

Paper Title: Capturing cloth covered bodies between the pages of a book: Twenty-first-century traces of two seventeenth-century coloured clothing charities.

Abstract: Within the pages of his small book, entitled *Melbourne*, published in 1933, the antiquarian writer Albert Stanley Jacques printed a curious account of the most striking and effective examples of the performative nature of seventeenth-century coloured charity clothing. From off the page came the words, actions and deeds of Henry Green (1679) and Thomas Grey (1695) of Melbourne in Derbyshire. Both men in their wills left funds for the distribution of charity waistcoats—green in the case of Henry Green, and grey in the case of Thomas Grey—that were to transform the parish landscape with the flashes of colour from those deserving poor women and men who received them. From the seventeenth century onwards through the ‘performance’ of anniversary rituals—the distribution of the charity in the parish church and the dressing of the godly recipients, the auditory affirmation of the charity by those deemed deserving, the public display of the terms of the charity in the parish church, and the annual commemorative sermons preached before the recipients and assembled congregation—these bequests established and reaffirmed the reciprocal obligations and supplications these acts of charity required between the living and the dead. These charities operated for 171 years before being commuted to a monetary sum. No trace of any waistcoat survives. When the practice appears to have faltered, the deserving poor took up their cause in print in order to call the distributors of the charity to account. In the form of a series of quasi-commandments and catechism, the anonymous printed document sought to correct a perceived wrong on behalf of and in keeping with the benefactors’ intensions for perpetuity. In a tale, similar to those recounted by Charles Dickens, the complainants made a call to attend the Doctors’ Commons to consult once more the written terms of the bequest previously on public display in the parish church. This ephemeral practice was captured and transmitted through a series of printed accounts across the centuries. Thus the contested history of clothing the poor was captured for posterity first in the pages of an anonymous pamphlet and then again in Jacques’ antiquarian history, representing the role of print in the transmission of cultural practices about rural charity and clothing the bodies of the deserving poor in the landscape of the past.

Brief Biography:

Dr Dolly MacKinnon, Senior Fellow, Historical Studies, Faculty of Arts & Career Enhancement Fellow, Faculty of VCA & Music, University of Melbourne, Australia. Author of *Revealing the Early Modern Landscape: Earls Colne, Essex 1500-1800* (Ashgate UK, forthcoming), she is a co-editor of three essay collections: *Exhibiting Madness* (forthcoming) and *Madness in Australia: Histories, Heritage and the Asylum* (2003) both with C. Coleborne, and *Hearing Places* (2007) with R. Bandt and M. Duffy. Her recent essays appeared in S. Tarbin and S. Broomhall (eds) *Women, Identities and Political Cultures in Early Modern Europe* (2008) and J. Nugent and E. Ewan (eds) *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* (2008). Her article ‘Gender, National Identity, and the Formation of Children’s British History in Alison Uttley’s *A Traveller in Time*’ is forthcoming in *Women’s History Review*.