

Dressing Global Bodies

The Political Power of
Dress in World History



Edited by Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello

DRESSING GLOBAL BODIES

Dressing Global Bodies addresses the complex politics of dress and fashion from a global perspective spanning four centuries, tying the early global to more contemporary times, to reveal clothing practice as a key cultural phenomenon and mechanism of defining one's identity.

This collection of chapters explores how garments reflect the hierarchies of value, collective and personal inclinations, religious norms and conversions. Apparel is now recognized for its seminal role in global, colonial and post-colonial engagements and for its role in personal and collective expression. Patterns of exchange and commerce are discussed by contributing authors to analyse powerful and diverse colonial and postcolonial practices. This volume rejects assumptions surrounding a purportedly all-powerful Western metropolitan fashion system and instead aims to emphasize how diverse populations seized agency through the fashioning of dress.

Dressing Global Bodies contributes to a growing scholarship considering gender and race, place and politics through the close critical analysis of dress and fashion; it is an indispensable volume for students of history and especially those interested in fashion, textiles, material culture and the body across a wide time frame.

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INTRODUCTION

Dressing global bodies

Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello

Dress is a broad and complex material category that has received much attention over past decades. Its link to the body and reflection of culture, creativity and capacity attract audiences of many kinds to exhibitions, conferences and published works, as well as intriguing students and scholars in many disciplines. Unlike nominally uniform commodities, dress is recognized for its profound variability whether in the form of outer garments or in the shape of small accessories. Attention to global exchange and material culture illuminates the influences that flowed from region to region, people to people, expressed in myriad ways through cultures of dress. Yet, when considered within such a global arena, dress is sometimes contentious, it brings together people as it sets them apart; dress is entangled with power and at times illuminates the persistence and defiance of marginalized peoples and displays the features of industrial and political systems whether in the making of new goods or the circulation of second-hand – all topics explored in this book.

Material culture and global dress

The global, the material and power inform the analyses contained in this collection and weave together a vital intellectual tapestry. There is no better way to approach these issues than through an artefact like this Chinese folding fan, made about 1820–1830 for export to Western markets (Figure 0.1).¹ This amalgam of peacock and painted goose feathers, plus incised bone fan sticks, is part of a long history of fan invention and use in East Asia, a signal marker of status, long incorporated into varied social and cultural forms. A Japanese invention became a Chinese vogue that spread to other regions of Asia, produced in a variety of materials from painted paper and bamboo sticks to more precious media such as ivory suited to a breadth of users. The direct oceanic contacts

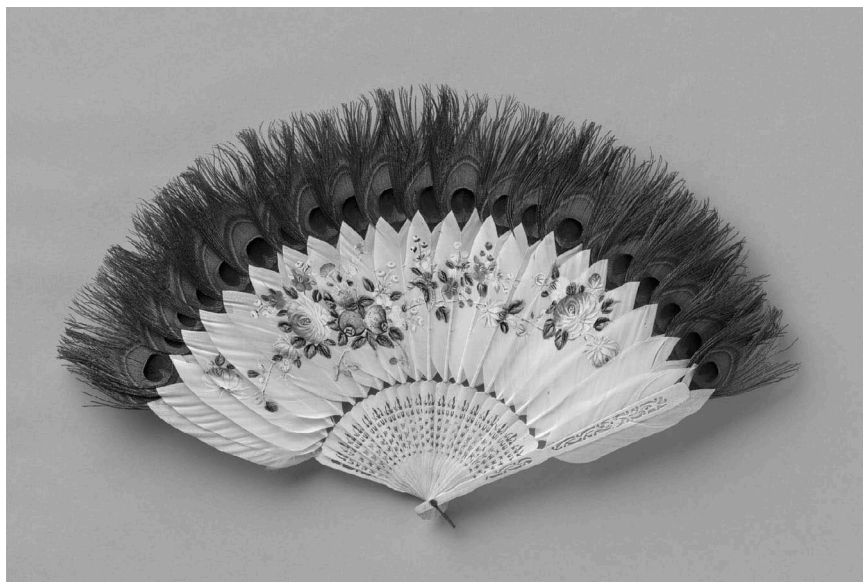


FIGURE 0.1 Hand-painted fan, goose feathers tipped with peacock feathers, painted in gouache, pierced bone sticks and guards. Made in China for export, 1820–1830.

Source: Gift of Mrs Henry W. Breyer, Sr. 1967. © Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1967–17–23.

between Europeans and East Asians, from the sixteenth century, encouraged the spread of this elegant accessory, one used with grace and purpose by men and women. Renaissance governments in Italy sought to limit the use of fans made of costly materials to select ranks, as local artisans experimented with making these fashionable notions – parrot feathers, gold, jewels and costly furs or printed paper and cheap fan sticks. At the same time, the trade in Chinese-made fans accelerated to meet demand and continued into the twentieth century, with both European and Chinese artisans working to serve consumers of all ranks.² Feather fans amounted to a larger investment than printed or painted paper, even when these included painted goose feathers, as with the example in Figure 0.1. The Renaissance vogue for feather fans, among aspiring Europeans, revived again from the mid-nineteenth century and carried into the twentieth, with feather fans becoming a craze in Western societies.

The sophisticated combination of materials in this fan suggests the ways in which design and the choice of materials were deployed to appeal to various buyers. Equally, the rage for fans in the mid-nineteenth century enabled a wider range of makers to present their take on this fashion accessory, including Native American fashion makers like the Wendat outside Quebec City (Figure 0.2). The whole reflects a type of material dialogue. Fixed-shape feather fans had an ancient lineage among the First Peoples of the Americas and these kinds of stylish feather fans were made and traded from Brazil over the same period, as well

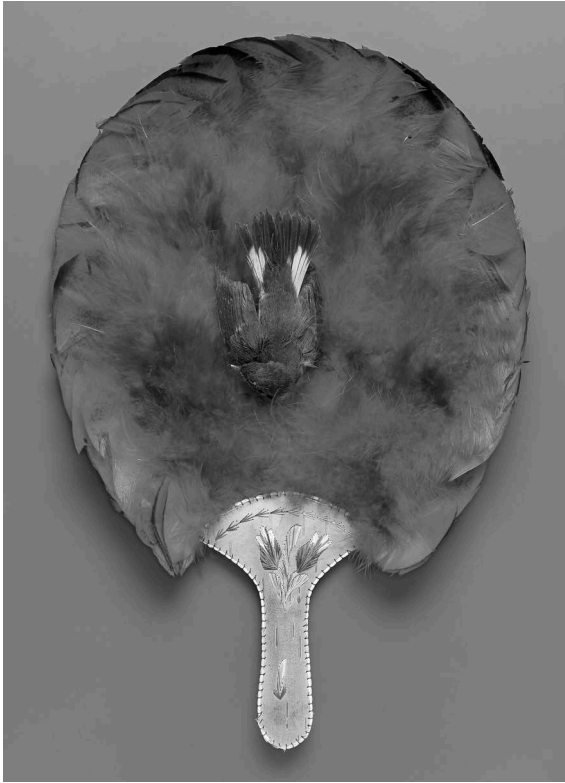


FIGURE 0.2 Canadian (Wendat?) fan, late nineteenth to early twentieth century, 24 × 36 cm. Dyed red marabou feathers mounted on natural turkey feathers, snow bunting at centre. Birchbark handle embroidered with dyed moose hair.

Source: © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1979.446. Gift of Thomas Logan Orser.

as from various communities of Native Americans in territories around the Great Lakes and river systems of central North America. Surveying extant feather fans such as these in major museum collections demonstrate the complexities at work within these global networks.³ Material evidence powerfully illuminates these global connections, ties that enabled material inspiration in the making of dress; specific modes of dress figured within (colonial) political systems that shaped or attempted to shape the local communities embedded in these networks.⁴

Attention to material culture is pivotal to obtain a full, rich analysis of the many facets of dress considered in this volume. Artefacts contain tacit evidence described as ‘extralingual’. Leora Auslander observes the power of things, noting that: ‘human beings need things to express and communicate the unsaid and the unsayable ... to situate themselves in space and time ... as

well as for sensory pleasure'.⁵ At the same time artefacts are also 'active agents in history. In their communicative, performative, emotive, and expressive capacities, they act, [and] have effects in the world'.⁶ Extant material evidence and historical representations form the analytical framework for this volume. Material culture study encourages attention to cross-cultural exchange, foregrounding creative actors that might otherwise go unnoticed. The influence of the global takes more tangible form when its materiality is acknowledged and assessed; similarly, the range of actors shaping the local and global are more fully apparent when a material culture approach is mobilized. Materiality opens for us a door into the world of people whose aesthetic, sartorial and material choices were not necessarily conveyed in written documents.

The challenge for us is to look deeply and recognize the myriad sources of knowledge embedded in objects from different places and communities. The Indigenous scholar, Sherry Farrell Racette, considers the many artefacts arising from Native American communities deposited in Western museums and she observes that they are

encoded with knowledge, although they are sometimes impenetrable and difficult to understand. Most often sleeping on a shelf in a museum storage room, completely decontextualized from their cultures of origin, they are the raw material of women's history. Through the power of colour and design, the objects in museum collections not only speak a powerful aesthetic, they also reveal critical information about the worlds and circumstances in which they were created.⁷

Our collection builds on the findings of scholars such as Emma Tarlo, Sandra Niessen et al. and Jean Allman, among others, which helped recast the meanings of fashion and the politics of dress.⁸ They epitomize the generative rethinking taking place in this growing field, part of a flourishing scholarship illuminating gender and race, place and politics, through the close critical analysis of dress. Our contributors offer a wealth of material histories from the rough clothing of Africans enslaved in imperial locales, to the heterogeneous patterns of attire in early nineteenth-century Senegambia and the power of royally mandated uniforms in early nineteenth-century Madagascar. Skin, fur and cloth, plus the shifting spaces of consumption are addressed, along with the patterns of coloniality in North America, New Zealand and Australia. The political practices of dress are likewise considered among late nineteenth-century Indian elites and Native American men and women in the twentieth century, along with the rise of tailored apparel in China and Japan over the same period, with global fashions in post-colonial Zambia also deftly explained. This collection builds the understanding of dress, its power in global, colonial and post-colonial settings and its personal and collective expressions, all of which defined time and place.⁹

A focus on dress provides the opportunity to explore the nuances of historic experiences, including the active engagement of those enveloped in particular dress systems. Interdisciplinarity is critical to this enterprise, building on myriad methodologies and theoretical perspectives. Shared theories and methodologies link this scholarship whether through the assessments of 'object lives' or the 'social skin', blending material culture study, visual and documentary analyses.¹⁰ Recent scholarship of this type has already produced important insights, on which we build, whether of colonial Louisiana, seventeenth-century Europe or nineteenth-century Native American communities.¹¹ This collection advances scholarship, with an emphasis on global ties and the agency of various world communities in the choices made and expressions of material life.¹²

Present-day scholars recognize the unique capacity of bodily coverings and adornment to explain past practices and politics. Terence Turner defined clothing as 'the social skin',¹³ a discursive concept demanding the serious attention to habitual systems along with exceptional material practice, for as Turner states:

Decorating, covering, uncovering or otherwise altering the human form in accordance with social notions of everyday propriety or sacred dress, beauty or solemnity, status or changes in status, or on occasion of the violation or inversion of such notions, seems to have been a concern of every human society of which we have knowledge.¹⁴

Karen Tranberg Hansen notes how the concept of the social skin: 'invites us to explore both the individual and collective identities that the dressed body enables'.¹⁵ There is a deeply inherent materiality in this concept, which has been taken up by our contributors, as well as by other scholars. Importantly, material culture study is integrated into historical, art historical and ethnographic studies, topics that also welcome curatorial knowledge. Museum collections are a vital resource in the diverse scholarship that appears in this volume. The challenge to scholars in this field is to untangle the ways in which the clothes that enveloped people in the past reflected their bodily experiences, along with cultural, social and gender priorities, as well as the economies of fashioning and refashioning across place and time.¹⁶

Within this volume, garments are assessed and intellectually dissected, along with the systems of provisioning or careful self-selection. The economies of identity and self-fashioning reflect hierarchies of value, collective and personal inclinations, political norms and conversions, whether these were enforced or voluntarily enacted. The materialities we address were shaped by global flows of cloth and beads, furs, ready-made and second-hand apparel, in active processes of exchange.¹⁷ Dress was a charged cultural instrument, as evidenced in colonial and decolonization politics, social and political agendas, animated by cross-cultural and commercial flows, industrial and institutional innovations.¹⁸ This fertile foundation inspires the contributions to this collection.

The global: imperial, colonial, post-colonial and the critique

Current global history scholarship rejects long-standing Eurocentric assumptions surrounding a purportedly all-powerful Western metropolitan fashion system and challenges the persistent claim that fashion originated solely in the West. 'Decentering' is part of a decolonization process, responding to cogent critiques in the wider social science fields, as with Dipesh Chakrabarty's call to 'provincialize Europe' and Natalie Zemon Davis' attention to 'decentering history'.¹⁹ Sustained, comparative assessments of clothing systems, to which we contribute, are building a clearer view of historic entanglements, while chronicling the powerful politics of dress, shaping economies and societies. Studies such as these are now recognized for the unique ways in which they illuminate social and political processes, as well as advancing understanding of the dressed body in distinctive spaces.²⁰ This volume continues the work of redefining national and collective communities as reflected in the practice of dress fashion, seen through the global lens, from the sixteenth through the twentieth century, exploring diverse colonial and post-colonial practices through this uniquely expressive medium.

That said, scholars have recently critiqued the 'global turn', noting that some global histories neglect the national or the local, with one scholar wondering whether global history 'has hit a point of diminishing return'.²¹ Debates of this sort indicate the disruptions that accompany a global historical methodology that – while not new – has gained prominence in recent years for its capacity to generate innovative and incisive analyses. Global histories elucidate topics that include national and micro analyses, while attending to connections and intersections across borders, world areas and oceans. It is important to acknowledge that there is a heightened antagonism towards the global in the present day within elite and populist politics in many parts of the world; however, we neglect attention to global histories at our peril, as these studies assess change and continuity, resistance and interruptions, from important vantage points, often with finely parsed assessments. Richard Drayton and David Motadel argue that the value of global history rests on

a new sensitivity to the historical agents, forces, and factors at scales above and below those of the nation or region ... [For] a self-conscious global history neither neglects 'the small spaces' nor evades the specificity and strangeness of disconnected historical experience.²²

The global framework of this volume emphasizes sustained imperial systems, as well as subaltern practices and regional norms and resistances as these evolve, producing withal a global history with the politics and practice of apparel at its heart. Connections of many kinds occurred through history, whether through trade, migration, colonization or resistance. Attention to global ties alters our ways of knowing, acknowledging the long history of sometimes-complex relations at every social level, shaped by Indigenous peoples as well as colonial

agents of many sorts and subsequent decolonization forces.²³ Think again about the fad for fans that rebounded through world regions from the mid-nineteenth century and consider the significance of those heterogeneous communities engaged in making these elegant trifles. Makers from different cultural origins – Asian and Indigenous American included – expressed culturally based skills and asserted their creative capacities despite sometime colonial attempts to mute such capacities or narrowly direct such expressions (Figures 0.1 and 0.2).

The processes of contact, connection and colonial/post-colonial struggle are illuminated through the deep study of dress, more fully uncovering the discrete politics, cultures and economies of individuals and communities along with their modes of material performance. The power of skin, shirts and snowshoes are juxtaposed against chapters on slave attire, uniforms and tailoring. Dress media – printed cotton, feathers or leather, wool uniforms, suits or blankets – possess a tactility, shape and weight that define their meanings among different communities of wearers and observers. Our contributors attend to material culture, assessed through different disciplinary lenses, providing a clearer analysis of clothing politics across time and place.

It remains the case that some projects on dress reflect (sometimes unwittingly) a Eurocentric intellectual crib. The fixation on Western elite dress remains strong; the preoccupation with courtiers and couturiers remains powerful. Both are subjects worthy of study. But they must be treated with care, for a profound Eurocentrism taints the subject of the ‘birth’ of fashion. Eurocentric assertions bruited in the 1970s and 1980s equated the birth of fashion with singular Burgundian courts and Parisian salons.²⁴ This thinking retains its influence. For example, a noted French theorist insisted that fashion ‘took hold in the modern West [c.1800] and nowhere else’.²⁵ This viewpoint reverberated into the 2000s.²⁶ However, this stance is being challenged by comparative and globalist views, including the decolonizing of dress and fashion study.²⁷ This collection contributes to ongoing revisions, a vital endeavour in this subject area.

Bodies, dressed or adorned, marked expectation or endurance, creativity or tradition and might evoke distaste or revulsion by observers as much as celebration or regard, as political systems were challenged or upheld.²⁸ Collectively, our contributors dissect political processes and present new histories, revealing cultural persistence, innovations or disjunctures.

We celebrate the fact that over the past generation, the study of dress moved from the lingering shadows of academia to centre stage, driving new analyses of gender, race, economy and culture – revising disciplinary practices. The dressed body is receiving greater academic and public attention than ever before. The active agency of clothing is now recognized as central in the study of colonial and imperial histories, expressions of shifting modernity, cross-cultural exchange, definitions and contestations of race and gender practice. The politics of dress is uniquely suited to the global study provided in this volume, through case studies that emphasize connections or explorations of entanglement. This collection advances the reimagining of social, cultural and gender politics as expressed through this dynamic ‘social skin’.

Dressing global bodies: content

The chapters in this volume are arranged in ways that encourages global comparative perspectives with topics moving from the sixteenth through the twentieth century. They address connections, diffusions and accommodations to political power, plus gender and ethnic priorities across time and place. Themes recur, as in the impact of colonization and the subaltern resistance/persistence in the face of sustained political affronts – or successful colonial settlement – expressed through dress. Analyses and narrative themes include ethnography and knowledge, the political dress of slavery, the potential and practice of fashion, settler accommodation, divergent patterns of Westernization and colonization. The materialities of dress are given sustained weight including as expressions of fashion, whether ‘power dressing’ in colonial India or the adoption of European-influenced uniforms in pre-colonial Madagascar.

The opening two chapters begin the analysis of historically politicized dress in the so-called ‘first global age’. In Chapter 1, Susanna Burghartz assesses how at the end of the seventeenth century European travelogues and costume books attempted to define the world’s peoples as encountered by European traders and colonizers. These early modern publications employed illustrations and text to explain the societies outside of Europe, a subject of great interest to elite European readers. Distance and difference were emphasized (or downplayed) through dress and bodily adornment, which sometimes pointed to shared traits and other times emphasized hierarchies of difference and race. These ‘proto-ethnographic’ texts and images demonstrate as well the priorities of the European authors. In Chapter 2, Giorgio Riello uncovers the shared anxieties surrounding fashion and consumption, fears shared by commentators in four parts of the early modern world: Ming China, Edo Japan, Europe and colonial Latin America. Riello teases out the commonalities and distinctive features of this ‘fashion world’, formed by discrete urban locales. Cosmopolitan city life itself generated shared traits, spaces often knit together by trade. However, Riello argues for distinctive fashion cultures in each of these settings, flourishing separately even while touched by globalism. Rather than seeing them in a hierarchical order, different areas of the world expressed a diverse range of notions of fashion.

The next four chapters examine various facets of dress politics and practice in colonial settings to the turn of the nineteenth century. The perspectives include the priorities of colonizers, as well as enslaved and Indigenous peoples, in addition to those populations touched by colonial forces in West Africa. Chapter 3, by Beverly Lemire, takes two articles of dress – ready-made white linen shirts and Native American-made snowshoes – using these examples of dress technology to interrogate colonial purpose and the technological capacity of Native American communities in northern North America. Snowshoes, in particular, reveal the vital importance of Indigenous technology, knowledge and diplomacy, with Indigenous material culture shared with European allies who were challenged by this new landscape. In Chapter 4,

Sophie White explores the importance of slave clothing in colonial Louisiana, an essential resource required by law to be provided to slaves by their owners – and defining the look and bodily experience of slaves. Deficiencies and dereliction were commonplace in this clothing system, a by-product of irregular shipments from France and often poor-quality goods, though frequently deemed excessive in price by colonial purchasers. Supply networks defined the capacity of imperial systems. Slaves owners innovated as needed, intent on using apparel to subjugate and control; while slaves, themselves, innovated as they could. Slave clothing was a source of perpetual anxiety and legislation throughout European empires, as Miki Sugiura confirms in Chapter 5, in her study of the Dutch Cape and Indian Ocean colonies. The Cape of Good Hope was a crucial victualing stop between Europe and Asia and slave labour was widely employed to serve domestic and agricultural needs in a unique commercial setting. The Cape's position on this sea route integrated this colony into the Dutch commercial networks in the Indian Ocean and Asia. These enabled the colonizers to secure ready-made garments, sourced in Asia, at exceptionally low prices. Imperial politics transformed dress technologies and politics with global implications. In Chapter 6, Jody Benjamin shows the ways in which in the nineteenth-century Senegambia was integrated into West African and global textile networks, including with the transatlantic slave trade. His analysis complicates the picture of the slave trade, by looking at those African communities who profited from this traffic. Wealthy West Africans who profited from the slave systems also distinguished themselves in their dress. However, wealth alone did not fully determine patterns of dressing. Heterogeneous populations and access to official and unofficial trade goods produced a complex history of dress. Benjamin uses the term 'cosmopolitan' to describe consumers in western Africa, linked to diverse markets, within and beyond French imperial networks. Sartorial innovations reflected these shifting and intersecting influences.

The global networks intersecting the Indian Ocean world are a point of interest in a number of chapters and are a specific focus in Chapter 7, where Sarah Fee examines the distinctive sartorial system introduced by the monarch of Madagascar years before the kingdom was colonized. Fee's ethnographic analysis of fashion counters simplistic assumptions about one-way Western influences and emphasizes the strategic way King Radama used, adopted and adapted uniforms to claim authority inside and outside his realm. This king negotiated purposefully with various colonial powers, while enforcing a major sartorial shift within his kingdom. Madagascar emerges as the site of an innovative resistance that employed new sartorial systems for political ends. Tailored wool uniforms, braid and embellishments took on very different meanings in the process.

Colonization and settler colonialism were materialized through systems of dress. This theme is addressed through the introduction of linen shirts in colonial regions and the challenges of providing apparel suitable for slaves, as discussed in earlier chapters. Equally significant were the new dress regimes enacted in

colonial regions such as New Zealand and Australia. Chapters 8 and 9 address the challenges and conundrums faced by settlers themselves who worked to modulate their dress in order to reinforce their territorial claims. In Chapter 8, Jane Malthus considers the settlers that formed part of what James Belich terms the 'Angloworld settler revolution'.²⁹ The imperial networks linking these spaces in turn provided the designs for weighty garments like wedding dresses, many of which are preserved in regional museums. Malthus unpacks the myths and realities of settlement and the geo-politics of textile production, access and use in New Zealand. Tensions of many sorts infused the dress system that emerged. For New Zealand settlers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a visible allegiance to the imperial centre, demonstrated in dress, was more important than the climate in which they lived. Further, providing clothing fibre for this imperial system remained a compelling purpose in this region. In Chapter 9, Laura Jovic considers the advice would-be settler immigrants received prior to launching themselves across the empire to Australia. What should they wear? What should they bring? And what could they expect in this new sartorial environment? Jovic concludes that the mid-nineteenth-century British guidebooks rarely provided good advice. Fashion was frowned upon in these compendiums, especially for those labouring male and female migrants destined for hard toil. Guidebooks served imperial purposes of hierarchy, including recommendations that bore little relation to the reality on arrival. Indeed, British visitors were shocked at the 'extravagance' of Melbourne ladies, fashionable excesses that overturned the 'natural' order of things, with Britain intended as the apogee of fashion.

Fashion was always political, whether policed by formal legal systems or by informal efforts to shame, ridicule or coerce. Dress styles remained a particularly contentious phenomenon within colonial settings, where the unruly colonized, or the newly wealthy settlers, rejected due modesty and compliance dear to imperial hierarchies. In Chapter 10, Tara Mayer addresses dress politics among the local elites in British India (1750–1830), where the adoption of European-style fashions unleashed extraordinary anxieties among British overseers. The avant-garde European styles adopted by some Indian princes elicited derision in British publications, imperfectly hiding British concerns that these fashions were a claim for political parity between Indians and Britons. The British struggled to demarcate themselves from the colonized. On some occasions, colonizers worked to distinguish dress systems; on other occasions, colonial instruction worked to erase Indigenous sartorial practice. In Chapter 11, Cory Willmott explores the causes and effects of clothing policies in North American missionary assimilationist programs. Many Anishinaabe children were forced into visual assimilation in boarding/residential schools. Some adults, however, chose to adopt or appropriate Western dress. These 'bodily regimes' were freighted with contending meanings and actors, missionary and Anishinaabe. White shirts and leather shoes were weighted with colonial meanings, though the moccasin way persisted in places despite these policies. Cross-cultural exchange was sometimes an amorphous force, a choice on some occasions and site of curiosity. In

Chapter 12, Hissako Anjo and Antonia Finnane explore the expansion of Western-style tailoring in China and Japan in the early twentieth century, an Asian-based focus that illuminates the complexities of knowledge transfer in thorny political circumstances. Anjo and Finnane identify an ‘epistemological revolution’ in cutting and tailoring that marked this history, where expertise developed amid differing social conditions, and where new hierarchies of skill evolved. Local tailors then served the priorities of cosmopolitan communities of men in China and Japan.

It is fitting that Karen Tranberg Hansen concludes this collection. Hansen pioneered seminal studies of dress, fashion and taste in colonial and post-colonial Africa and she works with a broad reach across disciplines and regional studies. In Chapter 13, she considers the politics of fashion in Zambia, exploring the strategies and innovations that allowed Zambian women and men to shape their sartorial, visual and aesthetic identities. Second-hand became ‘new’ in new geographies, with adroit adaptations. Western styles were reimagined through entangled relations with Zambian markets. At the same time, local designers ‘invented’ a traditional style in the *Chitenge*. Both systems of dress served the fashion desires and dress politics of this distinctive region. In sum, the processes of dressing global bodies open powerful histories of innovation and survival that comprise the human past.

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Notes

- 1 The Philadelphia Museum of Art holds two fans of this type and the Museum of Fine Art, Boston holds two virtually identical examples, with one artefact including the name of the Chinese supplier, Wo & Co. Sui. These extant artifacts suggest the scope of this trade. See www.mfa.org/collections/object/feather-bris%C3%A9-fan-125856; and www.mfa.org/collections/object/feather-bris%C3%A9-fan-125857 (both accessed 21 May 2019).
- 2 Beverly Lemire, *Global Trade and the Transformation of Consumer Cultures: The Material World Remade, c.1500–1820* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 148–156; Evelyn Welch, ‘Art on the Edge: Hair and Hands in Renaissance Italy’ *Renaissance Studies* 23.3 (2009): 260–268.

- 3 Examples survive of fashionable fans made by the Wendat, a First Nation community resident outside Quebec City. Their works can be found in the McCord Museum, Montreal, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Canadian Museum of History, among others. For discussion of Native American fashion makers see Lemire, *Global Trade*, 281–287; Anne De Stecher, ‘Souvenir Arts, Collectable Crafts, Cultural Heritage: The Huron-Wendat of Wendake, Quebec’, in *Craft, Community and Material Culture of Place and Politics, 19th–20th Century*, ed. Janice Helland, Beverly Lemire and Alena Buis (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2014). See also <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/M12679>; www.mfa.org/collections/object/feather-fan-125289; and www.historymuseum.ca/collections/artifact/36916/?q=feather+fan&page_num=1&item_num=58&media_irm=3069531 (all accessed 21–24 May 2019). Brazilian feather fan, comparable to that made in Wendake can be found in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, among other museums. See <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O114619/fan-natte-m-e> (accessed 24 May 2019).
- 4 Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, eds., *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connection in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2016).
- 5 Leora Auslander, ‘Beyond Words’, *American Historical Review* 110.4 (2005): 1019.
- 6 Auslander, ‘Beyond Words’, 1017; and Leora Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions: Everyday Life and Politics in Britain, North America and France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). For the value of material culture analysis in historical study see Lemire, *Global Trade*; Karen Harvey, ed., *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017); Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, eds., *Writing Material Culture History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).
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- 8 Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Sandra Niessen, Anne Marie Leshkovich and Carla Jones, eds., *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress* (Oxford: Berg, 2003); Jean Allman, ed., *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
- 9 See notes 11, 12 and 18 for examples of these works.
- 10 Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- 11 Michelle Maskeill, ‘Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500–2000’, *Journal of World History* 13.1 (2000): 27–65; Antonia Finnane, ‘Yangzhou’s “Mondernity”: Fashion and Consumption in the Early Nineteenth Century’, *Positions* 11.2 (2003): 395–425; Robert Ross, *Clothing: A Global History* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008); Beverly Lemire, ed., *The Force of Fashion in Politics and Society: Global Perspectives from Early Modern to Contemporary Times* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2010); Lemire, *Global Trade*; and Cory Willmott, ‘Designing, Producing and Enacting Nationalisms: Contemporary Amerindian Fashion in Canada’, in *The Force of Fashion*, ed. Beverly Lemire, 167–190.
- 12 Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, eds., *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Lemire, *Global Trade*.
- 13 Terence Turner, ‘The Social Skin’, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2.2 (2012): 486–504, reprinted from 1980.
- 14 Turner, ‘The Social Skin’, 486.

- 15 Karen Tranberg Hansen, 'The World of Dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 369–392.
- 16 See note 10.
- 17 Beverly Lemire, *Dress, Culture and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade Before the Factory, c.1660–1800* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997); Lucy Norris, 'Creative Entrepreneurs: The Re-Cycling of Second-Hand Indian Clothing', in *Old Clothes, New Looks: Second-Hand Fashion*, ed., A. Palmer and H. Clark (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 119–134; Lynne B. Milgram, 'Activating Frontier Livelihoods: Women and the Transnational Secondhand Clothing Trade between Hong Kong and the Philippines', *Urban Anthropology* 37.1 (2008): 5–47; Onur Inal, 'Women's Fashions in Transition: Ottoman Borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman Exchange of Costumes', *Journal of World History* 22.2 (2011): 243–272; Robert DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650–1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Peter McNeil, *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).
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- 20 Dorothy Ko, 'The Body as Attire: The Shifting Meanings of Footbinding in Seventeenth-Century China', *Journal of Women's History* 8.4 (1997): 8–27; Niessen et al., *Re-Orienting Fashion*; Karen Tranberg Hansen, *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Sophie White, '"Wearing Three or Four Handkerchiefs Around His Neck and Elsewhere About Him": Slaves' Construction of Masculinity and Ethnicity in French Colonial New Orleans', *Gender & History* 15.3 (2003): 528–549; Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack, eds., *The Right to Dress: Sumptuary Laws in a Global Perspective, c.1200–1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
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- 24 Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism Fifteenth-Eighteenth Century: The Structure of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 312–313.

- 25 Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15.
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1

THE FABRIC OF EARLY GLOBALIZATION

Skin, fur and cloth in the de Bry's travel accounts, 1590–1630

Susanna Burghartz

‘The island of Virginia in the region of America was discovered in 1587; because of the variety of its dress and customs, I thought I should put it into this book.’¹ This is how Cesare Vecellio explained the addition of Virginia to the 1598 second edition of his extraordinarily successful costume book, which appeared under the title *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo*. As the first costume book with an ambition for global coverage, it included the continent of America.² Beginning with a detailed description of dress in his native city, Venice, in the first edition of his book published in 1590, Vecellio provided not only a proto-ethnographic overview of Italy and Europe but also of Asia and Africa based on regionally differing clothing styles. In 1598 he added the so-called New World at the end of his encyclopaedic work.³ The section on Virginia was based on images and information published for the first time just eight years earlier in the first volume of Theodor de Bry’s America series. The Calvinist de Bry launched his successful and long-lasting publishing venture in 1590 with a volume dedicated to European voyages to the West, so-called *Indiae occidentalis* or *Americae*. His sons expanded it from 1597 onwards with voyages to the East, so-called *Indiae orientalis*, thus making this richly illustrated travel collection an undertaking of truly global proportions.⁴ The two series were published in Frankfurt and appeared in both German and Latin.⁵ As a whole they were aimed at scholars and collectors, courts and the wealthy urban elites in Germany and Europe. The engravings in both series became the most extensive and influential pictorial archive of the first globalization.⁶

The connections between the genres of the costume book and the travel collection were no coincidence. Both aimed at cataloguing and categorizing the world. In the course of the sixteenth century, European costume books had developed visual strategies for depicting the grammar of social and regional differences within and between societies through clothing.⁷ At the same time, travel

accounts, cosmologies and choreographies developed processes for integrating the New World more or less coherently into existing European knowledge systems and revising them in accordance with a stage theory of civilized development.⁸

Taking the example of the de Brys' lavishly illustrated travel collection, this chapter discusses the meaning of clothing and its effects on the formation of identities in what has been called the first age of globalization. The focus will be on imagination as well as knowledge and economics, since around 1600 Europeans like Vecellio were not simply honing a global system of classification based on dress. Europeans were also becoming integrated into an increasingly global system of exchange that included large-scale trade of textiles from Asia to Europe and from Europe to Africa and the Americas. Yet, the economic interest in global exchange and trade could not always be smoothly reconciled with striving to organize the world through clothing according to a system that demonstrated the superiority of European civilization. Europeans employed sometimes surprising narrative and visual strategies involving similarity, otherness and adaptation in order to sketch a reassuring picture of their own superiority. Their aim was to link their own well-established clothing system that organized differences of sex, status and ethnicity with their economic hopes and interests.

In recent years, global history has intensely discussed the role of fashion and fabric for an early age of globalization, c.1400–1800.⁹ It has become increasingly clear how important not just actual interactions and opportunities for exchange were, but also their imaginary anticipation, configuration and mastery. Economically, the trade in fabrics and the (raw) materials to produce them grew steadily. Gold and silver, spices and crops were not the only driving forces behind global networking processes. The significance of non-European raw materials, fabrics, skins and furs in the European textile regions and their global interactions also grew apace. They permanently changed early modern consumer cultures and led to the advent of a new 'cosmopolitan material culture'.¹⁰ At the same time, fabrics and clothing also played a key identity-political role for European textile cultures, whose prosperity and long-standing artisanal pride was largely based on the production of and trade in fabrics. By developing a global system of knowledge and classification for clothing with the aid of costume books, cosmologies and travelogues, they could create a more or less coherent context linking their own notions of social order with the positioning of various non-European societies and even those deemed 'savage' on a scale of civilization. Published between 1590 and 1630, the de Bry family's *Eastern* and *Western Voyages* were among the most famous early modern collections of travel accounts and arguably the most beautifully illustrated. They accompanied the entry of England and the Netherlands as colonial competitors. Moreover, they may be read as globally orientated costume books: they processed knowledge from various sources about dress as a globally functioning system of meaning, thereby illustrating developments over the sixteenth century in the global trade in relevant materials – raw materials like dyewoods, wool, silk, furs, skins and feathers but also various fabrics.

The de Brys deployed a range of existing images. Sometimes they simply copied, sometimes they modified their models, and sometimes they used their own

imaginations to affirm, and occasionally alter, European stereotypes about non-European societies and their clothing through images. By portraying clothing from all over the world, the de Brys used texture as a major clue for addressing questions of difference and similarity as well as the vast continuum between these poles. Like contemporary costume books,¹¹ the de Brys used clothing and its opposite, nakedness, to integrate the various peoples and regions visually into a global stage set of historical development. Their illustrated travelogues opened up a wide range of positions between ‘civilized’ and ‘savage’ as encoded in dress. But they also reported on the intensive exchange of stuffs and garments between cultures, whether as diplomatic gifts, important commodities or valued means of barter.

Ernst van den Boogaart noted in 2004 that in de Bry, dress ‘provides elementary information about the civility of a social group following the rough-and-ready formula “the more dress the more civility, the more nudity the more savagery”’.¹² I take this formula as a point of departure in order to consider the interplay between unambiguous black and white positioning and the artful transgression of this binary logic. In this chapter I ask how skin, fur and fabric were used on a global comparative scale to negotiate similarity, difference and assimilation: how did the engravings use textures, patterns and cuts to dramatize similarities and differences and to cement but also to play with them? What global topography do the two major de Bry travel series create based on clothing and what systems of circulation and exchange do they invoke? And can we understand the clothing discourse of the costume books and collections of travelogues simultaneously as constitutive elements of a theatre of the global and an emerging stage of early globalization in the making?

(Social) skin – pelts – fur

The first volume on Virginia, for which the de Brys relied on drawings by John White, who documented conditions in Roanoke for the Virginia Company, already appears to affirm the formula of the naked savage. The accompanying engraving depicts Indigenous warriors wearing feathers on their heads and animal-skin loin-cloths (Figure 1.1). The figures’ nakedness and the descriptive insistence on their primitive, animalistic loin-cloths at first seem to underline the uncivilized nature of the inhabitants of Virginia. According to the caption, ‘They hange before them the skinne of some beaste verye feinlye dresset in suche sorte, that the taylor hangeth downe behynde’. The text also describes in detail hairstyles, body painting or tattoos.¹³ In combination with the images’ use of poses and gestures the collection thus refers to a general European image of the primitiveness and wildness of the natives. The particular interest in the nakedness of the ‘savages’ displayed by de Bry’s sons also fits this image.¹⁴ As Michiel van Groesen shows in his comprehensive analysis of the collection, the de Brys’ engravers emphasized the natives’ Otherness with a few specific changes to the original drawings by White. By attributing feather headdresses to quite diverse ethnic groups in America, Asia and Africa, they additionally underlined the homogeneity of the uncivilized Other.¹⁵

A weroan or great Lorde of Virginia. III.



THe Princes of Virginia are attyred in suche manner as is expresse in this figure. They weare the haire of their heades long and bynde opp the ende of the forehead in a knot vnder thier eares. Yet they cutt the topp of their heades from the forehead to the nape of the necke in manner of a cockscombe, stirkinge a faier lóge pecher of some berd att the Begininge of the creste vppun their foreheads, and another short one on bothe seides about their eares. They hange at their eares ether thicke pearles, or somewhat els, as the clawe of some great birde, as cometh in to their fanlye. Moreouer They ether powne, or paynt their forehead, cheeks, chynne, bodye, armes, and leggs, yet in another sorte then the inhabitantz of Florida. They weare a chaine about their necks of pearles or beades of copper, wich they muche esteeme, and ther of wear they also braselets ohn their armes. Vnder their breasts about their bellyes appeir certayne spots, whear they vse to lett them selues bloode, when they are sicke. They hange before thé the skinne of some beaste verye feinelye dresse in suche sorte, that the tayle hangeth downe behynde. They carye a quiver made of small rufhes holding their bowe readie bent in on hand, and an arrowe in the other, radie to defend themselves. In this manner they goe to warr, or tho their solemne feasts and banquetts. They take muche pleasure in hunteing of deer wher of theris great store in the contrye, for yt is fruitfull, pleasant, and full of Goodly woods. Yt hath also store of riuers full of diuers sorts of fishe. When they go to batel they paynt their bodies in the most terrible manner that thei can deuise.

FIGURE 1.1 'A Weroan or Great Lorde of Virginia', plate 3 from Theodor de Bry, *America. Part 1 in English. A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia, of the Commodities and of the Nature and Manners of the Naturall Inhabitants ...* made in English by Thomas Hariot, Frankfurt 1590.

Source: © The British Library Board, C.38.i.18, plate 3, page 7.

Although this reading, with its emphasis on the construction of Otherness is persuasive, the collection also allows for the reconstruction of further levels of meaning and lines of argumentation less clearly wedded to the logic of binary coding. The first two volumes on Virginia and Florida in particular, which have received by far the most attention, show the Indigenous bodies as idealized, following antique models.¹⁶ The picture heading ‘A Weroan or Great Lorde of Virginia’, which points to differences of social rank, and the comment on the ‘finely dressed’ quality of the animal skins, contrast with the first impression of uncivilized savages. Stephanie Pratt has also shown with reference to the ‘Renaissance elbow’, that this image was a highly artificial, mannerist portrayal, a pose borrowed from the programme of figures of European rulers, warriors and soldiers.¹⁷

Comparison with Hendrik Goltzius’ 1587 ‘Standard bearer’ reveals clear and surprising similarities of gesture and body language between Indigenous and European warriors – both idealized – in White/de Bry’s pictorial invention (Figure 1.2). This



FIGURE 1.2 ‘The Standard Bearer’, by Hendrick Goltzius, 1587.

Source: © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-4639.