

# Introduction

## Fashioning the Self in Transcultural Settings: The Importance of Dress in the Historical and Cultural Sciences<sup>\*</sup>

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The question “how clothes made history and how history can be about clothes”<sup>1</sup> has gained increased importance in the Historical and Cultural Sciences. Among them count studies on fashion and clothing, research on the self and least but not least on self-narratives.

Dress has played an important role in the history and historiography of the western world for quite some time. Aside from art historians and anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers and semiologists have shown a particular interest in dress, fashion, and their manifold meanings.<sup>2</sup> Scholars of all disciplines would concur that dress is a socially relevant factor. Clothing can be taken as a communicative act and is related to identity.<sup>3</sup> It has enabled individuals to become part of a social group, as well as to distance themselves thereof. At least in modern times, dress has often been connected to fashion. And – as Georg Simmel has put it –, “fashion is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation; [...]. At the same time it satisfies in no less degree the need of differentiation, the tendency towards dissimilarity, the desire for change and contrast [...]. Thus fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity, the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and change.”<sup>4</sup>

Some scholars assume that in Europe up until the Middle Ages, it was possible to identify people as adherents of specific societal groups by the wearing of

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<sup>1</sup> Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Odile Blanc, “Historiographie du Vêtement: Un bilan”, in: *Le vêtement - Histoire, archéologie et symbolique vestimentaire au Moyen-Âge (Cahiers du Léopard d'Or)* (dirigés par Michel Pastoureau) Vol. 1, (1989): 7-33.

<sup>3</sup> Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2004), 177-178.

<sup>4</sup> Georg Simmel, “Fashion,” in: *International Quarterly* (New York), X (October 1904): 130-155 (pp. 133-34).



became a precondition for participation in life at court.<sup>11</sup> Dress became an expression of change in society and fashion turned into an inescapable social reality (*fait social total*). In the eighteenth century dress had still a constitutive power for identity, but the commercialized market gained more and more influence.<sup>12</sup> This shift was accompanied, as Barbara Vinken argues, by a gendered change in paradigms. The lofty, spectacular staging of the premodern nobility has been followed, with the end of the Ancien Régime, by the suppression of everything fashionable as an expression of ‘femininity’ in the sphere of the public and the political. The creation of bourgeois society resulted in uniformly clad male bodies that have been reduced to their mere functional aspects. As a result, fashion became the sole domain of the females, of whom western societies have ever since expected a form of striking decorous staging that evokes sexual desirability.<sup>13</sup> Colonial fantasies of the ‘Oriental’ corrupting all virility added to this image of female fashion, which superseded the aristocratic conception. Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered fashionable Paris as an “Oriental hotbed of sin”, which threatened to pervert ‘natural’ gender relations.<sup>14</sup>

In Social History, which has been extended by Cultural History, “dress was taken to *make* identity, rather than merely to signify its anterior existence.”<sup>15</sup> The connection between dress and authority was made clear in the Middle Ages through the symbolic act of investiture of clothes. The bestowal of a higher state or church function was connected to the donning of festive garments.<sup>16</sup> Clothes conferred a new identity on their wearer.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, such a connection between dress and authority can be shown for scholars. It was through dress that status and prestige of this group was established.<sup>18</sup> Only in the Enlightenment period did the academic dress code change, while still retaining many of the earlier norms in the form of traditions.<sup>19</sup> One of the most impressive examples of performativity of dress during the European Early Modern era can be found in the tradition of female cross-dressing, which has been studied by Rudolf Dekker and

<sup>11</sup> Dinges, *Von der Lesbarkeit der Welt*, 101.

<sup>12</sup> Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 178.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Vinken, *Angezogen: Das Geheimnis der Mode* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-116.

<sup>15</sup> Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 177-178.

<sup>16</sup> Jan Keupp, “Macht und Mode. Politische Interaktion im Zeichen der Kleidung,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 86, no. 2 (2004): 251-281.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-4.

<sup>18</sup> Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, *Gelehrte im Bild: Repräsentation, Darstellung und Wahrnehmung einer sozialen Gruppe im Mittelalter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Marian Füssel, “Talar und Doktorhut. Die akademische Kleiderordnung als Medium sozialer Distinktion,” in: Barbara Krug-Richter and Ruth-E. Mohrmann (eds.), *Frühneuzeitliche Universitätskulturen. Kulturhistorische Perspektiven auf die Hochschulen in Europa* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2009), 246-271.

Lotte van de Pol already three decades ago.<sup>20</sup> While they demonstrated on the basis of their collected sources how gender was created by dress, more recent studies have emphasized dynamic aspects and the amenability of clothing to multiple ascriptions of meaning, also and not least for the Renaissance. Focusing on the material and visual dimensions of clothes these investigations break new ground for “the language of clothes” and its relation to ‘Self-Fashioning.’<sup>21</sup> One of the most popular examples for this relation is the costume book of Matthäus Schwarz of Augsburg, (1496-1564).<sup>22</sup>

Even though self-narratives are a treasure trove for the study of material culture, as they contain rich information on the appearance, use and value of dress, such aspects of material culture are only dealt with in passing in the current volume. The main heuristic interest herein is focused on the uses and significance of dress in self-narratives. Through determining the role of dress for one’s self-fashioning in transcultural settings, the aspect of material culture is included in the research on autobiographical texts. As mentioned above numerous studies have emphasized the great potential of dress: it can create and transform identities, signify belongings as well as produce and mark differences. But how can these findings be made to bear fruit in the realm of research on self-narratives?

With regard to self-narratives, consensus has been reached that it is not the establishment of ‘truth’ in the form of verifiable facts that makes ego documents such fascinating texts. Instead, they afford us with unique insights into how individuals describe their world and make sense of it and how they define themselves in relation to other people.<sup>23</sup> Dress in this respect can take on many meanings ranging from a real object that fulfills a practical purpose to a sign, a code, or a medium for something else. This does not, however, entail that the authors of self-narratives are to be seen as autonomous individuals who are completely free in choosing how to stage themselves through entirely intentional, deliberate acts. Such a western concept is incompatible with the transcultural setting as it is applied here nor can it be confirmed on the basis of empirical findings in general.<sup>24</sup> Individualism is only one of many concepts of personhood that finds ex-

<sup>20</sup> Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte Constance van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997. First published in 1989).

<sup>21</sup> Rublack, *Dressing up*.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 51-79; Valentin Groebner, “Inside Out: Clothes, Dissimulation, and the Arts of Accounting in the Autobiography of Matthäus Schwarz, 1496-1574,” *Representations* 66, no. 1 (1999): 100-121; Gabriele Mentges, “Fashion, Time and the Consumption of a Renaissance Man in Germany: the Costume Book of Matthäus Schwarz of Augsburg, 1496-1564,” *Gender & History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 382-402.

<sup>23</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 15-19. Eadem, “Witness or False Witness: Metrics of Authenticity, Collective I-Formations, and the Ethic of Verification in First-Person Testimony,” *Biography* 35, no. 4 (2012): 590-626.

<sup>24</sup> Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich, “From the Individual to the Person. Challenging Autobiography Theory,” in: Claudia Ulbrich, Kaspar von Greyerz, and Lorenz Heiligen-

pression in ego documents. Or, put differently, performance and performativity are closely intertwined. Many questions connected to person and personhood need to be asked to decipher the concrete meaning of dress as described in an autobiographic text. These questions include: “Which aspects of the person do authors highlight in their texts? What are the roles played by the body, objects, relationships, bonds and places? Do people construct themselves according to ideal-typical models (and hence tell us something about the values of their era), or do they imagine their lives as counterpoints to the existing order? Do they create a world in their writing, which is far removed from their own reality? Which gender systems, group cultures and inclusion/exclusion mechanisms become visible? Where exactly is the dividing line between the sexes/genders? To what extent are the ideas of personhood, as articulated in self-narratives, dependent upon situation and context?”<sup>25</sup>

This volume aims to approach self-fashioning in its multiple meanings and understandings. In some respects, it addresses issues that have been raised by Stephen Greenblatt in his 1980 study “Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare.”<sup>26</sup> Greenblatt stipulated two premises: In sixteenth century England people recognized a sense of a self, and, they possessed awareness that the self can be formed or melded. In his view, there existed “a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires – and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity.”<sup>27</sup>

Greenblatt dates the coupling of an awareness of self with the opening of new avenues for expression and change, back to the Renaissance period. Yet earlier epochs have also recognized a ‘self’ and exhibited practices of its development, for example in the *imitatio Christi* or the veneration of saints.<sup>28</sup> The changing discourses on the individual and the community that developed in the transition period from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern era afforded unique historical conditions for a new self-fashioning as a negotiation process between individual expression and its restrictions by social structures and conditions. As Greenblatt argues, “fashioning oneself and being fashioned by cultural institutions – family, religion, state [were] inseparably intertwined.”<sup>29</sup> At the core of his understanding of self-fashioning is the notion of identity as a performative act, such as practiced through narration.

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setzer (eds.), *Mapping the 'I'. Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 15-33.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Greenblatt: *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). We would like to use this opportunity to thank Babette Reicherdt who has given us important cues to Stephen Greenblatt und Barbara Vinken.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>28</sup> The importance of mundane rituals for the expression of the self is often overlooked as Susan Crane has shown (Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 179).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 256.

The development and expression of the self is preconditioned in an aesthetic, social, psychological and intellectual way by the dialectic of the individual freedom of expression of the self on the one hand and the limitations that existing structures impose on the self on the other. The poststructuralist and anthropological theories of Michel Foucault, Clifford Geertz, and others influence his 'framework.'

Greenblatt ultimately remains very close to a linear history of the self, a fact that has led to many objections. Susan Crane, for instance, has emphasized "that the history of the self is a more intricate, nonlinear, even contradictory story than its scholarship has yet recognized."<sup>30</sup> For the Middle Ages she concluded that the "(...) rhetorics of disguise and masking, of cross-dress and heraldry, illustrate the rich elaboration of personal significance around physical signs that is only possible when appearance, not hidden interiority, is taken to be meaningful."<sup>31</sup> Dror Wahrman alerts us to the non-linear, contradictory nature of the history of the self when he stresses for the eighteenth century that the self was "outwardly or socially turned."<sup>32</sup> During that century the significance of dress was more limited than in earlier or later centuries: "Eighteenth-century identities, by contrast, could readily be established by *not* seeing through clothes."<sup>33</sup> Other critics of Greenblatt's concept have predominantly lamented a lack of theoretical precision in his use of terms such as history, culture and subjectivity, which they saw as the root cause for some of the uncritical reception that Greenblatt's approach has received. Nevertheless, self-fashioning has remained a fascinating concept.

In this volume we want to address the relationship of dress and self-fashioning in a transcultural context. In a broader sense, transculturalism refers to processes and practices that belong to more than one culture, or play themselves out in and between different cultural settings, as well as within cultures.<sup>34</sup> Hybrid forms and cultural interdependences deserve particular attention in this respect. Such an understanding of the term differs greatly from a more holistic interpretation, according to which culture is seen as a homogeneous space, which can be clearly distinguished from other cultures by its clear-cut borders and boundaries. The transcultural perspective understood in this broader sense challenges primarily any precept and definition of culture within the sphere of the national state, which sees culture under the presumption of the existence of an ethnically homogeneous unit or a clear-cut geographical space. Our approach not only deals

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<sup>30</sup> Crane, 177.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>32</sup> Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 179.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>34</sup> Claudia Ulbrich, Hans Medick, and Angelika Schaser, "Selbstzeugnis und Person. Transkulturelle Perspektiven" [Introduction], in: Claudia Ulbrich, Hans Medick, and Angelika Schaser (eds.), *Selbstzeugnis und Person. Transkulturelle Perspektiven* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), 1-20 (pp. 15-19); Hans Medick, "Einführung: Kulturelle Mehrfachzugehörigkeiten," in: Ibid., 181.

with culturally and nationally defined spaces, but also is also applicable to social milieus, religious or gender groups. Methodologically, the question of transferability of concepts obtains key importance in the interdisciplinary dialogue.<sup>35</sup>

A transcultural focus, as James Amelang has emphasized, necessitates a “move beyond the original context of our texts to assess them in the light of their presence and interpretation in other cultural contexts.”<sup>36</sup> This approach was implemented in this volume by engaging in a dialogue between students of different eras, disciplines, and academic traditions who have dealt with the question of how individuals in various cultures visualized or wrote about dress in their self-narratives.

### *Encounters with dress in transcultural settings*

This volume assembles case studies on various cultures, eras and geographical regions, which focus on the interplay of body, dress and person. About half of the contributions deal with the Ottoman Empire, with an important focus on the relations with European nations or traditions, and on the presentation of one’s own political entity towards a foreign power and its representatives. Beyond the prism of dress these articles contribute important facets to the history of the Ottoman Empire. This volume contains three parts, which are chronologically ordered and refer to different geographic areas. The first part unites a group of essays under the heading “The Self in Performance,” which focuses on concepts of personhood in different cultural milieus.

Christine Vogel in her article “The Kaftan and the Sword. Dress and Diplomacy in Ottoman-French Relations Around 1700,” addresses the *diplomatic persona* in a transcultural setting. Her analysis of the account of the French ambassador Charles de Ferriol on his presumably failed diplomatic mission to the Sublime Porte in Istanbul, provides an impressive depiction of the complex political realities after the Treaty of Karlowitz (Jan. 26, 1699). After having approached Topkapı Palace in the impressive company of some 4,000 janissaries, Ferriol refused to put down his sword when he was expected to don a new ceremonial robe bestowed on him by the sultan. As a consequence he is denied access to the Ottoman sultan. If one aims to understand Ferriol’s description of this scandalous occurrence, it does not suffice to analyze the function of attire in an individual, social, or cultural sense.

<sup>35</sup> Elke Hartmann and Gabriele Jancke, “Roupens Erinnerungen eines armenischen Revolutionärs (1921/1951) im transepochnalen Dialog. Konzepte und Kategorien der Selbstzeugnisforschung zwischen Universalität und Partikularität,” in: Claudia Ulbrich, Hans Medick, and Angelika Schaser (eds.), *Selbstzeugnis und Person. Transkulturelle Perspektiven* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), 31-74 (pp. 70-71).

<sup>36</sup> James Amelang, “Transcultural Autobiography, or The Lives of Others,” in: Claudia Ulbrich, Hans Medick, and Angelika Schaser (eds.), *Selbstzeugnis und Person. Transkulturelle Perspektiven* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), 77-86 (p. 79).



In a diplomatic context such as the reception of the French ambassador at the Ottoman Court, dress takes on an important significance as a means of voicing political demands and of demonstrating national predilections and values.

Gabriele Jancke discusses in her contribution “Exchanging, Protecting, Collecting, Signifying Clothes, Person and Civilization in Georg Forster’s ‘A Voyage Round the World (1777),’” aspects of the milieu of scholars in the Enlightenment period. The starting point of her remarks is the observation that Georg Forster writes in great detail about the clothes worn by the natives of the South Sea islands he visits, while hardly mentioning anything about his own attire. This is somewhat surprising given that in his time, dress was still imbued with ritual meaning that contained complex markers of belonging and hierarchy. Jancke shows that Forster construes himself as an author and scholar for whom foreign clothes are not only collectibles but markers that show the developmental state of a civilization. While the others whom he encounters on his journey are reduced to mere objects in his description, he stylizes himself as a competent observer who has the capacity to collect, order and classify evidence. Jancke presents Forster’s travelogue as a source for a new concept of scholarship, based on natural anthropology with a strong sense of hierarchy. As an observer he is himself invisible, while the production of his travelogue performs a rich and culturally significant practice in a transcultural setting.

Angela Heimen focuses on the performative power to act out gender and on the interrelation between gender and dressing practices. She refers to Anne Lister who was born into a well-off family of landowners in Yorkshire. In many respects, her life seemed incompatible with the expectations and gender norms of her elevated social circle. In 1806, at age 25, she began writing in her diary, which she kept in a coded language to protect its privacy. By the time of her death in 1840, it had grown into a voluminous text of some 6,600 pages. In her article “‘I cannot dress like the rest’ Gender, Class and Body Techniques in the Diaries of Anne Lister (1791-1840),” Angela Heimen investigates body language and body techniques to approach the diarist who defied any clear gender affiliation for herself. In her erotic fantasies as well as in the safety of her home she would dress like a man, while she preferred female attire in her public appearances. Drawing on Jennifer Craik’s view that body techniques were “the product of specific discourses interacting on different levels of power and knowledge and different realms such as social, political aesthetic and psychological forms of knowledge,” Heimen develops the importance of fashion and dress for Lister’s performance of the self. Items of dress are inherently ambivalent. Only the societal and cultural contexts in which they are worn – like on a stage – provide the reader with the necessary clues for understanding their meaning.

In “An Exercise in Ottoman Sartorial Micro-History: The Breeches, Shoes, and Fezzes of Mehmed Cemal Bey, 1855-1864,” Edhem Eldem uses the account book of Mehmed Cemal Bey to tell a story of everyday life among the upper middle



class of a society in full transformation. Eldem's skilful interpretation, emphasizing attention to detail and understanding the source in context, reveals a considerable amount about the quotidian reality of this Istanbul bourgeois bureaucrat. The lack of home maintenance expenses throughout the eight years which the book covers, combined with the minimal outlay for the women of his household, hints at Mehmed Cemal's continued dependence on his parents and his limited financial autonomy. Perhaps the best evidence the book provides is for Mehmed Cemal's considerable personal consumption, demonstrating his sartorial elegance in the form of textiles, garments, shoes and luxury items. While traditional purchases are not absent – including shawls, furs, and an eight year old slave girl – the appearance of western(ized) garments in the record are in absolute conformity with the reformist model imposed by the state in the second half of Mahmud II's reign. The entries describing what and where items were purchased gives a sense of social and religious hierarchy and geography. Fez merchants were always Muslim and named in the record, tailors were individually identified and came from a range of backgrounds while shoemakers were known only by their location. Cemal's account book offers a rare opportunity to follow with some detail, patterns of consumption over considerable and consistent periods of time, and reveals a typical man of his age, a bourgeois of Istanbul in times of change.

Elke Hartmann understands identities as "options available for acting and orienting oneself in a lifeworld." This theoretical approach, which replaces more simplistic role models, affords the tools for analyzing the manifold meanings of clothing in her article, "Shaping the Armenian Warrior: Clothing and Photographic Self-Portraits of Armenian Militiamen (*fedayis*) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century." In a close reading of Roupen Der Minasian's "Memoirs of an Armenian Revolutionary," she demonstrates how clothing becomes an element of transition in the life of a *fedayi*. Replacing old clothes by new ones symbolizes the crossing over from the old life into a new one. By giving up on his expensive fashionable clothes, Roupen distances himself from the affluent home of his childhood and breaks with his bourgeois family. Not unlike written texts, photographs of fighters taken before setting out on a mission also show that 'clothing' formed part of performative acts. These acts fulfilled various functions. They underlined the feeling of belonging to a particular group, but could also be understood as forms of self-enactment. By choosing one's depiction in photography as well as one's clothes, it is possible to establish a connection to particular traditions, to express subtle differences, or to integrate elements of foreign cultures. A close examination of family photographs in particular, displays not only to what extent traditions were preserved, but provides an impressive showcase of cultural hybridities.

Under the title "Itemization and Visualization" the second part of this volume addresses aspects of material culture including representation in art.

Joachim Gierlichs provides in his article “Europeans in ‘Turkish’ Dress,” a comprehensive overview of the centuries-old practice of Europeans depicting themselves in ‘Turkish,’ i.e. Ottoman, dress. He advocates drawing a clear distinction between paintings of Europeans in *alla turca* dress who wear authentic clothes and those depictions in which the Turkish connection is conjured up merely through the inclusion of ‘Oriental-looking’ people, accessories, or the scenery. A third category in this genre are images of individuals wearing a combination of elements of European and Turkish attire. Only once these types of depictions have been properly distinguished, Gierlichs argues, can we draw conclusions that will allow a productive engagement with the post-Saidian debate on Orientalism. A further desideratum is a more consistent analysis and recognition of regional variations and differences. Gierlichs notes that with the waning of the ‘Turkish threat’ after the failed siege of Vienna in 1683, Turkish dress came *en vogue* in France from where it eventually spread to other regions in Europe.

In her article “A More Beautiful Spectacle was Never Presented to My Gaze:’ Discussing Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq’s Concept of Person by Analyzing His Description of Ottoman Dress,” Kornelia Kaschke-Kisaarslan argues that Busbecq’s ‘Turkish Letters,’ which are one of the principal primary sources on the sixteenth century Ottoman court, can be understood as an immaterial, epistolary collection of curiosities: a collection of cultural practices and techniques. Busbecq collected numerous items on his mission. Items of dress did not enter his collection but are frequently mentioned throughout his letters. Kaschke-Kisaarslan emphasizes that certain characteristics of clothes – or rather the way in which people wore these clothes as well as other cultural techniques of daily life –, could only be presented by Busbecq to his readership through literary description, which can be understood as a collection of cultural practices. As books, especially travel narratives, constituted an important element in all Renaissance collections of curiosities, the descriptions can even be regarded as a collection within the collection.

The history of dress should not only be written as comparative history, but also as a connected history, or, *histoire croisée*. Abdullah Güllüoğlu’s article “The First Ottoman Legation to Prussia in 1763-1764 and its Depiction in a Costume Album from Berlin” is a good example for both. It deals with the genre of the costume book, which was a common feature of the sixteenth century. In addition, in the increasingly interconnected world of the seventeenth century, Ottoman artists also began to produce painted albums for the market. Among the most well-known printed albums belong a series of paintings by the Flemish artist Jean-Baptist Vanmour, who had been commissioned by the French ambassador Charles de Ferriol to provide a visual documentation of life at the Ottoman court. Abdullah Güllüoğlu succeeds in showing that the ‘Receuil Ferriol’ served as the model after which the hitherto hardly noticed Berlin costume album was shaped, which he subjects to a detailed analysis. While Ferriol asked for a portrayal of the entire Ottoman Empire through a set of individual paintings, the Berlin album focusses on

the Ottoman legation of 1763/64. The album reflects the great interest in Ottoman fabrics and textiles and has to be understood within the context of the emerging '*Türkenmode*' in Berlin in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Drawing on the memoirs of the Countess of Schwerin, which were penned between 1723 und 1726, Nina Mönich investigated the meaning of colors in court society. In her article "‘Mon habit bleu’, ‘mon habit noir’. The Meaning of Colors in Clothing in ‘Histoire de la Vie de la Comtesse de Scheverin’ (1731)," she focuses in particular on the colors black and blue and shows in a thorough analysis the multitude of mundane and religious meanings of color that can only be deciphered within concrete historical contexts. Colors appear as codes that signify values, norms, and belongings. The wearing of a black dress, for example, is not only explained in the self-narrative of the Countess of Schwerin as a sign of mourning or expression of the fashion in a particular aristocratic household, but also on economic grounds. The Countess of Schwerin also made use of color(s) in order to visualize a decisive turning point in her religiosity, when she converts to Catholicism. While focusing on the meanings that certain colors enjoyed at particular European courts, Nina Mönich's sophisticated reflections on color as code offer an approach for interpreting color in transcultural settings without premature emphasis on the differences.

In Esther Juhasz' piece, "Trousseau Lists of Jewish Brides from Izmir. Between an Official Document and a Personal Narrative," the multiple meanings of textiles become very clear. Dowry lists are far from trivial enumerations. Examining the relationship between women and their wedding apparel (clothes, underclothes, home textiles including whitewear, sheets, tablecloths, curtains, nightgowns, etc.) paves the way towards a better understanding of the economic, judicial and socially acceptable standards within the Jewish community of Izmir. Narrating history from the trousseau lists shows that private and communal lives cannot be neatly divided into separate spheres. Exemplified by the Sephardic communities of Juhasz' study, it goes without saying that this also applies to European societies not only for early modern times, but also for the nineteenth century with its excessive emphasis on hierarchy and differentiation.

At the core of the third section are articles dealing with the fascinating binary of "Uniformity and Individuality."

In her article "Traditional Costume, Nurse's Dress, Uniform – The Clothing of Red Cross Nurses in the First World War as Presented in the Autobiographical Texts of Adrienne Thomas and Helene Mierisch (1930/34)," Sophie Häusner offers a counter-narrative to the established discourse, which emphasizes the sexualisation and the degradation or debasing of war-time nurses as mere objects of sexual desire. She bases her critique on the exemplary study of the autobiographical novels of two German nurses serving in Red Cross units during the First World War. While the account of Adrienne Thomas became a bestseller in the interwar period but was burnt in 1934 by the Nazis for its pacifist nature, Helene Mierisch's text

on her experience as a nurse during the war was welcomed by the regime as an “early expression of Nazi militarism.” Häusner uses both texts to contribute to the discourse on uniforms and uniformity from the individual perspective of the nurses. It is through their particular garment, Häusner emphasizes, that the two protagonists gain access to a new and usually closed world for females – that of the male soldiers of the war – which thus affords them completely new forms of identification and options in their quest for meaning.

In her article “Persons in Uniform. The Meaning of Clothing for Japanese Prisoners of War in China,” Petra Buchholz reevaluates widely shared Western assumptions on the meaning of “uniform and uniformity” on the basis of self-narratives produced by Japanese prisoners of war in Chinese detention camps during World War II. In contrast to modern Western societies where uniformity carried mostly negative connotations as the antonym of individuality, Buchholz emphasizes that in Far East China and Japan the lexical and implied meanings of ‘uniformity’ do not render themselves to such clearly negative labeling. Tracing a long tradition in both countries of following regulations of a person’s outer appearance in terms of clothing, the item of dress that Buchholz further analyzes as an example of the Japanese/Chinese attitude towards “uniforms” is what became known in the West as the ‘Mao suit.’ Only loosely inspired by western uniforms, rather than a wholesale adoption of Western models, the Mao suits, which the Japanese prisoners had to wear, became a positive symbol of national identity and modernity. In a setting in which everybody is in uniform, the dress itself could no longer provoke resistance, but was seen as the acceptance of the Chinese model of society and, by extension, of the mild treatment China afforded its Japanese prisoners of war.

Kathrin Engler presents in her article “Between Uniform and Life-Form – Uniforms in the Artwork of Andrea Zittel,” a radical reinterpretation of what uniforms stand for in the art of Andrea Zittel. The contemporary design artist has created several series of mass-produced clothes that she would continuously wear as her sole garments over extended periods of time (see picture on the book cover). While her dresses resemble uniforms in the fact that stylistic variations within each type are generally avoided, it is in Engler’s analysis of the artist’s intentions that differences to the more classical type of the military uniform, which Engler sees as the prototype for all uniforms, or the standardized attire of the business world or politics attire become apparent. While these classical types of uniform dress render variety and individuality impossible through their “authoritarian controlled conformity and de-individualization,” this is not the case if dress norms are individually defined and agreed on. Zittel’s uniforms rather create a “synthesis of uniforming practices and individualization.” In Engler’s interpretation, uniform and uniformity only correspond because and if no reflection on dress occurs. Such self-chosen uniformity makes free while unreflected, automatically accepted uniformity is the opposite of diversity and individualization.

Focusing on a diverse range of geographic realms during different time periods the contributions to this volume afford us with new insights in the uses and significance of dress in self-narratives for a great variety of transcultural settings, with some of the texts also shedding new light on a number of fascinating aspects of Ottoman history.

