects and spaces, can offer fresh insights into the diverse roles dress could play in ancient cultures.

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