

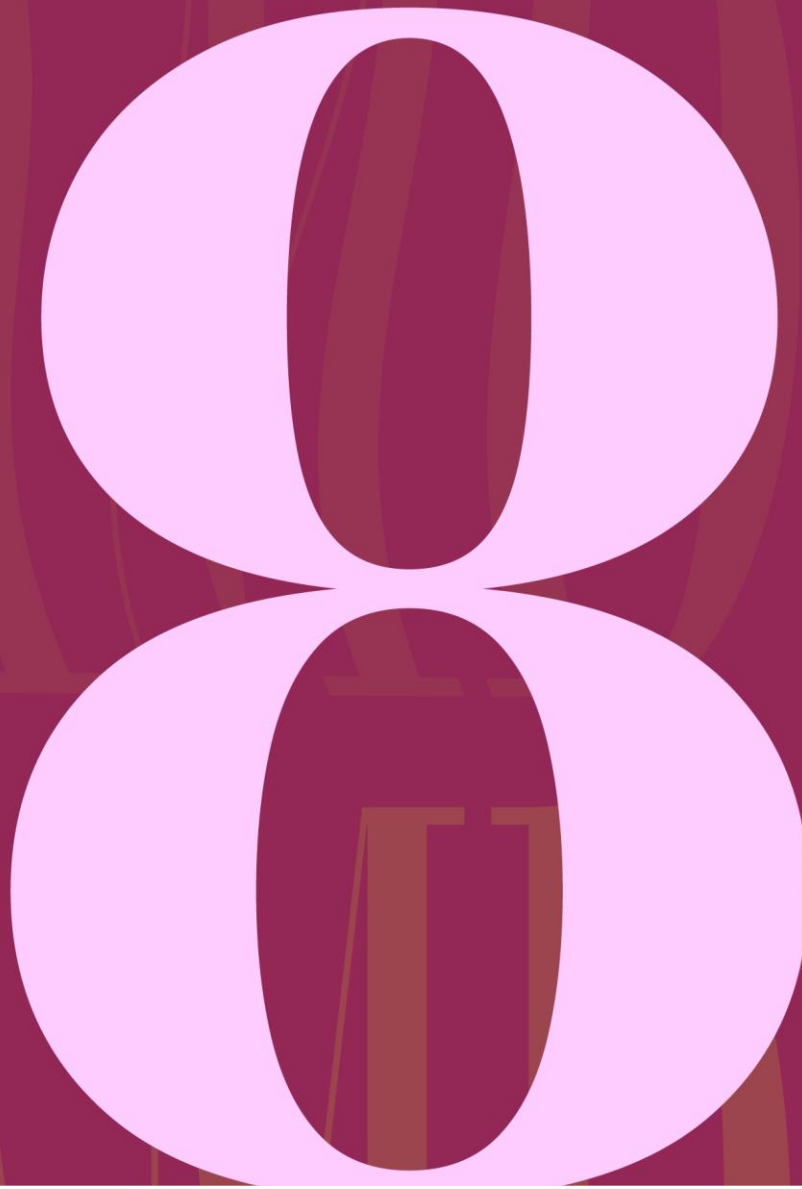
The idea of Brazilian fashion in the press: decolonial reflections in the transatlantic space

*A ideia de uma moda brasileira na imprensa:
reflexões decoloniais no espaço transatlântico*

*L'idée de la mode brésilienne dans la presse:
réflexions décoloniales dans l'espace transatlantique*

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Abstract

The article aims to analyze the speeches published in the press in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century about the idea of Brazilian fashion. To do this, we take a historical perspective to understand how transformations in the national and international context contributed to the development of this narrative and, consequently, the creation and dissemination of clothing characterized as national. Supported by the decolonial perspective, the publication of criticisms of the transatlantic circulation of European fashions, especially French fashion, is highlighted, and then the elements considered necessary for the creation of a national fashion are presented. With this, we can observe that in addition to the geographical aspect, the dissemination of the idea of Brazilian fashion in the press also depended on a set of external and internal factors. Thus, although the decolonial notion only appeared in the second half of the 20th century, we see how criticisms of foreign dependence and demands for fashion that represents Brazilian identity were already addressed in the press.

Keywords: press; brazilian fashion; decolonial studies.

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar os discursos publicados na imprensa no século XIX e primeira metade do século XX sobre a ideia de uma moda brasileira. Para isso, optou-se pela perspectiva histórica para compreender como as transformações no contexto nacional e internacional contribuíram para o desenvolvimento dessa narrativa e, conseqüentemente, a criação e difusão de vestimentas caracterizadas como nacionais. Tendo como base a perspectiva decolonial, deu-se evidência à publicação das críticas que eram feitas à circulação transatlântica de modas europeias, em especial à francesa, e, em seguida, foram apresentados elementos tidos como necessários para a criação de uma moda nacional. Com isso, é possível observar que, para além do aspecto geográfico, a difusão da ideia de uma moda brasileira na imprensa também dependia de um conjunto de fatores externos e internos. Assim, apesar de a noção decolonial só aparecer na segunda metade do século XX, nota-se como as críticas à dependência estrangeira e às reivindicações por uma moda que represente a identidade brasileira já eram abordadas na imprensa.

Palavras-chave: imprensa; moda brasileira; estudos decoloniais.

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Resumé

L'article vise à analyser les discours publiés dans la presse au XIXe siècle et dans la première moitié du XXe siècle sur l'idée de la mode brésilienne. Pour ce faire, nous adoptons une perspective historique pour comprendre comment les transformations du contexte national et international ont contribué au développement de ce récit et, par conséquent, à la création et à la diffusion de vêtements qualifiés de nationaux. Soutenue par la perspective décoloniale, la publication de critiques sur la circulation transatlantique des modes européennes, notamment françaises, est mise en avant, puis les éléments jugés nécessaires à la création d'une mode nationale sont présentés. Avec cela, nous pouvons observer qu'en plus de l'aspect géographique, la diffusion de l'idée de la mode brésilienne dans la presse dépendait également d'un ensemble de facteurs externes et internes. Ainsi, même si la notion décoloniale n'est apparue que dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, on voit que les critiques de la dépendance étrangère et les revendications d'une mode représentative de l'identité brésilienne étaient déjà abordées dans la presse.

Mots-clés: *presse; mode brésilienne; études décoloniales.*

1 Introduction

This article aims to present some elements that made it possible for certain newspaper and magazine editors to publish the idea of Brazilian fashion between the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. Criticisms by Brazilian textile industries and successively publicized and legitimized by the press regarding the dependence on foreign fashion and the demand for clothing manufacturing considered national would slowly and gradually contribute to the long decolonial process of dependence on European fashion, especially French, a model that was the main reference used by Brazilians and other nations throughout the 19th century and much of the 20th century.

It is important to remember that the few criticisms published in the press of the period did not have enough strength to modify the structures of hegemonic power that imposed the French symbolic and cultural system as the center of attention, interests and aspirations, especially among the Brazilian elite who were based on this model to compose their appearance. However, it is understood that these articles indicate the perception that some citizens had concerning the process of exploration and dependence experienced after independence. Thus, French fashion was an important part of the complex mechanism called the world system that classified France as a central country and Brazil as a peripheral one.

To analyze the idea of Brazilian fashion published in the press, it is necessary to consider some things. Firstly, the diffusion of this idea in the 19th century was initially linked to the desire for independence from the European model and, in the following century, a set of specialized knowledge and techniques was added, as well as the interplay of interests of the owners of the textile industries who organized competitions and fashion shows to promote and sell their products. In this context, different journalists were invited to participate in these events, some of them being members of the jury to evaluate the models, which allowed the press to describe everything that happened during the ceremony, emphasizing the creation of clothing considered national.

Secondly, it should be noted that the defenders of the idea of a Brazilian fashion, published in the press of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, had as their starting point the end of foreign dependence, which is aligned with

postcolonial and decolonial studies². Nevertheless, they did not take into account the complex clothing landscape or the diversity of clothing styles of all women, social classes and other groups in Brazil. This is because, in the period studied, Brazilian society lived under Eurocentric influence, when everything that was produced outside this prism acquired an exotic, traditional, different and, thus, inferior character.

Recent works, such as the articles that make up the dossier “The plural clothing of original peoples: an intercultural and transdisciplinary proposal”, published in DObra[s] Magazine (2024, n. 40), and other research that, from a decolonial perspective, places at the center of the discussion the production of fashion made by Indigenous peoples - understood as “the Indigenous practices of body adornment that are associated with the cultural construction of incarnated identity” (Beltrán-Rubio, 2024, p. 119, our translation) -, by black people and individuals or groups excluded from hitherto hegemonic discourses, highlight the creative plurality of clothing that exists in the world of fashion in Brazil, as well as call into question its notion (Santos, 2020; Maia, 2022; Casarin et al., 2022; Epaminondas, 2024).

Without a clear consensus on the specific use of the subject of fashion, whether to expand it, encompassing clothing outside the European/Western perspective, or to implode it, proposing other terms that translate its meaning and suit the locations covered, perhaps a first path is what was suggested by researcher Natalia Rosa Epaminondas, about understanding how the handling and use of this word served and still serves, “as a European instrument of domination” (2024, p. 287), and to consider the exchanges and transits between the production of Western and non-Western clothing that resulted in this social phenomenon called fashion, as proposed by researchers from Coletivo Moda e Decolonialidade – Encruzilhadas do Sul Global (CoMoDe) (Casarin et al., 2022).

However, it is understandable that the possibility of bringing these plural fashions, characterized by the cultural differences of Brazilian society, to the academic field, and discussing them based on decolonial studies, was the result of a long

² Postcolonial studies emerged in the 1980s in the United States as a critique of the cultural heritage left by the colonization process. And in the following decade, decolonial studies emerged in South America, whose center of interest was the geopolitics of power, Western hegemonic knowledge in relation to colonization in the Americas and the cultural institutions of the capitalist system.

historical process that initially had to go through the legitimacy of the idea of Brazilian fashion. And that is the path this research takes. Thus, as we intend to contribute to this debate, taking into account its relevance and importance, some articles published in the press will be presented which, preceding decolonial studies and the plurality of this phenomenon, allow us to reflect on the actions of certain individuals contrary to the dependency of European fashion.

In this regard, the article is structured in two parts that dialogue with decolonial studies and the national and international context. Firstly, some publications by Brazilians and foreigners criticizing the hegemony of Parisian fashion in the 19th century are presented. Next, the main elements that allowed us to rethink the discourses about the hegemony of fashion produced in Paris, at the same time that other clothing practices were published in the press, such as American/Hollywood fashion. And finally, publications on the idea of Brazilian fashion and how it can be inserted into decolonial studies of the 21st century are analyzed.

2 Critics of Parisian fashion in the 19th century

Since the installation of the royal press in Rio de Janeiro, in 1808, information about French fashion circulated in the court's official newspapers. Curiosities about the fashion of Empress Marie-Louise of Austria (1791-1847) (Guimarães, n° 97, 1810), wife of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), the sale of different French clothes and accessories (Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro, n° 23, 1816) and even the definition of fashion as a product of modernity, which feeds on constant renewal and depends on "imagination, born from vulgar opinion" (Guimarães, n° 5, 1814, pp. 88- 89) are mentioned in political and economic newspapers.

This observation allows us to understand that fashion was not only part of discussions about appearance and beauty, but that it already had a political character based on diplomatic agreements between Brazil and other nations and, therefore, an economic dimension, involving the circulation of products of imported and exported clothing. All these attributes indicate the complexity of a phenomenon that is difficult to define. In the present case, it can be considered that the fashion produced in Europe and appropriated in Brazil is a human, material and cultural production, created by

certain individuals socially recognized for their “capacity for invention and intervention” (Venancio, Vianna & Secreto, 2017, p. 10), to give an identity to a group, distinguishing it from others and giving meaning to its life experiences in historical time and space. Brazilian fashion also adapts to this logic during the period studied.

This definition highlights the act of imitating a certain group, at the same time that the imitated individuals sought to distinguish themselves from those who copied them (Tarde, 1993). In this logic, it is understood that the practices of reproducing French fashion in Brazil throughout the 19th century and much of the 20th century were due to the colonization process that made the local clothing of indigenous and subordinate peoples, slaves and the poor invisible, promoting only European dress practices. Furthermore, Parisian fashion was, at the time, the international reference in terms of modernity (Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro, n°11, 1816), elegance (O Jornal das Senhoras, n° 72, 1853) and good taste (Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro, n° 93, 1816). It is clear that these adjectives appeared constantly in the Rio press, serving as an instrument of European domination to shape the taste of female readers-consumers in Brazil.

The linguistic repertoire that fashion, particularly Parisian fashion, acquired over the centuries, perpetuated an asymmetrical relationship between so-called civilized societies and newly independent and peripheral countries, such as Brazil. From this perspective,

Fashion, as a noun, began to refer to a contemporary temporality, a system of power and a capitalist industry conceived in Europe and exported to the rest of the world through European imperialism and globalization, while fashion as a verb – the act of shaping the body – is of all temporalities and geographies and operates beyond colonial differences (Jansen, 2020, pp. 816-817, translated by the author).

The Brazilian press contributed to the linguistic construction of Parisian fashion as an element of modernity, innovation and creation, “in opposition to the idea of clothing/costume”, the first being “the entire set of clothes that characterize a certain people. Costume refers to the traditional clothes that a certain people wear, use for their festivities or cultural manifestations” (Santos & Medrado, 2023, p. 3).

In this way of thinking about fashion, clothing creations that did not follow this system were reduced to an idea of tradition, marked by the prism of temporal fixity and the lack of renewal in appearance. Furthermore, the production of clothing should

be designed by individuals with notoriety and recognition in their sewing work, which suggests that any other production that did not come from this place or was not carried out by such people, was not considered fashion. Therefore, throughout the 19th century, it was common to find in the press several advertisements from seamstresses declaring themselves French, as this represented knowledge of sewing work and the prestige of having been born in a society whose characteristics were civility and modernity.

However, some cases of resistance to the hegemony of Parisian fashion were also reported in the press. In the third edition of the magazine *O Espelho Diamantino*, in 1827, an article entitled *Fashions* stated that "in this city, fashion comes from France" (Plancher, n. 1, 1827, p. 12) and that, therefore, Brazilian women had to be careful with the excesses they produced when dressing. The author concluded the text by estimating that "neither in inventing fashions nor in imitation, do our Amáveis Patrícias (Lovely Patricians) go beyond elegant moderation" (ditto., p. 14). Two years later, the same article was reproduced in the magazine *O Mentor das Brasileiras*, in the city of São João del Rey (Plancher, n. 1, 1829), demonstrating that these individuals read each other, sharing the same ideas about fashion using the technique of rerun, that is, "copies of newspaper excerpts, often citing the source" (Guimarães, 2016, p. 18).

The fashionable consideration evoked by the author was linked to the idea of excessive consumption that could destroy a family's financial assets. And even if this perspective was not directly aligned with the problem of geopolitical power, hegemonic knowledge or cultural institutions in the capitalist system, as advocated by decolonial studies, it allows us to reflect on these men's concern with the symbolic power³ that fashion had, to the point of causing debt among its consumers. Therefore, they recommended vigilance so as not to become slaves to this system.

³ According to Pierre Bourdieu, "Symbolic power is a power to construct reality that tends to establish agnoseological order: the immediate meaning of the world". Thus, Parisian fashion is part of a system of symbols of the dominant culture. At the same time that it promotes social integration and becomes intelligible among contemporaries, its use, to a certain extent, becomes consensus and starts to be used as an instrument of domination. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 407).

The concern about Brazilian women's dependence on French fashion continued in the following decade with the publication of a more explicit text on the subject. In 1834, Friar Miguel do Sacramento Lopes, editor of the newspaper *O Carapuceiro*, published a text declaring that

The fashion empire has made us true slaves of foreigners: and if fashion is a mere whim, why haven't our patrícias also invented their fashions, always economical and adapted to our climate? Why shouldn't there also be Brazilian fashions? One day we need to stop being monkeys (Lopes, 1834, pp. 3-4).

The text was republished in the same year in the newspapers *Astro de Minas*, from São João del Rei (b. 1024, 1834), *A Verdade* (n° 331, 1834) and *Monitor Campista* (n° 55, 1834), both from the city of Rio de Janeiro, which demonstrates the circulation of the same way of thinking about Parisian fashion in different cities and newspapers around the country. The article therefore criticizes the hegemonic knowledge coming from France and, consequently, highlights the geopolitical power between Europe and peripheral nations, newly independent from America, such as Brazil. This positioning can be understood by the notion of “coloniality of power”, resulting from colonialism. According to Aníbal Quijano, this practice is a form of domination, where

Repression fell, above all, on the ways of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, and modes of meaning; about the resources, standards and instruments of formalized and objectified expression, intellectual or visual (Quijano, 1992, 12, translated by the author).

This system oppresses the imagination of colonized societies and replaces their practices and beliefs with the colonizer's culture in a perspective of “seduction [that] gave access to power” (ditto, addition and translation by the author). Thus, fashion, as a European product, was part of this cultural model understood as universal, seducing Brazilian consumers who aspired to dress according to the colonizer's codes. This practice, inscribed in the coloniality of power, reflected the desire to have the same adjectives that Parisian fashion would receive in the press, being recognized for its elegance, modernity and good taste, and to move away from the exotic image built over the centuries, such as analyzed by Maria Cláudia Bonadio (2014a).

This logic placed the country in a system of dependence, unable to produce its fashion. First, because in the logic of capitalism, Brazil was still inserted in the subaltern relationship, exporting raw materials and importing manufactured products due to the absence of an industrial complex capable of manufacturing the clothes and accessories that constituted fashion. This lack leads to the second point regarding how the country was perceived abroad as wild, exotic, agrarian and, therefore, backward.

Maria Cláudia Bonadio shows how the idea of exoticism ended up being inserted in the representation of Brazilian society and, thus, in the dissemination of fashion. She concludes that “Although this image is our 'trademark', at the same time it relegates us to a supporting space in international fashion” (2014a, pp. 72). For Frantz Fanon, the term exotic is a way of simplifying the culture of the colonized, which moves to the field of curiosity, of things undefined and without structure, while the culture of the colonizer is defined by dynamism, development, modernity and evolution. Thus, the author states “that no cultural confrontation can exist” (Fanon, 2011, p. 276). In this hierarchical overlap of symbolic powers, all local clothing cultures, when remembered, are reduced to peripheral practices, far from the notion that fashion produced in Europe received.

Thus, returning to the text by Frei Miguel do Sacramento Lopes, it is observed that the proposal to create a Brazilian fashion to end foreign dependence can also be analyzed from the anthropological or ethnographic perspective of fashion studies. In this approach, Jean Allman explains that there are researchers who try to “free the idea of 'fashion' from the theoretical clutches of Western modernity” (2004, p. 2, our translation).

From this perspective, Heloisa Santos states that it is important to deconstruct the idea of fashion as an attribute of the West. Drawing on studies that deal with the decolonial turn, the author proposes “considering Europe no longer as the center of the modern world or as modernity itself but inserting it into the history of other civilizations as a part, not as an engine” (Santos, 2020, p. 179). According to her, the concept of fashion, as it has been structured, “contributes to segregate and unlevel all peripheral capitalist societies which, because they do not have fashion, have, in principle, an erroneous relationship with clothing and time” (ditto, P. 186). Helena Santos thus proposes to interpret fashion as “a way of relating to clothing” (ditto, p.

184), seeking to consider all the clothing actions and practices of societies understood as Western and non-Western.

To this end, it is worth highlighting the plurality of symbolic systems of appearances that coexisted in nineteenth-century Brazil with the circulation of French fashion. By revealing the variety of groups coming from various African regions, Patrícia March de Souza points out the different ways of dressing adopted by the enslaved population in Rio de Janeiro. Within their limitations and possibilities, captives made “some type of choice in the act of dressing, with the appropriation of shared materials and codes in search of new social and cultural distinctions that permeate relationships of submission, exploitation and domination” (2011, p. 249).

Among the original peoples, the reports and illustrations of European and Brazilian travelers allow us to identify the symbolic systems of appearance adopted in the 19th century. Represented, most of the time, by (semi)nudity, use of props, adornments and paintings on the body, the descriptions of the time reduced their practices to uneducated and primitive, delegitimizing their knowledge and all clothing production that characterizes their cultures.

Some studies show that elements, such as adornments (Delson, 2024, p. 55) and body paintings, should be considered as clothing,

because, when they dress their bodies with paints and feathers, a series of essential meanings are intertwined, linked to explanations of the world and the mythological and identity continuities of the ethnic group that comprise them (Bicalho, 2023, p. 90).

However, this way of viewing fashion from the original peoples was not yet assimilated in the 19th-century articles published in the press, as they established the cultural opposition between what was or was not considered fashion. Miruna Raimundi de Gois and Daniela Novelli emphasize “that indigenous aesthetic representations have no relationship with fashion trends or capitalist intentions” (2024, p. 92), demonstrating that each symbolic system of appearance has its own characteristics. Therefore, they should not be placed in dispute or classified into hierarchies.

Added to these power relations, the patriarchal and Christian systems, which prevailed in Brazil, imposed codes and moral conduct on bodies, especially female bodies, whose clothing served as an instrument to hide the sexes. Between exhibitionism and modesty, Gilda de Melo e Souza highlights that the clothing used to

cover the body “in disguises, under the coercion of puritanism and decorum”, was the main trend adopted in “almost the entire 19th century and part of the 20th century” (1987, p. 93). According to this logic, Maria Cláudia Bonadio considers that “modesty is seen by many as another of the reasons that would have led individuals to cover their bodies” (2015, p. 182), showing that fashion was supported by a power system that went beyond the visual aspect of appearance.

The (semi)naked bodies of the different original peoples who lived in Brazil were, therefore, fought and criminalized. In the case of an Indigenous woman “who was arrested for nudity, she simply left prison wearing a skirt and had to prove that the skirt was truly her private property” (Moreira, 2016, p. 102). The borrowing of dresses and their uses, therefore, did not always represent the total adoption of the French fashion system but could serve as a defense strategy and subterfuge to escape from the power structures that restricted the way of life and clothing practices of indigenous people.

Thus, the clashes that occurred between individuals reduced to the condition of slaves and native peoples against the adoption of clothing that made up Western fashion, or the processes of simulation and hybridization of appearance to achieve their objectives and avoid certain penalties, denote the multiple resistance strategies against the fashion hegemony that placed these and other symbolic systems on the margins of society.

Another model of clothing practice that sought to move away from the European system was published in 1852 in *Novo Correio das Modas*. The article *American-Women's Revolutionary Assembly* describes the meeting of some women in New York, United States, to establish a set of resolutions on the fashion standards used at that time. The points used by the participants to modify their clothing style were, on the one hand, the aspect of health, comfort and elegance; and on the other, the argument that the “current way of dressing is of foreign origin and offers serious inconveniences to our compatriots, with obligations unworthy of a free society” (*Novo Correio das Modas*, 1852, p. 13). The assembly therefore resolved:

We recommend and adopt an attire that covers us from the discomfort and oppression of what we currently wear; that does not restrict our freedom of action, as necessary as it is useful for our health and comfort, that emancipates us from foreign fashions and whims, and that frees us from the

obligation that until now has imposed on us to sweep the streets of the city with the skirts of dresses.

- That the assembly declares itself entitled to choose the attire that is most in harmony with decency and elegance; without neglecting health and comfort.
- That we call in favor of the new attire, which combines elegance with convenience, the support of fashion, of this idol who until now has made us slaves of its extravagance.
- That our sisters be urged to declare in fact and word their emancipation from the current, hateful and degrading fashion, and to adopt the attire that best suits their health and comfort, and that best highlights their true beauty.
- Let it be declared that the attire we recommend is neither Turkish nor Persian, but American; the result of our ingenuity, and proof of our sovereign independence! (ditto, pp. 13-14).

It is noted that “Some of the ladies who were part of the assembly were already dressed per the new revolutionary principles, that is, baggy pants, jackets and wide-brimmed hats!” (ditto., P. 14), indicating the clothes adopted by them and which should be adopted by other women. It was a clothing style proposed by Amelia Bloomer (1818-1894) and some Americans who sought to reform dress codes. However, as Diana Crane explains, this way of dressing was strongly repudiated by American society, as it was “interpreted as a threat to the ideology of separate spheres, claiming that it would erase all distinctions between the sexes” (2000, p. 112).

In this century, Diana Crane highlights the existence of a clothing style that followed European fashion trends, adopted by Americans belonging to the bourgeois classes, and a style called alternative, as it “incorporated pieces of men's clothing, such as ties, hats, jackets, vests and shirts, sometimes isolated, sometimes combined, but always associated with pieces of fashionable women's clothing” (2000, p. 101, author's translation).

In the case of the American revolutionaries, the way of dressing that was proposed completely broke with European fashion codes and the structure of thought that determined gender in clothes. In the excerpt published in the press about the Revolutionary Assembly, it is observed that the participants used medical discourse to assert that fashion was contrary to healthy living. They stated that wearing a corset, in addition to contracting and deforming the female body, was an accessory that suffocated and made women uncomfortable.

In another article, titled Women's emancipation business, also published in *Novo Correio das Modas*, an American lady said that fashion has enslaved women, putting their lives in danger and that “because of it, people spend more than they

should, and the laces on the corsets with which women are tortured prevent them from providing society with the services it should provide” (ditto., P. 37).

The American lady treats fashion as an enslaving force, whose symbolic powers are superior to religion, morality and the law. She was aware of the furor that European fashion and clothing culture caused socially. The article also points out that the audience's laughter at the assembly was motivated by the more extravagant way in which some of the women who entered the room were dressed, but also by the jocular air that the North American lady's ideas conveyed, as her thoughts seemed unreal to some and extremes for others.

Comparing the use of clothing worn in Europe and Brazil, Jeffrey Needell highlighted that “in Rio, however, what was merely uncomfortable or impractical in Paris or London became a live act of self-flagellation” (1993, p. 197). And this is one of the reasons why American women questioned the fashion standards of the time.

Still about the American-Women's Revolutionary Assembly, another argument used by the participants concerned the nationalism that was missing in contemporary fashions, joining the belief of Frei Miguel do Sacramento Lopes Gama, which was published in the magazine *The Carapuceiro*, in 1834. As the fashion used was foreign, Americans claimed that they would always depend on products and clothes imported from Europe.

In the discourse, one can also see signs of an attempt to strengthen internal trade, whose production should be expanded by internal consumption to, therefore, generate national fashion. The use of locally sourced products – baggy pants, jackets and wide-brimmed hats – by American ladies sought to legitimize the idea of developing regional trade and establishing a clothing culture specific to Americans.

The revolutionaries therefore considered Parisian fashion a nuisance to the body, oppression and submission, and a degrading and hateful style. The emancipation of fashion, proposed by American ladies, was part of a feminine process that sought greater freedom for the body, but also the possibility of choosing what to wear, as well as access to national autonomy. Although the end of the fashion for corsets and the adoption of trousers were only implemented half a century after the assembly, the ideas debated by the participants, in the mid-19th century, were very progressive for the time, having echoed only later, in the 20th century.

Another case that can serve as a reflection to think about the coercion of dressing practices in Brazil, exercised by power structures. In some newspapers, notes and articles can be found about the arrest of women and men for being dressed in clothing considered to be of the opposite sex (Jornal do Commercio, year XXXV, n. 155, 1860; Semana Ilustrada, year VIII, no. 375, 1867; O Fluminense, year II, n° 236, 1879; Gazeta da Tarde, year I, no. 22, 1880; Diário de Notícias, year V, no. 1354, 1889). Although the press does not describe the reasons that led these individuals to wear clothing used by another gender, requiring further studies on the subject, it allows us to observe the restrictions and social impositions on appearance.

The criticism, in this case, is made of the power structure that limited the diversity of fashion's symbolic systems and gender transgressions, criminally repressing anyone who was dressed differently from the social standard that was considered the norm. Inversions could occur on specific and temporary occasions, such as at carnival balls, in theaters by actors and actresses, and even in wars, as stated by Christine Bard (2010), but they were generally strictly prohibited in everyday life throughout the 19th century.

Faced with a conservative, patriarchal and Catholic society, it is observed that the change in the clothing pattern adopted by the elites would hardly happen disruptively. It would begin slowly and within its own base, being adapted to the climate at first, and then being successively transformed, adopting characteristic elements of the local culture and, thus, being legitimized as a symbolic system of the national appearance.

The climate would be one of the arguments used in the press to adapt the fashion coming from Paris. However, unlike Frei Miguel do Sacramento Lopes, the editors considered this element without losing sight of the French referential base. For example, in the first edition of the newspaper A Estação, when dealing with clothing for bad weather, the editorial describes that

Our readers will still find heavy cloaks in the summer and light toiletries in the winter on our pages, but next to that which we cannot eliminate under penalty of no longer reproducing Parisian fashion, they will also find all the explanations that will show them the means of getting some advantage of these objects, conforming to the demands of our climate (A Estação, Year VIII, n° 1, 1879, p. 1).

It is noted that clothing adaptations, such as the reduction in the quantity of fabrics and even the change in the type of material, could be justified to adapt to the country's tropical reality and still be linked with the French model. However, it is possible to see that some editors saw this adaptation as a way of distancing themselves from the symbolic system produced in Paris.

In the article *Fashions*, from the newspaper *O Cherubim*, the author urges women to “use fabrics according to our climate”. Upon being happy to see them wearing light, simple and comfortable dresses, the individual, who signs under the pseudonym of *Ribeirinho*, concludes by stating: “I hope that someday I will write this sentence at the top of this section – National fashion. – Then I will never speak again of the sedimented and strange – Parisian fashion”. (*O Cherubim*, year III, no. 26, 1887).

In this sense, the article written by *Ribeirinho* at the end of the 19th century, once again gave evidence of a successive desire for a national product, as *Friar Miguel do Sacramento Lopes* had written in 1834. Changes in appearance would occur gradually during the *Belle Époque* and throughout the two world wars, gradually opening paths for new discourses on other symbolic systems of appearance. It would be from this period onwards that other issues, related to the national and international, would emerge and boost the narratives about Brazilian fashion in the press.

3 The dethronement of Parisian fashion and the blooming of other fashions

It was seen that some Brazilian editors published criticisms of the fashion produced in Paris, while other sources and researchers revealed certain actions that, carried out by some white, indigenous individuals or those reduced to the condition of slaves, sought to adopt another style of dressing throughout the century. XIX. As some of these initiatives could threaten the fashion adopted by the hegemonic classes, their codes and social norms, it was difficult for them to be implemented during that period, gaining strength only in the 20th century.

The significant changes that occurred during the *Belle Époque* are linked to the end of the corset and the use of pants by women. However, these transformations were assimilated by fashion movements and would coincide with bourgeois women's

access to the workplace, after all, performing professional tasks required greater flexibility and body movement.

Thus, criticism of Parisian fashion published in the press in the first half of the 20th century would gain new perspectives, depending on the events that occurred at the time. This movement can be understood based on three distinct elements: the first is linked to the two world wars. The conflicts occurred in the center of Europe and involved France, which was forced to allocate a large part of its production, especially textiles, to the battlefields, leading to a reduction in fashion exports and new creations by couturiers based in Paris. The second is due to the rise of Hollywood cinema in Brazil. The diffusion of North American films was accompanied by lifestyle and dressing, gaining the attention and taste of a new audience that began to go to cinemas located in the country's metropolises. And the third element concerns the development of the textile industry, mobilizing fabric manufacturers to promote competitions and fashion shows to publicize and sell their products.

The First World War was the first major event to put a brake on Parisian fashion production. Several French printed materials stopped being published during this period, including fashion magazines. The magazine *Les Modes* (1901-1937) experienced some interruptions in its publications, between 1914 and 1916, which led the author of the article *Fashion and Manners*, Sybil de Lancey (n° 165, 1915), to justify the materials fashions shortage.

The French author explained that the cessation of the monthly publication was motivated by the war, but that it also indicated a new attitude on the part of the couturiers in the face of the new context. The position was one of adherence to the French cause and a commitment to making war uniforms and other accessories and clothing based on war references, leaving current events that could hover over the world of women's fashion in the background. The effects of the war on the world of fashion were beginning to be felt on the other side of the Atlantic.

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, a note published in December 1914 by Madame Guimarães, in the newspaper *A Noite*, highlighted the misinformation reaching the specialized press, emphasizing the "difficulties in receiving models and fashion magazines" (n° 1083, 1914, p. 4). The note explained the lack of clothing information and materials that arrived in Brazil after the start of the war.

In the same edition and page of the newspaper, readers were informed of the fashion shortage, as they declared that "the great houses of Paris have closed their salons and the most important magazines cannot be printed, both for lack of paper and workers" (*Ibid.*). With this, the editors emphasized that it was necessary to resort to "models created by English fashion" (*Ibid.*), replacing Paris, signaling the impasses and difficulties caused by the conflict that was going through Parisian fashion.

At that time, the rise of American films shown in cinemas in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and other cities in the country appeared as an alternative, at least visual, to compensate for the lack of new Parisian fashion in the press. In the newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, the editorial staff published advertisements from Agência Cinematográfica Geral Darlot & Sarmiento, as well as from Odeon and Cine Avenida, about "the latest models of American fashion" (n° 7161, 1918, p. 12) aimed at spectators. In the newspaper *A Rua*, film advertising of *Be yourself!*, shown at Cine Avenida, also featured the "latest American fashion costumes" (n° 200, 1917, p. 5), contributing to the spread of Hollywood culture and appearance on Brazilian soil.

According to Denise Bernuzzi Sant'Anna, in the interwar period, "the influence of the *American way of life* on beauty models published in the press increased from that time onwards, contributing to modernizing beauty manuals" (2014, p. 93, italics in the original), which denoted a new style of being, acting and dressing. However, it must be said that cinematographic productions produced images and not necessarily fashion, after all, the clothes worn by actresses were created, most of the time, by costume designers, such as "Adrian, Edith Head, Muriel King, Elizabeth Hawes" (Careta, year XXXIII, n° 1712, 1941, p. 31), and rarely by tailors. In other words, elite Brazilian women continued to wear French fashion.

In the United States, Diana Crane (2000) shows that, in the mid-1930s, in addition to the visual importance of cinema with images of "male heroines", previously contradictory trends came together, providing a more flexible and alternative style for bourgeois women.

Although American fashion did not achieve a strong presence in the Brazilian market during the period, since the end of the First World War, the place it had acquired in the press became increasingly evident. In the magazine *O Malho*, the

editor stated that, until recently, Paris dictated fashion, but that “with cinema, little by little the prestige of the elegant dictatorship was changing” (n. 24, 1933, p. 34).

With the Second World War, many writers claimed that the capital of fashion had been dethroned by the city of cinema. In *Revista da Semana*, the editor asks if “the Fashion empire will move this time to New York? Will the war make Paris lose the scepter of Queen of Elegance?” (n° 6, 1940, p. 31).

Following this dynamic, the editorial staff of the magazine *Careta* published that “even before the outbreak of the new war, the phenomenon was a reality: Paris had lost the scepter of fashion reign. And nowadays, all over the world, we only talk about 'American fashion'” (n° 1712, 1941, p. 31). In line with that rationale, the editorial staff of the magazine *O Cruzeiro* published that “IN PRINCIPLE, when Paris wielded the scepter of fashion, few believed in the elegance of Hollywood. But, after the war extinguished the traditional center where Worth, Patou and Molyneux pontificated, the city of cinema began to be taken seriously” (n. 4, 1943, p. 104, capital letters in the original).

But it wasn't just American fashion that started to be advertised in the press. Still in the context of the First World War, the editorial staff of *Revista da Semana* published six comic strips, in which the character *Dr. Pensa em tudo* sought to create a national fashion (Image 1).

Without depending on French fashion, the character was inspired by the characteristics of certain Brazilian politicians to develop his creation. And even though the result seemed bizarre, causing the collaborator and the model to faint the character and, consequently, the magazine's editorial staff considered, satirically, that the clothing brought together the elements of Brazilian identity.

The editorial staff of the magazine *A Noite* also expressed the desire for national fashion, announcing the inauguration of the new commercial building *A Moda*, the joy of the skillful work of artists in sewing ateliers, and the great clarity with which industries adapted to the refinement of Parisian fashion. It was then described that “we do, in fact, have workshops and workers who, if well managed, will soon end up creating, if not Brazilian fashion, at least our own models, imagined and made here, without anything that makes them envy the creation of fashion houses of Paris” (n° 2232, 1918, p. 2).

However, the space dedicated to the idea of Brazilian fashion on the pages of newspapers and magazines would begin to become more complex. One of the promoters of the production of national clothing was the poet Paulo Torres. During an interview with the main Parisian couturiers, he proposed the creation of a product characteristic of the country. The editorial staff of the magazine *Frou-Frou* reprised his ideas, highlighting that the interviewing poet considered the absence of a “female couturier” (n° 32, 1926, p. 52) as the main element for launching Brazilian fashion. The editorial staff published that “an esthete ‘double’ of a modern merchant, that is, a man who, having a refined aesthetic feeling, also possesses a sense of opportunity and the bravery of achievements” (*ibid.*).

Image 1: Dr. Pensa em tudo and Brazilian fashion



Source: Revista da Semana, Rio de Janeiro, year. XVII, n. 39, Nov. 4th, 1916, p. 33. Brazilian Digital Newspaper Library (HDB).

In this sense, it is observed that the idea still prevailed, according to which fashion could only be created by someone with notoriety and social recognition in the world of *couture*. This way of thinking excluded local seamstresses and their creative capacity for the simple reason that they were not of French origin or had not learned to sew in the fashion capital.

The lack of a workforce recognized for its ability to create national fashion was also a topic in the magazine *Carioca* some years later:

With the European war, Hollywood will be left alone to dictate women's fashion, and we, who in this sense still depend on other nations due to the lack of creative seamstresses, will limit ourselves to copying the models that come from there, until the day we can impose the Brazilian fashion, per our climate (n° 207, 1939, p. 47).

It is possible to observe, therefore, that magazine editors from *Carioca* and *Frou-Frou*, and the poet Paulo Torres considered that there was a need for a person specialized in the fashion profession to produce a national product.

However, unlike all of them, the editor of the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* had another explanation for the reasons why Brazil still didn't have a Brazilian fashion: the lack of opportunity. In the article *Lost Costumes*, the author, under the pseudonym Mary Lou, clarified that the war created a significant division in the circulation of Parisian fashion among women in Rio de Janeiro and that, therefore,

Our stores then try to solve the problem by displaying in their windows fabrics of a tone along with others that enter into intimate relationships in correspondence. They suggest, insinuate, and advise. Large fashion houses display mannequins wearing outfits made from national and nationally inspired fabrics. The factories, in agreement with the traders, create patterns, and study new harmonies, and thus, we see the emergence of Brazilian fashion in confirmation of the proverb: 'Necessity is the mother of industry' (n° 14605, 1942, p. 27).

The opportunity for the development of Brazilian fashion would occur amid the world wars and the rise of Hollywood cinema. In this context, we note the growth of the Brazilian textile industries, especially Bangu, in Rio de Janeiro and Matarazzo and Rhodia in São Paulo.

The three companies stood out, especially in the 1950s, with the creation of national fashion shows and competitions. Explicitly, the events aimed to raise awareness of the products, but mainly to stimulate female taste and consumption of national products. As competitions and fashion shows were publicized in the press, this propagated the idea of national fashion.

The participation of politicians, celebrities and journalists was one of the strategies used to give visibility to the dresses produced by the manufacturers. The commercial and advertising agreements signed between industrialists and editors, politicians and tailors also contributed to giving national and international visibility to textile products manufactured in Brazil. One of these agreements was signed between the textile company Bangu and the designer Jacques Fath. The French creator was

invited by owner Joaquim Guilherme da Silveira to come to Brazil to present his creations made with cotton and fabrics from the Brazilian industry.

The images and their respective captions were iconic and very representative at the time for several reasons. Firstly, because the presence of a French designer in Brazil was quite significant for lovers of French fashion⁴. Secondly, the fabrics and cotton produced in the country and used by Jacques Fath to create the garments that made up the fashion show presented at the Copacabana-Palace, a luxury hotel in Rio de Janeiro, raised the question about the lack of specialized tailors in the country. And, finally, the fashion show that the designer produced, broadcast on French radio, increased the visibility of Brazilian fabrics and cotton among all listeners in France, but, above all, it served as a convincing strategy for a Brazilian audience, especially the elite seduced by French fashion, in terms of adherence to national dress.

The event, which was then presented in São Paulo and Salvador, was attended by First Lady Darcy Vargas, wife of President Getúlio Vargas, which confirms the prestige of the ceremony. This was of great importance, because

Other couturiers became known thanks to social chronicles: Nazareth, João Miranda and Guilherme Guimarães in Rio; Dener Pamplona de Abreu, Clodovil Hernandez and José Nunes in São Paulo; Rui Spohr, Galdino Lenzi and Luciano Baron in Porto Alegre, all creating their own models, but connected and obedient to the trends launched by Paris (Prado, 2019, p. 62).

Thus, it appears that little by little, Brazilian designers began to gain space on the pages of newspapers and magazines. At the Bangu factory, José Ronaldo Pereira da Silva (1933-1987), known as José Ronaldo, was the main designer of the dresses used in competitions and fashion shows promoted by the company.

In São Paulo, the Matarazzo textile industry also financed and organized some fashion events. In 1951, a fashion show was held at the São Paulo Museum of Modern Art (MASP), financed by the company. In 1956, a fashion festival was created in favor of people admitted to the Cancer Hospital (Correio Paulistano, n° 30846, 1956).

⁴ In addition to Jacques Fath, Elsa Schiaparelli was also in the country in the same year, but her arrival was “to confer with the Brazilian firm that controls its business in the country” (Diário Carioca, n° 7439, 1952, p. 12).

The 1957 festival was held to benefit the *Works of Social Pioneers* and *São Paulo Association to Combat Cancer*, in São Paulo, with the sponsorship of the first lady, Sarah Kubitschek, wife of President Juscelino Kubitschek. The participation of Parisian haute couture houses and Brazilian couturiers, as in the fashion show organized by the Bangu factory, in Rio de Janeiro, denotes the attempt to place Brazilian production in symmetry with Parisian production.

At the event, held in 1957, there was an exhibition of the crowns of Napoleon Bonaparte's two wives, as well as the debut of French couturiers. According to a publication in the newspaper *Última Hora*,

CHRISTIAN DIOR, JACQUES HEIM, JEANNE LANVIN CASTILLO, JEAN PATOU and MADELEINE DE RAUCH will present, for the first time at the Moda Festival next October, models of their creation, including those made in France, in Matarazzo-Boussac fabrics. These fabrics are manufactured in Brazil by S/A Indústrias Reunidas F. Matarazzo, according to the Franco-Brazilian agreement signed with the Boussac establishments, in Paris (n° 2225, 1957, p. 04).

The 1958 event brought together 20,000 people at the Ginásio Ibirapuera, in São Paulo, and was part of the first National Textile Industry Fair (Fenit). Maria Claudia Bonadio notes that “The 1st. Edition brought to São Paulo the creators Jean Dessès, Zoe Fontana, Countess Simonetta and Pierre Cardin, who presented fashion shows of collections already presented on international catwalks” (2005a, p. 2). In partnership with Marcel Boussac, an investor at Maison Dior, the Matarazzo industry brought together international and national garments in the same ceremony, symbolically equating their creators to equal levels, obscuring certain hierarchies in the power relations built collectively over the years. During the event, the contest *Agulhas de Ouro* won an award for Brazilian couturier Dener Pamplona.

With the same objective as the textile industries Bangu and Matarazzo-Boussac, the Rhodia SA industry started to organize fashion shows promoting the synthetic yarns and fibers produced in the country (Bonadio, 2005b), in addition to associating its products with the idea of Brazilian fashion (Neira, 2008; Conibere, 2023). But an action that would gain national and international visibility was the *Cruzeiro da Moda*, whose objective was to present abroad the *Coffee Collection*, developed by a group of couturiers, such as Dener Pamplona, designers, artists and people linked to fashion, using fabrics and materials produced by Rhodia.

The historian Maria Claudia Bonadio studied the reports made in the *Cruzeiro da Moda* between 1960 and 1962 and highlighted that

the text of the article stated that the objective of these promotions was to publicize national fashion creations in Europe and influence international fashion through the association of the new product with coffee, whose quality was already internationally known (2014b, p. 110).

It can be seen that the bold action, organized by Rhodia SA, was a complex task. Firstly, it is evident from the name of the collection, which gives rise to the dilemma that the country faced in the process of building its identity and national culture. At a time when the country was experiencing a phase of industrialization and modernity under the government of President Juscelino Kubitschek, the clothing line chosen to be exhibited in Paris is called coffee: a 19th-century product, originating from agriculture, showing the archaism of country and the paradoxes of the construction of Brazilian identity. Fashion, human cultural production, a phenomenon of time, reflected these contradictions and symbiosis in its production of meanings for a developing society.

But the ambiguity of fashion can also be analyzed from the point of view of decolonial studies. After all, the very concept of fashion, constructed from a linguistic repertoire published in the press, comes from Europe and falls within the prism of the coloniality of knowledge. According to Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves, “there is an epistemological legacy of Eurocentrism that prevents us from understanding the world based on the world in which we live and the epistemes that are specific to it” (2005, p. 3). This means that the notion of fashion is constructed from a perspective of Eurocentric domination (Epaminondas, 2024) and, although there was the creation of Brazilian fashion produced with elements of national identity, it was guided by European knowledge codes.

Although Brazilian couturiers could create a national product, they were aware of the need to obtain approval from consumers in Brazil. Even though Paris lost part of its hegemony as an international cultural capital, seeing its model go into crisis in the first half of the 20th century, the symbolic power built around Parisian fashion remained over Brazilian women. Sending the *Coffee Collection* to Paris can be seen as another strategy to gain the attention and acceptance of the Brazilian audience consuming French fashion.

As Mario Carelli stated: “After the Second World War, some Brazilians returned to Paris after overcoming the cultural dependence 'complex'. This in no way diminishes the city’s power of seduction and creative stimulation” (Carelli, 1993, p. 166, translated by the author). Thus, the mission carried out by Rhodia SA could be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, due to the advertising strategy adopted to receive approval for Brazilian fashion from Brazilian women. And on the other hand, where Rhodia presents its independent fashion collection, in coexistence with French, American and other models.

These interpretations can be analyzed from a decolonial perspective, after all, Rhodia was a French company based in Brazil and was part of the world system (Wallerstein, 1999), that is, it obeyed the systemic rules of world capitalism in an asymmetric balance of power with the Global South, considered a peripheral zone compared to developed countries in the North, such as France. Thus, the creation of Brazilian fashion, promoted by the textile industry and publicized in the press, gradually came to be recognized as a symbolic and peripheral system of appearance, due to the aesthetic visual codes adopted in its composition, but without completely breaking the ties with the European model.

However, despite Rhodia being part of the colonial power system, the initiative to create the Coffee Collection and present it to Brazilian and foreign audiences also revealed something important for Brazilian publishers. It was proven that in Brazil there was already a textile complex capable of supplying the raw materials necessary for the production of national clothing, in addition to highlighting the existence of seamstresses and designers with the creative capacity to invent fashion in the country. Apparently, the press' cultural mediators confirmed the fact, as the lack of Brazilian fashion in the country was no longer questioned in the newspapers.

4 Final considerations

As presented, the publication of the idea of Brazilian fashion in the 19th-century press sought, in some cases, to criticize the dependence on the European model, in addition to, in the American case, signaling the physical damage caused to the female body and preventing the development of local production. It also became

clear that other symbolic systems of appearance adopted by individuals reduced to slavery or by original peoples, did not yet appear in printed articles nor were they considered fashionable, being classified as traditional practices and, therefore, without mobility, in addition to being primitive and /or uneducated.

In the 20th century, the context of the two world wars and the insertion of Hollywood cinema in Brazil caused, on the one hand, a decrease in the transatlantic circulation of Parisian fashion and, on the other, the emergence of subjects focused on the visual production of American fashion. In Brazil, the development of the textile industries and the strategies adopted in the production, dissemination, circulation and consumption of their products raised some questions in the press about the elements necessary for the creation of Brazilian fashion.

It is important to remember that the adherence of the Brazilian female audience, especially the elite, to the use of Brazilian fashion did not happen overnight. This would take a few decades in the second half of the 20th century to happen. However, criticism of French fashion did not go unnoticed, as they were published in a media outlet read by these women and other members of the same social class.

Even though these ideas were not accepted and adopted at the time, they initiated the desire for emancipation from foreign dependence on the part of some individuals, aware of the peripheral position that Brazil found itself in relations with the world system. Therefore, when approaching the decolonial perspective, it should be borne in mind that the attempt to detach from the international model and the creation of a national fashion, presented here, would be just one of the first challenges to be faced. After all, the emergence of a symbolic system of Brazilian appearance would institutionalize a new relationship of domination and power on a local scale.

Therefore, when trying to overcome the asymmetries and alterities caused by the world system, in which fashion is one of the pieces of this great mechanism, it is important to (re)think the word from its material genesis, as the result of different exchanges (Casarin *et al.*, 2022); and semantics, serving as an instrument of Eurocentric domination (Epaminondas, 2024).

In the case of Brazil, it is necessary to reposition it as a plural product from a network perspective (Kaiser & McCullough, 2010), taking into account the place where it was and is manufactured, its production rate, its multiple temporalities and the

knowledge of the Indigenous peoples, black people, the LGBTQIAPN+ community, women, people with disabilities and other groups, previously silenced, so that they can produce new “ways of relating to clothing” (Santos, 2020) and reestablish the meaning that had been taken away from them, as a result of miscegenation.⁵

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