1 Staging the Clothing of the Early Modern World

Preface

Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, printed collections of clothing circulated in Europe, gaining a widespread success on the editorial market. They contained engravings of various size, which quickly became objects of curiosity, amusement, and decoration. While more than 200 of these books circulated in Europe between 1520 and 1610, production increased most perceptibly after 1550 in Paris, Venice, and Nurnberg, the most prominent centres for publishing (Tuffal, 1955; Olian, 1977).[1] The historiography that mostly focusses on European costume books agrees on some basic assumptions that identify dress as the category which in the early modern period structured a discourse on social, cultural, and gender difference. Alongside portraits, costume books were the new medium expressing individuality in a visual format, which projected the author's experience of the urban space in terms of habitat, work, and commerce. Research has also highlighted the visual culture these editorial productions shared with Renaissance chorography and cartography, as maps of cities and continents were often decorated with the dress of local inhabitants, reinforcing the connection between dress and place. Space became visible through the images of men and women wearing local attire. Recent studies have highlighted references to travel literature, botanical illustrations, and emblem books, all of which also shaped the visual apparatus of costume books (Ilg, 2004; Wilson, 2005; Mentges, 2007; Rublack, 2010).

In the early modern period, the equation of the gendered body with dress and civic space is in tension with a widening notion of space in terms of exploration and conquest and the construction of a non-Western, non-Christian other. Costume books staged the bodies of men and women on an ordered theatre of the world, displaying the most visibly evident components of otherness. Abraham Ortelius with his atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570), translated into Dutch (1571), German and French (1572), and Spanish (1588), and in 1606 into English as *The Theatre of the Whole World*, disseminated the figure of the world theatre across Europe. The title invited readers to comprehend the world both as a whole and through its local representations by experiencing an imaginary voyage displayed on the page. In a similar way, costume books invited readers to delve into human diversity on a micro level through the clothed bodies displayed on the theatre of the world and contained in a book (Riello, 2019: 284).

[1] One of the first books is Francois Deserps, *The Various Styles of Clothing*. A facsimile of the 1562 edition, Sarah Shannon, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: James Ford Bell Library, 2001).

In the context of growing curiosity and knowledge about non-Western peoples and lands, costume books comprised multifaceted notions of dress. An inclusive representation of dress as the bodily practice of combining nudity and bodily manipulations – tattoos, foot bondage, sexual mutilation – was in tension with the traditional meaning of costume, one that the Renaissance imbued with ethical and gendered notions of moral conduct, and with fashion as a sign of change and modernity in Western societies. Recent research recommends looking at the body as a 'strategy' for thinking about the global. In the context of world history, bodies are embedded in processes of circulation, mobility, exchange, and trade, providing, as it were, the basic connection of global interactions (Burton, 2012). In their fanciful attires, the people of the world displayed in costume books embodied abstract notions of space, suggesting to the readers ideas about distance and proximity, place, climate, ethnicity, sexual identity, and age. At the crossroads of early anthropology, travel literature, and visual culture, costume books blurred the lines between art and science. The clothed and naked bodies of men and women appearing on a variety of media (chorographies, atlases, world maps, costume albums and books, screens) partook in the early modern construction of a humanized global space where gender, ethnic, language, and religious differences prevailed over skin colour.

The early modern texts analysed in this Element communicate to readers from the twenty-first century a gaze that is astonished and yet free of a consolidated Western superiority. It is a gaze shaped by classical antiquity, travel diaries and missionary accounts, and the often derivative and imaginary pictures of clothing portrayed in drawings, engravings, and books that proliferated throughout Europe.

Until recent years, historians rarely questioned the normative monopoly of the Western gaze in defining and fixing the representation of world peoples via images, literature, and geographical, anthropological, and clinical investigation. However, global contacts and encounters offered other people the opportunity to describe, represent, and hybridize the (European) foreigners arriving in the lands they inhabited. Ethnographies therefore were not only a Western production, though Europeans 'enjoyed asymmetric advantages in that they were able to compile a much more comprehensive body of global cultural knowledge than any other people' (Bentley, 2011: 8).

The Circulation of Knowledge in and beyond Europe

The three sections of this work show how compendiums, travelogues, visual sources, missionary reports, and cartography were crucial to the elaboration of

images and texts in Italian, European, and non-Western costume albums and books. All three sections acknowledge the circulation of books, prints, and maps through agents (merchants, scientists, diplomats, missionaries, artists, travellers) across Europe and between East and West. Information not only travelled from the West to the Far East, but, as Sections 2 and 3 show, in the other direction as well. My central argument focusses on the circulation and translation of culture in costume books and albums across global connections. Images were traced and texts were copied and at times translated into images, spurred by an editorial market eager for plates that depicted people nobody had ever seen (as, for example, the Arctic population in northern Scandinavia before the 1550s, the Japanese in Europe before 1582, or the Portuguese in Japan before the 1540s).

Costume books were not a unique European production: in the Ottoman Empire and the Far East, artists and geographers pictured the dress of men and women of their own and faraway lands in manuscript albums, scrolls, and prints. Analysing these sources in non-Western contexts is another crucial contribution this Element intends to make to the expanding field of early modern global cultural studies. Addressing a growing readership in Japan or a European audience in Turkey, costume albums produced in Istanbul and Tokyo are also considered in tension with the Renaissance Western tradition. Structured on synthesis, repetition, and accumulation, these tracts develop a discursive model increasingly grounded on difference, in an expanding world unknown to biblical and classical sources. Costume books represent others through the lens of power, status, religion, trade, ethnicity, gender, and age. They address a readership attracted to exotica in a widening market of luxury goods where foreigners are becoming part of the domestic landscape (Bleichmar, 2011: 15–30; Bleichmar and Mancall, 2011). A startling desire for information is perceivable in most of them, the desire to know about foreigners and where they come from as well as a troubling anxiety about otherness and others.

The following paragraphs focus on the Venetian artist Cesare Vecellio's two editions of his *Habiti antichi e moderni* (*Ancient and Modern Clothing*) in the context of map-makers, geographers, and the printing trades in the cosmopolitan society of the late Renaissance.

The Ancient and Modern Clothing of the World

Cesare Vecellio (1521–1601) authored the largest and most important Italian costume book representing the peoples of the world. It was printed in Venice in two editions: *Degli habiti antichi e moderni di diverse parti del mondo* (1590)

and *Habiti antichi e moderni di tutto il mondo* (1598). While the first edition pictures the clothing of the three continents (Europe, Asia, Africa), the second one includes the New World and represents the four continents. The two editions are illustrated with 428 woodcuts (1590) and 503 woodcuts (1598) provided by Christopher Chrieger, a German printmaker whose name was Italianized as Cristoforo Guerra.

In recent years, much has been written on Cesare Vecellio, a versatile artist, active as a painter, engraver, and printmaker living and working in Cadore, Belluno, and Venice in the second half of the sixteenth century. The *Habiti* are the most extensively discussed costume books by Renaissance specialists mainly in terms of a history of clothing, textile production, and dress which is now expanding in the field of global fashion studies (Wilson, 2005; Jones and Rosenthal, 2008; Paulicelli, 2008; Paulicelli and Clark, 2009; Riello and McNeil, 2010; Riello, 2019). Sidestepping the analytical perspective of a history of fashion, my methodological approach to Vecellio's costume books is that of viewing them as a 'contact zone' (Pratt, 1992) where a wealth of visual and textual sources is creatively appropriated and reinterpreted. In this framework, addressing the circulation of knowledge and cultural translation, the *Habiti* appear to be a dynamic genre situated in a changing geopolitical context shaped by Western and non-Western cross-cultural exchanges. This methodological approach informs the three sections of this Element, which focus on three different contexts: the Scandinavian peninsula, the Ottoman Empire, and Japan. Venice as a global city (Wilson, 2005) and a printing centre provides connections between a situated local knowledge and cross-cultural exchanges across Italy, Europe, and the East.

Born in Pieve di Cadore in 1523, Cesare was a distant cousin of Tiziano Vecellio and was trained in his workshop in Venice, where the large Vecellio household cooperated under the artistic direction of Tiziano himself. Owing to a lack of sources concerning his life, Cesare was unacknowledged as an artist in his own right, and it was only in 1817 that Stefano Ticozzi in his *Vite dei pittori Vecellij del Cadore* mentioned Cesare as a close collaborator of Tiziano's (Ticozzi, 1817). Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle, in his famous monograph on Tiziano (1878), listed some works which he attributed to Cesare, whose contribution could be distinguished from that of other family members in the master's workshop (*bottega*). However, subsequent studies did not shed light on any documents concerning Cesare's life and work or his relationship to Tiziano. Only a few quotes in the 1590 *Habiti* mention a trip to Augsburg in 1548, where the artist and his collaborators were invited to paint a portrait of Charles V and his court. After Tiziano's death in the Venetian plague of 1576, Cesare probably received part of the drawings, etchings, and sketches as well

as some of the precious textiles listed among his belongings. Carpets and woven patterns appear in Cesare's paintings in the 1580s and 1590s and recent historiography from the Cadore has suggested a connection between these new motifs and Tiziano's legacy (Guérin Dalle Mese, 2002; Tagliaferro and Aikema, 2009).

In the 1570s, Cesare painted a series of portraits of a family from the local uprising nobility, the Piloni. Count Odorico, head of the household and holding important political charges, became his patron and friend. In his palace near Belluno, the count, Vecellio wrote, 'has a study. In addition to many kinds of books, this study is full of every ancient object one could desire, including ancient medals, portraits of heroes, and marble and bronze sculptures, as well as wondrous natural artifacts in substances of every noble kind. Throughout the region it is called Noah's Ark' (Vecellio, 1590: 219; Rosenthal and Jones, 2008: 271). The artist decorated the volumes of Piloni's precious collection of books with hand-coloured miniatures of exotic landscapes and imaginary portraits on the edgings, to make it look like a gallery of paintings rather than a library. Many of the Renaissance bestsellers that Cesare perused and quoted in his *Habiti* came from Piloni's library in Belluno. It is important to acknowledge the tension between the local embeddedness of the count as a jurist, politician, and major collector and the transnational update of his library and Wunderkammer – a key feature of the intellectual world of Venice and its mainland and of the transfer of knowledge and communication across Europe.

Vecellio's work was part of a well-connected world of engravers, printers, artists, and cartographers such as Giacomo Franco and Pietro and Ferdinando Bertelli who engraved costume books as well as maps (Woodward, 1996, 2007; Bury, 2001). Venice became a leading printing centre because of its trade networks, its political autonomy, and its tradition of freethinking. Beginning in the early sixteenth century, a growing entrepreneurial class of government officials, artisans of the metal and paper trades, merchants, and intellectuals provided a fertile ground for the spreading of the new technology and connected lay and church intellectuals with a wider readership for whom knowledge of the wider world was no longer a luxury but a necessity. Vecellio had his own smaller printing business and printed maps. Texts and images thus represent the clothed inhabitants of the world through the prism of the artist's contextualized reading of space. A keen awareness of the changing space of the world shapes the *Habiti*: a wealth of sources combines references to paintings, monuments, and tombstones with a large body of geographical and historical knowledge circulating in Venice from the mid-sixteenth century.

Gendering Civic Culture and Global State Power

A systematic comparative reading of the two editions underlines some crucial differences that are central to the argument presented in this Element. The first *Habiti* (1590) mainly addresses a local Venetian readership, is entirely written in Italian, and consists of two books, one dealing with the European dress of men and women and the other dealing with the costumes of Asia and Africa in the framework of the old three-continent partition of the world. Each illustration is set in an elaborate frame and is flanked by a page providing a detailed description of the image, from the top of the engraving down. Vecellio began with the hairstyle or headdress, worked his way down over the shoulders to the bust, arms, and hands, and ended with the feet. He detailed textiles, patterns, colours, and accessories – gloves, fans, handkerchiefs, flowers. He then explained how the individual costume was used, on what occasion and by whom, and to what extent the fashion was popular. Shaped by the Renaissance tradition of portraiture, the culture of self-fashioning and the use of models, costume books have been compared to emblem books or to collections of botanical engravings in which each plant species is presented singly, divided by genus on distinct plates set one next to the other (Wilson, 2005). This iconographic approach oriented towards analogy was useful in presenting the masculine and the feminine in both the natural and the human worlds.

Vecellio's explicit intent was to delineate a history of clothing and thus to provide a documented history of the images on the woodblock prints: he traced their origins from paintings, tombstones, frescoes, or books, or from news spread by travellers landing in Venice. Political and social power shape the artist's gaze that focusses on hybrid styles of clothing in colonial territories such as Venice's Stato da Mar. Religion is one of the key features distinguishing attire among the Protestants, Christian Orthodox, Jewish, Armenian, and Islamic people, and ritual – especially the bridal marriage dress – grants ethnic continuity of customs and costumes for minorities. Most of the genealogy of ancient and modern clothing in the first *Habiti* (1590) deals with women's fashion, and the female body played the greatest role in giving shape to the theatre of the world. The first edition features a culture of civic urban virtues in which noblewomen have a prominent visual position and female costumes embody some European cities, regions, and kingdoms.

The second edition (1598) is written in Latin and Italian, addresses a cosmopolitan readership, and is divided into twelve books comprising the peoples of Europe and of the world (including North and South America) within the modern four-continent division of the world. The prose loses all reference to local scales of representation and knowledge as well as to individuals.

Adopting a rather generic descriptive quality acquired through a systematic reduction of texts, the prose is mostly confined to a short description of the costume, eschewing information about customs and contexts. Here the images are set within a global history of costumes and customs. Princes with their royal gowns and insignia systematically move in, substituting the female icons of civic virtue in favour of a representation of state power embodied by men, which develops into a male-centred visual construction of global space. Adding America with twenty new prints was the crucial step in this direction (Van Groesen, 2008). Information had to be updated as the earth was no longer perceived to be made up of empty spaces surrounding familiar places and faces but was recognized as fully and densely inhabited by unknown men and women (Headley, 1997; Hodorowich, 2005).

As shown in Section 3, two new plates picturing the costumes of the Molucca Islands and Japan embodied the space of the Pacific and were the key to the global dimension of the second edition of the *Habiti*. It indeed staged the costumes of the whole world connecting the four continents through the written and visual sources that agents – diplomats, missionaries, travellers – brought with them. Migrations, diasporas, and the transfer of people and material culture provide the larger framework for the transcontinental circulation of images and texts that this Element illustrates.

The leading Italian, French, and German costume books, as well as the bestsellers that in the mid-sixteenth century appeared on the European book market and their Italian editions, mostly printed in Venice, shaped Vecellio's *Habiti*: Ramusio's collection *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, Olaus Magnus' *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, Nicolas de Nicolay's *Navigationi et viaggi*, Juan Gonzales de Mendoza's *Historia de la China*, and De Bry's *Collection of Voyages*.

Cesare Vecellio died in 1601. He was eighty years old and had survived the devastating 1576 plague that hit Venice and northern Italy. He published the first edition of the *Habiti* at sixty-seven and completed the second at seventy-five, a very old artist leaving behind him the world in a book.

The 'New World Within'

Passing from the first to the second edition, Vecellio modified the boundaries of Northern Europe, introducing new peoples – the inhabitants of Scandia (Scandinavia) – and calling it the 'new world in Europe'. The definition came from Giovanni Botero, a Jesuit scholar who between 1591 and 1597 was completing his encyclopedic *Relazioni Universali* (Botero, 2015), a masterpiece of Western and Catholic universalism offering armchair travellers

a global tour around the four continents. Writing about the northern peninsula bordering the ocean to the west and the north and the Baltic Sea to the south and the east, Botero defined it as a new world because it was inhabited by so many different peoples. Huge whales, monsters with human heads, and enormous quantities of fish were part of a wondrous landscape that nevertheless suggested commercial opportunities as herrings, salmon, and precious furs created trading networks and attracted capital. Both Vecellio and Botero compared Stockholm to Venice. The city where the king of Sweden resided was – like Venice – 'built in the marshes on wooden poles. The sea enters in two branches so deep and large that ships loaded with merchandise arrive with full blown sails' (Vecellio, 1590: 329; Botero, 2015: 202). For Italian readers, the new and the unknown were framed in a familiar context.

None of the European authors of costume books – Bertelli, De Bruyn, Boissard, Grassi, Weiditz – from whom Vecellio had copied many images had gone so far as to include the hyperborean regions or the inhabitants of the last Thule. Only the Venetian Pietro Bertelli had designed a Finnish costume, but on the whole Italian culture continued to depend on what it could glean from the work of the *auctores* who, in medieval times, had dominated in the field of geographical and encyclopedic studies (De Anna, 1988, 1994). In Venice, Ramusio had printed the travelogues of Pietro Querini, who had been shipwrecked near the Lofoten Islands in 1432. The reports from the envoys from the Holy See, at the forefront those of Antonio Possevino written between 1577 and 1580, remained inaccessible and locked within the Roman archives of the Curia and then of the Jesuits. The Arctic was the totally unknown, the void, and what was surprising to many Renaissance thinkers, it was missing from ancient sources. In this sense it was a new world and another world within Europe.

Recent historiography has connected the invisibility of the Far North in sixteenth-century sources to the ways in which Arctic exploration took place. Early modern Arctic encounters were a largely Protestant phenomenon and Dutch and English explorers shared their cultures' anxiety about the theological value of images – sculptures, paintings, handcrafted figures – as leading to idolatry (Heuer, 2019). The Dutch Jan Huygen von Linschoten's 1594–5 voyage to Lapland is a meaningful example of his identification of local sculptures with threatening idols. Arctic works appeared in a time of violent iconoclasm and religious wars when the traditional Christian conceptions of the image were being challenged. The invisibility of the last Thule, wrapped in ice, fog, darkness, and sorcery, suited the iconoclastic ideology of Northern European explorers who assimilated this landscape to the Reformation's attacks against idols in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, and France. The Far North

became a contact zone where religious zealots fought their culture wars verging on the meaning of visuality.

Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*

In this context, it was not by chance that Olaus Magnus (1490–1557), the Swedish archbishop of Uppsala, authored the most imaginative and densely illustrated encyclopedic tract on the northern peoples, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*. He was concretely involved with the Reformation debate over the moral and religious use of pictorial art at the Council of Trent, taking an uncompromising stand against iconoclasm. It was in Trent, where he appeared as a stranger from unknown lands, that he started planning his colossal history of the Far North 'numbed by the constant merciless cold' (Olaus Magnus, 1565: pp. 1–2; Heuer, 2019). In the foreword of his *Historia*, Olaus glorifies pictorial art as 'poetry without words [which] in its harmonious use of lines, colours, proportions, and in its imitation of living objects' preserves the memory of the past, inspires honourable deeds, and is a *magistra vitae* full of delights (Johannesson, 1991: 168). He wrote and reproduced in 480 woodcuts the first detailed description of the people of Scandinavia in their wondrous natural environment. Owing to Olaus' militant opposition to the Protestants' iconoclasm, Scandinavia appeared to Renaissance readers in a wealth of images (Gillgren, 1999).

Olaus Magnus is one of the great and, at the same time, perhaps one of the least known figures of Renaissance cultural history. Born in Linkoping in 1490, between 1519 and 1521, he wandered across Norway with his brother Johannes, who was made the archbishop of Uppsala in 1521. Because of his duties for the church and the king, he travelled widely in Sweden, Norway, and northern Finland. When Lutheran-friendly forces under Gustav Vasa conquered Stockholm in 1523, both brothers went into exile, travelled incessantly through Europe, and lived for long periods in world cities such as Danzic, Venice, and Rome. In Venice in 1539, Olaus published a maritime map of Scandinavia under the auspices of the Venetian patriarch Geronimo Quirini. The *Carta marina* printed with two informative booklets in Italian and German was full of wonderful illustrations of monsters, battles, and shipwrecks, of reindeers pulling chariots over icy rivers and lakes, hunters, and missionaries. It had a wide diffusion and its vignettes were repeated in the *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*. It was considered the most accurate map of Scandinavia (Miekkavaara, 2008).[2] However, the *Carta* and the *Historia* did not only offer

[2] For a colour reproduction of the *Carta marina*, see http://hornorkesteret.wordpress.com/2010/01/18/olaus-magnus-carta-marina-1539.

a wealth of illustrations: as we shall see, they were embedded in the conquering ideology of the Catholic Counter-Reformation (Lestringant, 2005: 6).

The brothers settled in Rome in 1541 in the Swedish hospice of Saint Birgitta, today in the piazza Farnese. Both died in Rome, Johannes in 1544 and Olaus in 1557. The latter was named archbishop in his brother's place but never returned to Sweden. He attended the first Council of Trent between December 1546 and March 1547 and conceived of his monumental *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, where he depicted the north not just as a fragmented landscape of ice and darkness, but as a potentially promising region in terms of natural resources worthy of reconquest by the papal forces.

Upon his return to Rome in 1547, Olaus installed two printing presses in the hospice of Saint Birgitta and employed an émigré from Parma to work them. The encyclopedic *Historia* shaped by the classics (especially Pliny), northern folklore, personal observation, and experience, generously illustrated with 480 woodcuts, was printed in Latin in Rome in 1555. Translations in French (1561), Dutch (1562), Italian (1565), German (1567), and English (1658) followed. It was not published in Swedish until 1909. In his own country, Olaus Magnus was a controversial figure who embodied the last generation of Catholic bishops opposing Gustav Vasa's conversion to Protestantism, the requisition of monastic property, and state-building – all of which Swedish historiography identified with modernity. A vast and seemingly unmanageable encyclopedia, full of fantasies with no scientific grounding, in Sweden the *Historia* was discredited and forgotten. It was better known in abridged editions, called *epitomes*, circulating among European scholars across confessional lines.[3] Olaus' sources for the images included his brother's *History of the Gothic and Swedish Kings* that was published in 1554, Hans Holbein's prints of the Old Testament, and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in Gabriele Giolito's 1549 edition. It seems probable that Olaus first produced sketches himself but left it to his Italian engraver to complete his pictures (Johannesson, 1991: 163–70). These were the only images of the Scandinavian peninsula and of the Arctic region circulating in Renaissance Europe.

The Indigenous Populations of Lapland and Biarmia

To the Southern Europeans to whom the book was addressed, the icy new world was upsetting because of the monstrosities it contained – whales, snakes, giants,

[3] The *Historia* comprises twenty-two books The first books describe the climate and geography. The author then moves on to describe warfare and peace in Scandinavia. In the second part of the work, Olaus discusses at length the animal kingdom, beginning with mankind and ending with insects. The twenty-two books supposedly mirror the structure of the Old Testament with its twenty-two books and perhaps even Augustine's *City of God*.