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LOUISE M. SYLVESTER, MARK C. CHAMBERS, and GALE R. OWEN-CROCKER, eds., *Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain: A Multilingual Sourcebook*. (Medieval and Renaissance Clothing and Textiles.) Woodbridge, UK, and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2014. Pp. xii, 412; 8 color plates. \$99. ISBN: 978-1-84383-932-3. doi:10.1086/686635

This volume presents an excellent introduction to the range of textual sources useful in the study of medieval textiles, clothing, and ornament (belts, rings, and other types of jewelry). A collection essentially of transcriptions, with facing-page translations, it ranges chronologically from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries, and focuses geographically on Britain (although it includes works by authors born in England but writing in Normandy, such as Orderic Vitalis, and those born in France but probably writing in England, such as Marie de France). A brief introduction to the volume sets out the range of text types and the kinds of information about dress and textiles they reveal, while chapter and individual document introductions provide more details on the same subjects, often with very useful indications of additional sources. The primary audience for this work is specialists in textile and fashion studies, but some of its features recommend selections to nonspecialists (those, more broadly, teaching the Middle Ages and beginning researchers in medieval English documents).

The strengths of this collection are several. First, the many types of texts featured—wills, accounts, inventories and rolls of livery, moral and satirical works, epics and romances, statutes and rolls of parliament, sumptuary legislation, and petitions to king, council, and parliament—provide a laudably broad introduction to the kinds of written sources available to researchers. For newcomers to the field of fashion history, textile studies, and material culture, this overview of source types is valuable not only in enlarging research horizons but also in learning how to read these sources. Such learning is chiefly facilitated by the provision of both transcriptions and translations, but also in some cases by the inclusion of plates (e.g., 4, 7, and 8) giving excerpts from the original sources transcribed and by reference to digitized versions of original documents available online. This broadens the value of the collection: even those not necessarily interested in clothing but wanting or needing to gain facility in late-medieval English scripts will profit from the petitions and parliamentary acts transcribed and translated here.

An even greater strength is the linguistic diversity and complexity of the texts presented. In addition to excerpts in Latin, Old English, Middle English, Anglo-French, Old Scots, and Middle Scots, there are numerous examples of documents combining several of these languages. So a 1411 will of a knight had opening and closing sections in Latin, most of the bequests in Middle English, but also a number of Anglo-French terms for specific pieces of armor (34–35). The editors have done a nice job of including versions of the same document or text in different languages: excerpts of both the Anglo-Saxon original and a Latin abstract of the will of Æthelgifu (980–90), for example, allow direct comparison of how terms used to describe textiles were rendered (16–17) and multiple retellings of the Constance story (in Latin, Anglo-French, and Middle English) illustrate variations in references to dress (284–305). The volume's extensive glossary of textile and apparel terms (357–99) across these many languages is a quite valuable contribution to fashion and textile studies.

*Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain*, moreover, nicely demonstrates how the study of cloth, clothing, and ornament crosses disciplinary boundaries (history, literature, art

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history) and intersects with broader themes and issues in medieval studies. Evidence concerning the conceptualization and visualization of social distinctions, economic and legal practices, the scope of governmental activity, courtly entertainments, heraldry, and mottos, as well as the imaginative representation of many of these, is offered in these pages. For those teaching the Middle Ages, this collection provides brief excerpts useful in providing students a sense of everyday life (What household goods were valuable enough to bequeath to others? How many ermine bellies were needed to line a king's cloak?) as well as illustrations of the richness and complexity of medieval sources.

While in some cases the editors republish selections from good print editions, in others they have returned to the manuscripts to produce new and more accurate transcriptions with careful indications of their extensions of abbreviations and of possible variant readings. The translations are extremely valuable because of the diverse, technical vocabulary used to describe fabrics, ornament, and garments across the Middle Ages. Those I was able to check were sound, with a few minor quibbles (92–93: *baculis episcopalibus* better rendered “crosiers” than “staves”; 158–59: *almucium* more likely *almutium*, or “mozzetta,” than “amice”) and some inconsistencies (*diasperus* variably “diaper” or “diasper”; *appelblome* “apple-blossom coloured” or “pink”). Literary specialists should be aware that excerpts from poetic works are rendered in prose.

There are some limitations that must be noted. While some excerpts are substantial enough, or from such well-known sources (e.g., *Beowulf*) that the contexts of the selections are clear, others would require returning to the sources for sound interpretation or even meaningful discussion. For example, since only the bequests of textiles or jewelry are excerpted from wills, one cannot draw conclusions about the importance or value of such items without returning to the testament to discover where these bequests ranked in the ordering of goods and what other things were bequeathed. Most of the excerpts from romances are also extremely truncated, leaving considerable ambiguity as to who “had no other robes” or who was giving whom “a purse made of silk and shining gold” (317, 321). The list price of \$99 for the volume and lack of an electronic edition will also, unfortunately, very much limit the diffusion of this valuable work.

These issues aside, *Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain* is a most welcome and valuable contribution to fashion and textile studies. It provides an outstanding introduction to essential British sources and an excellent glossary to aid researchers. While most useful to specialists, the volume may also open up an exciting area of scholarly inquiry to intrepid students.

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