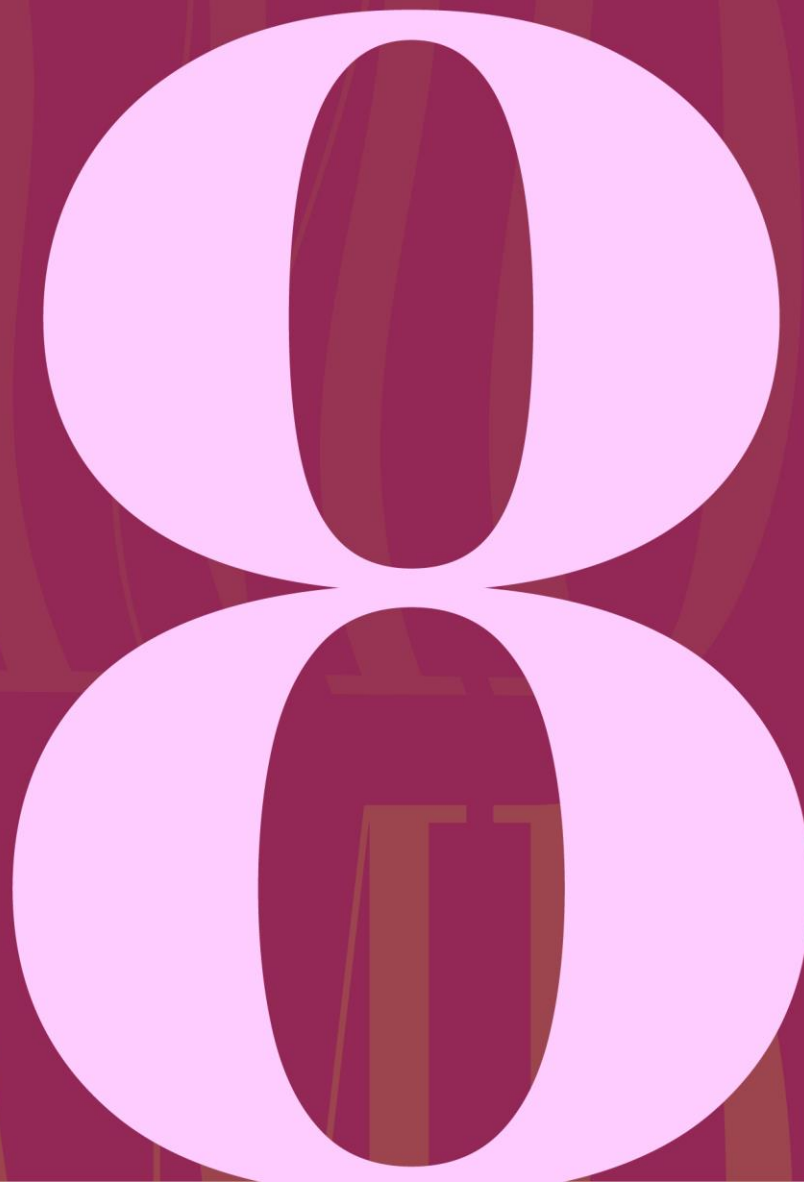


# Editorial



DOI: [10.5965/25944630822024e5641](https://doi.org/10.5965/25944630822024e5641)

## Reflections on the fashions that circulate in the transatlantic space

Image 1: *Portrait de la couturière habillant une poupée du théâtre de la mode en 1945*



Souce: Jeanne Lanvin – *Portrait de la couturière habillant une poupée du théâtre de la mode en 1945*. Available in: <https://www.diktats.com/products/jeanne-lanvin-portrait-de-la-couturiere-habillant-une-poupee-du-theatre-de-la-mode-en-1945>. Accessed May 8, 2024.

The image used to illustrate the call for papers for the Dossier “The transatlantic circulation of fashion in the 20th century. Cultural and symbolic aspects.” depicts Jeanne Lanvin wearing a doll for the Théâtre de la Mode, around the 1950s. The Théâtre was one of the projects led by the French Haute Couture trade union

group, the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne*, aiming to raise funds through advertising the so-called “French fashion”. As shown by Lottman et. al. (1990 and Maselli (2018), it consisted of the presentation of 70-centimeters-tall dolls, with a metal body and plastic head and dressed in the creations of large *maisons* of the time, such as Balmain, Schiaparelli, Dior, Lelong and Balenciaga. Many of the clothes presented were miniature replicas of current collections, stitched and embroidered in detail to replicate those on a larger scale. With a setting designed by renowned French artists, such as Christian Bérard, Boris Kochno and Jean Cocteau, the exhibition first opened at the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris and lasted for several weeks. After Paris, the exhibition was presented in London, Leeds, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Vienna and, finally, the United States.

The case is representative of the Dossier's intentions, as it reveals some conditions and means of fashion circulation at the time, highlights the concern of some agents with the maintenance of *Haute Couture* as a phenomenon that represents France, and stimulates a reflection about the possible reach of these clothes not just as garments, but also symbols. These were the same questions that motivated the promotion of a seminar held virtually in November 2022, the results of which are presented on the following pages. On the occasion, eight researchers and one researcher from different countries (Brazil, United States, France, England and Norway) were invited to reflect on fashion as an object of theoretical and practical study, which can be analyzed from at least two complementary dimensions: production and consumption.

In the first dimension, the phenomenon is thought of in terms of human cultural production, developed in historical time and space, by agents authorized to create, define and intervene in the material aspects that characterize fashion. As Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Delsaut (1976) argued, the definitions of what is or is not fashion involve a series of symbolic and economic struggles between these agents, continuously creating hierarchies.

In the second dimension, as the bearer of a set of adjectives, codes and symbols, fashion contributes to the construction of taste and appearance and, thus, produces individual and collective identities that can either bring people together or apart. In this dynamic, Georg Simmel (2022) demonstrated the interest of a certain

group in reproducing and copying the appearance of another; or the attempt of a copied group to distinguish itself with a new appearance. Both dimensions are guided by the consumption circuits of fashionable goods, which occur in different ways in time and space. They are influenced by fashion's own rules; and economic, political and cultural processes. They are synchronized with the rhythm of modern times and are constantly renewed.

Fernand Braudel (2005) stated that, since the 18th century, fashion has gained a sense of relevance. As Kurkdjian (2020) states, it was from this time on that Paris symbolically emerged as the capital of fashion, a point of reference for the West and especially for the newly independent American nations. Having that said, Véronique Pouillard (2021), in turn, states that the relationship between Paris and New York is paradigmatic, which makes the Atlantic an essential space to reflect on these circulations. For the author, while companies based in Paris set the tone for fashion styles, New York stood out for being an important center for mass production of clothing, most of the time based on Parisian styles. However, Pouillard (2021) also admits that, in addition to these two cities, it is important to take into account the role of other production hubs, such as London, and reception hubs, such as Rio de Janeiro.

Considering the point of view of consumption, it is possible to state that the dynamics were reconfigured with the Occupation of Paris between 1940 and 1944. Lou Taylor and Marie McLoughlin (2020) demonstrate that even though little news or fashion items left the city at that time, the style defined by certain agents who lived in the French capital was no longer confined within the country's borders: they began to be disseminated throughout Europe, the United States and Brazil. At the same time, these circuits present what Jean-François Botrel considers as "an identity dimension, which expresses the desire to perceive oneself outside the French prism and to privilege or support what is national [and] another one, more utilitarian, but also of a patriotic nature, which demands the transfer for progress, for reform" (2012, p. 62, our addition).

Therefore, the transatlantic circulation of fashion goods during the 20th century seemed to be a relevant case study to interpret and understand the theories and practices of the phenomenon, both in its cultural and symbolic dimensions. Furthermore, the topic is valuable for reflecting on fashion configurations, what the

transmission modes of your *savoir-faire* are; the agents that define and support their production, circulation and consumption, among others. The network of knowledge surrounding fashion as a social phenomenon also allows us to launch a pedagogical perspective on the dimension of teaching and the training of professionals (teachers, designers, etc.) in this area of knowledge. It integrates a multiple field of knowledge, as it encompasses notions of cutting, sewing, weaving, arts, molds, and other branches that stimulate the learning of our object of study.

Based on this proposal, this Dossier is made up of four articles written by three researchers and one researcher located in four different countries (Brazil, United States, France and Norway). Their research allows us to investigate the multiple transatlantic spaces through which fashion moved, impacting economically, politically and culturally different individuals and their respective societies at different times.

In the first research paper, Everton Vieira Barbosa proposes to analyze the storyline of Brazilian fashion printed out in periodicals published between the 19th and 20th centuries. In order to develop his analysis in the article titled “The idea of a Brazilian fashion in the press: decolonial reflections in the transatlantic”, the author places in historical perspective, and in dialogue with decolonial studies, the context of the period and its relationship with French fashion, recognized for the symbolic power it had before other nations, such as Brazil.

Initially, the article highlights some texts by Brazilians and foreigners who criticized French fashion in the 19th century, demanding the production of national fashion, which allows us to reflect on power relations among individuals and groups established in central and peripheral countries in the face of the imposition of a French clothing style, said to be universal. This clash of powers seems to become a little more balanced in the first half of the 20th century, when the author later presents how the two World Wars, the expansion of Hollywood cinema and the development of the textile industries contributed so that the Brazilian press would begin to highlight other modes of dress, such as the American and, subsequently, the Brazilian one.

Given these three events, and without leaving aside the decolonial perspective to reflect on power relations around the world, the article tries to unravel certain questions asked by editors and individuals interested in fashion about the elements necessary for the creation of Brazilian fashion. As can be seen, the ideology

of a national fashion would gain more and more space in the press with the efforts made by the owners of textile industries to publicize their products.

Thus, we see the first step towards stopping the copying of foreign models and the promotion of national production. As the author emphasizes, this could be a key to thinking about decolonial fashion from the perspective of the press without losing sight of the linguistic and plural meaning of this social phenomenon, and taking into account the knowledge of original peoples, black people and other individuals and groups neglected in the past.

The next article allows us to reflect and understand how, unlike the Hollywood cinema mentioned above, clothing manufactured in the U.S. was able to physically circulate in the transatlantic. Written by researcher Sarah Johnson, the article titled “The Montgomery Ward Export Department, International Parcel Mail, and Latin American Mail Order Customers, 1900-1940.” presents the development of an American international export system and demonstrates how it contributed to circulating product catalogs and, consequently, clothes that made up an American mode of dress in the Atlantic space.

In addition to highlighting the different spaces where catalogs and their respective products arrived, the author explains how technological transformations at the end of the 19th century, the Pan-Americanist ideology and the conflicts that occurred between the United States and Spain contributed, on the one hand, to expand international custom sales and, on the other, to increase the power of American influence throughout the American continent.

Concerning the international sales of ready-made clothing manufactured in the United States, the author emphasizes the importance of Chicago as the center of Montgomery Ward's export department, but above all the large textile hub developed in the region to serve the growing international demand. The large number of advertisements published in newspapers and magazines abroad and, consequently, the translation into Spanish and Portuguese, shows the importance that the sale of American clothing had gained in America.

At the doorstep of the 20th century, the third article in the dossier presents a new dynamic of fashion circulation that emerges in the transatlantic. Written by professor Véronique Isabelle Claire Pouillard, the research titled “Luxury fashion

licensing in transatlantic and colonial economies: Beyond Paris and New York”, reveals the commercial strategies used by large fashion brands to manufacture and circulate their products abroad.

According to the author, one of the main challenges for Parisian Haute Couture companies was exporting production to other countries, such as the United States. She stresses that the solution first found by Dior and then copied by others, was the opening of branches, the creation of designs adapted to the American lifestyle, in addition to using products available in the country itself, which would avoid paying customs duties. Thus, the strategy would allow different luxury companies to set up shop in various regions of the planet, adopting licenses as a way of being present through local production.

The author mentions that the establishment of licenses between France and America made it possible for these luxury companies in the post-war period to expand their strategy to other spaces, such as Africa. In addition to the colonial dominance that European countries exercised on the continent, the author highlights the importance of the press in the circulation of ideas and the installation of department stores that functioned as branches of fashion brands.

Taking the former Belgian colonies of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi as examples, the article presents how Dior broke into local markets and spread its products in the 1950s, followed by other French, Belgian and North American fashion brands. Thus, the author emphasizes how the main fashion brands of that time expanded their businesses beyond the transatlantic while, at the same time, showing how colonies were integrated into the commercial globalization of fashion.

In order to focus the studies on Parisian fashion companies and classify them as a Haute Couture brand, the fourth article in the dossier proposes to think about the redefinitions that the term gained in the 20th century through *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne* and interventions by the French State. Written by researcher Bárbara Venturini Ábile, the article, titled “Redefining Haute Couture: collaborations between the Parisian Chambre Syndicale de la Couture and the French State in the 20th century”, addresses the history of the creation of the union by couturiers based in Paris and its importance in defining, organizing and delimitating aspects that concern the *métier* of custom tailors.

By using the notion of field (Bourdieu, 1966; 2022) to address the institutionalization of the trade union chamber and its social role in the post-war fashion universe, the author shows what criteria were adopted to classify Parisian fashion houses. In addition, the hierarchies of symbolic power that were created among the seamstresses who were members of this institution are also presented.

As the author mentions, from the regulation of the Haute Couture nomenclature in 1945 until the 1960s, there was a significant decrease in the number of members of the union chamber, due to the difficulty of following the criteria established by the institution. Furthermore, the manufacturing of tailored clothing is facing financial hardships, leading the union chamber to request subsidies from the French State, which intervenes with financial assistance.

In addition to financial intervention, the French State also acted through the internationalization of advertisements, crossing the transatlantic. However, as evidenced by the author, the contribution of the French State further limited the participation of sewing houses. If at the beginning, the union chamber's function was to bring together and protect the manufacturers of the different segments of tailored clothing, with the creation of the Haute Couture nomenclature and the intervention of the State, the institution ended up gradually becoming a political instrument used to promote and internationalize Parisian fashion.

Based on these contributions, the Dossier proposes four perspectives to think about the circulation of fashion in the transatlantic. As the example of the Théâtre de la Mode makes clear, the social phenomenon in question is a product conditioned by the time and space in which it is produced and used, reflecting the paradigms of its contemporaries. Thus, by mobilizing personal and collective interests, serving as an object of desire and dispute, and reflecting on political, economic and cultural dimensions, fashion allows us, as will be shown in the following articles, to analyze social representations, their practices and, in doing so, better understand the world around us.

We hope you enjoy the reading.

Bárbara Venturini Ábile (Unicamp)

Everton Vieira Barbosa (Université Catholique de Lille)



Maio de 2024.

Grammar review: Cinthia Maria Ramazzini Remae

## References:

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **As regras da arte: gênese e estrutura do campo literário**. São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 1996.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Microcosmes : Théorie des champs**. 1er édition ed. Paris: Liber/Raisons d'agir, 2022.

BOURDIEU, Pierre; DELSAUT, Yvette. O costureiro e sua grife: contribuição para uma teoria da magia. **Educação em Revista**, Belo Horizonte, nº34, 2001.

BOTREL, Jean-François. Impressos sem fronteiras no século XIX (França/Espanha/América Latina). In: GUIMARÃES, Valéria (Org.). **Transferências culturais: o exemplo da imprensa na França e no Brasil**. Campinas, SP: Mercado de Letras; São Paulo: Edusp, 2012

BRAUDEL, Fernand. **Civilização Material, Economia e Capitalismo - Séculos XV-XVIII: As Estruturas do Cotidiano**. Volume 1. SP: Editora Martins Fontes, 2005.

KURKDJIAN, Sophie. From Paris haute couture to New York: maintaining the French domination of fashion across the Atlantic, 1939-1946, through women's magazines. In: TAYLOR, Lou; MCLOUGHLIN, Marie. **Paris Fashion and World War Two: Global Diffusion and Nazi Control**. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020, pp. 115-138.

LOTTMAN, H. R.; GASC, N.; CHARLES-ROUX, E. **Le Théâtre de la mode** : [exposition, Paris, Musée des arts de la mode, palais du Louvre, pavillon de Marsan, 10 mai-9 septembre 1990]. Paris: Ed. du May, 1990.

MASELLI, I. Lucien Lelong and the Théâtre de la Mode: the Preservation of Haute Couture during Wartime. **Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development**, v. N.09, 2018.

POUILLARD, Véronique. **Paris to New York: The Transatlantic Fashion Industry in the Twentieth Century**. Harvard University Press, 2021.

SIMMEL, Georg. **Philosophie de la mode**. Traduit de l'allemand par Arthur Lochmann. Paris: Allia, 2013.

TAYLOR, Lou; MCLOUGHLIN, Marie. **Paris Fashion and World War Two: Global Diffusion and Nazi Control**. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020.