

# Sumptuary Legislation in Early Modern Rome. An Exceptional Case?

## Abstract

This article examines social hierarchies of appearance in early modern Rome by focusing on sumptuary legislation. Since few actual pieces of clothing from the period are preserved, this type of legislation is an important source for studies on early modern clothing, and especially its function as a marker of social identity. Sumptuary laws were often an expression of the desire to draw a visible distinction between people of different status, and are therefore particularly valuable for studies that focus on groups from the lower echelons of society. The various restrictions on what the lower and middle classes could and could not wear resulted in a wide and varied documentation regarding the clothing of ordinary Italians. As this essay explores in greater depth, throughout the whole era of sumptuary legislation, Rome seems to have enacted relatively few laws, and those that were issued seem not to have been particularly strict. By highlighting some of the ways in which Rome differed from other Italian cities both politically and socially, this essay probes whether early modern Rome presents an exceptional case in the history of sumptuary legislation. It makes clear that, in contrast to other cities, sumptuary legislation in Rome seems to have been primarily a question of civic morality dictated by the notion of decorum, which was a central concept of the Tridentine period.

Early modern Rome has been defined as a *società spettacolo* in which it was necessary to play one's social role with style in order to create, maintain, as well as save one's face. Social identity was regarded as much more important than the individual, and clothing was therefore seen as a manifestation of the social order. Accordingly, what one wore should mark prescribed identities – of gender, age, marital status, rank, and nationality – as well as signal one's profession, social distinctions, and political allegiances. Clothing was believed to construct the social body and create a desired identity, often with the purpose of defining the status and social rank of the wearer and his or her family. However, by manipulating the codes, clothes could also be used in attempts to advance within the social hierarchy.

It could be argued that in terms of the 'rigid' rules regarding dress in early modern Italy, Rome offered a kind of middle ground – neither too strict nor too lenient. There can be no doubt that Rome was an extremely hierarchical society, but the notion – well-established in the research – that the individual was supposed to dress solely according to his or her social station does not always seem to have been applicable to Roman society in the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it may well have been rather difficult to comply with rules of this nature in the fluid social environment that characterized the *teatro del mondo*.

Rome's sumptuary legislation – or rather, the lack of specific, detailed laws on the matter – could confirm such a hypothesis. In contrast to many other cities on the Italian peninsula, Rome seems to have issued relatively few sumptuary laws, and those that were promulgated seem not to have been particularly restrictive.<sup>2</sup> The lack of documentation for such laws in Rome naturally raises a number of questions: what might explain this lack? Was early modern Rome an exceptional case in the history of Italian sumptuary legislation? As the question mark in the title of this essay indicates, by highlighting some of the ways in which Rome differed from other Italian cities both politically and socially – such as the very constitution of the city, and the lack of a local textile production – the presented discussion is an attempt to find an explanation for the question of why it seems to have been an exception to the rule. Judging by the content of two Roman dress reforms published in the second half of the sixteenth century, as well as some contemporary costume plates, secular sumptuary legislation in sixteenth-century Rome does not seem to have been enacted with an intent to

\* I would like to thank The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (*Stiftelsen Gihls Fond*), whose generous research grant made it possible for me to write this essay.

1 In terms of the social hierarchy of appearances (especially the apprehension that one's social standing determined what one would wear), it seems to be one of those dress historical 'facts' that throughout the years have come to be accepted without further questions. Yet, it could be argued that there are several aspects that speak against such a dogmatic apprehension. For example, Elizabeth Currie recently stressed that "the ubiquity of black, worn by so many different social groups, contrasts sharply with the notion that social hierarchies should be easily distinguished through dress." See Currie 2019, p. 107.

2 Ago 2013, pp. 109–110.

3 The concept of *decorum* was in fact Aristotelian in origin but had been introduced into artistic theory by Leon Battista Alberti, who employed *decorum – convenevolezza* – to designate the proper integration of different parts of a represented body. In the Tridentine period, a new sense of *decorum* became prevalent in religious painting in Rome, based on the idea that different painting styles were appropriate for different locations and functions, whether devotional, dynastic, or didactic. Yet, the range of meanings of the principle of *decorum* was broad. According to Robert Williams, *decorum* should be regarded as a principle that both disciplines and empowers, as well as one by which art becomes a politics of signs. Through its governance of representation, it is the principle by which art becomes a cultural practice, operating on a profound and intimate level to reconstitute both the individual and the culture as a whole. For more detailed explanations of the concept of *decorum*, see for instance Bailey 2003, p. 30; Mansour 2013, p. 154–155; and, in particular, Williams 1997, pp. 85–100.

4 Paulicelli 2014, pp. 30–36.

maintain a political order, nor as an instrument to uphold or reinforce the social barriers in terms of class. Instead, it seems to have been a question of civic morality most likely dictated by the notion of *decorum*, which was a central concept of the Tridentine period.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in the twelfth century, Italy underwent a commercial revolution which not only brought wealth to many but also introduced a large variety of new luxury goods – particularly expensive textiles such as silks and fine wools – onto the Italian market. Yet, this development alarmed the authorities in the Italian peninsula’s various city-states, who were concerned that the growing economic power of the new middling classes would threaten the old hierarchy and result in social confusion and disorder.<sup>4</sup> In attempts to control this ‘adverse’ progress, laws aiming at disciplining the social body began to be enacted in different Italian cities. These laws came to be known as *Leggi suntuarie* in Italian, deriving their name from the *leges sumptuariae* of ancient Rome that initially had been meant to control dining habits, but later also came to regulate the consumption of luxury goods and excessive expenditure.<sup>5</sup>

The first medieval sumptuary law, banning the public ostentation of rich furs, was enacted in Genoa in 1157. After the Genoese law, it would not be until the 1230s that any further legislation regarding sumptuousness would be promulgated, but thereafter, the production of such decrees would intensify over time.<sup>6</sup> Catherine Kovesi has shown that between the 1230s and 1500, “governments in over forty Italian cities enacted more than 300 of these so-called sumptuary laws, and they continued to do so well into the eighteenth century.”<sup>7</sup>

The sumptuary laws were designed to restrict and regulate all aspects of luxury consumption and excess, as well as, in particular, imported goods, in order to protect local economies.<sup>8</sup> Initially, however, Italian legislators were not strictly concerned with luxury consumption but also grouped other concerns under the headings of these laws, in particular by regulating various forms of social displays – such as banquets, weddings, parties, funerals, and the patterns of gift-giving – where either disorderly conduct or manifestations of opulence might occur in public. Guido Ruggiero argues, “These laws were often passed in the name of civic morality, stressing that excessive display underlined the moral fabric of the city because it was immodest, sinful, and also because it wasted wealth that could be used for the betterment of society.”<sup>9</sup>

In the early modern period, one’s dress should – above all – reflect one’s position in the social hierarchy. For centuries, clothing had been considered an accurate indicator of social class. Yet, with the rise of fashion in the fourteenth century, dress gradually became a way for individuals to construct and express personal identity, which was aligned with a desire to assume different roles in different contexts. This development not only alarmed Italian authorities but also social critics and moralists all over Europe, who worried that individualism in dress might dissolve the differences of rank, resulting in confusion regarding social boundaries as well as a loss of political and national hegemony.<sup>10</sup>

Already in the 1430s, Leon Battista Alberti stressed the close relationship between dress and honor in his *I libri della famiglia* (1432), when the narrator Gianozzo tells his son: *Le veste, Lionardo mio, onorano te. Vero? Onora tu adunque,*

5 For a more detailed discussion on the nature of sumptuary laws in Italy during Antiquity and early Middle Ages, see Kovesi Killerby 2002, pp. 1–22. See also Hunt 1996, pp. 36–37.

6 Hughes 1983, pp. 72–73. On the earliest Italian legislation, see Kovesi Killerby 2002, pp. 24–26. For a more recent publication on the history of Italian sumptuary legislation, see Muzzarelli 2020.

7 Kovesi Killerby 2002, p. 2.

8 Muzzarelli 2019, p. 167.

9 Ruggiero 2015, p. 361.

10 Rosenthal 2009a, p. 465, 470.

*onora le veste*.<sup>11</sup> Alberti's text came to influence many authors of early modern conduct literature to dedicate careful reflections to clothing and its social function, whether they were providing moral and behavioral guidance or dealing with political and social topics. At large, these writings stressed that clothing was to be regarded as the outward manifestation of an individual's moral and social worth, as well as a visible sign of the wearer's honor and reputation. The general perception, however, was that clothing reflected not only the honor and reputation of individuals, but also those of society as a whole. Thus, social hierarchies were to be reflected in hierarchies of appearance, and moralists came to accentuate the importance of 'appropriate' dress, which was to be regarded as the signifier of social stability. In the eyes of the moralists, the social order within a community could only be maintained if its members did not deceive each other by dressing above their station.<sup>12</sup>

To not dress appropriately was to dishonor and disrespect others. Hence, the significance of appropriate dress was, above all, a question of morality.<sup>13</sup> The various texts on behavior published during the early modern period therefore created a kind of 'ethics' of dress, in which features like lavishness, novelties, and ostentation, as well as misleading, deceiving, and 'dishonest' dress were deemed signifiers of social disorder.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of Italian sumptuary laws, in the fifteenth century the legislation directed against ceremony gradually declined, to more or less disappear, while at the same time laws targeting dress became increasingly more comprehensive and codified in form, steadily focusing on the preservation of the external symbols of class hierarchy by establishing the dress of each social category.<sup>15</sup> Henceforth, dress came to be the major regulatory object of attention by Italian sumptuary legislators. Attempts to regulate dress were chiefly directed at the project of bringing social appearance under control. The laws therefore demonstrated a suspicion of novelty, specifically indicating that "nothing should change in the political and social structure, [...] with particular regard to clothing fashions and foreign dress."<sup>16</sup>

Since few actual pieces of clothing from the early modern period survive, sumptuary legislation is an important source for studies on costume. These documents were an expression of the desire to create a visible distinction between persons of different status, and while sumptuary laws generally prescribed more than they described, they are especially valuable as sources for studies that focus on clothing as social markers. Not to mention the fact that, by establishing various restrictions on what people from the lower and middling echelons of society could wear and what was forbidden to them, sumptuary laws also provide us with wide and varied documentation on the clothing of ordinary Italians, persons for whom such information is otherwise often scarce.

Within this overall picture, the sumptuary laws governing dress in Rome seem to have been both distinctly fewer and less often enforced than elsewhere on the Italian peninsula. In the fifteenth century, Rome enacted sumptuary laws on only four occasions – in 1429, 1469, 1473 and 1479. Compared to other Ital-

11 Alberti (1432) 1969, p. 247.

12 See for instance Belfanti 2009, p. 263; and Currie 2000, p. 161.

13 Ribeiro 2003, p. 12.

14 Currie 2000, pp. 157–158.

15 See for instance: Hughes 1983, pp. 79–88; Hunt 1996, pp. 29–33; Kovesi Killerby 2002, p. 112; Muzzarelli 2019, p. 167; Riello/Rublack 2019, pp. 4–24.

16 Muzzarelli 2009, p. 604.

17 See Table 2.1 in Kovesi Killerby 2002, pp. 28–29.

18 In the third volume of her *Storia del Costume*, Rosita Levi Pisetzký published compiled bibliographies for documents addressing Italian sumptuary legislation issued in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Levi Pisetzký 1966, pp. 280–284, 462–467. See also Rodo-

ian cities, this was a strikingly low number. The city with the highest number of sumptuary laws was Florence, where 61 laws on the consumption of luxury goods were emitted, followed by Venice, with 42 laws. Thereafter came Bologna and Siena, with 21 laws each, followed by Genoa with 19, Lucca with 18, and Perugia with 15 laws.<sup>17</sup>

Rome's sumptuary legislation did not significantly increase during the following century. Indeed, ordinances on sumptuousness seem to have been issued on just eight occasions, i.e., during the pontificates of Julius II (1503–1513) in 1512; Leo X (1513–1521) in 1520; Clement VII (1523–1534) in 1523 and 1532; Pius IV (1559–1565) in 1559 and 1563; Pius V (1566–1572) in 1567; and Sixtus V (1585–1590) in 1586.<sup>18</sup> Just two of these documents, however, exclusively concern the regulation of clothing worn by the city's population – namely, the Roman dress reforms of 1563 and 1586 – and thus in this essay I shall focus solely on these.<sup>19</sup>

In general, the instructions provided by the Roman legislation come across ambiguously, with most clauses leaving room for interpretation. For instance, in both dress reforms the guidelines on color for widows' clothing state that “Non sia lecito alle Vedove di portare altri panni, che roggi, ò tinti di colore, che non sia più oscuro, che Roggio”. Thus, widows could apparently wear garments of any dark color, as long as the hue was no brighter than rust red. The most precise instructions regard the number and lengths of various types of costume ornament, as well as the restrictions on a few forbidden textiles. The most common restrictions on materials in the Roman laws involved textiles and dress ornamentation in gold and silver, a question that seems to have been of broad concern throughout the whole period of sumptuary control on the Italian peninsula.<sup>20</sup>

Previous research on the history of Italian sumptuary legislation has discerned a shift in the direction of the laws of the early modern period: in its earlier stages, legislators' reasoning was based above all on moral principles rather than on monetary criteria, but by the end of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth, the focus shifted to the economic aspect of clothing consumption.<sup>21</sup> In the case of much of the legislation, the concern about luxury consumption was essentially a concern about fashion consumption, or rather, about people's desire to change their wardrobes regularly according to changing fashions. Fashion almost appears as a synonym for luxury in both the moralists' writings and in sumptuary laws. Yet, in the case of Rome, the legislation concerning luxury was hardly restrictive.<sup>22</sup> Instead, conspicuous excess and richness seem to have been characteristic of *alla Romana* dress, if we are to believe the accounts

canachi 1907, p. 180. A discrepancy exists, however, between Rodocanachi and Levi Pisetzky: while Rodocanachi in 1907 mentioned five documents that concerned restrictions on clothing, Levi Pisetzky's bibliography for sixteenth-century Roman documents contains six documents; those of 1523 and 1559 are lacking, but three others have been added, issued in 1512, 1520, and 1532. Furthermore, according to the personnel at the Archivio di Stato di Roma, Levi Pisetzky's reference to the document of 1532 is incomplete, and they have therefore not been able to locate the document for me. Further, in her analysis of the Roman laws (Levi Pisetzky 1966, pp. 274–276), there is no mention of the *bando*.

19 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168; *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum (1581–1588) 1747*, pp. 288–292. The documents of 1520 and 1567 both address the restrictions to be observed for the customs of dowry rather than of dress and will therefore not be considered within this context.

20 For more detailed discussions on the matter, see Hughes 1983, p. 78; Hunt 1996, p. 124; Kovesi Killerby 2002, pp. 45–46.

21 See for instance: Hughes 1983, p. 79; Ilva 1995, p. 33.

22 Ago 2013, p. 109.

of visitors to the city.<sup>23</sup> Across the Italian peninsula, there was a conviction that the inhabitants, but especially the women, could confer honor and splendor upon their respective cities through their way of dressing, since fine clothing was considered a demonstration of a city's qualities, such as wealth and good breeding. That is, this would be true as long they dressed with modesty; women who dressed too lavishly could instead detract from a city's honor.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, the inhabitants of Rome, like those of most other Italian cities, certainly adhered to this notion.

Sixteenth-century Rome was, however, strongly dictated by the spirit of the Counter-Reformation. During this period, centralization triumphed in the Roman Catholic Church, as every effort was concentrated on stabilizing the deeply shattered structure of the Church.<sup>25</sup> From the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, the so-called *Renovatio Romae* was carried out to rebuild Rome in a manner that befitted its importance – that is, as the very emblem of its aspirations for religious authority and political power in Europe. Even outside the churches, a religious community spirit should be celebrated and the faithful were to be both entertained and enticed by musical processions, theatrical performances, and displays of various kinds. In fact, even the rhetoric regarding the city itself changed at just this point: the transformed Rome was now to be seen as a symbol of Catholic strength for the entire world – a citadel of religion – as well as the glorious recapitulation of a long-lost Roman and Christian past. The intention to make the city into a “Religious Theater for the Catholic Church” became part of an extensive campaign first formulated during the papacy of Sixtus V and which came to span the papal leaderships of his successors – particularly those of Clement VIII (1592–1605); Paul V (1605–1621); Urban VIII (1623–1644); and Alexander VII (1655–1667).<sup>26</sup>

With this in mind, it seems no coincidence that the first pontifical dress reform was promulgated in the final year of the Council of Trent (1563), and that the second bull (1586) was emitted contemporaneously with numerous other bulls aimed at spreading the Tridentine norms throughout all possible arenas of

23 Although few sources contain detailed descriptions of what was characteristic for the ‘national’ dress of the early modern Romans, evidence suggests that at least for female members of the upper classes and the wealthy middling classes, rich clothing was considered typical for dress in Rome. In addition to the archival documents of the period, there exist contemporary testimonies which support this assumption. For example, during his travels through Italy in 1580 and 1581, Michel de Montaigne marveled at the splendors of female fashion in Rome, claiming that “there is no comparison between the richness of their clothing and ours: everything is covered with pearls and precious stones.” Or, as William Thomas wrote in 1549: “But, in good earnest, the gentlewoman generally for gorgeous attire, apparel, and jewels exceed, I think, all other women of our known world. I mean as well the courtesans as the married-women. For in some places of Italy, specially where churchmen do reign, you shall find of that sort of women in rich apparel, in furniture of household, in service, in horse and hackney, and in all things that appertain to a delicate lady, so well furnished that to see one of them unknowingly she should seem rather of the quality of a princess than of a common woman.” Montaigne is cited in Currie 2008, p. 37; Thomas (1549) 1963, p. 16.

24 For example, this belief was highlighted in the preamble to a Florentine law of 1433. For a translated extract of this declaration, see Kovesi Killerby 2002, p. 115.

25 Jones/Worcester 2002, p. 1; Hall/Cooper 2013, pp. 7–9.

26 See for instance Black 2004, pp. 197–199; and Hall 2001, p. 257. Yet, it should be noted here that, although the foundations for this cultural transformation of the city were laid out in the 1580s, the real glorification of the Roman Catholic Church was initiated by Urban VIII and came first to a culmination in the 1660s under the pontificate of Alexander VII. In fact, of all the seventeenth-century popes, it was Alexander VII who most consciously redeveloped and propagandized Rome as a “Theater for the Church.” For more detailed discussions on the glorification of the Catholic Church during the pontificates of Urban VIII and Alexander VII, see: Rietbergen 2006 and Tadgell 2013. For more detailed discussions on the rhetoric of the city, see for instance: Black 2004, pp. 198–199; Gessert 2015, pp. 111–112; Rietbergen 2006, pp. 13–14; and Ruggiero 2015, pp. 494–495, 509–510.

society. The Roman dress reforms are in line with the Catholic Church's claims to universality and seem primarily to have been concerned with the concept of *decorum*, which was central to Tridentine norms. In fact, although exclusively concerned with the robes and habits of churchmen, several sessions of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) addressed the question of clothing. They primarily stressed the importance of being modestly and decently attired, since it was thought that such dress reflected the wearer's inner qualities of honesty, piety, and dignity.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast, for instance, to Florence and Venice, in Rome a magistracy that would specifically occupy itself with violations of sumptuary laws was not instituted by the popes, which could suggest that the Roman authorities did not find the matter to be as great a problem as did the authorities of other Italian cities. It even seems that the clerical leadership of Rome played a role in the lack of restrictions on luxury. Kovesi argues that in other parts of Italy, "lawmakers of the period did not restrict the consumption of luxury goods per se because in principle they were not against such consumption. It was when luxury consumption was in excess or for the wrong purposes that lawmakers were prepared to condemn it."<sup>28</sup> In Rome, however, the society was predominantly clerical. Since churchmen and cardinals commanded the greatest financial resources, they thus also set the tone. Renata Ago's research has shown that in certain circumstances members of Rome's middle classes in particular, did take up the comportment of the city's highest ranking social groups as a model: most of the affluent families from the old nobility and the wealthier merchant classes therefore imitated the behaviors established by the cardinals, churchmen, and the pope's relatives by adopting their luxurious habits – which did not always match their own economic means – and the bourgeoisie then imitated the nobility.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, although the clergy was the official lawmaker regarding sumptuary control in Rome, sumptuary legislation was still, above all, a secular matter. While "the personal possession of fine clothing by the clergy could never be condoned" (because the luxurious habits of the clergy were a matter completely within the Church's jurisdiction), the finery of the laity could, since it "could be put to good or bad use according to the intention of its owner."<sup>30</sup> But because the finery of the clergy could not be condemned, the Church could neither condemn the laity's finery as a general policy without facing the risk of creating unnecessary conflicts.<sup>31</sup>

27 For notes on clothing in the Tridentine decrees, see: Session II (7 January 1546); Session XIII (11 October 1551); Session XIV (25 November 1551); Session XXII (17 September 1562); Session XXIII (15 July 1563); Session XXIV (11 November 1563); and Session XXV (3–4 December 1563).

28 Kovesi Killerby 2002, p. 161.

29 Ago 2013, pp. 220–222. Similarly, Hohti's research on artisans in early modern Siena has shown that the lower classes would modify and manipulate current fashion to suit their own needs. See Hohti 2017, p. 160–161.

30 Kovesi Killerby 2002, p. 98. In fact, as Kovesi stresses elsewhere: "The unavoidable clash between the negative and positive functions of luxury and the seeming contradictions of disallowing luxury on certain occasions and to certain people, whilst permitting or positively promoting its use on others, created the impression to those subject to the law and to later writers on sumptuary law that there was a lack of a clear legislative policy." See Kovesi Killerby 1994, p. 119.

31 Although the scope of this essay does not include an examination of the restrictions on the dress of the clergy, it is important to stress that decrees in this regard, too, were published. For instance, in 1624, a bando addressing the rules to be observed by clerics and ecclesiastical persons & *gli altri, che vestono di lungo* was published in Rome by the magistracy of Urban VIII (1623–1644). This document is of interest for this discussion, since it shows that the importance of being appropriately dressed for one's social station also held true for clerics, by stressing that the piety of those who teach others to lead a pious life should be externally visible. Thus, to avoid creating a scandal by dressing inappropriately for their profession, Urban VIII mandated they follow certain rules regarding clothing and appearance in general (the first paragraph addresses hairstyles and facial hair). This directive indicated that the garments worn

In terms of Rome's lay population, there does not seem to have existed a particularly restrictive distinction between the dress permitted to different social ranks. Rome's situation seems to have been similar to that of Milan, where a distinction in clothing according to station and rank appears to have been absent for most of the early modern period. In an anonymous petition against the city's sumptuary law of 1565, the writer argues that in Milan there always had been "freedom of dress for everyone without distinction."<sup>32</sup> Kovesi notes that the writer of the petition indicates that "not even natural hierarchies of clothing operated in the city" but that instead there was a flexibility in dress which the writer links to Milan's stability and social cohesion. While most other Italian cities enacted sumptuary laws out of the conviction that vestimentary codes were essential for the social order and stability, the anonymous Milanese writer claims the opposite, stressing that it would even be damaging to create such divisions between people.<sup>33</sup>

As for the case of Rome, it cannot be claimed that either stability or social cohesion existed in the city during this period. The Urbs was a city of foreigners, composed of a fluid, immigrant population. Furthermore, its layered political framework and multiple social elites, as well as its economy built on intricate service and patronage relations, resulted in an uneven patchwork of urban arrangements that made it a rather nonhomogeneous place, without much stability. Given its diversified social and political structure, Rome would seem to have been almost the opposite of the Milan described by the anonymous petition writer. In other respects there were similarities, however, at least in terms of the lack of restrictive distinctions in clothing according to station and rank that characterized both of these cities for much of the early modern period. Nevertheless, if the freedom of dress in Milan – if we are to believe the anonymous writer – was the result of stability and social cohesion, the "freedom" of dress in Rome was more likely owed to its being an urban reality in constant flux. That is, it may simply have been too difficult to maneuver for control of such a 'small' (albeit important) detail as dress in a city with so much mobility, especially considering all the other causes for disorder – e.g., poverty, begging, vagabondism, and prostitution. The Roman authorities' constant attempts to bring public order to the streets of Rome seems to indeed confirm this explanation.

There is, however, another important way in which Rome differed from Milan, as well as from many other Italian cities, including Venice, Florence, and even Naples: namely, for its lack of a local manufacturing tradition. Early modern Rome was a city without prominent industries (except for that of building, which could perhaps be identified as Rome's only true industry). Although several sixteenth-century popes attempted to establish silk and wool textile manufactories in the city, none were successful;<sup>34</sup> in fact, 70 percent of the goods imported to Rome during that century were fabrics – mainly different kinds of wool, but also linen, cotton, and silk.<sup>35</sup>

under their robes were not to be bi-colored or of checkered fabrics, embroidered with threads of gold or in any vivid color, or adorned with lace. Furthermore, their collars and cuffs were to be in white and simple in style, without lace or needlework, and their clothes should only be in black, brown tones, ash-grey or *pavonazzo* (purple) or other similar colors, as long as they were modest and not too cheerful. Yet, their robes should be in no color other than black. The edict also stresses that clerics were not allowed to dress as prelates and should always avoid *le foggie nuove*. See ASR, Biblioteca, Bandi e Editti, Collezione I, Cronologico (1624–1627), vol. 13, *Editto per li Chierici, & altri, che vestono di lungo*, 26 November 1624.

32 Cited and translated in Kovesi 2019, p. 194.

33 Kovesi 2019, pp. 194–195.

34 On the lack of a local Roman textile industry, see for instance: Ago 2013, p. xxv; Delumeau 1979, pp. 134–135; Magnuson 1982, p. 9; and Molà 2000, pp. 11, 27–28.

35 Ago 1998, p. 36.



As stated above, economic protectionism was at times a reason for legislative activity on sumptuousness. Diane Owen Hughes has noted that in cities with their own clothing industries from which much of their wealth was secured, sumptuary legislation as regards restrictions on textiles was, in general, harsher.<sup>36</sup> For instance, protectionism was behind the sumptuary legislation in seventeenth-century Milan, due to a dramatic decline in the local silk industry. Yet, protectionist attempts were generally both late and sporadic, and should therefore not be regarded as among the most common reasons for the enactment of sumptuary laws. Nonetheless, since Rome in contrast to many other Italian cities did not have its own textile industry, the authorities had no need to protect their economic interests with regard to local products within the sector. In contrast to cities with their own industries, Rome was a city of consumption, not production. Moreover, in terms of clothing, it could be argued that Rome was – above all – a stage, not a market.

The enactment of sumptuary legislation in early modern Padua is another interesting example for comparison with the situation in Rome, since differently from it, the records of several laws and indictments for violations have survived from between 1277 and 1648. After being conquered by the Venetian Republic in 1405, Padua began to enact more comprehensive sumptuary laws inspired by those of Venice. These bear some similarity to those of Rome, since, according to Luca Molà and Giorgio Riello, the Paduan legislation was more generic than selective: “the Paduan sumptuary laws did not distinguish between people of different social and economic standing but forbade or allowed garments, foods and accessories for the entire population without social distinction.” The Paduan laws were not issued with the aim at distinguishing the rising bourgeoisie from the nobility. Instead, under their laws, both groups were equally prosecutable, which, as it has been suggested, may have been a way for the declining Paduan nobility to use sumptuary laws as a tool for imposing their “equality” with other rich citizens: “If the nobility could not outdo the rising bourgeoisie, sumptuary laws prevented the bourgeoisie from outdoing the nobility.”<sup>37</sup>

As stated above, previous research has shown that by the end of the sixteenth century, the principal concern of Italian legislators had shifted from a moral to a monetary question. Published during the second half of the sixteenth century, Rome’s dress reforms were associated with the former concern, mirroring the attitudes in legislative activity of their time. The reform of 1563 contains an extensive and detailed declaration of the reasons for its creation. The *bando* was published in December 1563, but its restrictions would not be enforced until 1564, at the end of *Carnivale*. It opens with a paragraph announcing that with the publication of these rules, Pope Pius IV will bring order to the city by imposing restrictions on the “suntuoso vestire delli huomini, & donne” living in Rome.<sup>38</sup> In the same paragraph, it is also stressed that since these restrictions are mandated by His Holiness, the Pope, no one can ever claim ignorance of them. Subsequently it is stated that the rules to be observed are concerned with the good and modest living of men and women, a concept further developed by the declaration that it is the responsibility of every state or principality to prevent anything that might corrupt the good morals of a society. The claim is made that since superfluous pomp causes all sorts of abuses, evils, and disorder, it often ruins and publicly damages many individuals. Thus, by establishing a series of rules regarding unnecessary expenses, this dress reform was above all an attempt to discipline corrupt behavior on the part of the city’s inhabitants.

36 Hughes 1983, pp. 77–79.

37 Molà/Riello 2019, pp. 220–222.

38 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168.

Certainly, the commonest motivation for Italian sumptuary legislation at the time was a moral one: “that of modesty in the outward apparel, and the avoidance of any clothing that might lead to, or encourage, immoral activities.”<sup>39</sup> Appearance should reflect social distinctions, especially by distinguishing the elite from the non-elite. The intended meaning here was that if the lower classes donned clothes traditionally worn by their social betters, the social order itself would suffer serious consequences. Since it was considered that dressing and displaying oneself in an incorrect manner would result in social chaos, the topic was regularly treated in contemporary writings on conduct.<sup>40</sup> For instance, in his treatise *La civil conversazione* (1574), Stefano Guazzo raged about the

“indiscretion of some ignoble rich men, who wear the clothes of the nobility and carry gilded arms, with other decorations which would only be fitting for knights. [...] And things have gone so far beyond this license in many parts of Italy that, as regards both men and women, there is no distinction of their level, and you see that the farmworkers dare to compete in dress with the artisans, and the artisans with the merchants, and the merchants with the noble.”<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, a challenge to the hierarchy of appearances had occurred in the sixteenth century, linked primarily to the rise of the middle classes. It was not, however, a challenge that arose from an urge to compete or to destroy the hierarchy of appearances, but rather from a desire for inclusion.<sup>42</sup> There was fear that social climbers would disrupt the established order, and governments therefore attempted to control social emulation by issuing sumptuary laws. Kovesi notes: “It is only with the rise of mercantile capitalism that sumptuary laws became a regular feature of the governance of social order.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, beginning in the sixteenth century, increasing restrictions controlled display at the lower social levels, especially when there appeared to be danger of the lower classes dressing as (and passing for) their betters.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the notion that occupation was a central aspect of identity for the great majority of the population, sumptuary laws rarely laid down regulations regarding occupational dress. Many Italian laws specified that they applied to all citizens, no matter what their status, but at the same time also stressed that the social rank of an individual should be immediately recognizable. Yet, in Italian sumptuary legislation the clothing of the working classes are not considered, simply because the garments they wore were not subject to ostentation and thus

39 Kovesi Killerby 2002, p. 62.

40 Ruggiero 2015, p. 363.

41 Cited and translated in Belfanti 2009, p. 269. For the original, see Guazzo (1574) 1993, p. 140.

42 Belfanti 2009, pp. 271–272.

43 Hunt 1996, p. 147; Kovesi Killerby 2002, p. 81.

44 Ruggiero 2015, pp. 366–367. On this matter, Paula Hohti’s research on the wardrobes of the artisans and shopkeepers in sixteenth-century Siena has shown how fine clothing worn by persons of a lower social order clearly caused societal tension. See Hohti 2010, p. 664. In the following century, fear of social climbers from the lower classes seems to have consolidated. For instance, in Milan it was observed that certain artisans adopted an elegant form of dress, despite the economic crisis that afflicted their class. According to a report presented by a special commission of the Milanese Senate, the Milanese artisans were strongly criticized for a display disproportionate to their means, attributable only to ambition and vanity. See Levi Pisetzky 1966, p. 468.

45 As both Giulia Calvi and Paula Hohti have shown, however, in seventeenth-century Florence, officials responsible for the city’s sumptuary laws seem to have especially targeted the clothing of the lower social orders. See Calvi 2003, pp. 213–230 and Hohti 2017, p. 157.

seldom fell into the category of being a means of social identification.<sup>45</sup> The only exception was the livery worn by servants and domestic staff of privileged *famiglie*, though in these cases, it was the head of the *famiglia* who was held responsible for the clothing of the household servants.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in many laws passed on the Italian peninsula, servants – both male and female – were dealt with severely so that they were ‘kept in their place.’ Restrictions were, for instance, imposed on the head-dresses and ornaments worn by female servants, on the décolleté of the necklines of their dresses, and on the textiles and colors of their clothing. In fact, not only were certain of these restrictions punishable by a fine, if violated, but occasionally it was also stated “that any citizen would be allowed to strip the offending items off their back.”<sup>47</sup>

In contrast to sumptuary legislation in many other Italian cities, the dress reforms of 1563 and 1586 in Rome did not distinguish between the different statuses of people, e.g., of gentlemen, burghers, peasants, etc., nor did they make a distinction between Rome’s inhabitants and foreigners.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it was the community at large that was targeted. Like the generic nature of Padua’s sumptuary enactment – which far from being an expression of ignorance regarding the social hierarchy or related to sartorial competitiveness, was part of a strategy to maintain a social order – Rome’s sumptuary laws do not seem to have been issued with the aim of distinguishing the rising bourgeoisie from the nobility. The section titles for the various rules to be observed respectively by men and women in the Reform of 1563 confirm this: those for men were to be observed by *Gentil’huomini, & cittadini, Romani, et altri habitanti, o, che dimorano in quest’Alma Città di Roma*, while those for women were to be observed by *Gentil-donne, & Cittadine Romane, & altre, che portano habito Romano*.<sup>49</sup> Costume accessories and adornments in precious materials or decorative additions of gold, silver, pearls and jewels, seem to have been the major concern of the authorities in terms of ‘immoral’ luxury consumption, and therefore strictly forbidden for most Romans.<sup>50</sup>

The dress reform of 1586 is even more generalized than was the earlier bull. In its first paragraph it stresses that the restrictions are to be observed by “ciascuna persona di qualsivoglia stato, grado, condizione, ò preminenza si sia”. While the title of the section on rules for men is rather vague, simply stating that the paragraphs concern *Moda da osservarsi nel vestire degl’Uomini*, the sections on

46 See for instance Calvi 2003, p. 217; Hunt 1996, pp. 113–114.

47 Kovesi Killerby 2002, pp. 88–89.

48 For more on this topic, see Ago 1997, pp. 672–673; Ago 2013, pp. 109–110; Cohen 2008, pp. 301–302.

49 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l’immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest’ Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168. On this note: as mentioned above, according to Rodocanachi, another ordinance concerning restrictions on clothing was issued during the pontificate of Pius IV, in 1559 and published on 11 June 1560. For the full transcription see Rodocanachi 1907, pp. 360–361. The restrictions presented in the law of 1559/1560 do not differ much from those of 1563. This might suggest that the first document did not have the desired impact and therefore required revision. The rules of 1559/1560 were for observance only by *le donne Romane, ovvero che usano habito romano*, including *zitelle, donne maritate*, and *vedove*, and lack any restrictions on male clothing. Yet, the law of 1559/1560 contains three restrictions on female clothing that do not reoccur in the later dress reforms: first, *donne maritate* and *donne messe in panni* are not allowed to wear headcloths of lace; second, stockings worked with gold or silver thread or embroidered are forbidden; and third, women are not allowed to wear caps and small hats decorated with badges or feathers. Moreover, the fine to be charged in the case of a violation of the rules had increased: in 1559/1560, it was 25 scudi, but in 1563, it had increased to 50 scudi. It seems possible that this increase was an attempt by the legislators to scare the Romans into taking the laws more seriously.

50 Ago 1997, pp. 672–673.

female clothing distinguish women only by marital status. Moreover, the rules for male clothing were not only fewer, but also less detailed than the rules on female clothing.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, similarly to sumptuary legislation in other Italian cities, the Roman laws were more concerned with the clothing worn by women than that of men.<sup>52</sup> In the bull of 1563, the section listing restrictions on male clothing is equally as extensive as the section on female clothing (in fact, the latter exceeds the former by only one paragraph), but the bull also contains a section addressing the rules to be observed by prostitutes. In the bull of 1586, however, there is only one section addressing the rules for male clothing, while four sections are devoted to female clothing; the women of Rome are furthermore divided into four main groups: maids/brides, wives, widows and prostitutes. In addition, there is another distinction to be observed among married women: after two years of marriage, a woman was supposed to dress *in panni* – that is, to wear dresses made of modest wool cloth – and to renounce gowns of more expensive fabrics.<sup>53</sup> Thus, in these bulls it is specified in some cases that the restriction is to be observed by newly married women, so-called *donne maritate non messe in panni*, or by *donne maritate in panni*. In fact, one of the paragraphs in the bull of 1586 provides the explanation: “Dichiarando che l’esser Sposa s’intenda per due anni dal giorno, che sarà andata a marito, e non più, per tutto il qual tempo possa portare li sopradetti ornamenti, il qual passato, sia obbligata di mettersi in panni.”<sup>54</sup>

In the bull of 1563, the initial paragraphs on female clothing concern accessories. It is stated, for example, that neither maids nor married women are allowed to go about the city without headcloths. It was also forbidden to wear false curls or bleach one’s hair blonde. Furthermore, unmarried girls and *donne maritate non messe in panni* were forbidden to wear rings, pendant earrings, male shirts with frills, handkerchiefs worked in gold or silver thread, perfumed gloves, detachable ruffs of any kind or collars worked with thread in any other fabric than plain sendal. Married women and *donne maritate messe in panni* were likewise not allowed to wear rings, pendant earrings, gloves, handkerchiefs worked in gold or silver thread or ruffs of any sort. Nor were they permitted to wear false curls. The latter category was also forbidden to wear any adornments around their necks or on their heads aside from *cuffie* or silk nets in white or fawn. They were also ordered never to go about the city without a *lenzuolo*, and forbidden to wear any collar other than those of plain sendal, although they could wear simple shoulder cloths, the so-called *panni di spalle*.<sup>55</sup>

The main undergarment in early modern Rome consisted in a *camicia* (a shirt or chemise worn close to the body by both men and women). According to the dress reform of 1563, married women *in panni* were allowed to wear only *camicie* worked with white or rust-red thread, and no belt other than one of plain

51 Both reforms also contain sections addressing other expenses, such as meals and parties in the bull of 1563, and dowries, weddings, funerals, banquets and parties, bridal beds, and carriages and coaches in the bull of 1586. See BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l’immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest’ Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168; *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum (1581–1588)* 1747, pp. 288–290.

52 On the focus on female clothing in other Italian cities, see for instance Hughes 1992, pp. 136–158; Hunt 1996, pp. 214–254, 255–272; Kovesi Killerby 2002, pp. 112–133.

53 Rodocanachi 1907, p. 180.

54 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum (1581–1588)* 1747, p. 289, item 18.

55 A *cuffia* was a type of hairnet or cap, while the *lenzuolo* was a veil/cloth mantle that went up from the belt to cover the head. Both head coverings were commonly worn by Roman women.

taffeta.<sup>56</sup> Yet, when dressed in wool garments, they were permitted to wear *camicie* worked with white silk and a gold belt without jewels, pearls or pendants, as long as the value of the belt did not exceed 100 scudi. Furthermore, when dressed in wool fabrics, they were also allowed a pearl necklace. In another paragraph, it is stressed that they were not allowed to go *ammátate senza soprietto*, which I interpret to mean that they were not allowed to wear boned bodices without an overcoat.<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, the same paragraph also stresses that married women and women *in panni* were only permitted to wear either plain *pianelle* without any decoration or *pianelle* adorned *alla Romanesco* – that is, in Roman style – which is specified as decoration with braid trim without bows.<sup>58</sup>

The rest of the paragraphs on female clothing in the bull of 1563 were thereafter to be observed by every woman living in Rome, regardless of age or marital station. The bull stresses that dresses should be simple and unadorned. No woman should wear dresses trimmed with lace, or clothing fabricated with gold, silver or velvet.<sup>59</sup> In another paragraph of the bull, these restrictions are repeated, stressing that in general, no man or woman, regardless of age, can wear such textiles, nor garments embellished with gold or silver thread, details of velvet or embroidery.<sup>60</sup> In terms of female clothing, it was forbidden to wear any kind of trimming in gold or silver, whether it was embroidery, lace, cords, carved ornament or paddings. The only trimmings allowed were piping in the same color as the rest of the dress, as well as small fringes and braiding on the bodice and sleeves. Any potential dress trains could be no longer than a half palm and were not allowed to be of such construction as to be attached to the dress. Moreover the (usually detachable) sleeves could not be slashed or cut. It is also stated that long over-gowns – the so-called *zimarre* – should be worn by women only in their homes. In terms of the trimming of overgarments, the same rules as for the dresses should be observed, but in addition, the decorative use of buttons, and *puntali* of gold, silver, jewels or enamel were forbidden.<sup>61</sup>

For women in general, bodices with necklines that were too low-cut, or open in front, were not allowed, but it was also not permitted to wear high-necked garments of any sort. Moreover, the bull also bans women from wearing *busti fatti a pizzo* – that is, “bodices made of lace.” Furthermore, farthingales and hoop skirts were prohibited, as well as garments of *buratti* of any kind.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of the rules to be observed men, in the reform of 1563, it was established that men were not allowed to wear caps made of cloth or wool fabrics in any color other than black. Furthermore, only simple types of wool textiles were

56 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, item 4.

57 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, item 5.

58 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, item 5. *Pianelle* were slip-on shoes in wood or cork that left the back of the heel bare, with platform soles of varying heights. They were worn indoor by both men and women but could also be made with double soles to be worn outdoor.

59 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, item 7.

60 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, item 13.

61 *Puntali* were a type of “ends” used on cords threaded through buttonholes, rings, or laces. For instance, when describing the dress of French noble girls, Vecellio writes: “non portano altri ornamenti al collo; ma legano i loro vezzi di perle, ò catene d'oro, con certe cordelle di seta, con puntali d'oro alla sommità del busto.” See Vecellio 1598, p. 272.

62 *Buratti* were fabrics woven with mixed threads, having a silk warp and a wool weft. They were often lightweight and transparent and therefore commonly used for veils. See Molà 2000, p. 403.

allowed (except for ‘religious reasons’ which is not explained further), nor was it permitted to adorn the caps with medals, jewels, pearls or ornaments of gold or silver. Yet cords and ribbons of gauze or voile fabric were allowed as trimmings, as were silk linings and fringes along the fold (as long as these were in the same color as the cap) if the cap was lined with woolen fabric. In terms of hats, men were only allowed to wear those made of felt or of simple woolen textiles, which, like the caps, could be adorned with cords of gauze or voile fabrics and/or lined with silk. If the hats were padded and not decorated in any other way, braiding and similar adornments such as small fringes in black were allowed along the fold.<sup>63</sup>

Men were not permitted to wear *camicie* worked with gold or silver thread, and their doublets could only be decorated with paddings of simple silk; if the doublet was slashed, making the taffeta underneath visible, the taffeta must be in the same color as the doublet.<sup>64</sup> As for various jackets and overgarments – such as the so-called *saio*, *casacca* and *colletto* – the only decoration allowed was a band around the chest and the sleeves. Buttons on these garments were not allowed to be of gold, silver, jewels or enamel, or be covered in expensive fabrics; instead, they were to be made of the same material and color as the rest of the garment. But it was the tails of these garments that seem to have been the cause of greatest concern. The limitations on the tails’ construction are many: they could not be wider than one-third of a palm, but were allowed to be reinforced (on the outside as well as on the inside) by studs, and if the tail was in the same color as the rest of the garment, it could be decorated either with braid or with silk fringes along the hem. The tails could be padded (but only if the padded layers were less than six) or be divided into three strips.<sup>65</sup>

For capes, the only permitted decoration was the band around the chest (in contrast to the *saio*, *casacca*, and *colletto*, however, this adornment could only be placed on the inside of the garment) which should not be wider than a half palm and have no more than six paddings. If it was adorned with braiding or fringe along the edges, these also had to be placed on the inside of the garment. The band could be divided into either two or three strips (with no more than two paddings). The cape could not be lined with any sort of wool fabric, and all the different parts of the cape had to be in the same color.<sup>66</sup>

As for restrictions on male legwear, the better part of the paragraph addressing these is devoted to the *cosciali*, the term generally used for those strings or straps that fastened the stockings to the breeches. In the dress reform of 1563, however, the term *cosciali* seems to instead be used to mean breeches, which was the upper section of male legwear, covering the thighs. For instance, the reform stresses that it is not permitted to put other materials such as cotton wool, felt, or similar fabrics, in the *cosciali* so as to ‘inflate’ the thighs, and then also stresses that if the *cosciali* lacked pockets, it was not permitted to put trimmings of gold, silver, embroidery, cuttings, lace, ribbons, or small fringes on the *cosciali*, but only paddings.<sup>67</sup> Hence, the specified restrictions must refer to the whole garment and not

63 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, items 1–2.

64 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, items 3–4.

65 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, item 5.

66 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, item 5.

67 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, item 7.

to its details. As for the padding, the rules seem rather paradoxical, first stating that the garment could not be stuffed with other textiles, and then stressing that the only trimming allowed on the *cosciali* was padding. My own interpretation is that padding was allowed as long as it was not made of the above-mentioned materials (and perhaps also as long as it did not excessively exaggerate the thighs).

The final two paragraphs addressing male clothing in the dress reform of 1563 regard socks and shoes, neither of which could be ornamented. Socks could not be made of any sort of silk, nor be quilted in a different color.<sup>68</sup>

Twenty-three years later, in the dress reform of 1586, we find that unmarried women and brides were forbidden to wear various kinds of hair ornaments, such as real or artificial flowers, fake curls, feathers, or plumes. Instead, when seen in public – even when travelling by coach – they were required to wear headcloths or the *panno listato*, which should reach the forehead at the hairline.<sup>69</sup> They could, however, wear hair ornaments with pearls and jewels if the value of these ornaments did not exceed 80 scudi. As for jewelry, they were not permitted to wear bracelets adorned with pearls, cameos, or jewels of any sort, nor pendant earrings with jewels, although pearls and enameled gold could be worn. The only necklaces permitted were a single string of pearls, as long as its value did not exceed 300 scudi, and gold chains (plain, without jewels), as long as the value did not exceed 70 scudi. Their belts could not be adorned with pearls and jewels, nor exceed a value of 30 scudi, nor were they permitted to wear *corone di profumo* around their necks or over their shoulders. Perfumed gloves were banned as well, but if gloves were worn, they could be washed with scented water.<sup>70</sup>

Neither were maids and brides permitted to wear items – such as *camicie* and collars – worked in gold or silver thread, though handkerchiefs adorned in this manner could be carried.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, it is also stated that they were not allowed to wear caps; instead, hats adorned with braid or lace in gold or silver could be worn, although not with feathers, embroidery, metal tips (*puntali*), bows or jewels, be they real or false.<sup>72</sup> Regarding their *pianelle*, no fabrics, whether permitted or forbidden, are specified, which could suggest that all types were allowed, even slippers of velvet. The *pianelle* could not, in any case, be adorned with braid in gold or silver thread.<sup>73</sup> Maids and brides could not wear veils of transparent *buratti*, or be seen about in Rome – whether on foot or traveling in carriages – without a dress underneath their outer garments, or with the sleeves of their *camicie* visible.<sup>74</sup>

68 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168, items 8–9.

69 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 289, item 1.

70 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 289, items 2–3; 5–9.

71 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 289, item 4.

72 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 289, item 15.

73 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 289, item 10.

74 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 289, items 16–17.

As regards women's dresses of various types, and the *zimarre* in wool, in contrast to the restrictions published in 1563, trimmings (of real or false gold or silver thread) measuring no wider than a finger could be sewed on the bodice. But no gowns or *zimarre* could be lace-trimmed or adorned with embroidery. Also, dresses with a train longer than a palm were still not allowed. At large, no garments could be decorated with buttons, bows or *puntali* in gold, silver, jewels, pearls or enamel. In one of the paragraphs, however, permission was given for owning a gown made of either gold or silver cloth, as long as it was simple and not adorned with cuttings, or embroidery and other trimmings, although piping and lace trim no wider than half a finger were allowed. It was not permissible, though, to wear dresses made of gold or silver cloth trimmed with gold or silver thread. In general, however, for the dress, the only permitted trimmings were one or two *liste* ("strips of cloth") and silk lace no wider than half a finger. These were to be placed either on the bodice, the sleeves or along the hemline. Lastly, another paragraph stresses that it was forbidden for brides to wear garments such as *zimarre*, aprons and headcloths made of net, which was only to be used for *cuffie*, collars and shoulder cloths.<sup>75</sup>

The rules to be observed by women *maritate messe in panni* in 1586 are rather similar to those of 1563 and, in general, more severe than those of brides.<sup>76</sup> Yet the first paragraph within this section of the bull declares that everything forbidden for brides should be understood as being strongly forbidden for married women as well. In fact, in a similar manner, in another paragraph, it is stated that everything prohibited to brides should also be understood as forbidden to maids. In addition to this, the same paragraph stresses that for unmarried women it is forbidden to wear precious stones, whether real or fake, and garments of gold or silver fabric, as well as garments adorned with embroidery or cuttings.

As for accessories, women *maritate messe in panni* were not allowed to wear handkerchiefs or collars that had been worked with gold or silver thread or with colored silk thread. They were also forbidden pendant earrings, and in addition to this – possibly in an attempt to clarify the rules of 1563 – not allowed to wear necklaces, gold jewelry or chains of gold and jewels around their necks; the only exception was pearl necklaces (with one string of pearls), which, however, were only to be worn on the occasion of weddings and other festivities. It is also stated that they could not wear *corone di profumo* around their necks, on their belts or carried in their hands. Furthermore, their *pianelle* should be simple and without ornament, except for a single silk braid, and it is still stressed that they were forbidden to go about Rome – whether on foot or by carriage – without headcloths, which, however, could not be adorned with lace.<sup>77</sup>

In terms of clothing, it is stated that no married woman could wear dresses or *zimarre* of woolen fabrics adorned with various trimmings of gold or silver – the only exceptions were silk crêpe and *buratto doppio*, as long as these were not transparent. The permitted adornments for these garments were, as in 1563, piping, lace trim and braid in either black or *pavonazzo*, as long as these were no wider than half a finger and only sewn onto the bodice, sleeves, and along the hemline.<sup>78</sup>

75 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 289, items 10–15.

76 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, pp. 289–290.

77 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, pp. 289–290, items 3; 6–7.

78 *Pavonazzo* was a purplish-blue color, although the term could also refer to a less expensive woolen cloth in a shade of red tending to purple.



Yet, on the occasion of weddings and feasts, married women could wear *camicie* worked with silk thread (of one color only) and a gown made of simple wool.<sup>79</sup>

Both dress reforms also contain paragraphs devoted to widows. The rules to be observed in the two bulls are largely the same.<sup>80</sup> In general, a widow's garments should be simple, without any ornament or trim, and widows could not be seen in public without an over-gown. The skirts of their gowns should not be shorter than one to two fingers from the ground, with no more than two pleats on the sides. The gowns should be worn without a bodice, but open in front over the chest, and to cover their décolletage, they should wear a so-called *pezzetta* – a small piece of cloth – in rust red, which should be fastened under their shoulder cloths and held in place with a belt of white cloth. As already mentioned above, in terms of color widows were not permitted to wear textiles in any color other than rust red, nor dyed in any color brighter than that hue. Furthermore, their headcloths were to be placed on their head no further back than one or two fingers from their forehead.

In the dress reform of 1586, many of the limitations in terms of male clothing are similar to those of 1563, though certain new items and restrictions have been added. For instance, it was still forbidden to adorn caps and hats with the previously mentioned ornaments and trim, but in the bull of 1586 it is also stressed that no real or fake pearls or precious metals are allowed, nor are feathers, plumes, bows, embroidery or metal tips. As in 1563, the only adornments permitted for male headwear are *cordone di velo* and/or *di seta intorno*.<sup>81</sup>

For male clothes such as the doublet, *saio*, *casacca*, *colletto* and cape, the restrictions are not much changed from the reform of 1563, but those of 1586 are more detailed as regards which textiles and specific features are allowed for the different garments. For instance, for *saio*, *casacca* and *colletto* it is stated that neither garment is permitted to be lined with any fabric other than 'pure' taffeta. It is further specified that if sarcenet and taffeta are used and visible through cuttings or slashings, the garment is not allowed to have either buttons or *puntali* of gold, silver, jewels or pearls, whether false or real. As for capes and other overgarments such as coats and the so-called *tabarro* and *ferraiuolo* (two different types of cloaks commonly worn at the time) it is stated that the only linings allowed are those of baize or taffeta (while different types of fur are forbidden). If it had no other trim, however, the cape could be lined with velvet.<sup>82</sup>

The limitations on male legwear are not as extensive and detailed in terms of cut and construction as those in the earlier dress reform, though, like the other male garments, they are much more specific in terms of fabric types. It was now prohibited to wear *calzoni* of gold or silver cloth, but the trimmings forbidden on the *cosciali* (still seemingly the term used for breeches) are the same. The

79 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 290, item 8.

80 In fact, the only rules that differed slightly between the two bulls are those regarding sleeves: in 1563, it was stated that dress sleeves should not be adorned if the sleeves of the over-gowns were the so-called open sleeves; the only exception was if the dress underneath was black. In the bull of 1586, it was instead stated that the sleeves should preferably be cut in such way that the fabric of the dress underneath was not visible – that is, the slashing of the gown's fabric was not allowed – but as in 1563, it was permitted if the sleeves of the dress were black. See BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168; *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 290.

81 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 288, item 1.

82 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 288, items 4–5; 7.

*cosciali* could now, however, be adorned with lace as long as there were no other trimmings. They could also be lined with satin, sarcenet, and taffeta, although ‘silk over silk’ was forbidden. There is also a short paragraph on socks, stating that socks made of silk, as well as the laces on socks in other materials (most likely of a lighter wool) were not allowed to be adorned with either gold or silver thread, whether real or false. Moreover, the updated paragraph addressing the question of shoes states that it is forbidden to wear velvet shoes decorated with quilted silk in a color different from that of the shoe.<sup>83</sup>

One of the new restrictions on male clothing added to the dress reform of 1586 concerns necklaces. It was now not permitted for men to wear necklaces with cross or medal pendants unless they were knights of a military order, *ò altri fatti da Principi*. Another new restriction incorporated into this reform addresses sword belts, which could only be made of worked leather or velvet, as long as this was not embroidered or decorated with gold or silver, either false or real, or with enamel. Yet, the belt buckles could be gilded or silvered, as could the decorations on the sword itself. In 1586 it is also clarified which textiles were prohibited: namely, all gold and silver cloth.<sup>84</sup>

One of perhaps the most interesting new paragraphs in the dress reform of 1586 is that addressing the restrictions for the livery worn by servants, staffers, and pages. As stated in the paragraph, since the Roman *gentiluomo* was required to clothe himself, but also to clothe in livery the members of his *famiglia*, his expenses were often excessive. For this reason, the dress reform declares that it is forbidden that servants, staffers, or pages dress in garments of silk. If the *gentiluomo* could afford it, however, bands of wool fabric were allowed (though not more than two), as well as trim in lace or braid. It was forbidden, however, to dress more than four persons from the *famiglia* in livery.<sup>85</sup>

Interestingly, the bull of 1563 ends with another paragraph on female clothing, namely regarding the dress of “le altre donne honeste, che non usano habito Romano.” Those intended here were the ‘foreign’ women, from another nation or city ‘abroad’ – be it France, Spain, Naples, Florence, Genoa, Venice, etc. – who did not dress *alla Romana*.<sup>86</sup> Just as was true for women from Rome itself, *le altre donne honeste* were not permitted to wear gowns in gold or silver cloth, nor dresses decorated in any way with gold or silver thread, slashed, cut, or trimmed with braid, laces, embroidery or piping. In fact, the paragraph stresses that in terms of dress, the foreign women in Rome should observe the same restrictions

83 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 288, items 8–10.

84 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 288, items 2; 6; 11.

85 This paragraph also mentions that equestrian trappings were another great expense for the Roman gentleman. Thus, another three paragraphs of the dress reform address different articles of equestrian equipment, such as saddles, saddle cloths and harnesses. See *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, pp. 288–289, items 12–15.

86 BC, *Editte e Bandi*, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168. On this matter: in the disunited early modern Italy, apparel represented a powerful and effective means of projecting and strengthening local identities, both by drawing on memories of earlier political achievements as well as by underlining new strengths. Together with other European nations, there existed a shared concern for creating a set of rules and canons founded on the idea of national identity, to which both the private and public self could be fashioned and molded. Ideas on nation and identity began to develop with the printing revolution in the fifteenth century, as well as with the creation of the vernacular languages that were to become national languages. According to Eugenia Paulicelli, it was through this process that nations and communities were created in people's mental geography and so became tangible political entities before they were

as the *Romane* did; if these rules were ignored, the foreign women would face the same penalties as the locals, that is, having their gowns confiscated and being fined 50 scudi for each violation.<sup>87</sup>

The punishments for transgressing the restrictions enacted in the Roman dress reforms are rather vague in the bull of 1563, while in the bull of 1586 a whole section has been added on the matter.<sup>88</sup> Transgression of any of the rules of 1563 led to confiscation of the item and a fine of 50 scudi a piece for the transgressor (meaning that if one was caught transgressing more than one of the rules, the total sum of the fine would increase accordingly). In 1586, however, the fine had not only increased to 100 scudi per violation of any of the rules in the new dress reform bull (of which one-fourth would be given to any potential informer, and the rest kept by the *Camera del Popolo*), but it is also added that if it were a married woman who transgressed the rules, the fine should immediately be paid by her husband, and her dowry reduced.

The bull of 1563 contains a paragraph addressing all the city's professionals and craftsmen working with clothing – *Sarti, Calzettari, Maestri, & Lavoranti* – stressing that they, too, must observe the statutes presented in the bull. The paragraph states that it is forbidden to “cut, make, keep or sell” any article of clothing that contravenes the restrictions drawn up in the dress reform. If these rules were ignored, the prohibited items would be confiscated and the transgressor fined 25 scudi for each item violating the laws. Those found guilty could even face corporal punishment.<sup>89</sup>

The bull of 1586 has a similar paragraph, this time addressed to *Orefici, Sarti, Setaioli, Ricamatori, e ad ogn'altro artista*. In it, these artisans are ordered to follow the rules of the reform and told not to produce or sell any of the prohibited articles of clothing, or to design any new creations of silk, buttons or stitching that were not in previously in use. The penalty for transgressing these orders was the corporal punishment of being whipped three times with a rope, confiscation of the prohibited goods, and a fine of 25 scudi per item. In the next two paragraphs, however, it is declared that the rules to observe are only to be applied to already made clothing (although the rules must henceforth continue to be observed) – most likely to avoid wasting valuable materials which had already been worked. It is stressed that existing women's clothing that broke the rules could be readapted for children, both sons and daughters, up to the age of ten. It is also stated here that foreigners who had arrived in Rome within the past six months – *per divozione, ò per altri negozi* – had an extra month from the date of

actualized in history. And it was also at this time that dress and fashion became intertwined with the idea of both nation and identity. When apparel is considered in a text written in the sixteenth century, it is often discussed in connection with the concept of nation, and archival documents from the period, such as inventory lists, often enumerate a great geographical mix of clothing in which French, Hungarian, German, Genoese, Roman and Venetian fashions feature alongside Spanish-style garments, adornments, accessories, and hairstyles. Like language, dress and style were considered vernaculars that identified with a particular place. Elizabeth Currie stresses, however, that such categorizations seldom give any indication of style – perhaps because they were self-explanatory to a contemporary audience? – and reconstructing the appearance of clothing from any given area is therefore generally quite problematical. Indeed, it is quite often difficult to tell if the national characterizations refer to a cut or a technique, or if they were merely an association with a production center. For more detailed discussions of this matter, see Currie 2000, p. 167; Paulicelli 2014, pp. 51–86; and Paulicelli 2015, pp. 1–9.

<sup>87</sup> BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168.

<sup>88</sup> *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, pp. 291–292.

<sup>89</sup> BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168.

the bull's publication to adjust and alter their clothing to accord with the rules stipulated by the dress reform bull.<sup>90</sup>

Gender was a central feature of social hierarchies. The fact that in the Roman dress reforms the rules to be observed by women outnumbered those for men is not exceptional. Sumptuary legislation often targeted women, and the case of Rome mirrors the laws of other Italian cities. As we have seen, however, the restrictions imposed on female clothing stressed the importance of modesty and simplicity in dress, and therefore seem to have been enacted primarily for reasons of morality. Moreover, it is only in the regulations aimed at the female population of Rome where we find an ordinance based on class distinction. That is, one of the most crucial distinctions to be made was to mark the difference between the city's 'respectable' women and those of *mala vita* (i.e., the prostitutes), in order to prevent confusion between Rome's *donne oneste* and the (often) well-dressed courtesans.<sup>91</sup>

There existed an unusual imbalance between men and women in Rome, in the sense that the former outnumbered the latter by a large margin.<sup>92</sup> Rome was a male city, with large numbers of churchmen as well as foreign men and courtiers, many of whom – not only the clerics – were not free to marry. Although it was officially condemned, however, it was relatively common for ostensibly celibate clerics to be sexually active in early modern Rome: many members of the Roman clergy even lived with a concubine. In contrast to most other cities on the Italian peninsula, the authorities in Rome had long exercised very little control over the city's prostitutes. Instead, it was argued that the presence of prostitutes acted as a guarantee of 'honesty' (that is, respectable mores) amongst the womenfolk, since prostitution provided an outlet for male lust by allowing men to have extra-marital sex without disturbing the social order by causing affronts to respectable women.<sup>93</sup>

Beginning in the 1550s, however, the moral climate regarding prostitution underwent a radical change. Although prostitution was not seen as a problem of individual immorality, it had begun to cause concerns regarding the wider social discipline of the city, in which prostitutes were signaled out as the very emblems of female 'disorderliness.' That is, they were now seen as a threat to the social order because of their capacity to ruin others, either by seducing young men or setting a bad example for decent women.<sup>94</sup> The election of Paul IV (1555–1559) marked the start of a period in which stern legal and financial measures were enforced against the Roman prostitutes. Their previous acceptance as a necessary evil was replaced by the opinion that the prostitutes of Rome were the very markers of what was wrong in the city. Paul IV was the first in a series of particularly zealous, reforming popes, who through various strategies attempted to regulate prostitution in Rome, but the most striking efforts took place between 1566 and 1605, during the pontificates of Pius V (1566–1572), Sixtus V (1585–1590) and Clement VIII (1592–1605).<sup>95</sup>

Despite these concerns, however, surprisingly little legislation seems to have been directed at Roman prostitutes in terms of their actual dress. Instead, the laws which were issued "suggest that the principal cause for concern was the ostentatious display of the courtesans' immoral earnings through their clothing and jewelry."<sup>96</sup> In 1532, the Capitoline authorities even made an attempt to stop courtesans from "parading their riches and dressing *alla Romana*."<sup>97</sup> This because dressing 'ostentatiously' confirmed that the prostitutes were transgressing status

90 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, pp. 291–292.

91 See for instance Cohen 2008, pp. 301–302; Levi Pisetzky 1966, p. 460.

92 For a more detailed discussion on Rome's unusual demography, see for instance Cohen 2014, pp. 35–45.

93 Rocke 2008, pp. 200–201.

94 Storey 2008, pp. 4–5.

95 Cohen 1998, pp. 400–401; Masson 1976, pp. 141–142; Storey 2008, p. 67.

boundaries and in so doing, were liable to be confused with ‘honest’ women. Prostitutes were also frequently prohibited from being seen in public openly dressed in male garb, from wearing cloaks, or the habits of nuns and *pinzochere*, and, especially during the Roman carnival season, from wearing masks or disguises of any kind, and from traveling in carriages and coaches.<sup>98</sup>

Accordingly, in the dress reform of 1563, it is stated that the Roman *meretrici* were not permitted to wear dresses of gold or silver cloth, or even dresses adorned with details in gold or silver. Further, articles of clothing and even details of the clothing could not be in velvet of any sort, or in satin or scarlet, or *pavonazzo* (the cloth). They were also prohibited from wearing pearl necklaces and *lenzuoli*, the head-covering in the form of a cloth mantle (sometimes translated as a “veil”) so common among Roman women. Instead, when seen in public prostitutes should cover their heads with a double-striped cloth.<sup>99</sup>

The restrictions imposed on prostitutes in the Roman dress reform suggest that they were an attempt to prevent courtesans from emulating the city’s ‘honest’ women. The head-covering is particularly interesting within this context, and perhaps also one of the most characteristic markers of social standing for women in Rome and elsewhere.<sup>100</sup> As we have seen, while the sumptuary laws of 1563 forbade unmarried girls and wives to be seen in public without a *lenzuolo*, prostitutes were instead denied the right to wear it, since according to the law, it was designated for ‘respectable’ women of the upper classes.<sup>101</sup> Although we cannot know with absolute certainty to what extent this restriction was respected by Roman prostitutes, we can at least assume that it was not always followed – the official prohibitions on the matter as well as the numerous contemporary testimonies about prostitutes (especially courtesans) garbing themselves as gentlewomen are proof enough.

By the end of the sixteenth century, Roman courtesans were commonly described as being more richly dressed than the city’s noblewomen. Such a testimony can for example be found in the costume books (1590/1598) of Cesare Vecellio.<sup>102</sup>

96 Storey 2004, p. 99.

97 Storey 2004, p. 99. For the attempt to restrict prostitutes from dressing *alla Romana*, see Rodocanachi 1901, p. 256.

98 See, for instance, Cohen 2008, pp. 301–302; Masson 1976, pp. 141–143; Storey 2004, p. 99. In fact, elsewhere, Tessa Storey states that in 1592, there was a proposition to impose a distinguishing mark on the prostitutes in Rome, that is, by making them wear a yellow sleeve, but a law was never enforced. See Storey 2005, p. 649.

99 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168.

100 In the early modern period, head-coverings (especially various types of veils) signaled the status and social position of all sorts of women – whether they were widows, nuns, prostitutes, or unmarried virgins – as well as their different life stages. Yet, female head-coverings had an ambivalent existence and were often the subject of tension between clerical and secular sumptuary activity since they were either seen as symbols of religious piety and sexual modesty, or of allure and concealment of identity (in the sense that they allowed women a problematic anonymity). For a more detailed discussion of the veil and of costume repertoires of the sixteenth century, see Bond 2021, pp. 325–368. See also Burghartz 2015, pp. 1–32; and for more detailed discussions on female head-coverings in early modern Italy, see in particular Muzzarelli 2016; as well as: Cohen 2008, pp. 301–302; Hughes 1992, pp. 149–151; Hunt 1996, pp. 223–224; Milligan 2017, pp. 181–183; Paulicelli 2011, pp. 47–48; and Rosenthal 2006, pp. 62–63.

101 Cohen 2008, p. 302.

102 It is important to bear in mind that costume books in general should be treated with care when used as historical sources in the study of dress. This is due to the fact that costume books generally sought to use the visualization of clothing customs to impart political and social ideals to particular audiences. What these publications aimed at representing was actually an ideal social reality. This only becomes an issue, however, if costume books are considered as a secluded historical source. If considered alongside other tendencies and phenomena of their time, as well as other primary sources – such as sumptuary laws – the genre provides valuable information. Vecellio’s *Degli Habiti antichi et moderni* contains illustrations depicting the differences in clothing not only between cities and nations, but also between social classes and professions,



1 Cesare Vecellio, *Cortigiane Moderne*, 1598, print on paper, 16.7 × 12.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. BI-1938-0066-25 (photo Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

In describing the *Cortigiane Moderne*, Vecellio complains that: “Modern Roman courtesans dress in such fine style that few people can tell them apart from the noblewomen of that city” (fig. 1).<sup>103</sup> Indeed, because of their fine and elegant attire, the ‘modern’ courtesans were easily confused with Roman gentlewomen:

and therefore shows how social identities were tied to one’s outward appearance. Furthermore, although Vecellio’s *Habiti* was not the first (or the last) of its kind – between 1520 and 1610 over 200 collections of engravings, etchings, and woodcuts on clothes and personal adornment were published in Germany, Italy, France, and Holland – it stands out in contrast to many of the other publications on dress, which had little or no text; Vecellio’s costume books instead feature both verbal and visual language. For fuller discussions on the matter of accuracy, see for instance: Bond 2021, p. 328; Ilg 2004, pp. 29–40; Jones 2009, pp. 511–544; Riello 2019, pp. 283–286. For a more detailed discussion of the genesis of costume books, see Paulicelli 2014, pp. 89–125.



2 Cesare Vecellio, *Cortigiane al tempo di Pio V*, 1598, print on paper, 16.7 × 12.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. BI-1938-0066-24 (photo Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

“They wear *sottane* of satin or *ormesino*, floor-length, over which they wear *zimarre* of velvet, decorated from top to bottom with gold buttons, with low necklines that expose their entire breast and neck, adorned with beautiful pearls, gold necklaces and ruffles of brilliant white. The overgarment includes narrow sleeves as long as the garment itself, but open, and through their openings the arms of *sottana* are visible. They make their hair blonde by artificial means, and they curl it and tie it up with silk ribbons inside a gold net prettily ornamented with jewels and pearls.”<sup>104</sup>

103 Vecellio (1590/1598) 2008, p. 88.

104 Vecellio (1590/1598) 2008, p. 88. Translated by Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones. See also Paulicelli 2014, pp. 117–118.

More interesting within this context, however, is the costume plate which precedes that of the ‘modern’ courtesan, since it describes the dress of Roman prostitutes from the time of Pope Pius V’s pontificate (1566–1572) (fig. 2). In contrast to the courtesans of the 1590s, Vecellio stresses that just two decades earlier, Roman prostitutes and courtesans had been more recognizable through their clothing:

“So that they could be distinguished from honorable women, prostitutes and courtesans of Rome at the time of the papacy of Pius V of blessed memory wore a floor-length *sottana* of silk, above which they were allowed to wear an overgarment shorter by a half-arm’s length than the garment beneath; this *zimarra* was made of black *rascia* similar to what widows wore, and it was fastened crosswise with a strip of white veil. On their heads they wore a half-length veil of white *cambrai*, arranged into a fold that stood out from the head far enough to cover the entire forehead, and in this way they went through Rome, clearly set apart from honored and respectable women.”<sup>105</sup>

If we are to believe Vecellio’s testimony, some years after the publication of the Roman dress reform of 1563, the prostitutes in Rome had evidently been ordered to wear a distinctive dress and a voluminous veil, which set them apart from other women. Furthermore, the costume plate suggests that the head-covering in the form of a double-striped cloth had been updated to a half-length veil of white linen. Or of course it could also mean that the law of 1563 had been ignored and therefore later changed; indeed, when referring to the *bando* of 1563, Elizabeth Cohen remarks in a footnote, “While elements of these guidelines must have been observed as custom as much as by law, it is hard to judge the enforcement or impact of such rules.”<sup>106</sup>

Other interesting visual evidence on the head-coverings of the female inhabitants of Rome is found in etchings of c. 1580, attributed to Pietro Bertelli. In these portrayals, the women’s veils are in fact more eye-catching than the rest of their costumes. The plate bearing the title *La Cortigiana* is very similar to Vecellio’s costume plate of the courtesan at the time of Pius V, and even shows her wearing a veil similar to that described by Vecellio (fig. 3).<sup>107</sup> It is also rather similar to the veil worn by the Roman widow, although the latter’s is longer, while the etching of *La Maritata Romana* shows a woman portrayed from behind, wearing, perhaps not surprisingly, a much more sumptuous veil (figs. 4–5). Another etching, showing a Roman *zitella*, differs the most from the other portrayals since the subject is shown wearing a veil which is only pinned to her hair (fig. 6). In fact, the image overall bears strong similarities to Vecellio’s costume plate with a Roman *Artigiane*, who wore “[...] curls on their foreheads and a silk veil, which they pin to their hair and let fall to the ground, tying its points to their gold belts” (fig. 7).<sup>108</sup>



3 Pietro Bertelli (attrib.), *La Cortigiana de Roma*, ca. 1580, engraving, 22.8 × 15.8 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 62.676.31.6 (photo The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

4 Pietro Bertelli (attrib.), *La Vedova Romana*, ca. 1580, engraving, 22.7 × 15.9 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 62.676.31.5 (photo The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

5 Pietro Bertelli (attrib.), *La Maritata Romana*, ca. 1580, engraving, 22.5 × 15.8 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 62.676.31.3 (photo The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

6 Pietro Bertelli (attrib.), *La Zitella Romana*, ca. 1580, engraving, 22.9 × 15.7 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 62.676.31.1 (photo The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

7 Cesare Vecellio, *Artigiane*, 1598, print on paper, 16.7 × 12.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. BI-1938-0066-23 (photo Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

105 Vecellio (1590/1598) 2008, p. 87. Translated by Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones.

106 Cohen 2008, p. 302.

107 It is known that Vecellio used earlier costume books as visual sources for his own work. Among them was that by Bertelli. See Rosenthal/Jones 2008, p. 24.

108 Vecellio (1590/1598) 2008, p. 86. Translated by Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones.







Yet another rich genre of evidence in terms of the dress of courtesans in particular, similar to that of the costume plates but perhaps more reliable as visual sources, are the illustrated manuscript albums called *Album Amicorum*.<sup>109</sup> These albums were a kind of drawing album in which the numerous foreign students at Italian universities of the time portrayed friends and acquaintances, but also fashions in clothing and daily scenes of regional life. The colored albums were organized by geographical region (country and city) and by the social ranks of the figures represented. The *Album Amicorum* has thus been considered as a predecessor of the printed costume book, but in contrast to the costume books, which generally had a more ideological character, the *Album Amicorum* was personalized according to the preferences and economic means (as well as experience) of the individual collector.<sup>110</sup>

By focusing on representations of Venetian courtesans in three unpublished albums compiled between the years 1575 and 1595, Margaret Rosenthal has shown that rather than mimic the styles of Venetian noblewomen, as had generally been thought, the courtesans cultivated their own collective identities and

8 *Cortegiana Romana* in *Album Amicorum* of a German Soldier, 1595, gouache on paper, 15.56 × 11.43 cm. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of the 1991 Collectors Committee (M.91.71.78) (photo © Museum Associates/LACMA)

9 *Gentildona Romana* in *Album Amicorum* of a German Soldier, 1595, gouache on paper, 15.56 × 11.43 cm. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of the 1991 Collectors Committee (M.91.71.74) (photo © Museum Associates/LACMA)

<sup>109</sup> Margaret Rosenthal argues that the illustrated *Album Amicorum* might be a more reliable source than costume books, since these were “able to register subtle changes in fashions faster than printed costume books.” Although the costume books presumably laid claim to more thorough and accurate representations of regional styles of clothing by their very nature (since they contain detailed woodcut or engraved illustrations), the illustrated *Album Amicorum* sometimes actually “predated the more widely consulted printed costume books by as much as twenty years and, for this reason, contains much useful information about fashion trends, local customs, and social behaviors that were not recorded in printed costume books.” Rosenthal 2006, pp. 63–64, 70–71.

<sup>110</sup> Rosenthal 2006, pp. 54–72. See also Davanzo Poli 1987, p. 58.



10 *Donzella Romana* in *Album Amicorum of a German Soldier*, 1595, gouache on paper, 15.56 × 11.43 cm. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of the 1991 Collectors Committee (M.91.71.76) (photo © Museum Associates/LACMA)

developed individual styles, taking advantage of the fact that clothing was a useful and highly deceptive tool for social differentiation.<sup>111</sup> An interesting feature pointed to by Rosenthal in her work is that although the illustrations show few differences between the clothing worn by ‘respectable’ women and courtesans, the courtesan is portrayed lifting her veil as if to remind “the viewer how to know for certain who is a courtesan.”<sup>112</sup>

Such a clear and distinguishing marker is not apparent in any of the plates representing Roman courtesans. In fact, if we look at the illustrations of Roman women in the travel album of 1595, the differences between the dress of gentlewomen and courtesans are practically non-existent. The plate representing a Roman *Cortigiana* shows a woman sumptuously dressed in fine garments and with expensive accessories (such as the gloves), which when compared to those of the *Gentildonna Romana* and the *Donzella Romana* confirms the complaints common to this period on how difficult it was to distinguish Roman courtesans from the ‘respectable’ upper-class women (figs. 8–10). Yet, in contrast to the more prosperous middle-ranking married Roman woman – the *Cittadina Romana Maritate* – and to the *Vedova Romana*, whose costumes appear more modest, mainly because of their veils (although the widow’s clothing is closer to the nun’s habit than to the outfits of any of the other women, evidently the common practice of Roman widows), the Roman courtesan certainly appears as a much more alluring figure (figs. 11–12).

If we look at some of the plates in the travel album of 1575, entitled *Mores Italiae*, for a comparison, we are able to draw the same conclusions in terms of the clothing worn by the different categories of Venetian women (here, too, the courtesan *in strada* lifts her veil to remind the viewer of her profession).<sup>113</sup> In terms of the clothing of Roman women, there are only two relative plates, one representing a *Cortigiana Romana* and one a married *Gentildonna Romana* (figs. 13–14). Having been drawn some twenty years earlier than the plates in the album of 1595, the plate with the courtesan shows a much more modestly wrapped figure than is true of her counterpart in the later album, and it also bears strong similarities to Vecellio’s plate of the Roman prostitutes from the time of Pius V’s pontificate. Certainly, the illustrations in the travel album were made during the pontificate of Pius’ successor, Gregory XIII (1572–1585), one of the sterner Counter-Reformation popes concerned about controlling the prostitutes of Rome, which explains the courtesan’s more modest appearance.

Sixteenth-century Rome was a city where the controlled was constantly challenged by the chaotic. It was a contradictory and complex place, with a richly animated culture. Since people from all social strands were drawn to Rome for a variety of reasons – whether seeking employment, preferment, salvation, or fame and fortune – it was a city of immigrants and foreigners. Social distinctions were

111 Rosenthal 2006, pp. 52–53. The unpublished albums: British Library, Egerton MS 1191, dated to 1575–1577; Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS 457, “*Mores Italiae*” of 1575; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Doris Stein Research and Design Centre, MS 91.71, of 1595.

112 Rosenthal 2009b, p. 632. Indeed, this gesture was the courtesans’ way of announcing her identity in public, specifically when she had disguised herself as a married woman, maiden, or widow. See Milligan 2017, pp. 181–183.



seemingly more fluid in Rome than in other parts of the peninsula. It was for this very reason that Rome came to be defined as the *teatro del mondo*. Being the seat of the papal court, which constituted the city's principal source of international importance, influence, and wealth, Rome had gradually become one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Europe, drawing diplomatic representatives from all over the Italian peninsula and the rest of Catholic world. The city therefore came to combine many 'theaters' into one great stage. According to Mario Rosa, the success of Rome as a European power dates to the end of the Religious Wars in France (1562–1598) and coincides with the renewed importance of the Counter-Reformation Church on the international scene. At the time, religion and politics were closely intertwined, and Rome was a 'theater' above all in a political sense as it had become a place in which it was possible to publicly form and mediate alliances in relation to the tensions and conflicts then afflicting Europe. In such a theater it was naturally important for the various individual actors to hold the stage, whatever their motivations might have been.<sup>114</sup>

In studying the clothing worn in such a rigidly hierarchical society as was early modern Rome, the relative paucity of sumptuary laws stands out. This rareness becomes even more remarkable in light of certain scholarly analyses which affirm that the early modern sumptuary restrictions enacted with the aim of bringing social order seem to have been most rigid in places where the hierarchy did not rest on birth-right, which was the case in Rome.<sup>115</sup>

11 *Cittadina Romana Maritata* in *Album Amicorum of a German Soldier*, 1595, gouache on paper, 15.56 × 11.43 cm. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of the 1991 Collectors Committee (M.91.71.75) (photo © Museum Associates/LACMA)

12 *Vedova Romana* in *Album Amicorum of a German Soldier*, 1595, gouache on paper, 15.56 × 11.43 cm. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of the 1991 Collectors Committee (M.91.71.77) (photo © Museum Associates/LACMA)

113 Rosenthal 2006, p. 73.

114 Rosa 2002, pp. 78–81. See also Storey 2008, p. 57.

115 See for instance Frick 2002, p. 179.

116 Riello/Rublack 2019, p. 19.



13 *Una Cortegiana Romana*, 1575, pl. 40, from *Mores Italiae*. New Haven, General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, inv. no. Beinecke MS 457 (photo The Beinecke Library, New Haven)

14 *Gentildonna Romana Maritata*, 1575, pl. 65, from *Mores Italiae*. New Haven, General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, inv. no. Beinecke MS 457 (photo The Beinecke Library, New Haven)

In the introductory chapter of *The Right to Dress* (2019), Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack raise the question: “If sumptuary intervention was a widespread tool of political and social intervention, why are there states and even empires where they were mostly absent?”<sup>116</sup> The authors suggest that an explanation for this “might be found in the difference and relationship between convention and the law”, stressing that since sumptuary legislation depended strongly on the political, economic, and religious context, such legislation certainly played a minor role in societies where the building of social conventions was dominated by tacit forms of social control, which was the case, for example, in autocratic regimes.<sup>117</sup>

As the capital of the Papal States, Rome held an important political position on the Italian peninsula. The pope was both the head of the Church and, at the same time, the most important secular leader in Italy. Yet, even if the pope in theory was an absolute monarch, control of the Papal States was constantly contested during the early modern period, and much of the territory was ruled by minor princes. Nevertheless, although not an autocratic regime per se (in reality, the papacy did not exercise complete power over the city), the government of both the Papal States and its capital did bear similarities with an ‘autocracy’ in the sense that the state’s building of social conventions was dominated by tacit forms of social control, that is, both those of the Church and those of the honor culture.<sup>118</sup> Thus, it would seem that one of the reasons for the relative scarcity of sumptuary legislation in Rome was, without a doubt, due to the specific rule of the city.

<sup>117</sup> Riello/Rublack 2019, p. 19.

<sup>118</sup> Laurie Nussdorfer has shown us that in contrast to many other cities in early modern Europe, the urban government of Rome never became completely absorbed by the (papal) monarchy. See Nussdorfer 1992. For a more detailed discussion on the honor culture, see for instance: Cohen/Cohen 1993, pp. 23–27.

Rome's leadership was unique in its kind. Laurie Nussdorfer stresses, "No single official or office 'governed' the city of Rome."<sup>119</sup> Rome's government was twofold, with the Vatican on one side, ruled by the Pope, and the *Campidoglio* on the other, ruled by the Senate and the *Popolo Romano* with its elected representatives, the so-called *cittadini*. In fact, in contrast to the governments of other Italian cities, the public council of the Roman *Campidoglio* was composed of a broad lay social elite, stretching from members of the old baronial houses and descendants of former papal families to the nobility created from the merchant and banking families and the *gentilhuomini*, who lived nobly, with or without a formal title, and met the criteria for *cittadini* (and could thus vote in the public council). It was "a vague but privileged body with the right to represent the city of Rome and act through their councils and officers."<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the pope could not enact legislation without the approval of the *Popolo Romano*, and vice versa. Thus, while scholars have linked the enactments of sumptuary legislation in other (in particular, northern) Italian cities to the rise of the middling classes – more precisely, when these cities had to admit merchants and guild artisans into their governments – such development and admittance was commonplace in Rome and therefore could not have been as much of a concern as to result in sumptuary restrictions.<sup>121</sup>

It has also been stressed that a distinction is needed between "urban sumptuary law" and "aristocratic sumptuary law", since the former type of law generally did not attempt to regulate dress according to social hierarchy.<sup>122</sup> Although different from other European monarchies, the Papal States were a principality in which the pope was the elected temporal monarch. Yet, in contrast to most other monarchical states where sumptuary laws were enacted, Rome's laws do not seem to have been enacted with the intention of reinforcing the various social barriers in terms of class (except that between prostitutes and 'honest' women), nor in order to maintain a political order.<sup>123</sup> At least not primarily. Instead, as we have seen in the dress reform of 1586, the restrictions were to be observed by "ciascuna persona di qualsivoglia stato, grado, condizione, ò preminenza si sia."<sup>124</sup> These laws were thus rather universalistic in the sense that they imposed roughly the same restraints on all denizens of the city of Rome. Rules were detailed only for broad social categories (e.g., men, brides, wives, and widows), which may well have been a consequence of the fact that for the contemporary audience, the more specific hierarchical social categories were regarded as self-explanatory.

Still, it is important to bear in mind that Roman society was primarily shaped by the Curia – that is, the administration of the papal court, which consisted of those in the service of the reigning pope and the ecclesiastical government. In contrast to other Italian cities such as Venice, Florence and Genoa, which were characterized by mercantile networks, in Rome, a huge percentage of the population was composed of clergy and employees of the Curia. Furthermore, while the aristocratic families were all linked to the papal court through complex patron-client networks, the lower and middling classes – particularly artisans and merchants – offered their services to both the Curia and the aristocracy in Rome (whether local or 'foreign' in origin). Although economically

119 Nussdorfer 1992, p. 45.

120 For a more detailed description of the *Popolo Romano*, see Nussdorfer 1992, pp. 66–71.

121 See Hughes 1983, p. 73; Hunt 1996, p. 178. On the civic nobility in Rome, see Nussdorfer 1992, pp. 95–107.

122 Hughes 1983, p. 73.

123 On the political nature of sumptuary laws, see for instance Muzzarelli 2009, p. 599.

124 *Reformatio circa immoderatos sumptus, qui in Alma Urbe fieri consueverunt, circa vestes, dotes, ornamenta, indumenta, & conviva*, 23 December 1586, in *Bullarum* (1581–1588) 1747, p. 288.

Rome was more of a consumer than a producer of goods, the city was crowded with artisans and merchants who produced and provided goods for consumption by the rich – both those residing and those temporarily present in the city. Thus, the productive core of Roman society in the sixteenth century was made up of artisans and merchants who produced and sold goods for the local market.<sup>125</sup>

Regarding dress, in terms of the Roman lay population in general there seems not to have existed a very restrictive or well-defined distinction between people of differing statuses, such as townsmen and peasants, gentlemen and burghers, and so on.<sup>126</sup> Although Rome's sumptuary enactment concerning the clergy demonstrated rules that corresponded to the various levels of the ecclesiastical social scale, the city's laws directed at the laity lacked such distinctions. This absence may be explainable by the city's volatile environment, as well as the composition of its social and political elites, which was greatly affected by the usually rapid succession of popes and the resulting rapid turnover of personnel at the court. With such a complex social and political hierarchy in constant flux, legislative activity aimed at defending the state itself, as well as the hierarchy it was built upon, would probably have been close to impossible to sustain in Rome.

Albeit few, the references in the laws to *alla Romana* dress are interesting. The idea of a hierarchy of appearances was strongly connected to the political turmoil Europe experienced in the early modern period. Although the idea of national character was a relatively new one, there still existed a deep concern over the risk of disappearance of national and regional dress styles – often to such an extent that atypical and foreign styles and customs could provoke rather hostile reactions.<sup>127</sup> This was mainly because the 'nonconformed' created a situation where neither the clothing nor the wearer could be accurately identified. Yet in terms of an actual dress style, the notion of a Roman 'national' character seems to have been essentially ideological.<sup>128</sup> The reason for this may have been that Rome had always been a city of foreigners. In such a mixed environment, it was natural for those who came from elsewhere to see the purity of their cultural customs gradually become more 'Romanized' (as well as mixed with other cultural habits), and this would also have involved the characteristic features of their native dress. Although sumptuary laws for Rome appear to have been generic in the sense that they did not contain detailed descriptions about which clothing was allowed for different groups in correspondence to social standing or cultural affiliation, it may still have been considered important to maintain a social order according to hierarchy in Rome. Perhaps clothing was not the only, or most explicit way that this principle was expressed, however.

An interesting aspect of the history of sumptuary legislation regards the various avoidance strategies used to circumvent this legislation. One such strategy can be linked to the disjuncture of language. At the beginning of the period of sumptuary control, the laws were written in the official Latin, without keeping pace with technological inventions in dress and the language thus often lacked terms for new inventions (which could create a loophole for transgressors

125 For a more detailed compilation of the various guilds and trades in early modern Rome, see for instance Ago 1998, pp. 5–8; Delumeau 1979, p. 93; and Robertson 2016, pp. 10–12. On this note, an interesting example is that of the Roman carriage and coach makers. A major status symbol for the upper classes, carriages also became a necessity for any notable desiring to express his power and magnificence in the city. This resulted in an especially active carriage-making industry in Rome by the end of the sixteenth century. For a more detailed discussion of this trade, see Hunt 2014, pp. 175–176.

126 On this topic, see also Ago 2013, pp. 109–110.

127 On the hostility towards foreign dress styles, see for instance: Levi Pisetzký 1966, p. 305.

128 I discuss the Roman *carattere nazionale* at greater length in my PhD dissertation "A Paradise for Impostors? Clothing as Social Markers in Early Modern Rome", European University Institute, Florence 2021.

of the laws, since they could claim that the forbidden items they wore were something else, by using terms different from those in the written laws). Much, however, has already been written on this topic, and since the Roman dress reforms from the second half of the sixteenth century were written in Italian, this particular strategy will not be discussed here.<sup>129</sup> In their analysis of prosecution cases in Padua between 1560 and 1620, Molà and Riello observe another interesting approach adopted by the citizens of Padua to challenge the city's sumptuary laws: "Some of the accused claimed that, although citizens, they were coming from 'abroad' (another city), where they had been unknowingly wearing forbidden items."<sup>130</sup> The authors subsequently describe one such incident, involving a Paduan tailor called Francesco, who in the 1560s was questioned in court for having violated the sumptuary restrictions when making a suit for one of his clients. The tailor defended himself by stressing that he did not want to make the suit the client asked for, since it would cause him to breach the sumptuary laws. But the client persisted, assuring Francesco that he was not going to wear it in Padua: "And he told me that I could produce it for him as he did not want to wear it in his territory [Padova] but in Rome where he had to go and that he would not wear it in Padova as it would have been against the law."<sup>131</sup> Clearly, Francesco had obeyed his client, but was then put on trial for producing forbidden items and thereby breaching the laws. Francesco's statement is of interest for this discussion since it suggests that Rome provided an arena for individuals to wear clothing that in their native environments was out of reach according to the local hierarchy of appearances, and thus deemed illegal. Which could further suggest that sixteenth-century Rome was a sort of paradise for impostors! Although, as far as I know, no prosecution protocols have been preserved for breaches of the Roman sumptuary laws related to this type of fraud, it seems likely that similar excuses were used in Rome as well, since it was a city of foreigners, with much coming and going within all social classes.

Indeed, also in sixteenth-century Rome, claiming to be a 'foreigner' seems to have been a common avoidance strategy in attempts to evade other sorts of restrictions. For instance, regarding the official curfew that restricted women's mobility after the *Ave Maria* bell at sunset, as a means of establishing public order in the streets, Cohen notes that: "When caught breaking curfew, some women claimed ignorance or said they were new in town."<sup>132</sup> It seems likely that the same (or similar) excuses would have been offered if an individual was caught breaking Rome's sumptuary laws. Certainly, the fact that one of the paragraphs in the dress reform of 1563 states that foreign women in Rome should observe the same dress restrictions as the native population, suggests that this might have been a common excuse. And this assumption is further reinforced by the concession in Rome's dress reform of 1586 to 'foreigners' who had recently arrived in the city, granting them an extra month to adjust and alter their clothing according to Roman standards.

By the late sixteenth century, due to Rome's social and political structure and its stature as the capital of European diplomacy (which meant it was crowded with envoys and attachés from throughout the peninsula as well as from the rest of Catholic Europe), anxiety at the idea of causing scandal by offending someone influential (or who might become influential in the next shift of power) must have been endemic. But oddly, no records of indictments for violations of sumptuary violations in early modern Rome seem to have survived.<sup>133</sup> If

129 See for instance: Hughes 1983, pp. 69–70; Frick 2002, p. 183, 189; Kovesi Killerby 1994, p. 117; Kovesi Killerby 2002, pp. 122–123; and Rublack 2010, p. 6.

130 Molà/Riello 2019, p. 228.

131 Molà/Riello 2019, p. 228.

132 Cohen 2008, p. 303.



Roman prosecution protocols existed – which we would assume is most likely – they have yet to be discovered. Still, the papacy never undertook to institute a Roman magistracy that was specifically occupied with violations of sumptuary laws. It is therefore difficult to assess the enforcement and impact of Rome’s sumptuary legislation, and any discussion regarding its effectiveness, or the severity of its application, can only be speculative at best. Rodocanachi claimed that the motivation for Sixtus V’s bull of 1586 was the lax public observance of the ordinances of his predecessors, leading to the Pope’s enjoinder of the municipal council to draw up a new decree.<sup>134</sup> This may have been the case, but the lack of archival sources on the matter still leaves us very much in the dark, not only due to the absence of prosecution protocols (or similar documents), but also because other documents on the clothing worn by Rome’s citizenry give no indication of the public’s attitude towards the few sumptuary restrictions that did exist. Indeed, as Ago remarks in her study on the material culture of early modern Rome, “the inventories are not detailed enough to permit an examination.”<sup>135</sup>

Indubitably, people in sixteenth-century Rome paid great attention to the clothes and accessories they wore, and to displays of wealth, which Ago states: “[...] explains concerns about sumptuary abuses, as a subversion of social order, and the corresponding efforts to use laws to guarantee a perfect correspondence between the appearance and the quality of an individual.”<sup>136</sup> Albeit few and far between, the reiteration of sumptuary laws leaves us with the impression that their effect may have been more ideological than substantial, in the sense that the general formalistic value of legislation itself was regarded as important in moderating conspicuous consumption. Although there existed several positive functions of luxury – economic, political, social, even religious – which was therefore often encouraged, luxury could as well, as Kovesi observes, “foster weakness and moral inanition.”<sup>137</sup> Hence, as in the case of Rome, it could be argued that sumptuary control was primarily an additional tool in the effort to bring order to a rather chaotic and constantly changing society. Indeed, as we have seen, the preamble of the dress reform of 1563 supports this contention, since it established that the authorities of Rome, “volendo emendare il corrotto vivere de gl’uomini, & levare ogni inutile spesa, & ogni dannosa pompa, & tutti quelli abusi; & disordini, che sogliono essere allettamento di libidine, & cagione di molti mali, di comune consentimento, fatta prima sopra ciò diligentissima considerazione havemo fatti gli seguenti capitoli di riforma.”<sup>138</sup>

133 I have been unable to locate any documents of this kind myself, nor have I found any references to such in the work of other scholars. In the extensive collection of trials at the *Tribunale Criminale del Governatore di Roma* (in ASR), however, one of the trial documents from 1610 concerns the crime of a destroyed *zimarra*.

134 Rodocanachi 1907, p. 180.

135 Ago 2013, p. 110.

136 Ago 2013, p. 220.

137 Kovesi Killerby 1994, p. 119.

138 BC, Editti e Bandi, vol. 1, *Bando e riforma sopra l'immoderate spese & pompa del vestire delli huomini & donne di quest' Alma Città, & degli Conviti*, 10 December 1563, p. 168.

## Abbreviations

### ASR

Archivio di Stato di Roma

### BC

Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome

## Bibliography

### Ago 1997

Renata Ago, “Gerarchia delle merci e meccanismi dello scambio a Roma nel primo Seicento”, *Quaderni storici*, 96, 3 (1997), pp. 663–683.

### Ago 1998

Renata Ago, *Economia barocca: Mercato e istituzioni nella Roma del Seicento*, Rome 1998.

### Ago 2013

Renata Ago, *Gusto for Things: A History of Objects in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, Chicago 2013.

### Alberti (1432) 1969

Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia* (1432), ed. Ruggiero Romano and Alberto Tenenti, Turin 1969.

### Bailey 2003

Gauvin A. Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565–1610*, Toronto 2003.

### Belfanti 2009

Carlo Marco Belfanti, “The Civilization of Fashion: At the Origins of a Western Social Institution”, *Journal of Social History*, 43, 2 (2009), pp. 261–263.

### Black 2004

Christopher F. Black, *Church, Religion and Society in Early Modern Italy*, New York 2004.

### Bond 2021

Katherine Bond, “Fashioned with Marvellous Skill: Veils and Costume Books of Sixteenth-Century Europe”, in *Materialised Identities in Early Modern Culture, 1450–1750. Objects, Affects, Effects*, ed. Susanna Burghartz et al., Amsterdam 2021, pp. 325–368.

### Bullarum (1581–1588) 1747

*Bullarum, Privilegiorum ac Diplomatum Romanorum Pontificum Amplissima Collectio. Cui accessere Pontificum omnium Vitae, Notae, & Indices opportuni. Opera et Studio Caroli Cocquelines. Tomus Quartus Pars Quarta. Ab Anno X. Gregorii XIII. usque ad Annum III. Sixti V. Scilicet ab Anno 1581 ad 1588*, Rome, 1747.

### Burghartz 2015

Susanna Burghartz, “Covered Women? Veiling in Early Modern Europe”, *History Workshop Journal*, 80, 1 (2015), pp. 1–32.

### Calvi 2003

Giulia Calvi, “Le leggi suntuarie e la storia sociale”, in *Disciplinare il lusso: La legislazione suntuaria in Italia e in Europa tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, ed. Maria Giuseppina, n.p. 1998.

### Cohen 1998

Elizabeth S. Cohen, “Seen and Known: Prostitutes in the Cityscape of Late-Sixteenth-Century Rome”, *Renaissance Studies*, 12, 3 (1998), pp. 392–409.

### Cohen 2008

Elizabeth S. Cohen, “To Pray, To Work, To Hear, To Speak: Women in Roman Streets c. 1600”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 12 (2008), pp. 239–311.

### Cohen 2014

Elizabeth S. Cohen, “Open City: An Introduction to Gender in Early Modern Rome”, *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 17, 1 (2014), pp. 35–54.

### Cohen/Cohen 1993

Thomas V. Cohen and Elizabeth S. Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome: Trial before the Papal Magistrates*, Toronto 1993.

### Currie 2000

Elizabeth Currie, “Prescribing Fashion: Dress, Politics and Gender in Sixteenth-Century Italian Conduct Literature”, *Fashion Theory*, 4, 2 (2000), pp. 157–177.

### Currie 2008

Elizabeth Currie, “Clothing and a Florentine Style, 1550–1620”, *Renaissance Studies*, 23, 1 (2008), pp. 33–52.

### Currie 2019

Elizabeth Currie, *Fashion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence*, London 2019.

### Davanzo Poli 1987

Doretta Davanzo Poli, “La moda nel Libro del Sarto”, in *Il Libro del Sarto*, ed. Fritz Saxl, Modena 1987, pp. 57–63.

### Delumeau 1979

Jean Delumeau, *Vita economica e sociale di Roma nel Cinquecento*, Florence 1979.

### Frick 2002

Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore 2002.

### Gessert 2015

Genevieve S. Gessert, “A Giant Corrupt Body: The Gendering of Renaissance Roma”, in *Receptions of Antiquity, Constructions of Gender in European Art, 1300–1600*, ed. Marice E. Rose and Alison C. Poe, Leiden 2015, pp. 98–130.

### Guazzo (1574) 1993

Stefano Guazzo, *La civil conversazione* (1574), 2 vols., ed. Amedeo Quondam, Modena 1993.

### Hall 2001

Marcia B. Hall, *After Raphael: Painting in Central Italy in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge 2001.

### Hall/Cooper 2013

Marcia B. Hall and Tracey E. Cooper, *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church*, New York 2013.

### Hohti 2010

Paula Hohti, “Conspicuous Consumption and Popular Consumers: Material Culture and Social Status in Sixteenth-Century Siena”, *Renaissance Studies*, 24, 5 (2010), pp. 654–670.

### Hohti 2017

Paula Hohti, “Dress, Dissemination, and Innovation: Artisan Fashion in

Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Italy”, in *Fashioning the Early Modern: Dress, Textiles, and Innovation in Europe, 1500–1800*, ed. Evelyn Welch, Oxford 2017, pp. 143–165.

**Hughes 1983**

Diane Owen Hughes, “Sumptuary Law and Social Relations in Renaissance Italy”, in *Disputes and Settlements Law and Human Relations in the West*, ed. John Bossy, Cambridge 1983, pp. 69–99.

**Hughes 1992**

Diane Owen Hughes, “Regulating Women’s Fashion”, in *A History of Women in the West*, 5 vols., 1994–1996, vol. 2: Silences of the Middle Ages, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, Cambridge 1992, pp. 136–158.

**Hunt 1996**

Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law*, Basingstoke 1996.

**Hunt 2014**

John M. Hunt, “Carriages, Violence, and Masculinity in Early Modern Rome”, *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 17, 1 (2014), pp. 175–196.

**Ilg 2004**

Ulrike Ilg, “The Cultural Significance of Costume Books in Sixteenth-Century Europe”, in *Clothing Culture, 1350–1650*, ed. Catherine Richardson, Aldershot 2004, pp. 29–47.

**Ilva 1995**

Alberto Ilva, “Note sulla legislazione suntuaria nell’Italia Centro Settentrionale”, in *Le trame della moda*, ed. Anna Giulia Cavagna and Grazietta Buttazzi, Rome 1995, pp. 31–52.

**Jones 2009**

Ann Rosalind Jones, “Worn in Venice and throughout Italy: The Impossible Present in Cesare Vecellio’s Costume Books”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39, 3 (2009), pp. 511–544.

**Jones/Worcester 2002**

Pamela M. Jones and Thomas Worcester, *From Rome to Eternity: Catholicism and the Arts in Italy, ca. 1550–1650*, Boston 2002.

**Kovesi Killerby 1994**

Catherine Kovesi Killerby, “Practical Problems in the Enforcement of Italian Sumptuary Law, 1200–1500”, in *Crime, Society and the Law in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Trevor Dean and Kate J.P. Lowe, Cambridge 1994, pp. 99–120.

**Kovesi Killerby 2002**

Catherine Kovesi Killerby, *Sumptuary Law in Italy, 1200–1500*, Oxford 2002.

**Kovesi 2019**

Catherine Kovesi, “Defending the Right to Dress: Two Sumptuary Law Protests in Sixteenth-Century Milan”, in *The Right to Dress* 2019, pp. 186–209.

**Levi Pisetzkzy 1966**

Rosita Levi Pisetzkzy et al., *Storia del Costume in Italia*, 5 vols., Milan 1964–1969, vol. 3: Il Cinquecento e il Seicento, 1966.

**Magnuson 1982**

Torgil Magnuson et al., *Rome in the Age of Bernini*, 2 vols., Stockholm 1982–1986, vol. 1: From the Election of Sixtus V to the Death of Urban VIII, 1982.

**Mansour 2013**

Opher Mansour, “Censure and Censorship in Rome c. 1600: The Visitation of Clement VIII and the Visual Arts”, in *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church*, ed. Marcia B. Hall and Tracey E. Cooper, New York 2013, pp. 136–160.

**Masson 1976**

Georgina Masson, *Courtesans of the Italian Renaissance*, New York 1976.

**Milligan 2017**

Gerry Milligan, “Literary Representations”, in *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion*, 6 vols., London 2017, vol. 3: In the Renaissance, ed. Elizabeth Currie and Susan Vincent, London 2017, pp. 175–192.

**Molà 2000**

Luca Molà, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice*, Baltimore 2000.

**Molà/Riello 2019**

Luca Molà and Giorgio Riello, “Against the Law: Sumptuary Prosecutions in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Padova”, in *The Right to Dress* 2019, pp. 210–239.

**Muzzarelli 2009**

Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, “Reconciling the Privilege of a Few with the Common Good: Sumptuary Laws in Medieval and Early Modern Europe”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39, 3 (2009), pp. 597–617.

**Muzzarelli 2016**

Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *A capo coperto. Storie di donne e di veli*, Bologna 2016.

**Muzzarelli 2019**

Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, “Sumptuary Laws in Italy: Financial Resource and Instrument of Rule”, in *The Right to Dress* 2019, pp. 167–185.

**Muzzarelli 2020**

Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Le regole del lusso: Apparenza e vita quotidiana del Medioevo all’età moderna*, Bologna 2020.

**Nussdorfer 1992**

Laurie Nussdorfer, *Civic Politics in the Rome of Urban VIII*, Princeton 1992.

**Paulicelli 2011**

Eugenia Paulicelli, “From the Sacred to the Secular: The Gendered Geography of Veils in Italian Cinquecento Fashion”, in *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories*, ed. Bella Mirabella, Ann Arbor 2011, pp. 40–58.

**Paulicelli 2014**

Eugenia Paulicelli, *Writing Fashion in Early Modern Italy: From Sprezzatura to Satire*, Farnham 2014.

**Paulicelli 2015**

Eugenia Paulicelli, “Italian Fashion: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 20, 1 (2015), pp. 1–9.

**Ribeiro 2003**

Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, Oxford 2003.

**Riello 2019**

Giorgio Riello, “The World in a Book: The Creation of the Global in Sixteenth-Century European Costume Books”, *Past & Present*, 242, Supplement 14 (2019), pp. 281–317.

**Riello/Rublack 2019**

Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack, “Introduction”, in *The Right to Dress* 2019, pp. 1–33.

**Rietbergen 2006**

Peter Rietbergen, *Power and Religion in Baroque Rome: Barberini Cultural Policies*, Leiden 2006.

**The Right to Dress 2019**

*The Right to Dress. Sumptuary Laws in a Global Perspective*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack, Cambridge 2019.

**Rocke 2008**

Michael Rocke, “Gender and Sexual Culture in Renaissance Italy”, in *The Italian Renaissance: The Essential Readings*, ed. Paula Findlen, Malden et al. 2008, pp. 192–211.

**Rodocanachi 1901**

Emmanuel Rodocanachi, *Les institutions communales de Rome sous la Papauté*, Paris 1901.

**Rodocanachi 1907**

Emmanuel Rodocanachi, *La Femme Italienne à l'Époque de la Renaissance: Sa Vie Privée et Mondaine son Influence Sociale*, Paris 1907.

**Rosa 2002**

Mario Rosa, “The World’s Theatre: The Court of Rome and Politics in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century”, in *Court and Politics in Papal Rome: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia, Cambridge 2002, pp. 78–98.

**Rosenthal 2006**

Margaret F. Rosenthal, “Cutting a Good Figure: The Fashions of Venetian Courtesans in the Illustrated Albums of Early Modern Travelers”, in *The Courtesan’s Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon, Oxford 2006, pp. 52–74.

**Rosenthal 2009a**

Margaret F. Rosenthal, “Cultures of Clothing in Later Medieval and Early Modern Europe”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39, 3 (2009), pp. 459–481.

**Rosenthal 2009b**

Margaret F. Rosenthal, “Fashions of Friendship in an Early Modern Illustrated *Album Amicorum*: British Library, MS Egerton 1191”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39, 3 (2009), pp. 619–641.

**Rosenthal/Jones 2008**

Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas; Cesare Vecellio’s Habiti Antichi et Moderni*, London 2008.

**Rublack 2010**

Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe*, Oxford 2010.

**Ruggiero 2015**

Guido Ruggiero, *The Renaissance in Italy: A Social and Cultural History of the Rinascimento*, New York 2015.

**Storey 2004**

Tessa Storey, “Clothing Courtesans: Fabrics, Signals, and Experiences”, in *Clothing Culture, 1350–1650*, ed. Catherine Richardson, Aldershot 2004, pp. 95–107.

**Storey 2005**

Tessa Storey, “Fragments from the Life Histories of Jewellery Belonging to Prostitutes in Early-Modern Rome”, *Renaissance Studies*, 19, 5 (2005), pp. 647–657.

**Storey 2008**

Tessa Storey, *Carnal Commerce in Counter-Reformation Rome*, Cambridge 2008.

**Tadgell 2013**

Christopher Tadgell, *Transformations: Baroque and Rococo in the Age of Absolutism and the Church Triumphant*, London 2013.

**Thomas (1549) 1963**

William Thomas, *The Historie of Italie (1549)*, ed. George B. Parks, New York 1963.

**Vecellio 1598**

Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti Antichi et Moderni di tutto il Mondo*, Venice 1598.

**Vecellio (1590/1598) 2008**

Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti Antichi et Moderni (1590/1598)*, ed. and transl. Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones, London 2008.

**Williams 1997**

Robert Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture in Sixteenth Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne*, New York 1997.