

Outer Appearance, Late Medieval Public Space, and the Law*

Gerhard Jaritz

Late medieval discourse about material culture and behaviour was sometimes extraordinarily rich. This was particularly true for phenomena in the public sphere and concerning outer appearance: dress, housing, festivities, food and meals taken outside one's house, etc. In chronicles, laws, charters, travel descriptions, religious and secular literature, and sermons, the discussion often became detailed and heated. The sources deal particularly with the exceptional and special, to be positively evaluated, or, more often, to be criticised, made fun of, condemned or prohibited. Sumptuary laws played an important role in this latter respect.¹ For the German-speaking areas of Europe, the urban sumptuary laws especially have to be mentioned as the most relevant sources for this topic in the period from the fourteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century.²

* This contribution is a modified version of the author's study "*Ira Dei, Material Culture, and Behavior in the Late Middle Ages: Evidence from German-speaking Regions*," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 18 (2002): 53-66.

¹ Concerning sumptuary legislation, generally, see, e. g., Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: a History of Sumptuary Law* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996); *Disciplinare il lusso. La legislazione suntuaria in Italia e in Europa tra Medioevo ed Età moderna*, ed. Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli and Antonella Campanini (Rome: Carocci, 2003); Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, "Reconciling the Privilege of a Few with the Common Good: Sumptuary Laws in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 39 (2009): 597-617; for England: Frances Elizabeth Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1926); Thomas Lüttenberg, "Sempre un passo indietro rispetto alla moda: leggi suntuarie in Inghilterra dal Medioevo all'inizio del XVII secolo," in *Disciplinare il lusso*, 145-62; for late medieval Italy and France: Catherine Kovesi Killerby, *Sumptuary Law in Italy 1200-1500* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli (cd.), *La legislazione suntuaria secoli XIII-XVI: Emilia Romagna*, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Fonti XLI (Rome: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, 2002); *Disciplinare il lusso*, 17-105; Johanna B. Moyer, "Sumptuary law in Ancien Régime France, 1229-1806," *Diss.*, Syracuse University, 1996; Neithard Bulst, "La legislazione suntuaria in Francia (secoli XIII-XVII)," in *Disciplinare il lusso*, 121-36. For the German speaking areas see note 2.

² See, e.g., Kent Roberts Greenfield, *Sumptuary Law in Nürnberg: A Study in Paternal Government* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1918); Gertraud Hampel, *Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kleiderordnungen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Österreichs* (Vienna: Verlag des wissenschaftlichen Antiquariats H. Geyer, 1962); Liselotte-Constanze Eisenbart, *Kleider-*

Beside the social arguments of status, the discourse about the God-given differences among humans revealed in their outer appearance was also driven by religious, economic, moral, and national criteria. From the religious point of view in the arguments given by representatives of the Church, it was particularly *superbia*, pride and haughtiness, that was seen as most relevant; one of the main sins and the first sin of mankind, it had provoked the wrath of God. Saint Bridget of Sweden, for instance, states in her *Revelaciones* about Adam:³ *Ira Dei super eum venit pro superbia, qua in sua felicitate Deum offenderat* (The wrath of the Lord came over him, who had offended God in his high spirits).

Superbia was closely connected with the material aspects of this world. One may just think of the regularly used warning examples of “Good and Bad Thoughts” or the “Good and Bad Prayer,” which are also found as didactic and moralising images with visual contrasts, mainly in the fifteenth century.⁴ In a Southern German woodcut (fig. 1), the good and pious man is concentrating his thoughts and prayers on the Passion of Christ, while the haughty man reflects on

ordnungen der deutschen Städte zwischen 1350 und 1700, Göttinger Bausteine zur Geschichtswissenschaft 32 (Göttingen, Berlin, and Frankfurt/Main: Musterschnitt-Verlag, 1962); Veronika Bauer, *Kleiderordnungen in Bayern vom 14. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert*, Miscellanea Bavarica Monacensia 62 (Munich: Kommissionsbuchhandlung R. Wölfle, 1975); Neithard Bulst, “Zum Problem städtischer und territorialer Kleider-, Aufwands- und Luxusgesetzgebung in Deutschland (13. bis Mitte 16. Jahrhundert),” in *Renaissance du pouvoir législatif et genèse de l'État*, ed. André Gouron and Albert Rigaudière, Publications de la Société d'histoire du droit et des institutions des anciens pays de droit écrit III (Montpellier: Société d'histoire du droit et des institutions des anciens pays de droit écrit, 1988), 29-57; idem, “Feste und Feiern unter Auflagen. Mittelalterliche Tauf-, Hochzeits- und Begräbnisordnungen in Deutschland und Frankreich,” in: *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter*, ed. Detlef Altenburg et al. (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1991), 39-54; Jutta Zander-Seidel, “Kleidergesetzgebung und städtische Ordnung, Inhalte, Überwachung und Akzeptanz frühneuzeitlicher Kleiderordnungen,” *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* 1993: 176-88; Gerhard Jaritz, “Kleidung und Prestige-Konkurrenz. Unterschiedliche Identitäten in der städtischen Gesellschaft unter Normierungszwängen,” *Saeculum* 44 (1993): 8-31; idem, “Leggi suntuarie nelle aree di lingua tedesca,” in *Disciplinare il lusso*, ed. Muzzarelli and Campaninia, 137-43.

³ Book XI: *Sermo Angelicus*, chapter 7/4 [*Sancta Birgitta, Opera Minora II: Sermo Angelicus (Revelaciones XI)*], ed. Sten Eklund (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1972); <http://www.umilta.net/bk11.html> – last accessed: December 28, 2012]. See *ibidem*, XI/7/6: *Adam, Dyaboli invidia deprauatus, per suam superbiam a vita perpetua deiecerat*.

⁴ See Robert Wildhaber, “Das gute und das schlechte Gebet,” in: *Europäische Kulturverflechtungen im Bereich der volkstümlichen Überlieferung. Festschrift für Bruno Schier zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Gerhard Heilfurth and Hinrich Siuts, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Mitteleuropäische Volksforschung A5 (Göttingen: Schwartz, 1967), 63-72; Nils-Arvid Bringéus, *Volkstümliche Bilderkunde* (München: Callwey, 1982), 25-27; Gerhard Jaritz, “Das schlechte Gebet zu den Schätzen der Welt,” in *Vom Umgang mit Schätzen*, ed. Elisabeth Vavra et al., Forschungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. Diskussionen und Materialien 8 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 81-97.

his riches: house, horse, food and drink, dress.⁵ The same stereotype appears in many other examples as, for instance, in a probably Austrian panel painting from the 1430s kept in the Christian Museum of Esztergom, Hungary (fig. 2).⁶ For the man who concentrated on bad prayer, depicted on another panel now lost, only the worldly treasures counted: house, horse, vessels, clothes, treasure chests, including his proud beautiful wife. He ignored Christ and the spiritual aspects of life.

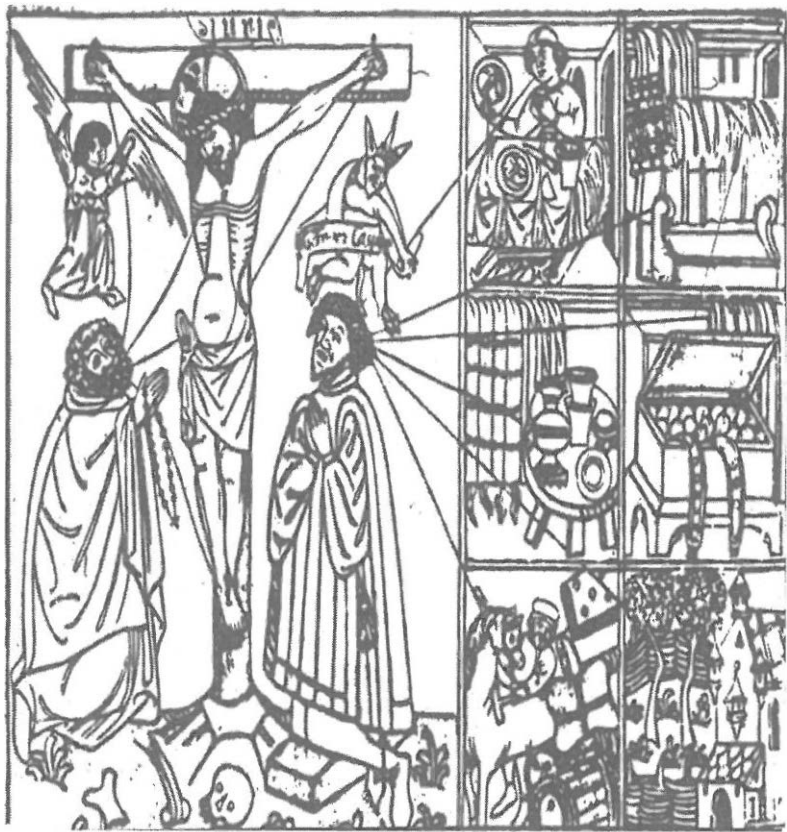


Fig. 1: Good and Bad Thoughts, woodcut, c. 1460.
Out of Bringéus, *Volkstümliche Bilderkunde*, 25, fig. 14.

⁵ The "Good and Bad Prayer," woodcut, German, 1430-1460; see Bringéus, *Volkstümliche Bilderkunde*, 25, fig. 14; Jaritz, "Das schlechte Gebet," 87, fig. 6.

⁶ *Evagationes Spiritus*, panel painting, thirties of the fifteenth century, Austrian (?), Esztergom, Christian Museum. See Pál Cséfalvay, ed., *Christliches Museum Esztergom* (Budapest: Corvina, 1993), 188-89, n. 23 and ill. 23; Jaritz, "Das schlechte Gebet," 92, fig. 13.



Fig. 2: Bad Thoughts, panel painting, 1430-1440, © Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit of the University of Salzburg (Krems an der Donau, Austria).

In the argument of the Church and its representatives, such behaviour provoked God's wrath and led to punishment. This tradition is already found in the Old Testament. One may just think, in particular, of Isaiah and his description of the proud daughters of Zion (Isaiah 3:16 ff.):

Moreover the LORD saith, because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: therefore the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness;

and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in war.

In late medieval discourse it was not only religious space and the sphere of the Church that concentrated on connecting pride, superfluity, and deviations in public outer appearance with the punishing wrath of God. The Church and the secular authorities operated close to each other. The latter also sometimes mentioned, used or constructed God's wrath in the context of phenomena connected with features of the outer appearance of material life that could endanger the social and economic system.

When dealing with evidence from the secular urban space of the German-speaking areas of late medieval Europe, one sees that the reasons for and results of such deviations, and the phenomena themselves, were occasionally dealt with in a rather detailed manner. In laws, the secular authorities, mainly the town councils, sometimes adapted the religious discourse in their sumptuary laws, particularly in those trying to regulate dress as the most ostentatious medium for showing off, representing oneself, and visualizing differences in status and in the social order of the system. The introduction to the dress regulation of Speyer from 1356, for instance, used the stereotype that haughtiness was the first of all sins ever committed, being therefore the root of all other sins. It annoyed God and harmed the people.⁷

Regularly, one finds such and similar arguments in the context of wearing fashionable or new styles of clothes. This emphasis could occur in a general sense, but also in a detailed way in connection with a specific piece of dress. A rather well-known general example is that from a Nuremberg dress law from the second half of the fifteenth century:⁸

As the almighty God since the beginning, not only on earth but also in heaven and in paradise, has hated the vice of pride and wantonness, and has punished them heavily, and as pride and disobedience have been the reason that a number of counties and communities perished, therefore ... we give the following law to praise the Lord, to promote common profit and to honour the city of Nuremberg.

This law was then certainly a dress regulation. In 1479, dukes Ernst and Albrecht of Saxonia asked the town council of Leipzig to keep the sumptuary legislation, again mainly dress regulations, well and rigorously so that wicked

⁷ Franz Joseph Mone, "Sittenpolizei zu Speier, Strassburg und Konstanz im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 7 (1856): 58; cf. Ulrike Lehmann-Langholz, *Kleiderkritik in mittelalterlicher Dichtung. Der Arme Hartmann, Heinrich von Melk, Neidhart, Wernher der Gartenaere und ein Ausblick auf die Stellungnahmen spätmittelalterlicher Dichter*, Europäische Hochschulschriften I/885 (Frankfurt/Main, Bern, and New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 294-97.

⁸ *Nürnberger Polizeiordnungen aus dem XIII bis XV Jahrhundert*, ed. Joseph Baader, Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart LXIII (1861, repr. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1966), 95.

pride would not provoke God's wrath and result in severe punishment and the denial of his grace.⁹

A Strassburg dress regulation from 1493, for example, connected the reaction of God to an individual object of clothing. It prohibited the very short men's dress that was worn by people "without fear of God."¹⁰ In 1464, two monstrances, with the Eucharist and holy oil, were stolen out of the minster of Bern in Switzerland. This event was clearly seen as connected with the existing *superbia* in the outer appearance of the inhabitants. To honour and praise the Lord, to soften his wrath and regain his mercy, dress regulations were proclaimed to be valid for everyone living in the town, explicitly against pointed shoes, too-short men's clothing, and trains on women's clothes.¹¹

In late medieval discourse, pointed shoes were seen as a particularly vain object that could provoke God's wrath as well as that of the urban authorities. The Bohemian chronicle of Benes of Weitmil notes for 1372 that for a young noble couple who wore them God sent down a bolt of lightning that cut off the points.¹² A number of critiques and statements against them used a general argumentation, sometimes articulating a prohibition for everyone (as in the 1464 dress regulation from Bern noted above), but generalities cannot be drawn that such pointed shoes (and also some other items of dress) were always seen as objects of vanity for everyone. The whole situation was a matter of status difference that led to varieties of realisation and decisively influenced the discussion about prohibited versus allowed public material objects.¹³ Often, for instance, pointed shoes were seen as a fashionable sign necessary for members of the upper classes of society to show their social status (see fig. 3).

⁹ *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Leipzig*, ed. Karl Friedrich von Posern-Klett, Codex Diplomaticus Saxoniae 2/VIII (Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1868), 416, n. 498 (1478 I 14).

¹⁰ *Strassburger Zunft- und Polizei-Verordnungen des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Johann Karl Brucker (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1889), 293.

¹¹ *Die Rechtsquellen des Kantons Bern. VI: Das Stadtrecht von Bern, I (1218-1539)*, ed. Friedrich Emil Welti, Sammlung Schweizerischer Rechtsquellen II (Aarau: H. R. Sauerländer & Co., 1902), 187-89 and 192-93; Leo Zehnder, *Volkskundliches in der älteren schweizerischen Chronistik*, Schriften der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde 60 (Basel: Verlag G. Krebs AG, 1976), 81-83.

¹² "Chronicon Benessii de Weitmil," ed. Josef Emler, in: *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum* IV (Prague: Nákl. Nadáni Frantiska Palackého, 1884), 546.

¹³ See also Gerhard Jaritz, "Schnabelschuh und Hörnerhaube oder: Bild, Sakultur und Kontextualisierung," in: 8. Österreichischer Kunsthistorikertag. *Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart – Gegenwart in der Kunstgeschichte? Kunsthistoriker* 11/12, 1994/1995 (Vienna, 1996): 8-12.



Fig. 3: Emperor Frederick III wearing pointed shoes, manuscript illustration, c. 1485,
 © Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit
 of the University of Salzburg (Krems an der Donau, Austria)

In this sense, it is also quite clear that the example of the Bernese dress regulation from 1464 and its repetition in 1470 led to problems.¹⁴ As noted above, the town authorities had determined that the law against pointed shoes, short men's clothes, and the trains of women's dresses should be valid for everyone in town. This included the urban nobility, who reacted negatively and emphasized that the almighty God, kings, and emperors, even hundreds of years prior, had ordered that there should be advantages for priests, knights, and noblemen, a visible difference from others, and that they should be free and unhindered. Other arguments were that since the creation of the world, in heaven as well as on earth, there had been such differences and this situation should not be changed. Members of the nobility had to wear such kinds of dress so that one might recognise them clearly.¹⁵ They could not always use gold and silver in order to be recognized. However, the members of the nobility were sentenced to pay a fine and banned from the city for a month. As a result of this 'unfriendly' act, the noblemen decided not to come back which led to economic problems in the town. A compromise had to be found. The authorities of Bern proclaimed permission for the members of the nobility to wear clothes as they pleased, as

¹⁴ See also Jaritz, "Kleidung und Prestige-Konkurrenz," 16-17.

¹⁵ Visual sources, therefore, also sometimes show members of the nobility or leading figures of society as wearing pointed shoes; see fig. 3: Emperor Frederick III (Armorial, Tyrol, c. 1485. Vienna, Austrian National Library, cod. s.n. 12820, fol. 23v).

long as their dress was decent – which certainly must have had a broad scope of meaning. Then the urban nobility returned and the economic problems were solved.

In the visual representation of the 'Burning of the Vanities' on the occasion of John Capestran's mid-fifteenth-century sermon in Bamberg (fig. 4)¹⁶ one recognises the vain pointed shoes, moreover, female headgear, board games, playing cards, and dice being thrown into the fire, all of them objects that were also regularly discussed and prohibited in urban (sumptuary) laws. Capestran's sermons sometimes also seem to have had explicit influences on urban legal regulations. In 1452, for instance, the town council of Leipzig proclaimed a law against pointed shoes, emphasising that they did so because of the sermons of John Capestran and other preachers.¹⁷



Fig. 4: Objects of vanity thrown into the fire on the occasion of John Capistran's Bamberg sermon, panel painting, c. 1470 (detail), © Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit of the University of Salzburg (Krems an der Donau, Austria).

¹⁶ John Capestran's Sermon at Bamberg and the Burning of the Vanities, panel painting, c. 1470. Bamberg, Staatsgalerie (detail). See *Der Bußprediger Capestrano auf dem Domplatz in Bamberg. Eine Bamberger Tafel um 1470/75. Begleitschrift zur Ausstellung*, ed. Hubert Ruß, Schriften des Historischen Museums Bamberg 12 (Bamberg: Historisches Museum, 1989). For Capestran's arguments about dress, see also: *Giovanni da Capestrano – Trattato degli Ornamenti Specie delle Donne*, ed. Aniceto Chiappini (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 1956), passim.

¹⁷ Ernst Kroker, "Leipziger Kleiderordnungen," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft zu Erforschung Vaterländischer Sprache und Altertümer in Leipzig* 10/5 (1912): 21-22.

References to the connection between sin, the wrath of God, and sumptuous behaviour to be regulated by secular law, mainly with regard to dress, continued and sometimes increased in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century legislation. The law of Emperor Maximilian II for Austria from 1568 that deals with dress, festivities, and gambling, mentions them as having caused the wrath of God and having led to the punishment of the Turks' invasion of the country.¹⁸ The regulation against haughtiness and superfluity in dress enacted in Bern in Switzerland in 1664 again started with the general statement about the sins of pride, haughtiness, and superfluity that had provoked God's wrath and driven whole cities, countries, and peoples to ruin.¹⁹ The Leipzig dress regulation of 1698, for instance, threatened the rod of God's wrath.²⁰

* * *

To recapitulate and generalise the situation, the following aspects are evident:

- Interdependence and the contexts of behaviour, material culture, secular legal ordinances, and religious discourse can be traced regularly in late medieval society.
- Any kind of action taking place in public space was particularly worthy of comment and regulation.
- The prevention of *superbia* played a relevant role, with dress apparently being most important. In the religious domain and secular orbit, different reasons were stressed for needing to prevent pride and haughtiness.
- In their arguments, the secular authorities not only used the economic and social profit of the community. They also connected them regularly with references to sin and to averting God's wrath and punishment.
- Such a context of the discourse could, on the one hand, be used in any general argument concerning *superbia*.
- On the other hand, it was also applied when dealing with specific objects, mainly in the sphere of fashionable dress and with regard to their form, like pointed shoes, ladies' horned headgear, different types of sleeves, men's short clothes, and so on.

¹⁸ *Codex Austriacus ordine alphabetico compilatus* II, ed. Franz-Anton Edler von Guarient (Vienna: Voigt, 1704), 147. Cf. the similar arguments in the seventeenth-century dress regulations from Hildesheim (Eisenbart, *Kleiderordnungen der deutschen Städte*, 82-83).

¹⁹ *Die Rechtsquellen des Kantons Bern I: Stadtrechte*, 6/2: *Das Stadtrecht von Bern VI: Staat und Kirche*, ed. Hermann Rennefahrt, Sammlung Schweizerischer Rechtsquellen II (Aarau: Sauerländer, 1961), 946 (1664 VII 4).

²⁰ Ernst Kroker, "Leipziger Kleiderordnungen," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft zur Erforschung Vaterländischer Sprache und Altertümer* 10/5 (1912): 66. Cf. Eisenbart, *Kleiderordnungen*, 57-59.

- Other groups of sumptuous objects, like prestigious furs, expensive cloth or fabric, precious jewels, costly gowns, and so on also appeared regularly in the sumptuary laws with reference to the various levels of the social hierarchy and their gradation, but were less connected with any religious discourse. There, the social and economic elements seem to have counted most.

The situation may be summarised in the following way: Material objects and their public use affected religious, social, economic, moral, and national discourses and arguments. Both the Church's and the secular authorities' reasoning influenced the production and utilization of these material goods and determined the laws about them. Any kind of outer appearance in public space that could lead to the presentation of luxury, to competition, social disturbance, and economic decline had to be regularised and controlled.

AT THE EDGE OF THE LAW

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At the Edge of the Law:

**Socially Unacceptable and Illegal Behaviour
in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period**

Edited by

Suzana Miljan

and

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Preface

This publication contains selected papers from a conference held in Zagreb (Centre for Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb) in 2009, dealing with the medieval and early modern period, and translated into English for this purpose.* The main goal was to gather papers on a topic that has not been researched enough amongst Croatian historians, that is, the socially unacceptable and illegal behaviour of individuals who were “walking at the edge of the law.” The general idea was also to present various research questions at the intersection of social and legal history, from the problem of feuding in medieval society to the various types of delinquency by pilgrims. The emphasis was put on the Croatian territory in the Middle Ages (from Slavonia to Istria and Dalmatia) and set in a broader (East) Central European context. The articles follow a chronological sequence, starting from the High Middle Ages, with a particular focus on the late medieval and early modern period.

The first paper is by Damir Karbić, who deals with the use of violence as a means of obtaining justice and re-establishing order, which was one of the peculiarities of the medieval legal system when compared with Roman law. After presenting different cases of feuds in Croatian sources, he discusses, how medieval communal legislation treated feuds as a separate legal institute, using the example of the city statutes of Split.

Marija Karbić concentrates on the ways in which women from the medieval urban settlements of the Sava and Drava *interamnium* came into conflict with the law by various criminal actions, from insults or brawls to abortion and murder. She connects those problems with the economic situation of these women, basing the analysis mainly on theft and prostitution cases. The women were sometimes punished severely, but sometimes pardoned or punished minimally.

The problem of gambling along the eastern Adriatic coast is the research subject of Sabine Florence Fabijanec. She analyses the urban statutory regulations stretching from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. She deals with the adoption of legal provisions against gambling and shows the diversity of approach to gambling from city to city.

Gerhard Jaritz analyses the interdependence between late medieval material culture, human behaviour, religious discourse, and legal culture using the example of actions connected with *superbia* that played a role in public

* The Croatia version of the conference proceedings is published as Suzana Miljan (ed.), *Na rubu zakona: društveno i pravno neprihvatljiva ponašanja kroz povijest*, Biblioteka *Dies historiae*, vol. 3 (Zagreb: Hrvatski studiji, 2009).

urban arguments. The secular authorities emphasized moral, national, and religious components, highlighting the necessity of averting God's wrath.

The perception of the behaviour of pilgrims is the topic of Zoran Ladić's contribution. He shows, in contrast to the idealized vision of pilgrimages and pilgrims, that pilgrimages made by average medieval or early modern believers were also considered superstition and that the pilgrims often engaged in fights, robberies, prostitution, and other forms of delinquent behaviour.

Paul Freedman offers an article on late medieval and early modern public acts of torture and execution, which were carefully choreographed events whose solemnity and meticulous preparation made the infliction of mutilation and death horrifyingly impressive. He also concentrates on the various *topoi* of peasant rebellion as described by literate contemporaries, such as rape, murder, cannibalism, the roasting of victims, and so on.

Lovorka Čoralić deals with Croats accused in the records of the Venetian Inquisition. Four types of accusation can be recognized: conversion to Islam, Protestantism, the use of magic, and conduct considered improper for clergymen (priests and other members of religious orders).

The last article is by Slaven Bertoša, dealing with poor social conditions in Istria in the early modern period that led to hunger, poverty, depopulation, and general insecurity, which in turn provoked dangerous behaviour, robbery, and murder. Capital crimes were under the jurisdiction of the *Potest* and Captain of Koper or, respectively, the Captain of Rašpor with his seat in Buzet. The village communities were also starting to organize themselves by introducing patrols, although in a modest way.

The collection of articles tries to popularise the topics for one plain purpose, that is, to erase the border between history and legal studies, since until now one cannot actually speak of "interdisciplinarity," but only of looking at many research problems from various reference points. Hopefully, this volume will be useful not only for historians dealing with this poorly researched topic of (Croatian) historiography, but also for a wider public generally interested in the functioning of the legal and social system in the past.

Finally, my special gratitude goes to Judith Rasson for copy editing the volume and to Gerhard Jaritz for offering the opportunity to publish it as a special issue of *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*, thus promoting this research on an international level.

Suzana Miljan