Medieval News

February 2016 No. 2

Fashion in Nürnberg...

Last Stand on Vellum

For more than a thousand years **the laws of Britain have been recorded on vellum**. Earlier this week the plan was revealed to abolish the practice. However, James Grey, a conservative MP is planning to call for a back-bench debate creating a stand-off between the Commons and the House of Lords.

Last time, the House of Lords decided to abolish the tradition to record the Acts of Parliament on vellum was **in 1999**. However, at that time plan was overturned by an unlikely alliance of Conservatives and Labour MP's, who defeated the move by 121 votes to 53.

Once again disgruntled traditionalists are manning the last ditch in view of the decision taken by the House of Lords to have future legislation printed on simple archive paper. The change is calculated to save £80.000 a year plus the lives of countless goats and calves.

However, led by James Grey, a conservative MP, a group of back-benchers are once again orchestrating an assault on the plans of the House of Lords. According to **The Telegraph**, he has warned that if peers go ahead with the plans to abandon vellum despite the Commons vote there will be a "constitutional stand off" over the issue and continues: "This is an outrageous act of constitutional and cultural vandalism. I think it may well cost more to use archival paper because you have to use properly controlled environments which you don't need for vellum."

However, the fact remains that a 19th century ruling presents the House of Lords the exclusive right to decide the matter.

It appears the matter has been of considerable interest for legislators in the British Parliament for some time and that the dispute – in itself – should be a prime candidate for being awarded the status of "intangible Cultural Heritage" by UNESCO.

We must hope Westminster comes to its senses!

Medieval News

- read about new exhibitions, books, research and much more

Editor-in-chief: Karen Schousboe
2016: February, No. 2

Medieval Histories Inc ©

Paradisstien 5
DK2840 Holte
Denmark

www.medievalhistories.com
info@medievalhistories.com
+45 24 23 36 10

Photo (frontpage):

Dress of the four-year old Katharina Gräfin zur Lippe, 1600
From Italy © Detmold, Lippisches Landesmuseum
Photos are to the best of our ability either published by permission or under the CCA.

Fashion in Renaissance Nürnberg

In Nürnberg they have an amazing collection of dresses and other items of clothing, which is usually hidden away. Now for the first time in decades 50 costumes are shown as part of special exhibition, In Fashion.

The Germanisches Nationalmuseum (GNM) is for the first time presenting its internationally significant collection of clothing of the Early Modern Age in a large-scale special exhibition. Around 50 costumes from the period from 1560 to 1650 are exhibited in the context of contemporary paintings and graphic art works. In addition, the exhibition features rare pieces of everyday clothing from the 16th and 17th centuries, including the finds – on show for the first time – from a tailor's workshop in Bremen, as well as needles, scissors, thimbles and clothes brushes.

Clothes have always played a central role in self-expression and individual identity. The exhibition brings together rare original textiles and representative likenesses from international museums. It shows clothing and fashion in their diverse social contexts and makes them decipherable as part of the material culture as well as in terms of their social and image-specific symbolism. The historical items of clothing permit an up-close view of shapes, materials and styling. The complementing paintings illustrate the original effect of the clothes and the way they were worn, which then, as now, reveals a person's place in society. The exhibition also addresses the question of how reliably the preserved items of clothing bear witnesses to the past, because the originals have rarely survived the centuries unscathed.

The exhibition is supported by international collections, with loans from, for example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna or the Royal Armoury, Stockholm, which owns and has generously lent a doublet dating from 1610 which is preserved as individual tailored pieces and is a unique document of historic tailoring practice.

The pieces, some of which are unique across Europe, are currently being scientifically processed and restored in a research project. A corresponding collection dresden is also currently undergoing restoration.

VISIT:

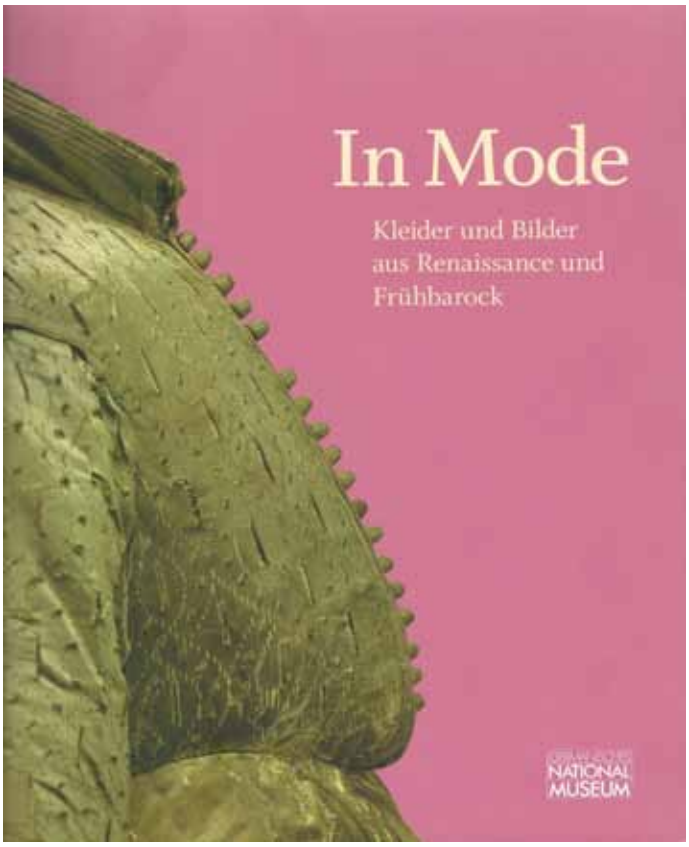
Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg
Kartäusergasse 1
90402 Nürnberg
03.12.2015 – 06.03.16

Green Silk Jacket c. 1580 - 1600

The green jacket is made of green silk tafetta, which was quilted and slashed. It is lined with linen and trimmed with passementerie braids and buttons.

BOOK REVIEW:

Strange Fashions



In Mode. Kleider und Bilder aus Renaissance und Frühbarock.
Ed. by Jutta Zander-Seidel
Germanisches National Museum 2015
ISBN: 978-936688-2

We all seem to know what fashion is: the inexorable shifting of patterns, forms and colours of our material culture pushed by the fashion industry in a constantly recycling of trends and inspiration pushed by magazines, fashion shows, film stars and other frontrunners. It is also commonly though that this idea of a "fashion industry" was invented in the 15th century to spring into full bloom in the 16th. However, the parameters, which governed fashion in the 16th century were quite different than today, and had different meanings to people at that time than it has today. On a superficial level, we might for instance claim that the phenomena of wearing ripped jeans is not that different from the widespread fashion in the 16th century to slash precious silk jackets in order to let the inner lining creep through.

In this case the reason is of course obvious. Jeans are the ultimate symbol on the might of the workers. Hence the 80s witnessed a quiet rebellion among stock-traders to sport Friday-wear in the office, consisting of jeans, polos and sweaters. Robbed of their class-symbol par excellence, workers united began to slash their jeans, thus parading their "poverty". In the 16th century, the slashing of silk had quite a different meaning. At that time it signified the ultimate luxury: to render the most precious textile material even more fragile, thus demonstrating the wearers ability to shun any real, corporal work. No wonder, the slashing of silk was repeatedly forbidden in laws, which tried to regulate the dressing of the people from top to bottom in society.

It is not an easy job to decipher all the many systems of signifiers and symbols, which were at play in the 16th century and we are still far from understanding the intricate meaning of the many tiny details, which parade in front of our wondrous eyes when we look at sculptured, painted or drawn representations of the costumes of that period.

However, the last twenty years have seen a continued effort to unravel what fashion was all about at a time when it more than anything meant the art of creating oneself as opposed to the art of just signalling the ability to shop for something "new". One of the centres of this effort is Nürnberg, where Jutta Zander-Seidel has reigned as head of the department of textiles and jewellery since 1995.

2016 has witnessed a very important milestone in her work, the exhibition of the collection of textiles held by the German National Museum in Nürnberg, home to one of the most important assemblies of preserved textiles from the 16th century. In connection with this exhibition she has also edited a very valuable catalogue, which in detail presents the different exhibits – textiles, drawings, paintings, archaeological finds and much more.

However, the catalogue holds so much more, not least the presentation of the history of the collection itself from its very early foundation in 1859, when the first item was acquired. Here we get information about the studies of the textiles, their (stressful) use in pageants and fashion-shows, their "publication" in magazines and books etc. But it also details the history of such precious items as the female gown, the slashed or knitted jackets, the trouser, capes, hats and collars. To this should be added the presentation of the remains from an archaeologically excavated tailor shop in Bremen plus chapters on the production and caring for textiles in the 16th century. Finally there is a substantial presentation of the restoration techniques, which have been used in the demanding work to keep these fragile textiles fit for the 21st century.

This book is a bonanza to any scholar interested in the early modern period as well as avid reenactors and living historians.

Wide Gowns c. 1560 - 1590

The black velvet loose gown was decorated with applications and bottons. It was worn on top of an undergown or kirtle made of ivory silk and fitted with loose sleeves. Together, the items form a unique ensemble of a 16th century elite dress from Germany.

In the 16th century Anna of Sachsen together with her husband the Saxon elector, the Duke of Saxony, were among the staunch defenders of the protestant faith. As such she was also one of the important arbiters of what she and her contemporaries called "the German Fashion". But what did it look like?

"Thus we pray once again and in a friendly manner that you will keep our usual German dress with the pleated gowns and caps and not dress in Italian dresses with smooth skirts and un-pleated gowns" (1570) *(Quoted from: Katrin keller: Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen. 1532-1585. Verlag Friedrich Pustet 2010, p. 48 ff.)*

(From a letter written by Anna of Sachsen to her aunt, the Duchess Elisabeth von Mecklenburg-Güstrow, who is invited to the wedding of one of Anna's daughters).

Anna of Sachsen was obviously keen to have her aunt dress properly and not in theItalien and – as she elsewhere called it – naughty fashion of the French. The question is however what the German fashion really looked like and how it differed from the Italien (and French). And why this question was of such importance? This was a time, when trade-relations criss-crossed an ever expanding world, bringing luxuries to every courtier and upstart trying to make a mark in his world; and where the fashioning of one self through the wearing of immensely costly clothes and accessories was high on the agenda of everyone. Furthermore, this was at a time

Women from Mecklenburg. The pleating of the dresses are very obvious. From: Kostüme und Sittenbilder des 16. Jahrhunderts aus West- und Osteuropa, Orient, der Neuen Welt und Afrika - BSB Cod.icon. 361, Augsburg ?, 4. Viertel 16. Jh

Hans Mielich: The Duchess Anna of Bayern 1556, Wien. Her kirtle and pregnncy is obviously of the non-pleated (Italian) variety © Kunst- historisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie

Cranach the Younger: Anna of Denmark (Duchess of Saxony) After 1565. Notice her carefully pleated gown. Art historical museum in Innsbruck. Source: Wikipedia.

when a number of so-called "Costume Books" were published detailing the different costumes available throughout the known world (whether old or new). This was a time, when new and exotic fashions came and went. But apparently not for Anna.

A comparison of paintings and pictures from some of the Costume Books from the period give us an inkling about what was at stake. In the Italian fashion skirts got draped flat across a farthingale, while the German fashion demanded a well rounded and pleated skirt.

Pregnancies

However, looking at German or Scandinavian portraits from the period most women look more or less pregnant. Records of the size of their coveys seem to demonstrate this quite clearly.

This was also the case for Anna. Inside 17 years she bore 15 children, of which only 4

Loose flowing undergown from the back; meant to be worn underneath the loose black gown

outlived her. Probably physically worn out, she died at the age of 53. Compared to this, the fate of Anna of Bayern was less horrid; of six children, five survived her.

It seems obvious to link these huge numbers of children with one of the central tenets of the new protestant fait. Man was not destined to celibacy, but to marry and procreate. Anna and her husband were both staunch Protestants and endeavoured to live this new life to the full.

Thus we get these amusing differences between the pleated and obviously pregnant look of the German fashion and the narrow waistlines of the Spanish, Italian and French portraits, which advertised Catholicism and the endless rules prohibiting sex when feasting, fasting or just in general practising celibacy.

The current exhibition in Nürnberg is remarkable because one of the unique exhibits is the only gown preserved, which belongs to this group of long, loose gowns, which pregnant women in the 16th century were so fond of.

However, this precious object might have been constructed in the "Catholic Fashion" - long slim, and floating. We still lack a specimen of the pleated gowns, sported by Anna of Saxony.

Detail from Reformational Altar in Wittenberg by Lucas Cranach the Younger. Notice the pleated underskirts of the woman, covered in warm and luxurious capes, some of which are also pleated. Source: Wikipedia

For the apparel oft proclaims the man...

How come nudity played such an important role in the visualization of Renaissance man and woman? One reason was, it could be used to counterbalance the dressing up of people in the 16th century

In the 16th century people were deeply engaged in trying to locate the earthly Paradise in the newly found world across the oceans. At the same time they were busy trying to fathom what happened if they viewed their world through the lens of the Old Testament.

The possibility to read the New Testament in the vernacular has often been seen as one of the important results of the early reformation. This was the text, which John Wiclyffe had translated, Tyndale (1494 – 1536) burned at the stake for, and Luther translated while imprisoned at Wartburg. However, soon after, Martin Luther began - together with his friends - to translate the Old Testament into German he began to fulfil a task, which probably had even more farreaching consequences and which subsequently inspired Tyndale and other protestant reformers all over Europe.

To a certain extent people knew the stories in the New Testament through preaching, popular art, woodcuts (Paupers Bible) etc. However, knowledge of the Old Testament must have been – to say the least – extremely patchy. In 1534, though, it was made available in a German translation to those, who could afford to buy a copy of the whole Bible. At the same time a long list of prominent artists began to ponder the story of Genesis and its broader meaning in a world, which located the earthly Paradise in a tangible geographical setting.

Clothes make the man. From: Hofkleiderbuch des Herzogs Wilhelm IV. und Albrecht V. 1508-1551 - BSB Cgm 1951, München, 16. Jh, fol 460

One result was the widespread preoccupation with the naked Adam and Eve in the works of Massacio, Dürer, Cranach, Holbein, Michelangelo, Henri Met de Bles, Jan Brueghel the Elder, Hieronymus Bosch and countless others; another, the numerous theological commentaries on the Pentateuch and the geographical treatises on the exotic whereabouts of this earthly Paradise.

One of the intriguing facts of this art is its preoccupation with the naked body before Adam and Eve fell and entered the earthly world. As is well known, God – according to Gen. 3:21 – "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (KJV). Nevertheless, this part of the story remained virtually unpainted. Apparently it was more important for the artists to paint Adam and Eve

Charity

By Lucas Cranach the Elder (1537 - 1550)

Crannach explored the concept of nakedness as the prime symbol of innocent charity in his paintings of mothers with their children. © The National Gallery. Source: Wikipedia

"That was my real figure from behind, because I had become fat and large." From the Klaidungsbüchlein, made for Matthäus Schwarz, refording his costumes 1520 - 1560. From: First Book of Fashion. The Book of Clothes of Matthaeus and Veit Konrad Schwarz of Augsburg. Ed . by Ulinka Rublack and Maria Hayward, Bloomsbury Academic Illustrations 2015

before the fall and in the act of expulsion (when they were still naked). Sometimes their private parts were covered with fig-leaves; sometimes not; (and sometimes fig-leaves or pants were added at a later and more prudish stage.) Whatever the case, artists obviously went to great lengths to explore the nude state of innocence as opposed to its later fallen - and clothed – version, which was rendered in countless portraits depicting the costumes of men and women.

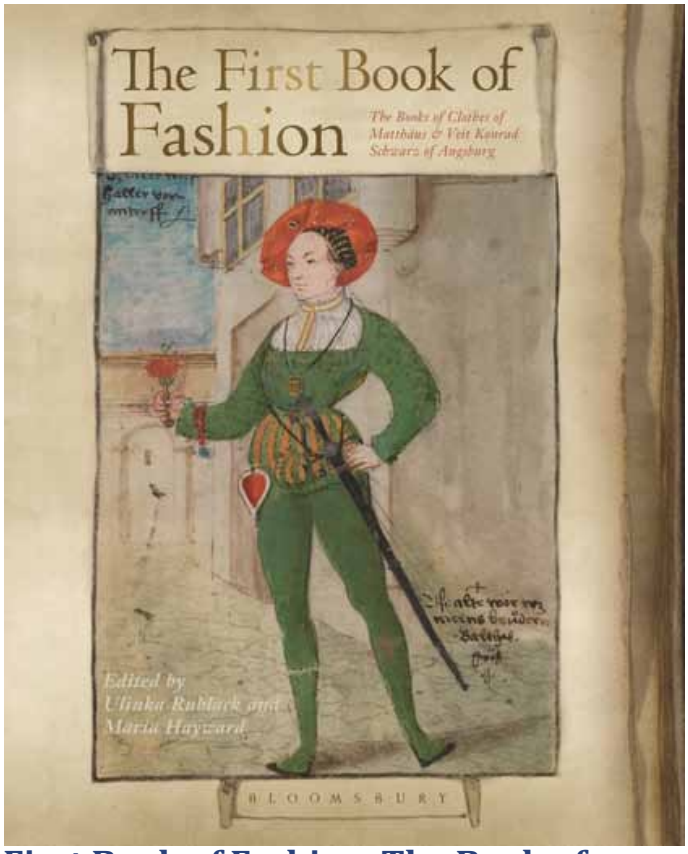
This motive was curiously imported into a number of the "books of costumes" which were either published during this period or produced for the private contemplation of the role of clothes and how they were designed to "make the man". Nakedness became the symbol par excellence of the pre-fallen innocence, while dressing-up the necessay posturing of a man on his way to power and glory.

SOURCE:

Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory
By Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass.
Cambridge University press 2000

History of Paradise. The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition.
By Jena Delumeau.
University of Illinois Press 2000

The First Book of Fashion



First Book of Fashion. The Book of Clothes of Matthaeus and Veit Konrad Schwarz of Augsburg

Ed . by Ulinka Rublack and Maria Hayward, Bloomsbury Academic Illustrations 2015
ISBN: 9780857857682

ABSTRACT:

This captivating book arguably reproduces the most extraordinary primary source documents in fashion history. Providing a revealing window onto the Renaissance, they chronicle how style-conscious accountant Matthäus Schwarz and his son Veit Konrad experienced life through clothes, and climbed the social ladder through fastidious management of self-image. These bourgeois dandies' agenda resonates as powerfully today as it did in the sixteenth century: one has to dress to impress, and dress to impress they did. The Schwarzes recorded their sartorial triumphs as well as failures in life in a series of portraits by illuminists over 60 years, which have been comprehensively reproduced in full color for the first time. These exquisite illustrations are accompanied by the Schwarzes' fashion-focussed yet at times deeply personal captions, which render the pair the world's first fashion bloggers and pioneers of everyday portraiture.

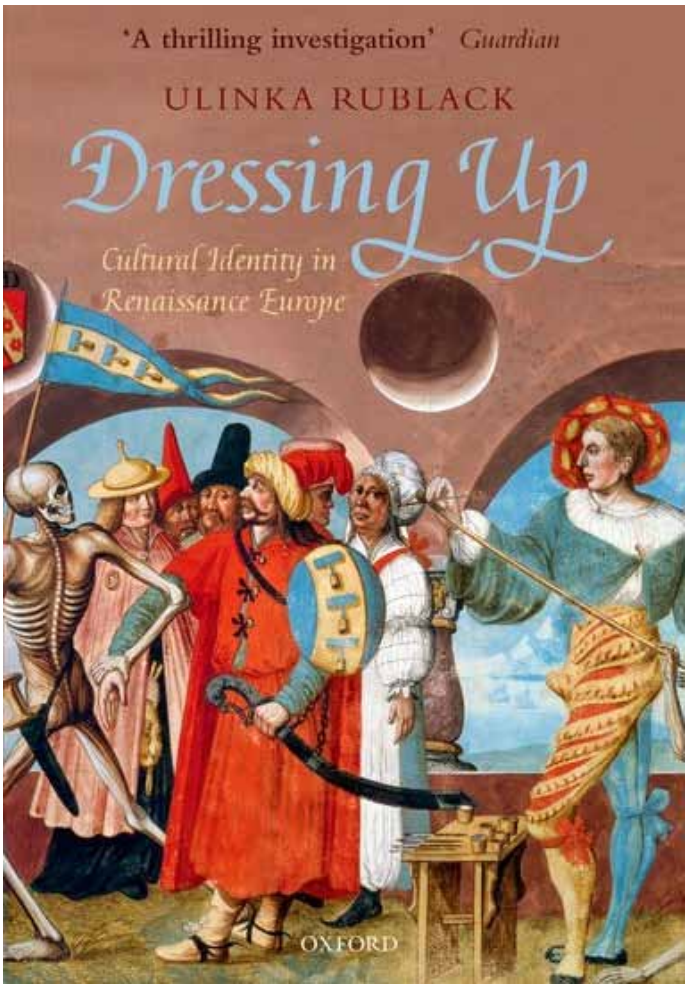
The First Book of Fashion demonstrates how dress – seemingly both ephemeral and trivial – is a potent tool in the right hands. Beyond this, it colorfully recaptures the experience of Renaissance life and reveals the importance of clothing to the aesthetics and every day culture of the period.

Historians Ulinka Rublack's and Maria Hayward's insightful commentaries create an unparalleled portrait of sixteenth-century dress that is both strikingly modern and thorough. This first English translation also includes a bespoke pattern by TONY award-winning costume designer and dress historian Jenny Tiramani, from which readers can recreate one of Schwarz's most elaborate and politically significant outfits.

Table of Contents:

BOOK REVIEW:

Dressing Up



Dressing Up. Cultural identity in Renaissance Europe
By Ulinka Rublack
Oxford University Press
ISBN: 9780199645183

In August 1524 Luther had a livid row with local artisans and burghers in the small town of Orlamünde, where Karlstadt, his former friend and comrade in arms had set up shop. Karlstadt, who was of noble origin, was highly egalitarian in his leanings plus harboured iconoclastic and other extreme views, which Luther regarded as heretical.

On that particular morning Luther arrived to sort out some of the views held by the local elders, who had sent a letter addressing him as "our spiritual teacher Martin Luther, our brother in Christ".

Luther was flaming mad. He could only see this as a gross attack on his superior scholarly authority as a doctor of theology. As the burghers proceeded with their lack of reverence, Luther threw a tantrum and demanded the horses to be hitched to the wagon. In the end he was somewhat mollified, but resisted in taking off his doctor's beret, which was flaming red – same colour as the traditional beret of the pope.

Luther was never painted with a red beret, and later paintings by Cranach actually shows him habitually dressed in a black beret. That red mattered to him, however, is apparent from the fact that he habitually was shown with a white shirt with black edges, a red vest or jacket and a black coat. In the end this is how he and his "visual designer", Cranach the Elder, decided he should look. Dressed in black as the rest of the reformers and with a black beret, but always with a slight purple tinge around his neck, signifying that although Luther was not pope, he was definitely on par.

Such is how we envision him: Preaching to his congregation or celebrating baptism, communion and penitence; and thus crafting the new church, materialized through the people showing of their sense of moral indignity, honour and reliability through their comportment - be it as members of the local council, in their homes, in the bosom of their families,while gardening or in church.

Martin Luther with a red band around his neck. School of Lucas Cranch. Source: Wikipedia

The beautiful small vignette about Luther in Orlamünde is brought to us in a recent book about "dressing up", which tells us how cultural identity in Renaissance Europe was formed through a spectacular new obsession with clothes, their colours and form. In the book the author, Ulinka Rublack presents us with a cornucopia of 156 fascinating illustrations and countless stories about Renaissance people, and to what extent they regarded their clothes as markers of not only social, but also personal, national and religious identity.

Dressing Up shows why clothes made history and history can be about clothes. It imagines the Renaissance afresh by considering people´s appearances: what they wore, how this made them move, what images they created, and how all this made people feel about themselves.

Using an astonishing array of sources, Ulinka Rublack argues that an appreciation of people´s relationship to appearances and images is essential to an understanding of what it meant to live at this time - and ever since. We read about the head accountant of a sixteenth-century merchant firm who commissioned 136 images of himself elaborately dressed across a lifetime; students arguing with their mother about which clothes they could have; or Nuremberg women wearing false braids dyed red or green. This brilliantly illustrated book draws on a range of insights across the disciplines and allows us to see an entire period in new ways. In integrating its findings into larger arguments about consumption, visual culture, the Reformation, German history, and the relationship of European and global history, it promises to re-shape the field.

The book, which won the Roland H. Bainton Prize for History 2011, is highly recommended.

Dancing in Augsburg c. 1500. Source: Wikipedia

The Dream of Lancelot.
From the Castle in Siedlęcin. Ludwig Schneider / Wikimedia.

Exterior of castle in Siedlęcin. Photo by © Krzysztof Góralski

The Castle in Siedlęcin

The ducal tower in Siedlęcin near Jelenia Góra (Lower Silesia, Poland) is one of the most impressive and important medieval monuments in Poland.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, the Duchy of Jawor and Świdnica was one of the richest regions in Central Europe. It was strongly influenced by the royal court in Prague. The keep in Siedlęcin was one of more than fifty castles built by Bolko I and his descendants. The ducal tower house in Siedlęcin is one of the most important medieval residences of this type in Central Europe. It's very exceptional because of the huge dimensions of both the Great Hall, the existing fourteenth century paintings found within, and the high level of authenticity of the entire monument.

Archaeology

An archaeological project, started in 2008, have provided information about not only the tower house itself but also the form and use of other buildings and constructions related to the tower house in both the medieval and more modern periods.

The keep is one of the largest (22,2 x 14,35 m) and best-preserved examples of such buildings in Central Europe. Henry I, Duke of Jawor, and third son of Bolko I commissioned its construction in 1313 or 1314.

He was born around 1290 and assumed control of the duchy in 1312. He and his wife, Agnes of Bohemia, also commissioned the medieval mural paintings in the great hall on the second floor around 1345 – 1346.

Unquestionably this is the most impressive part of the tower. The great hall in Siedlęcin tower house was obviously designed for ceremonial purposes: it was high up and it had this rich interior decoration. Architectural research shows that the floor containing the hall was originally divided into three rooms, but some of the interior walls were demolished in the seventeenth century when the tower was being used as a granary.

The Murals

One of the unique features of the castle - and well worth a detour - are the murals preserved in the great hall.

The completed polychrome paintings on the south wall of the Great Hall cover more than 32 square meters; they were made using the al secco technique. After the paintings were discovered at the end of the nineteenth century, they were subjected to a restoration in 1936. Research in the 1990's resulted in the first monograph describing the paintings. Not only the real meaning of the paintings (some scenes changed during improper restoration) but also the reasons of the misinterpretations was recovered. The latest restoration work on the paintings was undertaken in 2006 and 2007.

The paintings were obviously planned and financed by Duke Henry I and his wife in 1345-1346. Art historians suggested that the artist probably came from the north

Full series of paintings in the great hall in the Castle at Siedlęcin. Source Wikipedia/ InnaIna

Knights fighting. From the murals from Siedlęcin. © Marek Budzyń

east of Switzerland, since the murals show the influence of the Swiss Waltensburg Master ('Waltensburger Meister'). One theory is that the artist came to Świdnica and Jawor in the retinue of the wife of Duke Henrys' nephew, Agnes von Habsburg (1315-1392). Agnes was the daughter of the Duke of Austria, Leopold I, from the House of Habsburg, and Catherine of Savoy, which meant she had close ties with Switzerland.

The paintings were never finished. It seems that after the death of Henry the I in 1346 the work was suspended and later (after 1368 or 1369, when the castle was sold), the new owners of the tower, the noble family of Redern, hoped to continue the work with the assistance of one of the Swiss master's students. Unfortunately this seems not to have come to fruition. The paintings in Siedlęcin are exceptional: their topic is principally profane, something very rare to survive from this period. The main subject of the murals is the romantic story of one of the most famous legendary knights of the Middle Ages; their motive is now recognized as that of the legend of Sir Lancelot of the Lake as told by Chrétien de Troyes.

Chrétien de Troyes

The French poet, Chrétien de Troyes is known as the author of five Arthurian romances: Erec; Cligès; Lancelot, ou Le Chevalier à la charrette; Yvain, ou Le Chevalier au lion; and Perceval, ou Le Conte du Graal. The non-Arthurian tale Guillaume d'Angleterre, based on the legend of St. Eustace, may also have been written by Chrétien.

His tales, written in the vernacular, followed the appearance in France of Wace's Roman de Brut (1155), a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia regum Britanniae, which introduced Britain and the Arthurian legend to continental Europe.

Little is known of Chrétien's life. However, some time in 1181, Chrétien de Troyes, worked at the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine's eldest daughter, Marie of Champagne (1145-1197). Here he completed his Le Chevalier de la charrette. We know that Chrétien was the first to develop the character of Lancelot. If we are to believe his own words, 'the material and the treatment of it Le Chevalier de la charrette were 'given and furnished to him by the Countess'. Afterwards Lancelot's fame spread to the most distant parts of Medieval Europe. This resulted in an impressive series of translations and rewritings in different languages, as the romance continued to develop as a narrative form, of which he was the initiator

In Chrétien's romances Lancelot features as an exaggerated parody of the lover, who is servile to the god of love and to his imperious mistress Guinevere, wife of his overlord Arthur.

The Siedlęcin murals are based on the Vulgate Lancelot, depicting, among others, the court of Arthur's queen, Guinevere, her abduction by the wicked knight, Meleagant and her freeing by Lancelot. There are also representations of Lancelot sleeping underneath an apple tree and Sir Lionel sleeping on guard, the duel between Lancelot and Sir Tarquin and Lancelot with Sir Kay. There are other images as well, but their subject matter is sacred rather than secular, the central and largest figure being the one of St. Christopher, patron saint of travellers, pilgrims and knights.

VISIT:

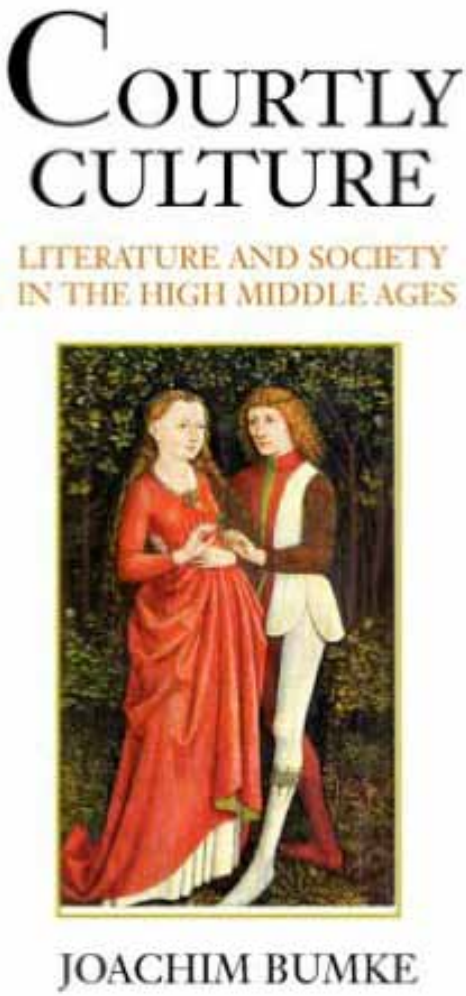
Medieval Ducal Tower in Siedlecin, Poland (official site)

The ducal tower in Siedlęcin is open to visitors every day.
High season (May – October): 9.00 – 18.00
Low season (November – April): 10.00 – 16.00

Camelot © Marek Budzyń

READ MORE:

Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages
By Joachim Bumke
University of California Press 1991
ISBN-10: 0520066340
ISBN-13: 978-0520066342

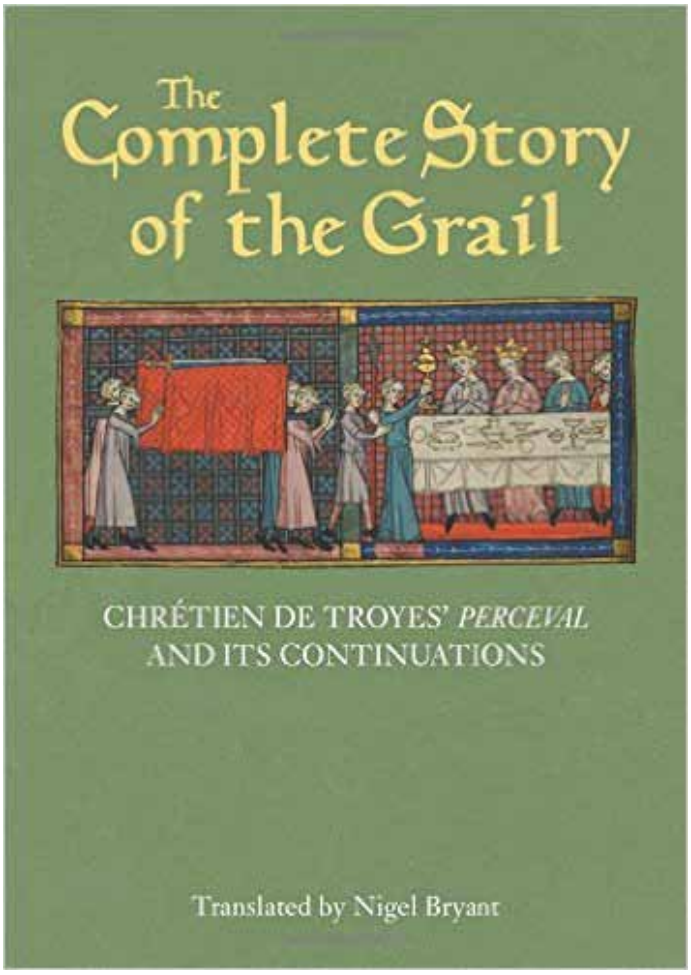


ABSTRACT:

Every aspect of "courtly culture" comes to life in Joachim Bumke's extraordinarily rich and well-documented presentation. A renowned medievalist with an encyclopedic knowledge of original sources and a passion for history, Bumke overlooks no detail, from the material realities of aristocratic society--the castles and clothing, weapons and transportation, food, drink, and table etiquette--to the behavior prescribed and practiced at tournaments, knighting ceremonies, and great princely feasts. The courtly knight and courtly lady, and the transforming idea of courtly love, are seen through the literature that celebrated them, and we learn how literacy among an aristocratic laity spread from France through Germany and became the basis of a cultural revolution.

The book by Bumke was originally published in German under the title: Höfische Kultur. Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter 1 - 2. Deutsche Taschenbuch-Verlag, München 1986

Perceval or Le Conte du Graal, Roman written between 1181-1185. From a manuscrit copied in Paris 1330 © BnF, Manuscrits, Français 12577 fol. 18v.



The Complete Story of the Grail
Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval and its continuations
By Nigel Bryant
Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2015
ISBN: 9781843844006

ABSTRACT:

The mysterious and haunting Grail makes its first appearance in literature in Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval at the end of the twelfth century. But Chrétien never finished his poem, leaving an unresolved story and an incomplete picture of the Grail. It was, however, far too attractive an idea to leave. Not only did it inspire quite separate works; his own unfinished poem was continued and finally completed by no fewer than four other writers.

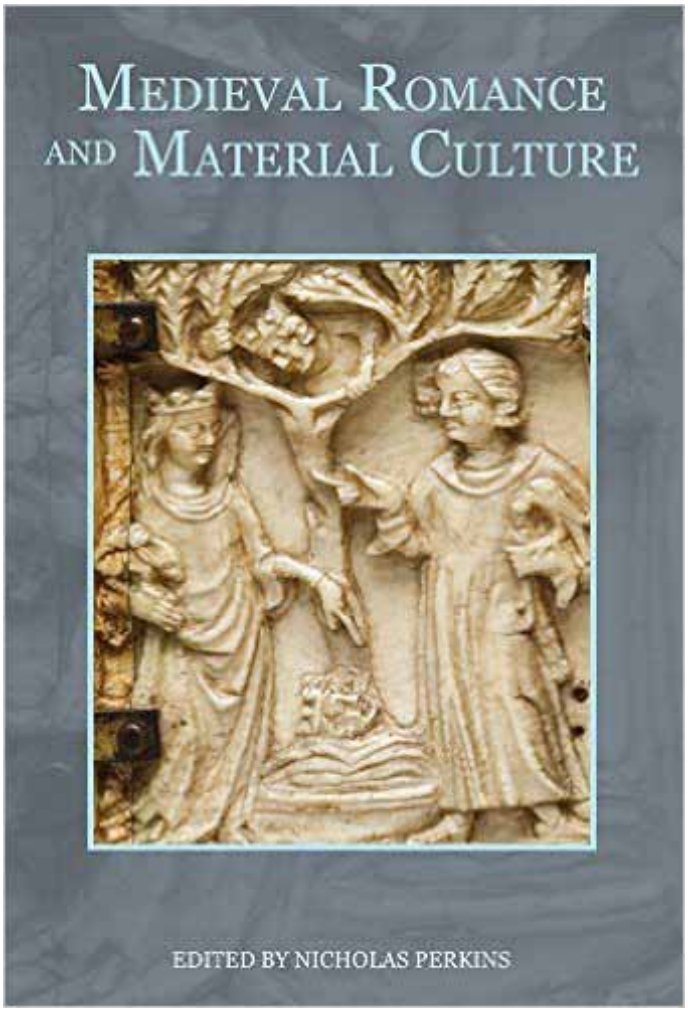
The Complete Story of the Grail is the first ever translation of the whole of the rich and compelling body of tales contained in Chrétien's poem and its four Continuations, which are finally attracting the scholarly attention they deserve. Besides Chrétien's original text, there are the anonymous First Continuation (translated here in its fullest version), the Second Continuation attributed to Wauchier de Denain, and the intriguing Third and Fourth Continuations - probably written simultaneously, with no knowledge of each other's work - by Manessier and Gerbert de Montreuil. Two other poets were drawn to create preludes explaining the background to Chrétien's story, and translated here also are their works: The Elucidation Prologue and Bliocadran.

Only in this, The Story of the Grail's complete form, can the reader appreciate the narrative skill and invention of the medieval poets and their surprising responses to Chrétien's theme - not least their crucial focus on the knight as a crusader. Equally, Chrétien's original poem was almost always copied in conjunction with one or more of the Continuations, so this translation represents how most medieval readers would have encountered it.

Nigel Bryant's previous translations from Medieval French include Perlesvaus - the High Book of the Grail, Robert de Boron's trilogy Merlin and the Grail, the Medieval Romance of Alexander, The True Chronicles of Jean le Bel and Perceforest.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Nigel Bryant has worked as a producer for BBC Radio 3 and as head of drama at Marlborough College. He is very well known for hus numerous translations and commentaries to medieval romances.



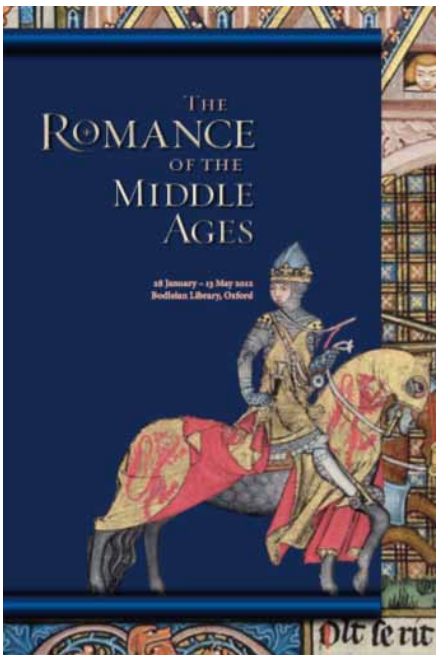
Medieval Romance and Material Culture
By Nicholas Perkins (Ed)
Boydell & Brewer 2015
ISBN: 9781843843900

Medieval romance narratives glitter with the material objects that were valued and exchanged in late-medieval society: lovers' rings and warriors' swords, holy relics and desirable or corrupted bodies. Romance, however, is also a genre in which such objects make meaning on numerous levels, and not always in predictable ways. These new essays examine from diverse perspectives how romances respond to material culture, but also show how romance as a genre helps to constitute and transmit that culture.

Focusing on romances circulating in Britain and Ireland between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, individual chapters address such questions as the relationship between objects and protagonists in romance narrative; the materiality of male and female bodies; the interaction between visual and verbal representations of romance; poetic form and manuscript textuality; and how a nineteenth-century edition of medieval romances provoked artists to homage and satire.

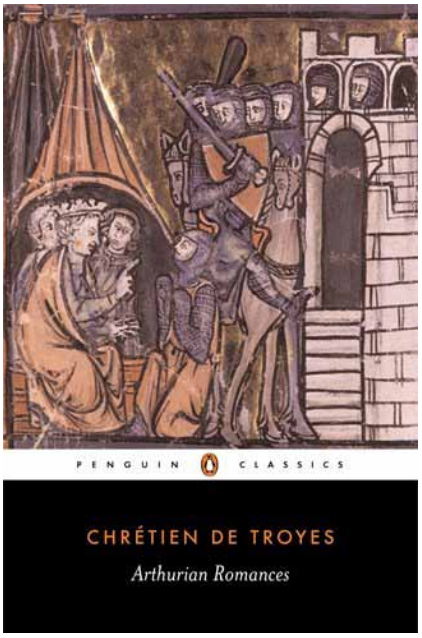
Nicholas Perkins is Associate Professor and Tutor in English at St Hugh's College, University of Oxford.

The Romance of the Middle Ages



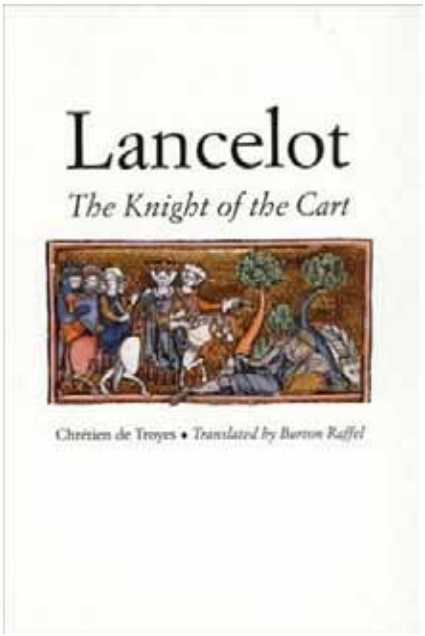
The amazing variety of medieval romance continues to feed our imagination. In 2012 the Bodleian Library in Oxford organised a major exhibition, which revealed how its compelling stories have inspired writers and artists across the centuries from the early modern period through medievalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to contemporary versions and adaptations.

The website continues to be an important resource



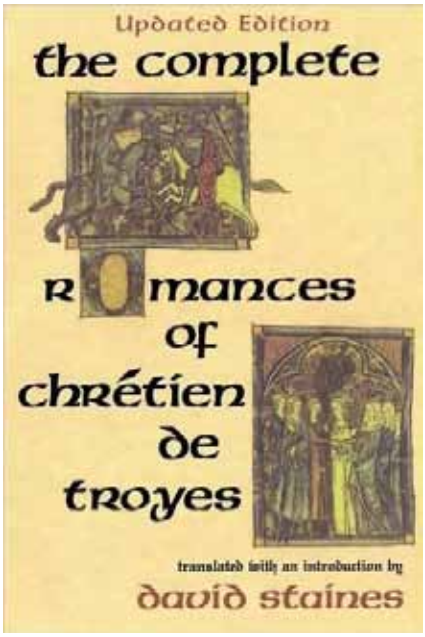
Arthurian Romances (Penguin Classics)

By Chrétien de Troyes (Author), William W. Kibler (Translator), Carleton W. Carroll (Translator)
Publisher: Penguin Classics; Revised edition 2004
ISBN-10: 0140445218
ISBN-13: 978-0140445213



Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart (Chretien de Troyes Romances)

by Chretien de Troyes (Author), Burton Raffel (Translator)
Yale University Press; New edition 1997
ISBN-10: 0300071205
ISBN-13: 978-0300071207



The Complete Romances of Chretien de Troyes

By David Staines (Translator, Foreword)
Indiana University Press; Reprint edition 1991
ISBN-10: 0253207878
ISBN-13: 978-0253207876