19TH CENTURY FRENCH ORIENTALISM AND THE ALGERIAN BURNOUS: 1830-1870

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of History
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

May 2025

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Sophia Winter Mason for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of History to be taken June 2025

Title: 19th Century French Orientalism and the Algerian Burnous: 1830-1870

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In 1830, France invaded Algeria and began the first major European settler-colony in Africa. Not long afterwards, Algerian-influenced clothing items began to appear in Paris. The most popular was the burnous, a white, woolen cloak which was worn frequently by the majority of people in Algeria. The burnous was adapted to meet French tastes and quickly became a popular fashion item.

This fit into a longer French tradition of sartorial orientalism, which was particularly prominent in the 18th century. For them, Algeria fit into the 'Orient' and they understood Algerian culture primarily through this lens. Since the height of turquerie (Turkish/ Ottoman focused orientalism) in the preceding century, the relationship between France and the nation they borrowed from had changed from allies to colonizer and colony. However, the constructions of Algerian culture seen in descriptions and representations of the burnous are largely consistent with this older tradition of orientalism. This consistency shows that French understandings of the Orient were not significantly impacted by the realities of colonialism until later in the empire's history.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Daniel Rosenberg, my primary thesis advisor and mentor. He has been very busy over the course of the last year, but despite everything, always made time to meet with me and talk through my ideas. I also have to thank him for my development as a history student before my thesis process even began, as I've learned from him both as a student and a research assistant.

Thank you also to Yalda Asmatey, my CHC faculty advisor who helped me get my bearings about thinking about the thesis project back in HC277H. And George Sheridan, who was kind enough to meet with me while I was studying abroad and give me advice about how I could use the resources I had while I was in France.

Lastly, thank you to every friend who's listened to me talk about the burnous, and to Tannyr Rose, who was a great thesis buddy. Thank you especially to my best friend Margaret Bird, who spent several evenings listening to me pace around the living room ranting about what it all meant, and who did some brilliant work cleaning up my first draft.

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Introduction

In 1830, France invaded Algeria and swiftly began to colonize the long Ottoman-ruled nation. This was the first major European settler colony in Africa, long before the scramble for Africa of the late 19th century. It was also the first Arab country to be annexed by the west, and for the French, their first foothold in the 'Orient.' The connections between French and Algerian culture in the 130 years of colonization to come were many, but in the first decades of colonization, French exposure to Algeria was much more limited. One of the primary references most people France would have for Algerian culture in this early colonial period was their clothes. Beginning in the mid-1830s, Algerian-inspired clothing items started to appear in Paris, and were adopted into French fashion. This adoption of Algerian clothing fit into a long tradition of orientalist dress in France. In their recent history at the turn of the century, Egyptian inspired styles had become all the rage following the 1798 (unsuccessful) Napoleonic expedition into Egypt. Before that, Turkish, and more generally Ottoman influences had been integrated into French masquerade and daily-wear during the *tuquerie* of the 17th and 18th centuries. For the French, Algeria too was a part of the Orient and was understood primarily as a part of Ottoman culture. Therefore, it fit quite cleanly into their propensity for adopting oriental influences into their wardrobes.

The Algerian clothing items which arrived in France included the haïk, tarbouch (fez cap), gandouras, and the burnous. Of these, the burnous, a woolen Algerian cloak which was near ubiquitous in Algeria, was the most popular and enduring in 19th century French fashion. Mentions of the burnous in French written sources dwarf mentions of other Algerian garments

such as the tarbouch and haïk after 1830.[1] The French burnous quickly morphed into a garment which was distinct from the original Algerian cloak and remained a popular fashion item in France through the 1860s. As the most common representation of the connection between France and Algeria for the metropolitan French citizen, the burnous can be used as a key item for understanding French conceptions of Algeria, and their ideas about the nature of the French relationship with Algeria. Primarily, these constructions are positioned in a positive light, as Algerian traits that the French find admirable are used to promote the burnous. Modest elegance, healthful naturalness, bravado, and exotic mystery are all ascribed to Algerian influence in the burnous. However, in the context of broader French orientalism, we can see that under this admiration is a deep-rooted condescension and ultimate belief in French superiority. The traits which they admired fit into larger ideas of a simple, natural, savagely beautiful Orient. However, this condescension was rarely related directly to contemporary colonial politics.

Since the time of French *turquerie,* the relationship between France and the country they were borrowing from had changed from trade partners and allies to colonizer and colony. Despite this monumental political shift, the patterns of adoption and constructions of Algerian culture seen in the French burnous are generally consistent with the constructions of the Orient during the preceding period. If this is used as an indicator of French orientalist attitudes more broadly, then it implies a continuity between pre-colonial and early colonial orientalism. Although the French political relationship with the Orient had fundamentally changed, the orientalist representations surrounding the burnous were based more on older constructions of the Orient than contemporary colonial philosophy.

[1] "Tarbouch, Haïk, Fez, Burnous" shown 1800-1900 in *Google Books Ngram Viewer.* https://books.google.com/ngrams/

This consistency shows that French understandings of the Orient were not significantly impacted by the realities of colonialism until later in the empire's history.

Literature Review

The analysis of the burnous in this thesis relies on three core historical lenses: costume history, orientalist history, and the combination of the two, the history of sartorial orientalism.

The first, costume history, falls within the broader scopes of material history and cultural history. There is a distinction some authors make between 'costume' history and 'fashion' history in which the first is more material and the latter more cultural, but these two categories are not distinct and have considerable overlap. As a part of material culture, the clothes that people wore daily can present significant information about their material conditions and their culture. As Phillippe Perrot writes in *Les Dessus et les Dessous de la bourgeoisie,* clothing oneself is an act of differentiation and therefore significance. People use dress as a way to align themselves with certain groups and divide themselves from others. This makes the study of clothing particularly relevant for cross-cultural encounters. Marie-Cecile Thoral argues in "Sartorial Orientalism: Cross-Cultural Dressing in Colonial Algeria and Metropolitan France in the Nineteenth Century" that dress is used as powerful indicator of both individual and collective identity, social status, and politics, and that cultural groups in interaction consciously construct their identity in relationship to each other through their clothing.[2]

Orientalist history, the other half of this analysis, is the study of western constructions of the Orient. The founding work of this historical field is Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism,* where he developed this definition of orientalist history as the study of European ideas of the Orient as opposed to history of the Orient itself.[3] He writes that orientalism has several meanings; it is the

[2] Marie-Cecile Thoral, "Sartorial Orientalism: Cross-Cultural Dressing in Colonial Algeria and Metropolitan France in the Nineteenth Century." European History Quarterly 45, no. 1 (2015): 57–82.
[3] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: 25th Anniversay Edition,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994.)

study of the Orient, an aesthetic style, and "The corporate institution for dealing with the Orient– dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views, of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." This field is deeply tied to post-colonial history. Said posited that orientalism and colonialism were inextricably linked, with the concepts of orientalism developed primarily in the 17th-19th centuries helping to construct the narrative in which Europe was the most advanced civilization with the right to exploit or civilize the other nations of the world. Many studies of the connections between European orientalism and modern colonialism have followed, particularly for British and French history, as two of both the greatest colonial powers and enthusiastic consumers of oriental aesthetics during the modern period. In *Empire and Culture: The French Experience, 1830-1940* editor Mark Evans writes that the first half of the 19th century wawas a time of elucidation of pre-figurative discourses of the Orient, using orientalism as a sort of laboratory for philosophies of racial theory, linguistics, and economics.[4] It was not until the Third Republic began in 1870 that these theories became solidified into state-sponsored philosophies of colonialism and orientalism. Similarly in *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*, editors Tony Chafer and Amanda Sacur argue that the late 19th and early 20th century is when France developed a consistent and popular 'colonial culture'.[5] Madeline Dobie argues in *Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism* that this developed colonial culture of this period is too often applied retroactively to the orientalism of earlier periods.[6] She writes that the representations of

[4] Mark Evans, "Introduction" in Empire and Culture: The French Experience, 1830-1940. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.)
[5] Chafer, Tony, and Amanda Sackur. *Promoting the Colonial Idea : Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave, 2002.
[6] Madeleine Dobie, Foreign *Bodies : Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001), 5.

the Orient demonstrate strong internal coherence between the mid-18th and mid-19th century, before it started to shift in its meaning during the modern French age of empire.

The study of sartorial orientalism is the combination of these two fields, as it deals with orientalism as it is expressed in dress. Literature and visual art are the sources most often studied in orientalist history, with less focus on material culture or clothing. When compared to orientalist literature or visual art, sartorial orientalism often works in more decentralized, subconscious, and popular manners. Many more hands participate in the creation and interpretation of orientalist fashion trends than participate in the creation of a piece of literature or art. Although each of these mediums are shaped by the collective beliefs of the culture in which they are made, oriental fashion comes more directly out of that collective consciousness than any single authored work. As a very specific field, there is not a large body of research on the history of sartorial orientalism. Within the history of French sartorial orientalism, there is a general focus on 18th century *turquerie,* as the era of French fashion most influenced by the Orient. Kendra Van Cleave's is *Dressing à la Turque: Ottoman Influence on French Fashion, 1670-1800* forms a core reference for sartorial orientalism during this period, as well as Adam Geczy's *Fashion and Orientalism: Dress, Textiles, and Culture from the 17th to the 21st Century*, which has a much broader timeframe.[7] The prominence of oriental fashion during this period is precisely why this thesis uses it as a reference to compare to the 19th century adoption of the burnous.

[7] Kendra Van Cleave, *Dressing a La Turque : Ottoman Influence on French Fashion, 1670-1800*. First edition. (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2023.)
Adam Geczy, Fashion and Orientalism : Dress, Textiles and Culture from the 17th to the 21st Century, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

The only piece of historical literature written on the burnous found during the course of this research is Thoral's "Sartorial Orientalism: Cross-cultural Dressing in Colonial Algeria and Metropolitan France in the Nineteenth Century." As the title suggests, Thoral's study is split between clothing in metropolitan France and Algeria, with a greater focus on the latter. She uses the burnous as a key item to study the adoption of Algerian clothing in metropolitan France, an approach that this thesis expands upon. As the title suggests, her analysis is mostly taken through the lens of orientalism, studying cross-cultural dressing between French settlers, Algerian Muslims, and Algerian Jews in order to "test Edward Said's theory on the overall culture of domination supposedly expressed in Orientalist discourses or acts as 'a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.'"[8] Thoral explores how these different groups in Algeria and France consciously constructed identity in relationship to each other through their clothing choices, and how the significance of their clothing could change over time. In metropolitan France, she explores the differing significance and appeal of Algerian clothing as both a subversive, anti-western symbol and as a symbol of imperialism. This is where the burnous is relevant, as the primary piece of Algerian clothing adopted in metropolitan France.

Within the field of historical orientalism, the colonization of Algeria is often listed as an important cultural event for French orientalism, and yet not much specific attention is paid to Algerian-centered orientalism in France immediately following colonization. Most cultural histories of Algerian colonization, such as those included in *Empire and Culture* and *Promoting the Colonial Idea* begin in the Third Republic or later. For discussions of the connections between orientalism and colonialism, this leaves a considerable gap. Within the narrow field of

[8] Thoral, 57.

sartorial orientalism, there is also very little pertaining to Algerian influence –Thoral being the sole example I have found– and not much more for orientalist dress more generally during this period. This thesis thus aims to fill these gaps with a case study of the burnous, to answer questions about orientalism and dress, the connections between orientalism and colonialism, and perceptions of Algeria soon after it was colonized.

Defining the Orient and Orientalism

The Orient is in many ways defined by its vagueness. In its most basic definition, East,' the Orient encompasses all of the many cultures to the east of Europe (the West). In the context of Algeria however, one might quickly notice that despite generally being included in the Orient, it sits not to the east, but rather directly south of Europe. Another definition, one which is arguably more relevant for 18th-19th century France, defines the Orient as all of the territories which the Ottoman Empire occupied at its height in the 16th century.[9] Islam was an important part of this understanding of the Orient, and an Islamic region would be generally grouped together with the Ottoman Orient, regardless of political or cultural connection. Although the French of the 18th and early 19th centuries would have seen the entirety of the Near East and Asia as being broadly similar (and thus understood them as 'the Orient') the Ottoman Empire was the primary reference and most quintessential Orient.[10] The ambiguity in the term reflected precisely the way in which it was understood by Europeans; cultures defined by their difference to Europe more than any characteristics of their own, generalized into one static and uniform image.

The idea of the Orient, and therefore orientalism, has a long history in the culture of Europe. Said points to the era of Islamic expansion in the 7th and 8th centuries as a foundational event that defined how Christian Europe understood the Orient for centuries to come. The sudden appearance of a foreign political and religious entity that so completely conquered and converted much of the known world terrified Christian Europe, and Islam came to symbolize terror and devastation in the European consciousness. The threat of Islam remained ever-present

[9] Geczy, 14
[10] Van Cleave, 6

for a millenia afterward, and Said argues that in that time European culture thoroughly incorporated the fear of Islam into its philosophy, lore, virtues, and vices. As Said simply puts it, "For Europe, Islam was a lasting trauma."[11] Islam, and the Islamic Orient, was construed as the fundamental 'other' of Europe, a dark alternative that was always lurking beside them, and European study and interpretation of the Orient was always conducted in this context. However, in Said's argument, the 18th century was a turning point in the relationship between Europe and the Orient. He points to two principal elements that underwent transformation during this period: growing systemic knowledge in Europe about the Orient; and Europe's increasing confidence that it was in a position of strength over the Orient.[12] These factors both increased interest in the Orient and changed the way that orientalism was practiced. In France, this was the era of *turquerie.* The French people, in particular the French nobility, became unabashedly fascinated with Turkish culture, understood to them to include the entire Ottoman empire, and even Ottoman inspired cultures in Eastern Europe.[13] They masqueraded in Turkish costume, had their portraits done in Turkish styles, watched Turkish themed plays, read travel diaries and ethnographies, and more. Said writes that this period of 18th century orientalism began what he calls 'modern orientalism,' specifically highlighting the expansion, historical confrontation, sympathy with, and classification of the Orient developed during this period as crucial elements for later orientalism.[14] In order to understand the burnous in the context of 19th century French orientalism, it is first crucial to study the preceding period of orientalism, specifically the sartorial orientalism of French *turquerie* as its direct predecessor.

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[11] Said, 86
[12] Said, 64
[13] Van Cleave, 15
[14] Said

Turquerie in the Ancien Régime

In her study of Turkish masquerade in 17th and 18th century France, Julaa Landweber credits a lessening fear of the Ottoman Empire, improving diplomatic relations, and a growing knowledge about the previously mysterious Turkish culture for the growing French obsession with *turquerie*.[15] In effective summary of this evolution, she presents the differing receptions to three Ottoman embassy visits to France, each of which kicked off a new *turquerie* fad. The first diplomat in 1669 was received with open disdain by the French public, the second in 1721 unabashed fascination, and in 1741 outright celebration and embrace of the French-speaking ambassador Saïd Efendi.[16] Much of this change was born of a reciprocal dynamic; as the Ottoman diplomats' respect and interest in French culture grew, so did French interest in Ottoman culture. However, Landweber clearly argues in agreement with Said that this evolution of French interest in the Turkish Orient reflected not simply an improving relationship between France and the Ottoman Empire, but a growing confidence that France was the definitive superior in that relationship.[17] The other major influence on *turquerie,* growing knowledge of Turkish and 'oriental' culture, was facilitated in large part by a growing retinue of published traveller's diaries and costume albums. The most famous and widely referenced costume album was the 1715 *Recueil de cent estampes représant différentes Nations du Levant,* a book of ethnographic costume plates published by a French ambassador to Sublime Porte.[18] The illustrations and written descriptions of Ottoman dress within were used as the authoritative

[15] Julia Landweber, "Celebrating Identity: Charting the History of Turkish Masquerade in Early Modern France." *Romance Studies : A Journal of the University of Wales* 23, no. 3 (2005)
[16] Landweber, 176.
[17] Landweber, 179.
[18] Landweber, 181-182.

reference for a growing clientele of Turkish masqueraders and orientalist painters.[19] Van Cleave writes that costume albums such as this one "represented Western Europeans' desire to categorize nations and people via their dress and character, which were supposedly linked. European-produced albums contributed to the idea that cultures could be reduced to visual characteristics, as well as the 'othering' of foreign cultures."[20] This fits into Said's argument about the West collecting knowledge about the Orient as a demonstration of power over it, and as a way of authoritatively reducing oriental cultures into a simple image that could be used by the Europeans for their own ends. However, *turquerie* was used by different parts of French society in a variety of ways to represent or achieve diverse concepts and goals. We will explore a few of the several facets of French *turquerie* as it relates specifically to sartorial orientalism in order to determine what exactly this interaction with Turkish, and oriental culture more broadly, meant for the French people.

The most direct and clear use of sartorial orientalism in 18th century France was oriental masquerade and costume. Geczy defines Masquerade as one of the three main types of orientalism in dress, alongside Assimilation and Tokenism.[21] He defines Masquerade as recognizably disguising oneself as the other, the most self-conscious form of orientalism in his model. Geczy argues that oriental masquerade is generally used in order to exercise a temporary release from social restrictions and allows for experimentation with personal or cultural identity. The oriental masquerade of *ancien régime* nobility was established in a long history of French masquerade, but oriental costume surpassed all others in popularity by the mid-18th century.[22]

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[19] Landweber, 176.; Van Cleave, 16.
[20] Van Cleave, 16.
[21] Geczy, 11.
[22] Landweber, 176, 179

Landweber argues, similarly to Geczy's model, that this practice of Masquerade was a manner of experimenting with national and personal identity in the safe guise of the other.[23] Between the mid-17th and mid-18th century, Turkish masquerade moved from vague and allegorical to demonstrating near ethnographic accuracy, a change facilitated by costume albums and increasing interaction with the Ottomans.[24] In the late 17th to early 18th century, oriental themed plays were very popular, and French actors increasingly donned oriental costumes. Van Cleave argues that this practice of representing Turkish characters through simple clothing changes contributed to an idea that the difference between the French and the Turks were mainly cosmetic, although it's unclear how well this lines up with other evidence.[25]

The oriental masquerade of the French nobility also served the simple purpose of broadcasting wealth, worldliness, and power in their ability to convincingly emulate the exotic. Landweber highlights the students of the Academy of France constructing an elaborate Turkish masquerade for the 1748 Carnival in Rome: *La Caravane du Sultan à la Mecque,* in which they costumed themselves as a noble Turkish procession escorting the Sultan on a pilgrimage to Mecca.[26] The masquerade was a resounding success, thoroughly impressing their audience and inspiring significant diplomatic respect for France.[27] The elaborate masquerade reminded Roman onlookers of France's historical ties to the Ottoman Empire and their current friendship, as well as implying that France was now the superior in that relationship by showing that mere students could recreate all the wealth and pomp of the greatest Ottoman nobles.[28] In reality, they had

[23] Landweber, 175.
[24] Landweber, 181-183.
[25] Van Cleave 21.
[26] Landweber, 175, 177-180.
[27] Landweber, 179.
[28] Landweber, 186.

skillfully disguised cheap canvas and fake glass jewels in order to create the spectacle, but the impression of wealth and power was strong.[29] In a similar manner, it was very fashionable during the 18th century to be painted in oriental costume as a way of signaling that same educated worldliness and wealth.[30] Sometimes the meaning was more pointed that simple boasting, as we can see in the oriental portraits commissioned by Madame de Pompadour, Louis XV's favorite mistress. An influential cultural and political figure in her own right, Pompadour was an avid patron of *turquerie,* and used oriental iconography to fashion herself as the head of the King's royal harem.[31] Her oriental portraits, depicting her as *la sultane,* were intended to construct a sort of legitimacy for her role in the French court, where she lacked any official authority but held great personal influence. By presenting herself as analogous to the head of the Sultan's harem, she created a role for herself, legitimizing and romanticizing her place by the King's side.[32]

Just as Geczy's model would suggest, the use of oriental masquerade was the clearest and most conscious use of sartorial orientalism in 17th-18th century France. Oriental dress was intentionally used by the French, principally the French nobility, to signal personal or national wealth and power and construct alternative identities for themselves. Within this practice of orientalism, there is a clear distinction between the usual French identity and dressing up in the identity of the other. These French masqueraders played a role that they could and would step out of at will. However, we will find that other usages of oriental dress were not nearly so well

[29] Landweber, 181.
[30] Van Cleave, 18.
[31] Landweber, 184.
[32] Geczy, 64-65.

divided from ideas of western culture. A more subtle kind of orientalism, one that blurred the boundaries between what was French and what was *turquerie* was at the same time taking form.

Turquerie was not confined simply to masquerade, nor was it confined to the costumes of the aristocracy. Turkish and oriental dress was incorporated into French fashion in more casual and subtle ways, crossing over from the oriental into the western. Van Cleave's book *Dressing à la Turque* principally analyzes this phenomenon, of the French taking oriental clothing and adapting it to their own tastes. One particularly compelling example is the development of the *robe à la francaise,* the quintessential French court gown of the mid-18th century, which Van Cleave argues can actually be traced back to the oriental style *robe de chambre.* In the mid-17th century using caftans (a general term for the long robe worn in contemporary Islamic cultures) as loungewear became very popular.[33] These were referred to as the *robe de chambre,* or dressing gown, and they were worn by men and women alike across most of the class spectrum. Van Cleave argues that we can see the *robe de chambre*'s clear influence in the *robe volante* (flying gown) of the 1720s, which was characterized by a loose, rectangular fit without waist definition, distinct from typical French fashions.[34] By the 1740s, the fit of the *robe volante* had been refined enough that it started being referred to by a new name: the *robe à la française.*[35] It was now tightly fitted in the front bodice but maintained the billowing rectangular shape of the *robe volante* in the back. The name, *robe à la française,* demonstrates just how quintessentially French it had become in the eyes of those who wore it, despite retaining characteristics of its caftan-inspired origins. Van Cleave posits that indeed, that made it *more* French, as the practice of adopting foreign styles and refining them to French tastes was considered to be an important

[33] Van Cleave, 42
[34] Van Cleave, 49.
[35] Van Cleave, 50.

part of the French character.[36] She cites a quote from the 1787 January edition of *le magasin des modes*: "Have they [French women] not borrowed, in less than two years, Polish, Turkish, Chinese [dress]?...It is true that they improve these styles…& give things [in return]. When they copy, they correct, they embellish. When they imitate, they create."[37] Adoption and integration of the foreign, particularly the oriental, was being constructed as a vital part of French cultural identity. This relationship construed the French as the active designers, taking oriental styles and by adapting them closer to French tastes which was assumed to inherently improve them.

It's interesting to note that this coincided with the growing feminization of fashion in the 18th century. In Paris, women were increasingly sewing, designing, and selling women's fashion, displacing the role of male tailors in dress-making.[38] Women's fashion consumption was also growing across classes, and fashion magazines rose in demand as these women tried to keep up with the current styles.[39] Previously, fashion was the realm of the aristocracy, but as the accessibility of fashion expanded and women took on more active roles in the process of creating fashion, it became more aligned with gender than class. *Le magasin des modes* specifies that it is French women who adapt these oriental styles, and it would appear that the talent for adapting foreign styles was not just being constructed as an element of the national French character, but the character of French women specifically.

This is certainly not to suggest that orientalism more generally was principally associated with feminine fashion. Men's styles were also subject to significant influence from the Orient. Van Cleave specifically highlights the impact of Eastern European military uniforms,

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[36] Van Cleave, 3.
[37] Van Cleave, 4
[38] Van Cleave, 8.
[39] ibid.

particularly of Poland and Hungary. These countries were within the sphere of influence of the Ottoman Empire, and were considered to be Orient-adjacent, if not fully oriental. At the very least, the French saw their clothing as being closer to Turkish in style than Western European. French troops frequently met Eastern troops on the battlefield during the 17th and 18th century, and directly cooperated with Polish and Hungarian units. The French celebrated the "bravery and flamboyant style" of these Eastern European troops, and several French regimental uniforms took inspiration from the Polish and Hungarian styles during the 18th century.[40] In this case, it appears that oriental styles were associated with masculine virtues of bravery and confidence.

Another way in which oriental clothing entered into the wardrobes of French men was as the uniform of the educated intellectual. Geczy argues that for 18th century male elites, oriental dress was used to signify a freewheeling intellectual mind, unconstrained by vain societal convention. By the end of the 17th century, it had become popular for men of high education to depict themselves in oriental style robes, showing off "prowess as intrepid thinkers and adventurous spirits."[41] By the middle of the 18th century, one particular clothing item had come to represent these ideas: the banyan. This was an informal robe used as a dressing gown that was attributed to various oriental origins (the French associated it with the Armenia, which was very popular in intellectual circles, but it is mostly inspired by a blend of Japanese and Indian clothing)[42] It became very fashionable for men of intellectual or philosophical aspirations to be painted in the banyan, which showed an intellectual flexibility and appealing eccentricity. Rousseau was one highly influential intellectual who adopted oriental clothing wholeheartedly from 1762-1767. During this time, he wore only Armenian robes while he lived in a remote town

[40] Van Cleave, 19-20.
[41] Geczy, 48-49.
[42] Geczy, 51-52.

in Switzerland.[43] His primary motivation was likely due to the clothing affording him greater comfort as he suffered from a urinary illness, but by donning his Armenian robes he assumed the intellectual, exotic, naturalistic implications associated with the intersection of oriental dress and enlightenment thought.[44] He never publicly advocated for others to adopt non-western dress, but his personal choices nevertheless had a cultural impact in the way that the French saw the relationship between oriental dress and enlightenment thought. As a symbol for intellectualism and enlightenment ideals, oriental dress signaled that a man was stepping out of the status quo, and even positioning himself above the strict and ever changing conventions of French fashion. Ironically, this ceased to be a particularly subversive or eccentric act as oriental clothing formed into a sort of uniform for the intellectual elite.

In the context of the masquerade, *turquerie* was associated with luxury, decadence, and style, but in other contexts it could also represent the opposite: modesty, simplicity, and stasis. Fashion was seen as a western invention in the18th century (and to a certain extent modern day) Europe, whereas the rest of the world had 'costume,' assumed to be deeply culturally meaningful and never changing. For Europeans in critique of their ever changing and yet always rigid fashion standards, the presumed lack of fashion in the Orient was an appealing alternative. In his Tableau de Paris, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, a prominent French writer, quipped "Why do we not laugh at oriental clothing which doesn't change, yet our tailors constantly cut and recut cloth in different ways? It's because oriental clothing is made for the human form."[45] The idea that clothing should indeed be made for the human form was a growing part of enlightenment thought in the 18th century. Rousseau was the intellectual leader of the debate around how dress

[43] Van Cleave, 142.
[44] ibid.
[45] Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1781–9), Tableau de Paris, ed. Jean-Claude Bonnet (Paris: Mercure de France, 1994), v.2, 125.

impacted the quality of people's lives.[46] He was concerned with the luxury and artifice of western fashion, and in particular on its effects on women and children, and proposed more simple and natural dress as their antidote.[47] His treatise *Émile, ou De L'Education* (1762) was very influential to this end.[48]Among his many ideas on the ideal ways to raise and educate a child, he wrote about the importance of natural, non restrictive clothing for small children, and for older girls to be directed towards simple, modestly elegant styles over the flamboyant and fashionable. Although he does not explicitly relate this advice with oriental clothing, many enlightenment authors who shared his philosophy endorsed oriental styles for the dress of children.[49] In *Dissertation sur l'éducation physique des enfants* (1762)*,* Genevan doctor Jacques Balexert argued that the Turks were among the strongest men in Europe because they did not swaddle their babies or wear restrictive clothing.[50] Many enlightenment authors suggested loose ottoman style clothing for young children to fully support their physical development.

These ideas about simple, healthful dress carried over into adult's fashion as well, although to a less fundamentally transformational degree. For French men, enlightenment clothing reform was associated with the rising popularity of more simple and comfortable english styles, but for women, it was more likely to be associated with oriental inspired styles.[51] Fashion magazines responded to the clothing reform movement and the criticism of fashion by promoting styles such as the *robe à la turque, robe lévite,* and *robe à la polonaise.*[52] These styles were simpler in construction and decoration than their contemporary alternatives, and they could

[46] Van Cleave, 139.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Van Cleave, 140.
[49] Van Cleave, 144.
[50] Van Cleave, 143.
[51] Van Cleave, 139.
[52] Van Cleave, 146.

have benefited from all the associations between modesty, morality and simplicity and oriental dress. The *robe à la polonaise* was particularly praised in discussions of natural and modest dress, and often explicitly linked with Rousseau. The drawn up skirts of the style, which raised the hemline and allowed for easier movement, were often highlighted as aligning with clothing reform ideals.[53] Ultimately, promoting these styles was a way for fashion magazines to repurpose criticisms of the fashion industry as a way to promote themselves and defend fashion as a whole. In associating these fashionable oriental styles with enlightenment ideals and constructions of the naturalistic and modest Orient, they reinforced the idea that oriental styles were morally superior to western ones, but could also be integrated into western culture without any true disruption of social convention.

[53] Van Cleave, 145.

The Burnous

French Interpretations of the Algerian Burnous

During the early years of the French occupation in Algeria, several officers wrote descriptions of Algeria and memoirs of their experiences there. This is the medium through which most French people learned about this new frontier. Many were based primarily around personal experience, but some were more academically ethnographic in nature, detailing what the French author observed in the customs and costumes of the local Algerians. Within these, burnous are often mentioned or focused on as a staple piece of clothing within the country. In "Recueillies dans une courte excursion en algérie," (1832) the author describes the clothing of the different ethnic groups of Algers: the Moors with their turbans, the Jews with rich and strict robes, and the Arabs with their burnous. He describes both men and women as wearing the burnous, and notes that the whiteness of the burnous can be used to discern class, particularly for women who wear little decoration to show their wealth in public.[54] In his 1831 memoire, Hubert Lauvergene mentions burnous multiple times and has a note defining the burnous as "a large rag of wool, more or less rough, which serves the Bedouin as a cloak for the day and a blanket during the night."[55] Claude Antoine writes in *Relation de la guerre d'Afrique: pendant les années 1830 - 31* about burnous being used as diplomatic gifts between Arab tribes.[56] These mentions of the burnous depict the cloak as a near ubiquitous and symbolically important garment within Algeria.

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54 "Recueillies dans une courte excursion en algérie" in *L' investigateur: journal de la Société des Etudes Historiques*. France, 1832, 97-112.

55 Lauvergne, Hubert. *Histoire de l'expédition d'Afrique en 1830, ou, Mémoires historiques sur tous les événements qui ont signalé la marche de notre armée depuis son départ de Toulon jusqu'à l'occupation d'Alger: suivie des Trois journées africaines, poème*. France: Béchet, 1831, 266.

56 Rozet, Claude Antoine. *Relation de la guerre d'Afrique: pendant les armées 1830 - 31*. France: Didot, 1832.

One of the most detailed early French descriptions of Algeria is *Voyage dans le Régence d'Alger,* written by Claude Antoine Rozet, a French officer, geographer, and naturalist.[57] It consists of two main volumes –the first dealing with the geography and environment, the second with the people– and an atlas of illustrations. The second volume is divided into chapters on each ethnic group that he identified in Algeria, detailing what he observed of their appearance, customs, history, and clothing, as well as the requisite judgements on the relative civility of each. He introduces the burnous as "a cloak of white or brown wool, with a pointed hood, stitched on with a hook and eye fastening, which the Berbers, Arabs, and in general all Algerians wear during winter, and which they carry with them almost every day that they go out."[58] He notes that women never wear the burnous, in contrast to the author of "Recueillies dans une courte

[57] Claude Antoine Rozet, *Voyage dans le Régence d'Alger,* Paris: 1833.

[58] Rozet, 14."Le Bernous est un manteau en laine blanche ou brune, portant un capuchon pointu , cousu à l'endroit de l'agrafe , que les Berbères, les Arabes, et en général tous les Algériens mettent pendant l'hiver, et qu'ils emportent presque tou- jours avec eux quand ils sortent." (translation mine)

excursion en algérie." An illustration of the burnous is included in the atlas as the costume of the Arab man.[59]

Fig. 1. Femme arabe, dans son intérieur et Arabe avec le Burnous, in Voyage dans la régence d'Alger, 1833.

The burnous depicted here is a full length white cloak, covering most of the body. The ¾ side-back angle clearly displays the conical hood, with a small tassel on the point. Later depictions of the Algerian burnous do not always include this shape of hood, rather more closely resembling the draped white cloaks that Rozet depicts the Berbers in. The contemporary French descriptions of the burnous discussed earlier do not make specific mention of this specific type of hood either, so it is possible that Rozet was inaccurately defining a specific cut of cloak as the true burnous,

[59] Claude Antoine Rozet, *Voyage dans la Régence d'Alger: Atlas,* Paris: 1833.

when the term might have been used more broadly. Regardless, the French interpretation of the burnous would latch onto this hood shape as a defining feature, whether because it was the most common in Algeria, the most unique feature, or simply because it was depicted in the earliest representations of the burnous that they encountered.

In these early descriptions of Algeria, the burnous is mentioned quite frequently in description of Algerian costume, and curious French readers looking for inspiration in Algeria would likely have taken note of it as an clothing item emblematic of the Maghreb. It was not the only clothing item adopted out of Algeria; haïcks (a full body shawl/veil), gandouras (a long tunic), and tarbouch/fez caps were similarly described by French authors in Algeria and later integrated into the Paris fashion scene.[60] However, none had the prevalence or longevity of the burnous in French fashion. While it is important not to project later constructions of meaning retroactively, it is notable that the burnous continued to hold practical and symbolic value, and became a national symbol of Algerian culture. The cultural importance of the burnous appears evident in these French descriptions, which gives context to the decision to adopt it as a fashionable oriental clothing item.

The Burnous in France

The earliest known mentions of the burnous in French fashion magazines appear in 1836.[61] On November 25th, 1836, *Journal des dames et des modes* includes the fashion section on the first page of the issue. They write that a large quantity of fashionable women are adopting court mourning fashion for the winter season, which promotes simpler styles. After a description

[60] Thoral, 60-63.

[61] The earliest example I was able to find, discussed above, was published November 25th, 1836. Thoral also used 1836 as the starting date for the burnous appearing in Paris, although I was not able to reference the *Tableau de Paris* issue that she cites for this date.

of the several appropriate trends for this period of court mourning, the author writes "We lastly note, during the evening at the Italian Theatre, the burnous of Mme. the Marquise of L., a young and beautiful woman, newly married; this Burnous (an Algerian cloak) was made of white merino wool, which in the delicacy of the fabric could rival the most beautiful French cashmere. The flocons or large tassels of this burnous (a specialty of this type of cloak) were of red ponceau silk, which produced a rich and picturesque effect. The most elegant women appear very taken in this form of cloak; and the men notice again and again the woman who wears it."[62] The burnous is introduced and defined to the readership, implying that this is written before the burnous has become popular enough for most to know it by name. In the preceding description of styles and fabrics appropriate for court mourning, merino wool is noted as an acceptable fabric, so it follows that the simple wool burnous could fit into those parameters. The tassels are noted as a unique feature, which is consistent with the illustration in *Voyage dans la régence d'Alger*, but may also speak to the general popularity of tassels in western fashion during this period. The author promotes the garment by appealing to the desire to attract men's attention, a common tool to promote many styles, but this appeal is also consistent with the association between oriental styles and sensuality and an exoticism which elevates one above the crowd.

[62] "On a remarqué dernièrement à la sortie du Théâtre-Italien le Burnous de Mme la marquise de L***, jeune et belle personne nouvellement mariée; ce Burnous (manteau algérien) était en mérinos blanc qui par la finesse du tissu aurait pu rivaliser avec le plus beau cachemire français. Les flocons ou grosses houpes de ce Burnous (spécialité de cette espèce de manteau) étaient en soie rouge ponceau, ce qui produisait un effet riche et pittoresque. Les femmes les plus élégantes paraissaient fort occupées de cette forme de manteau ; et les hommes remarquaient plus encore la personne qui le portait." "Modes." *Journal des dames et des modes,* November 25, 1836.

The earliest illustration of the French burnous I have identified is shown in the December 1839 edition of fashion magazine *La Mode*.[63] The cut and drape of the cloak differs substantially

Fig. 2. Fashion plate of the burnous in *La Mode,* 1839.

from the Algerian version: circular, near full length in the back but only reaching the hips in the front, creating a shape which better flatters the gowns underneath. The conical hood and tassels previously depicted remain consistent, and body of the burnous is still the traditional white, but a colorful lining and trim have been added. Overall, it still retains enough characteristics of the Algerian burnous to be recognizable, but it's clearly been changed to conform more closely to the fashionable silhouette for ladies' capes. Other examples within a period of a few years seem

[63] *La Mode,* December 1839. *Cassey Fashion Plates Collection.*

similar to this style. A fashion plate from the January 1840 issue of *La Mode* depicts a similar white burnous with colored lining and trim, but with a consistent full length from front to back.[64] A written description from October of 1841 mentions both white burnous with colored silk borders and burnous made entirely in colored velvet (which were almost exclusively made of silk), demonstrating a considerable departure from the original white woolen cloaks.[65]

The Bohemians and Sartorial Orientalism

The burnous was almost certainly introduced into France long before it was first recorded in Paris fashion magazines. As is the case for most garments, it is unclear who began the trend. Thoral hypothesizes that the first French to adopt the burnous were the young, eccentric artists and intellectuals of Paris, namely the bohemians.[66] She writes that orientally-inclined early travellers to Algeria returned wearing these burnous as a mark of worldliness and dissent against the dominant western culture.[67] As this trend spread among the unconventional artists and writers of Paris, it was eventually adopted into the fashionable middle class. However, Thoral's argument for this origin of the French burnous is built on the established bohemian fascination with oriental dress before the burnous appeared in Paris and the example of influential bohemians who returned from trips to Algeria wrapped in burnous after the mid-1830s. Neither of these pieces of evidence give any firm indication that the bohemians would have been the first French adopters of the burnous. Still, she is not wrong that the culture of the bohemians was likely an influential factor in the adoption of the burnous, and they warrant further discussion.

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64 *La Mode,* January 1840. *Cassey Fashion Plates Collection.*
65 *La Mode,* October 2, 1841, 31. *Gallica.*
66 Thoral, 60.
67 ibid.

Bohemianism originated in Paris, and came into its own as a movement during the 1830s. The name is taken from *boheme,* the French word for the Romani people. As a social and aesthetic movement (one which still exists today in various forms), it is characterized by a rejection of societal convention and an embrace of the odd, artistic, philosophical, and unconventional. It shares ideological and aesthetic origins with romanticism, and in the early 19th century, as Bohemianism took form, the two movements were closely associated, if not indistinguishable.[68] In the 1820s, young, subversive artists and intellectuals in Paris increasingly adopted unconventional dress as a way of signaling their artistic and moral dissent from the dominant culture. Mary Gluck writes that "Young men were to be seen everywhere, sporting Venetian outfits from the sixteenth century, Polish military uniforms from Bradenburg, Hungarian hussars' mantels, and oriental robes of all kinds, which were worn as markers of artistic identity and personal distinction."[69] Their sartorial rebellion was largely intended to signal their distaste for the rigidity of conventional society, but the specific garments they chose for this rebellion had more specific meanings. Medieval European clothing and oriental clothing were particularly common.[70] The choice of oriental clothing was in part the legacy of 18th century intellectual tradition, in which educated men wore oriental robes to signal "an expanded and freewheeling consciousness."[71] These fashions also evoked nostalgia and primitivism; Gluck writes that dedicated primitivist bohemians leaned more heavily into the oriental than others.[72] Geczy writes that this was the beginning of a period in which "certain precepts about the 'primitive' and the oriental became conflated and solidified," a process in which the bohemians

[68] Gluck.
[69] Gluck, 28.
[70] Gluck, 30-32.
[71] Geczy, 49.
[72] Geczy, 32.

played a significant role.[73] They criticized the rigidity, commercialism, and elitism which many saw as inherent in modern 'civilization' by dressing themselves in the guise of the 'other,' seen as an alternative to the dominant culture of Europe. Geczy writes that "orientalism had steeped into European society as more than just a place of reverie; it represented very real alternatives to contemporary ethics."[74]

By the 1830s, these modes of unusual dress were popular enough among the class of young artists that foreign visitors often described them as a feature of Parisian culture.[75] The features of bohemian dress slowly bled over into conventional fashion, but they did not take with them their counter-cultural implications. The adoption of bohemian trends was first seen in loungewear, which had already long been associated with oriental dress in French culture (the quintessential *la robe de chambre* being seen as near identical to caftan). Mainstream culture simultaneously mocked the eccentricity of the bohemians and incorporated parts of that eccentric style which they found appealing.[76] This is the kind of pattern that Thoral suggests for the adoption of the burnous, but as we have already shown, there is little direct evidence for the burnous to have moved from a subcultural style to a mainstream one. Although the bohemians may have been the most enthusiastic adopters of oriental fashions, sartorial orientalism had never retreated from popular French fashion. There is a relatively continuous line between *turquerie*, Egyptomania, and Algeria-focused orientalism. Nevertheless, the bohemian relationship with oriental dress and the way that relationship was interpreted by mainstream French culture gives valuable context to the meaning of the French burnous.

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[73] Geczy, 89.
[74] Geczy, 87.
[75] Gluck, 33.
[76] Gluck, 54.

Even if they were not the true trendsetters, the bohemians clearly adopted the burnous alongside the fashionable mainstream. However, what the adoption of the burnous meant to them may not have lined up with what it meant to the trendy *marchandes des modes* of Paris. Théophile Gautier was one such bohemian lover of the burnous. An influential romanticist writer and lover of bohemia, Gautier was fascinated with the oriental. In 1845, half a year before his first voyage to Algeria, he wrote in *La Presse:*

> 'It is strange, we believe we have conquered Algeria, and Algeria has conquered us. Our women already wear scarves interwoven with thread of gold, streaked with a thousand colours, which have served the harem slaves, our young men are adapting the camelhair burnous. The tarbouch has replaced the classic cashmere skull-cap, everyone is smoking a nargileh, hashish is taking the place of champagne; our Spahi officers look so Arab one would think they had captured themselves with a smala; they have adopted all the Oriental habits, so superior is primitive life to our so-called civilization.
>
> If this goes on, France will soon be Mahometan and we shall see the white domes of mosques rounding themselves on our horizons, and minarets mingling with steeples, as in Spain at the time of the Moors. We should indeed like to live to see the day…[77]

Théophile Gautier exaggerates here for rhetorical effect, but he still infuses the French adoption of Algerian fashions with great meaning. He himself returned from Algeria wrapped in a burnous, and is described by friends as having worn it regularly afterwards.[78] It would seem he donned the burnous out of an admiration for Algeria and a hope that the French could, and were, learning from them through cultural interaction. It would seem that he saw the adoption of the burnous and other Algerian garments as a partial realization of this hope, ascribing some level of wistful admiration to the fashionable Parisians who adopted these garments. The reason he admires Algeria is quite clearly put: he values primitivism over 'civilization' and sees the Orient

[77] Richardson, 76.
[78] Richardson, 78.

as the best representation of that. The description of mosques emerging in France as it transforms into a part of the Orient itself is evocative, especially when the colonial mission in Algeria was ideologically grounded in the spread of civilization and Christianity. Instead, Gautier imagines the Orient enveloping France, freeing them from 'civilization.' In reality, Gautier was not a critic of French colonization of Algeria, even endorsing it at certain times, and this sentiment was more dreamlike than a real subversion of colonial rhetoric.[79] He was deeply upset on his second visit to Algeria to see the French setting a railroad network into the Algerian countryside, but his grievances were focused on the corruption of the primitive countryside rather than a criticism of French colonial control.[80] Like other French orientalists, Gautier engaged with the idea of the Orient with acceptance of its European constructions. He never questioned whether the Orient was really less civilized, more primitively minded, and in possession of less agency than Europe; he simply decided that all these traits were actually good rather than bad. Still, in this way Gautier admired Algeria and the Orient, and presumed that admiration was the primary reason for which the French dressed themselves in oriental clothes.

No matter how influential, Gautier's sentiments cannot be used as a proxy for all bohemians and unconventional romanticists of Paris. However, other prominent bohemians such as Sainte Beuve adopted the burnous alongside him, and his ideas expressed here about Algerian dress do fit together with what orientalism meant more broadly to the bohemians.[81] For them, it was a way to signal their rejection of the norm, and an admiration for the 'other,' in what they see as a better, alternative way of life. This admiration was entirely based, in a somewhat indefinite and dreamlike way, on European constructions of the Orient and the primitive, but it

[79] Dobie 12-15.
[80] Richardson, 177.
[81] Thoral, 61.

was felt in an impassioned manner. However, their interpretation of the Orient was a minority sentiment in French society, and could not fully explain the appeal of the burnous for the majority of the French people. What exactly was the appeal and meaning of the Algerian burnous for the fashionable French mainstream?

Like in the 18th century, orientalism in France did not have singular meanings or consistently represent the same cohesive concepts. Many constructions about the Orient were universal, but the way that different groups in France interpreted those constructions in different contexts were not. Orientalism was used as subversive imagery, as a way of demonstrating wealth and worldliness, as a moral dress, or as trendy, exotic fashion. Many of these diverse constructions of oriental clothing continued into the mid 19th century.

The Appeal of the Burnous in Popular French Culture

The bohemian use of sartorial orientalism falls best into Geczy's category of Masquerade. This type of sartorial orientalism is characterized by recognizably disguising oneself as the other as a way to achieve release from social restrictions or to explore personal and/or national identity.[82] Gluck argues that the artists who were part of the 'ironic bohemia' movement of the 1830s-1850s engaged in a 'self conscious masquerade,' similar to Geczy's model. She writes that they practiced self representation (in their dress, their writing, and their visual imagery) in an intentionally theatrical manner, parodying themselves and/or consciously rejecting the mainstream culture through eccentric masquerade.[83] When bohemians such as Gautier donned the Algerian burnous, it fulfilled this purpose: dressing in the guise of the other to signal rejection of the mainstream and conscious identification with the other. However,

[82] Geczy, 11.
[83] Gluck, 20.

fashionable, mainstream adoption of the burnous does not appear to have followed this model. The fashionable young women of Paris who adopted the burnous did not do so as an oriental costume or disguise, they paired it with conventional French gowns. Neither did they take up the burnous as a way of signaling their distaste for the dominant French culture, if the descriptions in fashion magazines reflect general opinion. Their adoption of the burnous is more in line with Geczy's other two categories: Assimilation, which he describes as more unselfconscious and practical, and has the oriental elements eventually fully absorbed into occidental culture; and Tokenism, which is driven more by economics and politics, and uses oriental touches as elements to 'spice up' fashions, and which always retain their identity as foreign.[84] Like in 18th century *turquerie*, the appeal of the burnous was connected to elements that the French found appealing or admirable in their concept of the orient, whether they were practical, moral, or simply excited the imagination.

One appeal of the burnous was a perception that the cloak was more natural, modest, and healthful than its European counterparts. Some doctors, such as Emile Beaugrand in his treatise *L'hygiène pour l'art de conserver la santé,* recommended the burnous as a healthful alternative to restrictive European-style winter coats, supporting the natural function of the body.[85] This is reminiscent of the clothing reform movement of the late 18th century, which used Turkish clothing as an alternative example of dress which was designed for the human form, and to which many doctors ascribed long-term health benefits.[86] It seems very possible that the burnous inherited these associations between oriental clothing and healthfulness. In an 1857 issue of fashion magazine *Pysché,* a fashion journalist describes examples of popular children's fashion,

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84 Geczy, 11.

85 Émile Beaugrand, *L'Hygiène, ou l'Art de conserver la santé*, France: L. Hachette, 1855, 118, 125.

86 Van Cleave, 143-145.

and includes burnous as an appropriate coat for a little girl.[87] This may be connected to it being seen as more healthful and comfortable for children, similar to the adoption of oriental style clothing for children in the late 18th century.

A large part of the appeal of the burnous for the fashionable French citizen seemed to be divided by gender. In the context of gender representation, the burnous had differential meanings. In French descriptions of the burnous in Algeria, the cloak is more commonly associated with men, but some sources describe it as being worn universally, regardless of gender. Mentions of the burnous in French written sources during the mid-19th century are most likely to associate the term with descriptions of an Arab Algerian man (mostly Algerian soldiers during the 1830s), but not always. A common argument in the analysis of 19th century European orientalism is that Europe generally feminized or degendered the Orient and oriental men as a tool to legitimize their perpetual inferiority.[88] There is some evidence of this in French representation of Algeria, but there is also evidence of a perception of exaggerated masculinity in Algerian men. Thoral posits that Algerian clothing, particularly clothing worn by Algerian soldiers, was associated with manliness, virility, and strength.[89] There is a direct line between this admiration of the Algerian military costume and the oriental military costume fads of the 18th and early 19th century. We have already discussed the adoption of Hungarian and Polish influences into certain French regimental uniforms during the 18th century, inspired by French admiration of the bravery and flamboyance of Eastern European troops. Similarly, Egyptian details were very popular for French officers' military dress following the Napoleonic Expedition of 1798, and various Middle Eastern items like cashmere sashes and *sabres à la*

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87 Constance Aubert, "Manteaux. Au Coin de Rue, Rue Montesquieu, 8." *Psyché* (1857), 164.
88 Rovine, 57; Dobie, 2.
89 Thoral, 60.

maelouk became broadly incorporated into formal French military dress.[90] In 1863, an Algerian Spahi (French light cavalry unit recruited from the Algerian Arab and Berber population) regiment caused a sensation after being invited to Paris, with curious crowds constantly surrounding their barracks.[91] This long standing fascination with oriental soldiers presumably contributed to the appeal of the burnous, which was also a common item in Algerian military uniforms, as an item which exemplified oriental masculinity.

For French men, the burnous fit into this tradition of brash oriental masculinity. Thoral highlights a quote from the book *L'Algérie telle qu'elle est:*

> The settler […] chose a big woolen waterproof southern brown burnous made at Gardaïa. 'With it' the settler told his cousin, 'you will be mistaken in France for a song of big tents [a tribal Arab chief], catch the attention of all customers of the Café américain [in Paris], be invited to the most select salons, fool women and politicians…throw this burnous on your shoulder, put the hood on, take on a dark look [and you will be as popular as] the Muslims who turn the heads of all the girls on the boulevard de Strasbourg.[92]

Here, the burnous is associated with an exotic and mysterious kind of masculinity, an interesting counterpart to the image of the mysteriously hidden and sensual oriental woman.

For French women, there was a similar history of the oriental woman representing gendered appeal. Thoral claims that "women were also drawn to traditional Algerian clothes because of the appeal of orientalist images and clichés regarding seductive Oriental women."[93] This seductive appeal indeed had a long history in France, one we saw in oriental style portraiture of noble women. Our first known mention of the burnous in a fashion magazine alludes to this appeal, focusing on the male attention the burnous will bring a woman.[94]

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[90] Geczy, 82.
[91] Thoral, 63.
[92] Thoral, 61.
[93] Thoral, 60.
[94] "Modes." *Journal des dames et des modes,* November 25, 1836.

However, descriptions of the burnous in fashion magazines focus less on sensuality and more on modest elegance. The words "*simple*" and "*élégant*" often appear in descriptions of burnous. In the December 1857 edition of *Pysché,* a fashion journalist writes, "The burnous occupies all women at the moment, all young girls especially, it is a salient fashion in the domain of simplicity."[95] She goes on to promote the burnous of a specific fashion house, which she describes as having an incredible rustic, effortless charm.[96] In an 1867 issue of the same journal, a journalist writes "Llama lace shawls, rotondes and yak lace burnous, lined in the color of one's outfit, will always make, firstly, pretty outfits, and secondly, elegant and distinguished outfits."[97] The way in which the burnous was promoted to women, as a simple, elegant, and even timeless piece, is reminiscent of the orinetally-inspired *robe à la polonaise*, *robe levite*, and *robe à la turque* of the 18th century. These styles were considered to be more practical, modest, and less tied to fashion fads than other styles because of their association with the seemingly natural and timeless styles of the Orient.[98] The burnous appears to have carried on this concept that in the western world of fleeting and finicky styles, simple oriental styles which were perceived as more natural and modest had a unique and long lasting appeal.

There were evidently some traits French men and women perceived in the Orient which they wished to emulate, but unlike for the bohemians, this did not entail any true rejection or questioning of the French identity. Van Cleave argues that the reinterpretation of foreign styles and their adoption into French fashion was an important part of French cultural identity during

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95 "Le burnous occupe en ce moment toutes les femmes, toutes les jeunes filles surtout ; c'est une mode saillante qui est du domaine de leur simplicité." Constance Aubert, "Memento," *Psyché, (*1857), 183.

96 The original phrase in French is "qui ont toute la grâce du négligé" which can be literally translated as "which have all the grace of carelessness/sloppiness," but 'effortless charm' or perhaps 'rustic charm' better convey the meaning.
ibid.

97 Marie Delarue, "La Mode," *Pysché* (1867), 75.

98 Van Cleave, 140-149.

the 18th century.[99] It seems very likely that this aspect of French identity was carried into the 19th century. Indeed, we see the burnous undergo an evolution that takes it further and further away from the original Algerian design as the French reinterpret it to their own tastes. Although Van Cleave does not specifically gender this element of French identity, her analysis is almost entirely based on women's fashions. It is notable that the only evidence of the burnous as a true fashion item is as a feminine garment, whereas French men appear to have worn imported burnous, or at least more faithful recreations, when they did don the Algerian cloak.

During the 1830s and early 40s, shortly after its arrival, the French burnous was already visually distinctive from the Algerian original. It had a rounded shape, and although the body was white, contrasting colored silk lining and trim had already been added to embellish the garment. By the mid-century, even more changes had been introduced. An 1865 illustration in *La Mode* depicts a brilliant red burnous, captioned "Rich, velvet cloak in the form of a burnous but with pleats, trimmings, cords, silk tassels and gold thread."[100] The description of this garment

[99] Van Cleave, 4.

[100] "Riche manteau de drap velours en forme de burnous mais avec plis arrêtés, passementeries, cordelières, glands en soie et fil d'or." *La Mode* (1865), 89.

already acknowledges the changes it is making to the burnous by adding embellishments, but it retains the simple drape and conical tasseled hood (here with an exaggerated length), which still

Fig. 3. Fashion plate of two women in ballgowns, including a red burnous-style cloak. *La Mode,* 1865.

mark it as a burnous. Velvet burnous had become a common option by the mid-century, available in a wider variety of colors than the traditional spectrum of white to brown.[101] Cotton burnous, suitable to be used as a summer seaside layer instead of a winter cloak also became popular in the 1860s, deviating even farther from the original wool.[102] A fashion plate from 1857

[101] Constance Aubert, "Memento," *Psyché, (*1857), 183.
[102] Thoral, 62.

shows a burnous for which even greater liberties were taken with the design.[103] Six women in outerwear are each captioned with the name of their ensemble, one of which is the *burnous imperial.* This burnous has alternating solid and tartan panels and a split hood which comes to

Fig. 4. Fashion plate depicting six women in outerwear. *Le Petit Messager,* 1857.

two points instead of one, complete with double the tassels. Interestingly, the outfit of the woman to her right is captioned as a *Haïk,* another Algerian garment which has evidently been adapted beyond recognition. These changes, increasing in level of deviation over time, appear to fit with Van Cleave's model of adoption and gradual reinterpretation.

If we return to Geczy's model of the three categories of orientalism in dress, we can ask whether the French use of the burnous at the end of the Second Empire aligns more closely with Assimilation or Tokenism. Some elements of *turquerie* in Van Cleave's analysis fall closer to the former. When the French adopted Turkish clothes for reasons of comfort and health, such as the *robe à la chambre* or Turkish children's clothing, fit with the more unselfconscious and practical adoption of this category. The evolution of a garment such as the *robe à la chambre* to *robe*

103 "Fiamnia, Topaze, Princess Mathilde, Burnous imperial, Haïk, Manteau Boiteux," *Journal des modes* (1857). *Victoria and Albert Museum.*

volante to *robe à la française,* where an oriental influence is so thoroughly adopted that it becomes more French than Turkish, also falls closer to this model. The burnous was adopted in some practical capacity, but on the whole, its pattern of interpretation by the French aligns with the category of inspiration and tokenism. In this category, a garment is adopted for more directly political reasons, and retains its identity as oriental and foreign, never to be fully adopted into western dress but to exist alongside it as an exotic flair.[104] This relies on the perpetual 'othering' of oriental fashions. As late as the 1860s, the burnous was still sometimes referred to as the '*burnous africaine,'* retaining its mark as an African garment over a French one, despite the great quantity of changes the French had made to it by that point.[105]

There are even more substantial changes made to the burnous when the garment crosses the channel to England in the mid-19th century. Mentions of 'burnous' in English-language sources peak around 1860, and illustrations and extant garments cluster around the 1860s; thus it appears that the garment did not leave France in any substantial way until the mid-century.[106] When the burnous does appear in English sources, it is in the French form, unsurprisingly imported as a French garment instead of an Algerian one. An 1855 painting, *The Bridesmaid,* by British artist George Baxter depicts a young woman in a simple, cream-colored burnous without significant embellishment, but the rounded, half-length cut typical of French women's

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104 Geczy, 11.

105 Constance Aubert, "Pelisses et Manteaux," *Psyché* (1859), 181.

106 "Burnous" shown 1800-1900, English and French in *Google Books Ngram Viewer.* https://books.google.com/ngrams/

burnous.[107] However, some British designers took their own liberties with the design of the burnous. Out of the five 19th century burnous capes in the Victoria and Albert Museum Fig. 5.

Fig. 5. *The Bridesmaid* by George Baxter, 1855.

collections available to study online (each of varying providence, but all made in Britain), four of them are covered in paisley.[108] The estimated dates made of each of these burnous ranges from the 1840s to the 1860s. Paisley, a pattern of Persian origins, was introduced to the British through India, and named after the Scottish town where the pattern was adapted and manufactured for British consumption.[109] It was an iconic oriental motif in British textiles during the 18th and 19th centuries, but it had no connection to Algeria or North Africa more broadly. By adding it the burnous, we can surmise that the British interpreted the burnous as oriental, and

[107] George Baxter, *The Bridesmaid,* 1855, Print, *Victoria and Albert Museum.*

[108] "Collections," *Victoria and Albert Museum,* https://www.vam.ac.uk/collections, accessed May 18th.

[109] Geczy, 106.

subsequently blended in with other oriental aesthetics to achieve the 'exotic' look that appealed to them.

Fig. 6. Brown British burnous with paisley design, ca. 1855-1860. Victoria and Albert Museum

Fig. 7. Black British burnous with paisley design, ca. 1840. Victoria and Albert Museum

This suggests that when the British adopted the fashion from the French, they interpreted it more as an oriental fashion than a French one, despite the significant changes the French made to the design. However, although it retained its identity as oriental, it did not retain its identity as Algerian. French adaptation of the burnous, and subsequent British adaptation of the French interpretation, stripped most Algerian identity out of the burnous, but unlike a garment like the *robe à la francaise,* they did not substitute that lost identity for French. Instead, it was oriental, representative of all the generalized European construction of the Orient, free to spice up French fashion without ever being truly integrated.

Dominance and Colonialism in Algerian Orientalism

We have established the appeal of Algerian clothes for the French, both for those who used it for subversive ideas and for the mainstream, but we have not yet interrogated the power dynamics within the adoption of the burnous in full. The orientalism of the 18th century was grounded in a friendly political relationship with the Ottoman Empire, with a French certainty that they were the superiors in that friendship. The Algerian-centered orientalism of the 19th century was based on France conquering part of the Ottoman Empire, and establishing themselves as the total superiors and rulers of Algeria. For Said, there is a consistent line between these eras of orientalism, in which 18th century *turquerie* acts almost like a rehearsal for the colonialism of the 19th century.[110] As European orientalism is developed and further defined in its philosophies and judgements of the Orient, colonialism and colonial philosophy develop alongside it. The reason that the French had access to the burnous was because of their position of colonial power in Algeria, although as is shown in *turquerie* and egyptomania, colonialism is not required for this kind of oriental adoption; a political relationship, whether friendly or adversarial, can produce the same knowledge and resources. Landweber showed in her study of Turkish masquerade that in the 18th-century French relationship with the Ottoman Empire, orientalism was a way to celebrate and display their connection and to imply that France was the superior.[111] They derived power from orientalism via both association and domination. The burnous seems to have served a similar purpose. However, the choice by a fashionable French bourgeoisie to adopt oriental clothing is based on different motivations than French nobility trying to project political and national power. These kinds of projections of power on a national

[110] Said, 63.
[111] Landweber.

level did matter on some level to the typical French citizen, but on a more basic level, the appeal of something like the burnous was access to the exotic and unknown. Nevertheless, that simple fascination came from a context in which they felt no real threat from that exotic 'other' and felt comfortable enough in their primacy to experiment with what bits of foreign culture they wanted, secure in the feeling that it could be integrated into their own with no true change to it. This starkly contrasts with post-colonial French attitudes, which emphasize the degradation of French culture via foreign, oriental influence which they do not directly control.

The example of the differences in relationship to Algerian clothing between French settlers in Algeria and French citizens in metropolitan France cleanly showcases the underlying power dynamics. While early French travelers to Algeria donned the local costume, as the European settler class became established, the majority refused to wear Algerian clothing in public.[112] Unlike their peers in the homeland, who saw the burnous and other Algerian items as a exotic statement pieces, settlers were keenly aware of the status and power they derived from their European clothes in colonial Algeria, and that to engage in any cultural assimilation was to give up a part of that power.[113]

Thoral argues that the burnous, as the most prominent Algerian garment adopted into French fashion, was used as a symbol of French colonial victory and dominance. She highlights that this "proto-imperialist Orientalist fashion even received official recognition with the purchase of a burnous by the Empress Eugénie in 1855," citing a fashion magazine which notes this purchase and displays the specific burnous.[114] Despite the evident relationship between the French burnous and colonization of Algeria, I believe that looking at this purchase as a

[112] Thoral, 64.
[113] Thoral, 65.
[114] Thoral, 61.

conscious, political endorsement of the burnous as a symbol of French colonialism is too simplistic. For the burnous to be a true symbol of colonial philosophy and success, it would need to display a conscious, unique pattern of adoption and use by the French. Instead, the pattern of adoption and the symbolic meanings instilled in the French burnous are largely consistent with the pre-colonial adoption of oriental garments. The burnous was promoted with the use of the same oriental stereotypes which appealed to the French in the 18th century; it was seen as mysterious and masculine for men, modest and understated while still intriguing for women, and natural and healthful for all. The general pattern of adoption, in which it was introduced as an exotic statement piece and then gradually adapted to French tastes and integrated into mainstream fashion, is also consistent with the 18th century. Even its meaning as a subversive symbol of avant garde intellectualism and rejection of western culture is derived from the 18th century associations between enlightenment philosophy and orientalism. Dobie posits that the orientalist representation of the early and mid 19th century demonstrates far more internal coherence with the orientalism of the 18th century than the late 19th, in that it is not yet representative of a proper colonial discourse.[115] Although orientalist representations become more closely intertwined with colonial policy after 1830, it is not until the Third Republic begins in 1871 that a true colonialist culture and philosophy is developed.[116] Prior to that shift, orientalism continues to display a high level of displacement and aestheticization of oriental life instead of focusing on imagery of conquest and occupation.[117] With a fashionable lifespan between the 1830s and 1870s, the burnous fits into this era of aestheticization.

[115] Dobie, 4.
[116] Dobie, 21.
[117] Ibid.

This is certainly not to say that the burnous was not used to promote French colonialism in Algeria. It, alongside other Algerian garments like haïcks and gandouras, was featured in colonial displays in world's fairs as a way to promote interest in Algeria and to boast their colonial power. In 1855, multiple guilds of burnous producers took part in the Paris universal exhibition, to the interest and delight of fair goers.[118] In 1867, the number of Algerian exhibitors had increased dramatically and displays of Algerian clothes had become commonplace.[119] The promotion of the burnous showed the economic and cultural imports France had gained from their colonization of Algeria. It is relevant that these official promotions do not precede the mass popularity of the burnous, but follow it. Still, that does not mean that similar messages were not implied in popular, unofficial endorsements of the burnous. Even the subversive Théophile Gautier, critic of France and lover of Algeria, was essentially using his adoption of the burnous to endorse French colonialism. He did not say so, and may not have thought of it in those terms, but he did celebrate the association between France and Algeria and the cultural imports France received from that association.[120] However, there is a difference between promoting the connection between France and Algeria that implicitly endorses the colonial nature of that connection, and promoting the unique political philosophy and realities of colonialism in Algeria. This is what divides colonial orientalism in this period from orientalism in the modern French age of empire.

[118] Thoral, 62.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Richardson, 76.

Conclusion

In general, the patterns of adoption and philosophy of orientalism demonstrate consistency between the 18th century and mid-19th century. It was used as a way to challenge western ideas and play in alternative personal and national identities for some, but it was also a means to demonstrate French power via association with and superiority over the Orient. The appeals of oriental dress were largely similar: it was considered natural and healthful, and there was gendered appeal to ideas of modest yet potentially sensual oriental femininity and stoic oriental masculinity. Lastly, the pattern of adoption, in which an oriental garment was imported, modified to French tastes until it resembled French fashion more closely but nevertheless retained identity as an oriental piece, was consistent between these periods.

Within this 18th to mid-19th century pattern of orientalist representation there is a balance of admiration for the Orient and use of orientalism for subversive philosophy with the use of orientalism as an assertion of dominance over the Orient. However, these differing constructions of the Orient were not truly in conflict with each other. The things that people admired about the Orient completely fit into the narrative of Europe's cultural superiority. Those who loved the Orient, even those who thought it morally, aesthetically, or philosophically superior to the Occident, did not love it in a way that contradicted any of the basic European constructions of the Orient. Europe was civilized and the Orient was primitive; they loved the primitive. Europe was prudent while the Orient was sensual and brash; they loved the sensuality and bravado. Europe was complex and the Orient was simple; they loved the simplicity. By and large, admiration of the Orient did not equate respect.

The adoption of the burnous, and the French power it signified, was colonial because the French relationship with Algeria was colonial. Nevertheless, the orientalist representations

surrounding the burnous were not truly different from pre-colonial orientalist representations. Their appeal was based on older constructions of the Orient than any connection to the colonial mission or philosophy. For most of the French that wore it, the burnous did not have much conscious symbolic meaning, but that in itself is reflective of how ingrained these patterns of interaction with the Orient were in French society. What they did likely see in the burnous was a celebration of French association with and power over Algeria. But like the oriental literature of this period, the messages about the Orient that the burnous represented were still largely abstract and distant. The Orient was closer to France than it had ever been before, but it took time for that to be reflected in French orientalist understanding. To them, Algeria was more part of the distant and largely aesthetic Orient than a concrete political entity.

After this period, as colonialist politics and orientalism grew more closely intertwined, orientalist representation and fashion were used more intentionally as a tool of colonial culture. It likewise became more controversial, as critics worried about the integrity of French culture and preservation of the superiority of European culture.[121] However, in this early period of modern colonialism, the French felt confident in their control over what came into their culture and what stayed out. The Orient was a place for them to look for inspiration and enrich their own culture. The burnous exemplifies this comfortable pattern of admiration for and domination of the Orient working in tandem, which would eventually develop into a proper colonial philosophy.

However, to say that the orientalism of this period was not yet properly colonial is not to say that it was not compatible with colonialism. The same 18th century constructions of the Orient were applied to Algeria and the colonization of Algeria for decades, and they existed alongside colonial narratives without conflict. The reason that no change was immediately

[121] Rovine, 51-53.

required in orientalist constructions is because they were already set up for colonialism. The consistency of orientalism between the 18th and mid-19th century show not that orientalism was still stuck in pre-colonial thought, but that orientalism was essentially colonial before any political colonization of the Orient began.

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