

period. He signaled his allegiance to the Aymara by seldom wearing a Western suit in the campaign, and when he was made supreme leader of the Aymara, he wore a replica of an ancient cape. At his inauguration in late 2005, he wore a suit of semiprecious alpaca fiber, the fleece of an indigenous animal of the Andean highlands, with lapels embroidered with Aymara motifs.

As a political movement and a philosophy, feminism seeks equality between men and women. All forms of discrimination—unequal pay, objectification, oppression, patriarchy, and stereotyping—are the targets. Among the oppressive cultural forms that most feminists reject or critique are subservient, sexualized, or physically idealized media representations of females. Yet there are variations and many nuances among feminist viewpoints. A dichotomy of views toward fashion arose within feminist ranks, which Elizabeth Wilson characterized as “locked in contradiction.” The reading by Wilson, titled “Feminism and Fashion,” traces the split to two nineteenth-century perspectives. One finds fashion oppressive, a criticism that fashion continues to receive today. The other finds fashion a pleasure, often remarked on by its advocates across history. Wilson rejects feminist ambivalence toward fashion and posits a declaration of fashion’s functions and characteristics.

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FAILED CENSURES: ECCLESIASTICAL REGULATION OF WOMEN'S CLOTHING IN LATE MEDIEVAL ITALY

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Beginning in the eleventh century, reforming clergy attempted to bring the sobriety expected of monks and nuns to the lives of secular clerics and the laity. These efforts had mixed success, especially in the regulation of clothing. Popes and bishops tried again and again to check excesses of clergy who wore expensive cloth, gaudy colors, revealing cuts, and accessories more fitting to knights than to their religious calling (Izbicki 2005). Efforts to curb excess in the creation of lay garments and fashionable accessories usually fell to preachers like the Franciscan St. Bernardino of Siena and the Dominican reformer Girolamo Savonarola or to confessors.¹ Here too campaigns against vanity of dress and excessive display, although they might have short-term success, failed in the long run. The laity, men and women alike, continued dressing according to the fashion of time and place. Some theologians, like the Dominican observant Archbishop Antoninus of Florence, even were willing to bow to local custom and the social status of the lay people involved (Izbicki 1989; 2004). Prelates rarely legislated on this matter. When they did, in late medieval Italy, their efforts were largely unsuccessful. The earliest surviving evidence for this effort is found among the legatine statutes of Cardinal Latino Malabranca (Mansi 1960–1961 [1759–1798]).

[...]

Cardinal Latino's decree is available only in an imperfect copy in Mansi's eighteenth-century col-

lection of Church councils (Kaeppli 1970–1993: 185), but the outlines of its teachings are clear. The tenor of the decree was moral, reminding women that the Scriptures warned against “superfluous ornamentation” [*ornate supeifluo*]. It also denounced women who preferred pleasing the world to pleasing God. The specific injunctions of the decree, applicable wherever Cardinal Latino's legatine writ was valid, were described as tailored to the salvation of the women to whom they applied. Specifically, the legate warned women not to go about the city wearing clothing open in the front or dragging more than one hand's breadth [*palmum*] of cloth upon the ground. Their mantles were not supposed to have folds more than two hand's breadths [*palmos*] in size. These strictures applied to any woman older than twelve years of age. Women's virtues, not their clothing, were supposed to be their ornaments.

Additional restrictions were imposed on married women more than eighteen years old and married for more than a year. This allowed them to enjoy their marital finery briefly before switching to more sober garb.² This change was supposed to clothe them with becoming modesty. These married women were told to veil themselves when they went out. Nor were they permitted to wear clothing assembled “artificially” [*artificiose*] out of different types of cloth. (Presumably this included a prohibition against wearing stripes [Pastoureau 2001]).

Source: Extracted from T. M. Izbicki (2009), “Failed Censures: Ecclesiastical Regulation of Women's Clothing in Late Medieval Italy,” in R. Netherton and G. R. Owen-Crocker, eds., *Medieval Clothing and Textiles 5* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell), 37–53. Reproduced with permission.

It is apparent, moreover, that the legate intended enforcement via the sacrament of penance. Women who offended against the statute also were subject to ecclesiastical censures. They lost any concessions ever made to them, and they were deprived of the sacraments until they mended their ways.³ A woman who repented was expected to swear “before God and a priest” [*coram Deo, & Sacerdote*] that she would observe the statute. The sober dress she adopted thereafter was to be a warning to other women to mend their ways. Enforcement of the legate’s decree was expected of the clergy, both diocesan and monastic. Confessors were not supposed to absolve women who violated its instructions. Any priest, secular or religious, who did offer absolution lost his exercise of office and the fruits of his benefice for a month (Killerby 2002).

CARDINAL LATINO MALABRANCA’S CONSTITUTION ON WOMEN’S DRESS (1279)⁴

Almighty God, who requires the ornaments of virtue in his faithful people, intended to deter women from superfluous ornamentation of the body by way of the mouths of the prophets and apostles by calling them back with diligent warning, by holding them back with dire rebukes and by horrendous [threats] to the nations, as shines forth in many ways from the divine Scriptures. But because no few women, more to please the world than God, as their actions show, go to excess, acting quite imprudently in this superfluity, and lead others to excess [by their chiding], we, wishing to provide for their salvation and to warn about the many sins that frequently arise from this cause, strictly command in the present statute that, in the cities and other places of our legation in [which the present] constitution will be published by the bishops or their vicars, no woman more than twelve years of age go forth to proceed publicly in the city in a garment open in the front or a vestment flowing

more than one hand’s breadth on the ground, nor should she presume to wear a mantle on her shoulders with folds of more than two hand’s breadths.⁵ We add too that all married women who have attained the age of eighteen and have been married for more than a year should appear in public with their heads veiled, and none of them should wear in public [clothes] sewn together artificially from [different] types of cloth, so that with modest shame and bashful modesty, which especially ornament faithful wives, they show forth externally the chastity that they should have internally.

We compel those women who are known to have [at present] garments made in the aforesaid mode at least to give up those garments. But lest any such a woman should put off the making of garments of this sort to later, we prohibit this more strictly. If she, having set aside at the present time the fear of God and neglected care for proper integrity, should hold [this] our statute in contempt, we deprive her of all indulgences that were granted up to now or will be granted in the churches or preaching gatherings by our authority or that of other prelates; moreover, we deprive her of participation in all the sacraments. If she comes to penance for this or other sins, she is not to be absolved unless she promises firmly before God and a priest that she will observe the aforesaid statute thereafter. Thus she will doubtlessly bear witness by her dress to those women who wish to please the world more than God and who do not blush to be counted in the number of light women that they will sustain not just the scourge of ecclesiastical discipline but the opprobrium of a reprehensible reputation. Last of all, that if any priest, religious or secular, should presume to minister to those women who offend in the aforesaid any ecclesiastical sacrament before due satisfaction is made, he should know that he will be suspended equally from office and benefice for one month. And if, nonetheless, he fails seriously we discern that he is to be deprived perpetually of the power of hearing confessions.

Done at Bologna on the second day before the kalends of October⁶ in the second year of the pontificate of the Lord Pope Nicholas III.

6. The kalends being October 1, the date of the document is, therefore, September 29.

NOTES

1. Bernardino's rhetoric was particularly heated, advocating the burning of a girl, her mother, and the dressmaker who violated strict norms of dress (Mormando 1999).
2. After a "bridal period," a woman was expected to wear more sober clothes, and the husband could pawn the ornaments (Bestor 1999; Kirshner 1991).
3. This censure is minor excommunication, depriving the offender of access to the sacraments (Vodola 1986).
4. *De habita mulierum*, translated by the author from the text in Mansi (1960–1961 [1759–1798]: 24, 252–53). Mansi's edited text is imperfect. Words in square brackets are the author's additions based on Mansi's footnotes.
5. Killerby (2002) translates *chlamys* as a train "one half *braccio*" long.

EDITORS' NOTE

In the remainder of the essay, Thomas Izbicki explains that this regulation, as well as others issued by clergy and civil authorities, failed for several reasons. First, women often undermined the restrictions while nominally adhering to them; for example, by wearing veils worked with gold thread. Second, the clerics themselves often wore extravagant clothes. The papacy especially, a sumptuous court in its own right, "was no enemy of luxurious costume" (45). Finally, although the leading patriarchs of Italy's major cities expressed their concerns about dress through sumptuary laws, they—along with their wives and daughters—supported the luxury trade through their purchases. Dressing in sumptuous cloth and precious jewels upheld family status and maintained their dignity. The underlying problem was "how to strike a balance between moral rigor and the lived situation of the laity" (43).