

Il vestito forma la persona – “clothes make the man”: Fashion morality in Italian nineteenth-century conduct books

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Abstract

Using a corpus of 40 influential conduct books published in Italy in the long nineteenth century, we apply current insights in the role of values for the emergence and maintenance of conventions developed within the pragmatics of politeness to the prescriptive discourse on fashion, because in these sources norms for verbal and non-verbal behaviour are justified in a similar way. We argue that fashion choices are always said to communicate moral values. Most conduct books reinforce fashion norms by anchoring them in moral values because the authors expect their readers to be morally evaluated in terms of the clothes they wear. We will give an overview of rules regulating bodily hygiene, adornment, dress choice and fashion, and analyse which values are explicitly cited to justify the rules. The positive values such as diligence and parsimony show that fashion morality is seen as a means of self-improvement for the petty bourgeoisie whilst excesses (avarice and laziness on one end and vanity and frivolity on the other) lead to poverty. Our sources predominantly regulate fashion with personal, ego-centered values. This is markedly different from the current debate on sustainable fashion, led by social values such as compassion and altruism. With this historical paper we hope to contribute to the discussion of new approaches for the analysis of moralising discourse in fashion communication.

Keywords

morality, values, conventions, Italy, long nineteenth century, conduct books, ethical fashion

La pulitezza è il lusso del povero [...].
[Cleanliness is the luxury of the poor {...}]¹
Clemente Rossi

1 Fashion Morality

Historians of fashion have often underlined the interwovenness of dress and morality (Breward, 1995; Hollander, 1978, 1994; Kuchta, 2002; Ribeiro, 1986) to set the history of fashion apart from present-day attitudes supposedly characterised by total fashion freedom. Nevertheless, present-day demands for sustainability have reignited the debate on fashion morality. On the one hand, fast fashion is under scrutiny because of environmental issues

¹ Translations are ours, unless indicated otherwise.

(textile waste, use of toxic chemicals and of non-biodegradable materials) and its links with cheap labour in so-called sweatshops, with unacceptable wages and dangerous working conditions; on the other, fast fashion consumers are linked to an Instagram culture, where cheap clothes allow users to wear as many different outfits as possible, in order to perpetuate a (fake) image of wealth and success. From this perspective, fashion morality regards the industry as well as its consumers in that both are subjected to moral judgments: their actions are evaluated in terms of moral values, as good or bad, right or wrong, preferable or avoidable, provoking feelings of like or dislike, and so on. Sustainable fashion is positively evaluated, as “ethical,” because it endeavours to maximise benefits to communities and minimise impact on environment (Ethical Fashion Forum, n. d.; Henninger, Alevizou, & Oates, 2016). The respective moral



evaluations of slow and fast fashion, then, regard both the industry and its consumers, whereas a concept like modest fashion appears to be solely focused on the values of the consumers (Almassi, 2018). In this essay dedicated to the discourse on fashion morality in nineteenth-century Italian conduct books, fashion is used mainly as a benchmark to judge the user, although considerations for fashion as a creator of employment often surface. We argue that in our sources vestimentary choices are always said to communicate moral values and therefore, in this special issue about fashion communication, we understand this topic in two ways: a) most conduct books include a prescriptive and heavily moralising discourse on fashion, i. e., they reinforce fashion norms by rooting them in moral values because b) the authors expect their readers to be morally evaluated in terms of the clothes they are wearing.

Conduct books, by their very nature, focus on politeness and good manners to build meaningful social relationships. They traditionally provide rules for the presentability of one's person and the respectability of one's interactions, where presentability – the quality of who is fit to be seen in public – is considered a prime condition to achieve respectability. Fashion, therefore, is an important element within the codification of presentability. There are, in fact, certain overlaps between fashion and politeness, not in the least because both politeness and fashion are social regulating systems, based on social conventions. The pragmatics of politeness, born in the 1970s and 1980s with seminal publications by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) and Leech (1983), has increasingly looked at non-verbal communication, whereas fashion as well is conceived as a form of non-verbal communication (on the semiotics of fashion, see Barthes, 1967/2015; Crane, 2000). Only fairly recently, politeness studies have started to investigate the role of moral values and how they relate to social conventions. Conventions are kept in place by their frequency, but also by moral values. Moral values constitute a common ground, a shared benchmark for decision-making and for the judgement

of people's behaviour and relationships. Conventions and values constitute a moral order (Kádár, 2017; Kádár & Haugh, 2013), which is maintained via interaction and moral evaluations of interaction, but also, importantly, by metadiscourse – lay discourse on politeness and impoliteness. In this respect, conduct books in particular play a key role: not only do they contribute to the conventionalisation of certain polite usages (Terkourafi, 2011, p. 176; Terkourafi & Kádár, 2017, p. 190), they also help maintaining the moral order via their typically moralising discourse: conventions are reinforced each time they are anchored into moral foundations (Kádár, 2017 who refers to moral value theories in social psychology such as Haidt, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2012). In other words, conduct books contain an explicit discourse on moral values, which aims to justify conventions. Our study on norms for polite verbal behaviour based on the same corpus of conduct books has shown how politeness is explicitly rooted in values like reciprocity and fraternal love (Paternoster & Saltamacchia, 2017). In the current article we want to extend a metapragmatic method developed for linguistic politeness (where metapragmatic stands for the reflexive monitoring of linguistic choices, see Caffi, 1984, 1998; Verschueren, 2000) and apply it to fashion, because there are no real differences in the way conduct books morally justify verbal and non-verbal norms, which include norms on fashion. This way we hope to contribute to the discussion of new methodological approaches for the analysis of the present-day moralising discourse on fashion as seen in Geiger & Keller, 2017; Lundblad & Davies, 2015; Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014; Niinimäki, 2015, who analyse sustainable fashion in reference to the values of altruism, empathy, compassion.

Using a corpus of 40 conduct books published in Italy in the long nineteenth century (1800–1920), we compare the chapters dedicated to fashion (a term we conceive broadly, as pertaining to bodily hygiene, laundry, adornment and vestimentary choices) and we analyse which specific moral values are quoted to justify

particular vestimentary rules. Our corpus withholds, out of a possible 186 texts,² the most reprinted texts per decennium, in order to warrant maximum impact with the historical reader.³ As the discourse on fashion proves rather homogeneous across the sources, selecting representative passages has proven relatively straightforward. The essay thus discusses representative passages on fashion morality occurring in texts that were quite diffused at the time, in one specific layer of society.

Italian nineteenth-century conduct books address (pre-)adolescents on one hand, and members of the lower middle class and the top echelon of the working class on the other, who are all invited to share the values and the lifestyle of the middle classes.⁴ Primary school was made compulsory straight after the Unification for children of 6 and 7 years of age and soon after, in 1877, extended to 9-year-olds. Compulsory schools received a socially mixed public, and overall the aim was to provide children from all backgrounds with the tools to improve their chances at social advancement. Tasca (2004, pp. 51–57) reports how, in schools, *galatei* (or conduct books) were used as reading material in class and read out loud during meal times. Although illiteracy in the young nation was almost at 80% (Genovesi, 1998, p. 226), conduct books were present in free libraries for the people and in parish libraries. The *galatei* for the people originated within charitable associations or were sponsored by local councils. Giv-

en their socially inclusive nature, conduct books wrote about inexpensive activities: visits, walks, theatre, churchgoing etc. Typical chapters concern themselves with religion, conversation, games, table manners, visits, greetings on the street, hygiene and order, work and study, education. Given the absence of illustrations, the use of low-quality paper, the pocket-size format, the relatively low number of pages, and the simple typographic composition, Tasca (2004, p. 117) concludes that this is a product for a public with limited financial resources (on Italian conduct books see also Botteri 1999; Turnaturi 2011; Vanni 2006).

If with fashion we are to understand a quickly changing norm in clothing and accessories, hairstyle, makeup, footwear – involving regular spending –, it must be clear that the typical addressee of the conduct book – who has limited financial resources – cannot afford to keep up with fashion. However, that does not mean that *la moda* “fashion,” was a topic deemed unfit for inclusion. Quite the contrary, most conduct books extensively discuss norms for public presentation of the body. In the next section, we introduce a first historical source, from 1902. Rather than being a prescriptive source, this is a retrospective analysis of the history of fashion in the nineteenth century and the advance of the bourgeois outfit: as it captures processes of democratisation through fashion, the text allows us to introduce the topic of self-improvement, which is at the heart of our sources. We split the central section of this essay in two parts. The first one is dedicated to Melchiorre Gioja, whose *Nuovo Galateo* “New Galateo” dominates the genre in the first half of the century. Whilst Gioja has a secular approach and the treatises of the second half of the century are mainly (but not exclusively) furthering a Catholic ideology, Gioja’s utilitarianism, which favours both fashion and the fashion industry in the context of self-advancement, is not in contradiction with the later Catholic conduct books, on the contrary. After the unification of Italy in 1861, numbers of conduct books rise, peaking in the next two decennia. The second part is dedicated to these post-unification conduct books: within

2 The total number of titles listed in an inventory of Italian conduct and etiquette books, 1800–1920, compiled by Tasca, 2004, pp. 209–224.

3 We use Paternoster Annick & Saltamacchia Francesca (compilers). *Corpus di galatei italiani ottocenteschi (CGIO)*, in preparation at the Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano (CH). The corpus comprises digital versions of the 50 most reprinted conduct and etiquette books of the long nineteenth century (1800–1920). It contains 40 conduct books and 10 etiquette books.

4 There are also conduct books for the professions, such as physicians and solicitors, which we have not taken into consideration here (Botteri, 1999, pp. 245–319).

the huge nation-building effort (Gigante, 2013; Musiani, 2018; Patriarca, 2010) conduct books were seen as an efficient tool to promote social values alongside personal values (love of work, diligence) deemed necessary for the economic development of the country. We will give an overview of rules regulating bodily hygiene, adornment, dress choice and fashion, and analyse which values are explicitly cited to justify the rules. We will find that, in line with Gioja, positive evaluations mostly centre on diligence and appropriacy while negative valuations range from laziness and avarice (for not investing enough time in one's public appearance) to vanity and frivolity (for investing too much time in one's public appearance). Overall, we will conclude that discourse on fashion is firmly embedded in the ideology of self-advancement and we discuss suggestions for further research, mainly in the closely related genre of etiquette books: from the 1880s, the editions of conduct books slowly decrease and etiquette books, addressed to a mainly female readership belonging to the established bourgeoisie, become very successful.

2 Mara Antelling's retrospective view

In 1900 the Milanese publisher Vallardi invited well-known Italian intellectuals, amongst others the novelist Luigi Capuana, to reflect on the progress achieved in the nineteenth century. The series *Il secolo XIX nella vita e nella cultura dei popoli* "the nineteenth century in the life and the culture of the peoples" consists of 17 elegantly illustrated volumes, covering literature, music, art, economy, the sciences... Volume 11 is dedicated to *Vita intima, la moda e lo sport, vita sociale* "family life, fashion and sport, social life," with Mara Antelling (ca. 1902) contributing a lengthy essay about fashion. An established fashion journalist,⁵ she wrote a column *L'arte e la moda* "Art and Fashion" for the mag-

azine *Natura ed Arte* "Nature and Art." Whereas fashion magazines – such as the first Milanese magazine *Corriere delle dame* "Ladies' gazette" founded in 1804 (Franchini, 2002; Sergio, 2010) – usually treated fashion in a descriptive way,⁶ Antelling has a sociological and analytical approach, in which she reflects on the role of women in society (Frau, 2011, p. 10). She is aware that clothes have a connotation that is "not only aesthetic, but also (and foremost) socio-ethical" (Frau, 2011, p. 1).

Antelling's essay identifies connections between major socio-political changes and fashion. The French Revolution put an end to aristocratic vestimentary excesses that characterised the inhabitants of Versailles and dress was being standardised: "Nel [secolo] decimonono [la moda] subì trasformazioni svariatissime, tendendo a unificarsi in tutti gli stati sociali [...]" ["In the nineteenth [century], [fashion] underwent a vast range of variations, which tended to unify all the social layers {...}"] (Antelling, ca. 1902, p. 84). Advances in the textile industry enabled mass production and a faster distribution, and allowed the development of prêt-à-porter ranges, for sale in department stores. The bourgeois outfit became increasingly available to those with only limited financial resources (Perrot, 1989), in other words, the typical reader of Italian conduct books as explained above. Whereas in the first half of the century, in France, it was still possible to recognise different professions in the street by their costume (Frau, 2011, p. 1), midway through the century this was becoming harder. Precisely from this period comes the following quote, found in a French conduct book, probably originating in the 1840s and translated into Italian in 1853:⁷

5 Pseudonym of Anna Menegazzi Piccoli, born in Treviso (1845–1904). For an overview of her journalistic output, see Frau, 2011, pp. 4–5.

6 On the history of fashion and fashion writing in Italy see Jones, 2000; Levi Pisetzkzy, 1969, 1973, 1978; Paulicelli, 2001. On the early modern period see Paulicelli, 2014.

7 The first author was able to trace a copy of the French original (An., 1847) at the Musée des Ursulines (Quebec, CA), a Catholic order dedicated to the education of girls.

Oggimai la ricchezza delle vesti non è più distintivo dei diversi ordini di cittadini; il lusso è arrivato a tal punto da agguagliare condizione ed età [...]. [These days the riches of one's clothes does no longer distinguish between the different ranks of citizens; luxury has reached a point where it equalises rank and age {...}]. (Thouar, 1853, p. 33)

On one hand, Antelling is welcoming uniformity as a result of a democratisation process; on the other, she also expresses doubt about real social advancement. Fashion operates as a “turbine livellatore” “engine for equalisation”:

Il primo colpo lo dà la moda, insinuandosi coi suoi dettami in tutti gli ordini sociali, portando lo stesso verbo nell'umile casa borghese o nella semplice casa provinciale, come nel palazzo avito, o negli appartamenti delle dive in vena di *bonne fortune*. [Fashion gives the first blow, as it slowly infiltrates every social rank with its rules, spreading the same gospel in the humble bourgeois house or in the simple country house, as well as in the ancestral palace, or in the apartments of divas enjoying good fortune.] (Antelling, ca. 1902, p. 88)

However, for Antelling the democratisation is only apparent. Fashion creates uniformity for the top layer, whilst at the same time increasing the distance from the bottom layer:

L'eguaglianza negli abiti non rompe le dighe sociali che si erigono ancora fra classe e classe: le superiori sono rinserrate in un circolo saldo, chiuse in una rocca, e guardano con diffidenza la marea che monta e minaccia invasione. [The equality of clothes does not break the social dikes that are still erect between the social classes: the upper classes have locked themselves in a tight-knit club, barricaded in a fortress, and look with diffidence at the tide that mounts and threatens an invasion.] (Antelling, ca. 1902, p. 88)

Importantly, Antelling diagnoses the emergence of a strong demarcation line between the social classes, also identified by present-day historians. The lower middle class or petty (from *petite*) bourgeoisie in-

cluded primary school teachers, “scribes, copyists and similar employees in banking, the law, insurance and the lower ranks of the civil service” (Evans, 2016, p. 327), supervisory grades in the industry and independent artisans, shopkeepers and shop assistants in the newly expanding sector of department stores, whilst women increasingly found work in department stores, in “post offices, telephone exchanges” and in offices (Evans, 2016, 330; on Italy's nineteenth-century middle classes see Banti, 1996; Meriggi, 1992). This lower middle class endeavoured to be “accepted as middle class, through their dress, housing, social interests, education, etc., in order to insist on the differences between themselves and the working class” (Pilbeam, 1990, pp. 10–15; Montroni, 2002, p. 104 on the “rather strong” divide between these two groups in Italy). For the petty bourgeoisie, table manners, proper conversation and dress were crucial class symbols meant to maintain respectability (Kocka, 1989, p. 20). Table manners, e.g., needed to hide recent arrival from a social sphere where hunger and gluttony were rife. Italian nineteenth-century conduct books are precisely helping the petty bourgeoisie to avoid identification with the working class.

3 Melchiorre Gioja and the *Apology of Fashion: on the socio-economic purpose of fashion*

In the nineteenth century the production of conduct manuals is inaugurated in 1802 by the *Nuovo Galateo* “New Galateo” written by Melchiorre Gioja, the official historiographer of Napoleon's Cisalpine Republic, and subsequently the Director of the Bureau of Statistics of the Italian Kingdom. His treatise marks the beginning of a prolific publication of conduct manuals proposing a bourgeois model of politeness (Vanni, 2006, p. 13). In the new society that arises after the French Revolution social relationships become more complex. As they are no longer depending on a rigid hierarchical structure anchored in law, they are now negotiated on differ-

ent grounds: merit and work (and money) take the place of birthright (see Gipper, 2001). The first edition of the *New Galateo*, which will be followed by three expanded versions (1820, 1822, 1827), posits itself in opposition to the aristocratic code of conduct, and – particularly – to a model based on strict conformity to conventional “ceremonies”:

Nelle monarchie le cerimonie prendono il posto dei doveri sociali [...]. Gli uomini sono più apprezzati dai loro abiti che dai loro sentimenti, e la gentilezza nel gesto e nelle maniere ottiene maggior lode che la più eroica virtù. [In monarchies ceremonies take the place of social duties {...}. People are mostly appreciated for their dress rather than for their feelings and the elegance of manner is more appreciated than the most heroic of virtues.] (Gioja, 1802/1853, p. 8).

Although Gioja criticises the fact that people “are mostly appreciated for their dress rather than their feelings,” in the second edition he admits that “sebbene l’abito non faccia il monaco, ciò nonostante la maggior parte degli uomini, i quali hanno più occhio che intelletto, dall’abito giudicano le persone” [“although the habit does not make the monk, nevertheless most people, who have more eyes than brains, judge other people by their clothes”] (1820, p. 107). The presence of this proverb in behavioural literature goes back to the *Book of the Courtier* by Baldassar Castiglione (1528), an author who is often quoted in the *New Galateo*. In Book II, Chapter X–VIII, the interlocutors of this dialogue set at the court of Urbino discuss the meaning of clothes for the courtier. Whilst one interlocutor claims that people have to be judged rather by words and deeds than by clothes, precisely because of “quel proverbio che l’abito non fa il monaco” [“the proverb saying ‘The habit does not make the monk,’”] the main interlocutor disagrees: of course words and deeds are important, nevertheless one’s attire “non è piccolo argomento della fantasia di chi lo porta” [“is no slight index of the wearer’s fancy”] (Castiglione, 2002, p. 136; Castiglione 1959, p. 123). Gioja defends the

latter argument because “ciascuno aspira alla stima degli altri e ne teme il disprezzo” [“every man aspires to the others’ esteem and cannot tolerate scorn”] (1820, p. 28, original emphasis). To obtain esteem and appreciation is indeed the aim of the politeness model proposed by Gioja, which is based on the new concept of “social reason, i.e. the capacity of people to live together in a way that others are pleased with us and with themselves [“in modo di rendere gli altri contenti di noi e di loro stessi”] (1822/1853, pp. 109–110). Gioja’s individual affirms himself in his social relationships, which are focused on usefulness.

Gioja recommends taking great care in wearing clean clothes, since people “restano offesi dalla sordidezza” [“are offended by filth”] (1820, p. 106). He also prescribes cleanliness because, he argues, “la pulitezza, conservando le forze fisiche, ci conserva la possibilità d’ eseguire i doveri sociali e d’ essere utili agli altri” [“cleanliness preserves our physical strength, thus preserving the possibility to execute our social duties and to be useful to others”] (1822/1853, p. 116). Furthermore, dress should correspond to one’s financial condition because he who dresses above his means “si toglie di credito” [“loses credit”] since he “fa supporre che si veste a spese altrui” [“gives ground to suspicions that he dresses at the cost of other people”]; by contrast, he who dresses below his means “si tira addosso la taccia di pidocchieria” [“attracts onto himself the bad reputation of being a scrooge”] (1820, p. 112). Therefore, there is a golden mean to be followed. In sum, Gioja lays the foundations of the nineteenth-century rules: on the one hand, attention to personal hygiene and clean laundry, on the other, appropriate dress-choice. Interestingly, these precepts are argued for in view of a goal, and, more specifically, in view of a utilitarian motivation: achieving the others’ esteem and appreciation allows one to obtain public esteem, offices and honours, religious rewards, as Gioja explains in his preface. This utilitarian view, influenced by the French ideologues (such as Condillac and Cabanis) and Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism (see Sciacca, 1948, pp. 132–

133 and Botteri, 1990; Ghiringhelli, 1990; Sofia, 1990; Tasca, 2004; Vanni, 2006), equally dominates the chapter *Apologia della moda* “Apology of Fashion,” which Gioja introduces in the second edition of the *New Galateo*.

The *Apology of Fashion* follows a similarly instrumental approach, but at the same time, there are differences: whereas the *New Galateo* is a prescriptive text, the *Apology of Fashion* is an argumentative text, in which Gioja argues two sides of the question “fashion” adopting a favourable stance. We begin by discussing the historical context leading up to this chapter. Luxury and fashion form a hotly debated issue in the eighteenth century. Cecilia Carnino (2014), who offers a detailed reconstruction of this debate, argues that the complex discussion about luxury and wellness was actually a vehicle for a political debate focused on the free movement of wealth, on criticism of the traditional hierarchies and on the legitimation of new social classes. Carnino also underlines the new meaning that the word “consumption” acquires in the eighteenth century: far from being considered a mere destruction of resources, consumption was rather seen as a component of the demand for consumer goods. The reflection about the relationship between economy and luxury and fashion is at the core of the works of Mandeville in England (*The fable of the bees*, 1705) and Melon in France (*Essai politique sur le commerce*, 1734). Whilst according to the former, private vices can produce benefits because they offer opportunities for new employment, the latter considers luxury as a base for the economic development of a state. In Italy, fifteen years later, Galliani in *Della moneta* (1750) argues about the relationship between luxury, fashion and the progress of societies: he opposes a society based on conquest to a modern society based on economic development and civil progress. After Galliani, Verri (1764), Genovesi (1765) and Beccaria (1769) readily adopt Mandeville’s idea that luxury and fashion boost economic activity and, particularly, work. However, this positive view on luxury and fashion is strongly resisted by Catholics who accuse

fashion and luxury as the cause of moral corruption. They in particular focus on charity by arguing that the superfluous – i. e. luxury – is supposed to be donated in charity rather than to be used for personal gratification.

Melchiorre Gioja positions himself as the defendant of the first position and the accuser of the second position. In the first section of the *Apology of Fashion* he advances arguments in favour of fashion adopting an economic point of view: “i capricci della moda sono il mezzo per cui [...] il ricco alimenta il povero non a titolo di limosina, ma di lavoro” [“the whims of fashion are the means by which {...} the rich help the poor by supplying them with work rather than with a handout”] (Gioja 1822, p. 205). He argues this sentence in this way:

Un abito che presenta l'apparenza della novità è tosto ricercato dalle persone più ricche, e diviene l'oggetto delle brame di quelle che lo sono meno. [...] gli artisti imitano con materie meno costose [...] la prima foggia [...] e per conseguenza ne decade il prezzo. Decadendo il prezzo diviene proporzionato alle finanze delle persone povere, le quali per ciò vengono messe a parte di piaceri, da cui senza le variazioni della moda resterebbero escluse. La moda [...] eccita nella massa popolare la voglia di parteciparvi; quindi diviene pungentissimo stimolo contro la naturale inerzia. [A costume with the outward appearance of newness quickly becomes sought-after by the richest people, and it becomes the object of desire in people who are less rich. {...} the artists imitate the original model with less expensive materials {...} and therefore its price drops. With the price getting lower, the dress becomes proportionate to the financial resources of the poor, who, therefore, can take part in pleasures from which, without the changes in fashion, they would remain excluded. Fashion {...} fuels in the masses a desire to take part in it, thus becoming a biting incentive against natural inactivity.] (Gioja, 1822, p. 205)⁸

8 Note the similarity with the historical discourse on nineteenth-century price reductions in Philippe Perrot (1989) discussed in section 2. Interestingly, one of our anony-

Gioja summarises some of the main themes of the eighteenth-century debate on luxury. He embraces the idea that fashion is good because it offers new opportunities for employment; he also takes into consideration the public debate on charity by affirming that thanks to the whims of fashion the rich can help the poor by supplying them with work instead of alms – we can infer that work is preferable to charity because the former is an incentive against natural inactivity. Furthermore, by affirming that an outfit “becomes the object of desire in people who are less rich” and that fashion “fuels in the masses a desire to take part in it,” Gioja offers an interesting description of the dynamic of human desire. This idea is taken from Verri, who states that luxury is “lo sprone più vigoroso dell’industria” [“the strongest stimulus for the industry”] (1764/1993, p. 38) because the desire to buy luxury goods fuels the desire to work. Moreover, Verri underlines the fact that all passions and desires, both of rich and poor, are legitimate as a ground for economic development, and lead to an equal society.

The main argument advanced by Gioja to attack the opposing argument (fashion corrupts) is the following:

L’amore è di sua natura esclusivo [...]. Aumento di affezioni amorose è dunque uguale a diminuzione di godimenti comuni. Ora in generale le affezioni amorose crescono in ragione della bellezza. Quindi i popoli più laidi sono i più dissoluti. [Love, by its nature, is exclusive [...]. An increase in love is proportionate to a decrease in communal enjoyment. Now, in general love increases in reason of [i. e. in proportion to] beauty. Thus, the ugliest peoples are the most dissolute.] (Gioja, 1822, p. 209)

According to Gioja fashion cannot be the cause of corruption because “the ugliest people are the most dissolute” as they are prone to “communal enjoyment.” It follows that corruption is strictly related with uncivilized people rather than civilized

people – and fashion characterizes a civilized society.

From these short extracts taken from the *Apology of Fashion* it can be concluded that Gioja evaluates fashion positively, it is considered from an instrumental point of view as a vehicle for an economic and ideological discourse. The nineteenth-century philosopher and theologian Antonio Rosmini realised this better than anybody else; he in particular sensed the danger of a popularisation of the utilitarian ideas contained in Gioja’s *Apology of Fashion*. In the *Esame delle opinioni di Melchiorre Gioja in favore della moda* “Examination of Melchiorre Gioja’s opinions in favour of fashion” (1824) he advances more than forty “observations” countering not only the arguments that Melchiorre Gioja supported in defense of fashion, but also the utilitarian ideology that permeates the entire text (see Saltamacchia & Rocci, 2018; in press).

4 Post-unification Conduct Books

Whereas Gioja’s stance is secular, even anticlerical, post-unification conduct books propose, so to speak, a practical “appendix” to Catholic ethics (Tasca, 2004, p. 109). Many conduct books, especially those written for young readers, have a structure that follows “a day in the life of” their recipients and start with a chapter on the morning ritual: with an early rise comes the requirement to thank God for the new day, followed by rules for personal hygiene. Rules are justified by the need for good manners, but also by medical reasons: the persistent need to recommend frequent ablutions can be explained by a lingering fear of water as contamination agent for diseases such as cholera and the plague (Sorcinelli, 2009; Gatta e. g. explains the etymology of the word to his young readers: “Dalla voce greca hygies, sano” [“from the Greek work hygies, healthy”] (1865/1869, p. 9). Gattini (1869/1870, pp. 14–22) and Cianfrocca (1872/1878, pp. 11–16) provide detailed rules, but the longest lists appear in Chiavarino (1897, pp. 96–106) and Krier (1894/1900, pp. 29–35). Chiavarino’s list

mous reviewers pointed out how this sounds like a description of so-called high street brands, like Zara or H&M, etc. *ante litteram*.

contains no less than 34 items. Alongside a generic recommendation to wash, rules specifically target face and neck, ears, hands, nails, teeth, hair, feet, discuss the correct way to blow your nose, sneeze, spit, the correct use of handkerchiefs, and continue seamlessly to the cleanliness of clothes. To illustrate the level of detail involved, one example will suffice:

Il tossire e lo starnutire non deve essere troppo forte, nè sul volto delle persone, nè vicino a cose cui male sarebbe spruzzare, od anche solo darne il sospetto, come cibi, fiori, od altro. Avverti perciò di volgerti alquanto da parte, e di tenere il fazzoletto alla bocca. [Coughs and sneezes must not be too loud, and not in other people's face, neither close to objects which must not be covered in spray, nor even a suggestion of it, such as food, flowers, etc. Therefore, take care to turn yourself slightly sideways, and hold a handkerchief to your mouth.] (Chiavarino, 1897, p. 98)

Importantly, personal hygiene and cleanliness of clothes are treated in an absolute way: “acqua fresca in abbondanza, sapone semplice nostrano, buoni pettini e buone spazzole” [“abundant cool water, simple local soap, good combs and good brushes”] (Gatta, 1865/1869, p. 28). When washing “l'acqua non va punto risparmiata” [“water is not to be used sparingly”] (Grelli, 1889, p. 6). On the contrary, more is better: “Puossi giudicare [...] del grado di civiltà di un popolo dalla quantità d'acqua che consuma per la propria nettezza” [“One can judge [...] the degree of civilisation of a people by the amount of water it consumes for its cleanliness”] (Gallenga, 1871, p. 114; and see similar in Rossi on the use of soap for clean laundry, 1878/1921, p. 117 and p. 165).⁹ Cleanliness, in fact, is seen as a generic indicator of one's moral standards. For Rossi, it is a “coefficiente di moralità” [“a coefficient of morality”] (1878/1921, p. 164); for Pellegrino it is “lo specchio della mente e del cuore” [“the mirror of mind and heart”] (1870, p. 51 and

⁹ Rossi references the *Familiar Letters on Chemistry*, 1851, by Justus von Liebig, the father of organic chemistry, albeit in a rather approximate wording.

similar on p. 57). It reflects purity (Fiorentina, 1915/1918, p. 15), candour and kindness (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 9). Both Chiavarino and Krier refer to clean clothes as a representation of “interna onestà” [“internal honesty”] (1897, p. 108; 1894/1900, p. 39). Conversely, “l'immondezza del corpo” [“the filth of the body”] is not seldom “testimonio che rivela la bruttura del cuore” [“a witness revealing the ugliness of the heart”], according to Rizzoli in an earlier conduct book for priests (1845, p. 16). Similarly, for Rossi, a physical smell points to “puzzo morale” [“moral stench”] (1878/1921, p. 164).

Precisely because they send out this powerful moral message, clean clothes have the power to override the social stigmata of lower class and poverty. Dirt originating in manual work bears no negative connotation, on the contrary. According to Cajmi's *Nuovo Galateo, consigli di un nonno a' suoi nipoti* “New Galateo, Advice from a grandfather to his grandchildren,” peasants and artisans cannot possibly keep clean while they work. However,

[...] deposta la marra o il martello, vedili nel dì di festa: crederebbero mancare di reverenza perfino a Dio, se la candida camicia, o il giubbone custodito con tanta cautela dalle vigili donne, non imprimessero in quelle figure indurite ai travagli qualche po' di gentilezza e di civiltà. [...] once they put down the hoe and the hammer, just look at them on a Holy Day: they would think of themselves as disrespectful even to God, if the pure white shirt, or the jacket so carefully preserved by their attentive wives, would not impress onto those figures hardened by labour some kindness and civility.] (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 11)

In their Sunday best, they too become civilised.¹⁰ In the nation-building effort, work is always positively evaluated. Also, in the wake of the successful self-help

¹⁰ This quote neatly ties in with what Alain Corbin writes about the tendency in working class members to *s'endimancher* “put on their Sunday best” (*dimanche* in fact, means “Sunday” in French), effectively dress in a bourgeois costume. Alain Corbin, 1987, p. 449, quoted in Frau, 2011, p. 7.

movement in Victorian England, inaugurated by the publications of Samuel Smiles, self-help became very popular in Italy and it strongly encouraged work as a way for self-reliance (Tasca, 2004, p. 187; Turnaturi, 2011, p. 37). The same topic emerges in Pasquali, who teaches manners with edifying anecdotes: Beppino decides to leave school and, at the end of his first working day, he goes back to see if his companions will still greet him now that he has “un viso nero” [“a blackened face”] (Pasquali, 1897, p. 24). Most pupils ignore him, except for his former desk companion, who shakes hands affectionately “senza badare se nella stretta ritira la sua un po’ annerita” [“and does not mind if his hand turns a bit dirty from the handshake”] (Pasquali, 1897, p. 24). However, not only the working poor are respectable (despite the dirt), the clean poor are too: “Non è riprovevole che gli abiti siano vecchi o rattoppati, purché siano puliti” [“Old and patched cloths are not reprehensible, provided they are clean”] (Commodari, 1893, p. 24); “[...] infatti non ci spiace nemmeno l’abito misero e rattoppato del mendicante se è pulito” [“{...} in fact, not even the miserable, patched clothes of the beggar displease us, provided they are clean”] (Krier, 1894/1900, p. 39, and similar in Gallenga, 1871 p. 243). The most striking wording is found in Rossi: “La pulitezza è il lusso del povero” [“Cleanliness is the luxury of the poor”] (1878/1921, p. 164). It is better to have “cento toppe” [“one hundred patches”] than “una macchia sola” [“only one stain”] (Rossi, 1878/1921, p. 165). The hyperbole of the one hundred patches demonstrates that this discourse on hygiene and cleanliness is cast in absolute terms. Even one stain puts its owner on the wrong side of the demarcation line of who is respectable or not, who is part of the undeserving or deserving poor; that is those who deserve assistance, employment and those who do not, because they are lazy.¹¹ In fact, clean-

liness is an indication of diligence (Commodari, 1893 p. 24).¹²

It is worth insisting that rules for basic hygiene are coached in absolute wordings because when authors turn to other fashion-related topics, the moralising discourse becomes relative: virtue is formulated as an Aristotelian golden mean, and excesses are evaluated as vice. Let us look at the rules for body adornment with perfumes, cosmetics, hair pomades and oils: “un’acconciatura eccessiva indica vanità e leggerezza” [“excessive adornment points at vanity and frivolity”] (Cianfrocca, 1872/1878, p. 14). In the morning, Thouar does not want girls to spend “troppo tempo” [“too much time”] to take care of their appearance, “il che potrebbe facilmente essere indizio o fomite di mollezza, di svogliatezza e d’ozio pericolosissimo” [“this could easily be a sign of or an incitement to frivolity, listlessness or very dangerous laziness”] (Thouar, 1853, p. 26). The main problem here is time wasting. This is the reason why Gatta does not want to see a dressing table cluttered with “cosmetici di vario colore e odore, quelle essenze, quegli olii, quelle polveri” [“cosmetics of different colour and scent, those essences, those oils, those powders”]: “Eh via, lasciate queste frascherie ai perdigiorni [...]” [“come on, leave these fripperies to idlers {...}”] (Gatta, 1865/1869, p. 28). To avoid excess, young people need a middle way: “Prendete la via di mezzo; chè si vuole la pulizia, non già la caricatura” [“Take the middle way, because cleanliness is what we want, definitely not a caricature”] (Cajmi 1865–1867/1869, p. 6). The need to measure the use of perfume is still linked to frivolity, but it also involves taking into account other people’s wellbeing. Cajmi takes about “il vezzo che ha taluno di costringere altri a respirare quanto egli si è messo dattorno” [“the mannerism of some who force others to breathe in what they have put on”] (1865–1867/1869, p. 19; see also Gatta, 1865/1869, p. 30–31; Demartino, 1888/1897, p. 75).

11 The traditional dividing line is important for policy-makers in Victorian England, but the notion exists in Italy since late Antiquity (Allen, Neil & Mayer, 2009, p. 171).

12 It is often claimed that people who take care of their clothes are generally tidy, measured and diligent (see Pellegrino, 1870, p. 56).

Quite naturally, the amount of effort spent on getting dressed is evaluated in exactly the same way. Moral awareness is particularly prominent here, also in regards to underuse. For Thouar, underuse in the care of one's outfit ("toilette") is "in-dizio certo d'incuria e di pigrizia" ["a sure sign of negligence and laziness"] and overuse can be "contraria a modestia e rivelare vanità e leggerezza" ["opposed to modesty and reveal vanity and frivolousness"] (1853, p. 32). Gatta understands that young girls need some time to get dressed, however he asks they do not go beyond "i limiti onesti del convenevole" ["the honest limits of what is appropriate"] (1865/1869, p. 33; see also Gallenga 1871, p. 431 and Righi, 1889, p. 72). Paragraph 1 in Chiavarino's chapter on clothing starts as a search for the golden mean: "Guardati dall'eccedere sia per troppa cura come per troppa trascuraggine" ["Beware not to exceed nor by too much care neither by too much negligence"] (1897, p. 107). His list of values is particularly extensive. Too much effort will attract a series of negative evaluations: it reveals his reader to be "sciocco" ["stupid,"] "vanerello" ["frivolous,"] and it "è segno d'animo piccolo, di gretto carattere, di cuor vuoto, di cultura superficiale, e spesso anche di una smania peccaminosa di piaceri e di passioni disordinate" ["is a sign of small-mindedness, pettiness, heartlessness, superficial culture, and often also of a sinful desire for pleasures and unruly passions"] (Chiavarino, 1897, p. 107). Vice versa, sloppiness "rivela avarizia, mancanza dei dovuti riguardi" ["reveals stinginess, lack of due respect"] and sometimes it "dinota una coscienza turbata" ["means a troubled conscience"] (Chiavarino, 1897, p. 107). Krier follows Chiavarino almost word by word, but adds gloomily that excessive care of one's looks will drag the soul "sopra un cammino sdruciolevole" ["on a slippery path"] that will lead it to become "schiava dei vizii più odiosi" ["slave of the most odious vices"] (1894/1900, p. 37). Interestingly, our sources display a semiotic awareness with frequent expressions relating to communication: dress is *specchio*, *testimonio*, *indizio (certo)*, *segno di* ["mirror," "witness,"

"a (sure) clue, a sign"] and *rivela*, *dinota*, ["reveals," "indicates."]

Just as spending the right amount of time to adornments and clothes is regulated as a golden mean, the choice of clothes is equally determined in a relative way, that is, as appropriateness to circumstances. The most important circumstance is one's social class. Several authors quote *la condizione* ["status, station, standing"] as the only factor determining appropriate dress: "Il buon gusto, soprattutto, voi dovette dimostrarlo nel perfetto accordo della vostra condizione col vostro abbigliamento" ["Taste, especially, has to be shown through the perfect harmony between your social standing and your clothes"] (Fiorentina, 1915/1918, p. 67 and similar in Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 9; Gatta, 1865/1869, p. 31; Gallenga, 1871 p. 431 and Cipani, 1884, p. 13). Others introduce more factors. Thouar adds age (1853, p. 26), Rizzoli and Righi list status, age and add gender (1845, p. 20; 1889, p. 72). Krier wants his reader to adapt clothes to status, profession and age and he gives one example of each: "Lo studente non può vestirsi come il contadino, nè il magistrato come il commesso viaggiatore, nè il vecchio come il giovane" ["A student must not dress like a peasant, neither a magistrate like a travelling salesman, nor an elderly man like a young one"] (1894/1900, p. 38). Overall, the most elaborate rule is found in Gattini and Chiavarino who want clothes to be "convenienti all'età, alla condizione delle persone, ed anche alle circostanze de' luoghi, de' tempi, e del costume" ["appropriate to age, one's status and the circumstances of place, time and usage"] (Gattini, 1869/1870, p. 15; Chiavarino, 1897, p. 108). Historically, these lists originate in classical rhetoric as the *circumstantiae locutionis* "the circumstances of speech", traditionally listed as: who, what, why, in what manner, where, when, by what faculties. Here they are adapted to convey a visual rhetoric of appropriacy.¹³ In this regard, the call for simplicity shows that it was feared readers would breach the appro-

¹³ This conversion from verbal to non-verbal rhetoric takes place in Renaissance conduct books (Paternoster 1998).

priateness rule rather by overstating their rank than by understatement: “Non trop-
pa cura!” [“not too much care!”] because
“*La maggior semplicità piace sempre di
più*” [“the greatest simplicity always pleas-
es the most”] (Chiavarino, 1897 p. 107,
original emphasis; Krier, 1894/1900, p. 37).
Cajmi links simplicity of dress to the sim-
plicity of the soul (1865–1867/1869, p. 9),
whereas Fiorentina, who proposes – liter-
ally – a “barometro” [“barometer”] of dress
choices with their corresponding values,¹⁴
favours un “vestito semplice, adatto alla
condizione finanziaria e alla posizione
sociale” [“a simple costume, adapted to fi-
nancial condition and social position”] as
it reveals “carattere serio, buon senso” [“se-
riousness, common sense”] (1915/1918,
p. 81).

Unsurprisingly, given the consistent
coupling of dress choices with moral val-
ues, several conduct books explicitly re-
flect on clothes as a complex signifier, the
semiotics of which go far beyond mere
aesthetic relevance. These reflections of-
ten coagulate around the proverb *l’abito
non fa il monaco* (literally, “the habit does
not make the monk”), as previously seen in
Gioja. Whilst some authors quote the tra-
ditional proverb, like Gioja they are quick
to point out that it is not entirely valid:

L’abito non fa il monaco, è vero; ma lo fa di-
stinguere dagli altri. Dio giudica l’interno, ma
l’uomo, che non può guardare che all’ester-
no, ha diritto di argomentare dall’apparenza
per giudicare della sostanza. [“True, the habit
does not make the monk, but it distinguishes
him from the others. God judges the inside,
but man, who can only look at the outside, is
right to base his argument on the appearance
in order to judge the substance.”] (Cipani,
1884, p. 13 and similar in Rizzoli, 1845, p. 21,
Righi, 1889, p. 71)¹⁵

14 For praise of simplicity see also the first nov-
el in Savigny, 1844. *La sveglia* “The clock.”

15 Elsewhere, Rizzoli compares personal hy-
giene to “una lettera di raccomandazione” [“a
letter of recommendation”] (1845, pp. 19–20),
a metaphor which appears also in Demartino
(1888/1897, see below).

Thouar, however, rejects the proverb out-
right. Strangers judging a girl will always
look at her clothes first. And therefore:

Non è da citar qui il proverbio, l’abito non fa
il monaco, poiché è naturale che il cappellino
strapazzato, le scarpe sudicie, il vestito mac-
chiato sveglino poco buona opinione verso
chi li porta. [“The proverb, the habit does
not make the monk, cannot be quoted here,
since it is only natural that the worn-out hat,
the dirty shoes, the stained dress do not rouse
a good opinion towards she who is wearing
them.”] (Thouar, 1853, p. 32)

For Krier, clothes provide a wide range of
information: they constitute the easiest
argument for judging someone’s “carat-
tere” [“character,”] “costumi” [“manners”]
and “valore morale” [“moral value,”] and
furthermore, they suggest someone’s “sta-
to” [“status,”] “animo” [“mind,”] “gusto
personale” [“personal taste”] and “il gra-
do di educazione” [“the degree of educa-
tion”] (1894/1900, p. 36). Consequently,
he proposes an alternative proverb, in a
positive wording: “[...] il vestito forma la
persona.” [“{...} clothes make the man.”]
(Krier, 1894/1900, p. 36; Chiavarino, 1897,
p. 107). Demartino, writing for seminar-
ists, provides two more sayings: “Il vestito
è il nuncio dell’uomo” [“the costume is the
ambassador of the man”] and “la decenza
dell’abito è una lettera di raccomandazi-
one” [“the decency of one’s costume is a
letter of recommendation”] (1888/1897,
p. 74).

Fashion, then, is codified in a simi-
lar, that is, relative way. What distinguish-
es the discourse on fashion from the one
on dress is the addition of the element of
change over time. Cajmi admits the pow-
er of fashion, a “tyrant” imposing change
(1865–1867/1869, p. 12). Men like change:
“È vanità? è leggerezza? è bisogno di roves-
ciare sempre il vecchio, perchè col nuovo
si alimenta l’industria e il commercio?
Un po’ di tutti questi motivi” [“Is it van-
ity? Is it frivolity? Is it a need to always
overturn what is old, because what is new
feeds industry and trade? A bit of a com-
bination of all these motives”] (Cajmi,
1865–1867/1869, p. 12). However, in itself,

fashion is not the object of moral condemnation. On the contrary, in continuation with Gioja's economic argument,¹⁶ Cajmi evaluates fashion positively because it provides work to the poor. There is no point blaming fashion:

La c'è, e bisogna tollerarla; chè alla fin fine fornisce del pane alla povera gente, e il riprovarla, oltrechè è vano, porterebbe de' mali maggiori: del resto tanto peggio per le teste di nebbia che se ne fanno schiavi e vittime. ["It is here, and one has to accept it; because in the end it puts bread on the table for the poor and condemning it, which is useless anyway, would bring worse problems. Besides, so much the worse for the airheads who turn into fashion slaves and victims."] (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 13)

Luxury is treated along the same line, as "l'alimento di molte industrie, quindi la fonte vitale della esistenza di molte nazioni" ["it powers many industries and is therefore the vital source for the existence of many nations"] (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 15). The followers of fashion, indeed, as with the use of adornments and clothes, need to observe a golden mean "tra il buttarsi all'impazzata dietro il primo figurino di mode che ci casca giù d'oltremonti, o l'ostinarsi ad aggirarvi per la città come uno spicchio del secolo passato" ["between racing to throw yourself at the first fashion sketch that lands here from across the Alps and persisting in roaming around town like a slice of last century"] (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, pp. 12–13). Only excessive attitudes are condemned. Follow fashion too closely, and you are judged as fickle, mercurial, as someone who has "dato di volta al cervello" ["lost his mind"] (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 12):

[...] il meno che si dica di chi insaziabilmente tramuta il proprio abbigliamento o i propri arredi è l'essere egli un fanullone, un farfallino, un essere vacuo. {...} the least people say of whoever changes his clothes or his furniture insatiably is that he is an idler, a

frivolous, and empty human being.] (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 12)

Therefore, following fashion in an appropriate way comes down to determining when the time is right. Fashion is a vestimentary art of *kairos*, the opportune moment. The reader should copy a new usage "senza tanta fretta" ["without too much haste"] (Savigny, 1844, p. 11). "Non siate mai i primi nelle novità" ["never be the first to adopt novelties"] and give it some time: "lasciate un pochettino abituarsi l'occhio e l'orecchio della gente ai mutamenti d'ogni genere, e non vi accadrà mai di pentirvi" ["Allow people's eyes and ears to get a little bit used to changes of any kind, and never will you have regrets"] (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 13). If not, the reader would single him- or herself out: "[...] schivate soprattutto di distinguervi fra gli altri per qualche moda bizzarra e in generale non ancora accettata" [{"...} above all avoid distinguishing yourselves from the others by adopting some bizarre fashion, which is not yet widely accepted"] (Gatta, 1865/1869, p. 31). The way to do this is to copy "il costume dei più" ["the costume of the majority"] (Gatta, 1865/1869, p. 31), in other words, when "le mode" ["fashions"] are "accettate generalmente" ["widely accepted"] (Krier, 1894/1900, p. 37). Nevertheless, ridicule can be caused just as much by ignoring fashion: wearing clothes "poste in disuso" ["put into disuse"] would come down to "volersi rendere singolare per altro verso e [...] andare incontro al ridicolo" ["wanting to single yourself out in another way and {...} encounter ridicule"] (Thouar, 1853, p. 33).

If ignoring fashion attracts negative evaluations, being a slave to fashion is equally condemned, as we have seen. In this final paragraph, picking up an important strand in Gioja's argumentation, we want to zoom in on the financial consequences of an excessive attention to fashion, which is closely scrutinised under the heading of "ambizione." Ambition is linked to a taste for luxury: since luxury is defined as the superfluous (Cajmi, 1865–1867/1869, p. 15), ambition is seen as a desire to live above one's station, and

¹⁶ Gioja's name is mentioned in the next chapter on luxury, p. 15, precisely in the context of his economic studies.

this inevitably means overreaching one's finances. As a result, ambition is evaluated as a vice: Cajmi puts it at same level with "vanità" ["vanity,"] "orgoglio" ["pride,"] "rivalità" ["rivalry,"] and "invidia" ["envy"] (1865–1867/1869, p. 16). He pities the family that is buying the superfluous whilst it has nothing to "accendere il focolare o ammanire la mensa" ["lit the fire or set the table with"] (1865–1867/1869, p. 16). For Pellegrino, "gli ambiziosi e vanitosi giovinetti" ["the pretentious¹⁷ and vain young men"] who show off a watch, a pendent, a new tie, deserve "disprezzo e compassione" ["disdain and compassion"] as they are only "povere bolle di sapone che un leggier soffio fa scoppiare" ["poor soap bubbles, exploding with a gentle puff"] (1870, p. 84). Recalling her own schooldays, Fiorentina quotes the caretaker who commented on pupils wearing luxury items: "Chi sa che stiramanti allo stomaco! borbottava, con un sorrisetto arguto [...]" ["Who knows how these stomachs are rumbling! she mumbled, with a tiny sly grin"] (1915/1918, p. 80). Fiorentina can only wearily observe that, in the mean time, ambition is spreading with "passi da gigante" ["giant steps"] (1915/1918, p. 79):

E questo, purtroppo, vien fatto di pensare oggi, quando passa accanto uno sciame garrullo di giovinette in ghingheri, dietro cui talvolta s'affanna l'ombra pallida della madre che, tra le pieghe fonde del viso, lascia leggere qualcosa: intanto che non è nutrita come ne avrebbe bisogno. ["Unfortunately, this comes to mind nowadays when you come across a chirping swarm of youngsters all dolled up, followed, sometimes, by the pale shadow of an exhausted mother, who, in between the deep wrinkles of her face, gives you to read something: to begin with, that she is not eating as much as she should."] (Fiorentina, 1915/1918, p. 80)

17 We use this adjective to render the historically negative connotation of the term. In a historical dictionary, the Tommaseo-Bellini, 1861, retrieved from www.tommaseobellini.it, the lemma "ambizioso" contains the observation that the term can have a positive meaning, but only "abusivamente" "in an abusive manner" (*ad vocem*).

The woman's wrinkles reveal a daughter who, "ineducata" ["uncivilised,"] "senza cuore" ["heartless,"] imposes sacrifices on her mother (Fiorentina, 1915/1918, p. 80). Fiorentina's demand? "E intanto procurate che vostra madre non manchi del necessario" ["meanwhile make sure your mother does not lack in what is necessary"] (1915/1918, p. 80). The girls should also know the value of money and start saving. Clemente Rossi bans "capricciotti" ["little whims"] (1878/1921, p. 150) because "ricche stoffe spengono il fuoco della cucina" ["expensive fabrics put out the fire in the kitchen"] (1878/1921, p. 151). He warns for small debts, because "dal poco, mie care, si passa al molto" ["from small amounts, my dear girls, you move to big amounts"] (1878/1921, p. 151). Fornari's *galateo*, addressed to little girls, includes an edifying play on the dangers of ambition (1888, pp. 24–41), closely followed by a short narrative in the 1st person by a woman who ended up poor because, orphan, she sacrificed everything to pay for a luxury lifestyle, even her mother's jewels (1888, pp. 43–47). Although Rossi, Fiorentina and Fornari address girls, the condemnation of overspending is not gendered. Pellegrino (see above) only addresses boys and another chapter on ambition appears in Cajmi (1865–1867/1869, pp. 80–83) whose grandchildren consist of a boy and two girls.

5 Conclusion

Our attempt at applying a metapragmatic approach developed for the study of politeness values in politeness meta discourse on sections dedicated to fashion in conduct books has demonstrated that fashion rules, just like politeness rules, tend to be accompanied by moral justifications. These prescriptive sources treat the presentation of the body in public as an act rich in consequences for subsequent moral evaluations of the reader by the public. The link between fashion and moral values is constant and also consistent, whether embedded in a secular morality, as is Gioja's utilitarianism, or a mainly re-

ligious one, typical of later texts. This explains why so many sources disagree with the proverb “the habit does not make the monk” and suggest a version without the negation. As a result, we have been able to reconstruct a rather homogeneous body of rules and values. The biggest difference we found was between rules regarding the morning ritual and the remaining rules: personal hygiene and the use of well laundered clothes are presented in an absolute way, as the degree of one’s outer cleanliness is considered a gauging rod to measure one’s overall purity and candour: more external purity means more internal purity. The remaining rules, whether for body adornment, dress choice and fashion are defined in a relative way, that is, they are based on the search for a golden mean (indicating modesty, simplicity, common sense, seriousness, usefulness) between sinful extremes of investing too much time in one’s public appearance (vanity, frivolity) and not enough time (avarice, laziness). The right dress choice is deemed to be the one that is appropriate to one’s social condition, but also age, gender, profession, time and place... The right time to copy a fashion trend is when the overall majority has started to follow it. However, the edifying arguments are closely linked to socio-economic concerns: the recommendations to use abundant water and soap can be explained by the fact that these are cheap measures, which can go a long way to achieve respectability, prove diligence in the poor and mark them out as deserving. Vice versa, ignoring your appearance can lead to an evaluation of laziness, whereas excessive spending and frivolity is banned in the context of hunger, debt and financial ruin. Both negative extremes lead to poverty. The positive values such as diligence and parsimony show that fashion morality is seen as a means to self-improvement and a way to avoid poverty for the petty bourgeoisie. The fashion industry, as discussed in Gioja and Cajmi, receives the same positive evaluation: it creates jobs and helps people to avoid poverty. In respect to nowadays discussion on slow fashion, this is an interesting and clearly distinct find, as the need for sus-

tainability is predominantly justified with values relating to self-transcendence as altruism, empathy, compassion. In terms of Schwartz et al.’s (2012) classification of basic human values, the nineteenth-century fashion values are considered personal values, they are ego-centered, while the values involved in slow fashion are part of social, other-centered, values.

Although we took great care to only work with sources that enjoyed several reprints (Gioja and Chiavarino are true best-sellers, with respectively 46 and 10 editions up until 1920),¹⁸ it is true that the moralizing discourse on fashion is directed at a very specific segment of the population, the lower middle class. Overall, the middle classes were a small part of the Italian population – in 1881, the Italian electorate (which excludes the working class but includes the nobility) amounts to 2% of the population (Meriggi, 1989, p. 171) – and therefore arguably this kind of advice cannot be generalized to all layers of society. It is true that conduct books were used in schools, which had a very mixed public, but many of the poorest children, especially in southern and rural areas, were not sent to school.

6 Further research

To overcome this limitation of the study, it could prove useful to make a comparison with the fashion discourse in the etiquette genre, which makes a successful appearance in the *Belle époque* and addresses a different segment of the population. Such a comparison would a) help to fully appreciate the unique moral “coding” of fashion in conduct books, but b) it would also shed light on the gradual erosion of a moral discourse on fashion, as many etiquette books claim to be dealing with conventions and not values. Unlike conduct books, etiquette books are fully commercial enterprises addressing the women of the established bourgeoisie and the lower aristocracy. The precepts centre around the figure of the lady, who engages in an

¹⁸ However, Chiavarino’s conduct book was in print until 1960.

active social life typical of high society: gala dinners, tennis luncheons, garden parties at court, to name but a few. Importantly, the structure of the regulation is changing: general rules are lacking as these recurrent contexts are treated as scenarios, with very specific rules covering every tiny step of the script: etiquette is treated as un *cerimoniale di convenzione* “a ceremonial of conventions,” a fixed set of pre-negotiated rules. The explicit connection between rules and values is often lacking: mainly rules have to be followed simply because they represent common usage.

The same orientation applies to fashion. Advice on fashion is plentiful: it follows the different stages of a woman’s life and, within those stages, it depends on the activity she is doing: high society members change clothes several times a day. A context where rules are particularly copious is mourning wear: etiquette books offer lengthy advice on which fabrics, colours and jewels are suitable for full and half-mourning. Similarly, instructions for the bridal trousseau and for wedding wear are always very detailed. The main justification for this bonanza of fashion advice is to be found, not as much in moral values (although they are not completely disappearing), but rather in concerns for social distinction: the lady’s clothes are truly a status symbol (on values in Italian etiquette books, see Paternoster, 2019). She advertises her husband’s social status and wealth and it is important she never looks as if she were belonging to the nouveau riche, whose recently acquired wealth causes them to be guilty of bad, that is, ostentatious, taste. One example will suffice. Caterina Pigorini Beri, author of *Le buone maniere. Libro per tutti*, 1893/1908, fiercely attacks *il lusso falso* “fake luxury” in the parlour: fake lace, fake earthenware, fake bronze ware, and fake flowers are “un falso lusso di borghese indomencato”, a fake luxury of the bourgeois in his Sunday best, “the laughingstock” of people who understand “true elegance and true distinction” (1893/1908, p. 55). With this quote, we have come full circle. Whilst in conduct books the worker wearing his Sunday best represents moral dignity, in etiquette books

the bourgeois in Sunday best is stripped from respectability: he does not know how to choose a proper outfit because his status as nouveau riche causes him to overdo it (*indomencato* has indeed a negative connotation of pomposity).¹⁹

With etiquette books, the social range of the reference public is changing quite dramatically and so is the type of regulation, which is starting to evolve away from justifications rooted in moral values. Etiquette books, popular on both sides of the Atlantic, could prove a valuable link in studying the transformation from historical fashion morality to fashion freedom, bearing in mind that our own recent history, has seen the reverse, the reintroduction of fashion morality. In this context, we hope that our discussion of moral values can contribute to the study of values involved in the debate on “ethical” fashion.

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¹⁹ For criticism of the nouveau riche, see Alfonso Bergando’s chapter *Usanze antisignorili* “anti-gentlemanly customs,” 1881/1882, pp. 177–183.

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