

THE WORLD IN A BOOK: THE CREATION OF THE GLOBAL IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN COSTUME BOOKS*

Richard Hakluyt in his *Principal Navigations* advised would-be explorers in their mission to discover a north-eastern passage to China to carry with them two types of book. The first was an updated ‘new Herball and such books as make shew of Herbes, Plantes, Trees, Fishes, Foules, and Beastes of all Regions’. The second type of book to be used ‘to astonish the natives’ and as a reference guide to foreign lands was what Hakluyt called ‘the book of the attire of all nations’.¹ Hakluyt referred to what today are commonly called costume books, collections of the costumes of different people in Europe and other parts of the world. By the time Hakluyt published the first edition of his travel narratives in 1589, at least a dozen such costume books had been

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¹ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation: Made by Sea or Over-Land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at Any Time Within . . . These 1600 Yeeres*, 12 vols. (Glasgow, 1904), iii, 272. See also Mary C. Fuller, *Voyages in Print: English Narratives of Travel to America 1576–1624* (Cambridge, 1995), 6. In all likelihood the costume book mentioned by Hakluyt was Hans Weigel’s *Habitus praecipuorum populorum, tam virorum quam foeminarum singulari arte depicti* (Nuremberg, 1577). Peter C. Mancall (ed.), *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology* (Oxford, 2006), 46. On the relationship between herbals and costume books, see Bronwen Wilson, *The World in Venice: Print, the City, and Early Modern Identity* (Toronto, 2005), 93–100; and Daniel Defert, ‘Les collections iconographiques du XVI^e siècle’, in Jean Céard and Jean Claude Margolin (eds.), *Voyager à la Renaissance: Actes du colloque de Tours, 30 Juin – 13 Juillet, 1983* (Paris, 1987), 534–7.

published in France, Italy and Germany in the previous twenty-five years.² In the following decade the genre of the costume book reached maturity with the publication of Cesare Vecellio's two editions of his *Habiti antichi et moderni*, comprising more than four hundred plates each.³

Among the sources available to global historians, costume books have been less studied than maps, travel narratives and the collecting of world exotica as part of their consideration of the expanding horizons of Renaissance Europeans. Travel narratives and diaries have provided a lens through which to recover the agency of all the parties involved in global contacts, encounters and interactions.⁴ Similarly the analysis of collecting and gifting practices and the formation of cabinets of curiosities has stimulated a material-culture approach to European knowledge formation especially in relation to the extra-European world.⁵ Maps, atlases and more generally cartography have also been considered as integral to the new ways in which Europeans reshaped their geographic understanding of the world in the century following their discovery of the Americas and the opening of direct navigation routes to Asia.⁶

² For an overview, see Jannine Guérin Dalle Mese, *L'occhio di Cesare Vecellio: Abiti e costume esotici nel '500* (Alessandria, 1998), 11–17.

³ Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo* (Venice, 1590); Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo* (Venice, 1598).

⁴ See, for instance, Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (eds.), *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel* (London, 1999); Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Travel Writing and Humanistic Culture: A Blunted Impact?', *Journal of Early Modern History*, x (2006), 131–68. For a review, see Simon Ditchfield, 'Discovering How to Describe the World Then and Now: A Review Article', *Journal of Early Modern History*, xx (2016), 559–80.

⁵ On collecting and the expanding knowledge of the world in the sixteenth century, see Oliver Impey and A. MacGregor (eds.), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1985); Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, 1994); Daniela Bleichman and Peter C. Mancall (eds.), *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2011). On gifting, see Meredith Martin and Daniela Bleichmar (eds.), *Objects in Motion in the Early Modern World*, special issue of *Art History*, xxxviii, 4 (2015); Nancy Um and Leah R. Clark (eds.), *The Art of Embassy: Objects and Images of Early Modern Diplomacy*, special issue of *Journal of Early Modern History*, xx, 1 (2016); Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (eds.), *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2018).

⁶ Angelo Cattaneo, *Fra Mauro's Mappa Mundi and Fifteenth-Century Venice* (Turnhout, 2011); Andrea Nanetti et al., 'Maps as Knowledge Aggregators: From Renaissance Italy Fra Mauro to Web Search Engines', *Cartographic Journal*, lii, 2 (2015), 159–67.

Giulia Calvi has recently made the argument that in an attempt to create an ‘early modern culture of space’ costume books bridge anthropology, travel literature and visual culture.⁷ They are complex sources that should be considered together with travel accounts (of which they retain the ethnographic ambition and human subject), collecting and gifting (as they reflect visually on material and sartorial practices), and cartography (with which they share a topographical aim and visual language). Costume books need to be ‘read’ in conjunction with their relations, travel accounts, pamphlets, maps and pictures that, as recently noted by Susanna Burghartz, ‘processed the experiences of new places while creating new pictorial and literary worlds for an increasingly numerous European public’.⁸ So far, however, costume books have been mostly studied for the visual evidence that they present in thousands of clothed figures, most of which are deemed to embody sartorial specificity across space. Historians of dress and costume are therefore well acquainted with the potential as well as the pitfalls of using costume books. Yet, costume books have so far received limited consideration in historical writing. This is due to a combination of causes. Visual culture has never been fully integrated into the toolkit of microhistorical methodologies. By relying on written archival material to recover the richness of specific events and individual stories, microhistory has sidelined the visual and the material. The rise of global history has provided new impetus for a deeper engagement with a wider range of sources to include different modes of writing, recording and representation that are often treated as separate in European archival classifications, historical research and disciplinary boundaries. Notwithstanding its many drawbacks, digital access has provided an entry point for historians into a wider variety of source materials that include prints, miniatures, digitized books and manuscripts, artefacts and large-scale maps.⁹ This has allowed easier access to costume books as well and an enhanced capacity to record

⁷ Giulia Calvi, ‘Cultures of Space: Costume Books, Maps and Clothing between Europe and Japan (Sixteenth through Nineteenth Centuries)’, *I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance*, xx, 2 (2017), 332.

⁸ Susanna Burghartz, ‘Apocalyptic Times in a “World without End”: The Straits of Magellan around 1600’, in Helmut Puff, Ulrike Strasser, and Christopher Wild (eds.), *Cultures of Communication: Theologies of Media in Early Modern Europe and Beyond* (Toronto, 2017), 228.

⁹ For a critical approach on the methodological drawbacks of digital access to primary and secondary sources, see Lara Putnam, ‘The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast’, *American Historical Review*, cxxi, 2 (2016), 377–402.

and store their visual materials. It has made it possible to analyse several of these books at once and compare specific images across different books.

Why are costume books useful for historians? They articulate the relationship between the specificity of an individual image or figure and the general phenomenon of a collection of images whose ambition is to represent the entire world.¹⁰ This is a methodological issue well appreciated by historians who use very precise sources to weave sometimes large (general and global) narratives. In the case of costume books, the source material is both micro in its reference to the specificity of each figure and macro in its overarching ambition at capturing an entire world. The binomial 'micro–macro' is accompanied by a further dimension: the relationship between the local and the global.¹¹ We move here from a methodological approach to a geographical dimension. Costume books are deceptive in creating a seamless transition between the locality represented in each image and the global (one might even say universal) ambition of such books. They ask us to reflect on the meaning of concepts such as 'near' and 'far' and the point of view adopted when interpreting their visual evidence. They also challenge us to think about the ways in which 'micro and macro' and 'global and local' intersect with each other.

Being both sources for historians and historical artefacts, costume books raise a second methodological issue: their use and meaning at the time of their creation. What kind of global space did they create and how did they capture the expanding horizons of Renaissance Europeans? How did they articulate the relationship between the individual places of cities and countries represented by specific costumes and that of continents and the world as a unit? As such, costume books are a form of what has been defined as 'world-making': a device through which new notions of what present-day historians and social scientists refer to as 'the global' were established in sixteenth-century Europe.¹² They provide an insight into the ways European contemporaries

¹⁰ For a methodological discussion, see Amy Stanley, 'Maid-servants' Tales: Narrating Domestic and Global History in Eurasia, 1600–1900', *American Historical Review*, cxxi (2016), 438–40. See also Christian G. de Vito, 'Towards a Trans-local Microhistory (Trans-Spatial)', *Quaderni Storici*, cl (2015), 815–33.

¹¹ On the relationship between the local and the global in recent historical scholarship, see Anne Gerritsen, 'Scales of a Local: The Place of Locality in a Globalizing World', in Douglas Northrop (ed.), *A Companion to World History* (Oxford, 2012), 213–26.

¹² Ayesha Ramachandran, *The Worldmakers: Global Imagining in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, 2015). The concept of 'world-making' has a long tradition going back to Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jean-Luc Nancy and Nelson Goodman. For an overview see Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, 2016), 185–204, esp. 187.

understood the articulation between locality and global geographies and the ways in which they connected the microscopic dimension of bodies and their dress to wider interpretations of the very shape of the world.

Unlike the linguistic and material nature of travel narratives and collecting practices, costume books deploy the visual — the image of the clothed body — as a method of knowledge creation. This is a feature of costume books that needs to be highlighted as historians often struggle to deal with visual evidence especially when considering what contemporaries might have glimpsed in costume books rather than what we — from the perspective of a twenty-first century globalized society — might appreciate from their analysis as sources. A point to be noted is that what is presented is not in any sense real: it is not photographic or even a representation of costume in different parts of the world. What we see in costume books — though the point might have not been as clear for contemporaries — is an imagining of the world. Costume books are therefore one of the ways in which sixteenth-century Europeans thought about space and time across localities, nations and continents and to a certain extent appropriated such worlds.¹³

This is what present-day theorists have called a ‘global imaginary’ that in different shapes and through different tools of knowledge came into being in the course of the sixteenth century. This article focuses on the imagining of Europeans, though recent scholarship has shown that similar processes were at play in other parts of the world.¹⁴ After introducing their artistic genre, this article deconstructs costume books by considering their constituent elements: the individual folios and the specific places captured by costumed figures. It thus analyses the strategies and mechanisms through which space was articulated through a juxtaposition of localities and the sewing together of individual characters and places. Finally, it reflects on what kind of spatial architecture costume books created, which view of the world they endorsed and what was actually excluded from it. This article argues that unlike today’s

¹³ As Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen remind us, the very spatial classification of the world that we find so natural was being shaped in the second half of the sixteenth century. It was only in the 1570s, for instance, that Ortelius divided the world into four parts: Martin W. Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, 1997), 25–6.

¹⁴ Giulia Calvi compares Europe and Japan showing the parallel uses of images of costume in the two cultures: Calvi, ‘Cultures of Space’, 331–63. On representations of nakedness and cannibalism in Europe and Japan, see also Radu Leca, ‘Brazilian Cannibals in Sixteenth-Century Europe and Seventeenth-Century Japan’, *Comparative Critical Studies*, Electronic suppl. (2014), 109–30.

global imaginary, the view of the world created by costume books was surprisingly devoid of connectivity. It presented instead a world that was cumulative and in which the construction of the global relied on the strengthening of the local and its authenticity. It was also a vision in which space and time diverged as the world that they present was inhabited by people that did not necessarily live synchronically.¹⁵

I

THE GENESIS OF COSTUME BOOKS

It would be incorrect to think of costume books as anything approximating a codified genre of artistic production or type of publication. They emerged gradually in the course of the sixteenth century, borrowing both from travelogues and from so-called costume albums. The latter were produced by individuals in the course of their travels and incorporated both drawings and prints of clothed figures especially from the Middle East.¹⁶ These remained a popular way to record travel as exemplified through characters. The Italian traveller Pietro della Valle, whilst in Istanbul in 1614, commissioned what he called a 'book of coloured figures' (*un libro di figure colorite*) 'in which all diverse clothes of every sort, both of the men and of the women of this city will be drawn from life'.¹⁷ This was supposed to capture the 'curiosities in the various kinds of dress that were worn, because all the different offices and

¹⁵ See also Giovanni Levi's 'Frail Frontiers?' in this volume.

¹⁶ On costume albums, see Margaret F. Rosenthal, 'Cutting a Good Figure: The Fashions of Venetian Courtesans in the Illustrated Albums of Early Modern Times', in Martha Feltman and Bonnie Gordon (eds.), *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Oxford, 2006), 52–74; Leslie Meral Schick, 'Ottoman Costume Albums in a Cross-Cultural Context', *Art Turc/Turkish Art* (Geneva, 1999), 625–8; Leslie Meral Schick, 'The Place of Dress in Pre-modern Costume Albums', in Suraiya Faroqhi and Christopher K. Neumann (eds.), *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity* (Istanbul, 2004), 93–101; E. Natalie Rothman 'Visualizing a Space of Encounter: Intimacy, Alterity and Trans-Imperial Perspective in an Ottoman-Venetian Miniature Album', in Baki Tezcan and Gottfried Hagen (eds.), *Other Places: Ottomans Traveling, Seeing, Writing, Drawing the World. Essays in Honor of Thomas D. Goodrich*, pt ii, special issue of *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/Journal of Ottoman Studies*, lx (2012), 39–80. On Album Amicorum's use of costume figures, see Bronwen Wilson, 'Social Networking: The "Album Amicorum" and Early Modern Public Making', in Massimo Rospocher (ed.), *Oltre la sfera pubblica/Beyond the Public Sphere: Opinions, Publics, Spaces in Early Modern Europe* (Bologna, 2012), 1–19.

¹⁷ Pietro della Valle, *The Journals of Pietro della Valle, the Pilgrim*, ed. George Bull (London, 1989), 14.

ranks'.¹⁸ Della Valle suggests that these albums relied on first-hand information and were produced by local artists in Istanbul, though models sometimes borrowed from European artistic conventions. Small in format and comprising between fifty and two hundred images, extant examples present inscriptions in different European languages, most probably included by their commissioners.¹⁹

Figures could be at times cut out and assembled as the English traveller Peter Mundy (1600–67) did in his *A Briefe Relation of the Turckes* consisting of fifty-nine figures of 'the severall habitts used att Constantinople where most officers and Nationes are distinguished by their habits'.²⁰ Just a few years after della Valle, in 1618 Mundy commissioned these drawings from local artists in Istanbul as a way of visually capturing social hierarchies and the mix of different ethnic and merchant communities in one of Eurasia's busiest ports. Art and dress historians have examined the complex relationship between bespoke costume albums and printed costume books.²¹ Several of the images reproduced in costume books were inspired and even directly copied from albums as in the case of the figure of the seated Turkish woman here reproduced from Mundy's album (see Plate 1). This is particularly the case for the dress of all classes in Anatolia ranging from the court, to janissaries, to ecclesiastics as well as Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities.

Costume books shared with albums an ethnographic ambition well expressed by Nicolas de Nicolay in the prologue to his costume book entitled *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations* (1567). Here he stated that he wished to describe and represent 'the shapes and habits of foreign people of different age, sex, places, countries and status . . . as they are and as I have seen them . . .

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Della Valle's interest in costume is well testified in the frequent references to the dress of his wife, a Chaldean woman from Mosul whose identity before her death and after (in the form of a portrait) was shaped by sartorial choices. See Cristelle Baskins, 'Lost in Translation: Portraits of Sitti Maani Gioerida della Valle in Baroque Rome', *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vii (2012), 241–60.

¹⁹ Alberto Arbasino (ed.), *I Turchi: Codex Vindobonensis 8626* (Parma, 1971), 15–16.

²⁰ *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, ed. Sir Richard Carnac Temple (Cambridge, 1907), 26–7. See also *Peter Mundy, Merchant Adventurer*, ed. R. E. Pritchard (Oxford, 2011), ch. 1. The *Brief Relation* was separated from Mundy's travel diaries and is now at the British Museum.

²¹ Charlotte Colding Smith, "'Depicted with Extraordinary Skill": Ottoman Dress in Sixteenth-Century German Printed Costume Books', *Textile History*, xlv (2013), 25–50; Bronwen Wilson, "'Foggie diverse di vestire de' Turchi": Turkish Costume Illustration and Cultural Translation', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, xxxvii (2007), 97–119; Bronwen Wilson, 'Reflecting on the Turk in Late Sixteenth-Century Venetian Portrait Books', *Word and Image*, xix (2003), 38–58.



1. Seated woman holding a fan, from Peter Mundy's album *A Briefe Relation of the Turckes, Their Kings, Emperors, or Grandsigneurs, Their Conquests, Religion, Customes, Habbits, etc.* (1618), fo. 45. © British Museum 1974,0617,0.13.45.

without forgetting to describe their country or region, partially drawing from ancient authors'.²² Costume books have therefore to be read as part of a wider literary production interested in the 'manners' and 'costumes' of people around the world that, as Isabelle Paresys noted, were integral to the 'mental conception and the representation of space' in Renaissance Europe.²³

Yet costume books presented several innovations. Unlike idiosyncratic manuscript albums, costume books were printed. The rising printing industry found in narratives and representations of the newly discovered parts of the world an irresistible subject matter. Both the printed words and images (costumes but most commonly maps) became popular ways to represent newly encountered lands.²⁴ 'It was through printing that the world was translated into images', argues Eugenia Paulicelli, adding that printing brought 'the faraway and the unknown closer to Europeans and therefore closer to knowledge of the "other" via linguistic and visual representations'.²⁵ It is not therefore surprising that all costume books, starting with François Deserps' *Recueil de la diversité des habits* published in 1562 and commonly considered to be the first costume book, were printed in some of the main publishing centres of Europe such as Venice and Padua, Rome, Frankfurt and Paris.²⁶ Books such as Fernando Bertelli's *Diversarum nationum habitus* (1563 and 1569), the above-mentioned *Les quatre premiers livres de navigations* by Nicolay (1567 and later editions), Hans Weigel's *Habitus praeciporum populorum* (1577), Jean Boissard's *Habitus variorum orbis gentium* (1581) and Abraham de Bruÿn's *Omnium pene Europae, Asiae, Africae atque Americae gentium habitus* (1581) fed the imagination of those staying at home as much as those Europeans travelling to other continents as Hakluyt

²² Cited by Odile Blanc, 'Ethnologie et merveille dans quelques livres de costumes français', in Marie Viallon (ed.), *Paraître et se vêtir au XVI^e siècle: Actes du XIII^e Colloque du Puy-en-Velay* (Saint-Étienne, 2006), 81.

²³ Isabelle Paresys, 'Apparences vestimentaires et cartographie de l'espace en Europe occidentale aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles', in Isabelle Paresys (ed.), *Paraître et apparences en Europe occidentale du moyen âges à nos jours* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq, 2008), 254. See also Surekha Davies, 'Trade, Empires and Propaganda: Depictions of Brazilians on French Maps, 1542–1555', *Historical Journal*, lv (2012), 1–32.

²⁴ Valerie Traub, 'Mapping the Global Body', in Peter Erickson and Clark Hulse (eds.), *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race and Empire in Renaissance* (2000), 44–97.

²⁵ Eugenia Paulicelli, 'Mapping the World: The Political Geography of Dress in Cesare Vecellio's Costume Books', *The Italianist*, xxviii (2008), 26.

²⁶ Daniel Defert, 'Vêtir ceux qui sont nus, ou costumes et coutumes au XVI^e siècle', *Droit et Cultures*, iv (1982), 25.



2. Frontispiece of *Omnium pene Europae, Asiae, Africae atque Americae Gentium Habitus* by Abraham de Bruyn (1581), 27.31 x 35.56 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), The Doris Stein Research and Design Center for Costume and Textiles, and funds provided by the Costume Council, AC1997.164.1a-zz.

suggested.²⁷ The allegorical representations of costumed figures showing the different parts of the world were often to be found on costume books' covers and expressed their ambition for global coverage (see Plate 2).

Yet little is known about the readership of costume books. Their craftsmanship — and presumably cost — varied significantly, ranging from high-quality works such as Weigel's to more modest and smaller books such as Bertelli's. A broad survey of extant copies suggests that Vecellio's work was probably the most widely circulated and the plates and text of the second edition were reissued in the mid seventeenth century. Costume books might have adorned the libraries of collectors and what Liz Horodowich calls 'armchair travellers'.²⁸ Yet, they were in no sense rarities. An indicator of the

²⁷ Most original texts are now available in Gallica <<https://gallica.bnf.fr>>. A critical edition of Deserps's book has also been published: François Deserps, *A Collection of the Various Styles of Clothing which are Presently Worn in Countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Savage Islands, All Realistically Depicted 1562*, ed. S. Shannon (Minneapolis, 2001).

²⁸ Liz Horodowich, 'Armchair Travelers and the Venetian Discovery of the World', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxxvi (2005), 1041.

success of costume books is the fact that they were translated into several languages and reproduced in official and pirated editions. This article focuses on the late sixteenth century; yet an acknowledgement needs to be made as to the enduring success of the genre. Plates from sixteenth-century costume books continued to be produced and circulated in association with new plates in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century publications as in the case of Allain Manesson Mallet's *Description de l'univers* (1683) and John Green's *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1745–47).²⁹

In the same way in which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries their plates illustrated travel accounts, sixteenth-century costume books acknowledge travel writing as a source of inspiration and sometimes information. They borrowed from the descriptions and illustrations of best-selling books such as André Thevet's *Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique* (1558) and Jean de Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (1578) as well as well-known woodcuts such as Pierre Coeck van Aelst's *Moeurs et fachons de faire des Turcz* (1553), and Melchior Lorich's superb *Wolgerissene Figuren und Geschnittene, zu Ross un Fuss* (1576–82).³⁰ Yet the experiential and therefore partial nature of travel was replaced in costume books by a panoptic view of the world that no single person could have. While Deserps's book is the first to include all regions and not just the places visited by individual travellers, other books such as Nicolay's *Livres de navigations* in the course of seven editions shifted from a travelogue narrative to a description of individual figures, a change that ensured this book's success and its translation into four languages. The connection to the experiential is entirely superseded in Cesare Vecellio's *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo* (1590) and its revised and expanded edition entitled *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo* published eight years later.³¹ As the titles suggest, Vecellio's ambition was to survey the 'diverse parts of the world' and in its final edition 'all the world' in hundreds of plates.

²⁹ Allain Manesson Mallet, *Description de l'univers, contenant les differents systemes du monde, les cartes generales & particulieres de la geographie ancienne & moderne* (Paris, 1683); John Green, *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels: Consisting of the Most Esteemed Relations . . . Comprehending Everything Remarkable in its Kind, in Europe, Asia, Africa and America* (London, 1745–7).

³⁰ Guérin Dalle Mese, *L'occhio di Cesare Vecellio*, 9–12.

³¹ A critical edition of both costume books by Vecellio has been edited by Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas. Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi et Moderni* (London and New York, 2008).

II

THE LOCAL: PLACING BODIES AND DRESS

The striving of costume books to move away from the partial and the experiential towards the comprehensive and totalizing raises a question concerning the criteria adopted in the creation and selection of illustrations. In costume books each figure constitutes a basic unit, standing often for a specific place. Let us consider for example the 'Nobilis Gallicus ornatus' and the 'Nobilis Anglicus' from Pietro Bertelli's *Diversarum nationum ornatus*, published in Padua in 1593 (see Plate 3). They show two representational strategies at play, first the standardization of people and their costumes and secondly, what we might call 'specification'. Illustrations in costume books show limited variation: they standardize bodies and provide little visual information about places. There are no references to architecture, landscape or other distinctive topographical features.³² They are not to be interpreted as works of ethnography: the stripping away of context made them abstractions more than representations of people. This process however attributes to dress the ability to gather the specificity of each place, even though its distinctiveness might be limited. Standardization however highlights difference. In sifting through the pages of costume books, one is encouraged to compare, observe variations and dissimilarities and, as a consequence, position figures in separate spaces.

Standardization and difference allow for specification, that is to say the drawing of attention to the specificity of dress: what a Milanese noblewoman wears is different from what is worn in another city. Specification also highlights minute variations such as the sleeves of Venetians, the hoods used by Florentines or the attire of the French as compared to that of the Englishman.³³ In some costume books specification is also constructed by providing a sense of social hierarchy as can be seen in Jean Jacques Boissard's *Habitus variarum orbis gentium* (1581) (see Plate 4). Here the ladies of Rome are represented by a noblewoman, a courtesan and an old woman, all set within the same folio so as to form a spatial unit. The place that the clothed figure is supposed to represent is articulated socially and visually, giving the impression that one might be walking through the streets of Rome or any other city. European city states and nation states are given greater emphasis by revealing the articulation of social hierarchies through the dress adopted by rulers, noblemen, citizens, servants and labourers.

³² Wilson, *World in Venice*, 77; Nicole Pellegrin, 'Vêtements de peau(x) et de plumes: la nudité des indiens et la diversité du monde au XVII^e siècle', in Céard and Margolin (eds.), *Voyager à la Renaissance*, 523.

³³ Paulicelli, 'Mapping the World', 27.



3. 'Nobilis Gallicus ornatus' (left) and 'Nobilis Anglicus' (right), from Pietro Bertelli, *Diversarum Nationum Ornatus* (Padua, 1593). Author's collection.



4. Noblewoman, courtesan and old person of Rome in Jean Jacques Boissard's *Habitus Variarum Orbis Gentium* (Mechelen, 1581). Ink on paper with gouache, watercolour and gold, 26.67 x 35.56 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Gift of the 1994 Collectors Committee, AC1994.52.1a-yy.

There is here a quest for authenticity that allows the reader to believe that the figure represents the place and that the nature of the place can be captured simply through dress.³⁴ Such authenticity is claimed through the importance given to specific places. Nicolay, for instance, in his *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations* claimed first-hand experience in observing the dress of Europe and the Levant thanks to his fifteen-year long travels as part of the retinue of the ambassador of the King of France to the Ottoman Porte.³⁵ Deserps could not claim direct observation but reassured the reader that the figures were from the original drawings of the deceased Roberval, Captain of the King of France, and 'from a certain Portuguese having frequented many and diverse countries; and from those which we see daily with our own eyes'.³⁶ Vecellio dedicated a substantial number of plates to the costumes of Venice, the very city where he lived and where his books were published. For other cities he was said to rely instead on information provided by a number of friends and informers based in Venice and elsewhere in Europe as well as contemporary publications.³⁷

The claim for truth based on authenticity reinforced the link between dress and place. In the Renaissance, dress did not denote superficial difference, as it might for us today, but was considered to be ontological in nature.³⁸ Francesco Sansovino in *Venetia città nobilissima, et singolare* (1581) expressed this principle when he observed that 'costumes indicate the character of people'.³⁹ Historian Daniel Defert develops this line of thought by suggesting an overlap between dress and place. But place here should not be considered as a physical entity but a social and moral one in which 'costume' and 'custom' become the two faces of the same coin. Because of the readability of dress, what is worn becomes emblematic of a social stereotype and there is

³⁴ Wilson, *World in Venice*, 80.

³⁵ Blanc, 'Ethnologie et merveille dans quelques livres de costumes français', 81; Ulinka Ilg, 'On the Difficulties of Depicting a "Real" Turk: Reflections on Ethnographic Orientalism in European Art (14th to the 16th Centuries)', in Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf (eds.), *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer* (Venice, 2010), 231–44.

³⁶ Deserps, *Collection of the Various Styles of Clothing*, 28.

³⁷ Guérin Dalle Mese, *L'occhio di Cesare Vecellio*, 48; Traci Elizabeth Timmons, 'Habiti Antichi et Moderni di Tutto il Mondo and the "Myth of Venice"', *Athanos*, xv (1997), 28–33; Eugenia Paulicelli, *Writing Fashion in Early Modern Italy: From Sprezzatura to Satire* (Aldershot, 2014), 112–15; Calvi, 'Cultures of Space', 342.

³⁸ Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge, 2000).

³⁹ Cited in Wilson, "'Foggie diverse di vestire de' Turchi'", 104.

an overlap between appearance (costume; *habit* (Fr.), *abito* (It.) and behaviour (*custume* (It.); *habitude* (Fr.); *abitudine* (It.)).⁴⁰

Fabric literally stands for the fabric of society. It is a fictional ideal that in costume books is presented as a social reality.⁴¹ The idea that different nations, cultures and localities could be distinguished through dress was not new; it was well articulated for instance by the humanist Bardassar Castiglione in his *Cortegiano*, first published in 1528.⁴² In costume books dress came to be used as an indicator of a stable relationship between identity — be it social or national — and appearances. The overlap between character and place allowed dress to signify and identify place.⁴³ Vecellio observed that ‘the shape of dress does not know stability and firmness & they are always changing according to the whim and fancy of people’.⁴⁴ Yet this was a lament that makes us aware that costume books aimed to present a timelessness that set them in direct opposition to fashion plates which they are often mistakenly compared to.⁴⁵ Whilst the latter show the continuous metamorphosis of shapes and colours and the changing nature of choice, costume books fix time and space, and dress becomes an indicator of a stable relationship between an inner identity and the realm of the superficial.⁴⁶

The overlap between individual figures (dress) and the locality (place) that costume books present is confirmed through repetition. The topographical specificity becomes a recurrent theme or convention of representation that through repetition emerges as a stereotype. This means that a claim for truthfulness is to be found across different costume books in the very fact that they

⁴⁰ Defert, ‘Vêtir ceux qui sont nus’, 25–48.

⁴¹ Ulrike Ilg, ‘The Cultural Significance of Costume Books in Sixteenth-Century Europe’, in Catherine Richardson (ed.), *Clothing Culture, 1350–1650* (Aldershot, 2004), 42–3.

⁴² Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York, 2002; first pubd in Italian, 1528).

⁴³ Gabriele Mentges, ‘Pour une approche renouvelée des recueils de costumes de la Renaissance: Une cartographie vestimentaire de l’espace et du temps’, *Appearance(s)*, 1 (2007), 2.

⁴⁴ Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo*, ai lettori.

⁴⁵ Grazietta Butazzi, ‘Tra mode occidentali e “costumi” medio orientali: confronti e riflessioni dai repertori cinquecenteschi alle trasformazioni vestimentarie tra XVII e XVIII secolo’, in Giovanna Franci and Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli (eds.), *Il Vestito dell’Altro: Semiotica, Arti, Costume* (Milan, 2005), 251–70.

⁴⁶ Daniel Defert, ‘Un genre ethnographique profane au XVI^e siècle: les livres d’habits: Un essai d’ethno-icographie’, in Britta Rupp-Eisenreich (ed.), *Histoires de l’anthropologie (XV^e–XIX^e siècles)* (Paris, 1981), 25–41; Ann Rosalind Jones, ‘Habits, Holdings, Heterologies: Populations in Print in a 1562 Costume Book’, *Yale French Studies*, cx (2006), 93–4.

use identical images. With variations, many figures appear in at least two books and the most popular images appear in up to seven of the twelve best-known costume books of the late sixteenth century.⁴⁷ The figures in costume books were also used in other works such as *Civitates orbis terrarum* (1572–1617) by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, a collection of 546 bird's-eye views of cities around the world that reproduced several of Desprez and Nicolay's images, inserting them in their respective cities as in the case of the city of Jerusalem for which Ottoman figures were used (see Plate 5).⁴⁸ The unit of the walled city is here taken to be a separate and distinct space. At the same time the bird's-eye view of an urban space is populated by its inhabitants who, standing at the front of the image, capture the social life of the city itself. There is a clear relationship here between the world-making power of cartography and topography and that of costume.⁴⁹

This association between place and character is especially prevalent in representations of the Middle East that often include Turkish baths, low-class women and military scenes.⁵⁰ The Turkish woman at home is an example of stereotype. It is to be found in several albums as in Plate 1 and appears also in several costume books, among which are Hans Weigel's, Pietro Bertelli's (see Plates 6a and 6b), and Vecellio's two editions of his *Habiti antichi et moderni*.⁵¹ Vecellio told his readers that Turkish women were to be seen in public rarely and only completely veiled, whilst at home they are seated on cushions and wear elaborate clothing and jewellery.⁵² This image — one of the rare figures in costume books not standing — is suggestive of the segregated life that Turkish women endured in European eyes.

⁴⁷ Jo Anne Olian, 'Sixteenth-Century Costume Books', *Dress*, iii (1977), 21.

⁴⁸ Paresys, 'Apparences vestimentaires et cartographie de l'espace en Europe occidentale', 260; Christian Jacob, *The Sovereign Map: Theoretical Approaches in Cartography Throughout History* (Chicago, 2006), 275. See also François Penz, 'The Cinema in the Map — The Case of Braun and Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*', in François Penz and Richard Koec (eds.), *Cinematic Urban Geographies* (New York, 2017), 23–46. On Jerusalem in Braun's *Civitates*, see Rehav Rubin, 'Jerusalem in Braun and Hogenberg *Civitates*', *The Cartographic Journal*, xxxiii (1996), 119–29.

⁴⁹ On world-making and cartography, see Christian Jacob, 'Lieux de Savoir: Places and Spaces in the History of Knowledge', *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge*, i, 1 (2017), 85–102.

⁵⁰ E. Natalie Rothman 'Visualizing a Space of Encounter: Intimacy, Alterity, and Trans-Imperial Perspective in an Ottoman-Venetian Miniature Album', in Tezcan and Hagen (eds.), *Other Places*, pt ii, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/Journal of Ottoman Studies*, xl (2012), 44.

⁵¹ Kristin Lohse Belkin, *The Costume Book* (Brussels, 1980), figs. 214 and 222.

⁵² Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo*, 389.



5. The City of Jerusalem, from Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (Cologne, 1572), British Library Maps.C.29.e.1, 54. © The British Library Board.

These and a handful of other images came to shape the idea of a ‘separate sphere’ for women in the Ottoman Empire, including that of the seraglio.⁵³

III

ARTICULATING IMAGINARY SPACES

This article has so far argued that in costume books individual images stand for the spatial punctuation of specific places — often cities or nations. Yet the success of costume books lay in their claim to capture vast geographical and cultural expanses that were not the simple sum of localities. The articulation of space in costume books relied on the relationship between individual images and their order. Organized in a sequential order, costume books created both visually and textually a series of associations between distinct

⁵³ Giorgio Riello, ‘Velare e svelare: Le donne ottomane e l’intransigenza europea (secoli XVI–XVIII)’, in Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, Maria Grazia Nico Ottaviani and Gabriella Zarri (eds.), *Il velo in area mediterranea fra storia e simbolo: Tardo Medioevo — prima età moderna* (Bologna, 2014), 184–5.



6a. 'Ita super tapetes domi ornatae sedent ditiores foeminae turciae', in Hans Weigel, *Habitus praecipuorum populorum*, illustrated by Jost Amman (Nuremberg, 1577).
 © Victoria and Albert Museum, SP.52.



6b. 'Turca mulier ut domi sese continet', in Pietro Bertelli, *Diversarum Nationum Ornatus* (Padua, 1593). Private collection.

images and places through their juxtaposition. The cumulative effect was the creation of a spatial order often shared across costume books that is presented to the reader as quintessentially natural.

Let us consider two figures from Vecellio's first edition: the 'Matrona di Firenza' and the 'Africana' (see Plate 7). Vecellio provides long descriptions



7. 'Matrona di Firenze' (Married Woman of Florence; left) and 'Africana' (African Woman; right), in Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo* (c.1650 edition). Private collection.

of each figure and tells his readers that the ladies of Florence are dressed in black velvet and wear golden fastenings. Their dress is lined with ermine fur and gold brocade. They wear gloves and fans with feathers as shown in the matron's hands. They also wear jewellery and pearls, as well as veils on their hair.⁵⁴ Vecellio tells us that African women instead 'do not wear much velvet, or brocade' except for those of Egypt and Ethiopia. However, like the ladies of Florence, they wear gold or silver fastenings and 'go about adorned with valuable gold & jewellery and they wear bracelets on their arms'.⁵⁵

A European reader would have been able mentally to locate the figure of the African lady through an understanding of similarities and differences with more familiar models, as for instance that of the Florentine lady. Whilst these two figures seem to share similar preferences for jewellery and gold, they do not in terms of fabrics. Geographical distance is in costume books created through a process of 'othering' that relies on models that are quintessentially

⁵⁴ Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo*, libro i, 227.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, libro ii, 409.

European, rather than specifically French, Italian or German.⁵⁶ Vecellio tells his readers that African ladies ‘go about showing their bare legs and wear gold bands; nearly all of them paint their bodies, and their nails’, something that would have been extraneous to European culture.⁵⁷

If cultural difference is at the core of costume books, such differences should not be reduced to a simple binary opposition between Europeans and non-Europeans.⁵⁸ Sixteenth-century costume books capture a moment in which Europe had still to define a sense of superiority legitimated through racial categories.⁵⁹ Difference is instead dialectical and based on the comparing and contrasting of models that opposed for instance the softness of the draped clothing worn in Asia and Africa to European tailored garments.⁶⁰ Similarities were also invoked: readers were told by Vecellio that the African ladies ‘cover their hair with thin veils of a colour similar to those worn by nuns’ and their dress ‘is very similar to those worn by ladies in ancient Rome’.⁶¹ Analogies and similitudes are used to reduce cultural difference and create an implicit sense not exactly of coherence, but at least of belonging to the same spatial project.

The juxtaposition of images is therefore key in the making of costume books. Through a technique of addition these books create what Pellegrin calls a ‘patchwork’ of images.⁶² This is not a stable organization but a fluid relationship between figures and places. Though an attempt at providing classification is clear, costume books share with cabinets of curiosities a certain degree of idiosyncrasy.⁶³ And because of their idiosyncratic nature, costume books might be considered ‘spaces of thinking’ in which ‘the global’ is

⁵⁶ Paulicelli, *Writing Fashion*, 91. See also Anthony Pagden, ‘Europe: Conceptualizing a Continent’, in Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge, 2002), 33; and for the New World: Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago, 1991), 8.

⁵⁷ Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo*, libro ii, 409.

⁵⁸ Mentges, ‘Pour une approche renouvelée des recueils de costumes de la Renaissance’, 1; Giulia Calvi, ‘Gender and the Body’, in Anthony Molho and Diogo Ramada Curto (eds.), *Finding Europe: Discourses on Margins, Communities, Images* (London, 2007), 92.

⁵⁹ Costume books for instance pay little importance to race as articulated through physiognomy. Wilson, *World in Venice*, 80; Mary D. Sheriff, ‘Introduction: Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art, 1492–1930’, in Mary D. Sheriff (ed.), *Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art since the Age of Exploration* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 4–5.

⁶⁰ Butazzi, ‘Tra mode occidentali e “costumi” medio orientali’, 254.

⁶¹ Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo*, libro ii, 409.

⁶² Pellegrin, ‘Vêtements de peau(x) et de plumes’, 523–4.

⁶³ Odile Blanc, ‘Images du monde et portraits d’habits: les recueils de costumes à la Renaissance’, *Bulletin du Bibliophile*, ii (1995), esp. 222–3.

conceived.⁶⁴ Differently from today's view of a 'global Renaissance' based on contact, connection and the cultural and economic relationship between places, the imagined space of costume books is not explicitly connected or relational. Vecellio for instance, does not mention that the pearls worn by Florentine ladies would have been traded from Asia or that the gold of which European jewellery was made would have come from Africa. The strict association between subject and object becomes ethnocentric to the exclusion of the connectivity that provided so much knowledge and impetus to the very making of costume books.⁶⁵

Costume books create a sense of unity and articulation of space through order and structure instead. This structure is organized from the near to the faraway, and from the specific to the generic. All costume books are constructed in a linear fashion starting with the different parts of Europe and moving outwards to the Middle East, Africa, the Far East and eventually the Americas. Vecellio, in his 1598 edition, divided the world into twelve parts, starting with Italy (that constitutes half of the book), and proceeding with France, Spain, England, northern Europe, Germany, Poland, Turkey and Hungary. Africa, Asia (Japan and China in that order) and America form the final three parts of his work.⁶⁶ Other books similarly order their plates giving importance to the city or nation where they were published and to Italy in particular. Hans Weigel's *Habitus praeceptorum populorum* (Nuremberg 1577) or Abraham de Bruyn's *Omnium pene Europae, Asiae, Africae atque Americae gentium habitus* (Antwerp, 1581) start with the Holy Roman Emperor and the German electors. Different editions of Boissard's book start either with Venice or Rome, and Deserps introduces generic characters such as 'Le chevalier' and the 'La damoyse' before moving to Italy and France.

The near (to the author, to the place of publication and possibly to readers) and the local are central to the creation of depth through a complex mix of common people, noblemen and rulers representing the social hierarchy of those places. The number of plates dedicated to each place becomes less numerous the more one moves away from 'the local-near'. There is a distinct loss of social hierarchy, though most places continue to be represented at least by one male and one female figure. The movement from the near to the distant therefore becomes myopic in the sense that identification is

⁶⁴ Ilg, 'Cultural Significance of Costume Books', 43.

⁶⁵ Peter Stallybrass, 'Admiranda narratio: A European Best Seller', in Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Charlottesville, 2007), 14.

⁶⁶ On the reordering of Vecellio's plates and the positioning of Japan before China, see Calvi, 'Cultures of Space', 340 and 344.

increasingly imprecise both in terms of spatial categories (the ‘moors’ as a generic label or the ‘Indies’ as a spatial category) and types of dress.⁶⁷ There are occasional misidentifications, so what in Nicolay is a ‘femme de l’isle de Chios’ becomes in Vecellio ‘Hebrea in Sorie’.⁶⁸ Isabelle Paresys — with reference to maps that include dressed figures — argues that the more one moves out of western Europe, the more figures assume a metonymic value as they stand for an entire space rather than a specific place (*pars pro toto*).⁶⁹ This imprecision, however, is key in providing sufficient flexibility for costume books’ claim to capture the whole world in the pages of a single book even when spread thinly.

IV

THE WORLD IN A BOOK

Over the second half of the sixteenth century costume books became larger, more wide-ranging and were deemed to cover the entire world by offering a view of its principal inhabitants and its different nations. They shared an ambition of mapping the whole world with atlases such as Ortelius’ *Theatrum orbis terrarium*, first published in 1570.⁷⁰ They also borrowed from cosmographies such as Sebastian Münster’s 1544 work and ‘proto-ethnographic’ studies such as Johannes Boemus’ *The Manners, Laws and Costumes of all People* printed in forty-seven editions between 1535 and 1620.⁷¹ Like the new world histories emerging in the sixteenth century, costume books are ‘accumulative in character, often disordered, and certainly not symmetrical in nature’.⁷² Works of the previous century had proclaimed themselves universal in nature and relied on a symmetrical opposition

⁶⁷ Mentges, ‘Pour une approche renouvelée des recueils de costumes de la Renaissance’, 4.

⁶⁸ Olian, ‘Sixteenth-Century Costume Books’, 29.

⁶⁹ Paresys, ‘Apparences vestimentaires et cartographie de l’espace en Europe occidentale’, 259.

⁷⁰ Ramachandran, *The Worldmakers*, 40–1.

⁷¹ Deserps, *Collection of the Various Styles of Clothing*, 17–18; A. Klaus, ‘Cultural Variety in a Renaissance Perspective: Johannes Boemus on “The Manners, Laws and Customs of All People” (1520)’, in Henriette Bugge and Joan Pau Rubiés (eds.), *Shifting Cultures: Interaction and Discourse in the Expansion of Europe* (Münster, 1995), 17–34.

⁷² Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘On World Historians in the Sixteenth Century’, *Representations*, xci (2005), 36. On the writing of early modern world histories, see Giuseppe Marcocci, *Indios, cinesi, falsari: Le storie del mondo nel Rinascimento* (Rome, 2016); and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘On the Origins of Global History: Inaugural Lecture delivered on Thursday 28 November 2013’, trans. Liz Libbrecht (Paris, 2016), <<https://books.openedition.org/cdf/4200?lang=en>> (accessed 17 June 2019).

between Christian Europe and the rest of the world.⁷³ Costume books, in line with new Renaissance philosophical models, developed a vision of the world that strived to be comprehensive but at the same time had to concede that it could not be complete.

Vecellio in the first edition of his work divided the world into three parts and specifically referred to Europe as one of them. He provided a wide-ranging definition of the continent that included Croats, Dalmatians, Greeks, Russians and — interestingly — Turks. At the same time he pointed to the fact that ‘several parts of the world are still remote from our knowledge, and we are in the process of discovering them, & among those that have already been discovered, we have just learned their name, their dress & their costume’.⁷⁴ This is why in a second revised and augmented edition, Vecellio rearranged his work not just to include additional plates on Asia and some new plates of the inhabitants of the Americas; he also divided the world into twelve parts. Europe disappeared as a conceptual and geographical category being replaced by the idea of different ‘people’ inhabiting the world.⁷⁵

While costume books of the second half of the sixteenth century abound in detail about the Near East, their coverage and precision decrease by moving eastwards to India, China and Japan. One hypothesis might be that from a visual and representational point of view, a lack of knowledge of east Asia persisted in Europe well beyond the early sixteenth century.⁷⁶ Vecellio, for instance, provides minimal information about China through four figures: a ‘married noblewoman’ (see Plate 8), a further ‘noblewoman’, a ‘nobleman’ and a ‘man of average wealth’. Silk plays a central part in the narration of the garments worn by Chinese figures though there is a slip between image and

⁷³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘On Early Modern Historiography’, in Jerry Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (eds.), *The Cambridge World History*, vi, *The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE*, pt 2, *Pattern of Change* (Cambridge, 2015), 439 and 443.

⁷⁴ ‘Che molte parti del mondo sono hora remote dalla nostra notitia, che si vanno tuttavia scoprendo, & che di molte di quelle, che si sono scoperte, e’ pena passato alla notitia nostra il nome, non che gli Habiti, & i costuni’, Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo*, prologue.

⁷⁵ Calvi, ‘Gender and the Body’, 95–6. See also Giulia Calvi, ‘Across Three Empires: Balkan Costumes in XVI Century Europe’, in Constanta Vintila-Ghitulescu (ed.), *From Traditional Attire to Modern Dress: Modes of Identification, Modes of Recognition in the Balkans (XVIth–XXth Centuries)* (Newcastle, 2011), 29–51.

⁷⁶ Vecellio and others were producing their work at a time of profound change in the intellectual process of knowledge production in relation to China in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Antonella Romano, ‘La prima storia della Cina: Juan Gonzales de Mendoza fra l’Impero spagnolo e Roma’, *Quaderni Storici*, cxlii, no. 48 (2013), 89–116.



8. 'Matrona della China' (Married Noblewoman of China), in Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo* (1598), fo. 477^r. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.

text when for instance he observes that the Chinese 'consider small feet a great beauty' but does not represent it.⁷⁷ Perhaps more surprising is the nearly total absence of Japan in sixteenth-century costume books. In Vecellio a single figure of a 'Giovane giapponese' (Young man of Japan) appeared in his

⁷⁷ Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo*, 477^r.

second edition of 1598. This inclusion followed the Tenshō embassy of 1582–90 when four young Japanese supported by the Jesuits in Japan visited Lisbon, Madrid, Rome and Venice. The fact that there were no other visits by Japanese to Europe in the following three centuries is an indicator of the remoteness of Japan in Europeans' understanding and imagination. The Tenshō must have not escaped Vecellio's attention and he directly refers to the dagger, sword and kimono that the young Japanese had donated to the Doge and that could be seen in the main hall of the Council of Ten in the Doge's Palace.⁷⁸ Yet Vecellio might have drawn more from one of the images that circulated in print during the visit, such as the title page of Benacci's *Avisi* (1585) and *Breve Raguaglio* (1585) in which the Japanese are represented as wearing long dresses with double sleeves.⁷⁹

The ambition in Vecellio's and other costume books of chartering wider geographies relies on the principle that all people represented share a single origin as a human race. With the exception of Deserp's inclusion of monsters such as 'The Monkfish' (L'évêque de la Mer) and several savages inhabiting the Americas, costume books represent humanity as a cohesive whole sharing a common path and direction shaped by European costumes/customs. This can be seen in the fact that the European taxonomy of clothing is applied to all other parts of the world.⁸⁰ Yet, even if the world presented is one of convergence — one might say even of geographical compression thanks to the European encounter with new lands — this does not mean that the different people of the world lived in synchronicity. The standardization might set all figures on a level plain, giving as much space on the page to a king as to a peasant, or to a Florentine as to an American or African woman. Yet the figures presented inhabited different temporal spaces. As costume books chart space, so they do with time. In some cases the references to ancient dress were direct, and great importance was given to the old costumes especially of the people of Italy. This allowed the construction of a narrative of change in which modern dress was opposed to ancient mores. This principle, borrowed from fifteenth-century humanism, came to be used to

⁷⁸ Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo*, 476'. See also Calvi, 'Cultures of Space', 339.

⁷⁹ There are some similarities between Vecellio's description and Benacci's. See Adriana Boscaro, 'The First Japanese Ambassadors to Europe', *Kokusai Bunka Shinkokei Bulletin*, ciii (1970), 12–13. See also Adriana Boscaro, *Sixteenth Century European Printed Works on the First Japanese Mission to Europe* (Leiden, 1973).

⁸⁰ Ann Rosalind Jones, "'Worn in Venice and throughout Italy': The Impossible Present in Cesare Vecellio's Costume Books", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, xxxix, 3 (2009), 512.



9. Plate from Abraham de Bruyn's *Omnium pene Europae, Asiae, Africae atque Americae Gentium Habitus* (1581), showing fashionable French noblemen and the 'ancient'-inspired dress of academicians, rectors and prefects. The fourth figure on the top row is identical to the 'Nobilis Gallicus ornatus', in Bertelli (see Plate 3). Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), The Doris Stein Research and Design Center for Costume and Textiles, and funds provided by the Costume Council, AC1997.164.1a-zz.

conceptualize fashion as continuous change.⁸¹ However in costume books it is used for two other purposes. The first is the visual pleasure of observing difference in the dress of one's progenitors, a visual device that has remained popular to the present. The second is the overlaying of temporal difference across space. A claim of costume books is that while dress is ever-changing in Europe, it is much more stable elsewhere. The only garments that remain unaltered in Europe are those of magistrates, senators and doctors, all representing stable and unchanging institutions (see Plate 9).⁸² All other dress is part instead of a trajectory of mutation that makes the mapping of space through dress partial and temporary. As for the non-European populations, they lived in a time that precedes that of Europe. As observed earlier, the

⁸¹ Vecellio says, 'dress does not know either fixity or immobility' as shapes are constantly changing either by choice or by whim: Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo*, ai lettori. See also Paulicelli, 'Mapping the World', 37.

⁸² Roberta Orsi Landini, *Moda a Firenze, 1540–1580* (Florence, 2011), 15.

‘Africana’ in Vecellio was described as wearing the dress of the ladies of ancient Rome. And this happened not just because these populations lived in the past, but also because their time was unchanging.⁸³

V

LOCAL AND GLOBAL — TIME AND SPACE

The spatial and temporal contrast between two plates from Abraham de Bruÿn’s *Omnium pene Europae, Asiae, Aphricae atque Americae gentium habitus* (1581) could not be greater (see Plates 9 and 10). Whilst the costumes of France in Plate 9 are represented in great detail, the clothed figures of Plate 10 capture a vast part of the world that includes the West and East Indies, Africa and southern Europe. Yet what appears most striking to the viewer is the primitive and old-fashioned shapes of much of the clothing represented and the use of feathers to decorate the bodies of the Americans. The people of the Americas appear in costume books to inhabit a space that was not just positioned backward in time but that could illuminate the very origin of European society and its costumes. As Bronwen Wilson observes ‘the prelapsarian figures of this new, now “fourth part of the world” thereby served as a pictorial origin for a teleological history of costume in which time could be mapped across space’.⁸⁴

The relative absence of representations of the costumes of the Americas is an important feature of sixteenth-century costume books. Nicole Pellegrin estimates that out of a total of more than two thousand plates in six of the main costume books, no more than thirty are dedicated to the Americas.⁸⁵ Weigel, for instance, included only two plates of a Peruvian man and a Brazilian woman. Desprez had three ‘savages’ (to be possibly located in the New World) and a Brazilian man and woman. Such a lack of visual representations for the Americas is surprising considering the number of popular travelogues dedicated to the New World going back to the years immediately after Columbus landed in the West Indies.⁸⁶ For instance Boemus in his

⁸³ Jones, ‘Habits, Holdings, Heterologies’, 102.

⁸⁴ Wilson, *World in Venice*, 82.

⁸⁵ Nicole Pellegrin, ‘Vêtements de peau(x) et de plumes: la nudité des indiens et la diversité du monde au XVII^e siècle’, in Céard, and Margolin (eds.), *Voyager à La Renaissance*, 520–1.

⁸⁶ For an overview of visual representations of the Americas and its inhabitants, see Lynn Glaser, *America On Paper: the First Hundred Years* (Philadelphia, 1989), esp. 137–90; William C. Sturtevant, ‘First Visual Images of Native America’, in Fredi Chiappelli et al. (eds.), *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World On the Old*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, 1976), i, 417–54. See also Surekha Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters* (Cambridge, 2016), esp. 259–64.



10. Plate from Abraham de Bruyn's *Omnium pene Europae, Asiae, Africae atque Americae Gentium Habitus* (1581), showing (from left to right): American man and woman; two couples from the East Indies; the King of America and a noblewoman; an African man and a woman; and moors from Granada. Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), The Doris Stein Research and Design Center for Costume and Textiles, and funds provided by the Costume Council, AC1997.164.1a-zz.

influential *Omnium gentium mores, leges et ritus* (original edn. 1520) did not include the New World and did not even mention Columbus or Vespucci.⁸⁷ Similarly, the 1555 popular geographical text *La Division du monde* presented Europe, Asia and Africa but made no mention of the Americas.⁸⁸ Whilst per se this can be attributed to a reliance on classical sources to the detriment of humanist literature, Boemus is representative of what John Elliott has called a slowness to 'come to terms' with the New World.⁸⁹

The lateness of the incorporation of the Americas in costume books can be explained by the tension between two different models of interpretation and

⁸⁷ Klaus A. Vogel, 'Cultural Variety in a Renaissance Perspective: Johannes Boemus on "The Manners, Laws and Customs of All People" (1520)', in Henriette Bugge and Joan Pau Rubiés (eds.), *Shifting Cultures: Interaction and Discourse in the Expansion of Europe* (Münster, 1995), 20.

⁸⁸ Lewis and Wigen, *Myth of Continents*, 43.

⁸⁹ John H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New, 1492–1650* (Cambridge, 1970), 17.

representation of the continent's inhabitants. Early accounts represented America as inhabited by savages, characterized by cannibalistic practices and by nakedness.⁹⁰ Vespucci reported that they 'go about stark naked as nature made them: they are born naked and they die naked'.⁹¹ This model of nakedness opposed them to the civilization of the cloth that characterized not just Europeans but the entire vestimentary world that costume books chartered. It was only the challenging of this interpretation that set the inhabitants of the Americas within the fold of costume. Jean de Léry represented the inhabitants of Brazil in a different light: they were definitively not naked as they painted their bodies, wore necklaces and feathers on their hair, pendants on their ears, and the older among them pieces of cloth to cover their private parts.⁹² Over the course of the sixteenth century different representations of American people emerged: whilst these were the inhabitants of the West Indies in the 1490s and the early part of the century, they became those of Brazil in the mid sixteenth century through the descriptions of the Tupinamba by Léry, Staden and Thevet, and those of North America from John White's images in the 1580s and 1590s and their many reproductions.⁹³

The slow acknowledgement of the New World needs to be interpreted against the profound changes to the view of the world as seen in sixteenth-century Europe. Several scholars, such as Stephen Greenblatt, have underlined how representations of the New World and of the expanding

⁹⁰ Surekha Davies, 'America and Ameridians in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographiae Universalis Libri VI* (1550)', *Renaissance Studies*, xxxv (2011), 360; and Larissa Carvalho, 'Contact, Perception and Representation of the "American Other" in Sixteenth-Century Costume Books', in Irene Graziani and Maria Vittoria Spissu (eds.), *Il Mito del Nemico: Identità, alterità e loro rappresentazioni* (Bologna, 2019), 235–44. See also Gordon M. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill, 1997).

⁹¹ 'Vanno del tutto nude come la natura le ha partorite: nude nascono e nude poi muoiono', Amerigo Vespucci, *Il Mondo Nuovo di Amerigo Vespucci: Vespucci autentico e apocrifo*, ed. Mario Pozzi (Milan, 1984), 99.

⁹² Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise Called America*, trans. Janet Whatley (Berkeley, 1990), 58–61. See also Frank Lestringant, *Jean De Léry, ou, L'invention du sauvage: essai sur l'histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (Paris, 2005).

⁹³ Rüdiger Joppien, 'Étude de quelques portraits ethnologiques dans l'œuvre d'André Thevet', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, xci (1978), 125–36; Frank Lestringant, 'Le fleche du Patagon ou la preuve des lointains: sur un chapitre d'André Thevet', in Jean Céard and Jean Claude Margolin (eds.), *Voyager à La Renaissance: Actes du Colloque De Tours, 30 Juin – 13 Juillet 1983, Centre D'études Supérieures De La Renaissance* (Paris, 1987), 467–96; Neil L. Whitehead and Michael Harbsmeier (eds.), *Hans Staden's True History: An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil* (Durham, NC, 2008).

geographies of the known world in particular, signalled new ways of representation, for Europeans.⁹⁴ That the Americas were a new ‘place’ that could not just be incorporated into existing notions entailed substantial alterations in the vision of the world. This can be observed in two well-known plates in Vecellio’s second edition: ‘The dress of Married Women and Girls’ (*Habito delle Matronee, Donzelle*), and the ‘Young Man from Mexico’ (*Giovane Messicano*) (see Plates 11a and 12) that are among thirteen images that Vecellio dedicated in the final part of his work to the Americas and that include a man and a woman of Peru; a man and woman of Mexico; the king and queen of Florida; military men and women of Florida; and two figures for Virginia.⁹⁵

As already mentioned, Vecellio had not included any American figure in the first edition of his book, published in 1590. In the book’s preface, he admitted that he had already received images of the New World that ‘were not yet set in order’ but that he was still looking for images of dress of the New World and other parts of the world less well known.⁹⁶ The images mentioned by Vecellio were most probably those included by the publisher and engraver Theodor de Bry in the first volume of his *Collectiones peregrinatorum in Indiam orientalem et Indiam occidentalem* (1590–1634). These were taken from John White’s original drawings that had served as a model to illustrate Thomas Harriot’s *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, originally published without images in 1588 and reprinted in Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* the following year. In 1590 Theodor de Bry added plates based on White’s watercolours.⁹⁷

By the time Vecellio reproduced his female figure from White’s plate (see Plate 11b), it had already been reproduced in Bertelli’s *Diversarum nationum ornatus* (1594–6) as ‘Mulier Virginiae Insulae Habitatrix’ (Lady living in the Virgin Islands), thus misidentifying the nature of Virginia.⁹⁸ Vecellio too

⁹⁴ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 7. This argument has been both revised and expanded by recent scholarship that considers the importance of collecting practices. See for instance Lia Mackey, *Imagining the Americas in Medici Florence* (University Park, Pa., 2016).

⁹⁵ Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo*, libro xii.

⁹⁶ ‘Ma non anchora posti in ordine di maniera’. Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti mondo*, prologue.

⁹⁷ William C. Sturtevant, ‘The Sources for European Imagery of Native Americans’, in Rachel Doggett, Monique Hulvey and Julie Ainsworth (eds.), *New World of Wonders: European Images of the Americas, 1492–1700* (Washington, DC, 1992), 31; Kim Sloan, *A New World: England’s First View of America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), 130. On De Bry see: Michiel van Groesen, ‘The De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634): Early America Reconsidered’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, xii (2008), 1–24.

⁹⁸ Wilson, *World in Venice*, 82.



11a. 'Habito delle Matronee, Donzelle' (Clothing of the Married Women), in Cesare Vecellio's *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo* (1598), fo. 500^r. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.

reinterpreted this figure (that in White's original drawing was identified as 'A chiefe Herowans wyfe of Pomeoc and her daughter of the age of 8 or 10 yeares') in several ways, the most important of which is that the female figure is no longer a mother (see Plate 11a). The social context is lost in Vecellio as is an important element in the original drawing by White: the fact that the child is holding a European doll. Vecellio preferred to simplify



11b. 'A cheife Herowans wyfe of Pomeoc. / and her daughter of the age of .8. or. / 10. yeares'.
Watercolour over graphite, touched with white by John White, c.1585. © British Museum
1906,0509.1.13AN25876001.

the image, cutting out references to a process of exchange and positioning this figure in a timeless frame.⁹⁹

One of the main limitations of costume books is revealed in their aim to capture the characteristics of entire populations; yet they struggle to provide a sense of context and the increasingly connected nature of places in the world. In the case of the Americas, there is an absence not just of the people but also of a European presence in the form of empire. Nowhere in costume books is the presence of Europeans and their political power acknowledged outside of the boundaries of Europe. This is particularly striking in the case of the Spanish empire in Latin America that in the second half of the sixteenth century was fast becoming an important reality in the reconfiguration of world politics and economy. The images of the inhabitants of the Americas in costume books are disconnected from the acts of European first encounters that generated the images from which they draw. One is drawn to conclude that the Americas are always positioned at the end of costume books, not just because they are the most distant lands from a perceived centre of the world based in western Europe, but also because they are the most remote in time. They are the limits of the known world but also a re-start of a human story. This was well captured by John White himself who established a direct visual and sartorial parallelism between the inhabitants of Virginia and the ancient Picts whose appearances he claimed he had taken from an old manuscript.¹⁰⁰ He therefore acknowledged the existence of a common human trajectory towards 'civilization'.¹⁰¹

Vecellio provides a similar understanding in the representation of his 'Young Man from Mexico' (see Plate 12). Here one can see not one but two figures. Whilst the young man stands in the foreground wearing ornate dress, he turns his back on the nakedness of the 'savage' body in the background.¹⁰² In this illustration Vecellio presents a clear vision of change, though such change is not that of European fashion but that of the embracement of civilization. Such an act is only possible through an external

⁹⁹ Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Sleeves, Purses, Spindles: Fashioning Women in Cesare Vecellio's Costume Books', in Susan Shifn (ed.), *Re-framing Representations of Women: Figuring, Fashioning, Portraying and the Picturing Women Project* (Aldershot, 2008), 112–13.

¹⁰⁰ Alain Schnapp, 'Ancient Europe and Native Americans: A Comparative Reflection on the Roots of Antiquarianism', in Bleichman and Mancall (eds.), *Collecting Across Cultures*, 58–78, esp. 66.

¹⁰¹ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, 'Presentment of Civility: English Reading of American Self-Presentation in the Early Years of Colonization', *William and Mary Quarterly*, liv (1997), 193.

¹⁰² Paulicelli, 'Writing Fashion', 107.



12. 'Giovane messicano' (Young Man of Mexico), in Cesare Vecellio's *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo* (1598), fo. 492^v. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.

intervention as explained in the image caption. Mexicans, we are told, hold mirrors 'brought by the Spanish of Europe that they hold as jewels'.¹⁰³ Renaissance readers would have clearly interpreted mirrors (possibly of Venetian origin) as symbols of vanity. But here Mexicans hold the mirror

¹⁰³Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo*, libro xii, 473.

towards the viewers showing both their lack of understanding of a mirror's reflective properties and their immunity to narcissism. Although their bodies have now donned European clothing such as cuffs and ruffs, these are fashionable vanities only in the eyes of the beholder at which the mirror is pointed.

VI

CONCLUSION: THE PLACE AND TIME OF THE GLOBAL

Why are costume books important in our understanding of the relationship between micro and global histories? This article has put forward the argument that both 'local' and 'global' — as well as 'micro' and 'macro' — are not just present-day conceptual and theoretical categories but need to be understood historically. For Europeans, the sixteenth century was a moment of profound reconfiguration of their world, its shape and conformation and most importantly of how to understand and — one might say — categorize the people living in it. Costume books articulate — sometimes with difficulty — the shape of a world that is Europe-centred but at the same time open to be reconfigured beyond established geographies, ideas and knowledge. Whilst costume books acknowledge the unity of humanity, they establish a relationship between place and space and between near and far that is both geographic and conceptual. They endorse a notion of 'global' that is modular, malleable and expandable. The global is not set in opposition but in a dialectical relationship with the local: the individual figure representing a clothed body remains at the core of an architecture whose ambition is to survey the entire world. As such it is the specificity and claim for truth of individualized, 'located' figures that make a world-making endeavour as presented in these books legitimate and coherent.

Other contributions in this volume debate the importance of 'shifting scales' of analysis. Costume books reveal how contemporaries adopted strategies similar to those deployed by historians.¹⁰⁴ Yet such scales should not be taken solely as spatial or geographical. Costume books propose a view of the world that is chronologically differentiated and in which its people do not necessarily inhabit the same time.¹⁰⁵ The focus on contemporaries'

¹⁰⁴See, in particular, John-Paul A. Ghobrial, 'Seeing the World like a Microhistorian', in this volume.

¹⁰⁵For a thought-provoking analysis of the meaning of time and space in the early modern world, see Serge Gruzinski, *What Time is it There? America and Islam at the Dawn of Modern Times* (Cambridge, 2010). Gruzinski reflects also on the challenges of historical simultaneity, Serge Gruzinski, *The Eagle and the Dragon: Globalization and European Dreams of Conquest in China and America in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2014).

perceptions and ideas alerts us to the fact that the classic distinction between the *temps immobile* of the locality and the fast-paced change of the global is problematic in several ways. Costume books find instead fast-paced change in the depth of the local and the near whilst seeing immobility in the expanding horizons of the global. Mostly unreflective on what the relationship between the two might be, one can capture a glimpse of a new world of connectivity appearing in Vecellio's work, commonly considered the last and most articulate costume book of the sixteenth century.

Costume books have to be read (and looked at) next to other Renaissance world-making works that range from travelogues to cosmographies, atlases and world histories.¹⁰⁶ They are ways of imagining global geographies and of articulating them. Historians have long acknowledged the importance of text and have adopted textual analysis within microhistorical methodologies. However visual and material methodologies both in micro and global analyses have yet to be incorporated into the historian's toolkit. This article underlines how visibility proposed a stable relationship between identity, social order and appearances. This visual strategy allowed costume books to replicate this principle across all the peoples of the world.

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¹⁰⁶On the engagement of microhistory with a diverse range of sources and their dialogue, see Filippo de Vivo, 'Microhistories of Long-Distance Information: Space, Movement and Agency in the Early Modern News', in this volume.