

# 1

## INTRODUCTION: FASHIONING BRAZIL AND BRAZILIAN SELF-FASHIONING

In February 2014, four months ahead of the World Cup which commenced on June 12, the Brazilian tourism board *Embratur* requested that a pair of limited edition T-shirts produced by German multinational Adidas be discontinued. The two offending articles were a yellow T-shirt, which displayed a curvaceous brunette wearing a tiny bikini on *Copacabana* beach (identifiable by the imposing *Pão de Açúcar* in the background) beneath the words “Lookin’ to Score,” and its green companion, which presented an upside-down thong bikini bottom encased within a heart, amid the slogan “I love Brazil.” *Embratur* argued that the T-shirts celebrated a stereotypical Brazilian sensuality, which touched upon the host nation’s problematic reputation as a destination for sexual tourism, and presumably bore little relation to the multifaceted image of Brazil that then president Dilma Rousseff (in office from 2011 to 2016) and her administration were keen to project to an international audience ahead of the games. This revealing altercation is but one example of how the Western fashion industry has capitalized on *outsider* stereotypes of tropical Rio de Janeiro for its own commercial gain, further to the very real and emotional *insider* reactions that they provoke within Brazil, whose local populace does not straightforwardly recognize such categorizations as part of their own lived experience of dress, body, and identity.

This book aims to present a more holistic view of how dress and fashion in Brazil have been created, worn, displayed, viewed, and represented over the last one hundred years. It examines how the representation of Brazilian dress in *National Geographic* has been inextricably linked to culture, identity

construction, the interconnected experience of globalization—as it has occurred in multiple and differentiated ways—and the shared histories of Brazil from inside *and* outside. As a popular “scientific” and educational journal, *National Geographic*, since it was established in 1888, has played a key role in imagining the world at large. It has divided and labeled that world into areas of greater or lesser importance, often using dress as a vehicle for national identity to be articulated and realized through an *outsider* gaze. Yet simultaneously, the magazine tells multiple *insider* stories, about how global subjects have used dress to understand and negotiate their place within the world, expressing local, national, and transnational identities through their personal style and clothing choices. *National Geographic* is a multilayered resource then, which reveals the deeper connections between different people and places on the map, as well as the power relations that underpin them. It provides a revealing lens—yet to be seriously examined by fashion historians—through which to grapple with the nuances and complexities of dress as an embodied cultural practice, as well as the sensory and affective capacities of its representation that are communicated to the viewer through the pages of the magazine. Anne Hollander developed the idea that fashion *only* exists through visual media, highlighting the reciprocal and mutually exclusive relationship between the projection of ourselves to the outside world through dress, and the “constant reference of its interpretation” that an imaged world reflects to us (1993: 350). While a global history of fashion is in the process of being pieced together, that dress scholarship to date has neglected to engage with *National Geographic* can still be understood as part of a larger scholarly tendency to privilege inquiries into Western high fashion. This book bridges a gap between existing scholarship on *National Geographic*—that has tended to view representations in the magazine as essentializing local cultures—and contemporary academic debate concerning non-Western dress and fashion, which strives to capture the complex history of cross-cultural contact as ideas and inspirations are appropriated from across the globe. In writing of transnational encounter and exchange, I move beyond dichotomous understandings of the power relationships between *National Geographic* and Brazilian subjects to uncover the complex dynamics of dress as an embodied practice of performing culture.

By turning sustained attention to an underexplored region of fashion production, this book uses *National Geographic* to broaden our definition of what fashion is within a global context, while proposing a methodology with which to study it. My analysis does not simply apply Western fashion theory to a Brazilian context, but uses Brazilian scholars to contextualize and extend debates on the complex realities of dress and fashion practices in Brazil that have been documented by *National Geographic*'s vivid gaze over the last 125 years. While I draw upon Brazilian fashion scholarship throughout this book—an important and growing area of research, demonstrated by the work of Katia Castilho and Carol

Garcia (2001), Nizia Villaça (2005), Rita Andrade (2005), Valeria Brandini (2009), João Braga and Luís André do Prado (2011), Maria Claudia Bonadio (2014), and Kelly Mohs Gage (2016)—my decision to use five Brazilian cultural theorists to frame the analysis of each chapter is motivated by a desire to open out the key debates on globalization, as well as the relationship between the local and the global, in a more interdisciplinary and unconventional way. Despite constituting a fascinating resource for the fashion historian, *National Geographic* is not a fashion magazine, nor is it predominantly read by a fashion audience. It is therefore more fitting to draw upon the work of Brazilian cultural theorists Oswald de Andrade (1928), Robert Stam (1998), Silviano Santiago (2001), Roberto Schwarz (1992), and Renato Ortiz (2000), who are not primarily concerned with dress or fashion but nevertheless touch upon these interrelated subjects within their writing.<sup>1</sup>

## Definitions

It is important to outline from the outset the terminology that I use to describe and analyze various dress practices in Brazil. The most widely used term throughout this book is *dress*, in accordance with anthropologists Joanne B. Eicher and Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins's understanding of it as "an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements" (1995: 7). This encompassing definition considers the material properties and expressive capabilities of all types and styles of clothing or garments worn throughout the world. I prefer the term *dress* to *clothing* or *garment* since it extends beyond single or several items covering the body, to acknowledge the numerous acts and products used on the body, including makeup, hairstyle, piercing, scarification, body paint, tattoos, and perfume. Dress is not simply cloth, but a multisensory system of communication, whose many meanings are not fixed but continually informed and to an extent, even performed, through both wearing *and* representation. I avoid the highly problematic term *costume* within an everyday context, except when describing carnival or theatrical attire. I also define *fashion* within an expansive framework, as the demonstration of change and flux within any dress practices, and an additional value that is attached to clothing and its visual representation to entice consumers (Arnold 2009; Kawamura 2011). Fashion can be fast and throwaway street-style, but also rarefied and elite haute couture. It exists in numerous locations across the globe—a potent reminder that challenges the myth that fashion is solely a Western phenomenon, intrinsically connected to industrialization, modernization, and capitalism, which is passively adopted by non-Western cultures as they become Westernized. In retaining the terms *Western* and *non-Western* throughout this book, I hope to problematize them from within, demonstrating that they are imaginary constructs, which are brought into sharper focus by examining the case study of Brazilian dress practices. My

analysis seeks to develop a globally inclusive and expansive definition of fashion, which emphasizes non-Eurocentric narratives of cultural and sartorial exchange, as well as the multiplicity of fashion systems. Jennifer Craik (1993), Joanne B. Eicher (1995), Karen Tranberg Hansen (2000), Leslie Rabine (2002), Sandra Niesson (2003), Margaret Maynard (2004), Susan Kaiser (2012), and Sarah Cheang (2013) are but some of the scholars who have challenged the perennial distinctions drawn between Western fashion, perceived to be fluid and shifting, and purportedly non-Western dress, misunderstood as static and backward-looking. Their work has highlighted the vibrant and dynamic fashion systems, both macro and micro, that exist and interact across the globe, giving rise to the interconnected processes of mixing, fragmentation, syncretism, multiplication, creolization, and hybridity. *Hybridity* is an important term that frames my analysis throughout. As Néstor Garcia Canclini has articulated, “No identities [are] describable as self-contained and ahistorical essences” (1995: xxvii); while material objects may have originated in a specific area or location, due to the forces of globalization they are no longer affiliated with one space or place, but rather with multiple spaces and places throughout the world. Everyday modes of dress that have originated within the West do not necessarily signify Western values, since this ignores their creative appropriation in local contexts (Cheang 2017). I use the term *local* to refer to dress practices that are smaller in scale, and more specific and familiar to a certain group, community, geographical region, city, or state. In contrast, the term *global* is used to denote the style of clothing, fashion trends, or dress practices that are worn more ubiquitously throughout the world. Throughout this book, *fashion* is understood as the cultural practice of *dress*, imbued with a sense of continuous change and the shared consensus of trends; both are intrinsically connected to our individual experiences of *being* in the world, and embodying multiple subjectivities, whether of race, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and nationality.

## Global Dress Cultures

As a multifaceted form of cultural expression, dress is well equipped as a medium to analyze the widespread economic and cultural exchanges that have transformed contemporary social life and resulted in the interwoven processes of fragmentation, cross-fertilization, and hybridization. The adoption of mass-produced Western-style clothing throughout the world might suggest that we are witness to a pervasive and homogenized global culture. This would equate globalization, which unequivocally takes place on uneven terms of power, with a one-directional force of cultural imperialism that has standardized, homogenized, Westernized, and Americanized more vulnerable cultures (Barber 1996; Huntington 1996; Friedman 1998). Yet this oversimplified perspective

does not account for the numerous cultural and stylistic particularities that have been mobilized when Western-style dress is worn in ambiguous ways, often reconfigured for local tastes, or adopted for different reasons, possibly even as a form of resistance to the West. Arjun Appadurai (1986) has acknowledged that objects in cross-cultural networks have no intrinsic meaning but acquire new values through their exchange; in fashion, the different contexts in which Western-style clothing has been worn reveal articulations and negotiations that are variable and dialectical, based upon their new uses and requirements.

Appadurai has theorized the complex interactions and exchanges of information and ideas since the late 1980s as a series of conceptual frameworks, comprised of overlapping flows and connections between economic, political, and cultural constructs that are continually in flux. He coined the terms *ideoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *ethnoscapes*, and *finanscapes* to describe these multiple realities, which shift in accordance with one another and establish tensions between the *warp* of cultural homogeneity and the *weft* of cultural heterogeneity (1996: 33). It is within this hybrid space, where the *weft* is drawn through the *warp*, that new sartorial expressions are generated as two hitherto relatively distinct forms, types, patterns, or styles of dress mix and match. Certainly, all cultures have been hybrid for a long time, due to trade, slavery, warfare, travel, and migration, but the development of media and information technologies throughout the 1990s and beyond have substantially expanded the contact that different cultures have had with one another, and accelerated the speed at which these global interactions have occurred (Kraidy 2005: 21). Jan Nederveen Pieterse has eloquently described hybridization, and the heightened connectivity of contemporary global culture, as a process by which multifarious identities are “braided and interlaced, layer upon layer” (2009: 145). His use of a dress metaphor is a crucial reminder that globalization, in its economic, political, cultural, and technological dimensions, is intricately woven into everyday life; it shapes, encloses, exposes, and interacts with different bodies, defining and expressing personal and collective identities.

## What Is Brazilian Dress?

The key focus of the analysis throughout this book is the impact of globalization on Brazilian dress practices. The development of Brazilian dress reveals a long history of cross-cultural contact, slavery, and immigration. It is a complex and fluid process by which Brazil, since it was first colonized by the Portuguese in 1500, has absorbed but also reinterpreted influences that stem from its indigenous populations, as well as from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the United States. Brazilian dress innovations illuminate Brazil's role as an active participant in global fashion culture, unsurprising given that it is the fifth largest and fifth most populous country

in the world. The success of Brazilian fashion designers such as Alexandre Herchcovitch (Figure 1.0) enables us to see the country as something far greater than just a source of exotic inspiration to the West. His darker designs, as Brandini (2009) has articulated, challenge recurring stereotypes in European and North American fashion magazines, which still resort to oversimplification in their representation of Brazilian culture as an exotic spectacle, failing to appreciate the internal subtleties of the country's racial, religious, social, cultural, geographical, and sartorial diversity. From North to South, huge variables in culture and climate necessarily impact directly upon the everyday clothing choices made available to Brazilians. It leads one to question whether there is a form of dress characteristic of Brazilian culture or conspicuously national in character. Simplistic outsider reactions might suggest the bikini or *Havaiana* flip-flops, possibly even carnival costume, but this tells us more about foreign perceptions of Brazil—which have tended to treat Rio de Janeiro as a synecdoche for the entire country (Root and Andrade 2010)—than of the lived experience of dress for most Brazilians. Any attempt to define Brazilian dress in a sweeping brushstroke is a palpable reminder that national identity, like clothing, is a material *construct*, not an intangible *essence*—an ongoing social process of articulation and negotiation that involves both insiders and outsiders to the group. There is an incredible variation in dress styles in Brazil. The differing styles tell multiple stories about their wearers, revealing global networks of ideas and objects that are in dialogue



**Figure 1.0** Photograph by Victor Virgile, models showcase Alexandre Herchcovitch's Spring/Summer 2013 collection at São Paulo Fashion Week. Copyright: Victor Virgile/Getty.

with local identities. The forms of Brazilian dress analyzed throughout this book include, but are not limited to, *indigenous* forms of clothing, such as the complex sartorial system of the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, who live in the state of Rondonia and combine jewelry and body paint with Western-style shorts and T-shirts, in addition to *ceremonial* dress, such as the white outfits worn by *baianas* in Salvador da Bahia, who adhere to the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé and wear a hybrid fusion of sartorial elements that originate from Europe and West Africa (Mohs Gage 2016). I analyze not only *low fashion*, such as the localized use of Lycra among anonymous Brazilian designers influenced by international brands such as Azzedine Alaïa and Giorgio Armani, which emerged in Madureira, a poor suburb in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro (Stockler 2001), but also *high fashion*, such as the boutiques of designers Bianca Marques and Victor Dzenk in the affluent South Zone, which reinterpret international trends for a national audience.

All the examples of Brazilian dress that I examine reveal cross-cultural networks of exchange and influence, processes which are far from exclusive to Brazil. Yet they do come into much sharper focus within this heterogeneous region, which sits so ambiguously between the *Western* and the *non-Western*, and embodies many of the tensions between these two artificial constructs. The history of Brazil raises interesting questions about how *National Geographic* has articulated a recognizable image of the country for its readers. In geographical terms, Brazil is certainly a Western nation. Moreover, it is affiliated with the West in terms of its developing free-market economy, its large export supplies of raw materials and manufactured goods, its transition to a democratic constitution following the end of the authoritarian military regime in 1985, its high cultural institutions, and its adoption of Christianity and the Portuguese language. Brazil also enjoys a regional hegemonic influence in Latin America that raises doubt about simplistic assertions of US *cultural imperialism*, which I define as the exaltation and spread of a dominant cultures' values and habits, often supported by economic power. However, Brazil might still be considered a non-Western nation in terms of its incomplete infrastructure, socioeconomic disparities, unequal distribution of wealth and land, poor standards of public health, and its popular and material culture which constitutes, as David Hess and Roberto DaMatta have articulated, a unique site in which "Western culture has mixed and mingled with non-Western cultures for centuries" (1995: 2). Brazil must be understood then as a microcosm of the world as a whole. Just as *National Geographic* has attempted to encapsulate within its pages, "The World and All That Is In It," Brazil provides a revealing case study through which to examine how global identities have been asserted, negotiated, and *renegotiated* in the magazine through the representation of Brazilian dress and fashion. The diversity that is evident *within* Brazilian borders, as this book outlines, casts light upon *National Geographic's* search for difference *across* national boundaries.

## ***National Geographic*: Identification and Distance**

*National Geographic* was first published in 1888 as a slim terracotta-colored technical journal produced by the National Geographic Society, which was based in Washington, DC, and comprised 200 members, “to increase and diffuse geographic knowledge.” Under its first full-time editor, Gilbert H. Grosvenor (1903–54), *National Geographic* increased its outreach and developed into the popular glossy “scientific” and educational magazine, with its distinctive yellow border and color photography, which is familiar today. Within the contemporary global mediascape, *National Geographic* still casts a quasi-ethnographic gaze onto the purportedly exotic flora and fauna in the world each month to its 4,125,152 US and 6,855,235 international readers (Braden 2013). Although *National Geographic*’s mainstream cultural production is addressed at a predominantly heterosexual male, middle-class, and middle-aged audience, demonstrated by the advertisements published within it, the exact breakdown of readership statistics is difficult to ascertain, since a mixed, male *and* female readership, constituting a broad range of ages and social classes, has unquestionably encountered the magazine. This inability to pinpoint *National Geographic*’s readership is largely due to its ubiquity, memorably dramatized in Elizabeth Bishop’s 1971 poem, “The Waiting Room,” in which she recalled a crude memory of her six-year-old self, reading the February 1918 edition of the magazine while waiting for her aunt in a dentist’s surgery in Worcester, Massachusetts. To date, *National Geographic* produces forty editions in local languages, in addition to its English-language version, and is a global brand that encompasses television, radio, films, music, books, DVDs, maps, exhibitions, and merchandise. This book reflects upon *National Geographic* at a crucial point within the magazine’s history, the latter of which has been discussed in the work of Philip J. Pauly (1979), Alison Devine Nordstrom (1992), Lisa Bloom (1994), Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins (1995), Linda Steet (2000), Tamar Rothenberg (2007), and Stephanie Hawkins (2011). In September 2015, *National Geographic* merged with 21st Century Fox Media and abandoned its nonprofit status, mobilizing a new stage in the discussion of the magazine that brings into sharper focus the uncomfortable clash between research, education, and entertainment evident within its pages.

To slide open the glossy cover of *National Geographic* is to be confronted with a recurrent repertoire of diverse expressions, gestures, poses, clothing, and colors. The magazine has synthesized and compressed diverse peoples and places—previously separated by geographical, temporal, cultural, and ethnic disjuncture—into a single compact entity. A pertinent example can be seen in the 125th-anniversary edition of *National Geographic*, published in October 2013, which documented encounters with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kuwait, Nigeria,

Afghanistan, India, Peru, Iraq, China, and North Korea. Viewed in its entirety, the magazine presented a complex portrait of the world that oscillated precariously between homogenous identification *of*, and heterogeneous identification *with*, represented subjects. The interpretative emphasis shifted between two opposing poles: on the one hand, a distanced pleasure derived from the stereotypical exoticism manifest when privileged viewers observe geographically distant and often subordinate subjects but, simultaneously, a critical awareness of those diverse subjects as a site for potential, as knowing agents capable of constructing their own subjectivities through dress, pose, and deportment. Ariella Azoulay (2008) has complicated the one-directionality of power that Susan Sontag (1977) attributed to mass-media images and asserted that, rather than fatigued and image-saturated, viewers are global citizens: active, aware, and, by extension, politically informed and capable of alternative interpretation. The text within the 125th-anniversary edition catalyzed this palpable tension and contrasted, to cite one title, “Witness,” a noun suggestive of the distanced spectator, with “Relate,” an empathetic verb indicative of identification. Moreover, conflicting statements within the issue posited “Photography is a weapon against what’s wrong out there. It’s bearing witness to the truth” (37) against “I fall in love with almost every person I photograph. I want to hear each story. I want to get close. This is personal for me” (79). This complex disjunction between the standardization and differentiation of peoples and places has materialized from *within* the pages of *National Geographic*, presenting cross-cultural contact as an intricate and, crucially, *continually shifting* process of cultural exchange, not a static, deterministic state. Representation has emerged as a complex cultural process, comprised of numerous spatial and temporal continuities and discontinuities, in which meaning is not inherent only in the clothing choices made by subjects, but has also been fashioned by *National Geographic* in response to modulations in the balance of global power. To recognize this interactive dynamic enables the multiple subjects represented within the magazine to be understood as *both* interacting agents who *self-fashioned*, and subordinate subjects who were *fashioned* by *National Geographic*’s quasi-anthropological gaze.

## The Contact Zone

The methodological framework that binds this book together is *the contact zone*, to use a term coined by literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt (2008) to describe a space—such as *National Geographic*—in which different cultures encounter one another and establish ongoing relations. Pratt used it to describe real or imagined “spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (7).

Inherent within this space of contact are notions of friction and conflict played out in a militant area, or amorphous zone, in which the spatial and temporal presence of previously disparate groups can be seen to intersect. The contact zone provides a fitting framework for this book, concerned as it is with encounter and exchange between the local and global agents and agencies that have shaped Brazilian dress and fashion throughout the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. My analysis argues that *National Geographic's* centennial, celebrated in September 1988, marked a paradigm shift at the magazine. From an understanding of itself as an exemplar of objective science, it moved toward a more self-reflexive and performative subjectivity which was driven by the forces of contemporary globalization and most evident through the representation of dress. Crucial to this shift is that the magazine consciously *encouraged* its readers to experience diversely dressed Brazilian subjects in a heightened, multisensory way, centered on the fact that the act of wearing clothing, and the feel of it on our skin, is intimately linked to our tactile senses of interpretative looking. Photographs since *National Geographic's* centenary edition in September 1988 have traced the beginnings of a different view of encounters within the United States-Brazil contact zone, which have resisted the processes of objectification, appropriation, and stereotyping frequently associated with the rectangular yellow border. This is because they have broadened our understanding of fashion to encompass locations beyond Europe and North America by providing evidence of a fluid and varied Brazilian population, which has selected and experimented with preferred elements of local and global dress, and used those elements to fashion multiple identities of its own.

This book is structured as a contact zone. The first part (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) examines the representation of Brazilian dress in *National Geographic*, while the second part (Chapters 5 and 6) examines how the representation of Brazilian dress in *National Geographic Brasil* (the Portuguese-language version of the magazine, established in São Paulo in May 2000) casts a light upon these dominant representations of Brazil. The layout of the book therefore places the United States in direct contact with Brazil. In the following five interconnected chapters, the book mediates threads of thought from Oswald de Andrade (1928), Robert Stam (1998), Silviano Santiago (2001), Roberto Schwarz (1992), and Renato Ortiz (2000), each of whom have grappled with the *auto-ethnographic* construction of Brazilian identity in diverse and singular ways. This is unsurprising given their own mixed cultural identities and experiences of living and writing within different contact zones.<sup>2</sup> My analysis draws out the tensions and competing impulses that are evident in Brazilian dress and its representation in *National Geographic* and *National Geographic Brasil*. It thus enables the ambivalent and asymmetrical relations of power presented in *National Geographic* to serve as a point of departure, but not the straightforward conclusion, of the magazine's representational agenda.

## Auto-Ethnography

My analysis identifies instances of *auto-ethnography*, which Pratt emphasized is a phenomenon of the contact zone (2008: 7). Auto-ethnography is an autobiographical mode of performing and reflecting upon the subjectivity of one's own culture. The process encompasses an appropriation of the idioms of the dominant culture, but also an infiltration by indigenous modes, which enable the auto-ethnographic subject to actively self-fashion and self-present. Pratt's thinking is clearly informed by that of Brazilian poststructuralist scholar Silviano Santiago. Santiago coined the term "writing back" to refer to the palimpsestic process whereby Western literary practices are modified by Latin American writers, to provide space for the reinscription of alternative modes of non-Western creative expression (2001: 31). Brazilian dress is a form of auto-ethnographic expression, a sartorial manifestation of "writing back," which has enabled Brazilian subjects to represent themselves as *they* wished, and highlighted some of the tensions in their representation by *National Geographic*. Pratt acknowledged that "whilst subjugated people cannot control what the dominant culture visits upon them, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it, and what they make it mean" (7). Auto-ethnographic expressions are predetermined to be understood differently by diverse readerships, but this is not of primary concern, since they nevertheless "constitute a group's point of entry into the dominant culture" (9).

While my use of Latin American scholars throughout this book situates my own arguments derived from visual analysis in relation to contemporary writing on Brazilian national identity, my subjectivity as researcher provides an additional, self-reflexive gaze onto my primary material. I understand this gaze to be integral to the research process. It provides a means to examine—with a revisionist imperative—photographs of Brazilian dress published in *National Geographic* and *National Geographic Brasil*. By focusing on the images, first and foremost, I allow the various relations that constitute them to take center stage. There is a large amount of subjectivity present, not least on my own part. I recognize that these are not simply images *of* the world, but images that exist *in* the world. By considering the course of their mobility, I analyze the historical context in which the images were first presented and perceived, but also reflect upon my contemporary gaze, which inevitably re-presents them in the present day. A self-reflexive reengagement with my primary material holds the potential for a contested history of *National Geographic* to be revealed whereby, as Elizabeth Edwards has articulated, the photograph itself acts "both as a confrontation with the past and as an active and constituent part of the present" (2001: 7). The images—or snapshots—that I discuss are sites of potentiality, enabling me to identify points of fracture with the overdetermined arguments of scholarship to

date, a point to which I will return. While it cannot be denied that an asymmetrical dynamic of power has been in operation between *National Geographic* and Brazilian subjects, by allowing the images themselves to perform on a broader stage across space and time, my analysis reveals a counter narrative from *within* the representation of dress and fashion. By peeling back these layers of meaning, I enter the contact zone, and by extension, research, write and form evaluations from within it, enabling new ideas, debates, and histories of the magazine to be produced. My analysis enables the totalizing and reductive view of *National Geographic*, as the ultimate popular ethnographic gaze, to be reengaged with in a way that can move beyond previous scholarship, which has undeniably constituted an important stage in the discussion of the magazine, but is by no means the definitive one. This book can be understood then as a moment of “writing back.” I position myself self-reflexively as the auto-ethnographic writer, who undertakes the process of reevaluating and re-presenting the historiography of *National Geographic*. My intent is to sculpt out a space for alternative histories of the magazine to emerge *in-between* Brazilian dress practices and existing academic discourse on *National Geographic*, enabling the creative sartorial expressions of Brazilian subjects to be foregrounded, as opposed to silenced.

## Readdressing Scholarship on *National Geographic*

My study of Brazilian dress and fashion as seen through the lens of *National Geographic* is interdisciplinary, fitting neatly into no single field but drawing instead on dress history, fashion studies, art history, anthropology, literary criticism, film studies, poststructuralist theory, and Latin American studies. My analysis builds on a sustained critical commentary on *National Geographic* that has emerged since the early 1990s, conducted so far by sociologists, anthropologists, feminists, and postcolonial theorists. Catherine Lutz and Jane L. Collins (1993), Linda Steet (2001), Tamar Rothenberg (2007), and Stephanie Hawkins (2010) have all condemned the primitivizing and exoticizing gaze that the magazine has routinely placed on non-Western subjects. They have equated the gaze of *National Geographic* with masculine, imperialist power, but failed to acknowledge the fundamental social, cultural, economic, and political role that dress and fashion have played within the magazine, whether as a form of *submission*, or crucially, of *resistance* to the magazine’s quasi-anthropological gaze.

It is important to acknowledge the potential reductiveness of such critiques, which assert that *National Geographic* has fixed subjects within an imposed “ethnographic present” where, devoid of historical contextualization, they remain a spectacle of the unknown and exotic Other. This tantalizing commentary has

disregarded the possibility that dress might operate in unexpected or strategic ways, sometimes even against the very representational contexts that have framed it. As a dress historian trained within an art history tradition, my analysis shifts the focus of study to the active subjects represented within the magazine. These subjects have participated in global culture and consciously chosen how to present themselves to the outside world. They have done this through *self-fashioning*, which I define as personal style and clothing choices, and *self-presentation*, a term I use to describe the expressions, gestures, poses, and gazes that Brazilian subjects have enacted before the camera's gaze.

Although not an exhaustive register of scholarship on *National Geographic*, the following publications provide a brief overview of a growing area of study. None of these female North American scholars has explicitly focused on dress. Nevertheless, the symbolic and semiotic function of clothing has been threaded throughout almost all their arguments. In *Reading National Geographic* (1993), for example, anthropologist Lutz and sociologist Collins conducted an ethnographic study of *National Geographic* from 1950 to 1986. They outlined its encyclopedic and oppressive arrangements of race, gender, sexuality, and identity. Lutz and Collins compared the magazine to Edward Steichen's *Family of Man* exhibition at MOMA (1955), which featured 503 photographs from sixty-eight countries and was extensively criticized for its promotion of an undifferentiated form of universal humanism embedded in US Cold War propaganda. Lutz and Collins acknowledged that *National Geographic* has made a distinction between subjects wearing brightly colored "indigenous dress, tribal fashion, and/or ritual costume," indicative of "an entire alien life-style, locale or mind-set," and those wearing "Western dress," which implied a desire for "social change, material progress, and . . . a forward-looking Western orientation" (91–93). Similar conclusions about the Orientalist role of dress were drawn by Arab-American feminist scholar Linda Steet in *Veils and Daggers: A Century of National Geographic's Representation of the Arab World* (2001), which examined the magazine's systematic coverage of Arab peoples and cultures from 1888 to 1988. She argued that *National Geographic* has explicitly used non-Western dress to symbolize Arab women's alleged "domination and backwardness," as opposed to Western-style dress, which has signified their "emancipation and modernity" (109).

Tamar Rothenberg, meanwhile, has used dress more implicitly in *Presenting America's World: Strategies of Innocence in National Geographic Magazine, 1888–1945* (2007). She criticized the "strategies of innocence" used by *National Geographic* to present a utopian and altruistic vision of North American moral and technological supremacy abroad, and briefly outlined the exploitation of non-Western clothing to highlight distance and difference (6). *National Geographic* photographer, Maynard Owen Williams, for example, posed individuals in "full-costume" for the "benefit of his camera" (112). Rothenberg's own, limited

use of the term “full-costume” constructed a binary opposition between fashionable, modern dress and fixed, traditional costume, and demonstrated that her understanding of dress within the context of a transnational world was rather limited. Most recently, literary scholar Stephanie L. Hawkins’s revisionist account of the magazine from 1896 to 1954 in *American Iconographic: National Geographic, Global Culture and the Visual Imagination* (2010) has provided an important critique of previous scholarship, namely for its assumptions that “readers are not *reading* the magazine so much as treating it as a picture book, mindlessly flipping through the photographs without pause for critical reflection” (10). *National Geographic* viewers, she asserted, were not passive receptacles of cultural stereotypes, but active and critical participants who, rather than endorse the magazine’s imperialist agenda, negotiated their own understanding of the multifarious identities in the world through the lens of this American “icon” (13). However, Hawkins failed to extend her analysis to understand active and critical *National Geographic* viewers as also embodied and clothed, who formed sensory and emotional connections with subjects represented in the magazine through the interconnected activities of looking, seeing, being, feeling, and *wearing*.

Although the important work contributed by these scholars cannot be discounted, they do not consider the dressed body in the broader cultural sense as a tangible, three-dimensional site where complex forces meet. Rather than consider the subversive possibilities that are inherent in dress, and which demand a correspondingly multisensory response from viewers, Lutz and Collins, Steet, and Rothenberg concentrated on the ways the magazine has used dress as a tool to oppress non-Western subjects and construct stereotypical narratives of exotic difference. They have interpreted dress as a mere surface decoration, a secondary construction to the body. This book is concerned instead with the dressed body as a unified whole: how it *feels* to be dressed, the *experience* of dress, how Brazilian subjects have *been* dressed by *National Geographic*, but also their own, embodied *practices* of dress.

## Looking, Touching, Feeling

My analysis throughout this book focuses on the connections to be made between looking, touching, and *feeling*. Dress is a tactile layer that clothes the body, an exterior surface turned outward toward the gaze of the viewer. Yet it is simultaneously proximate to the wearer, who has an innate awareness of how clothing *feels* on the body and how it *touches* the body. This contradictory dynamic can be extended further to the viewer of a dressed body, since the viewer is also a *wearer*, who encounters the world through his or her own experience of dress (Entwistle 2000). Dress is a double layer that both *has* a material surface but also *is* an exterior surface. Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty clearly

indicated this entwining of body and clothing when he used a dress metaphor to foreground his understanding of sensory perception: “My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my ‘comprehension’” (2002: 273). He asserted that an individual’s experience of his or her body is the mediator for everything that he or she experiences in the outside world. Merleau-Ponty rejected a detached scientific and objective mode of viewing the world. Instead, he foregrounded the role of the dressed body in making sense of our surroundings, accounting for the thoughts, emotions, and memories evoked by touch. To make a phenomenological register of perception is to understand that contact between clothed *National Geographic* viewers and dressed Brazilian subjects was not *disembodied* and distanced, but a tactile and intimate encounter—whether acknowledged or unacknowledged by the viewer—which was woven into the sensory fabric of the magazine.

Not only has clothing provided a tactile surface through which the *National Geographic* viewer has perceived dressed Brazilian subjects, but the magazine itself is also a corporeal object that has clothed original photographs of dressed Brazilian subjects within a second, glossy skin. To encounter *National Geographic*, whether it has been picked up, exchanged, sold, glanced through, read from cover to cover, collected, even thrown away, is to experience it as a sensory object, to *feel* its weight as it is held in the hands, to explore the texture of its pages. Contact is necessarily bodily, as Merleau-Ponty made palpably clear when he acknowledged that to touch is also to be touched (368–69). It is through handling that the magazine has communicated to viewers, not solely by means of linguistic signification of the two-dimensional image, but also via the sensations, memories, emotions, or *affect* evoked by the three-dimensional object. Laura U. Marks has insisted that the haptic and optic are not a dichotomy, but rather “slide into one another”; she uses haptic criticism as a means to “‘warm up’ our cultural tendency to take a distance” (2002: xii–xxiii). This book argues that the direct physical contact *National Geographic* viewers have had with the magazine has demanded, however unwittingly, an instinctively visceral response, which has counteracted an overdeterministic awareness of geographical distance, in favor of affective identification with multivalent Brazilian subjects. This approach marks a revisionist shift that departs from a reliance solely on distanced semiotic analyses of images of clothing in *National Geographic* as signified and textualized, and moves toward a more dynamic engagement with dress and fashion as image, object, text, idea, and *experience* intertwined.

## Snapshots

This book is organized around a series of eleven interconnected case studies, which I refer to as *snapshots*. The case studies that I examine open out to reflect

change and continuity in Brazilian dress and fashion practices, as well as *National Geographic's* shifting gaze onto Brazil, in relation to the specific social, cultural, political, economic, technological, and geographical contexts. I refer to these case studies as snapshots because they constitute, in the words of Alexander Nemerov, "a patchwork of glimpses," which provide a means of coming into contact with Brazilian fashion history through the "photojournalistic precision of an instant in time" (2013: 2). I do not intend to provide an encyclopedic account of Brazilian dress practices as represented in *National Geographic* throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rather, I seek to address with precision and depth the different gazes that the magazine has placed onto Brazil during particularly charged moments of cross-cultural exchange between North and South America, and to examine what this can tell us about Brazilian practices of self-fashioning and self-presentation. This approach parallels Hans Belting's insistence that photography does not simply mirror the world but rather, synchronizes our shifting gaze with that world; it is "our changing gaze upon the world—and sometimes a gaze upon our own gaze" (2011: 146). Not solely a record of something that existed in the world, a snapshot opens up interpretative possibilities for the viewer, who invests his or her own memories, imaginings, epistemological knowledge, experiences, emotions, and preconceptions onto it, forming connections with broader systems of communication, whether verbal, visual, material, or textual.

My use of the term snapshot extends beyond its common usage in photography, where it describes a spontaneous mode of amateur picture-making. I use it to refer instead to a complex combination of text and image that is manifest within particular examples from *National Geographic* and *National Geographic Brasil*, which are pregnant with meaning and as such tell us something broader about the processes of globalization operating within the specific context of Brazil. Clearly, none of the photographs published within the magazine have been taken as snapshots: they do not share the technical inaccuracies of the genre, nor, for the most part, do they employ the ordinary subject matter of amateur photography. Nevertheless, a crucial part of the interpretation of the snapshot lies in its selective editing and arrangement in the photograph album. It is in this respect that an unmistakable parallel can be drawn with *National Geographic*, which has recontextualized the family photograph album to perform as a documentary record of the world at large *and* as a trigger for memory and recollection. The magazine has provided a space to order and control the interpretation of these snapshots, altering and adding to their meaning through text, design, and layout. It has fabricated contradictory stories about Brazil, simultaneously promoting identification and empathy with subjects, as well as exoticism and Otherness. Patrizia di Bello, in her discussion of women's popular culture in the nineteenth century, points to the *intersensoriality* of photograph albums and magazines, which were part of a complex process through which

“vision was modernized . . . into a fragmented, subjective experience by new technologies and visual entertainment machines which were operated by and operated on the body of the observer” (2005: 14). Di Bello acknowledges the subjective vision of the embodied observer, who becomes an active producer in the experience and perception of meaning in the magazine, a notion that is extendable to a contemporary analysis of *National Geographic* and its varied, individual viewers.

The eleven snapshots that this book examines were chosen following close content analysis of every issue of *National Geographic* and *National Geographic Brasil* within the Washington (DC) and São Paulo archives, during which time I carefully considered the visual and material qualities of each article that documented Brazil.<sup>3</sup> During the numerous hours spent in the archive, further to the time spent thinking about and discussing the images through interviews with archivists, editors, and contributors, I was concerned first and foremost with the snapshots that revealed the nuances and complexities of dress and fashion practices within Brazil, as Brazilian subjects actively engaged with *National Geographic*'s shifting gaze. Rather than impose any assumptions onto the primary material, my starting point was always the two-dimensional images themselves, and the way that they communicate to the viewer as three-dimensional objects. This follows the thinking of Edwards, who reiterates that photographs are “both images *and* physical objects that exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience” (2004: 1). This book uses art-historical methods as a critical strategy to analyze images of dress heuristically; although focusing on only eleven snapshots, I make a richer analysis by allowing close examination of the magazine to open out a broader discussion that draws on contemporary writing on Brazilian national identity and historical context. Appendices 1 and 2 provide a broader view of *National Geographic*'s representation of Brazil in the period 1888 to 1988, and 1988 to the present day, mapping the magazine articles onto key events in the history of Brazil and Brazilian interactions with the United States.

## Organization of Chapters

This book is comprised of six chapters. The second chapter uses the work of Brazilian modernist author Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954) to examine the representation of Brazilian dress in *National Geographic* in the first hundred years since the magazine was established in 1888. Andrade used the term “anthropophagy,” or cannibalism, to conceptualize how the subordinate Brazilian subject consumed elements of a dominant European or North American culture, swallowed what was necessary, and defecated what was no longer of any use. This critical and creative process enabled the Brazilian subject to cannibalize the colonial cultural identity and to regurgitate an entirely new and distinctive

one in postcolonial Brazil. Andrade deconstructed the negative connotations of cannibalism pervasive in popular Western discourses which, since Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the New World, have condemned the barbaric flesh-eating Savage. Instead, he offered a crucial antidote to such carnivalesque fictions of grotesquerie, creating a positive self-presentation of a Brazilian culture that creatively devoured dominant trends from abroad. This chapter applies anthropophagy to dress and uses it as a lens to open a critical discourse with the magazine's representational politics. It analyses to what extent the magazine can be seen to have fulfilled a form of US-driven cultural imperialism in its representation of Brazil. Through a close reading of three case studies (April 1926, August 1942, and September 1971), each reflective of three different gazes that *National Geographic* has placed on Brazil throughout the course of the twentieth century, the chapter highlights the layers of complexity provided by a revisionist rereading of *National Geographic* through the lens of dress. It examines articles written and photographed by US Army Air Corps officer Albert W. Stevens; American author Henry Albert Phillips; and Brazilian documentary filmmaker and photographer W. Jesco von Puttkamer. I analyze the hybrid outfits worn by the Maku population, indigenous to the upper Amazon River basin in 1926; the Western-style fashions popular among the European-descended elite in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in 1942; and the painted clothing presented by Cinta Largas women, indigenous to the southwestern Amazon rainforest in 1971. The chapter acknowledges the disciplinary shifts in anthropology throughout the period and contextualizes *National Geographic* within the broader mediascape, drawing points of comparison and distinction with specific examples from *Popular Mechanics*, *Life*, and *American Vogue*.

My third chapter uses the work of North American scholar of Brazilian film Robert Stam (1947–) to develop a complex and critical analysis of *National Geographic*'s representation of Brazilian dress following its centennial in 1988. Stam used garbage as a positive metaphor to describe the subversive potential of contemporary Brazilian culture, which recycled the remnants of Western capitalist culture and refashioned them in new contexts. Stam's metaphor is comparable to anthropophagy in the sense that it provides a means to invert cross-cultural expressions previously seen as negative, and revalorize them as an anti-colonial trope, turning a premeditated disadvantage into a tactical strength. This chapter applies the metaphor of recycling to clothing and uses it as a framework to examine *National Geographic*'s shift in representational policy, toward a more performative and subjective approach. This was encapsulated by the September 1988 centennial edition of the magazine, entitled "Within the Yellow Border . . .," written by the then editor of *National Geographic*, Wilbur E. Garrett (1980–90), which recognized photography as image *and* object intertwined. The haptic-visual qualities of photographs published in the centennial edition encouraged viewers to consider not solely how Brazilian clothing looked, but also how it *felt*,

prompting identification between viewer and subject. My analysis demonstrates that *National Geographic* not only encouraged its readers to experience Brazilian subjects in an increasingly multisensory way since 1988, but also began to document a more multifarious Brazil. I make a close examination of two case studies (December 1988 and August 2002), which were produced respectively by W. Jesco von Puttkamer in collaboration with American photojournalist Loren McIntyre, and African-American journalist Charles E. Cobb Jr. in partnership with American photographer David Alan Harvey. The chapter analyzes the second-hand Western sportswear appropriated by the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau peoples, indigenous to Rondonia in northwestern Brazil in 1988. It moves on to examine the locally produced Lycra fashions worn by a young Afro-Brazilian girl in Salvador in 2002, part of an important fashion trend that emerged throughout Brazil in the 1990s, which was heavily influenced by the Western high-fashion bodycon designs produced by Azzedine Alaïa, Claude Montana, and DKNY in the 1980s. This chapter is contextualized with examples from *American Vogue*. Rather than fashion an increasingly homogenous image of Brazil due to the interconnectedness engendered by globalization, *National Geographic* highlighted instead the subtleties of heterogeneous Brazilian dress forms, within which local and global elements interacted.

The fourth chapter uses the poststructuralist thinking of Brazilian theorist Silviano Santiago (1936–) to examine *National Geographic*'s engagements with Brazilian fashion since 2001. Santiago developed the concept of the “space in-between” to articulate Brazilian cultural production as a hybrid construction that has mixed and synthesized aspects of Western and non-Western cultures. This chapter applies Santiago's concept to fashion and marks a noticeable exception from the preceding and following two chapters. This is immediately evident from the title, which consciously employs the term “fashion,” as opposed to “dress,” as the primary medium for an examination of *National Geographic*'s representational strategies. In doing so, it explores scholarship surrounding “non-Western” dress and fashion, and offers new definitions of Brazilian fashion in a global context. The chapter presents two case studies from September 2001 and September 2011 which constitute the exception that proves (in the sense of tests) the hypothesis of the book as a whole—that since 1988 *National Geographic* has moved from cool, distanced viewing, toward an intimate and multisensory engagement with images as objects. It examines the photobook *National Geographic Fashion* (2001), which was the magazine's first conscious engagement with fashion, as well as a 2011 article written by American journalist Cynthia Gorney and accompanied with photographs by American photojournalist John Stanmeyer. In these two case studies, which are contextualized with examples from *Women's Wear Daily* and *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*, *National Geographic* presented a less complex picture of a global population, and fashioned Brazilian subjects more narrowly as either

indigenous subjects ostensibly divorced from the realm of fashion, or European-descended elite Brazilian women in urban centers engaging only with high-end Brazilian couture. To acknowledge *National Geographic's* enlarged and pervasive multimedia networks since 1995, the fourth chapter also extends the analysis to the representation of Brazilian fashion on the website, considering the sensory responses viewers may have had with digital fashion imagery.

My fifth chapter uses the work of Brazilian literary scholar Roberto Schwarz (1938-) to extend the analyses made in the first three chapters to *National Geographic Brasil*, which arrived in Brazil in May 2000. Schwarz described a perpetual problem faced by Brazilians, who have repeatedly appropriated intellectual paradigms, cultural forms, and fashionable trends from the United States and Europe, regardless of their relevance to local circumstances and national needs. From his perspective, the importation of foreign thought and cultural products as “misplaced ideas,” or a set of ill-fitting borrowed clothing, is central to understanding the cultural, social, political, economic, and sartorial history of Brazil. On first assessment, the arrival of *National Geographic Brasil* might be misunderstood as a striking contemporary example of misplaced ideas, a demonstration of the process of cultural globalization by which a popular magazine established and developed within the United States has been made appealing and accessible to new audiences in so-called peripheral countries such as Brazil. Yet this pessimistic stance ignores the fact that no culture is static, since ideas are always departing from one context, and being appropriated and applied differently on their arrival in a new one. My analysis takes a closer look at *National Geographic Brasil* and reveals that the magazine's wide-ranging and sophisticated production of local material has often complemented, and sometimes even challenged, ideas about Brazil produced by *National Geographic*. It examines three case studies from July 2000, February 2003, and September 2008, each of which present three different gazes that *National Geographic Brasil* has placed upon Brazilian subjects over the course of a decade. It examines articles written and photographed by Brazilian journalist Marina Moraes and accompanied with photographs taken by Albert W. Stevens (examined in the second chapter); Brazilian photojournalist Ricardo Beliel; and Brazilian portrait photographer Marcio Scavone. The chapter analyses the hybrid modes of indigenous dress worn by the Maku population in 1926, which were re-presented in *National Geographic Brasil* in July 2000. It moves on to analyze the cross-cultural hip-hop fashions worn by Angolan-Brazilian rappers living in Rio de Janeiro in 2003, and concludes by considering the appropriated forms of Japanese dress worn for ceremonial performances during the 2008 Star Festival, which is celebrated annually in the Liberdade area of São Paulo. Using archival evidence and interviews with staff and contributors to *National Geographic Brasil*, the analysis of this chapter is attentive to the representational agenda of *National Geographic Brasil*: how it has confronted and re-presented

earlier representational paradigms produced by *National Geographic*, but also how it has produced original modes of representation.

The sixth chapter draws together the different strands examined in the previous chapters, using the work of Brazilian cultural critic and sociologist Renato Ortiz (1947–). It examines *National Geographic Brasil* in the transitional period following 2010, when the magazine celebrated its tenth anniversary and began to position itself more dynamically and pragmatically in relation to *National Geographic*. Ortiz argued that it was inappropriate to refer to an autonomous global culture, which is hierarchically superior to national, regional, local, or individual cultural practices. He coined the term “mundialization,” which he argued is an overall social phenomenon; while there is a common background that we all share throughout the world, this must not be misunderstood as a pervasive homogenization or standardization of ideas, behavior, or cultural products. Rather, global culture is localized and indigenized through fashion and dress practices. My analysis uses mundialization as a framework to analyze a case study published in *National Geographic Brasil* in August 2013, which was written by American journalist Nadia Shira Cohen and accompanied with photographs taken by Brazilian documentary photographer Paulo Siqueira. It examines the localized forms of global dress worn by the Guarani-Kaiowá, indigenous to the central-Western state of Mato Grosso do Sul in Brazil. It extends the analysis to consider the representation of Guarani-Kaiowá dress in a short film produced for the digital iPad edition of *National Geographic Brasil*, considering its tactile qualities and making a link with the fourth chapter and its discussion of the *National Geographic* website. The medium of film provided an opportunity for Guarani-Kaiowá subjects to represent and perform their subjective identities through dress, movement, gesture, expression, and gaze. It also provided a substitution for touch and encouraged the viewer to have an intimate haptic-visual relation to clothed Brazilian subjects. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that *National Geographic Brasil's* representational strategies illuminate potentials for *National Geographic* to venture into new modes of digital representation, which are capable of *continuing* to resist the processes of objectification, stereotyping, and appropriation that have been associated with the magazine in scholarship to date. The key questions that all the chapters in this book grapple with are: what can *National Geographic* tell us about how Brazilian subjects have *self-fashioned*, using items and goods exchanged through local and global networks to construct their identities? But equally, how have *National Geographic* and *National Geographic Brasil* used dress and clothing to *fashion* an idea of Brazil within the popular imagination of its readers?