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# Imperial Fashions: Cashmere Shawls between Istanbul, Paris, and Milan (Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries)

**Abstract:** *Descriptions of material culture offer a point of entry into the circulation of textual and visual knowledge from the Ottoman to the French Empire and Italy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This article analyzes, discusses, and connects three different sources: Ignatius Mouradgèa d’Ohsson’s Tableau général de l’Empire Ottoman (1787–1820), Giulio Ferrario’s Il costume antico e modern (1817–1834) and Carolina Lattanzi’s Il Corriere delle Dame (1804–1874). The texts shed light on the fashion for cashmere shawls and cashmere cloth imported from India to the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the Napoleonic era. They also outline the crucial role of translation from Turkish to French and Italian as well as the role of dragomans, printers, engravers and editors in spreading the culture of fashion.*

In recent years and in connection with the growth of global history, the notion of *fashion* has attracted several critical assessments in view of its Eurocentric leanings.<sup>1</sup> The study and classification of fashion should be more globally inclusive – so goes the argument – and not centered on the notion of style change, which generally coincides with a process of westernization across the globe, equating fashion with Western modernity and labeling all other clothing practices as traditional and static. Attention has shifted to differences of time and place and to the interrelated dynamics that contribute to the making of fashion. These comprise groups of manufacturers, designers, retailers, journalists, promoters, and consumers – groups that are in communication with each other and common to all fashion systems. From this perspective, the system of

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<sup>1</sup> Arti Sandhu: *Indian Fashion. Tradition, Innovation, Style*. London 2015, 8; Tereza Kuldova: *Luxury Indian Fashion. A Social Critique*. London 2016.

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fashion becomes a “hybrid subject” characterized by the interconnecting networks of various forms of production, consumption, and demand.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter I will focus on some hybrid practices of clothing consumption, tracing the ways through which Eastern cashmere patterns and shawls acted as a source of inspiration across the Mediterranean. Between the second half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century these patterns and shawls were imported, imitated, selectively appropriated, and adapted, from India to Istanbul, Paris, and Milan.<sup>3</sup> I will focus on the role of mediators: intellectuals, institutions, printing firms, artists, journalists, and magazines for a female audience. All of them shaped the fashion for cashmere, spreading it across borders, languages and social classes, and turning it into a widespread popular phenomenon of hybrid and gendered clothing practices.

## Trading with the Levant

Since the second half of the sixteenth century, the Levant had been a crucial gateway for printed cottons flowing from Indian centers of manufacture into Europe. Portugal was the first European country to open the trade, which also flourished along the route connecting Cairo or Alexandria to Venice and from there to all of Europe.<sup>4</sup> From the seventeenth century, Genoa, Livorno, and especially Marseille were importing Indian textiles and producing local imitations.<sup>5</sup> In Marseille and in Venice production was in the hands of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire. The circulation of Asian patterns and textiles was part of the migration of Christian minorities, Greeks and Armenians, fleeing to Venice from the Ottoman conquest of Byzantine territories and taking with them know-how, technology, and innovations. In 1733 the Venetian Senate

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<sup>2</sup> Sandhu, *Indian Fashion*, 9; Beverly Lemire: *Domesticating the Exotic. Floral Culture and the East India Calico Trade with England, c. 1600–1800*, in: *Textile History* 34 (2003), 65–85.

<sup>3</sup> This paper is an enlarged and thoroughly revised version of an earlier publication. See Giulia Calvi: *Translating Imperial Practices, Knowledge and Taste Across the Mediterranean*. Giulio Ferrario and Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson, in: Costanta Vintilă-Ghițulescu (ed.), *Women, Consumption, and the Circulation of Ideas in South Eastern Europe, 17th–19th Centuries*, Leiden 2017, 12–46.

<sup>4</sup> Maria Joao Ferreira: *Asian Textiles in the Carreira da India. Portuguese Trade, Consumption and Taste, 1500–1700*, in: *Textile History* 46 (2015), 147–168.

<sup>5</sup> Margherita Bellezza Rosina and Marzia Cataldi Gallo: *Cotoni stampati e mezzari dalle Indie all’Europa*. Genoa 1993, 69; Olivier Raveux: *Fashion and Consumption of Painted and Printed Calicoes in the Mediterranean during the later Seventeenth Century. the Case of Chintz Quilts and Banyans in Marseilles*, in: *Textile History* 45 (2014), 49–67.

granted the Armenian weaver Elia d'Alessandri a twenty-year monopoly for the production of cotton cloth with gold and silver thread and natural flowers “in the Indian style of Basdar and Suratt”. As it was difficult to import Indian cotton due to the “extreme” distance, he was allowed to use cotton from the Greek islands of Kefalonia and Zante. The Armenian also exported to Istanbul shawls woven with Spanish wool and decorated with natural flowers, gold and silver that “sell well in the Turkish lands”.<sup>6</sup> For 40 years, until 1773, the Armenian family d'Alessandri carried on the production of different types of textiles for the domestic and Turkish markets, receiving public financial support and tax exemptions. The designs as well as the brilliance and fastness of color of Indian textiles attracted early modern European and Ottoman consumers, setting the stage for the later fashion of cashmere patterns and shawls.

Historians of material culture generally underestimate the non-Western side of this phenomenon, as well as the importance of colonialism in establishing trade routes and networks. Eurocentric accounts have often assumed that cashmere shawls became fashionable only through being displayed in Europe, based on the claim that fashion is a purely Western phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> From India, these precious items of clothing were exported to Istanbul, Alexandria, and Russia, and to the Romanian principalities, where painters portrayed men and women from the boyar dynasties wearing shawls, sashes, and turbans in a variety of striped and floral patterns. In Trieste, the popular portrait artist Giuseppe Tominz used cashmere shawls in a variety of colorful patterns to portray high-status Habsburg ladies, women in Greek and Slav merchant households, as well as Turks living in the city.<sup>8</sup> Napoleon and his officers brought cashmere shawls back from the 1798–1801 French Egyptian campaign, and Empress Josephine (1804–1809) started the fashion of wearing them in Paris. Her collection consisted of 300 to 400 cashmere shawls.<sup>9</sup> French consumers obtained the shawls from resident agents in Istanbul and Moscow, as well as from Alexandria and Smyrna via Marseille.<sup>10</sup>

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6 Roberto Berveglieri: *Inventori stranieri a Venezia (1474–1788)*. Venice 1995, 233–249.

7 Carlo Marco Belfanti: Was Fashion a European Invention?, in: *Journal of Global History* (2008), 3, 419–443; Michelle Maskiell: Consuming Kashmir. Shawls and Empires, 1500–2000, in: *Journal of World History* 13 (2002), 1, 27–65.

8 Fabrizio Magani: Giuseppe Tominz ritrattista goriziano, in: Giuseppe Esposito and Annalia Delneri (eds.): *Ottocento di frontiera. Gorizia 1780–1850. Arte e cultura*. Milan 1995.

9 Annemarie Kleinert: *Le “Journal des dames et des modes” ou la conquête de l’Europe féminine (1797–1839)*. Stuttgart 2001, 86.

10 Monique Lévi-Strauss: *Cashemire. La Création française 1800–1880*. Paris 2012; Susan Hiner: Lust for Luxe. Cashmere Fever in Nineteenth Century France, in: *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5 (2005), 1, 76–98.

## Luxury Comes from the East

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the fashion for cashmere shawls was spreading in Istanbul. The following text comments on Ottoman civil society at the time, where luxury textiles coming from the east encouraged practices of social distinction and the creation of different markets for elites and ordinary people and where consumption often transgressed religious norms:

Under Ottoman rule a widespread deviation from the traditional clothing norms of the Quran has taken place. Except for the *ulema* and a few lay devotees, all well-to-do families manage to procure silk clothes and the richest textiles. Those coming from India are the most sought after. They come in single colors; striped; with flowers and in every kind of silk; in golden and silver thread for the gentle sex; for servants in wealthy households; and for some administrators at the Court. Highly-priced shawls of extremely fine wool are in great fashion. Price is of no concern, as the Ottomans love to have those measuring twelve feet by four and of such fine weave that they can pass through a ring. Men and women wear them all year long. In winter, men wear them to walk the streets and go horse riding. They cover their heads with these shawls in bad weather, as in those countries people have no umbrellas and carriages are reserved for the delicate sex. Women cover their heads and shoulders and some make winter clothes that cost more than the finest muslins and the more exquisitely embroidered textiles. People of the lower orders wear locally produced shawls.<sup>11</sup>

The *Itschs Agassy*, domestic servants in wealthy households, could wear silk and Indian shawls, and officers at the court were followed by a *laquais* “chargé d’un schal des Indes”, whose charge was to carry an Indian shawl to cover their masters’ heads in case of rain.<sup>12</sup>

This detailed description of the inclination for precious Indian textiles and cashmere shawls in Istanbul contrasts with the practices of less wealthy Christian minorities in provincial towns, who follow the dictates of Ottoman and western fashion in a flexible way:

Christian women, especially the Greeks, enjoy more freedom and sometimes follow European fashions and use makeup. If they leave the house, they have to conform to Muslim rules and wear the veil, a dark *feredjé* and black shoes. All women from other nationalities must follow the same rules, and in all urban districts police officers from

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<sup>11</sup> Giulio Ferrario, *Il costume antico e moderno, o storia della milizia, della religione, delle arti, scienze ed usanze di tutti i popoli antichi e moderni, provata coi monumenti dell’antichità e rappresentata cogli analoghi disegni. Europa, vol. 4: Dell’Impero Ottomano. Degli Slavi moderni a cura di Carlo Magnetti*, Milan 1827, 385 (my translation).

<sup>12</sup> Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson: *Tableau général de l’Empire Othoman*, vol. 2. Paris 1790, 160–161.

time to time read out loud these sumptuary regulations. Such rigid codes of dress are not enforced in the provinces, and in the islands of the Greek archipelago there is the greatest freedom. Here women keep to their ancient customs and go unveiled. Therefore, European women who have settled in the provinces of the Empire are less restless. Their clothing is indeed a bizarre mixture of many costumes: some wear the *feredjé* and an Indian shawl in lieu of a veil.<sup>13</sup>

Both quotations introduce the reader to crucial features of luxury goods, whose main rhetorical and social use was embedded in a web of values and norms. Religion, ethnicity, class, and gender affected the level of demand for both locally-produced and imported goods, constructing the social codes that defined consumption, sociality, and appearance: wealthy Muslim families broke the monopoly of Islamic law and adopted transgressive clothing practices; elite men and women wore original textiles from India, while ordinary people bought locally-produced imitations; rigid sumptuary codes in Istanbul contrasted with the more tolerant *milieu* of provincial towns; and for both Muslims and Christians religion played a central role in the construction of consumption practices.

## Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson

The new preference for long and light cashmere shawls imported from India to Istanbul traces a *fil rouge* connecting material modernity, distinction, and taste. This can be seen in two beautifully illustrated folio volumes published for the educated elite of Europe: Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson's *Tableau général de l'Empire Ottoman*, printed in Paris in three volumes by Didot between 1787 and 1820; and Giulio Ferrario's *Il costume antico e moderno*, published in Milan between 1827 and 1834. Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson (1740–1807) was the first Ottoman to publish in French an illustrated history of the Ottoman Empire. An Armenian dragoman (interpreter) in the service of the Swedish consul in Constantinople, Ignatius Mouradgea was born to a French mother and a Catholic Armenian father already in the service of the Swedish diplomatic representative as an interpreter.<sup>14</sup> In this cosmopolitan milieu, the Mouradgeas, father and son,

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<sup>13</sup> Ferrario, *Il costume*, 358.

<sup>14</sup> Elisabeth A. Fraser: "Dressing Turks in the French Manner". Mouradgea d'Ohsson's *Panorama of the Ottoman Empire*, in: *Ars Orientalis* 39 (2010), 199–229; Carter Findley: *Writer and Subject, Self and Other. Mouradgea d'Ohsson and his Tableau générale de l'Empire Othoman*, in: Sture Theolin et al. (eds.): *The Torch of the Empire. Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson and the Tableau*

were cultural mediators, having good knowledge of languages and being well integrated in the court hierarchy and in the political networks of the Empire. Ignatius added the name d’Ohsson in 1787, when the king of Sweden Gustave III gave him noble status as reward for his services to the crown. In 1784 he left for Paris to publish his celebrated work, printed by Pierre Francois Didot “the younger”, a central figure of the Parisian luxury book trade. A subscription aimed at an aristocratic readership financed a deluxe *elephant folio* edition, illustrated with 233 engravings, 41 of which are full-page or double-page foldouts. In the opening discourse to the reader, d’Ohsson sketches a short biography: “I was born and grew up in Constantinople, and during my entire life I was employed in the service of a court intimately connected to the Sublime Porte. More than anybody else I had the means to overcome all difficulties and to accomplish the task that I have now decided to complete.”<sup>15</sup> The *Tableau général* is divided into two parts: the first on Muslim jurisprudence and the second on the history of the Ottoman Empire, which d’Ohsson never completed. In the second volume, the section on morality comprises two books: the first is entitled “food” (*de la nourriture*), and the second, “dress” (*du vetement*), which includes sumptuary norms, interior decoration, styles of clothing, shoes, furs, colors, perfumes, and carriages.

Among a wealth of images showing major religious practices (pilgrimage to Mecca, mosques, burial sites, ceremonies, processions) and some secular entertainments (libraries, music, and dance), a few plates represent the clothing of men and women from different ethnicities. Long cashmere shawls drape the bodies of elite European women, distinguishing them from Muslim women and slaves who wear the veil. A team of at least 28 artists (painters, designers, and engravers) produced most of the prints, under the direction of Charles Nicolas Cochin (1715–1791), a major figure in the eighteenth-century art world in Paris. Recent research has shed light on the Ottoman and Persian sources of the *Tableau général* and the French adaptation of the paintings and drawings that d’Ohsson brought with him from Constantinople, which the French disliked and transformed, hiring painters to redraw the “clumsy” figures of the originals to meet western aesthetics and taste.<sup>16</sup> Still, d’Ohsson insists that, because of a long-standing iconoclastic tradition, only extreme caution, lengthy and expensive procedures, and painstaking research enabled him to acquire the

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*générale de l’Empire Othoman in the Eighteenth Century*. Istanbul 2002, 27–28; Elisabeth A. Fraser: *Mediterranean Encounters. Artists Between Europe and the Ottoman Empire 1774–1839*. University Park, PA 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson: *Tableau général de l’Empire Othoman*, vol. 1, Paris 1788, *Discours préliminaire*.

<sup>16</sup> Fraser, *Dressing Turks*, 213.

collection of paintings and drawings he brought to Paris. Ottoman painters had produced them with great difficulty and in secrecy, working either on their own or in d'Ohsson's home. He argues that there were no great artists in the Empire, at least none that compared to painters in Italy, France, or the Netherlands:

How could they advance in this sublime art in a nation that does not care about it, where there are no models and where even the Christians have no taste for paintings, nor the habit of getting portrayed, and where Greek and Armenian painters have no other resources for their talent but painting holy images in churches or in private chapels? [...] It is useless to talk about Muslim painters: there are perhaps twenty in the whole Empire and they limit themselves to landscapes, maps, and drawings [...] some paint animals, but rarely human figures.<sup>17</sup>

Partial translations of the *Tableau général* in German, Russian, Swedish, and English (the latter published in Philadelphia in 1788) were put on the market. However, a further editorial circulation in Italy has not yet been acknowledged. I will now turn to this unexplored connection between Istanbul, Paris and Milan, the capital of Napoleon's Regno d'Italia (kingdom of Italy) and one of the main urban hubs of the French Empire where information on fashion was produced and disseminated.

## Fashion, Books, and Giulio Ferrario

Little is known of the spread of cashmere shawls in Italy, which seems to have occurred via importation from France, in the period during and after the Napoleonic regime. The decade between 1805 and 1815 witnessed an important modernizing thrust in Italian society, and consumption was part of a larger cultural transformation shaped by print and mass media. Fashion was not just a matter of expanding markets or imitation. It was also shaped by “a culture in which print was central, and it was the printing of information – visual as well as textual – that spread practices of fashion that could be fully communicated”.<sup>18</sup> In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the editorial business in Milan was expanding rapidly.<sup>19</sup> Napoleon was crowned king of Italy in Milan's Duomo in 1805, and the capital of the kingdom, where the court and administration resided,

<sup>17</sup> Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau générale*, vol. 2, 456–458.

<sup>18</sup> Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello: East & West. Textile Fashions in Early Modern Europe, in: *Journal of Social History* 41 (2008), 887–916, quotation on 888.

<sup>19</sup> Marino Berengo: *Intellettuali e librai nella Milano della Restaurazione*. Milan 2012 repr. Milan 1980.

offered many opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Important innovations, such as compulsory primary education and public subsidies for publishers, sparked the growth of an editorial market that catered to a widening readership.

In this vibrant cultural atmosphere Giulio Ferrario published a monumental collection of world history, *Il costume antico e moderno* (Ancient and modern costumes of the peoples of the world), published in 21 volumes between 1817 and 1834 in parallel Italian and French editions.<sup>20</sup> The fourth of his nine volumes on Europe was dedicated to the Ottoman Empire, for which Ferrario used Mouradgea d'Ohsson's *Tableau général* as his main textual and only visual reference. The two authors have never been studied in connection to one another, and this analytical angle sheds light on the translating capacities of two public intellectuals, who, in different geopolitical centers of the Mediterranean, worked as mediators across imperial boundaries, spreading fashion, prints, and books.

Giulio Ferrario (1767–1849) was an erudite ecclesiastic, a sophisticated philologist and a cultural entrepreneur, librarian and then director of the Biblioteca Braidense, the main public library in Milan. He lived through Napoleon's reign in Italy and its demise in 1814. He then became a faithful subject of the Austrian monarchy and dedicated his major work to the Habsburg Emperor Franz I.<sup>21</sup> His *Il costume antico e moderno* built upon the tradition of early modern costume books in a world perspective, which in the early modern period were printed in Italy, Europe, and in some non-Western countries.<sup>22</sup> This encyclopedic work was also part of a developing editorial production, in which compendiums of contemporary travel literature gained increasing success.

Ferrario's volume on the Ottoman Empire contains water-colored prints picturing the costumes of the different ethnic groups in the Empire's lands, with a last section on the "modern Slavs". 85 illustrations were readapted from the *Tableau général*. Ferrario's small team of artists readjusted the visual apparatus, which had already gone through a Westernizing process of translation. Vittorio and Francesco Raineri, Leone Giacomo Bussi, and Giacomo Gallina colored the black-and-white plates by hand, and at times condensed the representation of figures in the space of the page, as Ferrario's edition was not an *elephant folio*. On the whole, however, the plates are faithful reproductions of Mouradgea

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<sup>20</sup> Ferrario, *Il costume*.

<sup>21</sup> Stefano Nutini: Ferrario, Giulio, in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 46. Rome 1996. [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giulio-ferrario\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giulio-ferrario_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) (6 July 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Giulia Calvi: Cultures of Space. Costume Books, Maps and Clothing Between Europe and Japan (Sixteenth to Nineteenth centuries), in: *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 20 (2017), 331–363.

d'Ohsson's images, which focus on the vivid representation of ceremonies, mosques, burial sites, libraries, the Bosphorus, music, and dance. The images of women's and men's clothing repeat the original visual apparatus, portraying European women wearing cashmere shawls in contrast to the veiled Muslims. Throughout his work, Ferrario systematically looks at civil society ("civil customs", the customs of "private people"), outlining the practices that shape "the active consumer" who participates in taste formation, responding to new goods and combining goods in new ways to create a social identity and lifestyle. In this context, Ferrario translates the section on "morality" in the second volume of d'Ohsson's work.

In the longstanding Western tradition of costume books, the meaning of custom comprises social norms and bodily practices as well as the material culture of clothing and fashion across genders, ethnicities, and ages. Ferrario delves into d'Ohsson's text for cuts, shapes, and colors of dress, shoes, furs, turbans and hats, detailing how men and women use perfume, smoke tobacco and opium, drink coffee, listen to music and, when inebriated by alcohol and opium, dance. Translating d'Ohsson, who wrote for a European audience, Ferrario mirrors his perspective on the Ottoman's widespread private transgression of sumptuary laws shaped by Islamic moral codes. The description of the passion for cashmere shawls is repeated word for word from the *Tableau général* but is not confined to the immense city of Constantinople, which "mixes foreigners of different nations with the local inhabitants, Muslim and Christian, offering the most striking diversity of costumes and languages, and infinite nuances of customs and practices".<sup>23</sup> Tracing the route of Indian textiles across the Levant into the manufacturing centers of the Asian subcontinent, Ferrario acknowledges the high quality of Indian production, its global export, and the transformation of this process as a result of European technology. His attention focuses on the imitation and hybridization encouraged by the circulation of Western products in the East, and vice versa.

Indian artisans with great skill and intelligence copy Europe's most refined products and they do it using simple tools. No artisan in our countries could do this [...] In some productions, such as printed textiles, Indian craftsmen are absolutely superior to Europeans. Manufactures in Europe cannot reach the lively and long-lasting colors of Indian textiles. The same is true for precious stones and golden filigree. Indian silk and cotton production is universally acclaimed. Their woven cotton is incredibly fine and they can mend a broken piece of muslin with such dexterity that no human eye would ever detect it. They weave 4 meters long muslin pieces of cloth that can fit into a snuff-box or pass through a ring. Indians are the most skilled weavers in the whole world and have

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<sup>23</sup> Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau générale*, vol. 2, 429.

exported their products since Roman times to distant lands [. . .]. Our famous machines in Manchester produce cotton and woolen textiles at great speed; but Indian patience is superior to European efficiency in delicacy and finesse.<sup>24</sup>

Ferrario emphasizes Asian trade networks and downplays the quality of European manufactures, echoing contemporary aesthetic trends that valued authentic patterns of handloom weaving over the Western rational organization of mass-produced copies “from our famous Manchester machines”. He traces the routes of Indian cloth from the Coromandel Coast to Europe, and from other Indian regions to Africa and America. Golden and silver woven textiles are sold to China and are much preferred to those produced in Lyon for their unequalled light texture. From the mountainous Kashmir region come the shawls, scarves and woolen cloth that Italians call *Casimir*.<sup>25</sup> Asian imports and European-made copies were integrated into European fashion cycles – Chinoiserie, orientalism, japonisme, Indian style – creating different markets for different consumers: consumers of the middling sort bought European-made items, while elites distinguished themselves by wearing the high-priced originals.

Ferrario’s work shows that cashmere soon spread to Western Europe and Milan. In part two of the third volume of *Il costume*, which focuses on urban society in contemporary Italy, he writes that, in winter, women wear cashmere with differently decorated patterns: “We have seen cashmere dresses adorned with three rows of tulips [. . .] large merino shawls with borders woven into large bunches of flowers or long merino woolen scarfs with high borders like the ones you can see in the illustration. The price of these varies according to their quality and fine texture.”<sup>26</sup> (Figure 1) For a complete picture of fashion in Milan, however, Ferrario advises his readers to read the *Corriere delle Dame*, one of the first magazines for women to be issued in Italy. In the preceding 24 years, he notes, this journal had issued 20 volumes that popularized the changing Parisian fashions in detailed colored plates, adding to it the local styles of dress worn by Italians who refused to follow passively Imperial French whims.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ferrario, *Il costume, Asia*, vol. 2, 206–208.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 208–209.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, *Europa*, vol. 3, pt. 2, 931.

<sup>27</sup> Ferrario, *Il costume, Europa*, vol. 3, 117.



**Figure 1:** Giulio Ferrario: *Il costume antico e moderno, Europa*, vol. 3, pt. 2, 929, fig. 139. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Braidense, Milan.

## Il Corriere delle Dame (1804–1874)

The *Corriere delle Dame*, from which Ferrario draws his information on contemporary urban fashion and lifestyle in Milan, was the most up-to-date fashion journal addressed to a female readership. Modeled after the French *Journal des Dames et des Modes* (1797–1839),<sup>28</sup> it reproduced fashion plates of women's and

<sup>28</sup> Kleinert, *Journal des dames et des modes*.

men's clothing, mostly from Paris, and later from London and Vienna, with some Italian dresses and accessories, too. The journal began its weekly publication in 1804, profiting from the unique opportunity provided by Napoleon's coronation. Preparation for the sumptuous ceremony extended to the new kingdom of Italy, where French regulations on furnishings and gala dresses for the court were introduced. Fashion dealers, tailors, hairdressers, and embroiderers invaded Milan, putting on the market a wide variety of products for the elites who were waiting to take part in the coronation.

The *Corriere delle Dame* was owned and directed by Carolina Lattanzi, née Arienti (1771–1818), an energetic intellectual with feminist leanings, who took advantage of the opportunity and quickly established good relations with members of the new government.<sup>29</sup> She managed to obtain the monopoly for publishing the prints of all uniforms of the highest charges and magistrates of the kingdom, as well as 25 subscriptions to the *Corriere delle dame* from members of the viceregal court. The journal expressed strong support for Napoleon and his entourage, celebrating, as Lattanzi wrote, the rising of the new Empire in Europe in contrast to the decline of the Ottomans.

The colored fashion illustrations, which could also be printed separately, were the key assets of the journal, which was not only an editorial but also a financial success, owing to the innovative commercial enterprise launched by Lattanzi. All items in the prints – clothing for men and women, as well as accessories such as cashmere shawls and cashmere gilets for men – were described in detail, priced and sold, and shipped through the mail service to the subscribers who requested them. The prints reproduced French and, to a lesser degree, Italian fashion (Figures 2 and 3). The use of cashmere was not exclusively focused on women's shawls, scarves, cloaks, and dresses, but also included clothing for men: cashmere trousers and gilets. Several of the journal's February, March, and April issues of 1807 reproduced and sold madras shawls and scarves with decorated and colored woven patterns as well as long white cashmere scarves with woven, colored borders. The May issues advertised dresses made of Indian muslin, large embroidered muslin shawls, and Turkish colored handkerchiefs as both French and Italian fashion. One July issue advertised a "huge" embroidered cashmere shawl with a long fringe that made it "heavier than a monk's cloak", anticipating the winter fashion that would inevitably make this item more expensive.<sup>30</sup> Paper models of the dresses could also be ordered via mail, so that women could cut and sew the clothing at home for a much lower price. This

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<sup>29</sup> Silvia Franchini: *Editori, lettrici e stampa di moda*. Milan 2002, 40–41.

<sup>30</sup> *Il Corriere delle Dame*, 1807, 19 July, 247.



**Figure 2:** *Corriere delle Dame*, no. 43, 26 October 1806, 831, fig. 140. Courtesy of the Biblioteca del Senato ‘Giovanni Spadolini’, Rome.

created a viable and reciprocally empowering commercial connection between artisans, producers of fashion, and the weekly journal, and the availability of paper models was an essential element in the popularization of style not only for the elites, but also for a wider consumer public.

Research on the *Corriere delle Dame* has focused on its editorial fortunes from the perspective of a gendered nation-building culture. No attention has been given to the international information it provided, which has been dismissed as merely a taste for exoticism. In fact, the *Corriere delle Dame* had an interesting political column, “Termometro politico”, with news and comments on the military and political initiatives of the French, Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian powers. In addition,



Figure 3: *Corriere delle Dame*, no. 17, 28 April 1810, 137, fig. 327. Courtesy of the Biblioteca del Senato 'Giovanni Spadolini', Rome.

weekly installments on material culture and books spread knowledge about the Ottoman Empire. For instance, *Il Corriere delle Dame* published excerpts from Ferrario's third volume on the Ottoman Empire, introducing its female readership to nineteenth-century Italian travelogues. The journal also published the chapters on food, diet, and coffee from Giovan Battista Rampoldi's *Annali Musulmani*, printed in Milan in twelve volumes between 1822 and 1826,<sup>31</sup> a work that also served as a source for Ferrario. Rampoldi (1761–1836) was not a scholar, but he learned Arabic and traveled extensively across Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and North Africa between 1780 and 1790, apparently without official charges. His *Annali musulmani* is essentially a compilation modeled on Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville's *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1777–1779), and although not considered part of the Orientalist canon, it was the first attempt in Italy to write a widely encompassing history of the Islamic states based on a collection of Oriental sources and on the author's personal

31 Giovan Battista Rampoldi, *Annali musulmani*, Milano 1822–1826.

experience and knowledge of local languages. The printing of selected chapters of the work in *Il Corriere delle Dame* provides an example of how information on non-Western people was popularized by means of journals and travelogues. Addressing a middle-class, urban, female readership, *Il Corriere delle Dame* disseminated popular and entertaining narratives on the use of tobacco and the sociality surrounding the consumption of coffee in Istanbul, avoiding all references to local styles of dress and the veiling of women. In the journal, Oriental fashion was shaped by the consumer desires of European women and men, and in 1825 turbans of all sorts and with silver decorations were advertised as the craze of the moment. Turquerie was the cultural framework for the vogue for long cashmere shawls, turbans, and the loose, open garments that were to be worn in private.

In 1825, the journal advertised the launching of a new collection of calendars entitled *The Gallery of the World*. Calendars were printed at the beginning of each year and were the cheapest type of publication for a popular readership of men and women. *The Gallery of the World* aimed at describing the history, costume laws, and products of all nations, in a highly readable style. In 1826, the journal published excerpts of Ferrario's work on the costumes of the world and offered thirteen of its prints as a separate calendar. Prices advertised six different types of bindings, from cheap paper to expensive silk and Moroccan leather. Indeed, Ferrario's encyclopedic work on the costumes and customs of world, initially aimed at an aristocratic cosmopolitan readership and issued by a team of artists and collaborators in the Biblioteca and Accademia of Brera, eventually became the product of an expanding, urban editorial market. The work as a whole was printed in cheaper editions, and parts of it circulated in *Il Corriere delle Dame*. Both served to popularize visual and textual information addressed to different audiences and disseminating a culture of appearances in which print was central. They both also shared the non-academic Orientalism propagated in travelogues and journals that publishers were eager to put on the market. Chapters from Ferrario's *Il Costume* could now circulate among middle-class readers and especially among women, for whom the original luxury edition paid by a subscription of royalty, aristocrats, and well-to-do professionals and businessmen was unattainable.

## Concluding remarks

This article has used several descriptions of material culture as a point of entry into the circulation of textual and visual knowledge from the Ottoman to the French Empire and to Italy. Three different sources have been discussed and connected: Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson's *Tableau général de l'Empire Ottoman*,

Giulio Ferrario's *Il costume antico e moderno*, and Carolina Lattanzi's *Il Corriere delle Dame*. Building upon one another and viewed from different analytical angles, the sources shed light on the fashion for cashmere shawls and cashmere cloth imported from India to the Ottoman Empire and Europe from the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries.

Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson's *Tableau général* offered a firsthand systematic study of Ottoman society, in which dress and the consumption of clothing was framed in the context of Islamic law and religion. Giulio Ferrario's *Il costume antico e moderno* pursued an ethnographic approach to dress practices across the centuries from the viewpoint of an armchair traveller in the tradition of early modern costume books. Ferrario addressed an elite readership of royalty, nobility professionals, and merchants in Italy and Europe. *Il Corriere delle Dame*, directed by Carolina Lattanzi, was one of the main and longest-lasting weekly magazines for women, initially under the influence of French fashion and Napoleonic rule. It put cashmere shawls and scarfs on the fashion market. The prints it displayed in its weekly issues advertised garments that women could buy or sew at home. *Il Corriere delle Dame* was part of a system of fashion developing in Milan, the capital of the French Empire in Italy, where retailers, designers, journalists, promoters, and consumers were in communication with each other. In this sense, it marks a turning point in the process of cultural transfer that this paper has reconstructed, as it democratized the spread of information on politics, theatre, literature, medicine, hygiene, and fashion beyond the circles of the elites whose names are listed in the catalogue of 211 associates who financed Ferrario's volumes.

The article's focus on descriptions and prints of cashmere shawls sheds light on the different intellectual styles, editorial contexts, and changing audiences that go into the making of a system of fashion in which the media are a key element of communication. Translation is a crucial feature of the whole process, as each of these texts selected, appropriated and re-invented the hybrid languages of clothing across borders and Empires.



**Forum**

