

# Review of Literature

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## Historical Setting: Fifteenth-Century Life and Culture

European society in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century was a pre-industrial society. Change occurred slowly in such societies, but the pace of change abruptly accelerated in the fifteenth century. The factors in this acceleration were complex, but it is not within the scope of this project to describe all of them. The following is a brief description of a few of the mental and cultural structures that have some relevance to this topic. These are: the shift from a religion-based identity to a geographic-based identity, and the development of regionalism and nationalism; the growth of literacy; changes in religious practice and religious reform; and the hierarchical social structure.

## Definition of Terms

The terms, "Middle Ages" and its adjective "medieval;" "Renaissance," and "humanism" as used in the secondary literature have conflicting definitions and usages. Since "the Renaissance" did not occur at the same time all over Europe, and its ideas were adopted more rapidly in some places than in others, it can be said that the fifteenth century is simultaneously the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The word "renaissance" literally means "rebirth." The word, "rinascimento," which also means "rebirth," was coined by the Italians and is imbued with their perspective. The Italian states never really developed feudalism, but produced their own peculiar institutions in its place. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the remnants of Roman Empire, both visual and literary, were being rediscovered and reinterpreted. To the Italians this rediscovery

<sup>1</sup>Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1981 ed., s.v. "Humanism."

<sup>2</sup>Frederick B. Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages AD 200-1400: An Historical Survey*, 3d ed., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 432–442; Margaret Aston, *The Fifteenth Century: The Prospect of Europe*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 30–31; Albert E. Elsen, *Purposes of Art: An Introduction to the History and Appreciation of Art*, (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967), 105; E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 14th ed., (Oxford, UK: Phaidon Press, Limited, 1984), 167–169; Denys Hay, *Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.; 1966), 348; and Daniel Waley, *Later Medieval Europe: from St. Louis to Luther*, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1985), 136–138 and 146.

The distinction in the literature between "humanism" (see below) and "Renaissance learning" is often blurred. Waley originally defines "humanistic learning" as learning or scholarship concentrating on non-theological issues. The contrast is "humanistic" learning opposed to "divine" learning. This is the definition the author prefers. Aston, Hay, Artz, and Gombrich define "humanism" as learning

and reinterpretation seemed to be a renewal of their ancient Roman heritage, so they called it a "renaissance." For this discussion "Renaissance" will refer to the adoption of an aesthetic and of a philosophical system based on an interpretation of Graeco-Roman ideals or the period of time or places in which these ideals held sway. This philosophy was most readily adopted by the Italians, and only started to infiltrate Northern Europe at the end of the fifteenth century. "Middle Ages" is also a term developed by the Renaissance Italians; to them it meant the period between the glories of the Roman Empire and the rebirth of classicism. In this thesis, the "Middle Ages" refers to a period in which the leading aesthetic and philosophic systems are derived from non-Graeco-Roman European ideals and "medieval" is the descriptive adjective describing that philosophy. "Humanism," or a "doctrine, set of attitudes or way of life concerned with human interests and values,"<sup>1</sup> is a more universal concept. Elements of humanism can be found everywhere in Europe as early as the thirteenth century and humanism was an ongoing trend in European culture that accelerated its influence in the fifteenth century regardless of whether it was within a classical or medieval cultural milieu.<sup>2</sup>

### Growth of Nationalism; Concept of Europe

To a person living in 1400, to speak of "Europe" would have had less

meaning than to speak of "Christendom." In a world in which religion was the dominant factor, or, indeed, the purpose of existence, and in which encroachment and challenge was coming not from a nation or geographic entity, but from a rival religion, a person living in Europe would more readily identify with a person who shared a religion than with a person who shared a geographical location, but did not share the religion. By the sixteenth century, with the exploration and expansion of the Christian religion to the New World, a place with very different geographic and ethnic characteristics, and with the contraction of Christendom in the east by the expansion of Islam through Turkish invasions, people were starting to conceive of themselves as Europeans. Unity and diversity, cosmopolitanism and provincialism existed side by side. The Europe that sprung from Christendom had consciously diversified loyalties. This represented a shift in consciousness from a religion-based identity to a secular, geography-based identity.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the century, life and faith seemed to be beset on two sides. As we noted before, the expansion of Islam from the east ate away eastern Christendom. The long-term effects of the Black Death, or bubonic plague, which destroyed up to one-third of European population in the previous century, gave rise to social and religious confusion and unrest. From these two factors came an age of

redefinition, realignment, rediscovery, and reform.

One of the cultural effects of the plague was an acute awareness of death that permeated art, literature, and lifestyle. Images of death, as reminders of the transitory nature of life, were to be found in sculpture, illumination, painting, and the development of new types of religious devotions.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this awareness of death also spurred an awareness of humanity, which may have accelerated the growth of "humanism." It is around this time that clothing radically changed from being shapeless and body denying to being shaped to emphasize the human body. This process seems to have occurred all over Europe, and was not restricted to or initiated in Italy, which is often credited with the humanistic revival.

The plague was not the only devastation of the time. War was a frequent disrupter of life, economic growth, and population increase. This was the time of unrelenting religious and regional wars in Germany and Italy, the Hundred-Years' War between England and France, and civil wars of succession in England. The easiest way to cripple an enemy was to destroy his crops, and soldiers foraged the lands they traveled through or fought in for provisions. This often brought famine and social disruption to the lower orders of these war-stricken lands. Heavy taxation to finance wars further devastated local and regional economies, and the

peasantry, who had few resources to begin with, bore the heaviest brunt of all of these pressures.<sup>5</sup>

Other factors in this geography-based divergence were diversification in the visual arts and the development of vernacular languages and literature. In the visual arts, at the beginning of the century, the basic elements found in painting, sculpture, book illumination, and architecture were found all over Europe, so much so that we still call this style "International Gothic." At the end of the century, major divergences in art styles in different geographic regions had appeared and contemporaries had become aware of these differences.<sup>6</sup>

In the fifteenth century, educational opportunities expanded both geographically and socially. One occurrence was the formation of new universities in Northern Europe. Higher education was no longer concentrated in a few university centers such as Oxford, Paris, and Bologna, but could be obtained throughout the German states, Flanders, Northern Britain, the Baltic countries, Spain, Scandinavia and in the provinces of France. Formerly, the purpose of higher education had been to educate upper-class lawyers, doctors and the clergy; in the fifteenth century, courses of study changed to be applicable to a wider range of professions and to commerce, and were open to the expanding merchant classes and wealthier artisans. Primary education

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based on Graeco-Roman literature and philosophy. However, as Hay, Gombrich, and Artz continue their discussions on this issue, it becomes clear that they conceive of "humanistic" learning as being distinct from "divine" learning, and that some type of non-Graeco-Roman "humanism," although they do not call it that, was present in Northern Europe at the same time as Graeco-Roman-based "humanism" was present in Italy.

<sup>3</sup> Aston, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Aston, 15-20; Waley, 81-82; and Hay, 32-33.

<sup>5</sup> Aston, 22; Waley, 83-84; and Hay, 33-34.

<sup>6</sup> Aston, 36; Elsen, 145; Gombrich, 204-207; and Hay, 354-355.

also expanded as it came to be believed that “farmers and burghers” should be able to read the Bible for themselves and schools were instituted to teach them to do so. Many of the courses at the new universities and at these new schools for the lower orders were taught in the vernacular tongue. This encouraged the use of the vernacular and promoted a local or national identity as well.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, renewed pride in one's own region and one's own language came into being. The vernacular was used in translations of the Bible, in the keeping of legal and governmental records, and in writing and publishing contemporary literature.

All of these factors worked together to produce Europeans who were more likely to define themselves by the region or “nation” they lived in and as Europeans rather than fellow-Christians.

<sup>7</sup> Aston, 37–43; Artz, 305–321; and Hay, 334–338.

<sup>8</sup> C.A.J. Armstrong, *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century*, (London: The Hambleton Press, 1983), xii–xiii and 135–156; Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1924), 135–204; Aston, 149–175; and Artz, 419–432.

## Changes in Religious Practice and the Desire for Religious Reform

The Middle Ages and the Renaissance remained essentially religious times. The increasing secularization we see is not so much a turning away from religion, but the turning away from the organized Church and its unwieldy and often corrupt structure. Priests,

especially at the higher levels of the Church hierarchy, often abused their positions, seeking worldly wealth and power. As piety and spirituality turned inward, and as education and literacy increased, laymen came to demand that the priesthood live up to a higher standard of morality and to return to the ideals of poverty and charity of the early Christian Church. Increases in literacy among laymen, especially among the artisans and better-off yeomanry, prompting more widespread reading of the Bible and the increase of internalized devotional activity encouraged questioning of conventional wisdom regarding the sacraments, the uses and abuses of priesthood, and the structure of the Church. The nature of personal spirituality had changed, but the Church did not change enough to meet its new demands. Thus the stage was set for massive changes in organized religion, and in the next century, these newer concepts of spirituality would lead to the Reformation.<sup>8</sup>

## Social Hierarchy

The medieval and renaissance concept of the world was highly hierarchical and organic. It would not be until the 18th century that the organic metaphor of the world would be replaced in most people's minds with a more mechanical metaphor. The prevailing view was that the world was like the human body. The body was ruled by the head and all the other parts had their place

and function within the body. The limbs and the torso was subordinate to the head, the organs subordinate to the torso, and the parts of an organ subordinate to that organ.<sup>9</sup> Nature was turned upside down and disease reigned if a subordinate part of the body tried to dominate. Similarly, each person had his or her place and function in society and was subordinate to the person who had a higher place and function. Thus the peasant was subordinate to his master; his master was subordinate to his lord who was in turn subordinate to a higher lord and so on to the king. The Church had a similar hierarchy. And, again, chaos and disruption could occur if people of a lower status tried to raise their status or tried to rule.<sup>10</sup>

The subordination of women under the law was as attributable to this conception of the natural order as to any belief about the biological or mental inferiority of the sex. Women were inferior because God ordained that their place in the natural order was to be inferior to men. By the same idea, most men were also inferior to other men.<sup>11</sup>

In the fifteenth century, however, questioning about social conditions and social status was occurring. Many religious reform movements and heretical movements had elements of social change as part of their reform ideas. Within these movements, the efficacy of the priesthood and obedience to Church hierarchy were questioned

when the priesthood and the hierarchy were perceived to conflict with scripture. Questioning the religious hierarchy also lead to questioning the temporal hierarchy. Early on, Martin Luther supported peasant aspirations for more egalitarian social reform, but, horrified by the destruction and challenge to his own merchant class by the Peasant's Revolt of 1525, he reverted to supporting the established "natural" order as the way to prevent societal anarchy and loss of power by his own class.<sup>12</sup> However, even with the reaffirmation of organic natural order, previously disregarded sectors of society, specifically the wealthier middle classes, gained greater influence in both local and national governments.<sup>13</sup>

Religious beliefs, social status, and concepts of one's national or regional identity were often reflected in the material objects that were owned, used, and treasured. One of the most personal classes of objects was clothing. Next is an exploration of the secondary literature on the clothing of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

## Clothing History

Due to the scarcity of extant garments and to the limited nature of other types of primary sources for the study of medieval and early Renaissance clothing, the secondary literature pertaining to fifteenth century clothing is sparse. Most of the literature is descriptive of

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<sup>9</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 69–76.

<sup>10</sup> Artz, 290–292; Hay, 26–77; and Huizinga, 46–51.

<sup>11</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life* (New York: Verso, 1988), 96–102. Although Coontz is writing specifically about 17th- and 18th-century American life, its social structure and its philosophical underpinnings had not changed substantially since the Middle Ages.

<sup>12</sup> Keith Moxey, *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives: Popular Imagery in the Reformation*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 35–39.

<sup>13</sup> Aston, 130–133 and 142–147; Waley, 111–114; and Hay, 37–38.

a few chosen examples and little or no attempt is made to examine the overall patterns of change of styles over time or to examine the social or culture implications of the clothing. This review will first examine the literature on late medieval and early Renaissance clothing found in general surveys of western clothing that cover all time periods to the twentieth century, then examine the literature devoted specifically to medieval and early Renaissance clothing, and finally examine literature concentrating on headdress from the study period. The secondary sources were reviewed for their intended audience, use of primary and secondary sources, method of study and information about fifteenth and early sixteenth century clothing, especially headdress.

### Surveys of Western Clothing from Ancient Times to the Twentieth Century

Some of the most commonly available overall surveys of western clothing are Blanche Payne's *History of Costume*, Milia Davenport's *The Book of Costume*, James Laver's *Costume & Fashion*, and François Boucher's *20,000 Years of Fashion*.<sup>14</sup> Since these books are intended for a popular audience, the information found in them is very brief and over-generalized, and tends to be based on the subjective, impressionistic study of a few visual sources. These surveys are also accounts of what was new or unusual, or of what

belonged to the social elites. Little or no attention is paid to the typical, to the lower classes, or to places that lagged behind in the adoption of the latest styles.

Of these four, James Laver's *Costume & Fashion* has the briefest and most over-simplified description of medieval and early Renaissance clothing. The number or nature of the sources in his exposition are not stated nor is the method of study, but the method seems to be a subjective evaluation of artwork. His bibliography is a mix of scholarly works with outdated and often unreliable works. The most useful parts of the book are the clearly reproduced illustrations. Only one page of the text is devoted to men's headdress of the fifteenth century and is primarily descriptive of one type of headdress.

Somewhat stronger is François Boucher's *20,000 Years of Fashion*, which uses the development of French upper-class civilian clothing as the basis for comparison for the development of clothing in Europe. His primary sources include extant garments when they are available and visual artworks, which are studied qualitatively. The secondary sources are noted English and French costume historians mostly from the early 20th century. He does not specifically mention verbal sources, but does quote from contemporary chronicles and literature in the text. Boucher acknowledges societal influences

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<sup>14</sup> Blanche Payne, *History of Costume: From the Ancient Egyptians to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965); Milia Davenport, *The Book of Costume* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1948); James Laver, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1985); and François Boucher, *20,000 Years of Fashion* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., n.d.).

upon clothing such as economics, religion, politics, status delineation, and personal expression, but does not demonstrate the role these factors play in the changes in fashion. The material on fifteenth-century men's headdress is brief and simplistic.

Both Davenport and Payne have produced more detailed texts. Milia Davenport's *The Book of Costume* was written as much for theatrical designers as for a general audience interested in costume. Her primary sources include extant garments, extant textiles, art works, contemporary literature, contemporary sermons and commentary, sumptuary laws, correspondence, and printed inventories of notable persons (primarily royalty). Her main secondary sources include Jacob Burckhardt, Max von Boehn, numerous art historians, but generally disdains costume historians. Davenport states that the ideal book on costume would "... provide so many pictures (all documents, arranged chronologically, and in color) that the story would tell itself without words."<sup>15</sup> However, pictures alone cannot tell the whole story and some interpretation is necessary for a modern viewer to understand the times that produced the picture. She has tried to produce such a book of mostly primary source pictures, albeit in black and white and poorly reproduced, with supplemental descriptions to provide color, sometimes, literally. As such, the book is comprehensive and shows many visual sources of

clothing from several regions and all social classes. However, the supplemental commentary on the reproductions focus on the unusual and the different rather than what may be typical, and on the clothing of the social elites. Little attempt is made to integrate all the visual information given into coherent patterns, or to make comparisons between regions or times. Her commentaries include unsubstantiated "conventional wisdom" about garments and their use or meanings and her assumption seems to be that there is a linear progression of fashion.

Headdress is often shown in the sources but not much discussed in the commentaries unless it is showy or otherwise unique. Social or cultural uses of headdress is not discussed.

Blanche Payne's *History of Costume* is a history of western clothing from about 3000 BCE to 1900 CE devoted to the clothing of the upper and upper-middle classes, and appears to be an impressionistic analysis of a few art works depicting notable persons. It is often used in undergraduate courses on the history of costume. Her primary sources include extant garments, and garment and textile fragments, when they exist, and art works, but she does not seem to use verbal documentary sources. Her main secondary sources include Max von Boehn, Herbert Norris, Kelly and Schwabe, Milia Davenport, and C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington. Many of the illustrations used are redrawings from

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<sup>15</sup> Davenport, ix.

original sources rather than reproductions of the originals.

For headdress, and for clothing in general, Payne concentrates on the new and unusual, ignoring commonplace items. The basic assumption seems to be that there is a linear evolution of fashion, rather than there being a number of different trends from different regions and/or social classes that are adopted differentially by the fashionable. Payne also makes broad generalizations about fashion from a few selected sources that depict the powerful, the social elites, and the rich. The working classes are dismissed in three paragraphs and only agricultural workers are discussed.

She does acknowledge regional differences, and gives a summary of the main trends for each of the regions studied (Italy, Burgundy/Flanders, France, Germany, and England), but fails to compare and contrast each of the regional trends. Rather, Payne studies the "fashion" trends of each region by applying the standard of French fashion to each of them. She also states that Italy was the fashion leader due to the imagination and sumptuousness shown in its clothing, but does not demonstrate that Italian clothing has any influence on the clothing of other regions.<sup>16</sup>

Headdress is only mentioned in passing and only if it is unusual or bizarre. No attempt is made to examine wearing patterns of headdress for various social

classes or demographic groups, and no systematic attempt is made to examine regional similarities or differences.

Penelope Byrde's *The Male Image: Men's Fashion in Britain 1300–1970* is both a survey of English upper-class men's clothing and an interpretation of the development of men's examined in the light of the ideals of masculine image, aesthetic ideals, and delineation of social status.<sup>17</sup> The structure of the book includes a chapter on the influences on men's clothing, a chapter on showing a pictorial survey of English men's clothing, and chapters on individual clothing items. The chapter devoted to headdress gives a more detailed narrative about the development of headdress and is more sensitive to variations in type and structure than the text describing headdress in the other general surveys reviewed here.

Byrde examines visual works of art, contemporary literature, diaries, letter and memoirs, and extant garments. In addition to these primary sources, for fifteenth-century clothing, Byrde relies heavily on secondary sources by Elizabeth Birbari, C. Willet and Phillis Cunnington, and J. R. Planché. The text is extensively annotated and the notes provides excellent sources, but the bibliography is better suited to a non-specialist audience.

Byrde attempts to examine the changes in men's clothing in the context of

<sup>16</sup> Payne, 200.

<sup>17</sup> Penelope Byrde, *The Male Image: Men's Fashion in Britain 1300–1970* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1979).



gender roles: how men perceived themselves and how they structured their images to accord with these perceptions. Also she looks at how and what clothing can communicate within a society and how men's dress have developed and changed to adapt to communicate new messages about social status, moral values, and contemporary aesthetics. She does sometimes broadly attributes concepts about male and female roles predominant in one time period to all time periods in her range. While nineteenth-century concepts of male and female roles may satisfactorily explain the differences in the character and pace of change of men's clothing and women's clothing in the nineteenth century, they do not adequately explain the similarities in men's clothing and women's clothing prior to the eighteenth century.

### Surveys of Medieval/Renaissance Clothing

Literature concentrating on the dress of the Middle Ages, such as *Medieval Costume in England and France*, by Mary Houston; *Dress in Medieval France*, by Joan Evans; *The Handbook of English Mediaeval Costume*, by C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington; or *The Visual History of Costume: The Fourteenth & Fifteenth Centuries* by Margaret Scott is also intended for a popular audience and has many of the same problems as the previous sources.<sup>18</sup> These surveys are

also accounts of what was new or unusual, or of what belonged to the social elites with little or no attention paid to the typical, or to classes or countries that were outside of the main trends of fashionable change. They do, however, often supplement their analyses with contemporary literature and such historical records as household accounts and customs records, and have more detailed descriptions of clothing.

*Medieval Costume in England and France*, by Mary G. Houston surveys fashionable change in the clothing of the social elites of thirteenth-, fourteenth-, and fifteenth-century England and France. She uses manuscript illumination, tomb effigies, paintings, stained glasses, and extant church vestments as primary sources, but she relies heavily on nineteenth-century secondary sources. Unlike the other authors, she does cover the development of ecclesiastical vestments for these three centuries, the sight of which would have been most frequent in medieval society, and of professional and academic dress. For the most part, her information is composed of descriptions of the garments worn in a few visual sources without placing them into an aesthetic, cultural or social context. The 350 illustrations consist of line redrawings of original images.

Joan Evans in *Dress in Medieval France* also mainly describes some of the garments seen in visual sources, but she also includes commentary in

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<sup>18</sup> Mary G. Houston, *Medieval Costume in England and France: The 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1939); Joan Evans, *Dress in Medieval France* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1952); C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Mediaeval Costume* (Boston: Plays, Inc. 1969); and Margaret Scott, *A Visual History of Costume: The Fourteenth & Fifteenth Centuries* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1986).

contemporary chronicles and literature. Her scope of study is French and Burgundian clothing from 1060 to 1515 CE of the upper and occasionally, upper-middle classes. Evans's source materials for fifteenth century clothing include extant garments and garment and textile fragments, when they exist, but she does not describe them accurately.<sup>19</sup> Her other primary sources are art works, contemporary prose and poetry, and correspondences and inventories of notable persons. The main secondary sources include Viollet-le-Duc, Quicherat, Demay, and Harmand, the works of which were published more than twenty years prior to the printing of her book. Evans also makes extensive use of 19th-century transcriptions of medieval texts and documents rather than using the original sources themselves. She includes a section of black and white reproductions of the visual sources to illustrate the text, but uses renderings of Viollet-le-Duc's redrawings within the text. Overall, *Dress in Medieval France* has much fragmented description with little interpretation and synthesis of general trends.

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<sup>19</sup> Evans, 30 and 48. On these two pages, she shows drawings of the cutting diagrams of two pourpoints. One of the drawings on page 30 is captioned as the pourpoint belonging to Charles of Blois. The cut of the pourpoint attributed as belonging to Charles of Blois, has been documented in many others sources and its cutting diagram is generally depicted as the one she shows on page 48. One might think that this is merely a typographical error except that she discusses them in the accompanying text as they are captioned and drawn.

Much better with delineating general trends, at least with regards to change over time, is *The Handbook of English Mediaeval Costume*, by C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington. As the title suggests, the scope of the book is English clothing of the upper and middle classes from 800 to 1500 CE. The intention was to create a general reference of the main features of English

medieval clothing for an interested general audience and for theatrical designers. Their study uses some manuscript illuminations, memorial effigies, and contemporary literature. Secondary sources include noted nineteenth- and early twentieth-century clothing historians and art historians. The subject matter is primarily descriptive and social and cultural contexts are kept to a minimum. Contemporary literature is used to illustrate a particular garment rather than to analyze that garment. The material is arranged first chronologically, then by sex of the wearers, and for each sex, by type of garment. Each type is then described chronologically to give a sense of an evolution of style. The verbal descriptions are supplemented by line redrawings of original images, but the originals sources are cited. Often, features from one period are related to features from the previous period and to features from the next. As an overview of the main features of dress, it is well organized and lucidly written, but it is not detailed enough for use in interpretive analyses.

*The Visual History of Costume: The Fourteenth & Fifteenth Centuries* by Margaret Scott is also a general pictorial survey of upper class English, Burgundian, Flemish, French, and some German clothing from 1300–1500 CE. Unlike the previous surveys, this survey is rooted in a strong, scholarly evaluation of manuscript illumination, paintings, funerary sculpture, royal wardrobe accounts, sumptuary legisla-

tion, household accounts, contemporary chronicles, wills and inventories, and contemporary literature. Each type of information is considered in terms of the other types to see if each supports or contradicts each other. Her secondary sources include scholarly works of later-twentieth-century historians, clothing historians and art historians. The introduction to the book frankly describes the types of primary sources available for research into the clothing of the late Middle Ages and their limitations, her methods for using these sources, and a brief overview of the general trends of fashionable change while acknowledging, but not describing in detail, national and cultural complexities. The rest of the book is comprised of 150 reproductions of visual sources, arranged in chronological order, each with a description of the treatment of the head, body, and accessories worn by the persons portrayed. Some of these descriptions discuss briefly the aesthetic, cultural, or social contexts of the item described. The bibliography provides a solid starting point for more detailed study of the subject.

### Accounts of fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-Century Clothing

Most of the previous literature was published before 1970. More recent writers, while still using a subjective method of analysis, have brought more discipline to the study of fifteenth century clothing. The last two decades saw the

publication of several books concentrating on the clothing of the fifteenth or fifteenth and early sixteenth century. These include *Dress in Italian Painting 1460–1500*, by Elizabeth Birbari; *Renaissance Dress in Italy, 1400–1500*, by Jacqueline Herald; *Late Gothic Europe: 1400–1500*, by Margaret Scott; and *Hispanic Costume: 1480–1530*, by Ruth M. Anderson. Most of these are more complete than the previous surveys, using a variety of documentary sources to interpret clothing in a social setting. A better attempt to examine clothing of the lower classes and men's clothing is made, but these sources still concentrate on the clothing of the fashionable elites and of women. Scott, Herald, and Anderson attempt to firmly place their narrative of the changes in dress into a social and cultural context, while Birbari concentrates on what can be perceived in painting alone, almost divorced from a social context.<sup>20</sup>

*Dress in Italian Painting 1460–1500*, by Elizabeth Birbari is a primer on how to look at the portrayal of dress in works of art and how to interpret its construction and components, provided one looks with an open mind and without unsupported assumptions about the nature of the art. Unfortunately, Birbari makes the assumption about Italian art that the portrayal of every object, especially clothing, was a literally true and faithful recording of that object to the most minute detail.<sup>21</sup> Art historical scholarship does not support that assumption and a further discussion of

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<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Birbari, *Dress in Italian Painting 1460–1500* (London: John Murray Ltd, 1975); Jacqueline Herald, *Renaissance Dress in Italy 1400–1500*, History of Dress Series (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, Inc., 1981); Margaret Scott *Late Gothic Europe, 1400–1500*, The History of Dress Series (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, Inc., 1980); and Ruth M. Anderson, *Hispanic Costume: 1480–1530* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1979).

the characteristics of Italian fifteenth-century art will be given in Chapter III. This assumption creates conclusions about the types of garments worn in daily life and how it was constructed that are highly questionable. Birbari does not recognize the role that fantasy, idealization, and symbolism often play in the portrayal of human figures in art, and consequently garments that were most likely to be theatrical adaptations of clothing, she takes as clothing worn in daily life.

Although the title implies that all of Italian dress is discussed, the one hundred paintings Birbari analyzes comes mostly from Northern Italy as most of the innovative artists whose works she uses were employed in these areas. She then uses these paintings as guides to the construction of various items of Italian men's clothing and women's clothing. For some of the illustrated garments, she shows photographs of reconstructions based on her analysis of the paintings. Other than women's veils, headdress is not analyzed.

Most of Birbari's secondary sources are the works of art historians of Italian painting writing in the 1930s and 1940s, more than thirty years before this book was written. Comparison of Italian painting with Northern European painting may have contributed to a revision of her assumption of the absolute veracity of Italian painting, as may have knowledge of clothing and textile production, the general social

structure, and the concepts of Renaissance thought.

In contrast to the narrow focus on painting as the only source material of *Dress in Italian Painting 1460–1500* is Jacqueline Herald's *Renaissance Dress in Italy, 1400–1500*.<sup>22</sup> This is a much broader interpretative and descriptive study using a wide variety of primary sources to analyze and place Italian clothing into a social context. Like Birbari, the sources Herald uses come primarily from the northern half of Italy since this area was the leader in the development of Renaissance thought and aesthetics.

Primary source materials include works of art, fabric fragments, inventories, wills, household accounts, personal correspondence, and literature, all carefully considered together to give a comprehensive picture of the use of clothing in the life of upper-class Italians. Although the surviving evidence is strongly biased to representation of the upper classes, Herald does moderately discuss the role of clothing in the lives of the middle and lower classes based on the evidence she has found.

The main portion of the book intersperses chronologically arranged chapters descriptive of the types of garments worn and their physical characteristics placed into cultural contexts such as concepts of beauty, the spread of Renaissance aesthetics and the decline of the Gothic, or the

<sup>21</sup> Birbari, 1–3.

<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that Byrde, Birbari, and Herald all received their academic training in the history of dress at the Courtauld Institute, University of London with Birbari preceding Herald and Byrde by about five years.

use of dress as a method of communicating status, taste, or moral values, with chapters detailing textiles and textile production used for clothing, jewelry and accessories and heraldry.

Margaret Scott has also written a more detailed history of fifteenth century upper class French, Burgundian, and Flemish clothing and contains some descriptions of English and German clothing as well. The focus of *Late Gothic Europe: 1400–1500* is the interpretation of clothing in aesthetic and cultural contexts. Much of the structure of the book and the sources and method of study mirrors Jacqueline Herald. Scott evaluates manuscript illumination, paintings, funerary sculpture, royal wardrobe accounts, sumptuary legislation, household accounts, contemporary chronicles, wills and inventories, and contemporary literature synthesizing the historical evidence into a coherent narrative. Her secondary sources include scholarly works of later-twentieth-century historians, clothing historians and art historians.

Scott's chronological account of the changes in fashionable dress is preceded by chapters describing the political historical setting and how it affected the visual arts and the aesthetic concepts held by Northern European artists of the fifteenth century. The clothing described in the chronological chapters are placed in the context of changes in aesthetics and the decline of medieval thought.

Another well-organized and scholarly survey has been written by Ruth M. Anderson. *Hispanic Costume: 1480–1530* concentrates on a region and time period not often examined: Spain and Portugal of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The book is divided into two sections, one for men's clothing and one for women's clothing. These are subdivided into types of clothing items and of personal adornment starting with the head (hair and headdress) proceeding systematically to the toes (shoes and other foot coverings) and including outer garments and accessories.

Anderson's primary sources include art works, correspondences and inventories of notable persons (primarily royalty and nobility), contemporary chronicles, sumptuary laws, guild and town regulations for producers of clothing, and some contemporary literature. There are numerous illustrations for each type of garment or accessory discussed. Her main secondary sources include the works of Carmen Bernis Madrazo, C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, Maurice Leloir, James Laver, Rosita Levi Pisetsky and numerous scholars of Spanish history.

This is a systematic qualitative analysis of many art works and verbal sources primarily concerning notable persons. Anderson analyzes clothing items in the contexts of their makers and their wearers and integrates this information into a comprehensive interpretation of clothing worn on the Iberian peninsula in the

late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. She examines the clothing items in terms of their construction and their material components, who would have worn them and for what occasions, and their cultural and social meanings.

Anderson does not make the assumption that clothing developed along a single line of evolution, but rather acknowledges that different elements of clothing had their own independent evolutions and so she examined each element in isolation. The illustrations for each type show only the headdress or the doublet or the sleeves, and one does not always get a sense of an integrated outfit or a sense of what often goes with what. Another of the few weaknesses of this book is that the degree to which changes in one element may effect changes in another element is inadequately explored. The separation of men's from women's clothing, in a book that stresses social context, also made it difficult to see the interrelationships between men's and women's clothing. Otherwise, this is a brief and readable, yet scholarly and well-documented source for information about clothing for this period and place.

Headdress is discussed in its own section with ample illustrations of each type of headdress discussed. Anderson also briefly examines the uses of headdress in courtesy rituals, the qualifications for master's status in hat- and cap-makers guilds, as well as a discussion of various headdress types, their

changes, and their appearances in inventories and literature.

The following two articles describe social aspects of fifteenth-century clothing or of the way clothing is portrayed in art. They both discuss two facets of the topic, how clothing is used to mark one's social status and the importance of firmly delineated status to a culture that stressed adherence to the proper place and duties of each estate. Laura Rinaldi Dufresne examines the contrasts among the depictions of a popular author, Christine of Pisa, in fifteenth-century manuscript illumination, her actual social status, and her advice and commentary on dress and status in the article, "A Woman of Excellent Character: A Case Study of Dress, Reputation, and the Changing Costume of Christine de Pizan in the Fifteenth Century."<sup>23</sup> Dufresne compares Christine of Pisa's textual admonishments to dress for one's status with Christine's depiction in five French and Flemish manuscript copies of her works. Christine of Pisa, court author and scribe, had advised women to always dress appropriately for their social statuses, and while she was alive to control her portrayal in manuscripts, only approved of her image shown dressed in clothing appropriate to her status. Her works were immensely popular in the fifteenth, and after her death in 1430, she was increasingly portrayed in clothing appropriate to a social status far above her own in keeping with her reputation.

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<sup>23</sup> Laura Rinaldi Dufresne, "A Woman of Excellent Character: A Case Study of Dress, Reputation and the Changing Costume of Christine de Pizan in the Fifteenth Century," *Dress* 16: 2 (1990), 105-117.

John Scattergood analyzes the phrasing of English sumptuary legislation and compares it to such literary sources as poetry, song lyrics, sermons, chronicles, and correspondence to seek underlying attitudes and beliefs towards innovation and luxury in clothing in "Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages."<sup>24</sup> He concludes that the overriding concerns spurring the creation of sumptuary laws and contemporary commentary on dress were the fear that those adopting new "skimpy" fashions were indulging in the mortal sin of pride and those adopting costly fashions and materials beyond their means were blurring class distinctions and violating the concept of a rigid social hierarchy.

### Accounts of Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-Century Headdress

Literature specifically about fifteenth century headdress is, of course, more scarce than literature about clothing in general. Four articles were found that discussed fifteenth-century headdress or have fifteenth-century headdress within its purview. Three of the articles are descriptive, sometimes baldly so; the latter examines the role of headdress in concepts of gender and religious priesthood.<sup>25</sup> Cheunsoon Song and Lucy Roy Sibley's article, "The Vertical Headdress of Fifteenth Century Northern Europe," discusses the evolution and construction of fifteenth-century Northern European

women's headdress of the upper and upper-middle classes. Her primary sources include artwork by different artists of the same period. Her main secondary sources include Margaret Scott, François Boucher, Millia Davenport, Blanche Payne and Herbert Norris. Margaret Scott is cited in 31 of 55 footnotes and they seem quite dependent on her work. Song and Sibley examined art works and developed a classification of women's headdress by perceived method of construction, using the depicted shape, and types of elements used.

The article primarily describes their six categories of women's headdress, suggests how they could have been constructed, and shows examples of each type. It would have been beneficial if some of their proposed constructions could have been tested by trying to recreate them to see if they would really work. Song and Sibley also make some suggestions as to how social class may be depicted through the use of different types of headdress for each class, through the use of larger headdresses for higher classes, or the amount of decoration.

Finally they suggest an evolution of this type of headdress based on a small sample. From the article, it appears that the evolution is based on the dating of about 12 sources; more sources should be examined before drawing a conclusion about the evolution of a headdress type.

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<sup>24</sup> John Scattergood, "Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages," in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: The Boydell Press, 1987) 255–272.

<sup>25</sup> Cheunsoon Song and Lucy Roy Sibley, "The Vertical Headdress of Fifteenth Century Northern Europe," *Dress* 16:1 (1990), pp. 5–15; Karen Finch, "A Medieval Hat Rediscovered," *Textile History* 14 (Spring 1983), pp. 67–70; S. M. Levey, "Illustrations of the History of Knitting Selected from the Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum," *Textile History* 1:2 (1968–70), pp. 183–205; and Beverly Chico, "Gender, Headwear and Power in Judaic and Christian Traditions," *Dress* 16:2 (1990), pp. 127–140.

These two articles from *Textile History* are merely descriptions of the physical characteristics of extant men's hats. Karen Finch's "A Medieval Hat Rediscovered," comprises a description of a late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century hat containing the dimensions, construction details, and materials of the hat. Photographs of the hat from various angles and of details of construction are included. S. M. Levey briefly describes an early sixteenth-century knitted hat in her article, "Illustrations of the History of Knitting Selected from the Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum." This briefly gives the physical characteristics of the hat and discusses such knitted hats in context of royal legislation and of other verbal documentation. A photograph of the hat is included.

symbols of submission and modesty and of women's relationships to God through their relationships with men.

### Methods of Study: Content Analysis and Seriation

The above studies are based on traditional historical methodologies that can give a rich analysis of the role of clothing in a social and cultural context. Yet a weakness of traditional historical methods in the history of clothing is that too general a conclusion can be drawn from too few sources of information. Systematic studies that concentrate on the typical and cover a wider range of geographic territory and all classes are needed to give a more complete picture of fifteenth century clothing.

It could also be desirable to study the quantitative aspects of clothing as well. Two useful methods of creating and arranging quantitative data from visual sources are form analysis and seriation. Content analysis is a systematic method of data collection for items that are difficult to study because of their volume or particular nature.<sup>26</sup> Form analysis is a variant of content analysis that creates quantitative data from formal (in an art-theoretical sense) or physical characteristics of the sources of information.<sup>27</sup> Seriation is a technique for analysis used in archaeology in which the frequency of occurrence of features or characteristics of an object

<sup>26</sup> Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969) and Jo B. Paoletti, "Content Analysis: Its Application to the Study of the History of Costume," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 1 (1982): 14–17.

<sup>27</sup> Lisa Heidel, "Men's Nineteenth Century Wedding Clothing Found in Museum Collections" (M. S. Thesis, University of Maryland, 1992), 36.

<sup>28</sup> Robert C. Dunnell, "Seriation Method and Its Evaluation," *American Antiquity* 35 (1970): 305–319.

"Gender, Headwear and Power in Judaic and Christian Traditions," by Beverly Chico is an examination of the meanings of covering one's head in the Judaic and Christian religions. Chico contrasts the different functions of head coverings for men and women within these traditions using extant ritual headdress, photographs, scripture, religious commentaries, histories of Judaic religious garments and Christian ecclesiastical garments, and literature on the role of women in the Judaic and Christian faiths. Chico identifies the headdress worn by both Jewish and Christian male religious leaders as symbols of power and of men's relationship to God; and women's traditional headdress, such as veils, as



is arranged sequentially in time.<sup>28</sup> In archaeology, the object is often to arrange these frequencies of occurrence in the best possible time sequence without knowing the absolute dates of the objects. Seriation can also be used when the objects are firmly dated to analyze the rates of change in physical features of objects, the modes of occurrence, and other characteristics of temporal distribution. In this thesis, the physical and formal qualities of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century headdress as portrayed within art objects are analyzed using form analysis.

Although it comes from the field of anthropology, James Deetz and Edwin N. Dethlefsen's study of mortuary art in colonial New England provides an instructive example of form analysis combined with seriation.<sup>29</sup> The images found on cemetery monuments located in Boston and several other small towns surrounding Boston were placed into categories derived from three basic motifs. The mortuary images were firmly dated so the frequency of appearance of the various motifs were plotted against time for a given location. Comparison of the dates of appearance and the distribution of the different motifs by location enable Deetz and Dethlefsen draw conclusions about the diffusion and acceptance or rejection of mortuary images and by extension the diffusion and acceptance or rejection of religious concepts of death symbolized by the different motifs.

Form analysis and seriation were first applied to the study of clothing in Sarah Turnbaugh's study of women's 19th century headdress.<sup>30</sup> In this study, she used physical characteristics of headdresses portrayed in *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1830 to 1898 to classify these headdresses into types. She then graphed the frequency of appearance of these types against time to analyze changes in fashion in women's headdress over time.

Jo Paoletti, Catherine Beeker, and Diana Pelletier also used form analysis and seriation to study stylistic changes in men's jacket styles from 1919 to 1949.<sup>31</sup> The sources of study were illustrations of Sears catalog offerings and extant clothing in museum. The data collection instrument classified physical features of the jackets such as lapel width, location of the bridle line, silhouette shape, and pocket style. Seriation charts of the studies features were created to aid in interpretation of similar garments in museum collections.

This thesis uses form analysis and seriation when appropriate to analyze the patterns of distribution of men's fifteenth and early-sixteenth headdress over time and geography in an attempt to create a detailed foundation of knowledge of what kinds of headdresses there were, what were their dominant features, who wore them, and where were they worn, as well as how often the dominant modes changed and how long they lasted.

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<sup>29</sup> James Deetz and Edwin N. Dethlefsen, "Some Social Aspects of New England Colonial Mortuary Art," *Society for American Archaeology: Memoirs* 25 (1971): 30-38.

<sup>30</sup> Sarah Turnbaugh, "The Seriation of Fashion," *Home Economics Research Journal* 7 (March 1979): 241-248.

<sup>31</sup> Jo B. Paoletti, Catherine Beeker, and Diana Pelletier, "Men's Jacket Styles, 1919-1941: An Example of Coordinated Content Analysis and Object Study" *Dress* 13 (1987): 44-48. See also Catherine Beeker, "Seriation and Object Study of Men's Suit Jacket Characteristics, 1919-1949" (M. S. thesis, University of Maryland, 1989).

